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## Surprising Research from Public Affairs Council Finds Gen Y Most Favorable Toward Business

*Public Affairs Pulse survey: Young Americans give  
major companies a 71 percent approval rating*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — A new survey of Americans' opinions on business shows Generation Y has the most favorable views toward major companies among all age groups, with young Americans' approval rating for corporations at least 17 points higher than that of older Americans.

The [Public Affairs Pulse](#) — a first-of-its-kind, in-depth survey of Americans' opinions on business and government, released today by the [Public Affairs Council](#) and conducted by [Princeton Survey Research Associates International](#) — provides a surprising new look at Americans' opinions on the business sector and government regulation of business.

“While the images we see of the Occupy Wall Street movement indicate young people are the most dissatisfied with corporations, this group actually gave companies higher approval ratings than Baby Boomers and seniors,” said Doug Pinkham, president of the Public Affairs Council.

Members of Gen Y (age 18-34) gave a 71 percent approval rating for major companies, and Gen X (age 35-46) holds a similar opinion. But the approval ratings from Baby Boomers (age 47-65) and seniors (above 65) were 54 percent and 52 percent, respectively.

Additional findings from the Public Affairs Pulse survey:

- **Americans don't hate big companies.** A majority of Americans (61 percent) say they have a favorable opinion of major companies.
- **But they do dislike the appearance of CEO greed or self-serving behavior.** A strong majority of Americans (76 percent) see major companies as guilty of overpaying their top executives. They also don't think companies are paying other workers fairly (56 percent).
- **Regardless of whether a company is doing well, Americans don't like executive bonuses.** Even when times are good, one-half (49 percent) say they feel more unfavorable about a company when it hands out bonuses to top executives. When times are bad, nearly nine in ten (87 percent) say they think more unfavorably of a company that awards such bonuses.

- **Americans want major companies more involved in solving the nation's problems.** In addition to providing jobs, they want companies to provide community services such as food banks, free clinics and job training for the poor (80 percent), to provide disaster relief (76 percent), to improve health care (73 percent), to improve education (72 percent) and even to improve roads, bridges and mass transit (56 percent).
- **Americans have mixed feelings about regulation.** When asked whether corporate influence or government regulation is a bigger threat to the well-being of America's middle class, 56 percent believe federal regulation of business is a greater threat, and only 33 percent are more worried about corporate influence.
- **But public support for more government regulation of business has increased in the past 15 years.** The percentage of Americans who believe government is doing too little to regulate businesses has gone up 16 points since 1996 (from 19 percent to 35 percent).
- **Americans don't like the idea of businesses hiring lobbyists, but they support the idea of lobbying for all sorts of specific business reasons.** More than half of Americans (55 percent) think more unfavorably of a company that hires lobbyists. But when presented with five specific lobbying activities, a majority of Americans say such actions are acceptable (protect company jobs: 85 percent; open new markets: 75 percent; create a level playing field: 72 percent; reduce business costs: 64 percent; and secure government funding: 50 percent). There is much greater concern about major companies getting involved in political campaigns through paying for ads or forming a political action committee.
- **Americans trust technology companies more than any other sector.** Technology companies have by far the highest approval rating among types of firms. Twenty-nine percent of the public say technology companies are more trustworthy than other sectors. The next most trustworthy are food and beverage companies (18 percent).

Full results of the Public Affairs Pulse survey are available at [www.pac.org/pulse](http://www.pac.org/pulse).

The survey, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International from Aug. 10 through Sept. 8, 2011, questioned 1,753 adults age 18 or older living in the continental United States.

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