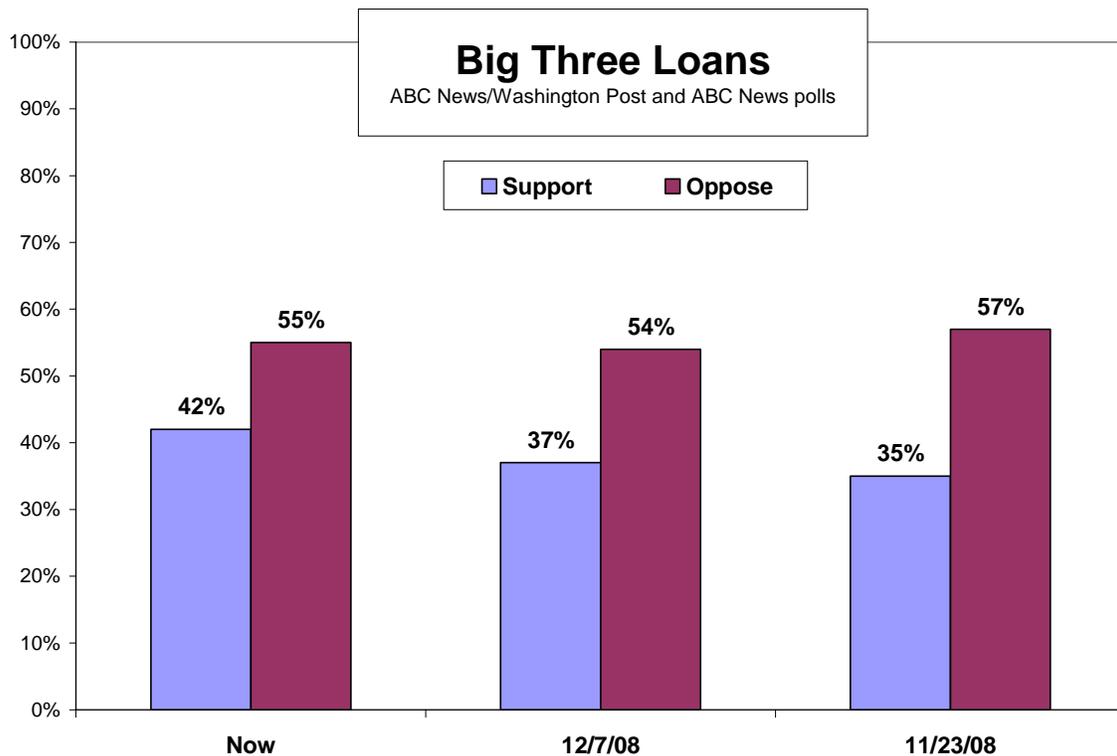


Blaming Management, Not Economy, Most Still Oppose Automaker Loans

Despite dire warnings, more than half of Americans still oppose federal loans to rescue the Big Three automakers, with two main reasons: Six in 10 doubt their reorganization in bankruptcy would hurt the economy. And three-quarters say they made their own bed.

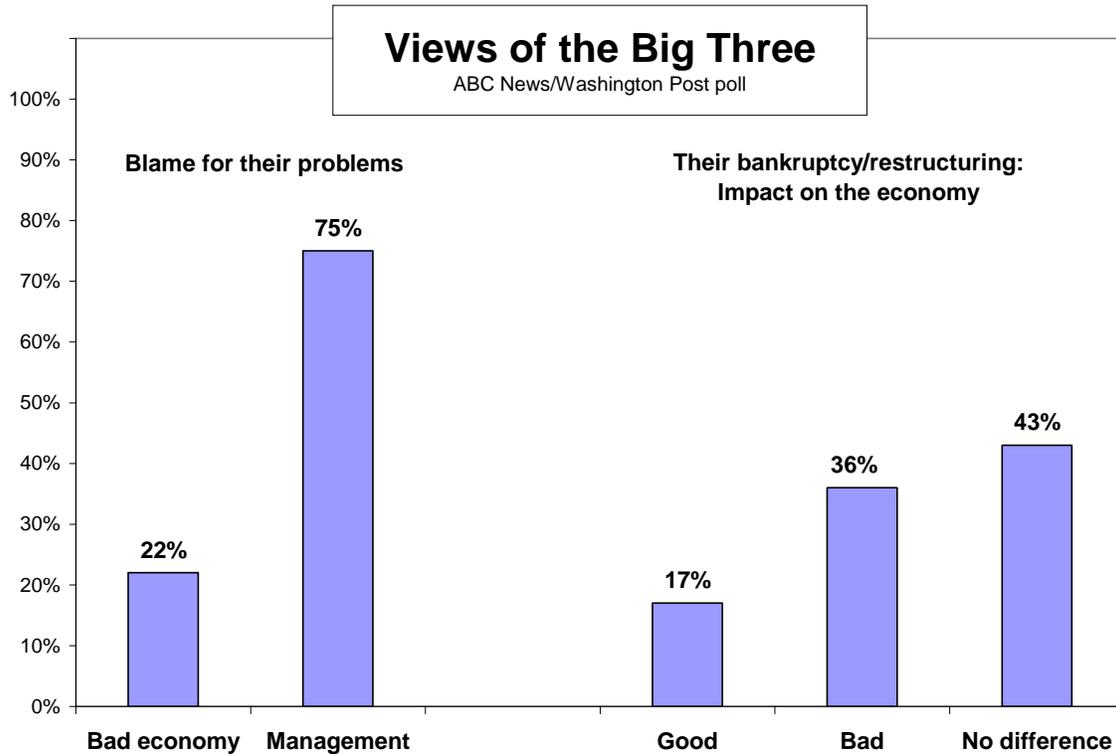
Overall, 55 percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll oppose such loans; 42 percent support them. Support has advanced modestly from 35 percent three weeks ago. But opposition has been steady, and more strongly felt.



A key reason is that just 22 percent believe the automakers' problems are mainly the fault of the bad economy; 75 percent instead blame the companies' own management. And it matters: Among those who blame the economy, two-thirds support the loans. But among the many more who blame bad management, 61 percent are opposed.

Similarly, the loans are supported by most of the people who think the broader economy would suffer if one or more of the automakers went into bankruptcy protection. But only

36 percent are persuaded that a Big Three bankruptcy indeed would hurt the economy. And among the rest, again most – just shy of two-thirds – oppose the automaker loans.



Congress rejected a loan package last week, leaving the Bush administration looking for alternatives. This poll noted that the government is considering up to \$14 billion in loans with a government board to oversee the automakers’ restructuring, and presented pro and con arguments: Supporters say it’s an underserved bailout and the companies would be better off reorganizing under bankruptcy laws; opponents instead say the loans are necessary to protect auto workers and save a key part of the U.S. economy.

Not only do 55 percent oppose the loans, 34 percent do so “strongly,” outstripping the level of strong support, 20 percent.

These views come at a time of extraordinary economic concern. Consumer confidence hit a record low in the weekly, 23-year-old ABC News Consumer Comfort Index two weeks ago; a mere 7 percent said the national economy is good, 20 percent called it a good time to spend money and fewer than half rated their own finances positively. It would seem a prime time to blame the economy for the automakers’ troubles, making the public’s focus on their management, instead, all the more potent.

GROUPS – The biggest differences are partisan. Fifty-two percent of Democrats support the loans, declining to 41 percent of independents and 29 percent of Republicans. The ideological divisions are similar – 56 percent of liberals in favor, dropping to 45 percent

of moderates and 31 percent of conservatives. Support bottoms out at 26 percent of conservative Republicans, a decidedly laissez-faire group.

Indeed 50 percent of Republicans not only oppose the loans, but do so “strongly.” Across the aisle, strong support from Democrats is far less prevalent, just 27 percent.

Partisanship, moreover, has increased in the past week, with support for the loans gaining 10 points among Democrats but slipping by 5 points among Republicans. In Congress last week, most Democrats supported the loan deal, while most Republicans voted no.

Among other groups, perhaps surprisingly, the loans are opposed by 53 percent in union households as well as by 56 percent in families without a union member.

The proposal does less well in the South and West (59 percent opposed) than in the East and Midwest, where the public divides evenly on the question.

Belief that the automakers’ reorganizing under bankruptcy laws would be bad for the economy peaks, albeit at just 44 percent, in their home region, the Midwest; it’s lowest, 30 percent, in the South. Even in the Midwest, more, 52 percent, say that outcome either would not make much difference to the broader economy, or would even be good for it.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 11-14, 2008, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults, including landline and cell-only respondents. Results for the full sample have a 3-point error margin; click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

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Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1 held for release.
2 previously released.
3-4 held for release.
5-6 previously released.
7-20 held for release.

21. The federal government is considering loaning up to 14 billion dollars to the Big Three U.S. automakers and putting in place a government board to oversee their restructuring. Some people say (it's a bailout those companies don't deserve, and that they'd be better off reorganizing under bankruptcy laws). Other people say (it's necessary to protect auto workers and save a key part of the U.S. economy). On balance, do you support or oppose this plan?

----- Support -----	----- Oppose -----	No
NET Strongly Somewhat	NET Somewhat Strongly	opinion

12/14/08	42	20	22	55	21	34	3
12/7/08*	37	17	20	54	23	30	10
11/23/08	35	18	17	57	21	36	9

*Wording 12/7: "The big three automakers in the United States have asked for up to 34 billion dollars in loans from the government...."
 11/23: "...up to 25 billion..."

22. Do you think the automakers' problems are mainly the fault of (the bad economy) or mainly the fault of (their own management)?

	Bad economy	Own management	No opinion
12/14/08	22	75	3

23. Say the loan plan is not approved and one or more of the automakers has to go under protection of bankruptcy laws while they try to restructure themselves. Do you think that would be good for the economy, bad for the economy, or would not make much difference either way?

	Good	Bad	No difference	No opinion
12/14/08	17	36	43	4

24-33 held for release.
 34-40 previously released.

END