

FOR RELEASE MARCH 15, 2018

Public Confidence in Mueller's Investigation Remains Steady

Most are skeptical Trump will act to block future Russian meddling

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

Carroll Doherty, Director of Political Research

Jocelyn Kiley, Associate Director, Research

Olivia O'Hea, Communications Assistant

202.419.4372

www.pewresearch.org

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Pew Research Center, March, 2018, "Public Confidence in Mueller's Investigation Remains Steady"

About Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It does not take policy positions. It conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research. The Center studies U.S. politics and policy; journalism and media; internet, science and technology; religion and public life; Hispanic trends; global attitudes and trends; and U.S. social and demographic trends. All of the Center's reports are available at www.pewresearch.org. Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

© Pew Research Center 2018

Public Confidence in Mueller’s Investigation Remains Steady

Most are skeptical Trump will act to block future Russian meddling

The public continues to express at least some confidence that Robert Mueller will conduct a fair investigation into Russia’s involvement in the 2016 election.

A majority of Americans (61%) say they are very or somewhat confident Mueller will conduct a fair investigation; these views have changed only modestly since December.

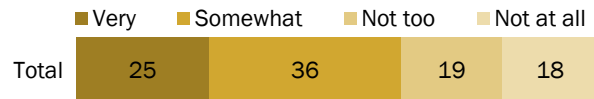
While opinions about Mueller’s probe – and other issues related to Russia’s alleged election meddling – are divided along partisan lines, nearly half of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (46%) are very or somewhat confident Mueller will conduct a fair investigation. Democrats and Democratic leaners are overwhelmingly confident Mueller’s investigation will be fair (75% very or somewhat confident).

The latest national survey by Pew Research Center, conducted March 7-14 among 1,466 adults, finds the public is skeptical that the Trump administration will make a “serious effort” to prevent Russia from influencing future U.S. elections. (The survey was conducted before the administration’s March 15 announcement it was imposing sanctions on Russia in response to its interference in the 2016 campaign.)

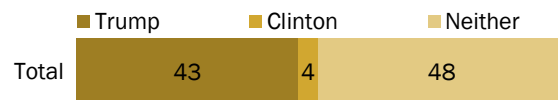
About four-in-ten Americans (42%) are very or somewhat confident that the administration will make a serious effort to thwart Russian efforts to influence future elections. Most are not too confident (19%) or not at all confident (36%) the Trump administration will take serious action to prevent Russia from influencing future elections in this country.

Most Americans are very or somewhat confident Mueller’s probe will be fair

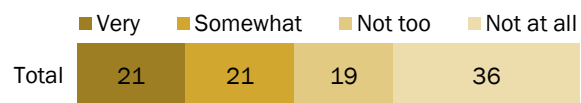
% who are ___ confident that special counsel Robert Mueller will conduct a fair investigation into Russian involvement in the 2016 election



% who say Russian efforts to influence the 2016 election benefited ___ campaign



% who are ___ confident that the Trump administration will make a serious effort to prevent Russia from influencing future U.S. elections



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 7-14, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The survey finds that the public is divided in opinions about the ultimate impact of Russian efforts to influence the 2016 presidential election: 48% say these efforts did not benefit either Trump or Hillary Clinton, while 43% say they benefited Trump. Very few Americans (4%) think Russian actions benefited Clinton.

Trump's job approval has changed little in recent months. Currently, 39% approve of the way Trump is handling his job as president, while 54% disapprove. (Also new today: *Disagreements about Trump widely seen as reflecting divides over 'other values and goals.'*)

Most are at least somewhat confident in fairness of Mueller's investigation

Overall, more Americans (61%) say they are very or somewhat confident that Justice Department special counsel Robert Mueller will conduct a fair investigation into Russia's involvement in the 2016 election; 37% are not too confident or not at all confident that he will do this.

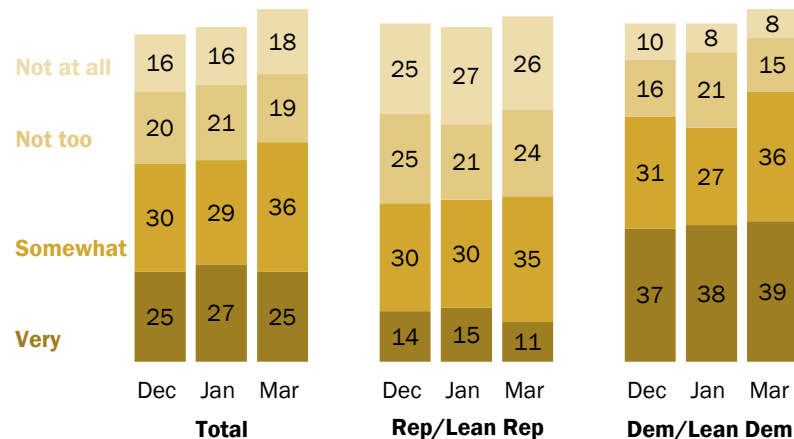
Among Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents, 39% are *very* confident Mueller will pursue a fair investigation, while another 36% are *somewhat* confident. Just 23% of Democrats are not too confident or not at all confident.

The share of Democrats who are at least somewhat confident Mueller will conduct a fair investigation into Russia's election involvement has risen modestly since December, from 68% then to 75% today.

By contrast, opinions among Republicans and Republican leaners are virtually unchanged from three months ago. About a quarter of Republicans say they are not at all confident (26%) that Mueller will conduct a fair investigation; 24% are not too confident, while 46% say they are at least somewhat confident Mueller will conduct a fair investigation into Russian election involvement.

Democrats' confidence in Mueller's investigation has increased; Republicans' views are little changed

% who are ___ confident that special counsel Robert Mueller will conduct a fair investigation into Russian involvement in the 2016 election



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 7-14, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Republicans say Russian efforts in 2016 didn't benefit either candidate

The public is split on whether Russian efforts to influence the 2016 election benefited Donald Trump's campaign or neither campaign very much. Roughly equal shares say that Russian efforts likely benefited Trump's campaign (43%) or neither of the campaigns (48%)—with sharp divisions by party. Just 4% say Russian efforts benefited Hillary Clinton's campaign.

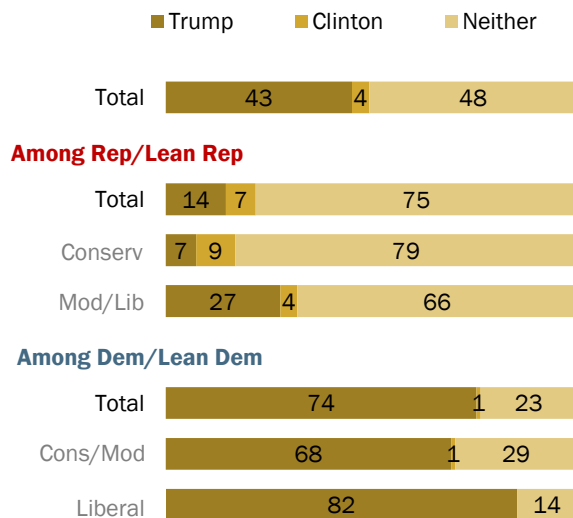
Three-quarters of Republicans and Republican leaners say that Russia's meddling didn't benefit either campaign very much. A nearly identical share of Democrats and Democratic leaners (74%) say it benefited Trump's campaign.

There are ideological differences in both parties in these views. Over a quarter (27%) of moderate and liberal Republicans say the Trump campaign benefited from Russian influence in the campaign, compared with just 7% of conservative Republicans.

Among Democrats, majorities of liberals (82%) and conservatives and moderates (68%) say the Trump campaign benefited from Russian efforts to influence the 2016 election.

Wide partisan gap in views of impact of Russian efforts to influence election

% who say Russian efforts to influence the 2016 election benefited ___ campaign



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 7-14, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

There also are sizable differences between parties – and wide ideological differences within each – on whether the Trump administration had improper contact with Russia during the 2016 campaign.

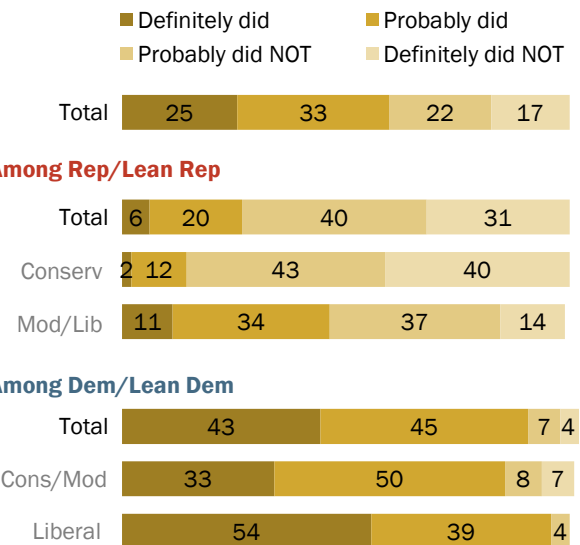
Overall, 58% of the public say senior members of the Trump administration likely had improper contact with Russia during the 2016 campaign, including 25% who say they “definitely” did and 33% who say they “probably” did. As with views of Mueller’s investigation, these opinions are relatively unchanged since December.

An overwhelming share of Democrats (88%) says that improper contact probably (45%) or definitely (43%) occurred. Liberal Democrats (54%) are far more likely than conservative and moderate Democrats (33%) to say such contacts definitely took place.

By contrast, seven-in-ten Republicans (71%) say that senior members of the Trump administration probably or definitely did not have improper contact with Russia. While 40% of conservative Republicans say improper campaign contacts between senior Trump officials and Russia definitely did not occur, just 14% of moderate and liberal Republicans say the same.

Parties divided ideologically in views of Trump campaign contacts with Russia

% who say senior members of Trump administration ____ have improper contact with Russia during 2016 campaign



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 7-14, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Most are not confident administration will make serious effort to prevent future Russian interference

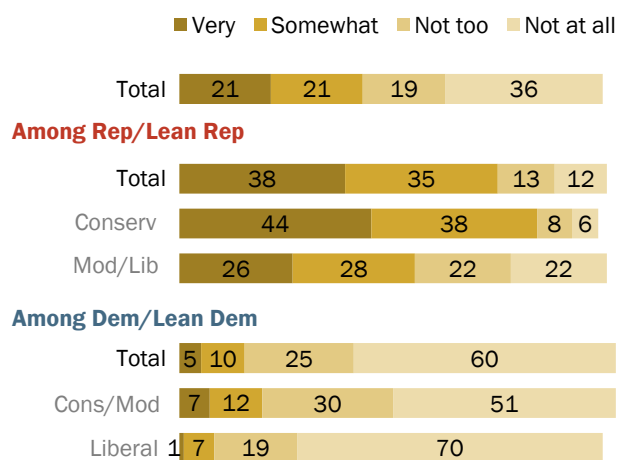
A majority of Americans (56%) say they are not confident that the Trump administration will make a serious effort to prevent Russia from influencing future U.S. elections. Roughly four-in-ten (42%) say they are very or somewhat confident that the administration will take serious action in this regard.

Democrats – especially liberals – are deeply skeptical that the White House will make serious efforts to block Russia from intervening in future elections. A large majority of liberal Democrats (70%), along with about half (51%) of the party’s conservatives and moderates, say they are “not at all confident” the administration will make serious efforts.

Most Republicans (73%) are very or somewhat confident that the administration will make a serious effort to block future election involvement by Russia. However, just 38% are very confident the White House will take serious action, including 44% of conservatives and 26% of moderates and liberals.

Democrats skeptical White House will prevent future Russian meddling

% who are ___ confident the Trump administration will make a serious effort to prevent Russia from influencing future U.S. elections



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 7-14, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Acknowledgements

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

Research team

Carroll Doherty, *Director, Political Research*

Jocelyn Kiley, *Associate Director, Political Research*

Alec Tyson, *Senior Researcher*

Bradley Jones, *Research Associate*

Baxter Oliphant, *Research Associate*

Hannah Fingerhut, *Research Analyst*

Hannah Hartig, *Research Analyst*

Aldo Iturrios, *Intern*

Communications and editorial

Bridget Johnson, *Communications Associate*

Olivia O’Hea, *Communications Assistant*

Graphic design and web publishing

Peter Bell, *Design Director*

Alissa Scheller, *Information Graphics Designer*

Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted March 7-14, 2018 among a national sample of 1,466 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (384 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,082 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 653 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted under the direction of ICF Incorporated. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Marketing Systems Group. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2016 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cell phone only, or both landline and cell phone), based on extrapolations from the 2016 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Survey conducted March 7-14, 2018

| Group | Unweighted sample size | Plus or minus ... |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Total sample | 1,466 | 3.0 percentage points |
| Republican/Lean Rep | 655 | 4.5 percentage points |
| Democrat/Lean Dem | 682 | 4.4 percentage points |

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Pew Research Center undertakes all polling activity, including calls to mobile telephone numbers, in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other applicable laws.

Pew Research Center is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization and a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
MARCH 2018 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
MARCH 7-14, 2018
N=1,466**

QUESTIONS 1, 7, 12, 14-15, 24-27, 40, 46-47 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

QUESTIONS 2, 41-42 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 3-6, 8-11, 13, 16-23, 28-39, 43-45

ASK ALL:

Q.48 How much, if anything, have you read or heard about Russian efforts to influence the 2016 presidential election? **[READ]**

| | | TREND FOR COMPARISON | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Mar 7-14 | | Jan 10-15 | |
| <u>2018</u> | | <u>2018¹</u> | |
| 61 | A lot | 55 | |
| 26 | A little | 33 | |
| 12 | Nothing at all | 11 | |
| 1 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) | 1 | |

ASK ALL:

Q.49 Do you think Russian efforts to influence the 2016 election **[READ AND RANDOMIZE OPTIONS 1 AND 2 WITH OPTION 3 ALWAYS LAST]**?

| Mar 7-14 | |
|-------------|--|
| <u>2018</u> | |
| 43 | Benefited Donald Trump's campaign |
| 4 | Benefited Hillary Clinton's campaign |
| 48 | Didn't benefit either one very much |
| * | Russia did not try to influence election (VOL.) |
| 4 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) |

ASK ALL:

Q.50 How confident are you that the Trump administration will make a serious effort to prevent Russia from influencing future U.S. elections? Are you **[READ IN ORDER]**?

| Mar 7-14 | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>2018</u> | |
| 21 | Very confident |
| 21 | Somewhat confident |
| 19 | Not too confident |
| 36 | Not at all confident |
| 2 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) |

QUESTIONS 51-53, 55, 59, 61, 63, 90 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

NO QUESTIONS 54, 56-58, 60, 62, 64-89, 91-93

¹ In the January 10-15, 2018 survey, question was worded: "How much, if anything, have you read or heard about the investigation into Russian involvement in the 2016 election?"

ASK ALL:

Q.94 Thinking about the investigation into Russian involvement in the 2016 election... just your impression, do you think senior members of the Trump administration definitely did, probably did, probably did NOT or definitely did NOT have improper contact with Russia during the 2016 presidential campaign?

| Mar 7-14 <u>2018</u> | | Nov 29-Dec 4 <u>2017</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 25 | Definitely did | 30 |
| 33 | Probably did | 29 |
| 22 | Probably did not | 18 |
| 17 | Definitely did not | 12 |
| 4 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) | 10 |

ASK ALL:

Q.95 How confident, if at all, are you that the Justice Department special counsel Robert Mueller [PRONOUNCED: "MULL-er"] will conduct a fair investigation into Russian involvement in the 2016 election [READ]?

| Mar 7-14 <u>2018</u> | | Jan 10-15 <u>2018</u> | Nov 29-Dec 4 <u>2017</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 25 | Very confident | 27 | 25 |
| 36 | Somewhat confident | 29 | 30 |
| 19 | Not too confident | 21 | 20 |
| 18 | Not at all confident | 16 | 16 |
| 3 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) | 8 | 8 |

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

| | Republican | Democrat | Independent | (VOL.) No preference | (VOL.) Other party | (VOL.) DK/Ref | Lean Rep | Lean Dem |
|----------------------|------------|----------|-------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Mar 7-14, 2018 | 26 | 28 | 41 | 3 | * | 1 | 17 | 18 |
| Jan 10-15, 2018 | 26 | 33 | 34 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 12 | 18 |
| Nov 29-Dec 4, 2017 | 20 | 32 | 40 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 13 | 19 |
| Oct 25-30, 2017 | 22 | 32 | 41 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 17 | 19 |
| Jun 8-Jul 9, 2017 | 25 | 31 | 39 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 16 | 18 |
| Apr 5-11, 2017 | 24 | 31 | 42 | 2 | 1 | * | 17 | 20 |
| Feb 7-12, 2017 | 23 | 34 | 37 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 15 | 18 |
| Yearly Totals | | | | | | | | |
| 2017 | 23.6 | 31.4 | 39.4 | 3.3 | .6 | 1.7 | 15.8 | 18.7 |
| 2016 | 25.4 | 32.0 | 36.5 | 3.4 | .5 | 2.2 | 14.6 | 17.0 |
| 2015 | 23.7 | 30.4 | 40.1 | 3.6 | .4 | 1.8 | 16.4 | 17.3 |
| 2014 | 23.2 | 31.5 | 39.5 | 3.1 | .7 | 2.0 | 16.2 | 16.5 |
| 2013 | 23.9 | 32.1 | 38.3 | 2.9 | .5 | 2.2 | 16.0 | 16.0 |
| 2012 | 24.7 | 32.6 | 36.4 | 3.1 | .5 | 2.7 | 14.4 | 16.1 |
| 2011 | 24.3 | 32.3 | 37.4 | 3.1 | .4 | 2.5 | 15.7 | 15.6 |
| 2010 | 25.2 | 32.7 | 35.2 | 3.6 | .4 | 2.8 | 14.5 | 14.1 |
| 2009 | 23.9 | 34.4 | 35.1 | 3.4 | .4 | 2.8 | 13.1 | 15.7 |
| 2008 | 25.7 | 36.0 | 31.5 | 3.6 | .3 | 3.0 | 10.6 | 15.2 |
| 2007 | 25.3 | 32.9 | 34.1 | 4.3 | .4 | 2.9 | 10.9 | 17.0 |
| 2006 | 27.8 | 33.1 | 30.9 | 4.4 | .3 | 3.4 | 10.5 | 15.1 |
| 2005 | 29.3 | 32.8 | 30.2 | 4.5 | .3 | 2.8 | 10.3 | 14.9 |
| 2004 | 30.0 | 33.5 | 29.5 | 3.8 | .4 | 3.0 | 11.7 | 13.4 |
| 2003 | 30.3 | 31.5 | 30.5 | 4.8 | .5 | 2.5 | 12.0 | 12.6 |
| 2002 | 30.4 | 31.4 | 29.8 | 5.0 | .7 | 2.7 | 12.4 | 11.6 |
| 2001 | 29.0 | 33.2 | 29.5 | 5.2 | .6 | 2.6 | 11.9 | 11.6 |
| 2001 Post-Sept 11 | 30.9 | 31.8 | 27.9 | 5.2 | .6 | 3.6 | 11.7 | 9.4 |

PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED...

| | <u>Republican</u> | <u>Democrat</u> | <u>Independent</u> | (VOL.) No <u>preference</u> | (VOL.) Other <u>party</u> | (VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u> | Lean <u>Rep</u> | Lean <u>Dem</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <i>2001 Pre-Sept 11</i> | 27.3 | 34.4 | 30.9 | 5.1 | .6 | 1.7 | 12.1 | 13.5 |
| 2000 | 28.0 | 33.4 | 29.1 | 5.5 | .5 | 3.6 | 11.6 | 11.7 |
| 1999 | 26.6 | 33.5 | 33.7 | 3.9 | .5 | 1.9 | 13.0 | 14.5 |
| 1998 | 27.9 | 33.7 | 31.1 | 4.6 | .4 | 2.3 | 11.6 | 13.1 |
| 1997 | 28.0 | 33.4 | 32.0 | 4.0 | .4 | 2.3 | 12.2 | 14.1 |
| 1996 | 28.9 | 33.9 | 31.8 | 3.0 | .4 | 2.0 | 12.1 | 14.9 |
| 1995 | 31.6 | 30.0 | 33.7 | 2.4 | .6 | 1.3 | 15.1 | 13.5 |
| 1994 | 30.1 | 31.5 | 33.5 | 1.3 | -- | 3.6 | 13.7 | 12.2 |
| 1993 | 27.4 | 33.6 | 34.2 | 4.4 | 1.5 | 2.9 | 11.5 | 14.9 |
| 1992 | 27.6 | 33.7 | 34.7 | 1.5 | 0 | 2.5 | 12.6 | 16.5 |
| 1991 | 30.9 | 31.4 | 33.2 | 0 | 1.4 | 3.0 | 14.7 | 10.8 |
| 1990 | 30.9 | 33.2 | 29.3 | 1.2 | 1.9 | 3.4 | 12.4 | 11.3 |
| 1989 | 33 | 33 | 34 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 1987 | 26 | 35 | 39 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |