

In the '50s through the early '80s, it was common practice for members of one party to cross party lines and vote along with the opposite party. For example, many Southern Democrats and Republicans alike opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1965, while Northern politicians from both parties supported it. This is apparent in the graphic below, where the blue and red dots blend together. But beginning in the mid-'80s, polarization began to increase, and by the 1993-94 Congress, there is almost no overlap on votes between the two parties. Since then, political polarization has been at its highest level since the late 1800s, with very few Congresspeople willing to step outside the rules of partisan politics. (<http://massappeal.com/new-research-paper-visualizes-political-polarization-in-congress/>)

