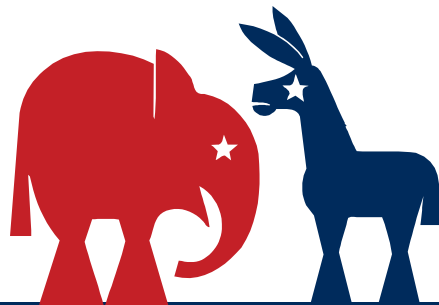


The Digital Divide In Congress

In 2009, CMF, with the assistance of our research partners at Harvard Kennedy School, Northeastern University, University of California–Riverside, and the Ohio State University, conducted an extensive evaluation of all congressional Web sites in the 111th Congress.

Through these evaluations, we found that there is a digital divide in Congress. In the five evaluations CMF has conducted of congressional Web sites, this is the first time that the most common letter grades earned were “A” and “F”.





The Most Common Letter Grades Earned Were "A" and "F"

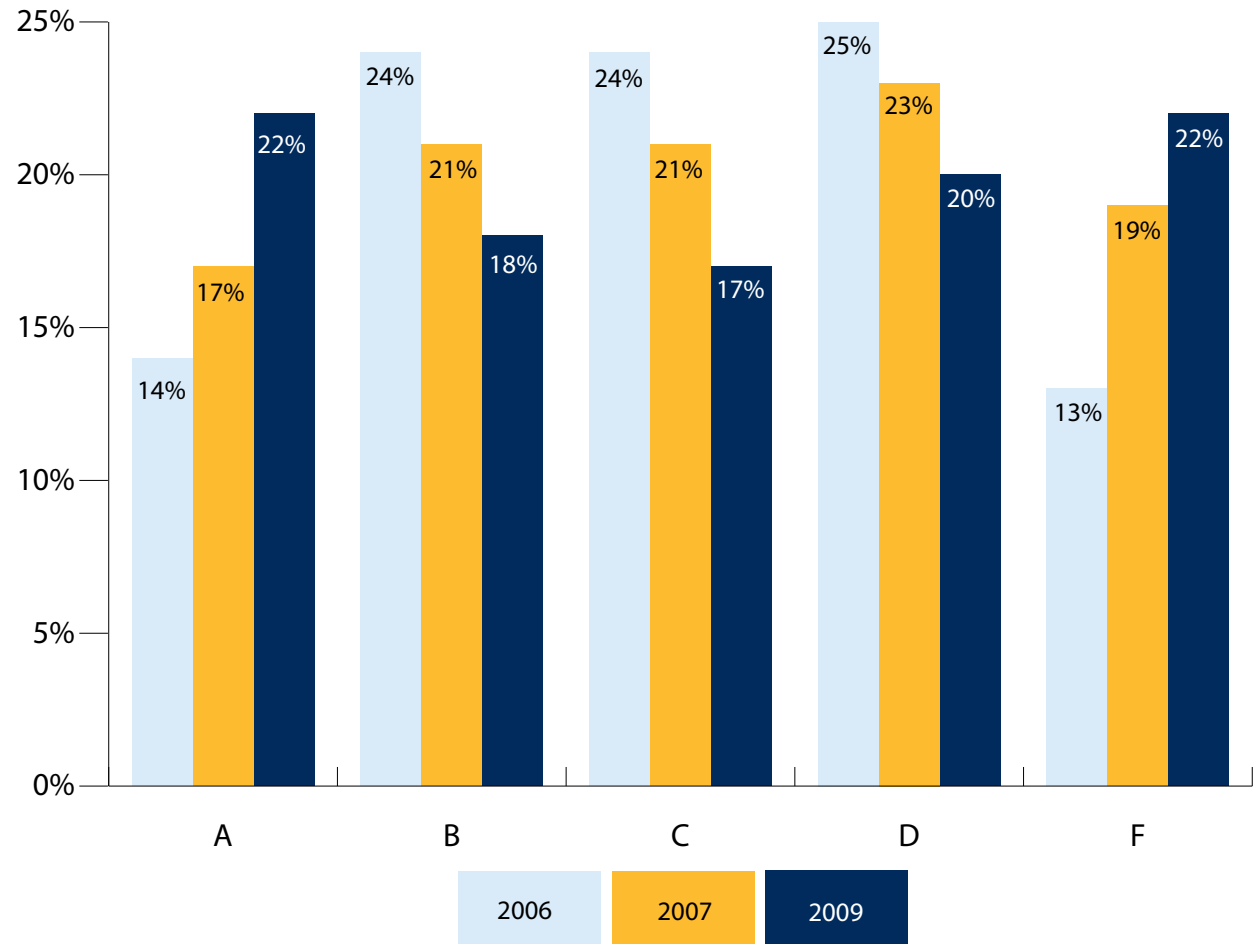
CONGRESSIONAL WEB SITE GRADES IN 2006, 2007 AND 2009

n = 615, 618, 620

In 2009, more congressional Web sites earned grades of "A" and "F" than ever before.

Since 2006, the number of "A"s and "F"s has increased, while every other grade has decreased.

*% may not = 100 due to rounding





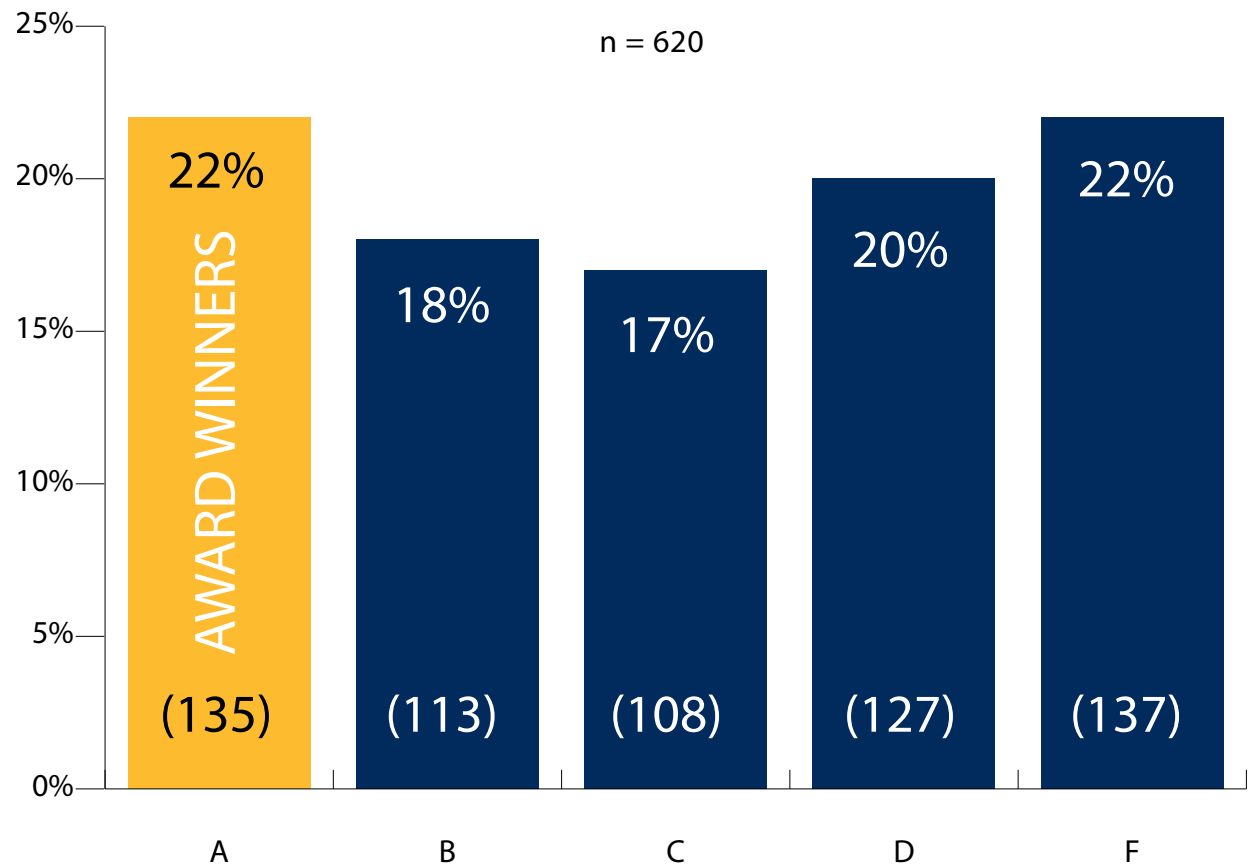
As The Best Web Sites Get Better, The Rest Are Falling Behind

Since CMF began conducting evaluations of congressional Web sites in 2001, the results have continued to skew towards the top and bottom grades.

An almost equal percentage of sites were substandard ("D"s and "F"s) as were above average ("A"s and "B"s).

Additionally, by analyzing past data, we found that "B"s were trending toward "A"s, and "D"s were trending towards "F"s.

CONGRESSIONAL WEB SITE GRADES IN 2009



*% may not = 100 due to rounding



Web Site Quality Cannot Be Explained by Environmental Factors or Demographics

We conducted an analysis on a variety of factors to determine if any contributed to the quality of a Member's Web site. None of the variables revealed any significant patterns in the 2009 scores, which emphasizes the simple fact that any congressional office can have an effective Web site.

party &
election margin

member's tenure

member's
gender & age

state & regions

% seniors &
% under 18

education &
average income

population density
& geographical size

Republican Web Sites Scored Better Overall...

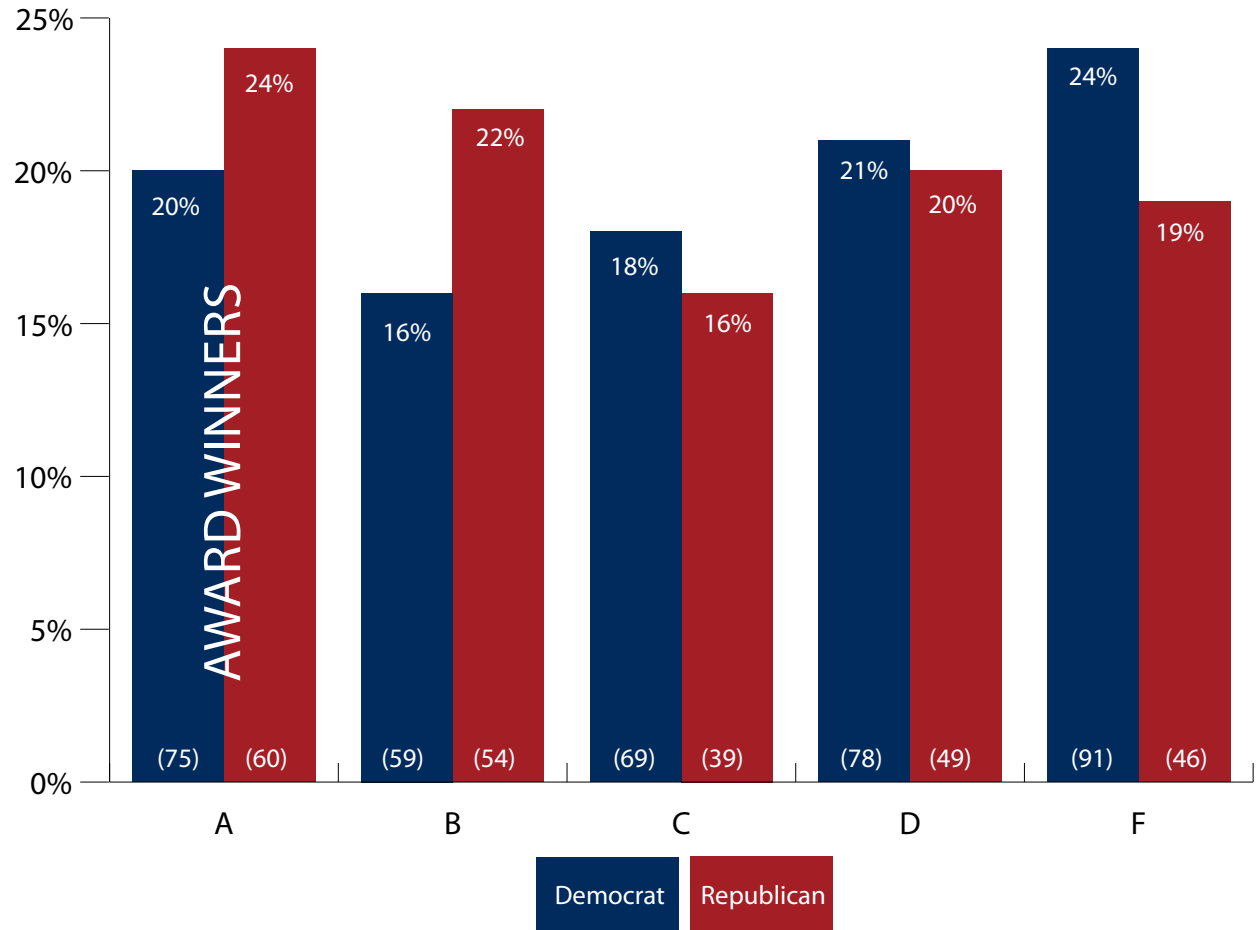


DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN WEB SITE GRADES IN 2009

n = 372, 248

Democratic Web sites outnumber Republican Web sites by a ratio of 3:2. Republican sites scored better overall with 62% of Republican and 54% of Democratic Web sites scoring a "C" or higher.

*% may not = 100 due to rounding

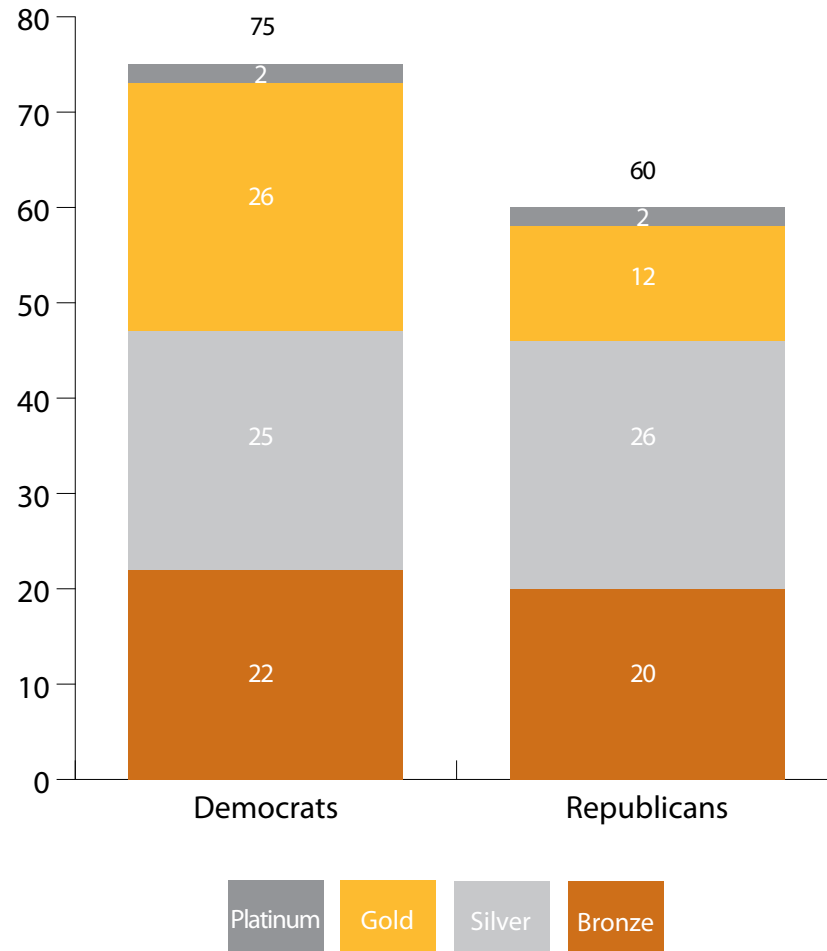




...But Democrats Have More Award-Winning Sites

Democrats had more than twice as many Gold Award-winning sites as Republicans.

Both parties received an equal number of Platinum Awards, given to the best Web sites in each of the following categories: House Member, Senate Member, Committee, and Leadership.





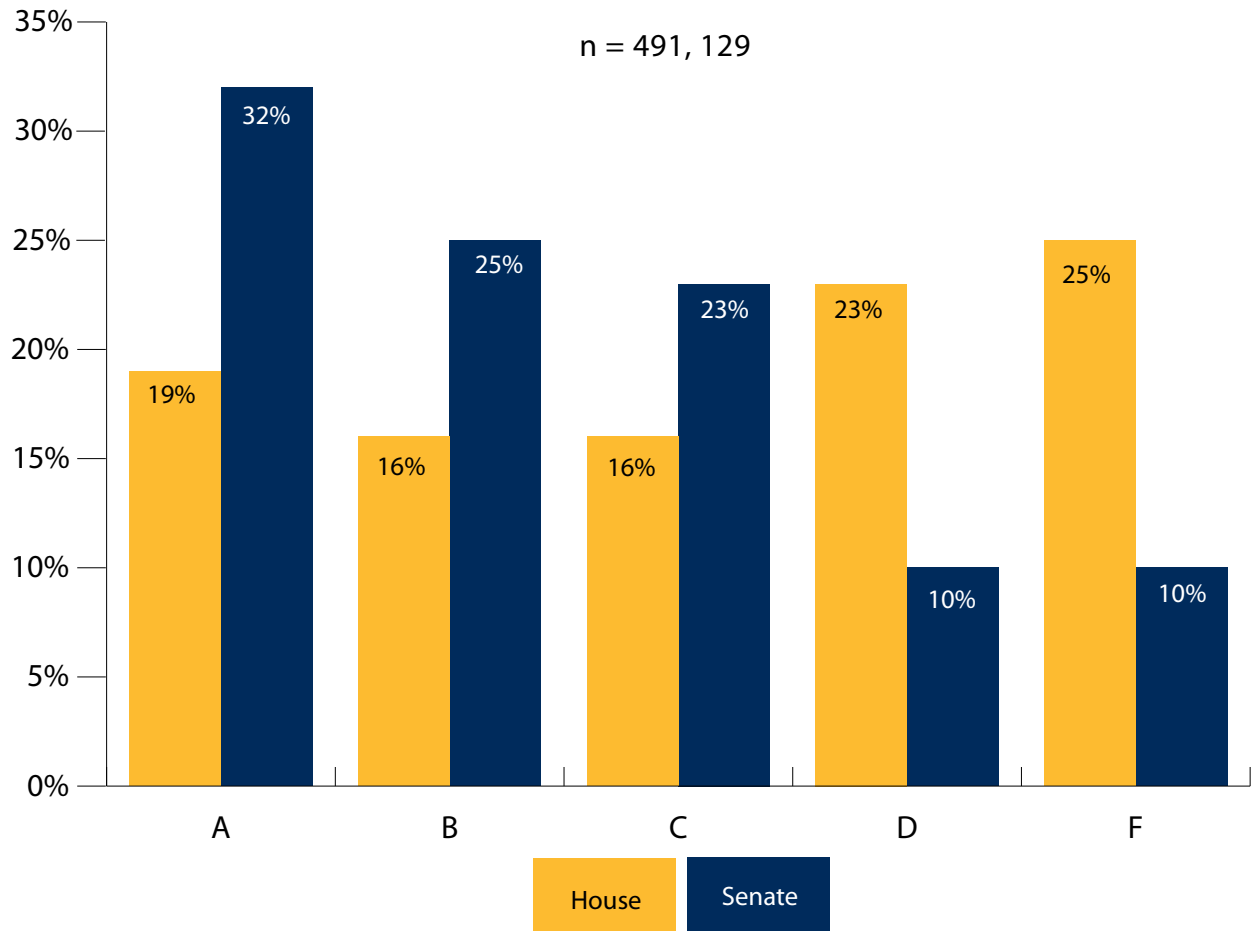
Senate Sites Scored Better Overall Than House Sites

For Senate Member, committee, and leadership sites, the most common letter grade was an “A,” compared to an “F” in the House.

The Senate’s performance is not surprising, given that Senate offices generally have more financial and staff resources than House offices.

House Member sites underperformed in some of the most crucial areas, including Issue Content, Timeliness, and Usability.

HOUSE AND SENATE WEB SITE GRADES IN 2009



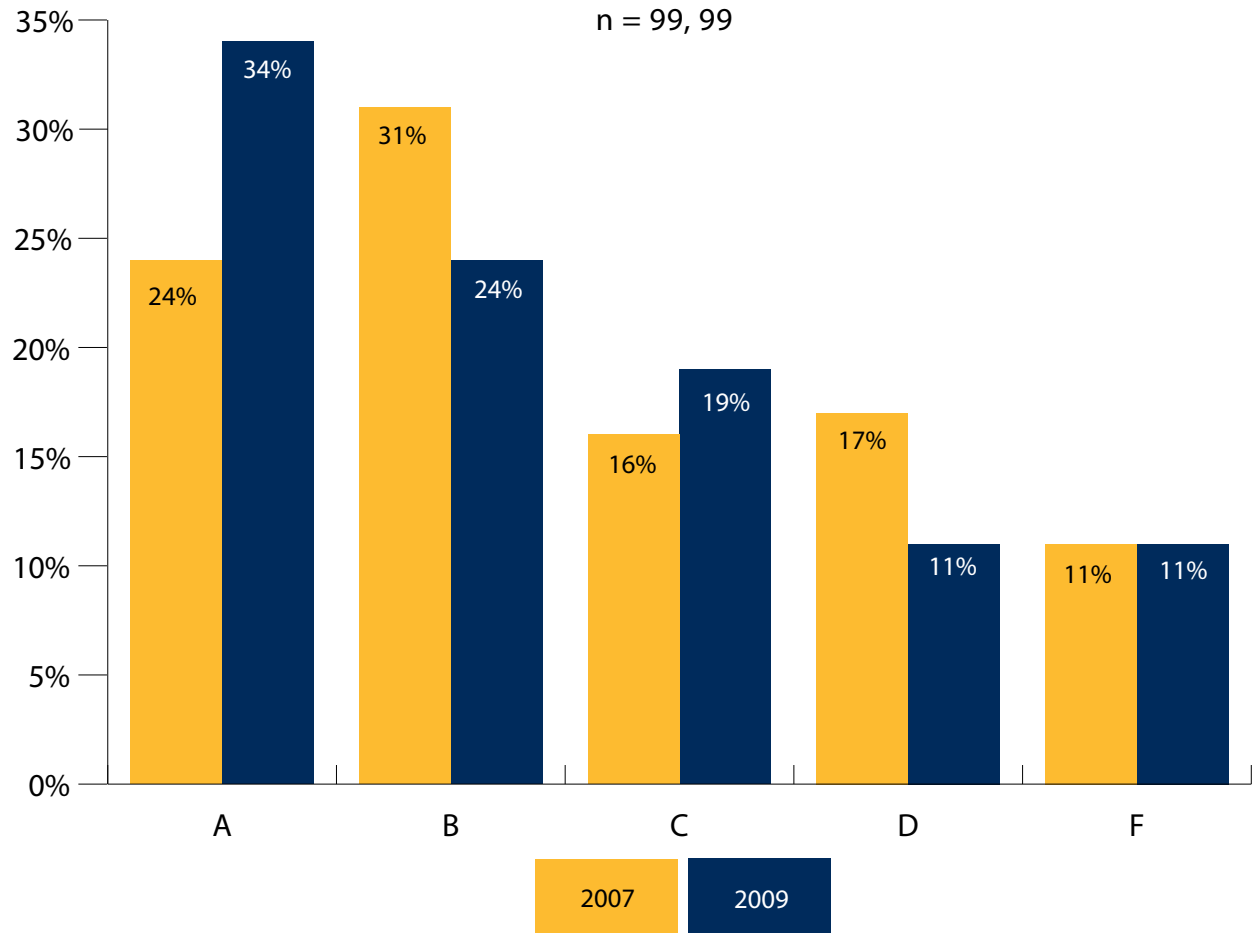
*% may not = 100 due to rounding

The Number of Award-Winning Senate Member Sites Increased Significantly



SENATE MEMBER WEB SITE GRADES IN 2007 AND 2009

The most common letter grade for Senators rose from a “B” to an “A”.
 Almost 60% scored an “A” or “B”.
 However, the number of “F”s remained the same.

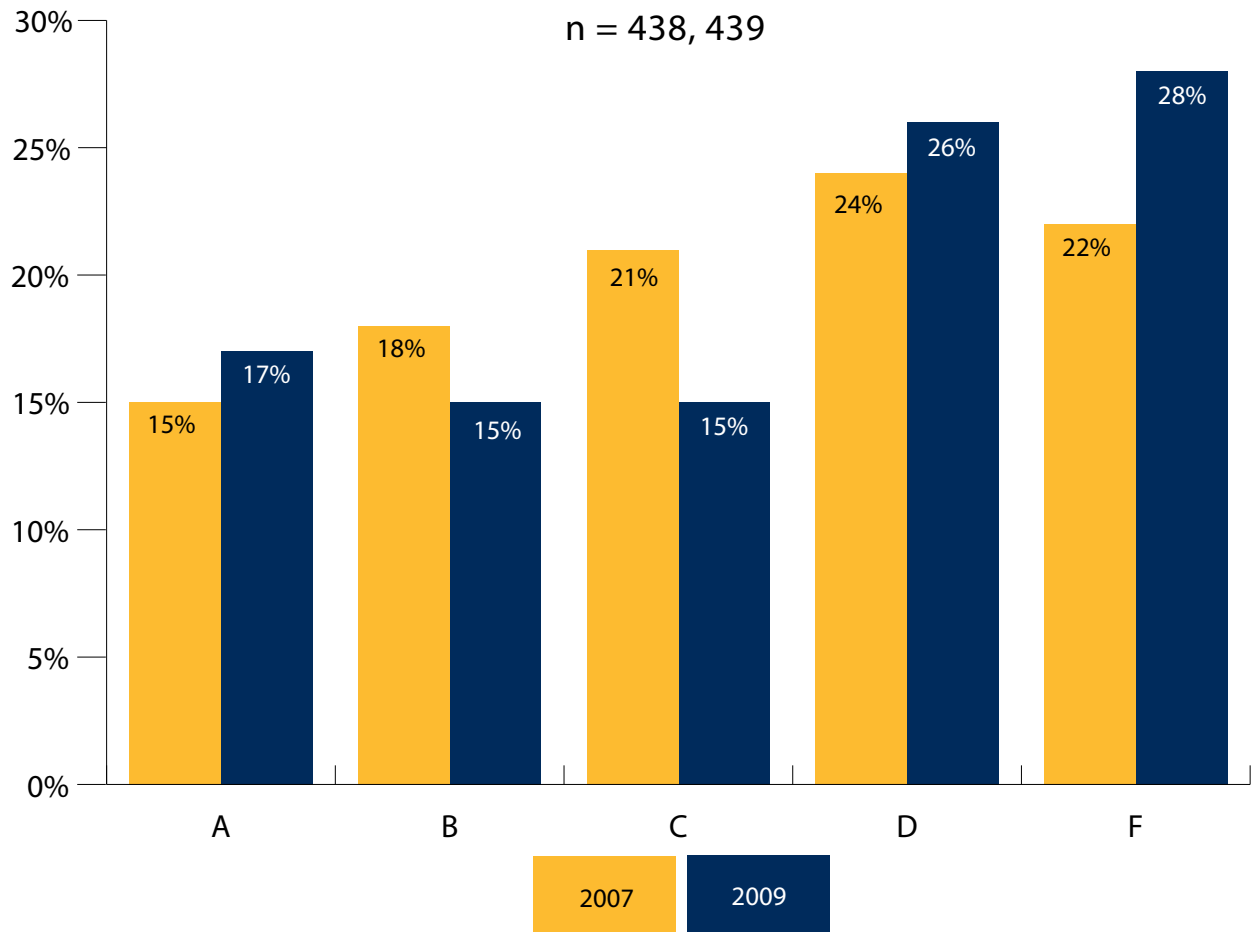


*% may not = 100 due to rounding



Despite a Slight Increase in Award Winners, The Quality of House Member Sites Is Declining

HOUSE AND SENATE WEB SITE GRADES IN 2007 AND 2009



With 439 of the 620 total sites, House Members comprise the largest segment of sites evaluated by CMF. They scored lower when compared to Senate Members, committees, and leadership sites. More than half (54%) of House Member Web sites scored a “D” or “F”. At the same time, the number of award-winning sites (“A”s) slightly increased.

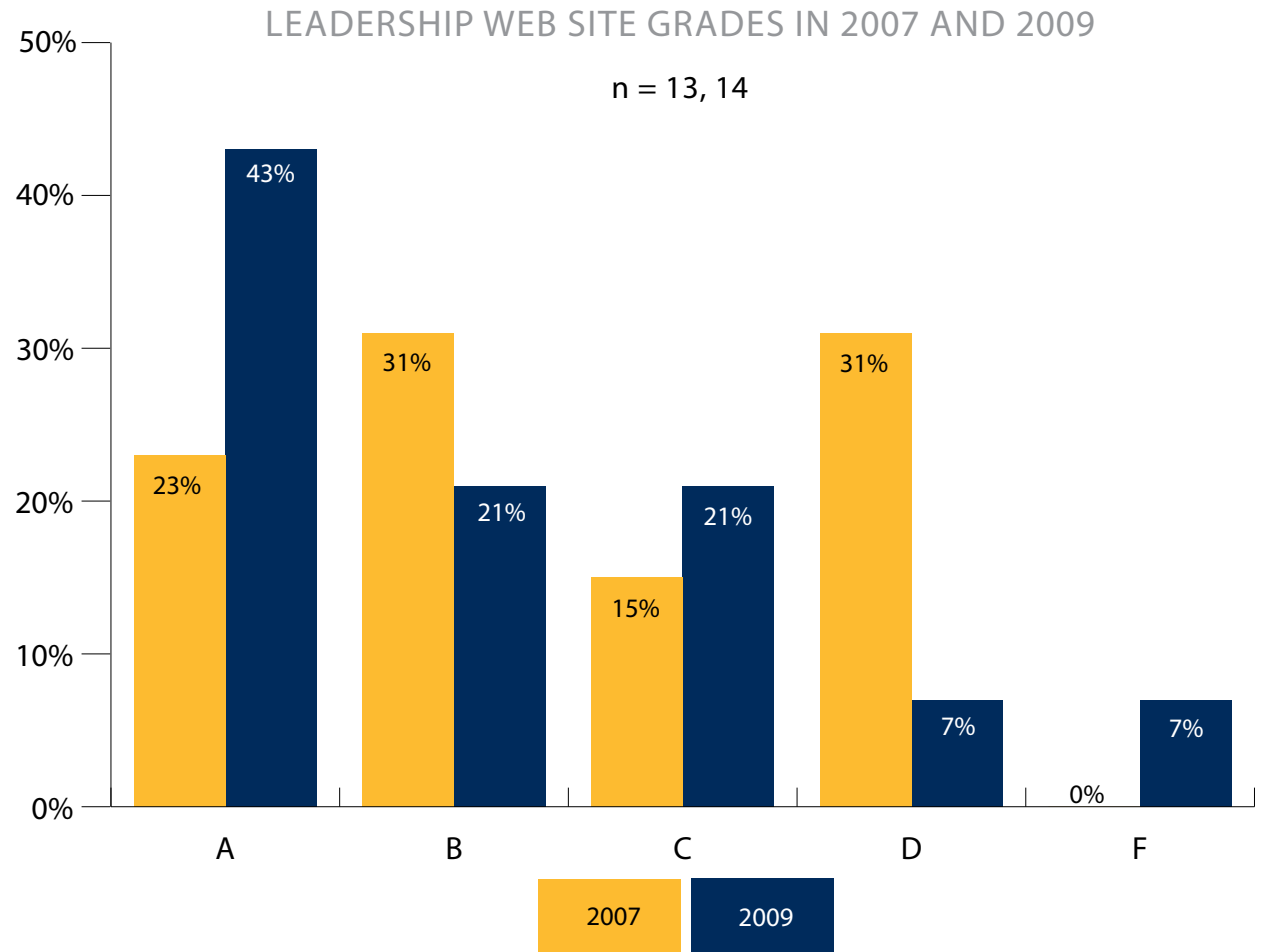
*% may not = 100 due to rounding



The Number of Award-Winning Leadership Sites Nearly Doubled

House and Senate leadership Web sites have improved since the last Congress. Six of the 14 leadership sites won awards in 2009, compared to 3 of 13 in 2007.

*% may not = 100 due to rounding





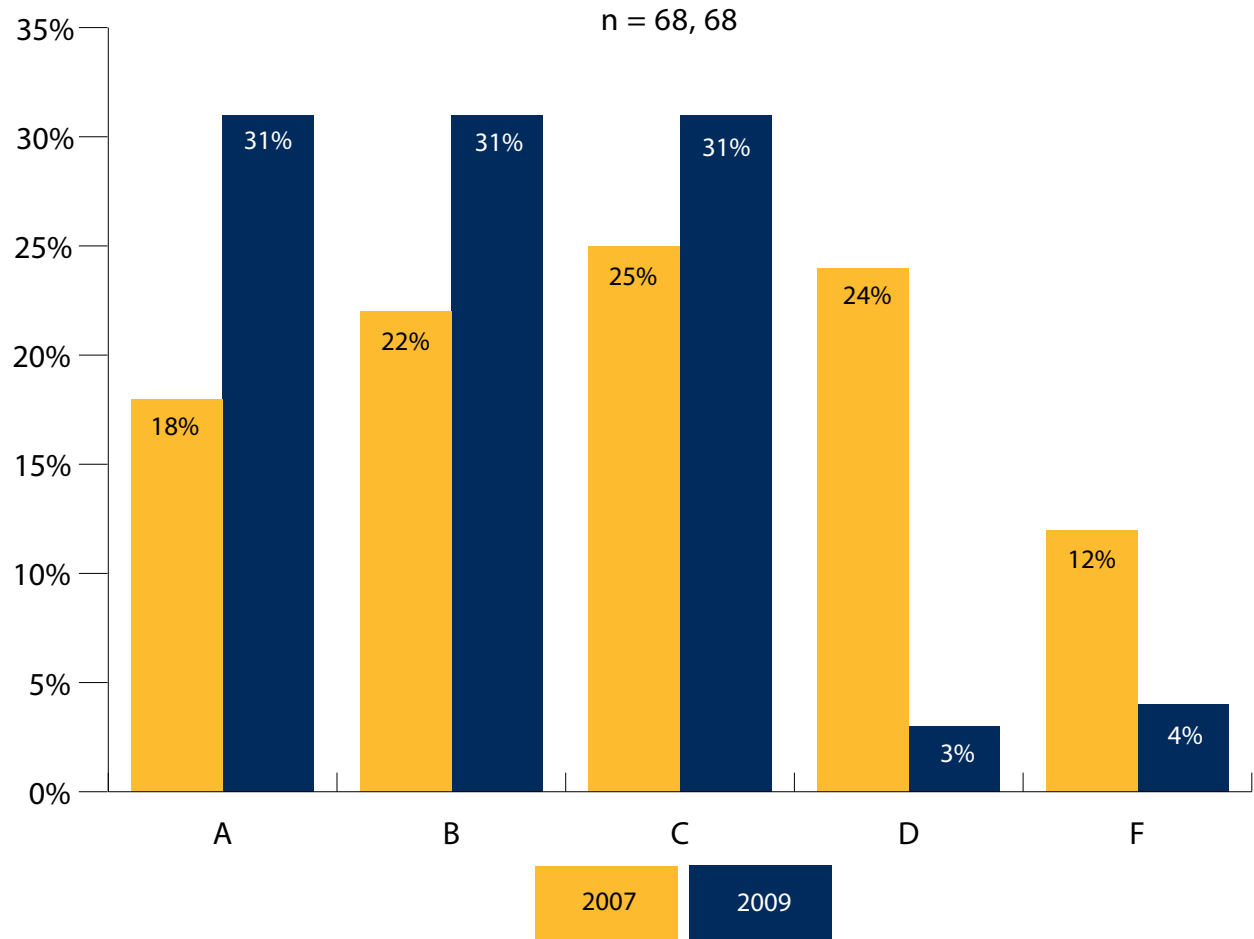
Committee Web Sites Showed The Most Dramatic Improvement

COMMITTEE WEB SITE GRADES IN 2007 AND 2009

The vast majority of committee Web sites in the House and Senate (93%) scored a "C" or better.

The proportion of "D"s and "F"s dropped from 36% to 7%.

This is primarily due to the improvement of minority (Republican) Web sites (see next slide).



*% may not = 100 due to rounding

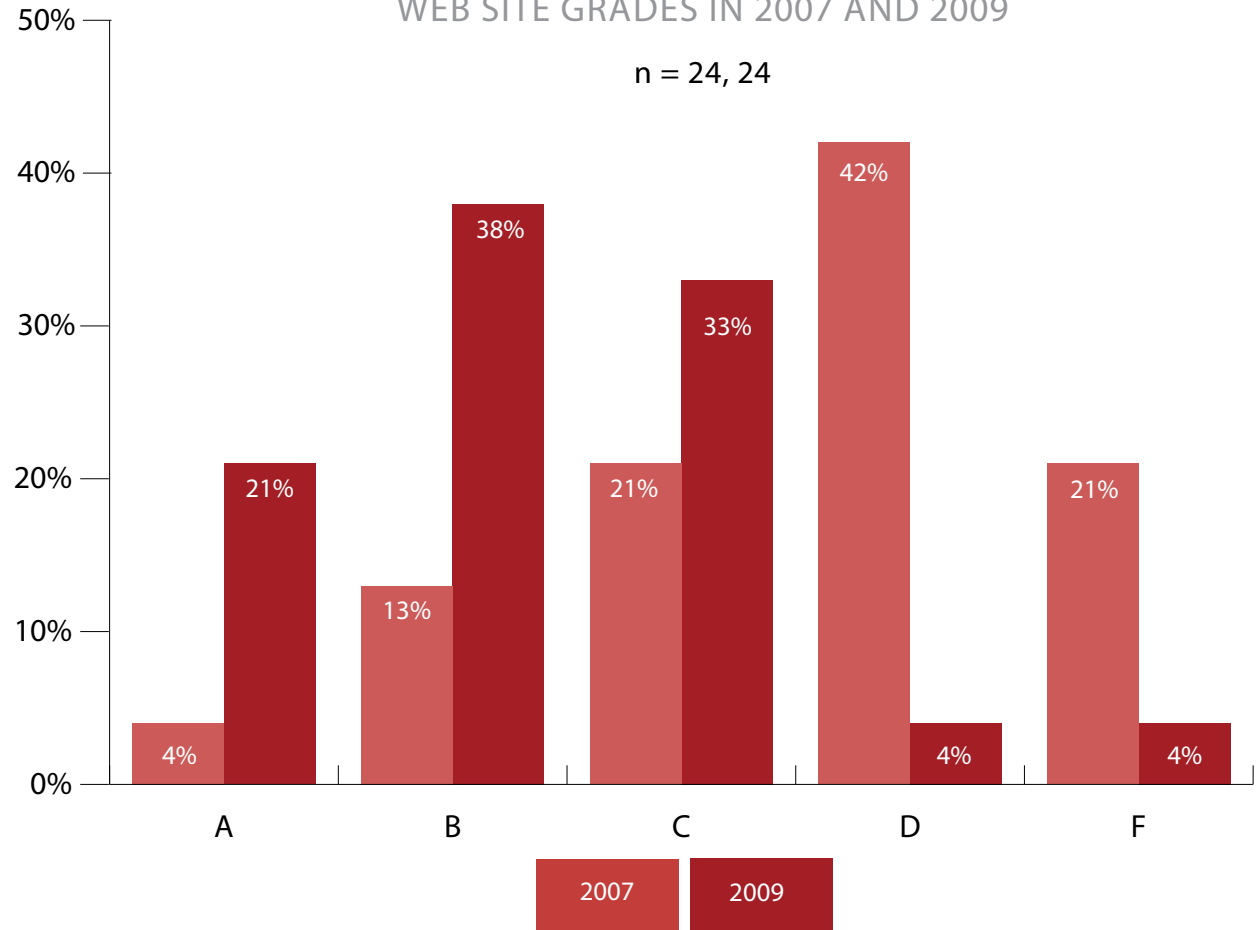
Republican Committee Sites Have Greatly Improved

The 2007 congressional Web site evaluations took place shortly after control of both chambers switched.

Since then, the proportion of minority (Republican) committee Web sites in the House and Senate that scored a "D" or "F" dropped from 63% to 8%, while the percentages scoring an "A", "B", or "C" rose dramatically.

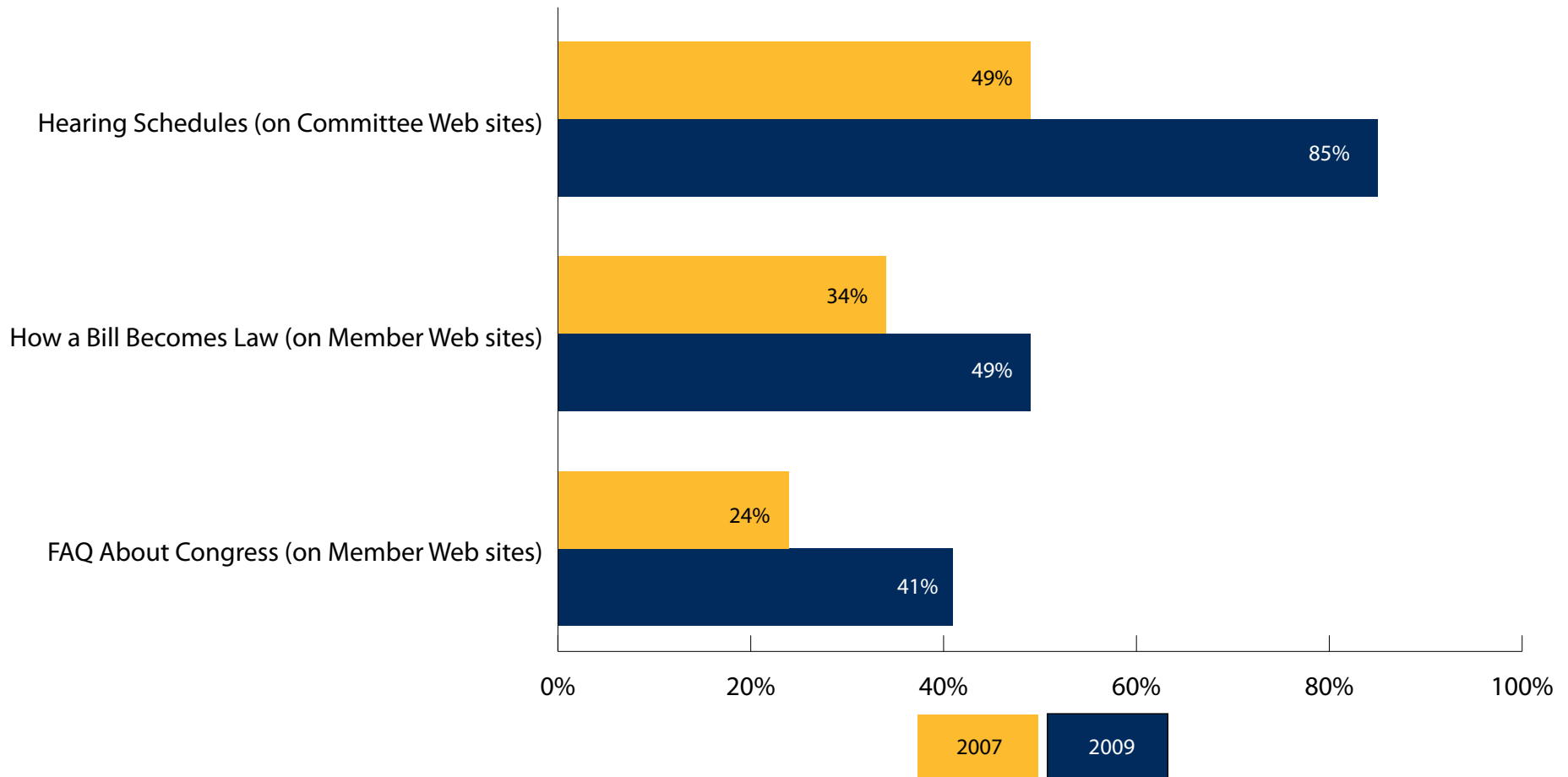
*% may not = 100 due to rounding

MINORITY (REPUBLICAN) COMMITTEE WEB SITE GRADES IN 2007 AND 2009

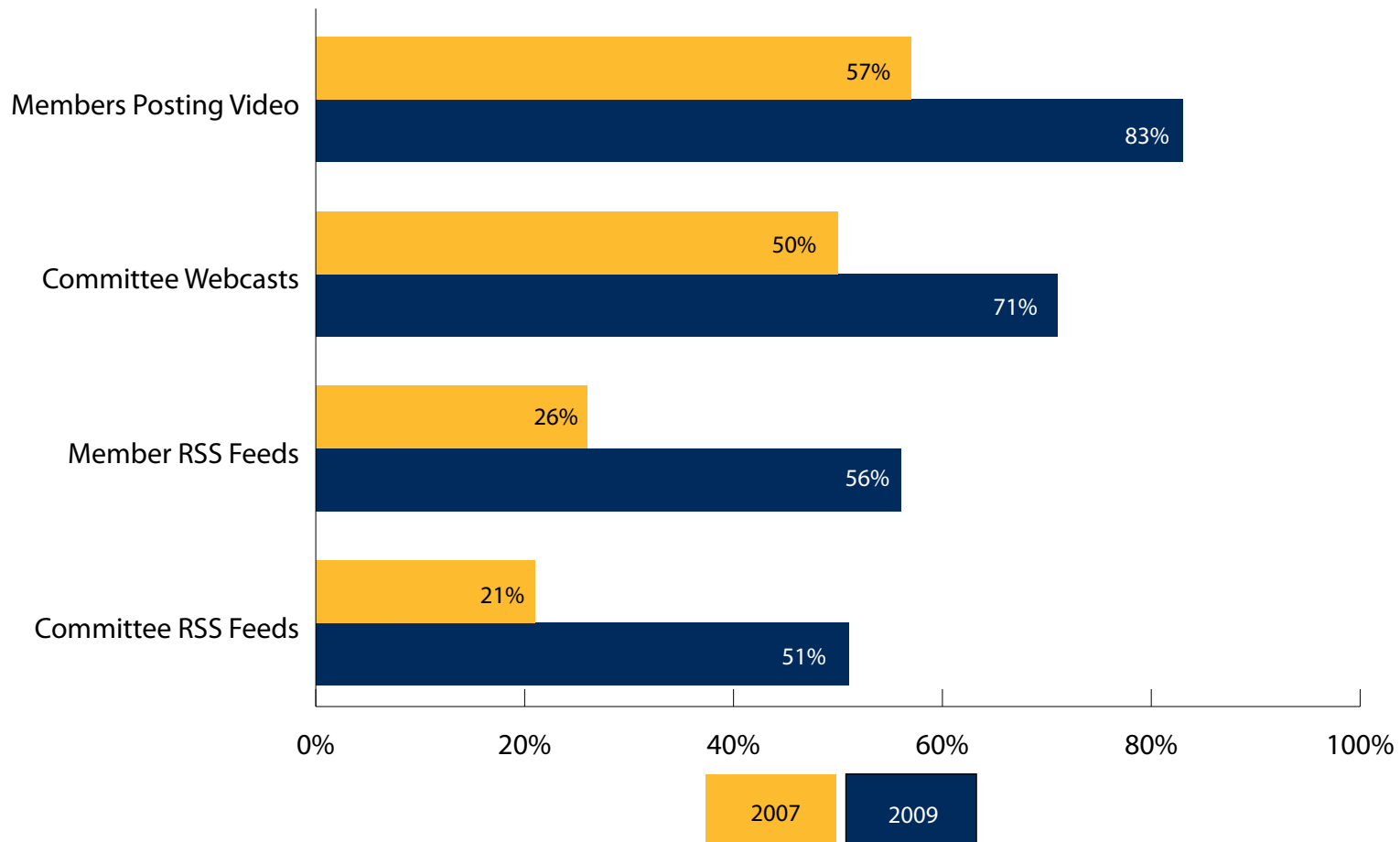




More Sites Are Posting Information About How Congress Works



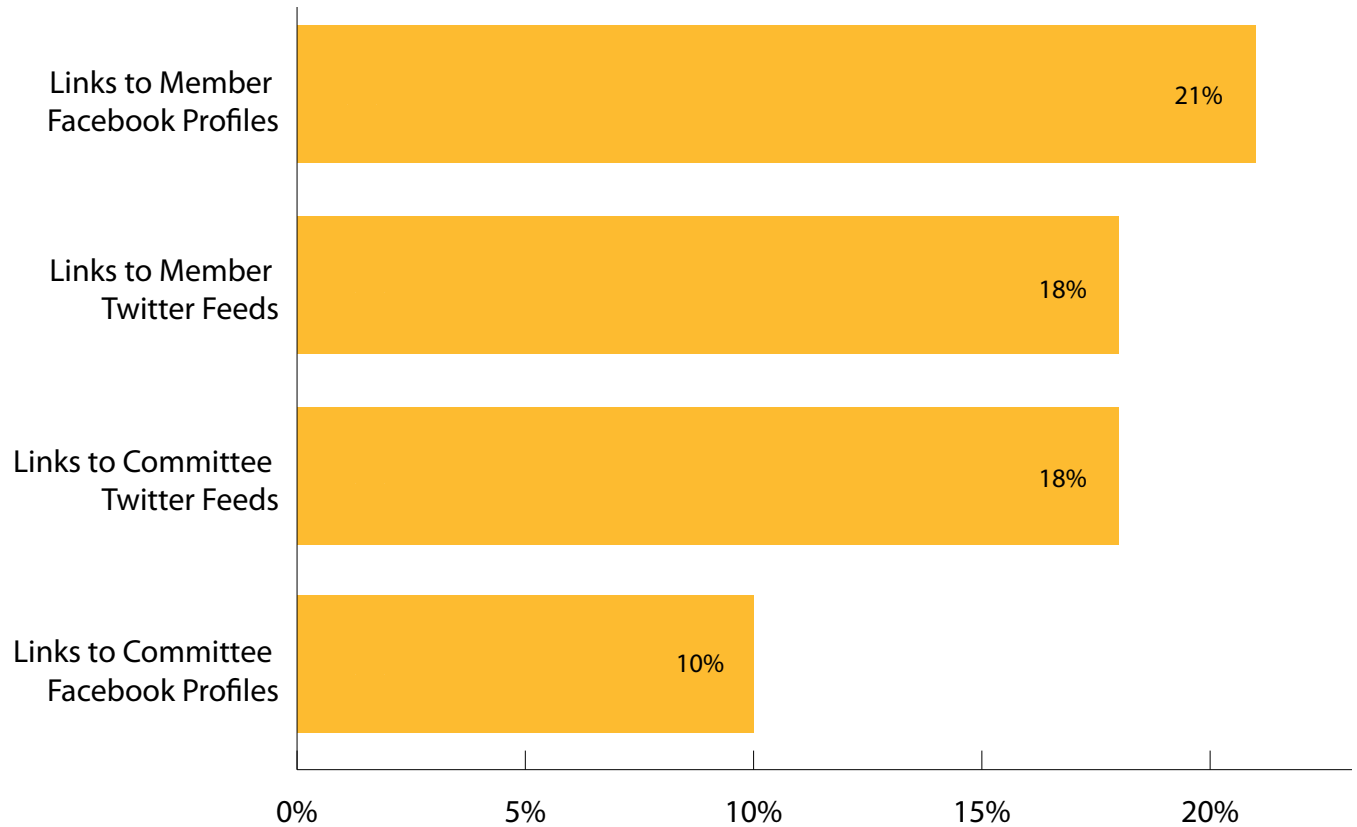
Use of Video and RSS Feeds Is Becoming Widespread





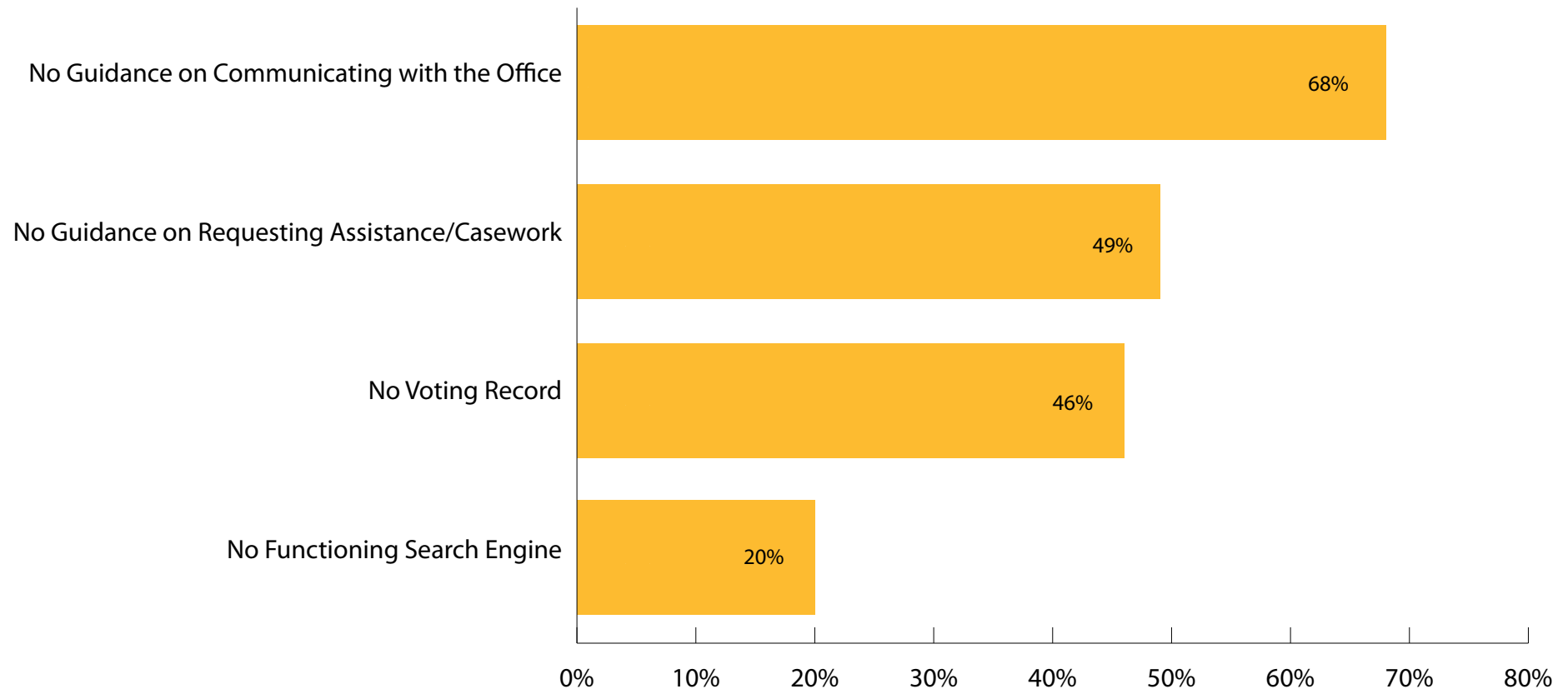
Links to Twitter and Facebook Sites Are Not Widespread, But Are Growing

In our 2007 evaluations, the adoption of social media by congressional Web sites wasn't widespread enough to warrant analysis. By the time of our 2009 evaluations, congressional rules were clarified regarding Members' use of social media, and an appreciable number of congressional offices provided links to their Twitter and Facebook pages from their official Web sites.





Too Many Member Sites Don't Have Basic Features and Information





Want To Know More?

ADDITIONAL SLIDESHOWS & INFORMATION

- [Overview of the Gold Mouse Project](#)
- [Methodology](#)
- [Mouse Award Winners](#)

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership For A More Perfect Union envisions a United States where Members of Congress and citizens have a vibrant, active, and engaged relationship characterized by mutual respect, a sense of shared purpose, and a dedication to the tenets of representative democracy.

We seek to further our nation's progress toward "a more perfect union" by fostering the genuine and effective exchange of ideas between Members of Congress and citizens. The Partnership seeks to accomplish this mission by conducting research and education, promoting best practices, and creating innovative tools for everyone with a stake in our government.

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