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## ***The Harris Poll*® Annual Confidence Index Rises 10 Points**

*Those saying they have great deal of confidence in White House rises 21 points*

**ROCHESTER, N.Y. – March 5, 2009** – Over the past four decades, *The Harris Poll* has measured the confidence, or lack of confidence, in the leaders of major institutions. This year's survey finds that confidence has increased substantially since last year and fourteen of the sixteen items listed show a rise in confidence. Overall, **The Harris Poll Confidence Index** has risen ten points this year.

These are the results of *The Harris Poll* of 1,010 adults surveyed by telephone between February 10 and 15, 2009.

As a result of the rise in confidence levels, **The Harris Poll Confidence Index** had risen very sharply from 44 in 2008 to 54 this year. This is close to where it had been between 2004 and 2007.

### **Largest Changes from Last Year**

One institution stands out for having the largest increase. Those who have a "great deal of confidence" in the leadership in **the White House** have more than doubled from 15% last year to 36% this year – a gain of fully 21 points. While one might assume this type of jump would happen with every new president that has not been the case.

- In 2001, after George W. Bush was inaugurated, those saying they had a great deal of confidence in the leadership in the White House showed no change (25% in both 2000 and 2001);
- After Bill Clinton was sworn into office, those saying they had a great deal of confidence in the White House dropped slightly from 25% in 1992 to 23% in 1993;
- When George H. W. Bush became president, there was a slight increase from 17% saying they had a great deal of confidence in the leadership of the White House in 1988 to 20% in 1989;
- Ronald Reagan saw an increase when he became president as 18% of Americans in 1980 said they had a great deal of confidence in the leadership of the White House while 28% said the same in 1981, an increase of 10 points; and,
- Up until this year Jimmy Carter was the stand out as just 11% of Americans said they had a great deal of confidence in the White House leadership in 1976 but this number jumped 20 points to 31% in 1977.

This poll also shows substantial increases in the number of people who have a great deal of confidence in:

- **Major Educational Institutions**, up eight points from 32% to 40%;
- **The Military**, up seven points from 51% to 58%.

There are only two institutions which show a decrease in the number of people who have a great deal of confidence in them:

- **Wall Street**, down seven points from 11% to 4%;
- **Major Companies**, down three points from 14% to 11%.

### **Institutions at the Top and Bottom of the List**

In this year's survey the leaders of six institutions enjoy the most confidence:

- The military (58% have a great deal of confidence);
- Small business (48%);
- Major educational institutions (40%);
- The White House (36%)
- Medicine (34%);
- Organized religion (30%);

Leaders of the following institution engender the lowest levels of confidence:

- Wall Street (only 4% have a great deal of confidence);
- The Congress (9%);
- Law firms (11%);
- Major Companies (11%);
- The press (12%);

### **Republicans Have More Confidence in the Leaders of Some Institutions and Democrats Have More Confidence in Others**

Republicans tend to have more confidence than Democrats in the leaders of:

- The military (65% vs. 49%);
- Small business (58% vs. 39%);
- Organized religion (36% vs. 22%);
- Major companies (14% vs. 18%);

Democrats, on the other hand, tend to have more confidence in the leaders of:

- Major educational institutions (49% vs. 33%);
- The White House (36% vs. 14%);
- Television news (32% vs. 13%);
- Organized labor (19% vs. 9%);
- Congress (14% vs. 4%).

### **So What?**

Public perceptions of different institutions and their leaders matter. They influence behavior. Legislators and regulators are probably more likely to take a tougher line with unpopular institutions than with popular ones and this is seen by the recent Capitol Hill grilling of corporate leaders by Members of Congress. The media may also play up “bad” stories about the leaders of unpopular institutions. What is also clear is that President Obama has high approval numbers and people have confidence in him and his leadership. As a result, some Republicans are reluctant to directly challenge him.

Perceptions over time change and the rationale behind those changes are not always under a leaders’ control. At the moment, Americans have a sense of hope in the new president and this sense of optimism translates to 14 of 16 institutions seeing a rise in those having a great deal of confidence in their leaders. If the economic crisis continues until next year, that sense of optimism may erode along with confidence in the leaders of these institutions.

**TABLE 1**

**CURRENT CONFIDENCE IN LEADERS OF INSTITUTIONS (2009)**

“As far as people in charge of running (READ EACH ITEM) are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?”

Base: All Adults

	A Great Deal of Confidence	Only some Confidence	Hardly Any Confidence At All	Not Sure/Decline to Answer
	%	%	%	%
The military	58	31	10	2
Small business	48	43	6	3
Major educational institutions, such as colleges and universities	40	45	12	2
The White House	36	36	25	4
Medicine	34	44	19	3
The U.S. Supreme Court	30	50	19	2
Organized religion	28	43	25	4
Public schools	25	50	24	1
Television news	22	48	28	3
The courts and the justice system	19	55	24	2
Organized labor	16	48	33	4
The press	12	46	41	1
Major companies	11	52	35	3
Law firms	11	55	30	4
Congress	9	47	42	1
Wall Street	4	33	57	5

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

\* Less Than 0.5%

**TABLE 2A**

**CONFIDENCE IN LEADERS OF INSTITUTIONS (2001-2009)**

"As far as people in charge of running (READ EACH ITEM) are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?"

*Those saying "a great deal of confidence"*

Base: All Adults

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Change 2008- 2009
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
The military	44	71	62	62	47	47	46	51	58	+7
Small business	X	X	X	X	47	45	54	47	48	+1
Major educational institutions such as colleges and universities	35	33	31	37	39	38	37	32	40	+8
The White House	21	50	40	31	31	25	22	15	36	+21
Medicine	32	29	31	32	29	31	37	28	34	+6
Organized religion	25	23	19	27	27	30	27	25	30	+5
The U.S. Supreme Court	35	41	34	29	29	33	27	25	28	+3
Public schools	X	X	X	X	26	22	22	20	25	+5
Television news	24	24	21	17	16	19	20	16	22	+6
The courts and the justice system	X	X	X	X	22	21	21	16	19	+3
Organized labor	15	11	14	15	17	12	15	11	16	+5
The press	13	16	15	15	12	14	12	10	12	+2
Major companies	20	16	13	12	17	13	16	14	11	-3
Law firms	10	13	12	10	11	10	13	10	11	+1
Congress	18	22	20	13	16	10	10	8	9	+1
Wall Street	23	19	12	17	15	15	17	11	4	-7
The executive branch of the federal government	20	33	26	23	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>HARRIS INTERACTIVE CONFIDENCE INDEX*</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>+10</b>

X = Not asked; \* see methodology

**TABLE 2B**

**CONFIDENCE IN LEADERS OF INSTITUTIONS (1991-2000)**

"As far as people in charge of running (READ EACH ITEM) are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?"

*Those saying "a great deal of confidence"*

Base: All Adults

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
The military	X	50	57	39	43	47	37	44	54	48
Small business	47	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Major educational institutions such as colleges and universities	X	29	23	25	27	30	27	37	37	36
The U.S. Supreme Court	15	30	26	31	32	31	28	37	42	34
Medicine	23	22	22	23	26	29	29	38	39	44
Organized religion	21	11	X	X	24	X	20	25	27	26
The White House	X	25	23	18	13	15	15	20	22	21
Public schools	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The courts and the justice system	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Television news	9	12	23	20	16	21	18	26	23	20
Wall Street	14	13	13	15	13	17	17	18	30	30
The press	X	X	15	13	11	14	11	14	15	13
Major companies	20	10	16	19	21	21	18	21	23	28
Organized labor	21	11	X	X	8	X	9	13	15	15
Congress	9	16	12	8	10	10	11	12	12	15
Law firms	X	13	11	8	9	11	7	11	10	12
The executive branch of the federal government	X	X	15	12	9	12	12	17	17	18
<b>HARRIS INTERACTIVE CONFIDENCE INDEX*</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>59</b>

X = Not asked; \* see methodology

**TABLE 2C**

**CONFIDENCE IN LEADERS OF INSTITUTIONS (1981-1990)**

"As far as people in charge of running (READ EACH ITEM) are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?"

*Those saying "a great deal of confidence"*

Base: All Adults

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Small business	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The military	28	31	35	45	32	36	35	33	32	43
Major educational institutions such as colleges & universities	34	30	36	40	35	34	36	34	32	35
The White House	28	20	23	42	30	19	23	17	20	14
The U.S. Supreme Court	29	25	33	35	28	32	30	32	28	32
Medicine	37	32	35	43	39	33	36	40	30	35
Organized religion	22	20	22	24	21	22	16	17	16	20
Public Schools	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The courts and justice system	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Major companies	16	18	18	19	17	16	21	19	16	9
Organized labor	12	8	10	12	13	11	11	13	10	18
Congress	16	13	20	28	16	21	20	15	16	14
Television news	24	24	24	28	23	27	29	28	25	27
Wall Street	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	21
The press	16	14	19	18	16	19	19	18	18	12
Law firms	X	X	12	17	12	14	15	13	X	X
The executive branch of the federal government	24	X	X	X	19	18	19	16	17	14
<b>HARRIS INTERACTIVE CONFIDENCE INDEX*</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>50</b>

X = Not asked; \* see methodology

**TABLE 2D**  
**CONFIDENCE IN LEADERS OF INSTITUTIONS (1966-1980)**

"As far as people in charge of running (READ EACH ITEM) are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?"

*Those saying "a great deal of confidence"*

Base: All Adults

	1966	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
The military	61	27	35	40	33	24	23	27	29	29	28
Small business	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Major educational institutions such as colleges & universities	61	37	33	44	40	36	31	37	41	33	36
The U.S. Supreme Court	50	23	28	33	40	28	22	29	29	28	27
Medicine	73	61	48	57	50	43	42	43	42	30	34
Organized religion	41	27	30	36	32	32	24	29	24	20	22
The White House	X	X	X	18	28	X	11	31	14	15	18
Public schools	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The courts and justice system	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Television news	X	X	X	41	31	35	28	28	35	37	29
Wall Street	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12
The press	29	18	18	30	25	26	20	18	23	28	19
Major companies	55	27	27	29	21	19	16	20	22	18	16
Organized labor	22	14	15	20	18	14	10	14	15	10	14
Congress	42	19	21	X	18	13	9	17	10	18	18
Law firms	X	X	X	24	18	16	12	14	18	16	13
The executive branch of the federal government	41	23	27	19	28	13	11	23	14	17	17
<b>HARRIS INTERACTIVE CONFIDENCE INDEX*</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>49</b>

X = Not asked; \* see methodology

**TABLE 3**  
**CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS; AVERAGE FOR INDEX IN EACH DECADE**

	1960s		1970s		1980s		1990s		2000s	
					1980	49	1990	50	2000	59
			1971	58	1981	51	1991	45	2001	55
			1972	59	1982	46	1992	45	2002	65
			1973	69	1983	53	1993	47	2003*	57
			1974	64	1984	63	1994	43	2004	55
			1975	55	1985	51	1995	43	2005	53
	1966	100	1976	44	1986	51	1996	47	2006	52
			1977	55	1987	53	1997	42	2007	53
			1978	55	1988	50	1998	54	2008	44
			1979	50	1989	46	1999	60	2009	54
<b>AVERAGE FOR DECADE</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>51</b>		<b>48</b>		<b>55</b>	

\*Completed in December 2002

**TABLE 4**  
**CONFIDENCE LEVELS – BY PARTY**

“As far as people in charge of running... are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?”

*Those saying “a great deal of confidence”*

Base: All Adults

	Total	Party ID		
		Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%
The military	58	<b>65</b>	49	62
Small business	48	<b>58</b>	39	50
Major educational institutions, such as colleges and universities	40	33	<b>49</b>	40
The White House	36	14	<b>55</b>	36
Medicine	34	33	35	34
The U.S. Supreme Court	30	28	30	32
Organized religion	28	<b>36</b>	22	28
Public schools	25	25	27	22
Television news	22	13	<b>32</b>	20
The courts and the justice system	19	16	20	21
Organized labor	16	9	<b>19</b>	16
The press	12	9	12	17
Major companies	11	<b>14</b>	8	8
Law firms	11	8	<b>15</b>	6
Congress	9	4	<b>14</b>	7
Wall Street	4	4	3	5

**Methodology**

The Harris Poll® was conducted by telephone within the United States between February 10 and 15, 2009 among a nationwide cross section of 1,010 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region, number of adults in the household, size of place (urbanicity), and number of phone lines voice/telephone lines in the household were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

The Harris Interactive Confidence in Leadership Index measures changes in the public’s confidence in various institutions. It is derived in the following manner:

1. The index is based on the mean value of the items asked.
2. All items have equal weight.
3. The year 1966, the first year the items were asked, was set as a reference year for the index and assigned a score of 100.

4. In order to yield a score of 100 in 1966, the mean value of the original 10 items was multiplied by a factor of 2.11. This same factor was then applied to the mean score in subsequent years, as long as the same items were asked.
5. Whenever a new item is added, the multiplication factor is changed so that the new item has no effect on that year's score. The new factor is derived by calculating the index with and without the new item(s), taking the ratio of the two scores, and multiplying this ratio by the old factor. (The current factor is 2.14).
6. In years when an item included in a previous year is not asked, it is assumed for calculation purposes that no change has occurred in that item since the last time it was asked.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling are subject to, multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.***

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### **About Harris Interactive**

Harris Interactive is a global leader in custom market research. With a long and rich history in multimodal research, powered by our science and technology, we assist clients in achieving business results. Harris Interactive serves clients globally through our North American, European and Asian offices and a network of independent market research firms. For more information, please visit [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com).

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