
Three in Five Americans Give President Obama's Job Performance Positive Ratings

Just under half say economy most important issue

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – May 21, 2009 – While the first hundred days have passed, the honeymoon does not appear to be over with the American public for Barack Obama. Three in five Americans (59%) give President Obama positive job ratings while two in five (41%) give him negative job ratings. This is almost unchanged since last month when 58% gave him positive ratings and 42% gave him negative ones.

Additionally, these are some of the findings of The Harris Poll, a new nationwide survey of 2,681 U.S. adults surveyed online between May 11 and 18, 2009 by Harris Interactive:

- It is not surprising that Democrats give President Obama overwhelmingly positive job ratings in comparison to Republicans (88% vs. 27%). Among Independents his support is also very strong with 57% giving his job so far positive ratings;
- There is a small gender gap emerging. While a majority of men give President Obama positive ratings (54%), almost two-thirds of women feel the same (63%);
- Two-thirds of Easterners (68%), three in five Westerners (62%) and Midwesterners (61%) give President Obama positive ratings. Southerners are divided – half (50%) give the president positive ratings while half (50%) give him negative ratings;
- Attitudes on the direction of the country still continue to move slowly upwards. In April 58% of adults believed that the country was going off on the wrong track, while 42% say it was going in the right direction. Now, one month later 44% believe the country is going in the right direction while 56% say it is going off on the wrong track; and,
- Just under half of Americans (45%) say the economy is one of the two most important issues for the government to address followed by three in ten who say health care (31%), two in ten (19%) say it is employment/jobs and 11% say budget/government spending issues. Less than one in ten Americans (8%) say the war is one of the most important issues, the lowest it has been since June of 2003.

So What?

Not surprisingly, Americans still say the most important issue the government needs to address is the economy. They say it by overwhelming numbers, especially when you consider those saying health care are most likely also speaking to the cost of healthcare. But they also approve of the job President Obama is currently doing and more U.S. adults are saying that the country is heading into the right direction. It may be when it comes to blaming someone for the economic crisis the President has managed to escape being the one who gets the blame. It most probably is that most Americans

understand that this is a situation he inherited and, at least for now, he is perceived as saying and/or doing the right things.

**TABLE 1
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING - TREND**

"How would you rate the overall job President Barack Obama is doing?"

Base: All adults

	March	April	May
	%	%	%
POSITIVE	55	58	59
Excellent	17	18	17
Pretty good	38	40	42
NEGATIVE	45	42	41
Only fair	27	26	25
Poor	18	15	16

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

**TABLE 2
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING**

"How would you rate the overall job President Barack Obama is doing?"

Base: All adults

	Total	Gender		Political Party		
		Men	Women	Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
POSITIVE	59	54	63	27	88	57
Excellent	17	17	18	2	34	11
Pretty good	42	37	46	24	54	46
NEGATIVE	41	46	37	73	12	43
Only fair	25	28	23	41	10	30
Poor	16	17	14	33	2	14

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

**TABLE 3
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING – BY GENERATION AND REGION**

"How would you rate the overall job President Barack Obama is doing?"

Base: All adults

	Total	Region				Generation			
		East	Midwest	South	West	Echo Boomers (18-32)	Gen X (33-44)	Baby Boomers (45-63)	Matures (64+)
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
POSITIVE	59	68	61	50	62	65	57	55	59
Excellent	17	26	13	15	17	18	16	17	18
Pretty good	42	42	48	35	45	46	41	38	42
NEGATIVE	41	32	39	50	38	35	43	45	41
Only fair	25	22	25	30	23	24	27	28	20
Poor	16	10	14	20	15	11	16	17	20

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

TABLE 4
RIGHT DIRECTION OR WRONG TRACK

"Generally speaking, would you say things in the country are going in the right direction or have they pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?"

Base: All adults

	TREND	Right Direction	Wrong Track
		%	%
2009	May	44	56
	April	42	58
	March	32	68
	January	19	72
2008	October	11	83
	September	16	77
	June	14	80
	April	15	75
	February	23	69
2007	December	18	74
	February	29	62
2006	May	24	69
	February	32	59
2005	November	27	68
	January	46	48
2004	September	38	57
	June	35	59
2003	December	35	57
	June	44	51
2002	December	36	57
	June	46	48
2001	December	65	32
	June	43	52
2000	October	50	41
	June	40	51
1999	June	37	55
	March	47	45
1998	December	43	51
	June	48	44
1997	December	39	56
	April	36	55
1996	December	38	50
	June	29	64
1995	December	26	62
	June	24	65
1994	December	29	63
	June	28	65
1993	June	21	70
	March	39	50
1992	June	12	81
	January	20	75
1991	December	17	75
	January	58	32
1990	October	20	73
	February	48	43

Note: Prior to March, 2009 this question was asked via telephone

TABLE 5
MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS

"What do you think are the two most important issues for the government to address?"

Spontaneous, unprompted replies

Base: All Adults

	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	07	08	08	09	09	09
	May	Jan	Feb	Aug	Dec	Dec	June	Oct	Aug	June	Oct	Feb	Oct	Jan	Mar.	May
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
The economy (non-specific)	8	9	7	5	32	34	25	28	19	14	13	41	64	59	50	45
Healthcare (not Medicare)	10	11	12	15	5	10	14	18	11	12	25	22	22	16	25	31
Employment/jobs	5	3	4	4	7	8	8	10	3	7	5	6	5	20	21	19
Budget/Government spending	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	5	6	5	2	6	6	11
(The) war	X	X	X	X	12	18	8	35	41	27	24	26	14	15	9	8
Education	15	14	21	25	12	11	13	7	8	7	6	4	6	5	5	6
Taxes	14	16	12	13	6	5	11	8	5	4	3	6	6	5	4	5
Immigration	2	1	*	1	1	1	2	2	3	20	12	12	3	2	4	5
Regulating banking/financial services industries	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	*	1	8	5
Environment	3	2	3	3	1	3	2	1	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	4
National security	X	X	2	2	6	3	6	5	2	2	2	5	5	4	2	4
Housing	X	X	X	X	X	1	1	*	*	1	2	2	2	3	6	3
Iraq	*	*	1	X	X	11	3	9	6	8	14	14	7	4	2	3
Domestic/social issues (non-specific)	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	1	2	1	3
Social security	6	6	24	16	3	2	4	4	10	5	3	4	3	1	1	3
Foreign policy (non-specific)	3	5	4	3	2	4	2	3	2	2	4	2	2	3	3	3
Terrorism	X	X	X	X	22	17	11	7	7	4	4	3	3	2	4	3
Military/defense	2	2	2	4	4	1	5	3	1	4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Downsizing government	X	X	X	1	*	X	X	1	*	1	1	1	*	1	1	2
Gas and oil prices	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	1	10	8	2	1	1	2	1	2
Energy	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	1	4	4	1	1	4	2	3	2
Bailouts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	*	1	3	2
Homeland/domestic security/public safety	X	X	X	X	8	9	3	6	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1
Ethics in government	*	*	*	*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Honesty/Integrity/Moral Values	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Abortion	2	2	2	6	1	1	1	4	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Judicial/Legal Issues	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	*	2	1	1	1	*	*	1	1
(Programs for) the poor/ poverty	3	2	2	3	1	2	3	*	4	4	4	4	*	1	1	1
Human/civil/women's rights	2	1	*	1	1	1	*	1	1	1	2	*	*	*	*	1
Same sex rights	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	1	2	*	*	*	*	1	1
Crime/violence	19	13	8	10	1	2	3	1	3	2	2	1	1	2	*	1
Drugs	8	6	2	5	2	3	3	*	2	1	3	1	*	1	1	*
Inflation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	2	3	*	*	1	1	*
Medicare	4	5	5	6	1	1	4	3	2	1	3	1	2	1	*	*
Middle East peace process between Palestinians and Israel	X	X	X	X	2	2	2	*	1	*	*	*	1	1	*	*
Peace/world peace/nuclear arms	1	3	3	1	2	2	3	*	1	1	2	1	*	1	*	*
Welfare	14	8	4	2	1	1	3	*	3	1	2	1	*	1	*	*
Religion (decline of)	*	1	*	1	2	1	1	1	*	1	1	1	*	1	*	*
Budget deficit/National debt	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	*	3	*
Homelessness	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	*	1	1	3	2	*	1	*	*
Programs for the elderly (not Medicare/Social Security)	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	*	*	*	1	1	1	*	*	*
Family values (decline of)	2	1	2	1	*	*	1	1	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	*
Obama/president	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	*	*	*	*	*
Second Amendment (right to bear arms)	X	*	*	*	*	X	*	*	*	*	*	1	X	*	*	*
AIDS	*	1	X	*	*	*	2	X	*	*	1	*	X	*	*	X
Recession/Depression	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	*	2	X

Other ¹	8	19	2	19	3	8	8	8	1	6	5	4	15	2	5	5
Not sure/refused/no issue	9	12	16	18	11	10	12	9	8	6	8	3	4	4	4	3

* = Less than 0.5%, X = Not mentioned as specific issue

¹ Including prescription drug prices, credit problems, trade, disability, corporate scandals, youth and government (other)

Note: Prior to March, 2009, this question was asked via telephone

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States May 11 and 18, 2009 among 2,681 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

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.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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

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