
Obama's Team Do Little to Boost Administration's Popularity

Clinton and Gates help a little, but Biden and Geithner do not

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – June 1, 2009 – The latest Harris Poll finds that leading members of President Obama's team get generally mediocre or weak job ratings and do little to lift the popularity of the administration. Furthermore, many people are unfamiliar even with key members of the cabinet, while House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has many more critics than admirers.

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.

One striking finding is how few people are familiar with key players in Washington. Less than half of adults are familiar enough with Defense Secretary Robert Gates (43%), Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner (41%), and Federal Chairman Ben Bernanke (43%) to have any opinions of them. Only Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (83%), Vice President Joe Biden (69%), and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (66%) of those listed are known to most people. In so far as any of the leaders measured are popular, Hillary Clinton and Bob Gates have more positive than negative ratings.

Leaders Ratings

The ratings of individual leaders in the government vary greatly.

- **Hillary Clinton** is rated 50% positive and 33% negative with 17% not familiar enough with her to have an opinion.
- **Joe Biden** has slightly higher negative (36%) than positive (32%) ratings.
- **Robert Gates'** ratings are almost two-to-one positive (28% and 15%), but most people (57%) don't have an opinion about him.
- **Nancy Pelosi** has by far the worst ratings of those measured, more than two-to-one negative (21% positive, 45% negative).
- **Tim Geithner** has more negative (26%) than positive (16%) ratings but most people (59%) don't have an opinion about him.
- **Ben Bernanke** is also unfamiliar to most people (57%) and receives somewhat more negative (24%) than positive (19%) ratings.

Congressional Ratings

The Congress is as usual deeply unpopular, as are both congressional Democrats and Republicans. The Congress as a whole has more than twice as many critics (69%) than admirers (31%). While many people are not familiar enough with the Democrats and Republicans in Congress to have any opinion about them, those who do are strongly

negative – congressional Democrats by 39% to 25%, and congressional Republicans by an even larger 45% to 14%.

So What?

It is evident that the popularity of this administration is strongly dependent on the president’s positive ratings. None of his colleagues do much to help him politically. Some commentators have written about the supposed strength of his team and his cabinet members. The public does not share this enthusiasm. And Nancy Pelosi is a political liability.

However, the public’s antipathy toward the Republicans in Congress means that in battles with the White House the Republicans start with a big disadvantage.

**TABLE 1
FAMILIARITY OF SENIOR CABINET MEMBERS, CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND PARTIES IN CONGRESS**

“Are you familiar enough with each of the following to have an opinion regarding them?”

Base: All adults

	FAMILIAR		
	March	April	May
	%	%	%
Secretary of State Hillary Clinton	85	83	83
Vice President Joe Biden	70	67	69
House Speaker Nancy Pelosi	68	65	66
Democrats in Congress	66	64	64
Republicans in Congress	62	61	59
Defense Secretary Robert Gates	40	44	43
Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke	42	43	43
Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner	35	44	41

TABLE 2
CONGRESS' OVERALL JOB RATING

"How would you rate the overall job the Congress is doing?"

Base: All adults

	TREND	Positive*	Negative**
		%	%
2009	May	31	69
	April	29	71
	March	29	71
2008	October	10	86
	September	16	81
	August	18	77
	June	13	83
	April	17	77
	February	20	76
2007	December	17	79
	October	20	77
	September	22	74
	July	24	72
	April	27	69
	February	33	62
2006	September	24	73
	May	18	80
	February	25	71
	January	25	72

*Positive = excellent or pretty good. **Negative = only fair or poor.

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

TABLE 3
RATINGS OF SENIOR CABINET MEMBERS, CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND PARTIES IN CONGRESS

"How would you rate the overall job each of the following are doing?"

Base: All adults

	Positive*	Excellent	Pretty Good	Negative**	Only Fair	Poor	Not Familiar
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Secretary of State Hillary Clinton	50	14	36	33	21	12	17
Vice President Joe Biden	32	7	25	36	21	15	31
Defense Secretary Robert Gates	28	7	21	15	11	4	57
Democrats in Congress	25	4	21	39	16	23	36
House Speaker Nancy Pelosi	21	4	17	45	15	30	34
Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke	19	4	16	24	16	7	57
Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner	16	4	11	26	14	12	59
Republicans in Congress	14	3	11	45	24	22	41

*Positive = excellent or pretty good **Negative = only fair or poor

TABLE 4
RATING OF VICE-PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

How would you rate the job Vice-President Joe Biden is doing?"

Base: All adults

		Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
May	%	32	36	31
April	%	34	32	33
March	%	35	35	30

*Excellent or pretty good. **Only fair or poor.

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

TABLE 5
RATING OF SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON

How would you rate the job Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is doing?"

Base: All adults

		Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
May	%	50	33	17
April	%	51	32	17
March	%	49	36	15

*Excellent or pretty good. **Only fair or poor.

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

TABLE 6
RATING OF DEFENSE SECRETARY ROBERT GATES

How would you rate the job Defense Secretary Robert Gates is doing?"

Base: All adults

		Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
May	%	28	15	57
April	%	30	14	56
March	%	27	13	60

*Excellent or pretty good. **Only fair or poor.

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

TABLE 7
RATING OF TREASURY SECRETARY TIM GEITHNER

How would you rate the job Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner is doing?"

Base: All adults

		Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
May	%	16	26	59
April	%	18	26	56
March	%	11	24	65

*Excellent or pretty good. **Only fair or poor.

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

TABLE 8
RATING OF HOUSE SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI

How would you rate the job House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is doing?"

Base: All adults

		Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
May	%	21	45	34
April	%	21	44	35
March	%	23	45	32

*Excellent or pretty good. **Only fair or poor.

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

TABLE 9
RATING OF FEDERAL RESERVE CHAIRMAN BEN BERNANKE

How would you rate the job Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke is doing?"

Base: All adults

		Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
May	%	19	24	57
April	%	20	23	57
March	%	14	28	58

*Excellent or pretty good. **Only fair or poor.

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

TABLE 10
RATING OF DEMOCRATS IN CONGRESS

How would you rate the job the Democrats in Congress are doing?"

Base: All adults

		Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
May	%	25	39	36
April	%	22	42	36
March	%	25	41	34

*Excellent or pretty good. **Only fair or poor.

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

TABLE 11
RATING OF REPUBLICANS IN CONGRESS

How would you rate the job the Republicans in Congress are doing?"

Base: All adults

		Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
May	%	14	45	41
April	%	14	48	39
March	%	15	47	38

*Excellent or pretty good. **Only fair or poor.

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

Methodology

The 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.

J36305
Q1220, 1225, 1230

The Harris Poll® #55, June 1, 2009

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Harris Interactive Inc. 06/09