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## Two-thirds of Americans Give Michelle Obama Positive Ratings

*Three-quarters believe her influence on President's decisions is good*

**ROCHESTER, N.Y. – July 7, 2009** – While the President's approval rating continues to be high (The Harris Poll, June 22, 2009) there is bound to be an occasional discussion at the Obama family dinner table about how the president's ratings are eclipsed by those of his wife. Two-thirds of Americans (68%) give Michelle Obama positive ratings on the job she is doing as first lady while one-third (32%) give her negative ratings. In comparison, in September of 2006, 64% of Americans gave First Lady Laura Bush positive ratings, while 36% gave her negative ratings.

These are some of the findings of The Harris Poll, a new nationwide survey of 2,177 U.S. adults surveyed online between June 8 and 15, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

Besides high approval ratings, over three-quarters of Americans (77%) say that overall Mrs. Obama's influence on the President's decisions is good while just 23% say her influence is bad. There is a gender difference as 84% of women say her influence is good compared to 69% of men. Even a majority of Republicans (53%) say the first lady's influence on her husband's decisions is good.

### First Lady's Influence on Government Policy

The public is somewhat divided on whether the first lady should be influencing government policy. Half of Americans (49%) believe she should have a little influence on government policy, one in ten (9%) say a lot of influence, and 42% say the first lady should have no influence at all on government policy. Three years ago, in September of 2006, a majority (54%) thought the first lady should have a little influence, 13% said a lot of influence and one-third (32%) said no influence at all.

### Perceptions of Past First Ladies

When perceptions of 10 former first ladies and the current first lady are compared, people say that

Eleanor Roosevelt (32%) will be viewed as the best first lady in history, followed by Jackie Kennedy (17%). Jackie Kennedy leads in the category of first lady who best represented the United States to the rest of the world (22%) followed by Michelle Obama (11%). Hillary Rodham Clinton is seen as most intelligent (29%) followed by Eleanor Roosevelt (13%). The current First Lady, Michelle Obama, is seen as the best role model for women in America (19%), followed by Jackie Kennedy (16%).

### So What?

Michelle Obama has undergone a lot of media scrutiny as first lady. There has been the traditional media watch on her fashion and style, but also scrutiny about what she is doing in reaching out to the people in her new hometown of Washington D.C., along with

stories on the new White House garden. She is a different model than the previous two first ladies, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Laura Bush, and she is making her own stamp on the role. No matter what the scrutiny has been, or what the media stories are, the public so far, approves of the job she is doing.

**TABLE 1  
RATING OF MICHELLE OBAMA**

**"How would you rate the job Laura Bush/Michelle Obama is doing as First Lady?"**

Base: All Adults

	Michelle Obama				Laura Bush (Sept. 2006)
	June 2009	Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	
	%	%	%	%	%
<b>POSITIVE (NET)</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>
Excellent	28	9	52	18	23
Pretty good	39	33	36	46	40
<b>NEGATIVE (NET)</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>
Only fair	21	34	10	25	29
Poor	11	24	3	10	8

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

**TABLE 2  
FIRST LADY'S INFLUENCE ON PRESIDENT – BY DATE AND PARTY**

**"Overall, do you think her influence on the President's decisions is...?"**

Base: All Adults

	June 2009	Political Party			Gender	
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>GOOD (NET)</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>84</b>
Very good	28	10	49	20	22	33
Somewhat good	49	44	45	56	47	51
<b>BAD (NET)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16</b>
Somewhat bad	14	28	4	16	17	12
Very bad	9	19	2	8	14	4

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

**TABLE 3  
EXTENT TO WHICH FIRST LADY SHOULD INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT POLICY**

**"To what extent do you think that the First Lady should influence government policy?"**

Base: All Adults

	Sept. 2006	June 2009	Political Party		
			Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
	%	%	%	%	%
A lot	13	9	5	14	8
A little	54	49	37	60	43
Not at all	32	42	58	27	49

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

**TABLE 4**  
**BEST FIRST LADIES ON FOUR CRITERION**  
**"Which first lady do you think..."**

Base: All Adults

	Will be viewed as the best First Lady in history	Was/Is the most Intelligent	Best represented/ represents the United States with the rest of the world	Was the best role model for women in America
	%	%	%	%
Eleanor Roosevelt, '33-'45	32	13	10	9
Jackie Kennedy, '61-'63	17	4	22	16
Lady Bird Johnson, '63-'69	2	3	4	3
Pat Nixon, '69-'74	1	3	2	2
Betty Ford, '74-'77	1	2	2	4
Rosalyn Carter, '77 – '81	*	2	3	3
Nancy Reagan, '81 – '89	7	4	8	6
Barbara Bush, '89 – '93	3	3	3	4
Hillary Rodham Clinton, '93 – '01	3	29	9	6
Laura Bush, '01 - '09	3	5	6	10
Michelle Obama, 2009 -present	9	11	11	19
Not Sure	23	22	20	20

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

\* Less than 0.5 percent.

**Methodology**

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States June 8 and 15, 2009 among 2,177 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.*

J36306  
Q 805, 810, 815, 821

***The Harris Poll*<sup>®</sup> #74, July 7, 2009**

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