
Nation Divided On President Obama: 51% Give Him Positive Marks, 49% Give Him Negative Marks

Majorities of Women, Independents, Gen Xers and Midwesterners Give Him Negative Marks

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – August 24, 2009 – As the summer winds down, President Obama's job numbers continue to move in a downward way. In June, 54% of U.S. adults gave him positive ratings and 46% gave the president negative marks. Two months and a huge debate over health care later, these numbers have dropped to 51% of Americans giving him positive marks and 49% giving him negative marks. The nation is split almost down the middle on the overall job President Obama is doing.

These are some of the findings of The Harris Poll, a new nationwide survey of 2,498 U.S. adults surveyed online between August 10 and 18, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

Looking at how certain groups feel about President Obama's job shows where some cracks are appearing:

- It is not surprising that Democrats give President Obama an overwhelmingly positive job rating in comparison to Republicans (81% vs. 13%). Among Independents, however, more give him negative ratings (53%) than positive (47%);
- There is a reverse gender gap emerging. Normally with a Democratic president, women are more likely than men to give higher approval ratings. Right now, this isn't the case as over half of men (53%) give President Obama positive marks while over half of women (52%) give him negative ratings;
- Three in five Easterners (61%) and 55% of Westerners give President Obama positive ratings. Majorities of Southerners (57%) and Midwesterners (53%) give him negative ratings;
- There are generational differences. Majorities of Echo Boomers (those 18-32) and Baby Boomers (those 45-63) give President Obama positive ratings (53% and 55% respectively). Majorities of Gen Xers (those 33-44) and Matures (those 64 and older) give him negative marks (54% and 57% respectively); and,
- Attitudes on the direction of the country continue to drift upward. This month, 46% believe it is going in the right direction and 54% say it is going off on the wrong track. In June, 43% said it was going in the right direction, while 57% said it was going off on the wrong track.

So What?

President Obama has had a blistering summer that does not have much to do with the normal heat and humidity in Washington, D.C. He has had to deal with not just Republican opposition on health care reform, but also some disagreements within his own party. And, while the news on the economy has been slowly getting better, this still

has not hit Americans' wallets. Like so many other polling organizations, the Harris Poll is seeing President Obama at the lowest approval ratings of this still young presidency. And, there are signs that the nation is becoming more divided over him – whether by region, age or even gender. Yet, he can take comfort in knowing that people's attitudes on the direction of the country as a whole are getting better, up dramatically from just 19% saying the country was going in the right direction when he took office in January.

**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	June	Aug.
	%	%	%	%	%
POSITIVE	55	58	59	54	51
Excellent	17	18	17	14	11
Pretty good	38	40	42	39	39
NEGATIVE	45	42	41	46	49
Only fair	27	26	25	25	25
Poor	18	15	16	21	24

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

**TABLE 2
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING – BY GENDER AND PARTY**

"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	51	53	48	13	81	47
Excellent	11	13	10	1	23	7
Pretty good	39	40	38	12	58	40
NEGATIVE	49	47	52	87	19	53
Only fair	25	22	29	33	15	27
Poor	24	25	23	53	4	26

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	51	61	47	43	55	53	46	55	43
Excellent	11	12	11	11	12	12	8	14	10
Pretty good	39	49	37	31	44	41	38	41	33
NEGATIVE	49	39	53	57	45	47	54	45	57
Only fair	25	23	27	29	20	31	28	20	24
Poor	24	15	25	29	24	16	26	25	33

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	August	46	54
	June	43	57
	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

Methodology

The Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States August 10 and 18, 2009 among 2,498 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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