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## Americans Give President Obama Negative Ratings on Handling of 12 Issues

*Two-thirds give him negative ratings on the most visible issue of August – health care*

**ROCHESTER, N.Y. – August 25, 2009** – As President Obama’s overall job approval remains just [barely positive](#), when presented with a list of twelve issues he is currently facing, the American public believes that the job he is doing on all 12 of them is negative. The one that is closest to an even split among adults is reducing the threat of terrorist attacks against the United States where just over half of Americans (51%) give the president negative ratings and 49% give him positive ratings.

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 the economic issue overall, three in five Americans (61%) give President Obama negative ratings on the economy, while 39% give him positive ones. In June, 43% of Americans gave President Obama positive ratings on the economy. When it comes to specific economic issues, the news is worse for the president. On regulating the financial system, 63% give President Obama negative marks and on taxes two-thirds of Americans (67%) give him negative marks. Seven in ten Americans give the president negative ratings on employment/ unemployment (69%) and social security (70%) while over three-quarters (77%) give him negative marks on the job he is doing on the federal budget.

Looking at the environment, 57% of Americans give President Obama negative marks for his handling of that issue. When it comes to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the American public is of a similar mind. Almost three in five U.S. adults (58%) give President Obama negative marks on his handling of the war in Iraq and 59% give him negative ratings on his handling of the war in Afghanistan. More than three in five Americans give President Obama negative ratings on the overall job he is doing on education (63%) and health care (65%).

There is also a generation divide on these issues. The youngest generation, Echo Boomers (those aged 18-32) are less likely to give President Obama negative ratings on 11 of the 12 issues. On one, the environment, Baby Boomers are the most “positive” on the job the president has done. In comparison, Matures (those aged 64 and older) and more likely to give President Obama negative ratings on 11 of the 12 issues. On social security, Gen Xers (those aged 33-44) are the most negative.

### So What?

President Obama has had a lot on his hands during his first seven months in office. The economy continues to very slowly improve (at least according to economic indicators) but that news does not seem to be hitting the American public and they are finding fault with President Obama’s handling of economic issues, especially the federal budget. While this alone would be bad news for the Obama Administration, when it is not

coupled with any good news – at least on how the American public views the job the president is doing on six other non-economic issues – that means the White House might be in for a rough autumn. It is one that will most likely be dominated by health care which the president is trying to move through Congress quickly. But he is hampered by two things – the negative attitude of the America public in how he is handling the issue and the lack of a good deal of political capital to help push this through the House and Senate.

**TABLE 1  
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S RATING ON CERTAIN ISSUES**

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

Base: All adults

	POSITIVE	Excellent	Pretty good	NEGATIVE	Only fair	Poor
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Reducing the threat of terrorist attack against the U.S.	49	8	41	51	29	22
The environment	43	8	35	57	36	22
The war in Iraq	42	8	34	58	35	23
The war in Afghanistan	41	6	34	59	37	22
The economy	39	9	31	61	25	36
Regulating the financial system	37	7	30	63	29	34
Education	37	6	31	63	39	24
Health care	35	8	27	65	25	40
Taxes	33	6	28	67	32	35
Employment/Unemployment	31	5	26	69	30	39
Social Security	30	4	26	70	37	32
The federal budget	23	4	19	77	30	47

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

**TABLE 2**  
**PRESIDENT OBAMA'S RATING ON CERTAIN ISSUES – BY GENERATION**

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

*Percent saying "Only Fair/Poor"*

Base: All adults

	Generation				
	Total	Echo Boomers (18-32)	Gen. X (33-44)	Baby Boomers (45-63)	Matures (64+)
	%	%	%	%	%
Reducing the threat of terrorist attack against the U.S.	51	47	55	49	56
The environment	56	56	60	54	61
The war in Iraq	58	57	61	55	63
The war in Afghanistan	59	58	61	56	67
The economy	61	58	64	57	68
Regulating the financial system	63	60	69	60	67
Education	63	59	71	59	69
Health care	65	62	69	62	71
Taxes	67	62	71	65	73
Employment/Unemployment	69	62	70	68	77
Social Security	70	68	77	67	70
The federal budget	77	73	81	75	83

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

**TABLE 3**  
**PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING ON THE ECONOMY - TREND**

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

Base: All adults

	March	April	May	June	August
	%	%	%	%	%
<b>POSITIVE</b>	47	49	46	43	39
Excellent	13	13	10	3	9
Pretty good	34	36	36	34	31
<b>NEGATIVE</b>	53	51	54	57	61
Only fair	30	27	30	27	25
Poor	23	24	24	30	36

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

**Methodology**

This 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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***The Harris Poll® #93, August 25, 2009***

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### **About Harris Interactive**

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