

Majorities of Americans Give President Obama Negative Ratings on his Handling of 12 Major Issues

Among the lowest are unemployment, the federal deficit and the war in Afghanistan

New York, N.Y. — October 19, 2009 — As President Obama's overall approval rating continues [to slide](#), he cannot find much solace in Americans' opinions on his handling of 12 different issues as he does not have a positive rating on any of these. The top one for President Obama is reducing the threat of terrorist attack with 41% giving his job on this a positive rating, down from 49% who said so in August. Two in five Americans also give the President positive marks on the environment (40%, down from 43% in August) and education (40% up from 37% in August).

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,293 adults surveyed online between October 5 and 12, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

President Obama is dealing with two different wars – one in Iraq and one in Afghanistan – and the American public is not pleased with his handling of either of them. In August two in five U.S. adults (42%) gave the president positive marks on his handling of the war in Iraq. Currently, that number has dropped to 34% while 66% give President Obama negative ratings on this war. The numbers for Afghanistan have gone down even more. In August, two in five (41%) gave the president positive ratings on the war in Afghanistan but now just one-quarter of Americans (27%) give him positive marks while 73% give him negative ratings.

The president has also spent a great deal of time trying to win the American public's support for his health reform plan but does not seem to be making much headway on this issue. Just three in ten Americans (31%) give President Obama positive ratings on his handling of health care while 69% give him negative ratings. In August, over one-third (35%) of U.S. adults gave the president positive ratings on this issue.

Looking at economic issues at least two-thirds of Americans give him negative ratings on all of these issues. On the economy overall, 67% give the president negative marks while one-third (33%) give him positive ones. In September, 40% gave President Obama positive marks on his handling of the economy. More specifically on his handling of regulating the financial system three in ten Americans (31%) give the president positive ratings while 69% give him negative marks. In August, 37% of Americans gave the president's job on this positive marks.

When it comes to the issue of taxes, three in ten Americans (29%) give the president positive marks on his handling of this issue while 71% give him negative ratings. Just one-quarter of Americans (26%) gives the president's handling of employment/unemployment a positive rating, down from 31% who felt this way in August. And, his lowest number is on the federal budget deficit where almost four in five Americans (78%) give President Obama negative marks and only 22% give him positive ratings.

So what?

The President needs a win, whether it is health care reform, some good economic numbers that matter to the American people or a change in Afghanistan. But, until he has something that resonates with the American public in a positive light, there is a sense that a negative attitude will permeate over all issues. One thing to note, education has actually ticked up a little and the White House had put forth their new education initiatives

recently. Maybe this is the one issue that they should focus on for the near term, as long as they don't take their eye off of the economy.

**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.	41	8	33	59	30	29
The environment	40	6	33	60	38	22
Education	40	8	31	60	36	25
The war in Iraq	34	6	29	66	35	31
The economy	33	7	26	67	28	39
Regulating the financial system	31	7	25	69	32	37
Health care	31	7	24	69	30	39
Taxes	29	5	24	71	35	36
Social Security	28	5	23	72	36	36
The war in Afghanistan	27	4	22	73	39	35
Employment/Unemployment	26	4	22	74	33	41
The federal budget deficit	22	4	18	78	30	48

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

**TABLE 2
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S RATING ON CERTAIN ISSUES - TREND**

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

Base: All adults

Percent saying "Excellent/Pretty good"

	August 2009	October 2009
	%	%
Reducing the threat of terrorist attack against the U.S.	49	41
The environment	43	40
Education	37	40
The war in Iraq	42	34
The economy	39	33
Regulating the financial system	37	31
Health care	35	31
Taxes	33	29
Social Security	30	28
The war in Afghanistan	41	27
Employment/Unemployment	31	26
The federal budget deficit	23	22

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	Aug.	Sept.	October
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
POSITIVE	47	49	46	43	39	40	33
Excellent	13	13	10	3	9	7	7
Pretty good	34	36	36	34	31	33	26
NEGATIVE	53	51	54	57	61	60	67
Only fair	30	27	30	27	25	27	28
Poor	23	24	24	30	36	33	39

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

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States October 5 and 12, 2009 among 2,293 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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