
Obama by Far the Most Popular Political Leader in Europe and U.S.

No other head of government comes close

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – April 7, 2009 – A new poll by Harris Interactive for France 24 and the International Herald Tribune finds that in the United States and the five largest European countries, President Obama is far more popular than any other elected leader or head of government. No other political or governmental leader from any part of the world enjoys anything like the same popularity.

This poll measures not job ratings but how good or bad opinions are of 19 well-known world leaders. Across the six countries, fully 80% of adults on average have good opinions of President Obama. Like some other leaders, he does less well in his own country than abroad. In the United States, 68% have a good opinion of him. He is even more popular in Europe (86% in France and Italy, 85% in Germany, 84% in Spain and 72% in Britain.)

The only leader who comes close is the Dalai Lama with an average good opinion score of 74%, but of course he is not a head of government.

These are the results of a new **Harris Interactive/France 24/International Herald Tribune** survey conducted online among a total of 6,538 adults (aged 16-64) in France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain and the United States and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy between February 25 and March 3, 2009.

Because this survey provides data on what people think of the world's leaders in six different countries, there are many very interesting findings. Some of the more interesting ones are:

- **Merkel is the most popular European leader and Berlusconi is the least popular.**

On average 51% in the six countries have a good opinion of Chancellor Angela Merkel and only 17% have a good opinion of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

- **Attitudes to most world leaders have not changed very much – with Pope Benedict being the biggest exception.**

The proportions of the public with good opinions of the 19 leaders are generally similar to what they were in the two previous surveys in November and January, however, those with a good opinion of Pope Benedict XVI are an exception. The average of those with a good opinion of him has fallen from 48% and 49% in the two previous surveys to 39% now. Other leaders whose popularity has slipped are Prime Minister Zapatero of Spain (down 6 points since last November), EU

President Barroso (down 7 points), and French Prime Minister Sarkozy (down 5 points). The positive opinions of most other leaders have slipped by two to four percentage points, probably because of the economy.

- **Some world leaders have very few admirers.**

Only a few people have good opinions of Iranian President Ahmadinejad (6% on average), Syrian President al-Assad (8%), China President Hu Jintao (9%), Russian President Medvedev (10%), and Venezuelan President Chavez (14%).

- **Some leaders are more popular abroad; others are popular in their own countries.**

Those with a good opinion of President Obama are higher across the six countries than at home (80% vs. 68%). The same is true to some degree for President Sarkozy (40% vs. 30%) and Prime Minister Brown (36% vs. 30%). However, Prime Minister Berlusconi is much more popular at home (38%) than across the six countries (17%). This is also true for Prime Minister Zapatero (48% vs. 35%), and Chancellor Merkel (59% vs. 51%).

- **President Obama is also seen as the most influential world leader.**

Fully 83%, on average across the six countries, believe President Obama has a great deal or some influence at an international level. Other leaders who are widely seen as influential are Russian President Putin (65% on average), Chancellor Merkel (59%), President Sarkozy (59%), Prime Minister Brown (52%) and Pope Benedict (51%).

The leaders on the list seen as the least influential are Syrian President al-Assad (21%), and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (22%).

So What?

These new findings have several implications:

1. For years, many Americans were annoyed or embarrassed to learn how deeply unpopular President Bush was in most countries around the world. Now they can enjoy the warm glow of popularity that President Obama engenders abroad.
2. The very high opinion that so many people have of the Dalai Lama highlights a problem for China. Chinese attempts to vilify him have failed to convince world opinion, and he remains the highly regarded voice for the people of Tibet.

3. The big difference between Prime Minister Berlusconi's popularity in Italy and across the six countries surely reflects his control over much of the Italian media.
4. The decline in popularity of Pope Benedict, which is the largest change for any leader over the last four months, probably reflects his handling of Bishop Williamson the so-called Holocaust denier.

TABLE 1
GOOD OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS

“For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?”
Percent saying “Very/Somewhat good”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	United States	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	Great Britain	Average for all 6 countries
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Barack Obama (United States)	68	86	86	84	85	72	80
The Dalai Lama	62	78	84	78	76	64	74
Angela Merkel (Germany)	25	66	69	62	59	26	51
Tony Blair (Great Britain)	65	51	60	37	46	30	48
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	27	30	59	53	39	30	40
Pope Benedict XVI	56	24	49	31	42	33	39
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	37	35	49	35	28	30	36
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	15	50	59	48	27	13	35
Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)	17	36	43	34	37	29	33
Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union)	13	35	48	39	35	11	30
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)	14	33	31	49	13	7	25
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	16	7	38	16	12	13	17
Fidel Castro (Cuba)	9	11	29	12	17	19	16
Vladimir Putin (Russia)	15	9	24	12	21	13	16
Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)	8	27	18	10	12	11	14
Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)	9	8	14	11	12	6	10
Hu Jintao (China)	9	6	12	10	7	11	9
Bashar al-Assad (Syria)	6	5	13	8	8	6	8
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)	5	4	8	7	6	6	6

TABLE 2
GOOD OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS – IN HOME COUNTRIES

“For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?”
Percent saying “Very/Somewhat good”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Rating In Own Country	Average for all 6 countries	Difference
	%	%	%
Barack Obama (United States)	68	80	+12
Angela Merkel (Germany)	59	51	-8
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	48	35	-13
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	38	17	-21
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	30	36	+6
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	30	40	+10

TABLE 3
GOOD OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS – TREND OF 6 COUNTRY AVERAGES

“For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?”
Percent saying “Very/Somewhat good”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Average for all 6 countries			% Change from November
	% November	% January	% Current	
Barack Obama (United States)	N/A	80	80	0 *
The Dalai Lama	71	77	74	+3
Angela Merkel (Germany)	54	53	51	-3
Tony Blair (Great Britain)	51	53	48	-3
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	45	44	40	-5
Pope Benedict XVI	48	49	39	-9
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	40	36	36	-4
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	41	39	35	-6
Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)	36	35	33	-3
Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union)	37	33	30	-7
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)	27	27	25	-2
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	20	18	17	-3
Fidel Castro (Cuba)	17	18	16	-1
Vladimir Putin (Russia)	17	17	16	-1
Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)	16	17	14	-2
Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)	12	11	10	-2
Hu Jintao (China)	10	9	9	-1
Bashar al-Assad (Syria)	10	9	8	-2
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)	7	6	6	-1

*Note: The percentage change for Barack Obama is being measured from January to the present.

TABLE 4
GOOD OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS - UNITED STATES

"For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?"
Percent saying "Very/Somewhat good"

Base: All U.S. adults

	% November	% January	% Current	% Change from November
Barack Obama (United States)	N/A	71	68	-3 *
The Dalai Lama	60	66	62	+2
Angela Merkel (Germany)	30	27	25	-5
Tony Blair (Great Britain)	65	69	65	0
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	36	29	27	-9
Pope Benedict XVI	55	66	56	+1
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	42	35	37	-5
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	20	19	15	-5
Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)	19	18	17	-2
Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union)	20	13	13	-7
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)	16	14	14	-2
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	20	19	16	-4
Fidel Castro (Cuba)	8	10	9	+1
Vladimir Putin (Russia)	18	19	15	-3
Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)	9	13	8	-1
Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)	10	11	9	-1
Hu Jintao (China)	10	10	9	-1
Bashar al-Assad (Syria)	6	7	6	0
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)	5	7	5	0

*Note: The percentage change for Barack Obama is being measured from January to the present.

TABLE 5
GOOD OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS - FRANCE

“For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?”
Percent saying “Very/Somewhat good”

Base: All French adults

	% November	% January	% Current	% Change from November
Barack Obama (United States)	N/A	88	86	-2 *
The Dalai Lama	79	86	78	-1
Angela Merkel (Germany)	70	70	66	-4
Tony Blair (Great Britain)	52	59	51	-1
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	40	39	30	-10
Pope Benedict XVI	41	37	24	-17
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	41	40	35	-6
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	57	58	50	-7
Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)	43	42	36	-7
Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union)	40	39	35	-5
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)	32	39	33	+1
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	9	6	7	-2
Fidel Castro (Cuba)	12	14	11	-1
Vladimir Putin (Russia)	8	8	9	+1
Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)	31	35	27	-4
Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)	7	8	8	+1
Hu Jintao (China)	7	4	6	-1
Bashar al-Assad (Syria)	7	7	5	-2
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)	5	3	4	-1

*Note: The percentage change for Barack Obama is being measured from January to the present.

TABLE 6
GOOD OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS – ITALY

“For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?”
Percent saying “Very/Somewhat good”

Base: All Italian adults

	% November	% January	% Current	% Change from November
Barack Obama (United States)	N/A	87	86	-1 *
The Dalai Lama	80	83	84	+4
Angela Merkel (Germany)	73	71	69	-4
Tony Blair (Great Britain)	65	61	60	-5
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	60	63	59	-1
Pope Benedict XVI	55	55	49	-6
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	49	43	49	0
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	65	61	59	-6
Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)	43	40	43	0
Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union)	52	46	48	-4
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)	36	35	31	-5
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	43	39	38	-5
Fidel Castro (Cuba)	25	29	29	+4
Vladimir Putin (Russia)	24	27	24	0
Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)	22	23	18	-4
Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)	14	15	14	0
Hu Jintao (China)	10	11	12	+2
Bashar al-Assad (Syria)	15	12	13	-2
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)	6	8	8	+2

*Note: The percentage change for Barack Obama is being measured from January to the present.

TABLE 7
GOOD OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS – SPAIN

“For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?”
Percent saying “Very/Somewhat good”

Base: All Spanish adults

	% November	% January	% Current	% Change from November
Barack Obama (United States)	N/A	82	84	+2 *
The Dalai Lama	70	83	78	+8
Angela Merkel (Germany)	59	63	62	+3
Tony Blair (Great Britain)	39	46	37	-2
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	53	62	53	0
Pope Benedict XVI	34	39	31	-3
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	42	36	35	-7
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	50	52	48	-2
Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)	41	39	34	-7
Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union)	49	46	39	-10
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)	50	51	49	-1
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	20	20	16	-4
Fidel Castro (Cuba)	15	15	12	-3
Vladimir Putin (Russia)	15	15	12	-3
Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)	11	11	10	-1
Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)	13	12	11	-2
Hu Jintao (China)	16	16	10	-6
Bashar al-Assad (Syria)	14	13	8	-6
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)	9	9	7	-2

*Note: The percentage change for Barack Obama is being measured from January to the present.

TABLE 8
GOOD OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS – GERMANY

“For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?”
Percent saying “Very/Somewhat good”

Base: All German adults

	% November	% January	% Current	% Change from November
Barack Obama (United States)	N/A	84	85	+1 *
The Dalai Lama	77	83	76	-1
Angela Merkel (Germany)	63	63	59	-4
Tony Blair (Great Britain)	50	49	46	-4
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	48	42	39	-9
Pope Benedict XVI	59	60	42	-17
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	34	29	28	-6
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	36	27	27	-9
Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)	39	40	37	-2
Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union)	46	40	35	-11
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)	16	14	13	-3
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	14	13	12	-2
Fidel Castro (Cuba)	21	19	17	-4
Vladimir Putin (Russia)	25	21	21	-4
Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)	14	11	12	-2
Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)	18	11	12	-6
Hu Jintao (China)	8	7	7	-1
Bashar al-Assad (Syria)	9	7	8	-1
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)	8	5	6	-2

*Note: The percentage change for Barack Obama is being measured from January to the present.

TABLE 9
GOOD OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS – GREAT BRITAIN

“For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?”
Percent saying “Very/Somewhat good”

Base: All U.K. adults

	% November	% January	% Current	% Change from November
Barack Obama (United States)	N/A	70	72	+2 *
The Dalai Lama	61	62	64	+3
Angela Merkel (Germany)	28	24	26	-2
Tony Blair (Great Britain)	37	32	30	-7
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	31	31	30	-1
Pope Benedict XVI	41	38	33	-8
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	33	32	30	-3
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	16	15	13	-3
Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)	29	28	29	0
Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union)	16	13	11	-5
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)	9	8	7	-2
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	16	11	13	-3
Fidel Castro (Cuba)	19	18	19	0
Vladimir Putin (Russia)	13	11	13	0
Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)	10	11	11	+1
Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)	9	6	6	-3
Hu Jintao (China)	10	8	11	+1
Bashar al-Assad (Syria)	7	5	6	-1
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)	7	6	6	-1

*Note: The percentage change for Barack Obama is being measured from January to the present.

TABLE 10
WORLD LEADERS WHO ARE INFLUENTIAL

“For each of the following international personalities, how much influence do you think they have at an international level?”
Percent Saying “A Great deal/Some influence”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	United States	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	Great Britain	Average for all 6 countries
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Barack Obama (United States)	82	84	87	85	86	75	83
Vladimir Putin (Russia)	55	65	74	68	75	53	65
Angela Merkel (Germany)	33	67	70	75	70	39	59
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	36	58	74	76	65	44	59
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	45	46	63	60	44	52	52
Pope Benedict XVI	62	30	72	61	41	40	51
Hu Jintao (China)	41	51	55	50	45	42	47
Tony Blair (Great Britain)	54	38	51	58	45	28	46
Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union)	30	41	54	48	43	33	42
Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)	35	40	49	45	36	41	41
The Dalai Lama	41	34	52	44	31	32	39
Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)	35	39	38	41	48	27	38
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	22	29	51	52	38	26	36
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)	37	29	47	33	28	27	34
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	20	34	55	39	24	20	32
Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)	35	29	26	36	14	15	26
Fidel Castro (Cuba)	29	16	31	28	16	18	23
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)	21	22	28	37	14	12	22
Bashar al-Assad (Syria)	22	20	26	23	15	17	21

TABLE 11
POPULARITY/INFLUENCE INDEX**

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Popularity (Very +Somewhat good opinion)		Influence A great deal of +Some influence)		Popularity/ influence average index	
	%	*	%	*	%	*
Barack Obama (United States)	80	0	83	0	82	0
The Dalai Lama	74	-3	39	-4	56	-4
Angela Merkel (Germany)	51	-2	59	-1	55	-2
Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	40	-4	59	-3	49	-4
Tony Blair (Great Britain)	48	-5	46	-2	47	-4
Pope Benedict XVI	39	-10	51	-3	45	-7
Gordon Brown (Great Britain)	36	0	52	0	44	0
Vladimir Putin (Russia)	16	-1	65	-4	40	-3
Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)	33	-2	41	-1	37	-2
Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union)	30	-3	42	-2	36	-3
Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain)	35	-4	32	-1	34	-2
Hu Jintao (China)	9	0	47	0	28	0
Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)	17	-1	36	+1	27	0
Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)	10	-1	38	-2	24	-2
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)	25	-2	22	0	23	-2
Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)	14	-3	26	-2	20	-3
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)	6	0	34	0	20	0
Fidel Castro (Cuba)	16	-2	23	-2	20	-2
Bashar al-Assad (Syria)	8	-1	21	0	14	-1

* Note: A * indicates a percentage change from January.

**This index is the sum of the two measures divided by two.

Methodology

This **Harris Interactive/France 24/International Herald Tribune** study was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,538 adults (aged 16-64) within France (1,067), Germany (1,060), Great Britain (1,226), Spain (1,098) and the United States (1,057), and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy (1,030) between February 25 and March 3 2009. Figures for age, sex, education, region and Internet usage were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was 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 populations of the respective countries. 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 and of the British Polling Council.

About Harris Interactive

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