

President Obama's Ratings Continue Their Fall Again This Month

Three in five Americans believe country going off on wrong track

New York, N.Y. — October 16, 2009 — President Obama may have won the Nobel Peace Prize, but unfortunately, he is not winning accolades from the American public as his job approval rating continues its downward slide. In September, U.S. adults were split almost evenly on the job the President has been doing – 49% gave him positive ratings and 51% gave him negative ratings. This month, the number giving him positive ratings drops to 45% while over half of Americans (55%) give him negative ratings.

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.

The approval ratings of the president by Democrats and Republicans are as one would expect with 77% of Democrats giving President Obama positive ratings compared to 14% of Republicans. Independents, however, are more down on the president as 60% give him negative ratings while 40% give him positive marks on his overall job performance.

The White House should also be concerned about weakness in some of President Obama's strongest supporters. During the election, Echo Boomers (those aged 18-32) were the strongest age group supporting the president. Now they are of mixed minds on his performance as just over half (51%) give the president positive ratings and 49% give him negative ratings. The oldest generation, Matures (those aged 64 and older) are even more negative with just 39% giving President Obama positive marks and 61% giving him negative marks.

There is one bright spot for the President – his ratings are not as low as the ratings of Congress. This month, more than four in five Americans (84%) rate the job Congress is doing negatively while just 16% give it positive marks. This continues the downward trend for Congress that has continued since their "high" positive rating of 31% in May.

One reason for the negative feelings towards the President and Congress may be the negative feelings towards the country as a whole. Three in five Americans (61%) say they believe things in the country have seriously gotten off on the wrong track and just 39% say things are going in the right direction. This is the third month now that the number of Americans saying things are moving in the right direction has decreased; it was at 46% in August and 42% in September.

So what?

Right now President Obama has a very ambitious agenda – there is health care reform, there is making decisions on Afghanistan, and there is financial reform and creating jobs, just to name a few. In order to move these initiatives forward, the president needs the support of the American public. Up until recently, it seemed he had the support or at least a willingness to give him the benefit of the doubt. Now, however, that support has definitely slipped away from him. In order for him to have success, he needs to rally the public and convince them he is succeeding. Or, at the very least, that something positive is right around the corner. Right now, Americans are just not sure.

TABLE 1
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING - TREND

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

Base: All adults

	Mar.	April	May	June	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
POSITIVE	55	58	59	54	51	49	45
Excellent	17	18	17	14	11	11	10
Pretty good	38	40	42	39	39	38	35
NEGATIVE	45	42	41	46	49	51	55
Only fair	27	26	25	25	25	25	27
Poor	18	15	16	21	24	26	28

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

TABLE 2
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING – BY PARTY

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

Base: All adults

	Total	Political Party			Generation			
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Echo Boomers (18-32)	Gen X (33-44)	Baby Boomers (45-63)	Matures (64+)
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
POSITIVE	45	14	77	40	51	42	45	39
Excellent	10	2	20	6	10	10	9	9
Pretty good	35	12	57	34	41	33	36	30
NEGATIVE	55	86	23	60	49	58	55	61
Only fair	27	31	17	32	33	26	26	19
Poor	28	55	7	28	16	31	28	42

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

**TABLE 3
CONGRESS' OVERALL JOB RATING**

"How would you rate the overall job the Congress is doing?"

Base: All adults

	TREND	Positive*	Negative**
		%	%
2009	Oct.	16	84
	Sept.	19	81
	Aug.	22	78
	June	25	75
	May	31	69
	April	29	71
	March	29	71
2008	October	10	86
	September	16	81
	August	18	77
	June	13	83
	February	20	76
2007	December	17	79
	October	20	77
	September	22	74
	April	27	69
	February	33	62
2006	September	24	73
	May	18	80
	February	25	71
	January	25	72

*Positive = excellent or pretty good. **Negative = only fair or poor.

Note: Prior to March, 2009, this question was asked by telephone

**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	October	39	61
	September	42	58
	August	46	54
	June	43	57
	April	42	58
	March	32	68
	January	19	72
2008	October	11	83
	September	16	77
	June	14	80
	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

Note: Prior to March, 2009 this question was asked via telephone

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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