
European Reactions to President Obama Overwhelmingly Positive

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – January 22, 2009 – Opinion polls in the United States have reported the overwhelmingly optimistic and positive feelings of the American people toward President Barack Obama. A new Financial Times/Harris Poll finds that he is even more popular in the five largest European countries than in the United States.

In the U.S., fully 68% of adults believe that the new president will have a “positive impact on the course of international events,” and only 16% believe he will have a negative impact. In Europe, the numbers who are optimistic are 92% in France, 90% in Italy, 85% in Spain, 82% in Germany, and 77% in Britain.

Further evidence of the extraordinary enthusiasm and optimism engendered by Obama’s election is that scarcely anyone in Europe expects him to have a negative impact on international events – 1% in France, 3% in Spain, 4% in Italy, 5% in Germany and 8% in Britain.

These are some of the findings of a **Financial Times/Harris Poll** conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,299 adults (1,000 or more in each country), aged 16-64, within France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, and the United States and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy between 8 and 15 January 2009.

So What?

These extraordinary poll findings suggest the following conclusions:

1. European leaders will fall over themselves to associate themselves with the incredibly popular new president, in the hope that some of his popularity will rub off on them.
2. As long as it lasts, President Obama’s popularity will make it easier for European governments to support American foreign policy goals even where these do not enjoy public support – for example, in sending more troops to Afghanistan.
3. Many Europeans who were highly critical of the United States when it was led by President Bush will feel more warmly not just about President Obama but about the country and the American people who elected him.

While there are no comparable polling data about how Europeans felt about most previous U.S. presidents, **we believe that this moment is probably unique, and that no newly elected American president was ever as popular as President Obama is now.**

TABLE 1
IMPACT OF OBAMA ON INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

“Overall, how much of a positive or negative impact do you think that President Obama will have on the course of international events?”

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
POSITIVE IMPACT (NET)	68	77	92	90	85	82
Strong positive impact	29	29	39	41	23	29
Moderate positive impact	26	30	37	36	38	31
Slight positive impact	13	19	16	13	25	22
Neutral impact	15	15	7	6	12	13
NEGATIVE IMPACT (NET)	16	8	1	4	3	5
Slight negative impact	5	3	1	2	1	2
Moderate negative impact	5	2	*	1	1	1
Strong negative impact	6	3	*	1	1	2

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

Note: * indicates less than 0.5%

Methodology

This **FT/Harris Poll** was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,299 adults (aged 16-64) within France (1,021), Germany (1,107), Great Britain (1,071), Spain (1,007) and the United States (1,066), and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy (1,027) between 8 and 15 January 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.

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Press Contact:

Harris Interactive
Corporate Communications
585-272-8400

press@harrisinteractive.net

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