

## **PRESIDENT OBAMA REMAINS POPULAR AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, BUT SOME EXPRESS DOUBTS ABOUT HIS POLICIES**

Polls conducted by NBC News/Wall Street Journal (WSJ) and CBS News/New York Times (NYT) in late September suggest concern among young adults about some of President Obama's policies. While young adults 18-29 years old expressed positive feelings toward the president personally and about his overall performance, the polls indicate doubts about Obama's handling of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as split opinions about his handling of health care. While the sample sizes of young adults are small, the findings suggest that the President may be seeing some erosion in support from his more enthusiastic supporters.

### **OVERALL PERFORMANCE**

Compared to every other age group, young adults (ages 18-29) gave Obama his highest approval rating in terms of overall job performance. In the CBS/NYT poll, 64% of young adults expressed approval of his job performance, in comparison to 55% of those 30--64, and 43% of those age 65 and older. The NBC/WSJ survey showed a 63% approval rating with an increase in number of young people disapproving of President Obama's job performance going from a 19% disapproval rating in March to 28% in September.

### **PERSONAL APPEAL VS. POLICIES**

When asked to rate their personal feelings toward Obama, a huge 83% of young adults in the NBC/WSJ poll reported positive feelings toward Obama and 53% of young adults said they "like [Obama] personally and approve most policies."

While these numbers have declined since reported highs in January and April 2009, they are still indicative of a substantial majority of young adults who support Obama overall. However, 43% now say they disapprove of many of his policies up from 27% in January:

### **YOUNG PEOPLE'S FEELINGS TOWARD BARACK OBAMA:**

	9/2009	1/2009
Like personally and approve most policies	53%	67%
Like personally, but disapprove of many policies	30	22
Don't like personally, approve most of policies	2	5
Don't like personally, disapprove many policies	13	5
None (VOL)	2	1

### **THE HANDLING OF AFGHANISTAN**

The September CBS/NYT poll indicated that the decline in support for Obama's policies may be stemming from attitudes toward the war in Afghanistan. Only 41% of young adults approve of Obama's handling of Afghanistan, which is lower than support from those between 30 and 64 years of age.

### **TROOP LEVELS IN AFGHANISTAN:**

	All	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Increase	29%	13%	31%	36%	36%
Keep Same	27	33	29	24	20
Decrease	32	41	36	27	24
Don't Know	12	13	4	13	20

In addition, 41% of young adults also want to see the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan decreased, which is the highest percentage of any age group.

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It is also notable that 20% of young adults and 21% of total respondents in the CBS/NYT poll said they “didn’t know” whether they approved or disapproved of Obama’s handling of Afghanistan. These numbers were higher than any other reported percentage of people who said they “didn’t know” about a particular issue, which could indicate a greater confusion or hesitance regarding the issue itself or Obama’s performance in relation to it.

In addition to Afghanistan, 34% of young adults in the CBS/NYT poll disapprove of Obama’s handling of Iraq, which is higher than any other age group.

Finally, young people split almost evenly (48% approve, 42% disapprove) regarding Obama’s handling of health care.

**FOOTNOTE: OBAMA AND SENIORS**

While support for Obama is down a bit among young people, it is among seniors age 65 and older that Obama may have his biggest problems. Only 38% of this group approve of Obama’s handling of health care, and only 41% approve of the president’s handling of the economy. In addition, seniors gave Obama his lowest approval rating in terms of overall job performance with only 43% approval. Since seniors represent a crucial part of the electorate, it may be in the president’s best interest to consider the concerns of this age group in order to raise support for his policies and actions.

**OBAMA’S APPROVAL RATINGS FROM ADULTS AGE 65+:**

	Health Care	Economy	Overall Performance
Approval	38%	41%	43%
Disapproval	51	46	46
Don’t Know	11	13	11

**METHODOLOGY:** The data for this summary is based on two polls conducted by NBC News/The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) and CBS News/The New York Times (NYT) which were provided to American University. . Results for the NBC/WSJ poll are based on telephone interviews conducted from September 17-20, 2009 with a random sample of 1,005 adults. Included within this sample are 100 interviews conducted with adults who only use a cell phone. The sample was obtained by drawing from 350 geographic points, and then selecting individuals in accordance with a probability sample that would give all landline telephone numbers (both listed and unlisted) an equal chance of being included within the sample.

The results from the CBS/NYT poll are based on telephone interviews conducted from September 19-23, 2009 with a random sample of 1,042 respondents. A sample of land line telephone exchanges were called randomly by a computer from a complete list of more than 69,000 active residential exchanges across the country. To increase coverage, this land line sample was supplemented by respondents reached through random dialing of cell phone numbers. The exchanges were intentionally chosen to ensure that each region of the country was represented in proportion to its population.

In both polls, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of sampling error is roughly  $\pm 3$  percentage points. Also, both samples were weighted to control for minimal variations in race,

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age, education, and sex. The margin of error among the sample of young voters is plus or minus 6.9 percentage points.

The data was analyzed by American University Public Communication graduate students Erica Lawton, Robbie Schwartz, Trace Dominguez, Olga Gallardo and Alissa McCurley and written by Erica Lawton.

**NBC/WSJ POLL**  
**Young People and Obama**  
**September 17-20, 2009**

**In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job that Barack Obama is doing as president?**

	Sep-09	Jul-09	Jun-09	Apr-09	Mar-09	Jan-09	Dec-08
Approve	63	68	60	70	68	na	na
Disapprove	28	26	29	20	19	na	na
Not sure	9	6	11	10	13	na	na

**Now I'm going to read you the names of several public figures, and I'd like you to rate your feelings toward each one as either very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, or very negative. If you don't know the name, please just say so.**

**Barack Obama**

	Sep-09	Jul-09	Jun-09	Apr-09	Mar-09	Jan-09	Dec-08
Very positive	38	44	45	45	48	49	48
Somewhat positive	29	25	25	25	29	29	22
Neutral	17	14	7	12	10	13	16
Somewhat negative	10	6	17	8	7	5	9
Very negative	6	10	6	8	6	3	5
Don't know name/not sure	0	1	0	2	0	1	0

**Which ONE of the following statements best describes your feelings toward Barack Obama?**

	Sep-09	Jul-09	Jun-09	Apr-09	Mar-09	Jan-09	Dec-08
Like personally and approve most policies	53	na	59	61	na	67	na
Like personally, but disapprove of many policies	30	na	23	24	na	22	na
Don't like personally, approve most of policies	2	na	4	5	na	5	na
Don't like personally, disapprove many policies	13	na	12	7	na	5	na
None (VOL)	2	na	1	1	na	1	na
Not sure	0	na	1	2	na	0	na

**CBS/NYT POLL**  
**September 19-23, 2009**

**Obama OVERALL job rating by age**

	All	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Approve	56%	64%	54%	57%	43%
Disapprove	35	23	33	34	46
DK	9	13	13	9	11

**Obama's handling of AFGHANISTAN**

	All	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Approve	44%	41%	51%	46%	33%
Disapprove	35	39	33	33	49
DK	21	20	16	21	18

**Obama's handling of HEALTH CARE**

	All	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Approve	47%	48%	48%	48%	38%
Disapprove	45	42	46	43	51
DK	8	10	6	9	11

**Obama's handling of IRAQ**

	All	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Approve	54%	50%	58%	58%	49%
Disapprove	29	34	28	26	30
DK	17	16	14	16	21

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**Obama's handling of the ECONOMY**

	All	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Approve	50%	52%	49%	52%	41%
Disapprove	40	34	43	40	46
DK	10	14	8	8	13

**Troop levels in Afghanistan**

	All	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Increase	29%	13%	31%	36%	36%
Keep same	27	33	29	24	20
Decrease	32	41	36	27	24
DK	12	13	4	13	20