

# Obama's Approval Rating Holds Steady at 58%

## *Americans More Optimistic about the Economy*



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### *Americans More Optimistic about the Economy*

**Washington, DC** – After a noted decline last month, President Obama's approval ratings have stabilized, with 58% saying that they approve of how he is handling his job, according to a new telephone poll of over 1,000 adults conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs. In contrast, 37% say that they disapprove of the President's job performance.

A majority of Americans remain polarized when it comes to their approval of Obama. One third (32%) indicate that they *strongly approve* while one quarter (24%) *strongly disapprove* of the way he is handling his job as President of the United States.

- African-Americans (95% approve), Hispanics (79%), those who are not employed (71%), those with a household income of less than \$25,000 (70%), and Westerners (66%), are among those most likely to approve of Obama while college graduates (47% disapprove), those with a household income of at least \$50,000 (46%), retirees (45%), and Southerners (45%) tend to be more critical.
- Across party lines, more dramatic differences emerge. More than eight in ten Democrats (82%) say that they are happy with the job that Obama is doing, just 24% of Republicans feel this way. Independents fall in line with Americans overall, as 57% say that they approve of his job performance.
- Six months into his presidency, Obama's 58% approval rating is eight points higher than was George W. Bush's in August 2001 (as reported by the Pew Research Center at the time).

*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted July 30 – August 3, 2009. For the survey, a nationally representative, randomly selected sample of 1,005 adults aged 18 and older across the United States was interviewed by Ipsos. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate within 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population in the U.S. been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual U.S. population according to U.S. Census figures. Respondents had the option to be interviewed in English or Spanish.*

### Americans Are Becoming More Positive about the Economic Outlook

Americans are more likely to say that they feel the economy has stabilized today than they have at any time since Obama became took office. A full 56% say that the economy has stabilized but has not yet begun to improve, up from 49% in July. This jump is even more significant looking back to February, when just over a third of Americans (35%) felt this was the case.

Additionally, Americans are slightly *more* likely to say that the economy has turned a corner than they were just last month (9% in August vs. 6% in July) and *less* likely to feel that the worst is yet to come (32% in August vs. 39% in July).

- Adults aged 35 to 54 (12%) and Northeasterners (15%) are particularly like to say that the economy has already begun to improve.
- Democrats (13%) are also more likely than are Republicans (6%) or Independents (5%) to feel that the country has already turned the corner on the economic crisis. Likewise, Republicans (43%) and Independents (34%) are more likely than Democrats (23%) to believe that the economy will further deteriorate.

Similarly, Americans prove more optimistic about the direction of the country than they were just a month ago, as 46% now say that things are headed in the right direction compared to 40% who felt this way in July. They are now nearly as likely to say that things in the U.S. are headed in the right direction as to say that they are off on the wrong track (48%).

- Here again, however, attitudes vary immensely depending on party identification as two thirds of Democrats (67%) say that things are headed in the right direction compared with just 42% of Independents and only 16% of Republicans.

#### Despite a Heated Debate, Obama's Declining Performance on Health Care Mirrors Overall Drop in Approval

When asked to grade the President on his performance on various issues, more than four in ten (44%) say that they would give him an "A" (23%) or a "B" (21%) on his handling of health care. This marks a nine-point decline since February, when 53% gave him these high marks. This decline parallels Americans' waning approval of Obama overall, which has dropped 11 points since February.

- African-Americans (84%), Hispanics (62%) and unmarried adults (56%) are particularly likely to laud Obama's performance when it comes to health care.
- In contrast, those who tend to be most critical include white adults (45% give Obama a D or an F), college graduates (43%), married adults (42%), those with a household income of \$50,000 or more (42%), and Southerners (42%).
- Clear differences also emerge across partisan lines. Among Democrats, Obama's GPA on health care is 3.8, the equivalent of an A. However, his GPA on this issue falls to 2.9 among Independents (close to a B) and 2.1 among Republicans (close to a C).

Obama's ratings are showing a slight decline across a variety of issue areas compared with where they were in February. While diplomacy continues to be Obama's greatest strength (57% give him an A or a B), there has been a drop of six points over the past six months. There have been similar drops when it comes to how he is handling energy independence (down nine points to 47%) and education (down nine points to 52%).

When it comes to Obama's handling of the economy and jobs, Americans are slightly less positive than they were back in February. While 53% awarded Obama top marks (an A or a B) back in February, 47% do so now. As with health care, this decline is in line with overall decrease in Obama's approval ratings since he took office, even in the face of widespread criticism about the stimulus and increasing unemployment rates.

Obama's ratings have remained largely unchanged when it comes to terrorism (down two points to 48%), the war in Afghanistan (down two points to 45%), and the war in Iraq (down two points to 49%).



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