



President Barack Obama's Approval Rating, Health Care, & The Economy

*** Complete Tables for Poll Appended ***

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, October 14, 2009

Contact: Lee M. Miringoff
Barbara L. Carvalho
Mary E. Azzoli
Marist College
845.575.5050

This Marist Poll Reports:

President Obama's Approval Rating at 53%...Loses More Ground Among Independents

President Barack Obama maintains the support of a majority of registered voters nationwide. However, he continues to slide in the eyes of Independent voters. Currently, 53% of voters approve of the job the president is doing in office while 41% disapprove. When Marist last asked about President Obama in August, 55% gave the president their stamp of approval. Similar proportions of voters thought this way in Marist's June, April 27th, and April 8th surveys -- 56%, 55%, and 56%, respectively.

There has been little change among Democrats and Republicans. Most Democrats nationally -- 84% -- approve of Mr. Obama's performance. In August, 90% of voters in the president's party rated him highly. Across the aisle, Republicans have also remained steady in their views. 74% of Republicans disapprove of the president's performance compared with 71% two months ago.

However, the president's rating among Independent voters continues to erode. These members of the electorate currently divide with 45% approving of the president's job performance and 47% disapproving. Worse yet for the president is that his disapproval rating has increased among this important voting group. In Marist's August survey, 47% of Independents approved of his performance while 37% thought Mr. Obama could be doing a better job. That August survey marked the first time the president did not receive support from a majority of Independents since taking office.

And, there is a gender gap within the Independent party. 49% of women who are Independent voters think the president is doing a good job compared with 42% of men in this voting block. In fact, 50% of men who are Independents think the president is not meeting their standards. 43% of women also disapprove. This gender gap reflects the difference between the sexes in the overall electorate. The president garners more support among women. 55% approve of the president's job performance while 38% disapprove. On the other hand, 50% of men applaud the president while 45% are critical of him.

Age makes a difference, as well. Voters under the age of 45 are more likely to say the president is on the mark than voters who are older.

Change for the Better? Less Than Half Think So... Independents Make Difference

46% of voters nationwide think President Obama is having a positive impact on the nation while 34% believe he is changing the country for the worse. 18% say he has made no change at all. When Marist last asked this question in August, half of voters thought Mr. Obama was improving the nation, and 31% believed he was making the country worse.

As seen in the president's approval rating, Independent voters account for the difference. These voters divide. 38% report the president is having a positive effect and 39% say he is making things worse. Two months ago, 42% thought President Obama was bringing about change for the better, and 33% said he was not.

A Nation Divides About the Course of the Country

In general, when it comes to how things are going in the United States, Americans divide. 47% think the country is moving in the right direction, and 47% say it is moving along the wrong path. More residents have a pessimistic view of the nation's trajectory since Marist last asked this question in August. 50% of Americans, at that time, reported the country was on track compared with 42% who thought it needed to be redirected.

Similar proportions of registered voters share the population's divided views. And, here again, Independents are the reason. Currently, nearly six in ten Independent voters -- 58% - - think the nation is moving in the wrong direction. 37% say it is moving in the right direction. This is a vast difference from August's survey when 45% reported the nation was moving in the right direction, and 48% reported it was taking a wrong turn.

Obama's Handling of Health Care...Not What the Doctor Ordered?

Just less than half -- 49% -- of the U.S. electorate disapproves of how President Barack Obama is handling health care. 44% approve. When Marist last asked this question in August, voters divided. 43% of registered voters approved of Mr. Obama's handling of health care while 45% did not.

Since that previous poll, opinion remains split along party lines. 68% of Democrats approve of the president's actions while 80% of Republicans disapprove. Two months ago, 74% of Democrats and 76% of Republicans held these respective views. Little has changed among Independent voters. A majority of this group -- 53% -- do not like how Mr. Obama is handling the issue. A similar proportion of Independents -- 52% -- was not satisfied with the president's handling of health care two months ago.

Majority of Voters Approve of Public Option

The proposed public option in health care reform has come under a great deal of debate. Do Americans think a public option is a good thing or a bad thing? 60% think it would prove beneficial while 27% think it would be detrimental. Similar proportions of registered voters agree.

Not surprisingly, 75% of Democrats believe the option is a good thing, and 12% do not. Looking at Republicans, 40% believe it to be a benefit, and 49% think there's a better way to go. A majority of Independents -- 57% -- say a public option would be a good thing. 30% disagree. Interestingly, voters who identify themselves as ideologically conservative divide. 43% are for the public option, and 44% are against it.

Voters Divide Over Handling of Economy...Obama Slips Among Independent Voters

Slightly less than half of registered voters nationwide -- 48% -- approve of the way President Obama is handling the economy. 47% disapprove. In Marist's August survey, the president had a slim majority of voters who thought he was handling the economy well. 52% approved of his actions while 41% did not at that time.

Although there continues to be a partisan divide on this issue, the bigger cause for worry for the president is his drop in support among Independents. Looking at the Democrats, three-quarters agree with Mr. Obama's economic strategy. Not surprisingly, Republicans stand on the other end of the spectrum with 77% *disapproving* of the president's handling of the economy.

But, when it comes to Independents, the tides have turned against the president. 54% of these all-important voters report they *disapprove* of how Mr. Obama is dealing with the economy while 42% approve. In Marist's August survey, Independent voters divided with 47% saying they liked the way the president was dealing with the economy and 45% reporting they did not.

However, the silver lining for the president is that seven in ten voters still think he inherited the country's current economic conditions while 24% say they are a result of his own policies. Even a majority of Republicans -- 51% -- report the president walked into the nation's current economic web. Two months ago, 74% believed the nation's economic problems were left for Obama to solve. And, at that time, 18% thought the nation's economic situation was a result of the president's actions.

Unemployment Picture Dim

76% of Americans report they personally know someone who has lost his or her job in the last 6 months. And, unfortunately, the unemployment situation has not improved during that same time frame. When Marist last asked this question to U.S. residents in April, 75% said they knew someone who had been laid off during the preceding six months.

Nature of the Sample: 1026 U.S. Residents

This survey of 1026 United States residents was conducted on October 7th, 8th, and 12th, 2009. Residents 18 years of age and older were interviewed by telephone. Telephone numbers were selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the nation. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each region was represented in proportion to its population. To increase coverage, this land-line sample was supplemented by respondents reached through random dialing of cell phone numbers. The two samples were then combined. Results are statistically significant at $\pm 3.0\%$. There are 913 registered voters. The results for this subset are statistically significant at $\pm 3.5\%$. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.

Marist Poll October 2009
National Survey Tables

		Registered Voters		
		Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?		
		Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		53%	41%	6%
Party ID	Democrat	84%	11%	5%
	Republican	21%	74%	5%
	Independent	45%	47%	8%
Party ID by Gender	Democratic men	85%	12%	3%
	Democratic women	83%	11%	7%
	Republican men	18%	79%	3%
	Republican women	23%	70%	7%
	Independent men	42%	50%	8%
	Independent women	49%	43%	8%
	Ideology	Liberal	81%	11%
Moderate		68%	25%	7%
Conservative		29%	66%	5%
Region	Northeast	61%	34%	6%
	Midwest	57%	35%	8%
	South	42%	52%	6%
	West	58%	37%	5%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	52%	41%	7%
	\$50,000 or more	54%	42%	4%
Education	Not college graduate	51%	42%	6%
	College graduate	54%	40%	6%
Age	18 to 29	70%	25%	5%
	30 to 44	57%	37%	5%
	45 to 59	46%	48%	6%
	60 or older	46%	46%	8%
Gender	Men	50%	45%	5%
	Women	55%	38%	7%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters "N=913 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters			
		Overall, would you describe the direction in which President Barack Obama is moving the country as:			
		Change for the better	Change for the worse	No change at all	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		46%	34%	18%	2%
Party ID	Democrat	77%	6%	16%	1%
	Republican	18%	64%	17%	1%
	Independent	38%	39%	20%	3%
Party ID by Gender	Democratic men	75%	8%	16%	0%
	Democratic women	78%	4%	15%	2%
	Republican men	16%	65%	17%	1%
	Republican women	19%	64%	16%	2%
	Independent men	36%	43%	19%	2%
	Independent women	39%	35%	22%	4%
Ideology	Liberal	78%	6%	14%	3%
	Moderate	60%	19%	19%	1%
	Conservative	22%	58%	18%	1%
Region	Northeast	55%	24%	20%	1%
	Midwest	50%	29%	20%	1%
	South	38%	44%	16%	3%
	West	50%	32%	17%	1%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	46%	33%	19%	3%
	\$50,000 or more	48%	37%	15%	1%
Education	Not college graduate	45%	34%	19%	2%
	College graduate	50%	34%	14%	2%
Age	18 to 29	59%	14%	27%	0%
	30 to 44	49%	29%	20%	3%
	45 to 59	42%	42%	15%	1%
	60 or older	43%	41%	14%	2%
Gender	Men	44%	37%	18%	1%
	Women	49%	31%	18%	2%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters "N=913 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		USA Residents		
		In general, thinking about the way things are going in the country, do you feel things are going in the right direction or that things are going in the wrong direction?		
		Right direction	Wrong direction	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
USA Residents		47%	47%	6%
Registered Voters		48%	47%	5%
Party ID	Democrat	77%	19%	4%
	Republican	22%	74%	4%
	Independent	37%	58%	5%
Party ID by Gender	Democratic men	80%	18%	1%
	Democratic women	75%	19%	5%
	Republican men	21%	73%	6%
	Republican women	23%	74%	3%
	Independent men	34%	63%	3%
	Independent women	41%	52%	7%
Ideology	Liberal	76%	21%	3%
	Moderate	65%	32%	3%
	Conservative	24%	72%	4%
Region	Northeast	57%	40%	3%
	Midwest	50%	45%	5%
	South	40%	54%	7%
	West	50%	42%	8%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	46%	48%	6%
	\$50,000 or more	50%	46%	4%
Education	Not college graduate	46%	48%	6%
	College graduate	51%	45%	5%
Age	18 to 29	59%	37%	5%
	30 to 44	47%	44%	9%
	45 to 59	45%	51%	4%
	60 or older	43%	51%	5%
Gender	Men	46%	49%	6%
	Women	49%	45%	6%

Marist Poll National Residents "N=1026 MOE +/- 3%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters		
		Do you approve or disapprove of how President Barack Obama is handling health care?		
		Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		44%	49%	7%
Party ID	Democrat	68%	23%	8%
	Republican	16%	80%	4%
	Independent	39%	53%	7%
Party ID by Gender	Democratic men	72%	23%	5%
	Democratic women	65%	24%	11%
	Republican men	17%	80%	3%
	Republican women	15%	80%	5%
	Independent men	39%	57%	4%
	Independent women	40%	49%	11%
Ideology	Liberal	67%	22%	11%
	Moderate	56%	34%	10%
	Conservative	24%	73%	3%
Region	Northeast	47%	46%	7%
	Midwest	50%	42%	8%
	South	35%	58%	7%
	West	47%	46%	7%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	44%	48%	9%
	\$50,000 or more	43%	51%	6%
Education	Not college graduate	41%	51%	8%
	College graduate	47%	47%	6%
Age	18 to 29	57%	36%	7%
	30 to 44	42%	48%	9%
	45 to 59	40%	54%	6%
	60 or older	40%	53%	7%
Gender	Men	44%	52%	4%
	Women	43%	47%	10%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters "N=913 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		USA Residents		
		Do you think a public option is a good thing or a bad thing to include in health care reform?		
		Good thing	Bad thing	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
USA Residents		60%	27%	13%
Registered Voters		59%	28%	13%
Party ID	Democrat	75%	12%	13%
	Republican	40%	49%	11%
	Independent	57%	30%	13%
Party ID by Gender	Democratic men	72%	12%	16%
	Democratic women	77%	12%	11%
	Republican men	37%	58%	5%
	Republican women	43%	41%	17%
	Independent men	51%	33%	17%
	Independent women	65%	26%	9%
Ideology	Liberal	79%	7%	14%
	Moderate	67%	22%	11%
	Conservative	43%	44%	13%
Region	Northeast	59%	25%	16%
	Midwest	62%	26%	12%
	South	53%	34%	13%
	West	70%	18%	11%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	59%	26%	15%
	\$50,000 or more	62%	30%	9%
Education	Not college graduate	61%	24%	15%
	College graduate	57%	34%	10%
Age	18 to 29	68%	14%	18%
	30 to 44	66%	21%	13%
	45 to 59	58%	32%	10%
	60 or older	51%	35%	14%
Gender	Men	56%	30%	14%
	Women	64%	24%	12%

Marist Poll National Residents "N=1026 MOE +/- 3%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters		
		Do you approve or disapprove of how President Barack Obama is handling the economy?		
		Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		48%	47%	5%
Party ID	Democrat	75%	17%	8%
	Republican	19%	77%	3%
	Independent	42%	54%	5%
Party ID by Gender	Democratic men	81%	13%	6%
	Democratic women	70%	21%	9%
	Republican men	18%	81%	1%
	Republican women	20%	75%	5%
	Independent men	42%	56%	1%
	Independent women	41%	50%	8%
Ideology	Liberal	77%	15%	8%
	Moderate	64%	30%	6%
	Conservative	23%	73%	4%
Region	Northeast	54%	41%	5%
	Midwest	52%	43%	5%
	South	40%	54%	6%
	West	49%	45%	6%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	45%	48%	7%
	\$50,000 or more	51%	47%	3%
Education	Not college graduate	45%	50%	5%
	College graduate	51%	42%	6%
Age	18 to 29	58%	33%	8%
	30 to 44	49%	45%	6%
	45 to 59	44%	51%	5%
	60 or older	44%	51%	5%
Gender	Men	49%	48%	3%
	Women	46%	46%	8%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters "N=913 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters		
		Do you think the current economic conditions are mostly something President Obama inherited or are they mostly a result of his own policies?		
		Economic conditions mostly inherited	Economic conditions mostly result of his own policies	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		70%	24%	6%
Party ID	Democrat	86%	11%	3%
	Republican	51%	41%	8%
	Independent	70%	25%	5%
Party ID by Gender	Democratic men	90%	8%	2%
	Democratic women	83%	13%	4%
	Republican men	48%	47%	5%
	Republican women	54%	36%	10%
	Independent men	66%	30%	3%
	Independent women	74%	19%	7%
Ideology	Liberal	88%	7%	5%
	Moderate	84%	12%	4%
	Conservative	54%	40%	5%
Region	Northeast	76%	17%	7%
	Midwest	75%	21%	4%
	South	64%	30%	6%
	West	71%	23%	6%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	68%	27%	5%
	\$50,000 or more	76%	21%	3%
Education	Not college graduate	67%	27%	6%
	College graduate	78%	18%	4%
Age	18 to 29	77%	17%	6%
	30 to 44	75%	20%	4%
	45 to 59	68%	28%	4%
	60 or older	66%	27%	8%
Gender	Men	70%	26%	4%
	Women	71%	22%	7%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters "N=913 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		USA Residents	
		Do you personally know someone who has lost their job in the last 6 months?	
		Yes	No
		Row %	Row %
USA Residents		76%	24%
Registered Voters		77%	23%
Party ID	Democrat	71%	29%
	Republican	82%	18%
	Independent	79%	21%
Party ID by Gender	Democratic men	77%	23%
	Democratic women	66%	34%
	Republican men	81%	19%
	Republican women	83%	17%
	Independent men	83%	17%
	Independent women	74%	26%
Ideology	Liberal	75%	25%
	Moderate	78%	22%
	Conservative	78%	22%
Region	Northeast	72%	28%
	Midwest	76%	24%
	South	78%	22%
	West	74%	26%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	75%	25%
	\$50,000 or more	81%	19%
Education	Not college graduate	74%	26%
	College graduate	80%	20%
Age	18 to 29	74%	26%
	30 to 44	80%	20%
	45 to 59	82%	18%
	60 or older	68%	32%
Gender	Men	79%	21%
	Women	72%	28%

Marist Poll National Residents "N=1026 MOE +/- 3%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.