



**Showdown with the Intelligence Community:
Americans More Likely to Believe the FBI than President Trump**
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This Marist Poll Reports:

Two-thirds of Americans (66%) say, if President Donald Trump and the FBI disagree, they would believe the FBI over the president. Only 24% of U.S. residents report they would take the side of Mr. Trump. With the exception of the president's most ardent supporters, more Americans put credence in the FBI than in the president.

More than seven in ten Americans do not think the FBI is out to get President Trump's administration. 71% of U.S. residents assert the Bureau is just trying to do its job. In contrast, 23% believe the FBI is biased against the president. Although 49% of Republicans believe the FBI has a grievance against Mr. Trump, more than four in ten (43%) say the Bureau is just carrying out its duties.

"If the White House was banking on the release of the Nunes memo to flip public opinion against the FBI, that has not happened," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "In fact, the Nunes memo becomes just another page in a lengthy book on the investigation."

In contrast with President Trump, the FBI is held in favor among many Americans. 65% of residents have a favorable impression of the FBI. 28% have an unfavorable one. Regardless of demographic group, at least a majority of Americans, including 55% of Republicans, have a positive view of the FBI.

Mr. Trump continues to suffer from a low favorable rating and a low job approval rating. 35% of U.S. adults have a positive impression of the president, and 57% have a negative one. Looking at Mr. Trump's job performance, 38% approve of how he is doing, and 54% disapprove. Seven percent are unsure. The president received nearly identical favorable and job approval ratings last month.

The proportion of Americans who strongly disapprove of how President Trump is performing in his post (44%), up from 39% last month, also continues to outweigh the proportion who strongly

approve (24%).

If Americans have to pick sides between President Trump and Special Counsel Robert Mueller, a majority are more likely to believe Mr. Mueller (55%) than Mr. Trump (30%). One percent believe both, 4% align with neither of them, and 11% are unsure. Again, with the exception of the president's base, more Americans are likely to place credibility in Mueller. However, even among his base, there is less consensus among white residents without a college education. 43% perceive Trump to be more believable than Mueller while 40% have the opposing view.

Mueller has been tasked with investigating potential Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, and seven in ten residents (70%), including 55% of Republicans, want Mueller to finish his investigation. 16% of Americans think Mueller should be fired, and 14% are unsure. Last month, similar proportions of Americans had these views.

A majority of Americans (53%) consider Mueller's investigation to be fair, a modest increase from 48% previously. 28% think the probe is unfair, and one in five (20%) are unsure. A partisan divide exists. While 77% of Democrats and 51% of independents perceive the investigation to be fair, a plurality of Republicans (46%) say it is unfair. 35% of the GOP, though, think the investigation is being carried out without prejudice, and a notable 19% of Republicans are unsure.

Despite this high-profile investigation, Mueller remains relatively unknown to the American public. 33%, a slight increase from 29% in January, have a favorable view of Mueller, 27% have an unfavorable one, and 39% are unsure or never heard of him. Previously, 29% of residents nationally had a negative opinion of Mueller, and 42% were unsure or had never heard of him.

"Although most Americans think the Mueller investigation is fair and should move ahead to completion, his standing in the court of public opinion is not solid given the large proportion of people who have not formed an impression of him," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion.

Many Americans do not think President Trump has done something illegal in his dealings with Russia and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Yet, they are not willing to clear him of all wrong doing. 57% of residents believe President Trump acted either illegally (29%) or acted unethically but did not break the law (28%). Only 36% say Trump did nothing wrong. Of note, the proportion of Americans who think the president's behavior was illegal is up from 22% in October.

With this year's midterm elections on the horizon, are Americans worried about Russian interference in the electoral process? A majority (53%) think it is not very likely or not likely at all that Russia will meddle in the election. 41% believe it is either likely or very likely Russia will attempt to interfere. While 60% of Democrats expect Russian involvement, most Republicans

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(78%) and a majority of independents (56%) think Russia will not tamper with the process.

Americans do not think Congress or social media sites, like Facebook and Twitter, have invested significant energy into safeguarding the midterm elections from Russian hacking. 73% of residents nationally say Congress has done little or nothing at all to change things from 2016. Only 18% believe they have done a great deal or good amount to ensure there is not a recurrence.

Nearly three in four Americans (73%) also report that social media companies have done little or nothing at all to prohibit Russia from meddling in the 2018 midterm elections. Only 15% say they have done a great deal or a good amount to prevent Russian interference since 2016.

Looking at the generic congressional ballot question, Democrats lead the Republicans (49% to 38%) among registered voters nationally. Five percent support neither party's candidate, and 8% are undecided. There has been a change on this question. When it was last reported in January, the Democrats edged the Republicans (46% to 40%).

"When policy is the focus, the gap between potential vote for Democrats and Republicans narrows," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "But, when President Trump is occupied with Twitter skirmishes, the Democrats reestablish a double-digit advantage over the Republicans on this question."

Independents fluctuate. A plurality of independent voters (43%) now say they support the Democratic candidate, up from 36% last month. 32% are for the Republican candidate, down from 38%.

Americans remain pessimistic about the direction of the nation. 57% think it is moving in the wrong direction while 37% believe it is moving in the right one. This is little changed from Americans' attitudes last month.