



CBS NEWS POLL
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The Obama Presidency: A Year Before the 2012 Presidential Election
December 5-7, 2011

- President Barack Obama's approval rating remains in the mid-40s...
President Obama is viewed as down-to-earth (59%) and a strong leader (57%)...
However, the poll finds negative assessments of the President too...
51% disapprove of the President's signature accomplishment in office...

Approval Ratings

44% of Americans approve of the job Barack Obama is doing as president - similar to his rating last month. About as many - 46% - now disapprove.

Last month, the President's approval rating was 43%, matching the lowest rating of his presidency. His highest approval rating since taking office (68%) occurred in April 2009...

President Obama's Overall Job Rating

Table with 4 columns: Date, Rating, Approve, Disapprove. Rows include dates from 4/2009 to 11/2011 with corresponding approval and disapproval percentages.

As the nation's economy continues to struggle, just 33% of Americans approve of the way President Obama is handling it— the lowest rating of his presidency in CBS News Polls. 60% disapprove. The last time the President's approval rating on the economy was above 40% was in February of this year.

In addition, only 35% approve of his handling of job creation.

Mr. Obama gets slightly better marks on foreign policy (41% approve), and since the death of Osama bin Laden, terrorism has been a strong issue for the President: 57% approve of his handling of that.

### President Obama's Approval Ratings on...

	Approve	Disapprove
Handling terrorism	57%	31
Foreign policy	41%	41
Job creation	35%	58
The economy	33%	60

### The President on the Issues: The Economy

Views on the national economy remain very negative: since early 2008, roughly three in four Americans (and sometimes even more) have said the economy is in bad shape. Now, 86% of Americans characterize the economy as at least somewhat bad, including 42% who say it is very bad. Although the national unemployment rate recently dropped below 9% for the first time since 2009, Americans are skeptical that a recovery is on the horizon. Just 21% think the economy is getting better, and 39% think it is getting worse, up from 32% last month.

### Direction of the Economy

	Now	11/2011
Better	21%	18%
Worse	39	32
Same	40	50

When asked if President Obama has made real progress fixing the economy, 68% say he has not. Just 28% say he has.

### Has President Obama Made Real Progress Fixing the Economy?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Yes	28%	9%	52%	23%
No	68	89	42	72

And while 37% say the Obama Administration's policies prevented the country from going into a deeper recession, just under half -- 49% - say those policies did not do that.

### Did President Obama's Policies Prevent a Deeper Recession?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Yes	37%	20%	57%	34%
No	49	71	30	50
Don't know	14	9	13	16

In addition, more think the policies of the Obama Administration have mostly favored Wall Street (42%) than mostly favored average Americans (38%).

**Who Do the Policies of the Obama Administration Favor Most?**

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Wall Street	42%	56%	25%	44%
Average Americans	38	16	64	33
Neither (volunteered)	9	18	1	9

But while they may disapprove of his handling of this issue, few Americans think the President is most to blame for the current state of the nation's economy. When asked to choose between the Bush Administration, the Obama administration, Wall Street, and Congress, more Americans blame the Bush Administration (22%) or Congress (16%) than Wall Street (12%) or President Obama (12%), though 24% volunteer that a combination of all four is to blame.

**Blame for the Condition of the Economy**

	Now	9/2011	6/2011	9/2010
Bush administration	22%	22%	26%	37%
Congress	16	15	11	11
Wall Street	12	16	25	21
Obama administration	12	12	8	5
Someone else	7	8	8	8
All of them/combo	24	23	19	15

**The President: Qualities and Characteristics**

Despite an approval rating in the 40s, Americans appear to have a positive impression of President Obama on some personal measures. A 57% majority views the President as a strong leader, similar to the percentage in a September poll -- but that figure has declined significantly since he took office. Democrats (85%) and independents (57%) say Barack Obama has strong qualities of leadership, while 67% of Republicans disagree.

**Does Pres. Obama Have Strong Qualities of Leadership?**

	Now	9/2011	2/2011	1/2010	10/2009	2/2009
Yes	57%	57%	62%	70%	72%	85%
No	39	39	34	28	24	10

59% of Americans describe the President as down-to-earth, and just a third says he is aloof. Democrats and independents see him as down-to-earth, while more than half of Republicans perceive the President as aloof.

**Do You Think of President Obama as...?**

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Down-to-earth	59%	35%	87%	56%
Aloof	32	53	10	34

The President is also seen as a fighter: two thirds of Americans think Barack Obama fights hard for his policies; just 26% say he doesn't. More than half of Republicans think President Obama fights hard for his policies.

**Does President Obama Fight Hard for his Policies?**

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Yes	64%	55%	75%	63%
No	26	35	18	27

Bringing change and uniting Americans were central elements of Barack Obama’s presidential campaign four years ago. Today, most Americans think he has worked hard to bring about change (57%), but fewer (37%) think his presidency has united the country. There are partisan differences on these measures also.

**Do You Think President Obama Has....**

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Worked hard to bring about change	57%	39%	79%	53%
Mostly just talked about it	38	57	18	40
Brought groups together	37%	21%	54%	35%
Divided them	48	67	33	48

And most Americans do not think the President’s priorities for the country are in line with theirs. 54% say President Obama doesn’t share their priorities, while 41% think he does. This is the public’s most negative assessment on this question since Barack Obama assumed office. Again, the public divides along partisan lines: 73% of Democrats say he shares their priorities, while 79% of Republicans say he does not.

**Does Pres. Obama Share Your Priorities for the Country?**

	Now	4/2011	1/2011	5/2010	10/2009	2/2009
Yes	41%	43%	42%	45%	58%	65%
No	54	53	52	47	38	28

**Health Care**

Americans remain skeptical of one of the major legislative achievements of Barack Obama’s first term as president: the 2010 health care reform law. 51% of Americans disapprove of the law, including a third who strongly disapprove, while just 35% approve either somewhat or strongly. More Americans have disapproved than approved of the law since it was passed in March 2010.

**Views of the Health Care Reform Law**

	Now	6/2011	2/2011	10/2010	3/2010
Approve	35%	37%	33%	39%	32%
Disapprove	51	48	51	43	53

Only 13% of Americans think the new health care reform law will mostly help them personally; most either think it will hurt them (32%) or not have much of an effect (46%). Most Republicans think it will hurt them (53%), while most Democrats think it will have no effect on them personally (51%).

### How Will the Health Care Reform Law Affect You Personally?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Help	13%	2%	25%	12%
Hurt	32	53	15	32
No effect	46	40	51	46

What's more, half of all Americans think President Obama should have focused his priorities elsewhere during his first term in office, though 43% think he did the right thing in trying to reform the health care system. Most Republicans think he should have focused on other things, and most Democrats think he did the right thing. Independents are more divided.

### Should President Obama Have Focused on Health Care in His First Term?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Yes	43%	20%	67%	41%
No	50	76	29	48

### Looking Ahead to 2012

Americans continue to be unhappy with the direction the country is headed in: Three in four think the country is off on the wrong track. Just one in five thinks it is headed in the right direction.

#### Direction of the Country

Right direction	21%
Wrong track	75

With nearly a year to go before the presidential election, 41% of Americans think President Obama has performed his job well enough to be elected to a second term, but 54% don't think so. Not surprisingly, most Democrats think Mr. Obama deserves to be re-elected, while most Republicans do not.

### Does President Obama Deserve to Be Re-elected?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Yes	41%	7%	77%	37%
No	54	91	19	55

As the President gears up for his re-election campaign, 66% of Americans say they do not have a clear idea of what he wants to accomplish in a second term; just a third say they do. Fewer than half of Democrats say they have a clear idea of what the President wants to accomplish if re-elected.

### Do You Have a Clear Idea Of What Pres. Obama Wants to Accomplish If Re-elected?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Clear idea	32%	22%	46%	29%
Not a clear idea	66	76	52	69

Compared to other recent two-term presidents, President Obama's 44% approval rating is only slightly below Bill Clinton's at this point in time in his presidency (47%), but it is 14 points lower than Ronald Reagan's was in late 1983. George W. Bush's approval rating, at 52% in December 2003, was also higher than Mr. Obama's.

Comparisons to modern one-term presidents are mixed. President Obama's approval rating is lower than President George H. W. Bush's in November 1991, but President Bush's approval rating dropped precipitously during 1992. In contrast, President Obama's current approval rating is much higher than the 30% Jimmy Carter received in late 1979.

<b>Presidential Job Approval Ratings</b>						
	Barack Obama Now	G.W. Bush 12/2003	Bill Clinton 12/1995	G.H.W. Bush 11/1991	Ronald Reagan 11/1983	Jimmy Carter 11/1979
Approve	44%	52%	47%	51%	58%	30%
Disapprove	46	40	40	37	30	50

After nearly three years in the White House, 52% of Americans say President Obama's performance in office has been about what they expected, but 35% feel his time in office has been disappointing. Few Americans – even among Democrats -- say he has exceeded their expectations.

<b>President Obama's Job Performance So Far</b>				
	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
About as expected	52%	48%	61%	49%
Worse than expected	35	48	19	38
Better than expected	10	3	19	8

### **Congressional Gridlock**

Congress' job approval rating is far lower than the President's. 82% of Americans disapprove of the job Congress is doing, while 11% approve - just two percentage points above the all-time low of 9% recorded last month.

<b>Job Rating of Congress</b>			
	Now	11/2011	10/2011
Approve	11%	9%	9%
Disapprove	82	83	84

When it comes to the difficulties in reaching agreements and passing legislation in Congress, Americans put more of the blame on the Republicans in Congress than Barack Obama and the Democrats. 42% blame Republicans more, while just 26% blame President Obama and the Democrats, though 22% volunteer both are equally to blame.

<b>Who Do You Blame for Gridlock in Washington?</b>				
	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Republicans in Congress	42%	9%	76%	39%
Barack Obama and Democrats	26	59	7	20
Both (volunteered)	22	26	10	28

This poll was conducted by telephone from December 5-7, 2011 among 856 adults nationwide. Phone numbers were dialed from samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups may be higher. This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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q1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Nov11a
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	44	11	77	41	43
Disapprove	46	79	14	47	47
DK/NA	10	10	9	12	10

q2 Do you feel things in this country are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?

					Nov11b
Right direction	21	7	36	19	15
Wrong track	75	92	59	76	76
DK/NA	4	1	5	5	9

q3 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling foreign policy?

					Nov11a
Approve	41	16	64	39	45
Disapprove	41	66	18	42	41
DK/NA	18	18	18	19	14

q4 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the economy?

Approve	33	10	64	26	34
Disapprove	60	88	27	66	60
DK/NA	7	2	9	8	6

q5 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the threat of terrorism?

Approve	57	31	82	56	63
Disapprove	31	54	13	29	28
DK/NA	12	15	5	15	9

q6 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling job creation?

					Oct11a1
Approve	35	11	60	33	35
Disapprove	58	83	30	62	58
DK/NA	7	6	10	5	7

q7-8 BLANK

q9 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

					Nov11a
Approve	11	11	14	8	9
Disapprove	82	81	77	87	83
DK/NA	7	8	9	5	8

q10 So far, has Barack Obama's performance in office been better than you expected, worse than you expected, or about what you expected?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep11a
	%	%	%	%	%
Better than expected	10	3	19	8	8
Worse than expected	35	48	19	38	34
About what expected	52	48	61	49	55
DK/NA	3	1	1	5	3

q11 Do you think Barack Obama has performed his job as president well enough to deserve re-election, or don't you think so?

Deserves re-election	41	7	77	37
Does not deserve re-election	54	91	19	55
DK/NA	5	2	4	8

q12 How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

					Nov11a
Very good	1	1	1	1	1
Fairly good	12	4	21	11	12
Fairly bad	44	36	49	46	41
Very bad	42	59	28	41	45
DK/NA	1	0	1	1	1

q13 Do you think the economy is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

Better	21	8	35	19	18
Worse	39	53	26	38	32
Same	40	38	38	42	50
DK/NA	0	1	1	1	0

q14 BLANK

q15 Who do you think is mostly to blame for the current state of the nation's economy-- the Bush administration, the Obama administration, Wall Street and financial institutions, Congress, or someone else?

					Sep11b
Bush administration	22	6	39	21	22
Obama administration	12	26	2	11	12
Wall St. & financial inst.	12	9	14	12	16
Congress	16	19	14	16	15
Someone else	7	7	4	10	8
All of the above (Vol.)	12	15	7	14	10
Combination (Vol.)	12	11	12	13	13
Don't know/No answer	7	7	8	3	4

q16 Since he took office, has Barack Obama made real progress in fixing the economy or hasn't he made real progress in fixing the economy?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep11b
	%	%	%	%	%
Made real progress	28	9	52	23	25
Hasn't made real progress	68	89	42	72	69
DK/NA	4	2	6	5	6

q17 Do you think the policies of the Obama Administration prevented the country from going into a deeper recession, or have the policies of the Obama Administration not had that effect?

Did	37	20	57	34
Did not	49	71	30	50
DK/NA	14	9	13	16

q18 Do you think the policies of the Obama administration have mostly favored those on Wall Street or mostly favored the average American?

Wall Street	42	56	25	44
Average American	38	16	64	33
Both (Vol.)	2	0	1	3
Neither (Vol.)	9	18	1	9
DK/NA	9	10	9	11

q19-21 BLANK

q22 Do you think Barack Obama has strong qualities of leadership, or not?

Has	57	28	85	57	57
Does not have	39	67	12	40	39
Don't know/No answer	4	5	3	3	4

q23 Do you think Barack Obama has the same priorities for the country as you have, or doesn't he?

					Apr11a
Yes	41	16	73	33	43
No	54	79	23	60	53
Don't know/No answer	5	5	4	7	4

q24 Regardless of your opinion of Barack Obama, do you think he has worked hard to bring about change, or has he mostly just talked about it?

Worked hard	57	39	79	53
Mostly talked	38	57	18	40
Don't know/No answer	5	4	3	7

q25 So far, do you think Barack Obama's presidency has brought different groups of Americans together, or do you think it has divided them?

					Jan10b
Brought groups together	37	21	54	35	50
Divided them	48	67	33	48	37
Don't know/No answer	15	12	13	17	13

q26 Regardless of your opinion about the health care law enacted last year, do you think Barack Obama did the right thing in trying to reform the healthcare system during his first term in office, or do you think he should have focused his priorities elsewhere?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Right thing	43	20	67	41
Focus elsewhere	50	76	29	48
DK/NA	7	4	4	11

q27 Do you have a clear idea of what Barack Obama wants to accomplish if he were elected to a second term as President, or not?

Clear idea	32	22	46	29
Not a clear idea	66	76	52	69
DK/NA	2	2	2	2

q28 In his dealings with Congress, do you think Barack Obama fights hard for his policies, or don't you think he does?

Fights for policies	64	55	75	63
Does not	26	35	18	27
DK/NA	10	10	7	10

q29 In general do you think of Barack Obama as down-to-earth or do you think of him as aloof?

Down-to-earth	59	35	87	56
Aloof	32	53	10	34
DK/NA	9	12	3	10

q30-31 BLANK

q32 These days, who do you blame more for the difficulties in reaching agreements and passing legislation in Congress -- the Republicans in Congress or Barack Obama and the Democrats in Congress?

Republicans in Congress	42	9	76	39
Barack Obama and Democrats	26	59	7	20
Both (Vol.)	22	26	10	28
Don't know/No answer	10	6	7	13

q33-34 BLANK

q35 From what you've heard or read, do you approve or disapprove of the health care law that was enacted last year? (If Approve, ask:) Do you strongly approve or somewhat approve? (If Disapprove, ask:) Do you somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove?

					Jun11a
Strongly approve	12	1	26	9	14
Somewhat approve	23	13	35	21	23
Somewhat disapprove	16	15	11	19	15
Strongly disapprove	35	62	9	36	33
DK/NA	14	9	19	15	15

q36 From what you've heard or read, do you think the new health care reform law will mostly help you personally, will mostly hurt you personally, or don't you think it will have much of an effect on you personally?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan11a
	%	%	%	%	%
Help	13	2	25	12	18
Hurt	32	53	15	32	30
No effect	46	40	51	46	47
DK/NA	9	5	9	10	5

	<u>UWNEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	856	
Total Republicans	230	227
Total Democrats	272	257
Total Independents	354	372