



CBS News/New York Times Poll
For release: December 9, 2009
6:30 PM EST

ISSUES: MORE U.S. TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN, THE ECONOMY AND HEALTH CARE
December 4-8, 2009

Confronted with problems domestically and abroad, President Barack Obama's job approval rating has reached a new low in this poll, with just 50% approving of the job he is doing, down three points from last month. This is his lowest job approval rating yet in CBS News Polls.

In his speech to the nation last week, the President outlined his plan for the war in Afghanistan, including sending an additional 30,000 U.S. troops there; his speech had some effect. By a slim margin, more Americans now approve than disapprove of a troop increase there, and the President's approval rating on handling the war in Afghanistan has risen ten points from its low last month. However, most disapprove of setting a timetable for troop withdrawal, which the President suggested could begin in 2011.

The President's approval ratings on handling the economy is at an all-time low, and 50% disapprove of his handling of health care.

JOB APPROVAL

Confronted with problems on both the domestic and international fronts -- including unemployment, health care reform and the war in Afghanistan -- the President's job approval rating has fallen to an all-time low. Just 50% of Americans approve of the job President Obama is doing overall, while 39% disapprove. Last month, 53% approved.

He still receives strong support from Democrats, but his approval rating among Republicans is just 19%, and only 43% of independents approve.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB APPROVAL RATING

Table with 5 columns: Rating, All, Reps, Dems, Inds. Rows: Approve, Disapprove.

The president's approval rating on the nation's most important issue, the economy, continues to decline. 47% approve of the job he is doing on the economy - his lowest rating to date. 43% disapprove.

On health care, President Obama elicits more negative than positive ratings, with disapproval inching up to the 50% mark, its highest level yet. 42% approve of his handling of the issue. Earlier this fall measures were more upbeat.

**PRESIDENT OBAMA'S APPROVAL RATINGS**

	Now	11/2009	10/2009	8/2009	4/2009	2/2009
Overall	50%	53%	56%	56%	68%	62%
Afghanistan	48%	38%	42%	48%	56%	--
Economy	47%	49%	54%	53%	61%	55%
Health care	42%	44%	47%	40%	--	--

**U.S. TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN**

51% of Americans approve of sending more troops to Afghanistan, a strategy the President outlined in his speech last week. 43% disapprove.

**MORE U.S. TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN?**

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Approve	51%	68%	42%	48%
Disapprove	43	27	53	45

There is a noteworthy partisan dynamic to these views: members of the President's own party disapprove of a troop increase in Afghanistan, while two in three Republicans approve. Independents are divided.

President Obama said he would begin troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2011, but on this a majority disagrees with the president. 55% of the public thinks setting a deadline for troop withdrawal is a bad idea; just 41% think it is a good idea.

**SETTING A DATE FOR TROOP WITHDRAWAL**

Good idea	41%
Bad idea	55

President Obama's partisans agree with him on this point. Democrats support a timetable for troop withdrawal, while Republicans and independents do not.

However, the public would rather have U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan for just a year or two. 57% are willing for U.S. troops to stay in Afghanistan for two years or less, but just 33% are willing for them to stay longer than that or as long as it takes.

**WILLING FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF TROOPS  
TO REMAIN IN AFGHANISTAN FOR...**

Less than a year	32%
One to two years	25
Two to ten years	7
As long as it takes	26

Americans would pay for the added troops with spending cuts. Just 19% want the cost of sending more troops to Afghanistan to be added to the budget deficit, and only 10% support a tax increase.

**HOW TO PAY FOR ADDED TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN?**

Spending cuts	53%
Add to budget deficit	19%
Tax increase	10
Other	6

**PRESIDENT OBAMA'S WAR**

President Obama's approval rating on handling Afghanistan has risen ten points in this poll, from its low of 38% last month.

**PRESIDENT OBAMA'S HANDLING OF AFGHANISTAN**

	Now	11/2009	10/2009	4/2009
Approve	48%	38%	42%	58%
Disapprove	38	43	34	21
Don't know	14	19	24	21

The increase is attributable to a rise among Republicans and independents. 42% of Republicans now approve of how President Obama is handling Afghanistan, up from 23% last month. Among independents, approval has increased from 30% to 45% now.

But the public gives the President only mixed reviews on whether he has clearly explained his plan for Afghanistan -- 42% say he has, 47% say he has not.

**HAS OBAMA CLEARLY EXPLAINED HIS PLAN FOR AFGHANISTAN?**

Yes	42%
No	47

By two to one, assessments of the war remain highly negative. 60% think the war is going badly, while 30% think it is going well. This is a somewhat more positive view than last month,

**HOW ARE THINGS GOING FOR THE U.S. IN AFGHANISTAN?**

	Now	11/2009	9/2009	3/2003	12/2001
Well	30%	23%	35%	76%	93%
Badly	60	69	53	14	5

In November, assessments of the war had dropped sharply among Republicans. Those figures have returned to previous levels; 41% of Republicans now think the war is going well. Just 27% of Democrats agree.

49% think the U.S. is doing the right thing fighting in Afghanistan; 39% think the U.S. should not be involved in Afghanistan now.

**THE WAR AND TERRORISM**

In his speech, President Obama said "the days of providing a blank check are over," and that the government of Afghanistan must play a strong role in eliminating terrorists and creating stability there.

Most Americans don't see the government of Afghanistan as providing much help in efforts to create stability. Just 26% think the U.S. can count on the Afghan government to work toward stabilizing the country, while more than twice as many, 61%, think the U.S. can't count on that.

**COUNT ON AFGHAN GOV'T TO WORK TOWARD STABILIZING THE COUNTRY?**

Yes	26%
No	61

The public is divided about the long-term prospects for rooting out terrorists from the country. 48% think it is likely the U.S. will be able to stop terrorists from using Afghanistan as a safe haven for their attacks against the U.S. and its allies (but just 11% think that is very likely). 42% think that is not likely.

**LIKELY U.S. CAN STOP TERRORISTS IN AFGHANISTAN?**

Very likely	11%
Somewhat likely	37
Not at all/not likely	42

The President talked about the need to defeat Al Qaeda in Afghanistan; just under four in 10 think sending more troops to Afghanistan will make the U.S. safer from terrorism; far more than the 8% that think it will make the U.S. less safe. 45% think it will have no effect.

**THE ECONOMY**

Americans continue to volunteer the economy and jobs as the nation's top problem, far outdistancing their second most pressing issue - health care.

**COUNTRY'S MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM**

	Now	10/2009	9/2009	7/2009
Economy & jobs	47%	45%	41%	56%
Health care/health insurance	12	20	19	12

The public's overall assessment of the condition of the national economy remains grim; 77% of Americans say the economy is in bad shape.

**CONDITION OF THE ECONOMY**

	Now	11/2009	10/2009	8/2009	4/2009	2/2009
Good	22%	19%	16%	20%	16%	5%
Bad	77	79	84	79	84	94

In addition, just 29% of Americans think the economy is getting better, while 23% think it is getting worse. 47% say the economy is staying the same. Even though the public's outlook for the economy isn't especially hopeful, it is significantly more optimistic than earlier this year, when just 5% of Americans thought the economy was improving.

### THE ECONOMY IS GETTING...

	Now	11/2009	10/2009	8/2009	4/2009	2/2009
Better	29%	32%	31%	36%	20%	5%
Worse	23	25	18	25	34	51
Staying the same	47	42	50	38	43	42

The struggling economy has an impact on how Americans view the overall direction of the country. 37% of Americans say the nation is headed in the right direction - down slightly from September. 56% think the country is off on the wrong track.

While Americans are not very optimistic, they are 25 points more positive about the direction the U.S. is headed than they were a year ago.

Still, among those who think the economy is in very bad shape (33%), eight in 10 say the country is off on the wrong track.

### IS U.S. IN RIGHT DIRECTION OR WRONG TRACK?

	Now	9/2009	7/2009	12/2008	10/2008
Right direction	37%	41%	35%	12%	7%
Wrong track	56	53	57	83	89

### HEALTH CARE

As the Senate continues its debate over health care reform, the state of public opinion remains much the same as it has been: Americans support a public option, but few still believe the reforms under debate would actually help them personally.

About six in ten Americans continue to express support for the so-called "public option" -- which the Senate appears to have sidelined for now. Views on this haven't changed recently. As was the case last month, Democrats favor it and Republicans are opposed.

### VIEWS ON PUBLIC OPTION

	Now	11/2009
Favor	59%	61%
Oppose	29	28

Last summer, in poll questions that did not include the phrase "public option," views were much the same, with six in ten consistently in favor.

But as both sides of the debate have dug in to assert their positions this fall, the public's views on the impact of reform remain steady and skeptical: few Americans think they'll personally be helped by the reforms, and more than twice as many more think they'll be hurt, while four in ten foresee no impact.

**HOW WOULD PROPOSED CHANGES AFFECT YOU PERSONALLY?**

	Now	11/2009	10/2009
Would help	16%	19%	18%
Would hurt	34	34	31
No effect	42	41	45
Not sure	8	6	6

---

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1,031 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone December 4-8, 2009. Phone numbers were dialed from random digit dial 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 is higher.

This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

**CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL**  
**ISSUES: AFGHANISTAN, THE ECONOMY AND HEALTH CARE**  
**December 4-8, 2009**

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

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Nov09b
	Total	*** Party ID ***			
	%	Rep	Dem	Ind	%
Approve	50	19	82	43	53
Disapprove	39	70	12	41	36
DK/NA	11	11	6	16	11

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?

					Sep09b
Right direction	37	17	60	30	41
Wrong track	56	81	31	63	53
DK/NA	7	2	9	7	6

q3 What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

					Oct09a
Economy / Jobs	47	45	48	47	45
Health Care	12	11	13	13	20
War/Peace(General)	4	5	7	1	7
War in Afghanistan	2	1	3	2	3
War in Iraq	2	1	4	2	2
Poverty / Homelessness	3	2	1	5	1
Moral Values/Family Values	3	4	2	1	0
Budget Deficit	2	2	1	4	3
Other	20	26	16	18	16
DK/NA	5	3	5	7	3

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

					Nov09b
Approve	47	18	77	40	49%
Disapprove	43	77	14	47	43
DK/NA	10	5	9	13	8

q5 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the situation with Afghanistan?

Approve	48	42	55	45	38
Disapprove	38	38	33	41	43
DK/NA	14	20	12	14	19

q6 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling health care?

Approve	42	13	68	39	44
Disapprove	50	82	25	53	48
DK/NA	8	5	7	8	8

q7 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

q8 How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

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

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Nov09b
	%	%	%	%	%
Very good	2	2	2	2	1
Fairly good	20	10	27	21	18
Fairly bad	44	48	42	42	42
Very bad	33	39	27	35	37
DK/NA	1	1	2	0	2

q9 Do you think the economy is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

Better	29	19	41	24	32
Worse	23	30	11	31	25
Same	47	49	48	44	42
DK/NA	1	2	0	1	1

q10-82 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

q83 Do you think the U.S. is doing the right thing by fighting the war in Afghanistan now, or should the U.S. not be involved in Afghanistan now?

					Oct09a
Right thing	49	69	42	42	51
Not involved	39	22	46	45	39
DK/NA	12	9	12	13	10

q84 What is your impression of how the war in Afghanistan is going for the United States right now -- very well, somewhat well, somewhat badly, or very badly?

					Nov09b
Very well	1	2	1	1	4
Somewhat well	29	39	26	25	19
Somewhat badly	43	37	49	43	42
Very badly	17	13	18	19	27
DK/NA	10	9	6	12	8

q85 From what you know about the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, how much longer would you be willing to have large numbers of U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan -- less than a year, one to two years, two to five years, five to ten years, or as long as it takes?

					Sep09b
Less than a year	32	17	41	35	31
One to two years	25	19	31	25	24
Two to five years	6	8	5	5	11
Five to ten years	1	2	1	1	1
As long as it takes	26	46	14	23	26
Should leave now (vol.)	4	3	5	3	1
DK/NA	6	5	3	8	6



q86 How likely do you think it is that the U.S. will be able to stop terrorists from using Afghanistan as a safe haven for their attacks against the U.S. and its allies -- very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not all likely?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

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

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Very likely	11	16	9	11
Somewhat likely	37	44	41	29
Not very likely	26	24	28	26
Not at all likely	16	8	18	19
Don't know/no answer	10	8	4	15

q87 So far, do you think Barack Obama has clearly explained his plan for Afghanistan, or hasn't he clearly explained his plan?

Has explained plan	42	31	55	39
Has not explained plan	47	57	39	46
DK/NA	11	12	6	15

q88 As you may know, Barack Obama announced that an additional 30,000 U.S. troops will be sent to Afghanistan in the coming months. Do you approve or disapprove of sending additional troops to Afghanistan?

Approve	51	68	42	48
Disapprove	43	27	53	45
DK/NA	6	5	5	7

q89 As you may know, Barack Obama has announced that he will begin bringing U.S. troops home from Afghanistan starting in the middle of 2011. Do you think it is a good idea for Barack Obama to set a date to begin withdrawing troops, or is it not a good idea to set a date?

Good idea	41	20	62	38
Not good idea	55	78	36	57
DK/NA	4	2	2	5

q90 Regardless of whether you think sending additional troops to Afghanistan is a good idea, do you think the United States can count on the government of Afghanistan to work toward stabilizing the country, or can it not count on the government of Afghanistan?

Can count on Afghanistan	26	32	27	22
Cannot	61	53	62	66
DK/NA	13	15	11	12

q91 In order to pay for the additional U.S. troops in Afghanistan, do you think the money should come from a tax increase, spending cuts in other areas of government or should it be added to the budget deficit?

Tax increase	10	5	13	9
Spending cuts	53	64	46	52
Budget deficit	19	15	22	18
Other/Combination (vol.)	6	8	5	5
DK/NA	12	8	14	16

q92 Do you think sending more U.S. troops to Afghanistan will make the U.S. safer from terrorism, less safe from terrorism, or will sending more troops to Afghanistan not affect the United States' safety from terrorism?

**\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\***

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

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Safer	39	61	28	33
Less safe	8	3	10	10
Will not affect safety	45	27	57	46
DK/NA	8	9	5	11

q93 BLANK

q94 From what you've heard or read, do you think the health care reforms under consideration in Congress will mostly help you personally, will mostly hurt you personally, or don't you think they will have much of an effect on you personally?

					Nov09b
					%
Help	16	4	29	10	19
Hurt	34	54	13	38	34
No effect	42	35	50	39	41
DK/NA	8	7	8	13	6

q95 Would you favor or oppose the government offering some people who are uninsured the choice of a government administered health insurance plan -- also known as a "public option" -- that would compete with private health insurance plans?

Favor	59	33	80	59	61
Oppose	29	55	12	28	28
DK/NA	12	12	8	13	11

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>	
Total Respondents	1031		
Total Republicans	291	276	(27%)
Total Democrats	363	368	(36%)
Total Independents	377	387	(37%)