

Hillary Clinton & Robert Gates Only Two Leaders In Washington Get More Positive Than Negative Rating

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Most people are not familiar with Harry Reid, Mitch McConnell or John Boehner, but most of those who are give them negative ratings

Most of the ratings of leading political figures including Cabinet members and congressional leaders make for pretty dismal reading.

A recent Harris Poll asked the public to rate the performance of eight leaders and both parties in Congress.Â

Many people were not familiar with some of those on the list. Among those who were familiar with them, eight of the ten received more positive than negative ratings.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,276 adults surveyed online between December 7 and 14, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

Most adults were not familiar with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (56%), Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner (57%), House Minority Leader John Boehner (72%) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (72%).

Only half of all adults (49%) were familiar with Bob Gates.

The two most favorably rated leaders were Hillary Clinton (48% positive, 34% negative) and Bob Gates (28% positive, 21% negative).

Among those who were familiar with them, all of the other leaders rated had more negative than positive ratings:

- Vice President Joe Biden (42% negative to 30% positive);
- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (49% to 22%);
- Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner (29% to 15%);
- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (33% to 11%);
- House Minority Leader John Boehner (19% to 8%); and,
- Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (20% to 8%).

In addition, this Harris Poll asked the public what they thought of Republicans and Democrats in Congress. The replies to these questions, among those familiar with them, were overwhelmingly negative for both Democrats (50% negative and only 18% positive) and Republicans (50% negative and 14% positive).

None of the ratings in this poll were very different from the ratings in September.

So what?

These findings confirm that only a minority of the public is familiar with more than a small number of leaders in D.C.; and that most people with opinions continue to hold much more negative than positive feelings about Washington and most of our Federal Government leaders.

It is reasonable to expect this to continue until the economy is seen to be improving, which means that the numbers of unemployed are falling substantially (jobless growth is unlikely to make these numbers better).

It is interesting that Hillary Clinton is the most popular leader in D.C, as were both Secretaries of State in the Bush Administration, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice.

Whether that is because fewer people blame them for the country's economic and domestic problems or because they are often seen on a world stage, this survey does not tell us.

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States December 7 and 14, 2009 among 2,276 adults (aged 18 and over).

Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates.

These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys.

The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population.

Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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