

Half Of Americans Do Not Believe President Obama Will Be Re-elected

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President's job rating one year from election lower than five of past six presidents at same time

One year from now the country will be in the final days of the 2012 presidential campaign.

Most likely the final debates will have been held and the two candidates will be on their final campaign trips wooing undecided voters. President Obama will be trying to move on to a second term and one of the Republicans will be trying to stop that.

However, the President is heading into this year-long campaign with only one-third of Americans (33%) giving the job he is doing positive ratings while two-thirds (67%) give him negative marks. This is almost unchanged from last month when 32% gave him positive ratings and 68% gave him negative ones.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,463 adults surveyed online between October 10 and 17, 2011 by Harris Interactive.

Looking back

Going back to The Harris Poll Vault, we can take a look to see what the ratings of other presidents were one year before they attempted to win a second term. Only one, Jimmy Carter had lower ratings with 25% of Americans giving him positive marks while three-quarters (74%) gave him negative ratings.

Of these presidents, three won re-election, all with positive ratings over 45%. But, as President George H.W. Bush would be the first to say, high approval ratings do not guarantee re-election.

Congress and direction of the country

One thing President Obama can feel good about is his ratings are better than those of Congress. Just 5% of Americans give the job Congress is doing positive ratings while 95% give them negative ratings. This is almost unchanged from last month when 6% gave Congress positive marks and 94% gave them negative ratings.

This sense of dissatisfaction is extended to how things overall are as well. Just one in five Americans (20%) say things in the country are going in the right direction while 80% say they have pretty seriously gone off on the wrong track.

President Obama and re-election

If the election for president was to be held today, over half of Americans (54%) say they would be unlikely to vote for President Obama while 40% say they would be likely to and 6% are not at all sure. When asked if they think he will be re-elected, half of U.S. adults (49%) say they do not think he will be while three in ten (30%) say he will and one in five (21%) are not at all sure. Even Democrats are unsure of his re-election chances as just half (54%) say they think he will be re-elected while one-quarter say he will not be (23%) and another quarter (24%) are not at all sure.

So What?

One year is a lifetime in American politics. Anything can happen in a blink of an eye that can change the momentum of a race, good or bad. But, while the sample is small, when approval ratings are below 40% one year out as they were for Carter and Ford, re-election does not seem to be in the cards the following November. Thirteen months from now we'll know if this is a true measure of re-election or not.

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States between October 10 and 17, 2011 among 2,463 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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