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Initial Center for Working-Class Studies online survey pegs Obama approval rating in high 80s despite pessimism about economy and uneasiness about the future

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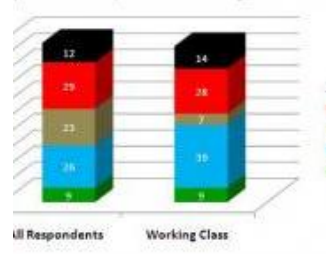
President Barack Obama received a resounding round of applause in the initial online public opinion survey conducted by the Center for Working-Class Studies (CWCS) at Youngstown State University. According to the survey, Fifty-three percent (52.6%) of the 891 respondents strongly approve and thirty-five percent (35%) approve of the President's job performance during his first 100 days in office. Mirroring their approval of the President's job performance, seventy-three percent (73%) said they believe the country is moving in the right direction.

That figure stands in stark contrast to the ninety-two percent (92%) who believe the national economy is bad or very bad and shows no signs of recovering quickly. When asked how long they expected the current recession to last, thirty-five percent (35%) said one year, and twenty-six percent (26%) said the downturn would continue for two years. Only nine percent (9%) said they believed the economy would recover in the next six months.

Working-class respondents—defined as those between the ages of thirty (30) and sixty (60) with annual incomes of \$10,000 to \$50,000 who lack college degrees—also gave the President an eighty-seven percent (87%) approval rating, although a slightly smaller number; forty-six percent (46%) strongly approve of his performance. Seventy-four percent (74%) of this group believes the country is moving in the right direction.

Those positive numbers contrast with the ninety-four percent (94%) of working-class respondents who said the economy is bad or very bad. And this group is even more pessimistic about the prospects for a speedy recovery. More than seventy-eight percent (78%) said they believe the recession will last one year or more, with more than forty-six percent (46%) saying it will last for two years or longer. Only six percent (6%) say they see light at the end of the economic tunnel this year.

When you have children, when they are your age do you think the standard of living will be much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse than yours is now?



The dichotomy between respondents' views of the President's performance and their concerns about the economy are underscored by their uncertainty about whether the administration's stimulus plan will be effective. While forty-two percent (42%) said they are confident the stimulus proposals will work, forty-four percent (44%) said they are only somewhat confident, and fourteen percent (14%) said they are not confident at all.

Working-class respondents were slightly more optimistic, with forty-eight percent (48%) expressing confidence in the President's plan, thirty-eight percent (38%) saying they were somewhat confident, and thirteen percent (13%) saying they were not confident at all that the stimulus package would turn the economy around.

Dr. John Russo, CWCS co-director, said he believes the contrast between the respondents' optimism about the president and their pessimism about the state of the economy and its future can be

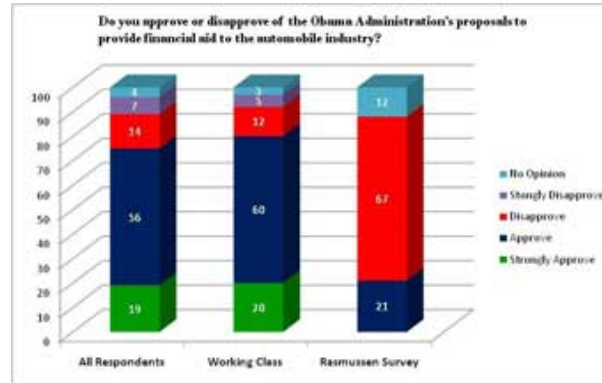
How confident are you that the Obama Administration's stimulus package will improve the economy?





explained by a number of factors:

"First of all, the President is clearly in a honeymoon period. The people who voted for him—and that includes eighty-five percent (85%) of the respondents who revealed their choice when asked—are confident he can lead the nation out of the economic morass he inherited," Dr. Russo said. "And to a lesser extent they, like all voters, are loath to admit that they may have made a mistake last November, so they are willing to give him the benefit of the doubt for the foreseeable future."



"At the same time, they cannot ignore the economic conditions that surround them. Chrysler's filed bankruptcy, and GM is about to do so. The value of existing homes continues to erode, jobs are hard to find, gas prices are rising, the stock market's falling, and despite all the talk about stimulus the economy appears to be stuck in neutral at best," Dr. Russo said. "So while people remain hopeful that the President's plan will work, they're also very worried about the future."

That uncertainty about the future is underscored by the responses offered when people were asked whether or not they believe their children will enjoy a higher standard of living in the years ahead. Among all respondents, thirty-five percent (35%) believed their children's standard of living would be somewhat or much better than theirs while forty-one percent (41%) believed it would be somewhat or much worse and twenty-four percent (24%) believed it would be the same.

Members of the working class hold a somewhat brighter view. Forty-eight percent (48%) believe their children will do better, forty-two percent (42%) believe they will do worse and seven percent (7%) believe their children's standard of living will be about the same as theirs.

In any case, these results are consistent with those derived from a wide range of surveys that clearly show a growing erosion in one of the core American beliefs: that things would always be better for future generations. Whether President Obama can reverse this troubling trend will be one of the primary benchmarks for success that his administration must meet over the next three and one-half years.

Following is a synopsis of other key results:

President Obama

- 85% approve of his handling of foreign policy. 11% disapprove.
- 82% approve of his handling of the economy. 15% disapprove.
- 81% approve of his handling of the situation in Iraq. 13% disapprove.
- 60% approve of his plans to deploy additional troops in Afghanistan with only 19% strongly approving the strategy. 31% disapprove.
- 78% trust him to deal with the country's economic crisis.
- 43% believe big business and Wall Street have too much influence over the Obama Administration.

Congress

- 58% approve of Congress' performance, but only 4% strongly approve. 33% disapprove.
- Only 6% trust Congress to deal with the economic crisis.
- 93% believe big business and Wall Street have too much influence over Congressional Republicans. 78% believe the same about Congressional Democrats.

Issues

When asked to name the three most important issues facing the nation today respondents chose the following:

- The economy 73%
- Health care 67%
- Jobs 47%
- 89% approve of President Obama's plan to roll back the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy.
- 48% approve of the banking bailout, with only 4% strongly approving. 45% disapprove.
- 75% approve of the auto industry bailout. 21% disapprove.
- 76% believe the federal government should spend money to stimulate the economy. 18.3% say the money should be used to reduce the deficit and national debt.

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