

ABC News/Washington Post poll: June 8, 2011

Obama's Goods and Bads

Praise is hard to come by for a president in a poor economy.

An open-ended question in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll asked Americans what Barack Obama has done particularly well lately, and what he's done especially poorly – and then, which of the two is more important.

It's the follow-up that marks the president's challenges. Whatever they say he's done, the public by 56 to 40 percent also says the negative answer – what the president's handled poorly lately – is more important than the positive, what he's done notably well.

As to the answers, nearly one in four, 23 percent, volunteer the economy or jobs as Obama's greatest failing, with other responses in single digits, led by items such as international issues, 8 percent; spending and the deficit, 7 percent; and health care, also 7 percent.

On the positive side, there's the killing of Osama bin Laden, cited by 29 percent as the president's best recent accomplishment. But, as reported yesterday, his bin-Laden bounce in approval already has vanished.

Antipathy toward the president is high enough that 16 percent of Americans volunteer that he's done “nothing” especially well recently. On the other hand, that's nearly balanced by the 12 percent who say he's done nothing poorly.

GROUPS – Praise and criticism of the president are heavily influenced by partisan and ideological preferences. But in the measure of what's more important, Republicans are more critical of Obama than Democrats are supportive. And in the all-important middle – political independents, and to some extent moderates – the president's got problems.

Majorities of Democrats and liberals (59 and 61 percent, respectively) say the thing he's done well recently is more important to them than the thing he's done poorly. But larger majorities of Republicans and conservatives (74 and 71 percent) say the thing he's done poorly is more important. And among independents and moderates, 58 and 53 percent, respectively, say what Obama has done poorly recently outweighs what he's done well.

In another comparison, nearly a quarter of Republicans say he's done nothing well recently, while only 5 percent say he's done nothing poorly – a net 18 percent negative. It's 19 percent “nothing well” vs. 7 percent “nothing poorly” among independents, also negative, by a net 12 points. Only Democrats are positive on this comparison; 23 percent say Obama's done nothing poorly, vs. 6 percent who say he hasn't done anything especially well lately.

Maintaining popularity at a time of 9.1 percent unemployment is a steep challenge for any president. One approach can be to suggest that recent positive achievements outweigh continued problems. These results – with the 2012 election looming – show how tough that sale may be.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone June 2-5, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,002 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gregory Holyk, Langer Research Associates.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

1-4, 6a, 7-8, 12-14, 22-40, 43-45 previously released.

5, 6b-d, 15-21, 41-42 held for release.

9. If you were to name one thing that Obama has done especially well as president recently, what would it be?

	6/5/11
Positive personal attributes	
(strength, leadership, like him)	7
Finding/killing Osama bin Laden	29
Security/terrorism	4
Economy	7
Jobs/employment	2
International issues	6
Politics/dealing with the	
Republicans	2
Taxes	*
Government spending/deficit/debt	1
Health care/medical insurance	5
Disaster response/relief	2
War/military affairs	2
Speeches/communication skills	2
Social issues/abortion/gay	
marriage	*
Everything	1
Nothing	16
Other	7
No opinion	9

10. If you were to name one thing that Obama has done especially poorly as president recently, what would it be?

	6/5/11
Negative personal attributes	
(lack of strength, lack of	
leadership, don't like him)	5
Security/terrorism	5
Economy	18
Jobs/employment	5
International issues	8

Politics/dealing with the Republicans	6
Taxes	1
Government spending/deficit/debt	7
Health care/medical insurance	7
Disaster response/relief	*
War/military affairs	3
Speeches/communication skills	1
Social issues/abortion/gay marriage	1
Gas prices	*
Immigration	1
Everything	4
Nothing	12
Other	6
No opinion	11

11. (IF NAMED ITEM FOR EACH) Which one of the two things you mentioned do you feel is the more important: the thing Obama has done well or the thing Obama has done poorly?

	Thing done well	Thing done poorly	Both equally (vol.)	No opinion
6/5/11	40	56	3	1

END