

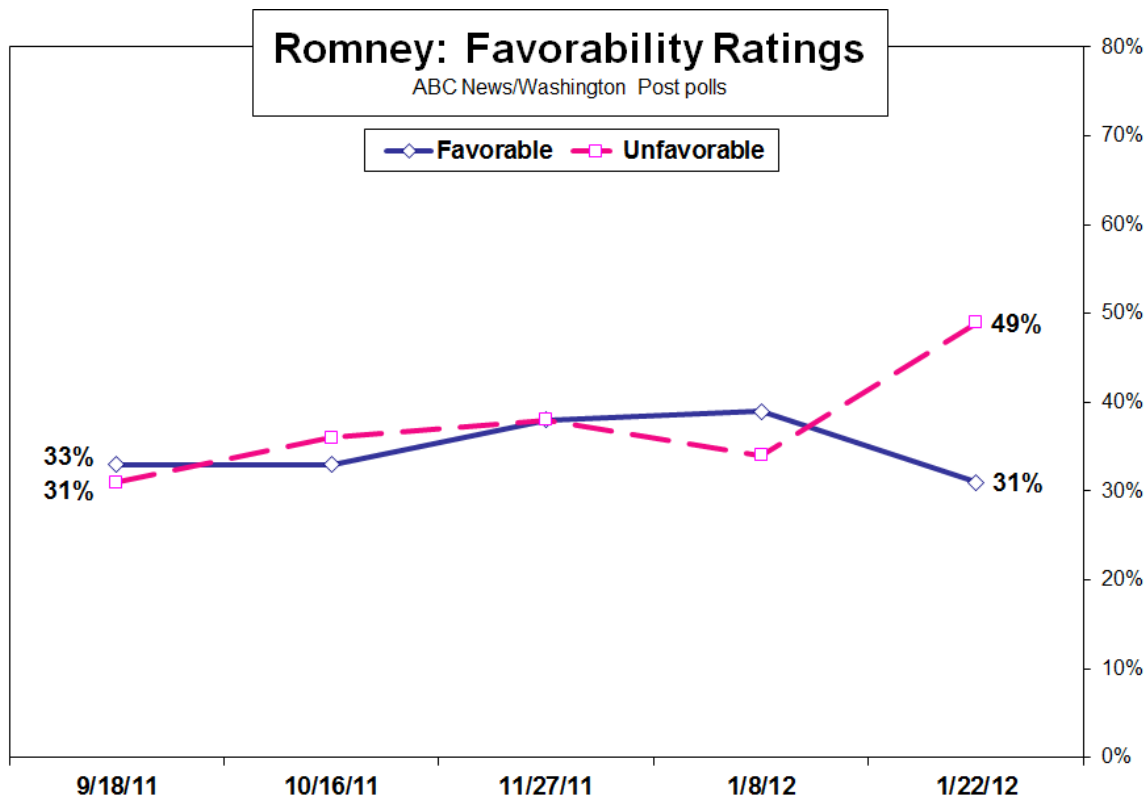
Sharp Swings in Political Popularity As the Wild Ride of 2012 Continues

Unfavorable views of Mitt Romney have soared, doubts about Newt Gingrich remain widespread and Barack Obama has advanced to his highest personal popularity in more than a year – all in advance of the State of the Union address in which Obama makes his case for a second term.

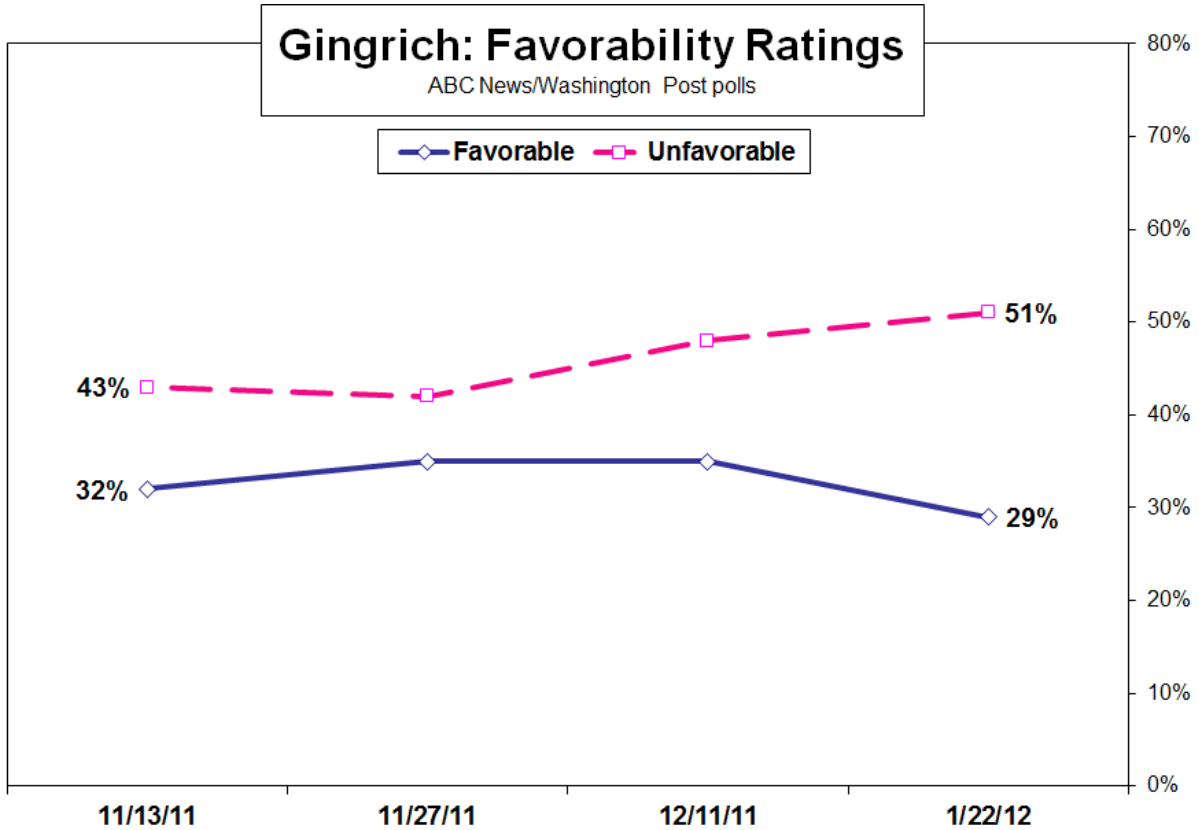
Fifty-three percent of Americans in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll express a favorable opinion of Obama overall, up by 5 points from last month to the most since April 2010. It can matter: Favorability is the most basic measure of a public figure's popularity.

Obama may be benefitting from a less-grim economic outlook, but also by comparison to the Republicans, deep in their intramural food fight. As he's gained, Romney has stumbled badly, with unfavorable views of the recent Republican front-runner up by 15 points in just two weeks.

Forty-nine percent of Americans now see Romney unfavorably, a new high in ABC/Post polling this cycle. That far outstrips his favorable rating, 31 percent, down 8 points to a new low. The shift, moreover, has been led by political independents, swing voters in national politics.



While that reflects a remarkable reversal of fortune for Romney, Gingrich, too, has lost ground, dropping 6 points in favorability since December – and with more than half of Americans, 51 percent, now seeing him unfavorably, up from the low 40s last fall. While links to recent criticisms by his ex-wife are speculative, his decline occurred among married adults.

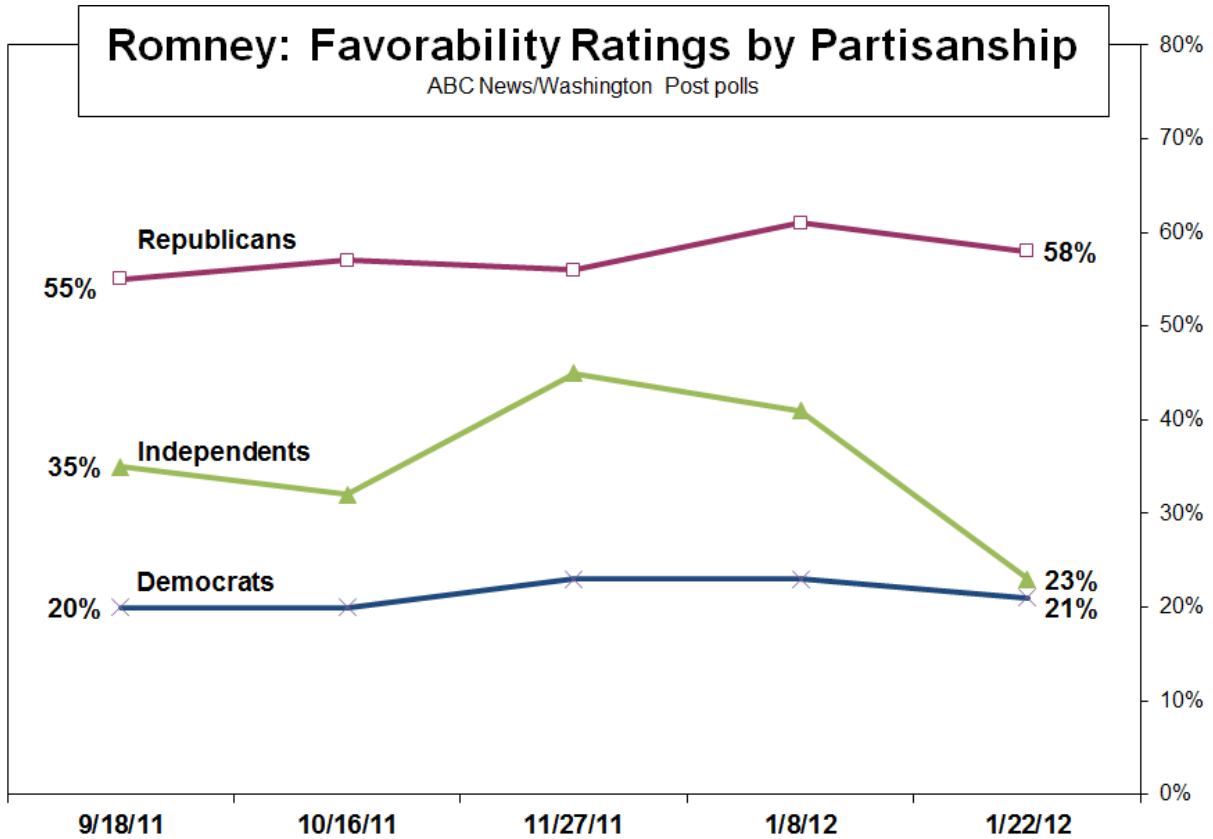


Interviews for this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), were conducted Wednesday through Sunday, following and then through the period in which Romney – easy winner of the New Hampshire GOP primary – stumbled in a series of debates, divulged that he pays a 15 percent tax rate, was equivocal on release of his tax returns and then lost the South Carolina primary to Gingrich, whose ex-wife, Marianne, had just called him unfit for office. (There were no significant shifts in result across individual days.)

The sharpest shifts have been among independents. Unfavorable opinions of Romney have soared by 17 points in this group since Jan. 8, to 51 percent; favorable opinions have dropped by 18 points among independents in the same period, to just 23 percent. Gingrich, for his part, has lost 11 points among independents since December, to 22 percent favorability. Obama, by contrast, gets a 51 percent favorable rating from independents.

Even among Republicans, while Romney’s favorable score has held about steady (58 percent), his unfavorable rating has advanced by 14 points. He’s also lost ground across the ideological spectrum, with unfavorable assessments gaining 17 points among “very” conservative

Americans, 11 points among “somewhat” conservatives and 16 points among moderates and liberals. The shift among moderates and liberals can be explained given Romney’s efforts to sharpen his appeal to the conservative base of his party; his loss among conservatives though, makes the message a tougher one for his campaign.



Gingrich, already broadly unpopular among liberals, has lost 10 points in favorability among moderates. He’s slipped much more slightly among conservatives, by 7 points overall. And Gingrich lost 12 points in favorability among married or partnered adults (men and women alike), a drop partially offset among others.

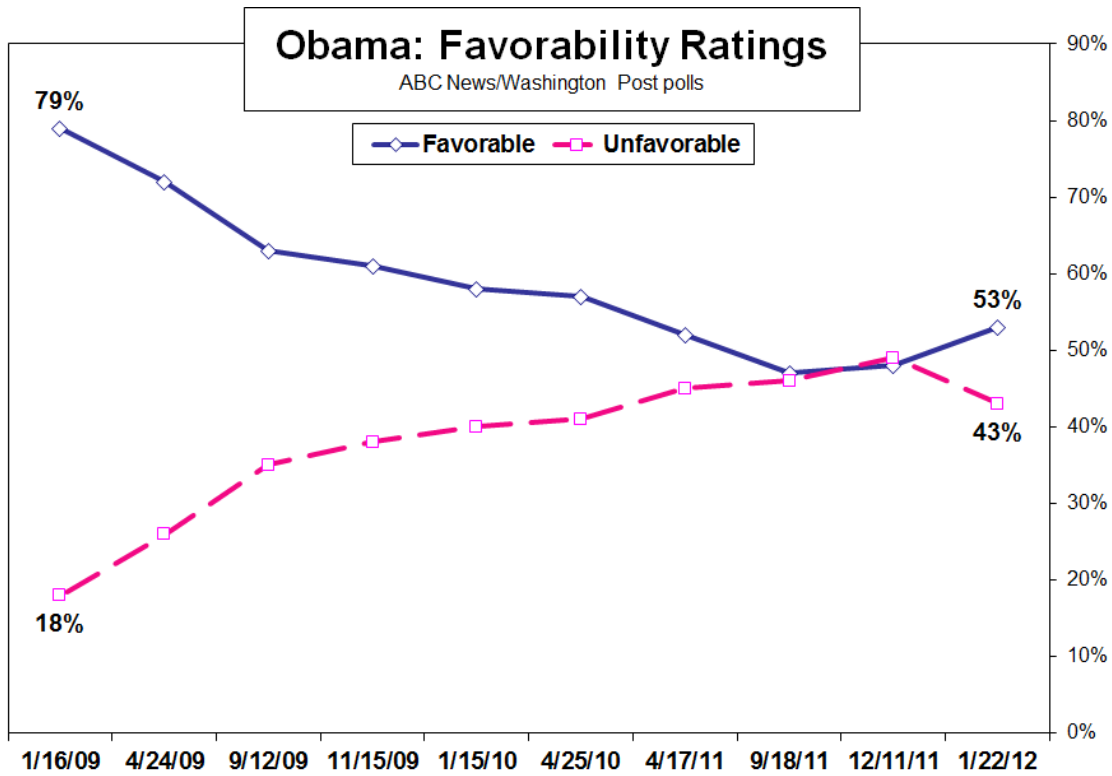
Obama, in the meantime, has advanced by 12 points in favorability among moderates, to 66 percent, nearly as high as his rating from liberals, 70 percent positive. His rating drops among conservatives to 30 percent favorable.

Adding to their challenges, intensity of sentiment is running against Romney and Gingrich alike. Thirty-one percent of Americans have a “strongly” unfavorable opinion Gingrich, vs. just 8 percent who see him strongly favorably. The comparable numbers are 23 percent vs. 6 percent for Romney. Obama, by contrast, has improved essentially to an even split in intensity – 29 percent “strongly” unfavorable, 27 percent strongly favorable.

	Favorable-unfavorable ratings					
	---- Obama ---		--- Romney --		-- Gingrich -	
	Now	12/11	Now	1/8	Now	12/11
All	53-43%	48-49	31-49	39-34	29-51	35-48
Democrats	87-11	82-17	21-62	23-52	16-66	18-70
Republicans	20-78	15-82	58-32	61-18	55-34	60-28
Independents	51-45	44-52	23-51	41-34	22-53	33-48
Liberals	70-28	75-24	17-64	30-50	14-68	18-69
Moderates	66-31	54-42	27-52	38-34	20-58	30-52
Somewhat conservatives	32-64	27-70	45-39	53-28	42-41	49-34
Very conservatives	26-73	17-81	43-45	50-28	55-33	61-31
Liberal Democrats	90-10	90-10	13-75	22-65	13-73	14-74
Conservative Republicans	12-86	10-86	58-33	66-18	64-27	66-23

There's room for change, not only given the shifting nature of public assessments of the GOP figures, but also given the level of undecideds. Two in 10 Americans have yet to form an opinion of Romney or Gingrich. Three years into his presidency, just 4 percent are undecided on Obama.

The president, scheduled to deliver his third State of the Union address tonight, fell from an extraordinary 79 percent favorability rating when he took office to a low of 47 percent in September; as noted, this poll puts him back over the crucial 50-percent mark.



Obama's ratings are sharply divided, though – 87 percent favorable among Democrats, 78 percent unfavorable among Republicans, with a 51-45 percent positive-negative division among independents. The key question is where that middle ground goes when the Republicans pick a nominee and begin aiming their arguments against Obama – rather than against each other.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cell phone Jan. 18-22, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,009 adults. 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 SSRS/Social Science Research Solutions of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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

Media contacts: [David Ford](#), (212) 456-7243, and [Julie Townsend](#), (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow.

1. Overall, do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of (NAME)? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

a. Barack Obama

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/22/12	53	27	25	43	14	29	4
12/11/11	48	23	25	49	16	33	3
9/18/11	47	22	25	46	15	31	7
4/17/11	52	33	20	45	13	32	2
4/25/10	57	37	21	41	12	29	2
1/15/10	58	38	20	40	13	27	2
11/15/09	61	39	21	38	11	27	1
9/12/09	63	40	23	35	12	24	2
4/24/09	72	46	26	26	11	15	2
1/16/09	79	50	29	18	9	9	3
11/2/08 LV	63	47	16	33	7	26	4
10/23/08 LV	63	47	16	34	7	27	3
10/11/08 RV	64	44	20	33	12	21	3
9/7/08 RV	58	35	23	36	12	24	7
8/22/08 RV	62	37	25	34	13	21	4
6/15/08	63	35	28	33	12	21	4
4/13/08	56	28	28	39	14	25	5
1/12/08	63	31	32	30	14	16	7
11/1/07	51	21	30	36	16	20	13
2/25/07	53	21	33	30	16	14	16
1/19/07	45	NA	NA	29	NA	NA	25
12/11/06	44	21	22	23	17	6	33

b. Mitt Romney

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/22/12	31	6	25	49	25	23	21
1/8/12	39	10	28	34	18	16	28

11/27/11	38	9	29	38	20	17	25
10/16/11	33	8	26	36	20	15	31
9/18/11	33	5	27	31	16	14	37

c. Newt Gingrich

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/22/12	29	8	20	51	20	31	20
12/11/11	35	12	23	48	21	27	18
11/27/11	35	11	24	42	18	24	23
11/13/11	32	10	21	43	21	21	26
11/1/98	34	NA	NA	58	NA	NA	9
8/21/98	34			46			19
7/12/98	31			47			22
5/12/98	34			53			13
4/4/98	34			43			23
1/31/98	27			46			27
1/30/98	27			46			27
1/19/98	32			49			19
9/10/97	26			52			22
4/24/97	23			59			18
9/4/96RV	26			55			19
6/30/96	25			57			18
10/30/95	29			45			26
7/17/95	34			46			20
6/8/95	32			51			18
3/19/95	31	"	"	46	"	"	23

END