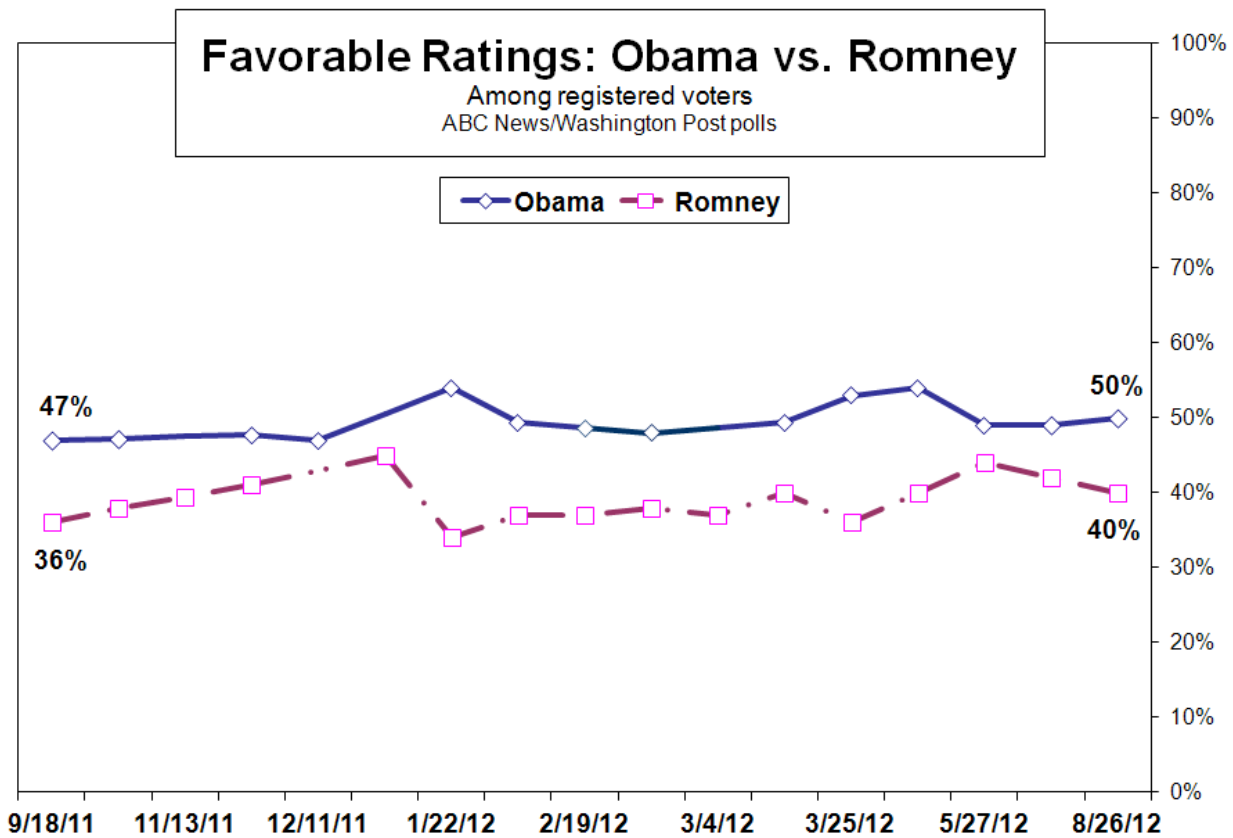


Low Favorability Trails Romney Up to the Convention Dais

Mitt Romney accepts the Republican nomination for president this week with the lowest personal popularity of any major-party nominee in polls dating to Ronald Reagan's presidency, a difficulty for Romney that's persisted throughout this election cycle.

Forty percent of registered voters in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll see Romney favorably overall, while 51 percent rate him unfavorably – 11 points underwater in this basic measure, with a majority unfavorable score for just the second time in polls since last fall.

Barack Obama does better in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), but hardly well – 50-47 percent in favorable vs. unfavorable views among registered voters, essentially the same as his 2012 average in ABC/Post polls. On this, as on other measures, as hard as they've campaigned, views of the two hardly have budged.



Romney’s favorability rating is the lowest of any major-party nominee at roughly the time of his convention in available data back to 1984; indeed he’s the first, at this stage of the campaign, to be rated more unfavorably than favorably by a significant margin. On the other hand, Obama’s net favorable rating is substantially lower than the four previous incumbents’ (Reagan, both Bushes and Bill Clinton) at this point.

One previous candidate in this period had a favorability rating as low as Obama’s and went on to win the presidency – George H.W. Bush in 1988. (Bush’s unfavorability rating was lower than Obama’s, with more undecided.) None has won with favorability as low as Romney’s, increasing the pressure for him to develop more of a personal connection with the electorate, perhaps starting with his acceptance speech Thursday night.

		Pre-convention favorability (among registered voters)		
		Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
Mitt Romney	8/26/12	40	51	9
Barack Obama	8/26/12	50	47	4
Barack Obama	8/22/08	62	34	4
John McCain	8/22/08	59	37	4
John Kerry	7/25/04	48	39	12
George W. Bush	7/25/04	54	43	3
George W. Bush	7/23/00	61	30	9
Al Gore	7/23/00	53	37	10
Bill Clinton	6/30/96	56	40	4
Bob Dole	6/30/96	50	37	13
Bill Clinton	7/8/92	53	33	14
George Bush	7/8/92	57	39	4
Mike Dukakis	7/17/88	56	24	20
George Bush	7/17/88	49	36	15
Walter Mondale	9/11/84	47	49	4
Ronald Reagan	9/11/84	60	38	2

Favorability is a broader concept than simple likeability, a measure in which Obama far surpasses Romney; it also reflects empathy, a sense that the candidate understands the problems of average Americans – an attribute on which Obama also leads, but more narrowly. Analysis of ABC/Post data this week shows that when likeability and empathy are tested together, empathy is a far more powerful predictor of vote choices.

GROUPS – Romney has particular challenges in some groups: His 34 percent favorability rating among women who are registered to vote is down by 9 percentage points from May, with particular weakness among unmarried women, a core Democratic group.

Romney is seen favorably by just 35 percent of independents who are registered to vote, numerically a low since March (albeit not significantly different from its level earlier this month). Obama’s favorability rating among independents is 9 points higher than Romney’s; nonetheless in a separate ABC/Post poll released Monday the two were about even among independents in vote preference, 47-43 percent, Romney-Obama, indicating that favorability is one factor in candidate support, but not in and of itself determinative.

Romney’s rating also is notably low, just 21 percent favorable, among adults who say they’re not registered to vote – a sentiment that would explain a focus on voter registration by the Obama camp in the two months ahead.

Romney does far better in his core ideological support groups, but with shortfalls compared with Obama. Romney is seen favorably by 69 percent of conservative voters; Obama, by 81 percent of liberals. And Obama’s rating among moderates, 61 percent favorable, far exceeds Romney’s in this group, 29 percent.

	Favorable-unfavorable ratings (among registered voters)	
	Obama	Romney
All	50-47%	40-51
Men	48-49	46-47
Women	51-45	34-55
Democrats	87-12	11-83
Republicans	11-88	81-16
Independents	44-48	35-51
Liberals	81-17	10-82
Moderates	61-34	29-61
Conservatives NET	21-77	69-25
Somewhat cons.	22-75	67-24
Very cons.	19-80	71-27
Liberal Dems	92- 8	8-88
Conservative Reps	6-92	86-11

A variety of factors may inform these ratings; both candidates likely are low on favorability not solely because of their own doing, but because the public is in a sour mood, pinched by the long-running economic downturn. Nonetheless, while they focus in the weeks ahead on winning voters’ minds, a few hearts wouldn’t hurt.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cell phone Aug. 22-26, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,020 adults and 814 registered voters. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points for the full sample and 4 points for the sample of registered voters, including design effect. 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>.

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Full results follow.

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

8/26/12 - Summary Table - Registered Voters

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
a. Barack Obama	50	29	20	47	13	34	4
b. Mitt Romney	40	21	19	51	18	33	9

Trend:

a. Barack Obama

		----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No op.
		NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
8/26/12		50	27	24	44	14	29	6
8/26/12 RV		50	29	20	47	13	34	4
8/5/12		53	29	24	43	12	31	4
5/27/12		52	29	23	45	14	31	3
4/15/12		56	30	26	40	14	26	5
3/25/12		53	31	23	43	15	28	3
2/26/12		51	26	25	45	13	32	3
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	op.
8/26/12	35	17	18	51	20	31	14
8/26/12 RV	40	21	19	51	18	33	9
8/5/12	40	16	23	49	19	30	11
5/27/12	41	15	26	45	21	24	14
4/15/12	35	12	23	47	24	23	18
3/25/12	34	8	26	50	25	25	16
3/18/12	38	10	28	42	19	23	20
3/4/12	35	9	26	45	20	25	20
2/26/12	33	6	27	46	22	24	21
2/19/12	37	10	27	44	21	23	19
2/12/12	36	9	27	43	18	24	22
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

*** END ***