

ABC News poll analysis – 7/27/16

Obama Approval: Can it Help Clinton?

By Ally Brodsky

President Obama will address the Democratic convention tonight from an unusually strong position; for the last two months straight he's held the highest job approval rating in ABC News/Washington Post polls since early in his presidency. Fifty-six percent approve of his job performance, up from a career-low 40 percent just in advance of the 2014 midterm elections.

Obama's in a particularly enviable position in comparison with George W. Bush at this time in his presidency: His approval rating was a dismal 28 percent in July 2008, a year in which Bush was perceived as a drag on John McCain's unsuccessful effort to succeed him.

That said, presidential approval is no guarantee of success for the in-party's nominee. Bill Clinton held a 60 percent approval rating at this point in his presidency, and while Al Gore won the popular vote in the contested 2000 election, he lost in the electoral college.

One place Obama may be particularly useful to Hillary Clinton is among young people, a group that heavily favored Bernie Sanders in the primaries. Obama's approval rating in the latest ABC/Post poll peaks by age at 70 percent among 18- to 29-year-olds, a group he won by record margins in 2008 and 2012 alike, and that Clinton very much needs this year.

Obama, further, has 86 percent approval from liberals – another group in which Sanders was competitive in the primaries. Indeed, Obama also has 86 percent approval from Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents who supported Sanders for the nomination, as well as 93 percent from those who favored Clinton.

Obama also potentially can help Clinton in the political middle, with his 55 percent approval among independents and 62 percent among political moderates.

That said, the president's ratings are highly polarized, befitting today's sharp partisanship. He has 88 percent approval from Democrats but just 17 percent from Republicans; just 29 percent among conservatives; and just 45 percent approval among whites, vs. 77 percent among nonwhites (including 89 percent among blacks and 76 percent among Hispanics).

While Obama is underwater among whites, there's a range there as well – a low of 36 percent approval from white men who don't have a four-year college degree to a high of 52 percent approval from white women who are college graduates. The latter group is another critical one for Clinton this fall.

	Obama job approval among groups						
	Approve			Disapprove			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opin.
All	56	33	24	42	9	33	2
18-29	70	35	34	30	11	20	*

30-39	60	33	27	35	9	27	5
40-49	57	29	28	41	8	33	2
50-64	49	33	15	50	9	41	2
65+	45	29	17	53	10	43	1
Democrats	88	60	28	11	5	7	1
Republicans	17	6	10	81	15	67	2
Independents	55	25	30	44	10	33	2
Liberals	86	57	29	13	4	9	2
Moderates	62	34	28	36	11	25	2
Conservatives	29	13	16	71	11	59	1
Whites	45	25	20	53	11	42	2
Nonwhites NET	77	45	32	22	6	17	1
Blacks	89	68	21	8	6	2	2
Hispanics	76	37	40	23	6	18	*
White men non-grad.	36	17	20	61	10	51	3
White women non-grad.	45	25	20	54	11	43	1
White men coll. grad.	49	27	22	49	12	37	2
White women coll. grad.	52	36	16	45	12	34	3

In addition to far outstripping George W. Bush's approval rating in summer 2008, Obama's also higher than Bush's 50 percent at about this point in 2004 (when Bush won re-election regardless) and George H.W. Bush's at this point in summer 1992, when he lost his re-election bid.

In one other comparison, Obama's approval rating today is identical to Ronald Reagan's in summer 1988, the year the first President Bush went on to succeed him.

	Presidential approval at (approximate) time of conventions	
	Approve	Disapprove
Obama		
7/14/16	56	42
7/8/12	47	49
G. W. Bush		
7/13/08	28	69
7/25/04	50	47
B. Clinton		
8/20/00	60	35
8/5/96	59	37
G. H. W. Bush		
8/4/92	33	64
Reagan		
7/11/88	56	42
7/11/84	54	41
Carter*		
7/14/80	33	55
Ford*		
6/14/76	45	40
Nixon*		

6/26/72	56	33
Johnson*		
7/23/68	40	47
6/30/64	74	15
No data for Kennedy		
Eisenhower*		
7/21/60	49	33
7/17/56	70	20
Truman*		
7/18/52	29	59
6/24/48	40	44
F. Roosevelt*+		
7/16/40	64	26

*Gallup; others are ABC/Post
+No data available for 1944