



**THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER**  
**For The People & The Press**

**NEWS Release**

1615 L Street, N.W., Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Tel (202) 419-4350  
Fax (202) 419-4399

FOR RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2008

**Favorability of Leading Figures**

**OPINION OF OPRAH MORE POLITICIZED, GORE'S RATINGS IMPROVE**

*FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:*

Andrew Kohut, Director  
Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors  
Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research  
Pew Research Center for the People & the Press  
202/419-4350  
<http://www.people-press.org>

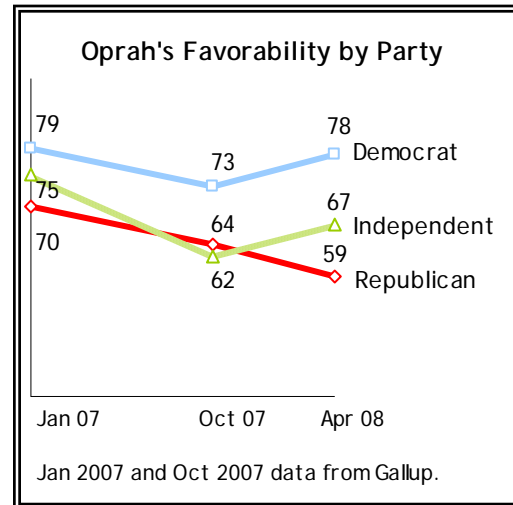
## Favorability of Leading Figures

### OPINION OF OPRAH MORE POLITICIZED, GORE'S RATINGS IMPROVE

Long one of America's best-known and best-liked media figures, Oprah Winfrey saw her popularity slip after her endorsement of Barack Obama last year. A new survey shows that her image has not recovered, and opinions about the talk show host have become increasingly divided along partisan political lines.

Currently, 68% of Americans say they have a favorable opinion of Winfrey, which is largely unchanged from a Gallup survey in October 2007 (66%). At that time, Gallup found that positive views of Winfrey had declined by eight points, from 74%, since January 2007.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted April 23-30 among 1,000 Americans, finds that Winfrey's image has continued to decline among Republicans. Currently, 59% of Republicans say they have a favorable opinion of Winfrey down from 64% last October, and 75% in January 2007. About a third of Republicans (32%) now view Winfrey unfavorably, up substantially since January 2007 (21%).



Nearly eight-in-ten Democrats (78%) now give Winfrey a favorable rating, which is up slightly from last fall and about the same percentage as last January (79%). Two-thirds of independents (67%) have a positive opinion of Winfrey, up a bit from October (62%), but still below the proportion in January (75%).

Women continue to have much more favorable opinions of Winfrey than do men. Currently, 79% of women say they have a positive view of Winfrey compared with 55% of men. Both men and women have somewhat less favorable opinions than they did in January 2007 (women 85% favorable, men 63% favorable).

About three-quarters (76%) of Americans ages 18-34 have a positive opinion of Winfrey, which is virtually unchanged from January 2007 (75%). By contrast, views of Winfrey have declined among those older than 35 (74% rated her positively in January 2007, only 64% do so today).

Winfrey's favorability also has declined among college graduates: two-thirds (66%) now view the talk show host favorably, down from 78% in January 2007. Opinions among people with less education have remained more stable.

### Gore's Better Image

Former vice president Al Gore's favorability has improved since 2002. Currently, 53% have a favorable opinion of Gore while 36% express an unfavorable view. In December 2002, opinions about Gore were evenly split (44% favorable vs. 46% unfavorable).

Notably, the proportion of Americans saying they have a very favorable opinion of Gore – who won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for his environmental activism – has nearly doubled during this period, from 12% to 22%.

A solid majority of college graduates (58%) now view Gore favorably, an 19-point increase since 2002. A quarter of college graduates say they have a very favorable view of Gore – four times the percentage in 2002 (6%). Those with some college education also hold more favorable views today (58% compared with 43% in 2002). Opinions of Gore have not changed among those with a high school

Oprah's Favorability			
	Fav	Unfav	DK/Can't
	%	%	Rate
Total	68	21	11=100
Men	55	31	14=100
Women	79	14	7=100
18-34	76	16	8=100
35-49	66	25	9=100
50-64	62	29	9=100
65+	67	18	15=100
College grad	66	26	8=100
Some college	73	19	8=100
HS or less	67	21	12=100
Republican	58	32	10=100
Democrat	78	16	6=100
Independent	66	23	11=100

Gore's Image Improves						
	% favorable			% very favorable		
	Dec 2002	April 2008	Change in fav	Dec 2002	April 2008	Change in very fav
Total	44	53	+9	12	22	+10
Men	35	45	+10	9	17	+8
Women	53	60	+7	16	26	+10
18-29	48	46	-2	12	24	+12
30-49	42	54	+12	12	16	+4
50-64	42	58	+16	11	28	+17
65+	45	52	+7	14	22	+8
College grad	39	58	+19	6	25	+19
Some college	43	58	+15	10	23	+13
HS or less	47	47	0	17	19	+2
Republican	23	29	+6	4	9	+5
Democrat	69	72	+3	24	35	+11
Independent	44	53	+9	11	18	+7

education or less; fewer than half in this group view Gore favorably (47%).

More than seven-in-ten Democrats (72%) have a favorable opinion of Gore, who was the party's presidential nominee in 2000; overall, Democrats' views of Gore have changed little since 2002 (69%). However, the proportion of Democrats expressing a very favorable opinion of Gore has increased by 11 points (from 24% to 35%). About half of independents (53%) have a favorable impression of Gore, up from 44% six years ago. Republicans' views of Gore have improved a bit but remain negative; just 29% of Republicans say they have a favorable impression of the former vice president.

### Gore, Obama and Clinton

Gore's image is somewhat more favorable, on balance, than Barack Obama's and much more favorable than Hillary Clinton's.

Democrats have comparably favorable opinions of Gore, Obama and Clinton (72%, 69% and 71%, respectively). But slightly more Democrats have an unfavorable opinion of Obama (26%) and Clinton (27%) than they do of Gore (20%).

Gore's unfavorable rating among Republicans, while high (62%), is substantially lower than Clinton's (79%); Obama's unfavorable rating among Republicans falls in between, at 68%.

Views of Gore and the Democratic Candidates				
	<u>Fav</u>	<u>Unfav</u>	<u>DK/Can't</u> <u>Rate</u>	<u>N</u>
Al Gore	%	%	%	
Total	53	36	11=100	1000
Republican	29	62	9=100	267
Democrat	72	20	8=100	338
Independent	53	36	11=100	323
Barack Obama	<u>Fav</u>	<u>Unfav</u>	<u>DK/Can't</u> <u>Rate</u>	
Total	52	42	6=100	1502
Republican	26	68	6=100	412
Democrat	69	26	5=100	521
Independent	56	38	6=100	462
Hillary Clinton	<u>Fav</u>	<u>Unfav</u>	<u>DK/Can't</u> <u>Rate</u>	
Total	49	47	4=100	1502
Republican	20	79	1=100	412
Democrat	71	27	2=100	521
Independent	48	46	6=100	462

Ratings for Gore from April 23-30 (N=1000). Ratings for Clinton and Obama from April 23-27 (N=1502).

## Robert Gates Still Not Widely Known

After almost a year and a half on the job, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates remains a largely unrecognized figure. Fully 45% of Americans either do not know enough about Gates, or declined to offer an opinion. Roughly a third (34%) expresses a favorable opinion compared with 21% who have an unfavorable view.

Opinion of Robert Gates		
	Dec 2006	April 2008
Favorable	34	34
Unfavorable	18	21
Don't know/Can't rate	48	45
	100	100

Gates is no better known now than he was in December 2006 – his first month in office – when 48% of the public did not offer an opinion of him.

Yet among those familiar with him, Gates' image is better than his predecessor's, Donald Rumsfeld, and on par with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's. More than six-in-ten (62%) of those able to rate Gates express a positive opinion of him. In April 2006, fewer than half (45%) of those familiar enough with Rumsfeld to offer an opinion expressed a favorable view of the former defense secretary.

Like Rice, and unlike Rumsfeld, Gates has substantial appeal among independents and Democrats. Nearly two-thirds of independents familiar with Gates (65%), and more than half of Democrats (54%), express a favorable opinion of him. In March, comparable proportions of independents and Democrats able to rate Rice expressed positive opinions of the secretary of state.

Gates Nearly As Popular As Rice (Based on those who can rate)				
<i>Opinion of...</i>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Ind</u>
<b>Robert Gates (04/08)</b>	%	%	%	%
Favorable	62	65	54	65
Unfavorable	38	35	46	35
	100	100	100	100
<i>Can't rate</i>	45	43	43	43
<b>Donald Rumsfeld (04/06)</b>				
Favorable	45	75	22	41
Unfavorable	55	25	78	59
	100	100	100	100
<i>Can't rate</i>	16	9	17	17
<b>Condoleezza Rice (03/08)</b>				
Favorable	66	86	50	65
Unfavorable	34	14	50	35
	100	100	100	100
<i>Can't rate</i>	15	10	13	17
<b>George W. Bush (04/08)</b>				
Favorable	32	72	10	24
Unfavorable	68	28	90	76
	100	100	100	100
<i>Can't rate</i>	4	3	3	3

However, both Rice and Rumsfeld get higher ratings from Republicans than does Gates. In March, 86% of Republicans able to rate Rice expressed a favorable opinion of her. In April 2006, Rumsfeld also enjoyed strong favorable ratings among Republicans familiar with him (75% favorable). By contrast, Gates is somewhat less popular within

his own party. A majority of Republicans (65%) express a favorable view of him, while about one-in-three (35%) of those who can rate the defense secretary view him unfavorably.

George W. Bush remains widely unpopular among the general public; 68% of those who can rate him offer an unfavorable opinion of the president, compared with 32% who view him favorably. Opinions of Bush are overwhelmingly partisan. A large majority of independents (76%) and an overwhelming 90% of Democrats express an unfavorable view of the president, while 72% of Republicans view Bush favorably, based on those who could offer an opinion of the president.

### Bill Gates Remains Popular

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates continues to be well regarded by a majority of Americans. In March, nearly seven-in-ten (69%) said they had a favorable opinion of Bill Gates, comparable with his rating in May 2000 (64%).

Gates is broadly popular across party lines; large majorities of Republicans, Democrats and independents express a favorable view of him. Democrats, in particular, have become more favorable toward Gates since 2000; 70% of Democrats express a favorable opinion of Gates, up from 61% in 2000. Republicans' high regard for Gates is little changed from 2000 (72% favorable then, 75% favorable in March).

Nearly nine-in-ten (88%) of those with high annual incomes have a favorable opinion of Gates, as do 85% of college graduates. Those with lower levels of income and education view Gates somewhat less favorably than the public as a whole. However, majorities of low income-earners and those who did not attend college still express a favorable opinion of the software pioneer overall.

Bill Gates' Favorability							
	--- May 2000---			--- March 2008---			Change in Fav
	Fav %	Unfav %	DK/Can't- Rate %	Fav %	Unfav %	DK/Can't- Rate %	
Total	64	15	21=100	69	15	16=100	+5
Republican	72	14	14=100	75	12	13=100	+3
Democrat	61	18	21=100	70	17	13=100	+9
Independent	66	17	17=100	67	16	17=100	+1
<i>Income*</i>							
High	80	12	8=100	88	7	5=100	+8
Middle	68	16	16=100	76	13	11=100	+8
Low	55	20	25=100	59	21	20=100	+4
College grad	72	18	10=100	85	8	7=100	+13
Some college	71	15	14=100	78	14	8=100	+7
H.S. or less	57	14	29=100	56	19	25=100	-1
* Income categories adjusted for inflation. In 2000 Low=under \$30,000, Middle=\$30-75,000, High=\$75k and over. In 2008, Low=under \$40k, Middle=\$40-100,000, High=\$100k and over.							

## ABOUT THE SURVEYS

Results for these surveys are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among two nationwide samples of adults, 18 years of age or older, from March 24-29, 2008 and April 23-30, 2008. The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the surveys:

<b>March 2008</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus...</b>
Total sample	1,001	3.5 percentage points
Republicans	294	6.5 percentage points
Democrats	336	6 percentage points
Independents	307	6.5 percentage points

<b>April 2008</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus...</b>
Total sample	1,000	3.5 percentage points
Republicans	267	7 percentage points
Democrats	338	6 percentage points
Independents	323	6 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## ABOUT THE CENTER

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of eight projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

Andrew Kohut, Director  
Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research  
Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors  
Kim Parker, Senior Researcher  
Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf, Leah Christian and Jocelyn Kiley,  
Research Associates  
Kathleen Holzwart, Research Analyst  
James Albright and Alec Tyson, Research Assistants

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**APRIL 2008 FAVORABILITY SURVEY [OMNIBUS]**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**April 23-30, 2008**  
**N=1000**

**ASK ALL:**

P.1 Now I'd like your views on some people. As I read some names, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each person. (First, **INSERT NAME**) would you say your overall opinion of... **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]** is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? How about **(NEXT NAME)?** **[IF NECESSARY: would you say your overall opinion of [NAME] is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable?**  
**[INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE."]**

		-----Favorable-----			-----Unfavorable-----			(VOL) Never	(VOL) Can't
		Total	Very	Mostly	Total	Very	Mostly	Heard of	Rate/Ref
b.	Oprah Winfrey	68	26	42	21	9	12	1	10=100
	October 12-14, 2007 ( <i>Gallup</i> )	66			26			1	6=99
	January 5-7, 2007 ( <i>Gallup</i> )	74			17			*	8=99
	November 10-12, 2003 ( <i>Gallup</i> )	73			20			1	6=100
	March 26-29, 1992 ( <i>Gallup</i> )	78			14			2	6=100
c.	Al Gore	53	22	31	36	16	20	1	10=100
	December, 2002	44	12	32	46	21	25	1	9=100
	July, 2001	54	16	38	39	18	21	*	7=100
	January, 2001	57	22	35	39	19	20	*	4=100
	May, 2000	50	13	37	38	15	23	1	11=100
	March, 1999	47	12	35	43	17	26	2	8=100
	December, 1998	58	18	40	33	11	22	1	8=100
	Early October, 1998 ( <i>RVs</i> )	53	16	37	38	13	25	1	8=100
	Early September, 1998	57	13	44	35	13	22	1	7=100
	Late August, 1998	55	11	44	37	14	23	1	7=100
	March, 1998	59	17	42	30	11	19	2	9=100
	November, 1997	55	12	43	38	12	26	1	6=100
	September, 1997	46	11	35	43	15	28	1	10=100
	August, 1997	54	15	39	37	15	22	1	8=100
	April, 1997	57	12	45	36	12	24	1	6=100
	January, 1997	65	18	47	29	8	21	1	5=100
	July, 1994	67	18	49	26	7	19	2	5=100
	August, 1992	66	22	44	20	5	15	2	12=100
	July, 1992 <sup>1</sup>	47	15	32	19	5	14	6	28=100
	September, 1987	29	6	23	14	3	11	23	34=100
d.	Robert Gates	34	7	27	21	6	15	27	18=100
	December, 2006	34	7	27	18	12	6	24	24=100

**QUESTIONS P.1 a, 2, 3, 4, AND 5 RELEASED PREVIOUSLY.**

---

<sup>1</sup> July 1992 trend based on 461 respondents asked on July 9, 1992 only.



**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**MARCH 2008 FAVORABILITY SURVEY [OMNIBUS]**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**March 24-29, 2008**  
**N=1001**

**ASK ALL:**

P.1 Now I'd like your views on some people. As I read some names, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each person. (First, **INSERT NAME**) would you say your overall opinion of... **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]** is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? How about **(NEXT NAME)**? **[IF NECESSARY:** would you say your overall opinion of **[NAME]** is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable?  
**[INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE."]**

		-----Favorable-----			-----Unfavorable-----			Never	(VOL) Can't	(VOL)
		<u>Total</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Mostly</u>		<u>Heard of</u>	<u>Rate/Ref</u>
d.	Bill Gates	69	23	46	15	5	10		3	13=100
	May, 2000	64	19	45	15	5	10		6	15=100
	March, 1998	55	15	40	18	5	13		10	17=100
	<b>ABC/WP:</b> January, 1998	49	--	--	16	--	--		--	35=100

**QUESTIONS P.1 a, 2, 3, and 4 RELEASED PREVIOUSLY.**