

September 29, 2008

U.S. Leaders Not Getting High Marks on Credit Crisis

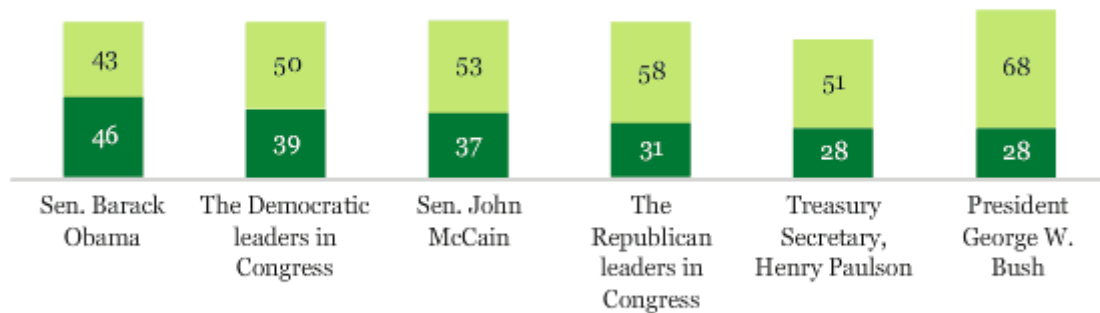
None receives majority approval, but Obama comes closest

by Lydia Saad

PRINCETON, NJ -- A *USA Today*/Gallup poll conducted Friday and Saturday finds more Americans disapproving than approving of how most of the major national political players have handled the recent problems on Wall Street. Only Barack Obama squeaks by with more Americans approving than disapproving of his performance on the issue, 46% to 43%.

Next, please say whether you approve or disapprove of the way each of the following has responded to the problems on Wall Street.

■ % Approve ■ % Disapprove



USA Today/Gallup poll, Sept. 26-27, 2008

GALLUP POLL

The Sept. 26-27 poll was conducted before Sunday morning's announcement that congressional leaders and the Bush administration had reached agreement on a \$700 billion bailout plan. It includes interviews before, during, and after the first presidential debate between Obama and John McCain on Friday night.

Both Obama and McCain are rated more favorably for their responses to the Wall Street mess than are their respective parties in Congress. Obama wins the approval of 46% of Americans, compared with 39% approving of the Democratic leaders in Congress more generally. Similarly, 37% of Americans approve of how McCain has responded, compared with 31% approving of the Republican leaders in Congress.

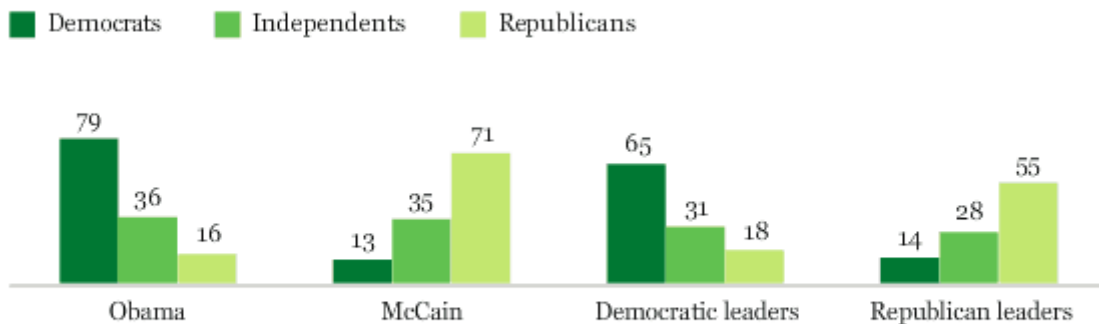
Democrats Kinder to Their Leadership on the Issue

The higher scores of Obama and the Democrats in Congress relative to McCain and the Republicans in Congress are mainly owing to differences in intraparty support for each side. Nearly 8 in 10 Democrats approve of the way Obama has responded to the Wall Street crisis, compared with only 7 in 10 Republicans approving of McCain. Similarly, 65% of Democrats approve of the Democratic leaders in Congress, in contrast to 55% of Republicans approving of the Republican leaders in Congress.

Importantly, Obama and McCain receive similar ratings on the Wall Street issue from political independents, with only about a third of this group approving of each.

Rating How Political Players Have Responded to Wall Street Crisis, by Party ID

Percentage approving of the way each has responded



USA Today/Gallup poll, Sept. 26-27, 2008

GALLUP POLL

The worst-rated political players on the Wall Street issue both come from the Bush administration -- Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, one of the chief authors of the original bailout plan, and President George W. Bush himself. Only 28% of Americans approve of how each has responded to the recent financial problems. Of the two, however, Bush has a net score that is significantly worse, as 68% disapprove of his performance, compared with 51% disapproving of Paulson's. A much greater number have no opinion of Paulson's performance than of Bush's (21% vs. 5%).

Bottom Line

Though Obama and McCain have offered prescriptions for the Wall Street crisis, and McCain attempted to demonstrate his commitment to solving it by dramatically suspending his campaign last week and returning to Washington, neither candidate has won majority public approval on the issue. Obama outscores McCain in approval on the issue 46% to 37%, mostly because his fellow Democrats rate his response more highly than Republicans rate McCain's.

In terms of winning over the political center where most swing voters reside, however, the jury still seems to be out. Obama and McCain receive nearly identical ratings from political independents for their handling of the Wall Street crisis, and they're not positive. Only about a third of independents approve of the way each candidate has responded.

As Americans take a few days to digest Friday night's debate and Sunday's compromise bailout plan, their reviews of the political players' performances on the issue could change. The initial finding, however, is that with the near-Wall Street collapse putting U.S. credit and housing markets in serious jeopardy, and setting up worrisome forecasts for wages and jobs, Americans may be in no mood to dole out praise on the issue.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,011 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted Sept. 26-27, 2008. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on land-line telephones (for respondents with a land-line telephone) and cellular phones (for respondents who are cell-phone only).

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

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Next, please say whether you approve or disapprove of the way each of the following has responded to the problems on Wall Street. [RANDOM ORDER]

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
	%	%	%
Sen. Barack Obama	46	43	11
The Democratic leaders in Congress	39	50	11
Sen. John McCain	37	53	10
The Republican leaders in Congress	31	58	11
Treasury Secretary, Henry Paulson	28	51	21
President George W. Bush	28	68	5

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