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BBC News/Harris Poll

Opinions of Adults in the United States

January 2010 - Below are the most recent data from the latest BBC News/Harris Poll, a monthly poll of adults in the U.S.

Methodology

This **BBC News/Harris Poll** was conducted online within the United States January 13 and 15, 2010 among 2,010 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

**TABLE 1
GRADING THE PRESIDENT**

"Looking back at all that he has done during his first year in office, if you could give President Barack Obama a grade for his accomplishments this year, what grade would you give him on a scale of A+ to F, where A+ is the best possible grade and F is the worst possible grade"

Base: All Adults

	Total	Region				Age			
		East	Midwest	South	West	18-34	35-44	45-54	55+
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A (NET)	20	22	14	20	24	21	26	16	18
A+	5	7	4	5	6	9	7	5	2
A	8	8	4	10	8	6	9	7	9
A-	7	7	6	5	10	6	10	4	7
B (NET)	29	35	29	24	30	37	26	26	24
B+	10	14	9	8	9	12	11	7	9
B	12	11	14	11	13	15	9	10	11
B-	7	10	6	5	8	9	6	9	4
C (NET)	20	20	25	16	19	21	18	22	18
C+	7	8	10	5	6	8	6	9	6
C	6	6	8	6	5	7	7	6	5
C-	6	5	7	5	7	6	5	7	6
D	12	9	13	14	10	7	10	14	16
F	20	15	19	26	17	14	19	22	24

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

President Obama gets mixed grades from the American public on his first year in office. One in five Americans each give him an A, a C and an F for his first year while three in ten Americans give him a B and just over one in ten a D. Westerners and those aged 35-44 are more likely to give him an A. Easterners and those aged 18-34 are more likely to give him a B. Midwesterners are more likely to give the president a C. And, Southerners and those aged 55 and older are more likely to give him an F.

**TABLE 2
ATTENTION TO ISSUES**

"Continuing to think about President Obama's first year in office, do you think he has paid the right amount of attention on each of the following issues?"

Base: All Adults

		Too much attention	The right amount of attention	Not enough attention	Not sure
Health care reform	%	44	32	16	8
Environment	%	18	35	33	14
The war in Afghanistan	%	13	43	33	12
The war in Iraq	%	12	44	33	11
Foreign Policy	%	12	43	29	16
Economy	%	7	38	48	7
Homeland security	%	6	38	47	9
The budget deficit	%	5	30	56	10
Education	%	4	35	47	13
Employment	%	3	31	59	8

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Looking at a variety of issues, more than two in five Americans believe President Obama has paid too much attention on health care reform during his first year in office. On the reverse side, three in five Americans believe he has not paid enough attention to employment and just under that say he has not paid enough attention to the budget deficit. Just under half of Americans also say President Obama has not paid enough attention to the economy, homeland security and education. Just over two in five Americans believe the president has paid the right amount of attention to foreign policy and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. One area that is split is the environment as one-third of Americans believes the president has not paid enough attention to it while just over that number believes he has paid the right amount of attention to it.

**TABLE 3
THE CURRENT STATE OF THE UNION**

"Now looking ahead, in the next few weeks, President Obama will be giving his first State of the Union address. How would you rate the current state of the union?"

Base: All Adults

	Total	Age			
		18-34	35-44	45-54	55+
	%	%	%	%	%
POSITIVE (NET)	16	19	24	11	11
Excellent	3	5	6	1	*
Good	13	15	18	11	11
NEGATIVE (NET)	84	81	76	89	89
Fair	44	52	39	44	38
Poor	40	29	37	44	50

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding. * indicates less than 0.5%

As President Obama prepares to give his first State of the Union he has his work cut out for him as over four in five Americans believe the current state of the union is negative. Older Americans are actually even more pessimistic as nine in ten of both 45-54 year olds and those 55 and older say this. In fact, those over 55 are most negative, as half of them say the state of the union is poor – the lowest rating.

TABLE 4
FOCUS FOR STATE OF THE UNION

"While all of these are important issues, which two do you think President Obama should focus attention on during the State of the Union?"

Base: All Adults

	Total	Age			
		18-34	35-44	45-54	55+
	%	%	%	%	%
The economy	51	48	51	58	50
Employment	42	37	43	44	45
Homeland security	23	11	18	26	34
Health care	21	23	25	21	19
Budget deficit	18	13	12	21	25
Education	7	12	10	5	3
Afghanistan	6	7	7	4	7
Foreign policy	5	6	5	5	3
The environment	5	8	3	3	3
Iraq	4	6	8	2	3
Not at all sure	6	10	6	4	3

Note: Multiple responses accepted

Rising to the top are two issues which have been front and center in Americans' minds this year as to what the focus should be on for the upcoming State of the Union. Half of Americans believe President Obama should focus on the economy while two in five believe it should be employment. Almost one-quarter say the focus should be on homeland security while one in five believe it should be health care and just under that say the budget deficit. Less than one in ten Americans believe the focus should be on education, Afghanistan, foreign policy, the environment, or Iraq.

TABLE 5
THE BUDGET DEFICIT

"One area he may focus on is reducing the United States' budget deficit and reducing the country's large debt. How much of a priority should this be for the Obama administration in the next few months?"

Base: All Adults

	Total	Age			
		18-34	35-44	45-54	55+
	%	%	%	%	%
The highest priority	23	16	28	21	28
Very important priority, but not the highest	35	36	31	37	35
An important priority	30	29	31	32	28
Not that important of a priority	7	10	5	6	6
Not an important priority at all	1	1	1	1	1
Not at all sure	4	9	3	3	2

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

While over half of Americans say the budget deficit is something that the President did not focus enough attention on in the past year, less than one-quarter say it should be the highest priority for the Obama administration in the next few months. Over one-third say it should be a very important priority, but not the highest and three in ten believe it should be an important priority.

TABLE 6
EDUCATION ISSUES

"Another area he may focus on in the State of the Union address is education. Of these various educational issues, which one do you think is most important?"

Base: All Adults

	Total	Age				Gender		Child in household	
		18-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Men	Women	Has child	No child
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Setting national standards for schools	38	41	34	37	37	34	41	36	39
Teacher pay	19	18	25	14	18	18	19	17	20
Teacher retraining	12	12	11	13	12	13	11	16	10
The expansion of charter schools	11	8	14	12	12	15	7	14	10
Not at all sure	20	21	15	23	21	20	21	18	21

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

When it comes to education issues, two in five Americans believe that of the four named, the most important one is setting national standards for schools while one in five say it is teacher pay and one in ten each say teacher retraining and the expansion of charter schools with one in five not at all sure. Women are more likely than men to say setting national standards is most important while men are more likely to say the expansion of charter schools. When it comes to looking at those who have children in their household versus those who do not, those with no child are slightly more likely to say setting national standards and teacher pay are more important while those with children are more likely to say teacher retraining and the expansion of charter schools are more important.