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Trump Gets Negative Ratings for Many Personal Traits, but Most Say He Stands Up for His Beliefs

Trump rated lower for trustworthiness than Obama, Bush, Clinton

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Trump Gets Negative Ratings for Many Personal Traits, but Most Say He Stands Up for His Beliefs

Trump rated lower for trustworthiness than Obama, Bush, Clinton

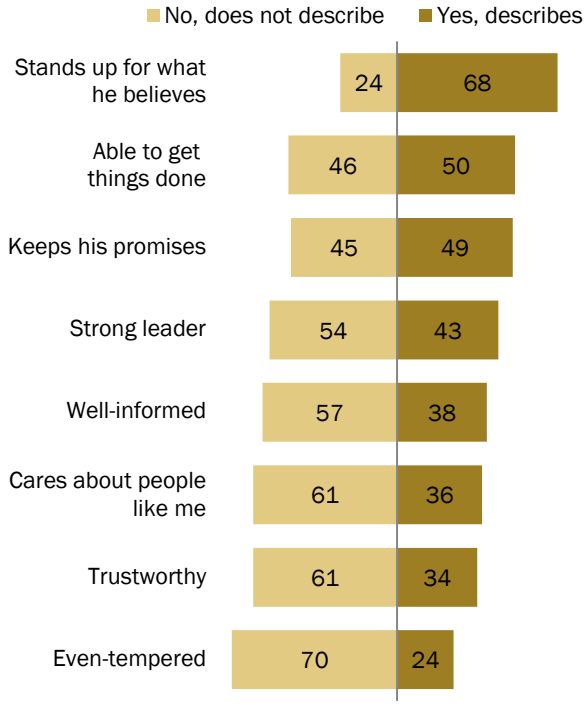
Donald Trump receives generally negative ratings from the public across a range of personal traits and characteristics. Just 24% of Americans say Trump is even-tempered, while nearly three times as many (70%) say that description does not apply to him. Fewer than half say that Trump is a strong leader (43%), well-informed (38%), empathetic (36%) or trustworthy (34%).

Opinions are more divided over whether Trump keeps his promises or is able to get things done. A large majority (68%) – including about half of Democrats – says Trump is "someone who stands up for what he believes in."

The latest national survey by Pew Research Center, conducted Sept. 18-24 among 1,754 adults, finds that Trump gets lower ratings than his predecessors in recent midterm years – Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton – for being trustworthy, empathetic and well-informed. However, Trump fares comparatively well in public perceptions of his ability to get things done.

Trump gets low marks for temperament, trust; most say he stands up for beliefs

% who say each describes Trump ...



Note: Don't know responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 18-24, 2018.

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Trump's overall job rating stands at 38% and remains deeply divided by gender, race and educational attainment. While men are divided in views of Trump's job performance (46% approve, 47% disapprove), more than twice as many women disapprove (63%) than approve (30%).

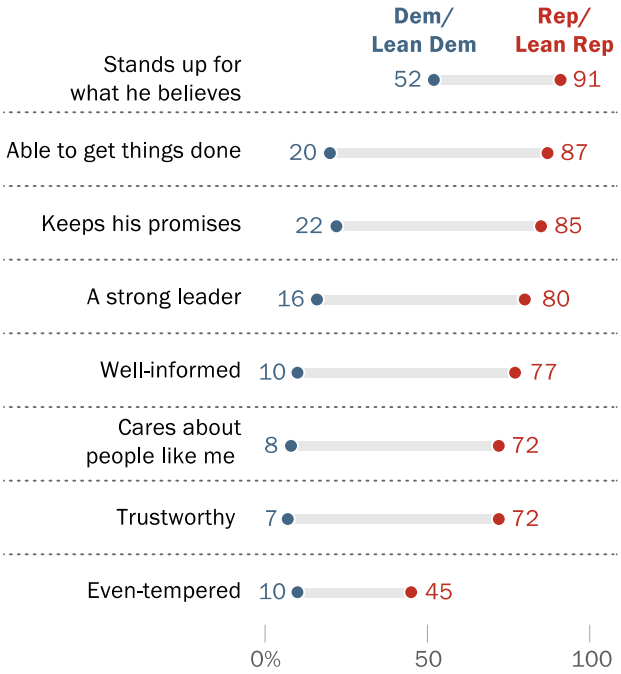
As has been the case since he became president, Trump's job approval ratings are divided along partisan lines; they are more polarized than any president's dating to Dwight Eisenhower.

Similarly, there are large partisan divides in evaluations of Trump's personal traits and characteristics, though the gaps are not as wide in views of Trump's temperament and whether he stands up for his beliefs.

Trump gets high ratings from Republicans – about 70% or higher – for seven of eight personal traits. But only 45% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say Trump is even-tempered, more than 20 percentage points lower than for any other trait.

Republicans give Trump very positive ratings on traits – except temperament

% who say each describes Trump ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 18-24, 2018.

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Democrats and Democratic leaners also give Trump particularly low ratings for his temperament (10% say he is even-tempered), as well as for being trustworthy (7%), caring about people like them (8%) and being well-informed (10%).

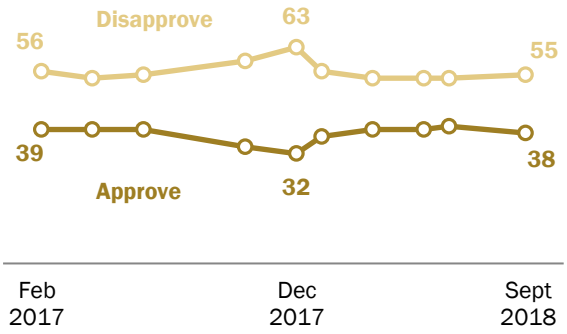
On the other hand, about half of Democrats (52%) say Trump stands up for what he believes in, which is about 30 points higher than the share who offer any other positive evaluation.

Trump job approval remains low

Overall, 55% say they disapprove of the way Trump is handling his job as president, compared with 38% who say they approve of his job performance. Trump's approval ratings are little changed since June and have been remarkably stable over the first year and a half of his administration. Over this period, Trump's ratings have shown much less change than his predecessors.

More continue to disapprove than approve of Trump's job performance

% who ___ of the way Trump is handling his job as president



Note: Don't know responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 18-24, 2018.

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Large majorities of blacks (84%) and Hispanics (71%) disapprove of the way Trump is handling his job. Whites are evenly split in their views.

Younger adults are more likely to disapprove of the president's job performance than older adults. And those with higher levels of education are more critical of how he is handling his job than those with lower levels of education.

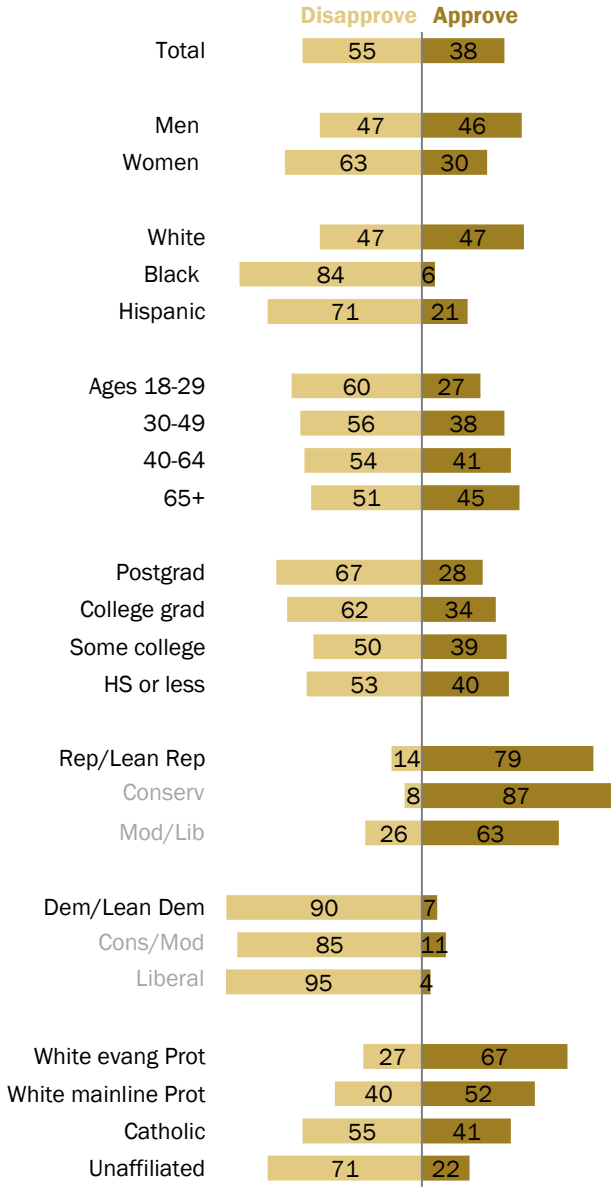
By 67% to 27%, white evangelical Protestants continue to approve of the job Trump is doing. Among white mainline Protestants, about half (52%) approve of Trump's performance (40% disapprove). On balance, Catholics are more likely to disapprove (55%) than approve (41%) of how Trump is handling his job as president. Ratings are even more negative among the religiously unaffiliated, 71% of whom say they disapprove of Trump.

About eight-in-ten Republicans and Republican leaners (79%) say they approve of Trump's job performance; his ratings are significantly higher among conservative Republicans (87%) than moderate and liberal Republicans (63%).

Among Democrats and Democratic leaners, a large 90% majority disapproves of Trump's job performance, including 95% of liberals and 85% of moderates and conservatives.

Wide demographic differences in Trump job approval persist

% who ___ of the way Trump is handling his job as president



Note: Don't know responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 18-24, 2018.

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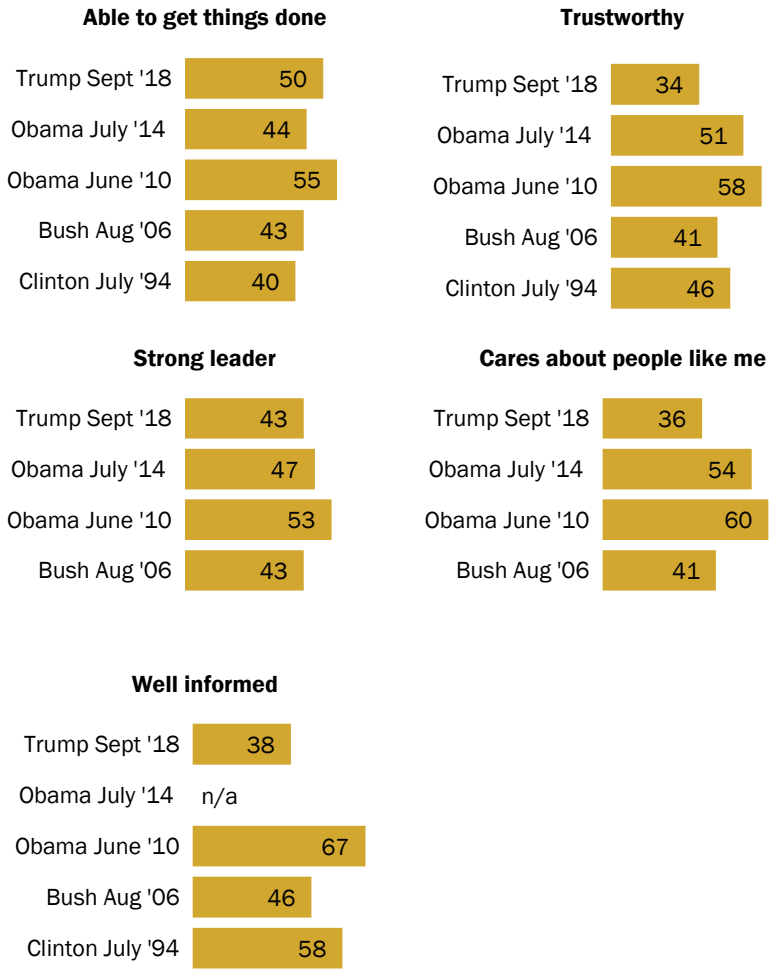
Views of Trump's personal traits and those of recent presidents

On trustworthiness, empathy and being well-informed, Trump is rated lower than for his recent predecessors at similar points in the midterm years of their presidencies. For instance, about a third (34%) describe Trump as trustworthy today. By comparison, Obama was described as trustworthy by 58% of Americans in the summer before the 2010 midterm and by 51% in the summer before the 2014 midterm. About four-in-ten (41%) described Bush as trustworthy in August 2006 (the second midterm election year of his administration) and 46% said this of Clinton in July 1994.

Similarly, smaller shares now say the phrase "cares about people like me" describes Trump (36%) than said this described Obama and Bush in the three previous midterm cycles.

Impressions of Trump as trustworthy lag well behind other presidents in midterm years

% who say each describes president ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 18-24, 2018.

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When it comes to perceptions of being a "strong leader," Trump gets the same rating as Bush did in 2006 (43%) and trails behind assessments of Obama on this dimension in the summers of 2010 (53%) and 2014 (47%).

Trump fares relatively better when it comes to his ability to get things done. More describe Trump as able to get things done than said this about Clinton in July 1994 (40%) or Obama in July 2014 (44%); he trails only ratings of Obama in June 2010, when 55% described him as able to get things done.

On several traits, the partisan gap in assessments of Trump is wider than at comparable points during the Bush, Obama or Clinton administrations.

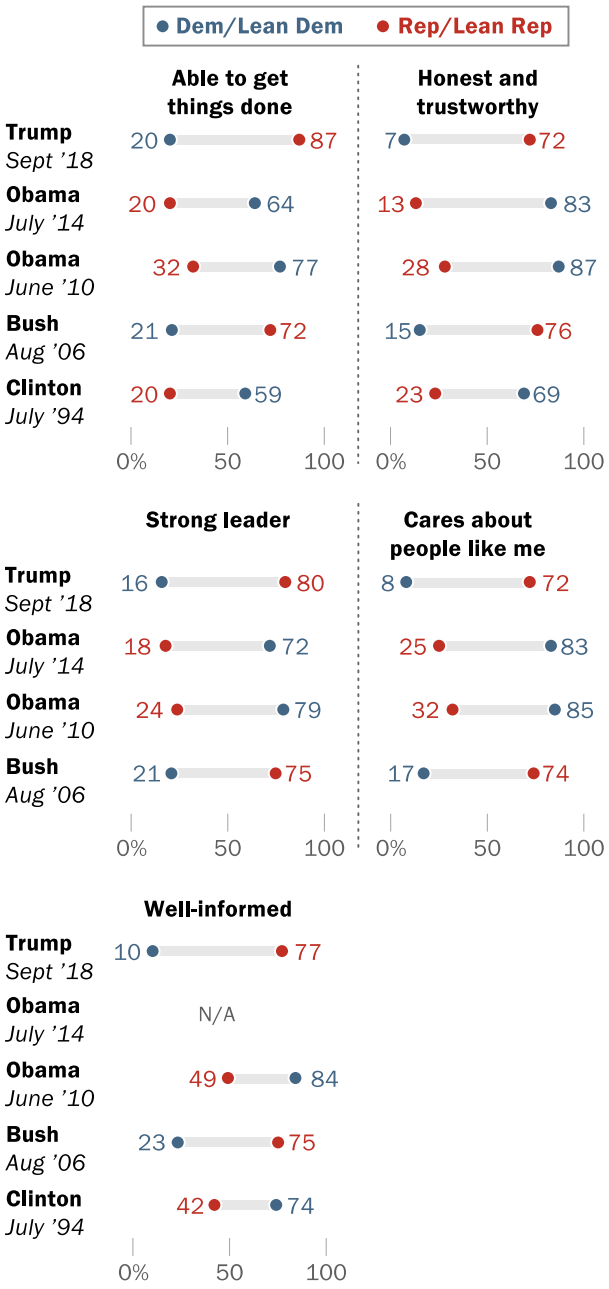
There is now a 67-percentage-point partisan gap over whether Trump is seen as "able to get things done." Nearly nine-in-ten Republicans (87%) say this describes Trump, one of the traits they rate him highest on. Republicans today are more likely than partisans who supported the party in control of the White House in the recent past to say the president is able to get things done. In past midterm years dating to 1994, the partisan gap on trait was never more than about 50 points.

There also is a 67-point gap between the shares of Republicans and Democrats who say Trump is well-informed. This is a much bigger gap than for past presidents. Democratic ratings for Trump on this trait stand out as historically low. Just 10% of Democrats say he is well-informed. By contrast, 23% of Democrats described Bush this way during his sixth year in office and far larger shares of Republicans described Obama (49%) and Clinton (42%) this way at this point in their terms.

The partisan gaps on trustworthiness, leadership and empathy also are at least as wide as any seen in midterm years since 1994, though the magnitude of the differences are somewhat more comparable to partisan ratings for recent presidents.

Growing partisan polarization in evaluations of some presidential traits

% who say each describes president ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 18-24, 2018.

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Most Republicans say GOP lawmakers are not obligated to support Trump's policies if they disagree

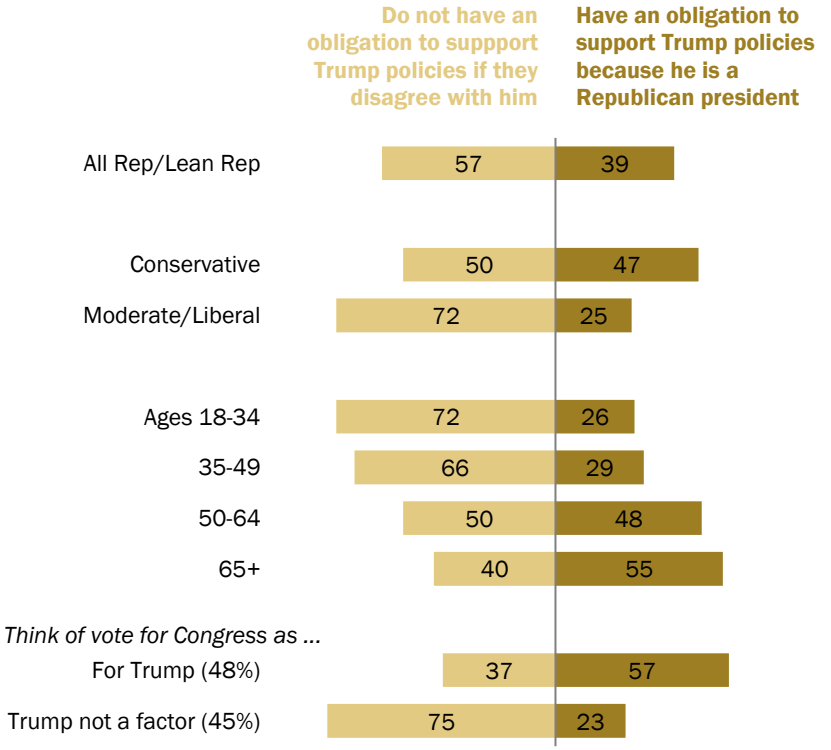
While Republicans and Republican leaners give Trump high job approval marks and rate his personal characteristics positively, many do not believe that GOP lawmakers in Congress have to support his policies if they disagree with him.

Overall, 57% of Republicans say that Republicans in Congress "do not have an obligation to support Trump's policies and programs if they disagree with him"; 39% say they "do have an obligation to do this because Trump is a Republican president." Views on this question are about the same as they were in April 2017.

Younger Republicans are especially likely to say that Republicans in Congress are not obligated to support Trump's policies if they disagree with them; those ages 50 to 64 are about evenly divided in their views. By contrast, a majority of Republicans 65 and older say that Republican lawmakers in Washington do have an obligation to support the president's policies even if they disagree.

Do Republicans in Congress have an obligation to back Trump's policies?

% of Republicans and Rep leaners who say Republicans in Congress ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 18-24, 2018.
Note: Don't know responses not shown.

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Conservative Republicans and Republican leaners are split in their views: About as many say GOP lawmakers have an obligation to support Trump's policies (47%) as say they do not (50%). Most moderate and liberal Republicans (72%) say Republicans in Congress are not obligated to support Trump's policies if they disagree with them.

There also is a divide on this between Republicans who think about their midterm vote as a vote "for" Trump and those who say Trump is not a factor in their midterm vote. Among the 48% of Republican voters who consider their vote for Congress as a vote for Trump, 57% say Republicans in Congress have an obligation to support Trump's policies. Among the 45% of Republican voters who say Trump is not much of a factor in their midterm vote, 75% say GOP lawmakers are not obligated to support his policies if they disagree with them.

Acknowledgements

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted September 18-24, 2018, among a national sample of 1,754 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (439 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,315 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 829 who had no landline telephone).[1] The survey was conducted by interviewers under the direction of Abt Associates. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International LLC. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/.

The combined landline and cell phone sample is weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2016 Census Bureau's American Community Survey one-year estimates and population density to parameters from the decennial census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cellphone only, or both landline and cellphone), based on extrapolations from the 2016 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

[1] Due to a programming error, 37 respondents who were interviewed on a landline phone were not asked about the presence of a cellphone in their household. To account for this error, these cases were imputed as having both a landline and a cellphone, which is the most common status for landline respondents.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Survey conducted September 18-24, 2018

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,754	2.7 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	755	4.2 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	843	3.9 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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.

Pew Research Center undertakes all polling activity, including calls to mobile telephone numbers, in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other applicable laws.

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PEW RESEARCH CENTER
SEPTEMBER 2018 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
SEPTEMBER 18-24, 2018
N=1,754

Q.1 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

RANDOMIZE Q.1 AND Q.2 BLOCK
ASK ALL:
Q.2 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President? **[IF DK ENTER AS DK. IF DEPENDS PROBE ONCE WITH:** Overall do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President? **IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]**

	Approve	Disapprove	(VOL.) DK/Ref
Sep 18-24, 2018	38	55	7
Jun 5-12, 2018	40	54	6
Apr 25-May 1, 2018	39	54	6
Mar 7-14, 2018	39	54	7
Jan 10-15, 2018	37	56	7
Nov 29-Dec 4, 2017	32	63	5
Oct 25-30, 2017	34	59	7
Jun 8-18, 2017	39	55	7
Apr 5-11, 2017	39	54	6
Feb 7-12, 2017	39	56	6

See past presidents' approval trends: Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton

NO QUESTIONS 3-6, 9-10, 14-27, 29-32

QUESTIONS 7-8, 11-13, 28 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

ASK ALL:
Q.33 As I read some pairs of opposite phrases, please tell me which one best reflects your impression of Donald Trump. (First,) does Donald Trump impress you as...**[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]** Next, **[NEXT ITEM]**? **[IF NECESSARY:** "Does Donald Trump impress you as …"**]**

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=867]:

a.F1	Trustworthy	Not trustworthy	(VOL.) Neither particularly	(VOL.) DK/Ref
Sep 18-24, 2018	34	61	2	3
Jan 10-15, 2018	35	59	2	3
Feb 7-12, 2017	37	59	1	3

b.F1	Able to get things done	Not able to get things done	(VOL.) Neither particularly	(VOL.) DK/Ref
Sep 18-24, 2018	50	46	2	3
Jan 10-15, 2018	50	46	2	3
Feb 7-12, 2017	54	40	1	4

c.F1	A strong leader	Not a strong leader	(VOL.) Neither particularly	(VOL.) DK/Ref
Sep 18-24, 2018	43	54	1	2
Jan 10-15, 2018	44	54	1	1

Q.33 CONTINUED…

	A strong leader	Not a strong leader	**(VOL.)** Neither particularly	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
Feb 7-12, 2017	49	49	1	1

d.F1	Someone who cares about people like me	Someone who doesn't care about people like me	**(VOL.)** Neither particularly	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
Sep 18-24, 2018	36	61	1	2
Jan 10-15, 2018	35	62	1	2
Feb 7-12, 2017	40	56	1	3

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=887]:

e.F2	Even tempered	Not even tempered	**(VOL.)** Neither particularly	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
Sep 18-24, 2018	24	70	2	4
Jan 10-15, 2018	25	68	3	4
Feb 7-12, 2017	28	68	1	4

f.F2	Well informed	Not well informed	**(VOL.)** Neither particularly	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
Sep 18-24, 2018	38	57	2	3
Jan 10-15, 2018	37	61	1	1
Feb 7-12, 2017	39	57	1	2

g.F2	Keeps his promises	Doesn't keep his promises	**(VOL.)** Neither particularly	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
Sep 18-24, 2018	49	45	2	4
Jan 10-15, 2018	39	54	3	4
Feb 7-12, 2017	60	31	3	6

h.F2	Someone who stands up for what he believes in	Someone who DOESN'T stand up for what he believes in	**(VOL.)** Neither particularly	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
Sep 18-24, 2018	68	24	2	5

NO QUESTIONS 34-43, 47-49, 52-57, 60-63, 67-72, 80-82, 85-92, 94-95

QUESTIONS 44-46, 50-51, 58-59, 83, 93, 96-97 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

QUESTIONS 64-66, 73-79, 84, 98-100 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:
PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?
ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):
PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean Rep	Lean Dem
Sep 18-24, 2018	25	32	37	3	1	2	15	18
Jun 5-12, 2018	25	31	38	3	1	2	15	18
Apr 25-May 1, 2018	27	28	38	4	1	2	14	19
Mar 7-14, 2018	26	28	41	3	*	1	17	18
Jan 10-15, 2018	26	33	34	3	1	3	12	18
Nov 29-Dec 4, 2017	20	32	40	4	1	3	13	19
Oct 25-30, 2017	22	32	41	3	1	2	17	19
Jun 8-Jul 9, 2017	25	31	39	3	1	2	16	18
Yearly Totals								
2017	23.6	31.4	39.4	3.3	.6	1.7	15.8	18.7
2016	25.4	32.0	36.5	3.4	.5	2.2	14.6	17.0
2015	23.7	30.4	40.1	3.6	.4	1.8	16.4	17.3
2014	23.2	31.5	39.5	3.1	.7	2.0	16.2	16.5
2013	23.9	32.1	38.3	2.9	.5	2.2	16.0	16.0
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	*30.9*	*31.8*	*27.9*	*5.2*	*.6*	*3.6*	*11.7*	*9.4*
2001 Pre-Sept 11	*27.3*	*34.4*	*30.9*	*5.1*	*.6*	*1.7*	*12.1*	*13.5*
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

ASK REPUBLICANS AND REPUBLICAN LEANERS (PARTY=1 OR PARTYLN=1)[N=755]:
Q.101 Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

Sep 18-24 2018		Apr 5-11 2017
39	Republicans in Congress have an obligation to support Donald Trump's policies and programs because he is a Republican president	43
57	Republicans in Congress do NOT have an obligation to support Donald Trump's policies and programs if they disagree with him	55
4	Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**	2