



Survey Ranks Obama 15th Best President, Bush Among Worst

Former President George W. Bush is in the bottom 5

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July 2, 2010

President Obama ranks 15th out of 44 in a poll of the best and worst presidents while former President George W. Bush earns a place in the bottom five, according to the Siena College Research Institute's recent survey of 238 presidential scholars released Thursday. [\[See a slide show of the 10 Worst Presidents.\]](#)

Obama secured a top ten place in two skill set categories, communication ability (7th) and ability to compromise (10th), and in two personality trait categories, imagination (6th) and intelligence (8th). Background, described as family, education, and experience, proved his lowest score at 32nd.

This is the 5th time the institute has conducted the survey of U.S. presidents, which is done a year after a new president takes office. The inaugural survey in 1982 ranked then-President Ronald Reagan at 16th. "Obviously, there's not great validity to it since they've only been in office for one year," says the survey's co-director and statistician Douglas Lonnstrom. "But it's a benchmark for us to see how they move." [\[Take our poll: Who is the worst president?\]](#)

President tend to rank around 20th while they are in office, and Obama is no exception. His actions over the next few years will decide if he stays roughly the same like Reagan—who moved from 16th to 20th, 22nd, 16th again, and finally to 18th this year—or like Bush, who fell a dramatic 16 slots in the first poll after he left office, from 23rd to 39th.

Bush made the top twenty in only two categories, luck (18th) and willingness to take risks (19th), and he sits in the bottom five in 12 of the 20 categories, notably 42nd in intelligence, foreign policy accomplishments, and communication ability. Lonnstrom points out the unpopular former president has time on his side, explaining it takes four or five decades to know a president's true worth. "Right now there's a lot of emotion about Bush," he says. "Time passes and people become more objective, and so we'll see."

Franklin D. Roosevelt has held his title as top president since 1982 with the same four following to round out the consistent top five: Theodore Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson.

Joining Bush in the bottom five this year are Franklin Pierce, Warren G. Harding, James Buchanan, and Andrew Johnson, who is at the very bottom for the second year in a row.

The survey, which ranks presidents using 20 different factors, shows Jefferson was the most intelligent president, Richard Nixon was the worst at integrity and avoiding crucial mistakes, Lincoln had the best overall ability, and Washington was the best leader.

Here's the full list*:

1. Franklin D. Roosevelt
2. Theodore Roosevelt
3. Abraham Lincoln
4. George Washington
5. Thomas Jefferson
6. James Madison
7. James Monroe
8. Woodrow Wilson
9. Harry Truman
10. Dwight D. Eisenhower
11. John F. Kennedy
12. James K. Polk
13. William Clinton
14. Andrew Jackson
15. Barack Obama
16. Lyndon B. Johnson
17. John Adams
18. Ronald Reagan
19. John Quincy Adams
20. Grover Cleveland
21. William McKinley
22. George H. W. Bush
23. Martin Van Buren
24. William Howard Taft
25. Chester Arthur
26. Ulysses S. Grant

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29. Calvin Coolidge
30. Richard Nixon
31. Rutherford B. Hayes
32. James Carter
33. Zachary Taylor
34. Benjamin Harrison
35. William Henry Harrison
36. Herbert Hoover
37. John Tyler
38. Millard Fillmore
39. George W. Bush
40. Franklin Pierce
41. Warren G. Harding
42. James Buchanan
43. Andrew Johnson

*There are only 43 ranking slots since Grover Cleveland was both the 22nd and 24th president; he left the White House only to return four years later for his second term.

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