



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

SEPTEMBER 25, 2012

Republicans Again See Pro-Obama Bias

Pluralities Say Press Is Fair to Romney, Obama

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andrew Kohut

President, Pew Research Center

Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock

Associate Directors

Scott Keeter

Director of Survey Research

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel (202) 419-4350

Fax (202) 419-4399

www.people-press.org

Republicans Again See Pro-Obama Bias

Pluralities Say Press Is Fair to Romney, Obama

There is no public consensus when it comes to how the presidential candidates are being covered by the news media. Nearly half (46%) say the coverage of Romney has been fair, while among those who see a bias as many say the press has been too easy on the GOP nominee (20%) as too tough on him (21%). The same percentage (46%) says coverage of Obama has also been fair. However, nearly twice as many say press coverage of the president has been too easy (28%) than too tough (15%).

Four years ago, there was a larger disparity in impressions of how the press was covering the candidates. In October 2008 more thought the press was being too tough on McCain (23%) than too easy (15%). Nearly a third (31%) said the press was being too easy on Obama, while just 7% said it was being too tough. At that time, just 38% said coverage of Sarah Palin was fair; as many (38%) said coverage was too tough.

As Many Say Press Is "Too Easy" as "Too Tough" on Romney

	Too tough	Too easy	Fair	DK
Sept 2012	%	%	%	%
Mitt Romney	21	20	46	13=100
Barack Obama	15	28	46	11=100
October 2008				
John McCain	23	15	60	2=100
Barack Obama	7	31	60	2=100
Sarah Palin	38	21	38	3=100
Joe Biden	5	23	66	6=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Sept 20-23, 2012.
Based on general public.

[Republicans generally are more critical of the press than are Democrats.](#) The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted September 20-23, 2012 among 1,005 adults, finds, 45% of Republicans think the press has been too tough on Mitt Romney – almost identical to the 44% who said this about coverage of McCain in October 2008. By comparison, 26% of Democrats think the press is too tough on Obama, though this has increased substantially from only 9% four years ago.

What stands out to Republicans even more is what they see as unfair treatment of Obama. Six-in-ten (60%) Republicans say the news coverage is too easy on Obama. Most Democrats say news organizations have been fair in their coverage of Mitt Romney, with only 29% saying they have been too easy on him.

Republicans Continue to Say that Press Goes Easy on Obama

Romney/McCain	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
Sept 2012 (Romney)	%	%	%	%
Too easy	20	7	29	19
Too tough	21	45	5	24
Fair	46	38	57	45
Don't know	<u>13</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>11</u>
	100	100	100	100
Oct 2008 (McCain)				
Too easy	15	6	22	15
Too tough	23	44	10	21
Fair	60	48	66	61
Don't know	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100	100	100
Barack Obama	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
Sept 2012	%	%	%	%
Too easy	28	60	4	36
Too tough	15	3	26	11
Fair	46	30	62	43
Don't know	<u>11</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>
	100	100	100	100
Oct 2008				
Too easy	31	55	9	36
Too tough	7	4	9	8
Fair	60	39	81	55
Don't know	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Sept 20-23, 2012.
Based on general public.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted September 20-23, 2012 among a national sample of 1,005 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (605 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 400 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 211 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. 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://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2011 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. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,005	3.7 percentage points
Republicans	249	7.4 percentage points
Democrats	336	6.4 percentage points
Independents	355	6.2 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
September 20-23, 2012 OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,005

PEW.1 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**PEWWP.1 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED****ASK ALL:**

PEW.2 Thinking about recent news coverage, would you say the press has been too easy, too tough or fair in the way it has covered **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?

	<u>Too easy</u>	<u>Too tough</u>	<u>Fair</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
a. Barack Obama				
September 20-23, 2012	28	15	46	11
May 17-20, 2012	28	19	41	13
November 3-6, 2011	26	22	41	11
July 21-24, 2011	27	23	41	9
November 18-21, 2010 ¹	23	21	46	9
September 9-12, 2010	27	23	37	13
July 15-18, 2010	27	24	39	10
April 9-12, 2010	29	21	42	8
October 3-6, 2008	31	7	60	2
April 25-28, 2008	26	17	52	5
March 20-24, 2008	23	15	55	7
February 29-March 3, 2008	28	8	58	6
February 1-4, 2008	23	8	61	8
b. Mitt Romney				
September 20-23, 2012	20	21	46	13
May 17-20, 2012	21	15	47	18
February 2-5, 2012	19	14	47	19
November 3-6, 2011	12	9	53	26
July 21-24, 2011	16	9	45	30

TREND FOR COMPARISON:

	<u>Too easy</u>	<u>Too tough</u>	<u>Fair</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
<i>John McCain</i>				
October 3-6, 2008	15	23	60	2=100
April 25-28, 2008	20	8	65	7=100
March 20-24, 2008	18	9	62	11=100
February 29-March 3, 2008	14	14	64	8=100
February 1-4, 2008	14	9	63	14=100

¹ For November 18-21, 2010 this question was not asked in a list. For all other trends, this was a list item.