Kayla Gallagher

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Data-Driven Journalism

Michelle Minkoff

Original Data Set Story

THE PRESIDENTIAL POPULARITY CONTEST

*A look into the history of presidential approval ratings and what they mean.*

The concept of presidential popularity is a simple, but powerful thing in American politics. This popularity is examined by using a presidential approval rating. These ratings are often used to determine the success of a president, but where do these numbers come from?

There are a number of factors that are taken into account when calculating a president’s approval rating like the national unemployment rates and the state of the economy during their presidency.

Out the last ten presidents who have served the nation, **Lyndon B. Johnson has the highest average approval rating of 74.2%.** Johnson’s presidency began after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, leaving the vice president to serve **one partial term before he was re-elected for a second term.**

The president with the lowest approval rating over the last ten presidents was the 45th president of the United States, **Donald Trump with an average rating of 41.1%.** Despite his controversial presidency, **Trump had the second lowest unemployment rate at 5.04% after Johnson.** However, **Trump also had the lowest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth with an average of 1% during the course of his presidency.**

Former **President George W. Bush has also seen high approval ratings from the nation at 60.9%**. However, Bush hit a record-high approval rating of 80% shortly after the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York on Sept. 11, 2001.

**Four out of the last ten United States presidents have been Democrats, with the other six as Republicans.** Out of these presidents, two have been impeached: Bill Clinton and Donald Trump. Clinton’s impeachment followed the Monica Lewinsky scandal and Trump was impeached twice during his four-year term. Richard Nixon faced potential impeachment after the Watergate scandal, but **resigned early into his second term** before it could happen.

Due to the situation in which Johnson became president, data shows that his political statistics led to him having the highest approval rating. During his almost 2-term presidency he had the **lowest average unemployment rate at 4.18%** and the **highest GDP growth at 5.3%.**

These numbers can contain important stakes for presidents in office. Some presidents have lost Congressional seats for their parties due to low approval ratings.

Although these numbers and percentages may help contribute, some presidential popularity experts say that it is really just about general perception and the mood of the country.

Dataset: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17ipWQ509ORVcZKgMW4nM249MkW8ibcDbK2rQdaVW0Fg/edit?usp=sharing>