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Hillary's Image

Public rates Clinton

by Frank Newport

GALLUP NEWS SERVICE

PRINCETON, NJ -- Hillary Clinton is one of the best-known political personalities in the country, having been in an intense public spotlight for more than 15 years. Although Clinton has been well-known for some time, opinions of her have shifted considerably as the years have gone by.

At one point in early 1999, toward the end of her husband's impeachment proceedings, Clinton was viewed favorably by 66% of the American people. But within two years, just after the Clintons left the White House in 2001, her favorable rating had fallen to 44%.

More recently, Hillary Clinton's image has undergone a significant change, becoming steadily less positive as this year has progressed. Gallup's last trend measure showed that 45% of Americans have a favorable view of Clinton while 52% have an unfavorable view. That contrasts with a significantly more positive image -- 58% favorable, 40% unfavorable -- as 2007 began.

What's behind Americans' views of Clinton? A recent Gallup Panel poll asked Americans to say -- in their own words -- what they particularly like about Clinton, and what they dislike about her. There was no shortage of opinion. About two-thirds of Americans were able or willing to say something positive about Clinton, and about the same percentage were able or willing to say something negative.

Clinton's Positives

The accompanying table displays, in categories, the responses people give when asked what they like about Clinton. The left-hand column contains the responses of all Americans, while the right-hand column represents only the comments of those who within this same survey said they had a positive overall opinion of Clinton.

Next, I'd like to learn more about your views of Hillary Rodham Clinton, both what you like and admire about her and what you dislike or don't admire about her. First, please tell me what you like or admire about Hillary Clinton. (OPEN-ENDED)

2007 Apr 23-26

Total sample

Those with a positive opinion of Clinton

%

%

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Strength/Stamina

10

16

Determination/Tenacity/Perseverance	6	8
Forthright/Outspoken/Direct	6	7
Stands up for beliefs	4	5
Courageousness/Audacity	3	3
Aggressive/Assertive	3	4
Honesty/Integrity	2	4
Faithful/Loyal	1	2
Energetic/Enthusiasm	1	1

INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence	9	13
Knowledgeable/Well-informed	6	8

POLITICAL ASPECTS

Her campaign for the presidency	7	10
Political career/Leadership	6	10

VIEWS AND ISSUES

Agree with her views	4	7
Views on healthcare	3	4

Strong advocate for women	2	4
Views on Iraq	1	1
Advocate for New York	1	1
OTHER		
Commitment to her husband/Forgiveness	4	4
She is a Democrat	2	3
Physical attributes	1	1
Good parent	1	--
Other	3	4
Everything	--	
Nothing	26	6
No opinion	5	

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

It's clear that people who have a positive opinion of Clinton talk about her personal characteristics more than anything else. In particular, it seems that many of those who like Clinton admire her because of her fighting spirit in responding to the many travails and challenges of her life. Along these lines, those who like her mention her strength and stamina, her determination and perseverance, her forthrightness, her standing up for her beliefs, and her aggressiveness.

Those who like Clinton also mention her intelligence, and aspects of her political life, including her current campaign for the presidency.

Those who have a positive opinion of Clinton have perhaps surprisingly few comments about her positions on the issues. In

other words, admiration for Clinton is focused more on inner, dispositional aspects of her persona rather than on more practical or political issue positions.

In summary, the top five reasons given by those who have a positive opinion of Clinton are:

1. Her strength and stamina
2. Her intelligence
3. Admiration for her campaign for president
4. Her political career and leadership
5. (tie) Her knowledge
5. (tie) Her political career and leadership

Negatives

This table displays, in categories, the responses Americans give when asked what they dislike or don't admire about Clinton. The column on the right-hand side represents the opinions of those who have a negative view of Clinton.

Please tell me what you dislike or don't admire about Hillary Clinton. (OPEN-ENDED)

<i>2007 Apr 23-26</i>	Total sample	Those with a negative opinion of Clinton
	%	%
PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS		
Don't trust her	8	14
Too much of an opportunist	7	11
Overly aggressive/Overbearing	5	6
Cold/Unfeeling personality	4	2
Her attitude/Arrogance	3	4
Lack of morals/ethics	3	5

VIEWS AND ISSUES

Dislike her political views in general/ Liberal political views	14	23
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Wavers too much on issues to her advantage/Wishy-washy	10	11
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Views on Iraq	2	2
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CLINTON HISTORY

Past history of Clinton scandals	8	8
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OTHER

Just don't like her	4	6
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She is a female/Not ready for a female president	3	3
-----------------------------------------------------	---	---

Lack of experience/knowledge	2	3
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Lack of support for Republicans	1	2
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Other	4	4
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Everything	3	7
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Nothing	23	4
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No opinion	9	3
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NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

People who dislike Clinton say a number of things when asked what they don't admire about her -- split to a degree between mentions that deal with her personal characteristics and those that deal with her positions on the issues.

The biggest contrast between the negative views given by those who dislike Clinton and the positive views given by those who like Clinton is the greater tendency of the former to mention her positions on the issues. Almost one out of four of those who don't like Clinton cite her views on the issues and her liberal positions as what they don't admire about her. Another 11% mention their perceptions that she wavers too much on the issues and is wishy-washy, while 2% say they don't admire her views on Iraq specifically.

That's not to say her detractors don't mention Clinton's personal characteristics. While those who admire Clinton cite her strength and determination, those who don't like her cite what they perceive to be her more "shifty" nature. That includes 14% who say they simply don't trust her, 11% who say she is an opportunist, and 5% who say she has no morals or ethics. Some of the additional responses -- that she is too aggressive or arrogant -- are essentially mirror images of her positives.

There is little mention of her husband Bill per se by those who don't admire Hillary, but 8% of those who don't like her cite her involvement with past Clinton scandals. Those could of course include her husband's White House affair and subsequent impeachment and/or her own involvement in the Whitewater scandal.

In rank order, the top five things people with negative views about Clinton don't admire about her are:

1. Her political views and liberal positions on the issues
2. They generally don't trust her.
3. (tie) They think she is an opportunist.
3. (tie) They think she is too wishy-washy, flip-flopping on the issues.
5. Past history of the Clinton scandals

Comparisons to June 2006

These same two open-ended questions about Clinton were asked in a Gallup Panel survey in June 2006. The comparison of the public's overall responses is given in the accompanying table. In general, there does not appear to have been any systematic, major change since June in the ways people discuss either Clinton's positives or her negatives. The biggest change seems to be a slight increase in discussions of her campaign for the presidency in the context of what people admire about her, and a decrease in specific mentions of her strong advocacy for women.

Please tell me what you like or admire about Hillary Clinton. (OPEN-ENDED)

	2007 Apr 23-26	2006 Jun 26-29
	%	%
Strength/Stamina	10	6
Intelligence	9	9
Her campaign for the presidency	7	2
Determination/Tenacity/Perseverance	6	6

Political career/Leadership	6	5
Knowledgeable/Well-informed	6	2
Forthright/Outspoken/Direct	6	9
Commitment to her husband/Forgiveness	4	6
Agree with her views	4	5
Stands up for beliefs	4	4
Courageousness/Audacity	3	2
Aggressive/Assertive	3	1
Views on healthcare	3	2
Strong advocate for women	2	10
Honesty/Integrity	2	1
She is a Democrat	2	1
Physical attributes	1	1
Faithful/Loyal	1	1
Views on Iraq	1	1
Energetic/Enthusiasm	1	1
Good parent	1	*
Advocate for New York	1	1
Other	3	9

Everything	--	*
Nothing	26	25
No opinion	5	10

* Less than 0.5%

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Please tell me what you dislike or don't admire about Hillary Clinton. (OPEN-ENDED)

	2007 Apr 23-26	2006 Jun 26-29
	%	%
Dislike her political views in general/Liberal political views	14	13
Wavers too much on issues to her advantage/Wishy-washy	10	11
Don't trust her	8	7
Past history of Clinton scandals	8	7
Too much of an opportunist	7	4
Overly aggressive/Overbearing	5	5
Cold/Unfeeling personality	4	2
Just don't like her	4	4
Her attitude/Arrogance	3	3

She is a female/Not ready for a female president	3	*
Lack of morals/ethics	3	3
Views on Iraq	2	2
Lack of experience/knowledge	2	2
Lack of support for Republicans	1	1
Other	4	4
Everything	3	3
Nothing	23	27
No opinion	9	16

* Less than 0.5%

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Bottom Line

Clinton's admirers appear, more than anything else, to appreciate her personal characteristics of toughness, stamina, perseverance, and determination in the face of adversity. Those who have a positive opinion of Clinton also admire her intelligence and knowledge.

Clinton's detractors have negative things to say about her personal characteristics -- most particularly the perceptions that she is not trustworthy and is an opportunist -- but detractors also say they don't like her liberal orientation, positions on specific issues, and her perceived wavering on issues.

In an election context, these data suggest that in order to shore up her base, Clinton needs to continue with her tough image. To convert detractors, she would need to change issue positions and convince them at the same time that she is not an opportunist and not wishy-washy.

Survey Methods

Results for this panel study are based on telephone interviews with 1,007 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted April 23-26, 2007. Respondents were drawn from Gallup's nationally representative household panel, which was originally recruited

through random selection methods. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of sampling error is $\hat{\pm}4$ percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

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