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# Hillary Clinton's Strengths: Record at State, Toughness, Honesty

*But Benghazi Seen as Top Negative*

A Pew Research Center/USA TODAY Survey

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
ON THIS REPORT:**

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# Hillary Clinton's Strengths: Record at State, Toughness, Honesty

## *But Benghazi Seen as Top Negative*

If she runs for president in 2016, Hillary Clinton would bring a number of potential strengths to the race, from her tenure as secretary of state to her perceived toughness and honesty. Fully 67% of Americans approve of the job she did as secretary of state, while majorities say she is tough (69%) and honest (56%).

The public also rejects the notion that Clinton is unlikable – a change from the 2008 Democratic primary campaign. In a memorable moment from that contest, then-candidate Barack Obama turned to Clinton during a debate and said sarcastically, [“You’re likable enough, Hillary.”](#) Today, just 36% say Clinton is “hard to like”; a majority (57%) says that phrase does not describe her. During the 2008 primary season, about half of voters found Clinton hard to like (51% in March 2008).

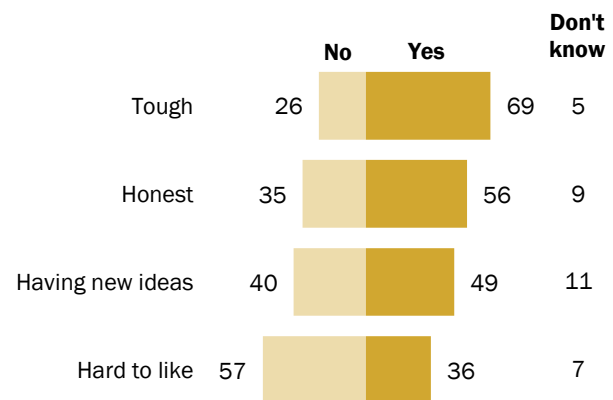
However, the new national survey by the Pew Research Center and [USA TODAY](#), conducted Feb. 27-Mar. 2 among 1,002 adults, finds that Clinton is not widely seen as having new ideas. About half (49%) say the phrase “having new ideas” describes Clinton, while 40% say it does not; 11% offer no opinion.

And while Clinton’s performance at the State Department is viewed positively, her handling of the 2012 attack on the U.S. consulate at Benghazi, Libya registers as a negative aspect of her background.

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### Clinton Viewed as Tough and Honest, But Fewer Say She Has New Ideas

*% saying each describes Hillary Clinton ...*



Survey conducted Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2014.

Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY

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When people are asked to name in their own words the most negative thing about Clinton's career, "Benghazi" is the most frequent response, cited by 15% of respondents. Among Republicans, 28% volunteer Benghazi as the most negative aspect of her career.

On the other hand, Clinton's tenure at the State Department is mentioned most frequently as her biggest positive (by 12%), while 8% cite her role as Bill Clinton's wife or the way she dealt with the Monica Lewinsky affair.

The survey finds that about half of Americans (51%) want to see Hillary Clinton run for president in 2016, while 43% say they would not want to see her run. If Clinton decides to run, however, most say they would consider voting for her. Nearly six-in-ten say there is a good chance (35%) or some chance (24%) they would vote for Clinton. About four-in-ten adults (38%) – including 74% of Republicans – say there is no chance they would vote for her.

Among Democrats, an overwhelming share of liberals (87%) want to see Hillary Clinton run and nearly as many (83%) say there is a good chance they would vote for her. Fewer conservative and moderate Democrats want Clinton to run (69%); 60% say there is a good chance they would vote for her.

## Assessments of Clinton's Career

*Thinking about Hillary Clinton's career, what one thing do you have ...*

The most positive view of?		The most negative view of?	
	%		%
Secretary of State	12	Benghazi	15
Bill Clinton's wife/ Handling of affair	8	Bill Clinton/ Husband's affair	9
Woman in politics	5	Democrat/Policies	3
Health care	3	Dislike general	3
First Lady	3	Dishonest	2
Intelligence	2	Secretary of State	2
Experience	2	Career politician	2
		Career generally	2
Nothing	11	Nothing	18

Survey conducted Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2014. Top responses shown; for complete list, see survey topline. Open-ended question, multiple responses accepted.

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## Views of a Possible Clinton Candidacy

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
<i>Would you like Hillary Clinton to run in 2016?</i>	%	%	%	%
Yes	51	26	76	45
No	43	70	19	48
Don't know	7	4	4	7
	100	100	100	100
<i>If Clinton runs, chance you would vote for her ...</i>				
Good chance	35	8	70	24
Some chance	24	17	17	34
No chance	38	74	12	40
Don't know	3	1	2	2
	100	100	100	100

Survey conducted Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2014. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY

Opinions about the potential impact of Clinton's gender on her candidacy have become more positive since her first try for the presidency in 2008. Currently, 33% say that if Clinton runs for president, the fact that she is a woman would help her; 20% say it would hurt her and 44% say it would make no difference. In early January 2008, when asked a slightly different question (would Clinton's gender hurt her if she were the Democratic nominee), more said it would hurt than help (35% vs. 24%).

Both women and men are more likely to say that Clinton's gender is an asset than did so in the 2008 survey. Currently, 39% of women and 45% of men say that Clinton's gender would help her; 19% and 14%, respectively, think it would hurt her. In January 2008, far more women thought that Clinton's gender would hurt rather than help (38% vs. 22%). Men were more evenly divided at that time (27% help, 31% hurt).

Clinton's involvement in her husband's administration also is viewed more positively than negatively. In the current survey, 42% say Hillary Clinton's involvement in Bill Clinton's administration would help her, compared with 17% who think it would hurt her; 39% say it wouldn't make a difference. In January 2008, during the Democratic primaries, 42% said her involvement in her husband's presidency would help, 29% said it would hurt, while 25% said it would not make a difference to voters.

Republicans and Democrats offer similar views of the impact of Clinton's gender on a possible presidential run. Democrats are far more likely

## Fewer See Clinton's Gender as a Potential Negative than in Jan. 2008

*If Hillary Clinton decides to run for president in 2016, the fact that she is a woman ...*

	Jan 2008*	Mar 2014	Change
	%	%	
Would help her	24	33	+9
Would hurt her	35	20	-15
Wouldn't make a difference	36	44	+8
Don't know	5	3	
	100	100	

Survey conducted Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2014. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

\* 2008 question asked "If Hillary Clinton is the Democratic Party nominee for president ..."

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## Would Gender, Ties with Bill Clinton Administration Matter in 2016?

*If Clinton decides to run for president in 2016, would ...*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
<b>The fact that she is a woman</b>				
Help her	33	30	33	35
Hurt her	20	23	24	17
Not make a difference	44	46	42	46
Don't know	3	1	2	2
	100	100	100	100
<b>Her involvement in Bill Clinton admin.</b>				
Help her	42	34	52	40
Hurt her	17	26	11	16
Not make a difference	39	39	36	44
Don't know	2	1	1	1
	100	100	100	100

Survey conducted Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2014.

Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY

than Republicans to think that her involvement in Bill Clinton's presidency would help her (52% vs. 34%). But even among Republicans, only about a quarter (26%) view Clinton's involvement in her husband's administration as a possible negative.

## Perceptions of Hillary Clinton's Age

When asked an open-ended question about how old Hillary Clinton is, 57% of respondents offer an age in the 60s and 31% give an age in the 50s; very few think she is 70 or older (3%) or under 50 (6%).

In fact, the public tends to underestimate Hillary Clinton's age (she is 66). About eight-in-ten (83%) give an age of 65 or younger, 2% volunteer her exact age, and just 12% give an age of 67 or higher. The median age offered is 60.

Younger adults (under age 30) are the most likely to underestimate Hillary Clinton's age: fully 53% think she is in her 50s while another 16% say she is under 50. Older adults are more accurate, with majorities giving an age in the 60s.

There are only modest divides in views of Clinton's age by party, though Democrats are somewhat more likely than Republicans to give an age in the 50s (32% vs. 22%).

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### Most Think Hillary Clinton Is in Her 60s

*Just your best guess, how old is Hillary Clinton?*

	Younger than 50	50- 59	60- 69	70+	DK
	%	%	%	%	%
Total	6	31	57	3	4=100
Men	5	34	56	1	3=100
Women	6	27	59	4	4=100
18-29	16	53	27	2	2=100
30-49	5	34	58	*	3=100
50-64	*	20	72	5	2=100
65+	1	17	70	5	6=100
Republican	6	22	67	4	2=100
Democrat	2	32	60	2	4=100
Independent	9	35	51	2	3=100

Survey conducted Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2014. Open-ended question; respondents were asked to guess a specific age. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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## Partisan Views of Clinton's Traits

Nearly seven-in-ten say Hillary Clinton is described as tough (69%) and 56% say she is honest. In addition, most reject the notion that she is hard to like – just 36% say this. Her image is not as strong when it comes to the concept of having new ideas: 49% say this trait describes Hillary Clinton, while 40% say it does not.

While Republicans hold a negative opinion of Clinton generally, most (55%) say that she is tough. Far fewer Republicans view Clinton as having new ideas (31%) or honest (30%); 60% say she is hard to like.

Nearly seven-in-ten independents say Hillary Clinton is tough (68%) and 52% say she is honest; somewhat fewer (44%) say she has new ideas. About four-in-ten independents (39%) say she is hard to like.

Democrats hold positive views of Hillary Clinton across all the traits tested in the survey: broad majorities see her as tough (81%), honest (81%), and as having new ideas (69%); few see her as hard to like (20%). Liberal Democrats are especially likely to associate positive traits with Hillary Clinton.

Women express significantly more positive views than men of Clinton on two dimensions: 54% of women say she has new ideas, compared with 43% of men. And 74% of women say Clinton is tough; a smaller majority of men (64%) say this trait applies to Clinton.

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### Most Republicans Say Clinton's "Tough"

*% saying each describes Hillary Clinton ...*

	<b>Tough</b>	<b>Honest</b>	<b>Having new ideas</b>	<b>Hard to like</b>
	%	%	%	%
Total	69	56	49	36
Men	64	54	43	36
Women	74	58	54	37
18-29	67	56	44	34
30-49	71	59	55	35
50-64	71	58	46	37
65+	66	51	49	41
Republican	55	30	31	60
Democrat	81	81	69	20
Liberal	90	88	75	23
Cons/Mod	76	77	65	18
Independent	68	52	44	39

Survey conducted Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2014.

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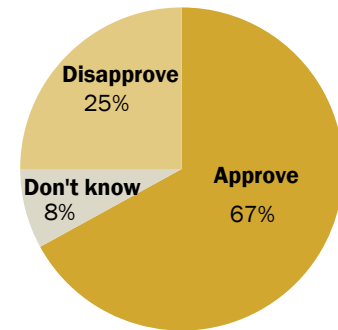
## Positive Views of Clinton's Job as Secretary

Overall, 67% approve of Hillary Clinton's job performance as secretary of state, while just 25% disapprove. Fully 91% of Democrats approve of the way she handled her job as secretary, as do a majority (64%) of independents. About half of Republicans (53%) disapprove of her job performance as secretary of state while 39% approve.

But Clinton's tenure at the State Department also brings to mind some negative feelings among the public, particularly about the Benghazi attack. Overall, 15% of the public say Benghazi is the most negative thing about her career, with nearly three-in-ten Republicans (28%) and 8% of Democrats stating this.

When it comes to other views of Clinton, 11% of Democrats and 4% of Republicans mention her husband or her handling of the Monica Lewinsky affair as a positive. But 7% of Democrats and 10% of Republicans view Bill Clinton as the most negative thing about Hillary Clinton's career.

## Most Approve of Clinton's Job as Secretary of State



Survey conducted Feb. 27-March 2, 2014.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY

## "Benghazi" Registers with Republicans

*Thinking about Hillary Clinton's career, what one thing do you have most positive/negative view of?*

### Top Positives

Among Republicans		Among Democrats	
	%		%
Secretary of State	11	Secretary of State	18
Woman in politics	5	Bill Clinton's wife/Dealing with affair	11
Bill Clinton's wife/Dealing with affair	4	Woman in politics	5
Women's issues	2	Health care	5
Strength	2	Intelligence	4

### Top Negatives

Among Republicans		Among Democrats	
	%		%
Benghazi	28	Benghazi	8
Bill Clinton	10	Bill Clinton	7
Democrat/Policy	9	2008 campaign	3
Dislike in general	4	Gender	2
First Lady	3	Health care	2

Survey conducted Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2014. Top responses shown; for complete list, see survey topline. Open-ended question, multiple responses accepted.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY

## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted February 27-March 2, 2014 among a national sample of 1,002 adults, 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (500 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 502 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 272 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 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://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 2012 Census Bureau's American Community 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 2013 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 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:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1,002	3.6 percentage points
Republican	246	7.3 percentage points
Democrat	331	6.3 percentage points
Independent	372	6.0 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.

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY  
February 27-March 2, 2014 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1,002**

**PEW.1 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK ALL:**

PEW.2 Would you like to see Hillary Clinton run for president in 2016, or not?

(U)  
Feb 27-Mar 2  
2014  
51 Yes  
43 No  
7 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

**TREND FOR COMPARISON:**

*Would you like to see Hillary Clinton run for high political office someday or not?*

Dec  
1998  
38 Yes  
56 No  
5 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.3 How much of a chance is there that you would vote for Hillary Clinton if she is a candidate for president in 2016 — is there a good chance, some chance, or no chance?

(U)  
Feb 27-Mar 2  
2014  
35 Good chance  
24 Some chance  
38 No chance  
3 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.4 As I name some traits, please tell me whether you think each one describes Hillary Clinton. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]** do you think of Hillary Clinton as **[FIRST ITEM]** or not? Do you think of Hillary Clinton as **[NEXT ITEM]** or not?

		Yes, describes <u>Clinton</u>	No	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	Honest			
	February 27-March 2, 2014 (U)	56	35	9
	April, 2008 (RVs)	42	51	7
	March, 2008 (RVs)	48	46	6
b.	Tough			
	February 27-March 2, 2014 (U)	69	26	5
	April, 2008 (RVs)	76	22	2
c.	Having new ideas			
	February 27-March 2, 2014 (U)	49	40	11
d.	Hard to like			
	February 27-March 2, 2014 (U)	36	57	7
	April, 2008 (RVs)	53	45	2
	March, 2008 (RVs)	51	45	4

**RANDOMIZE PEW.5 AND PEW.6****ASK ALL:**

PEW.5 Thinking about Hillary Clinton's career, what one thing do you have the most negative view of?  
**[OPEN END; IF "DON'T KNOW" PROMPT ONCE "It can be anything she was involved with that you didn't like." PROBE FOR CLARITY ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL]?**

(U)	
Feb 27-Mar 2	
<u>2014</u>	
15	Benghazi
9	Bill Clinton/Husband's affair
3	Democrat/Policy positions
3	Dislike/General negative
2	Dishonest
2	Secretary of State/Foreign policy
2	Career politician
2	Career generally/Performance
1	Gender/Woman
1	2008 campaign
1	Health care
1	First Lady/White House
1	Whitewater
1	Age
1	NY Senate
1	Everything
7	Other
18	Nothing
33	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

*Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.*

**RANDOMIZE PEW.5 AND PEW.6****ASK ALL:**

PEW.6 Thinking about Hillary Clinton's career, what one thing do you have the most positive view of? **[OPEN END; IF "DON'T KNOW" PROMPT ONCE "It can be anything she was involved with that you liked." PROBE FOR CLARITY ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL]?**

(U)

Feb 27-Mar 2

2014

12	Secretary of State/Foreign affairs
8	Being Bill Clinton's wife/Dealing with Lewinsky affair
5	Being a woman in politics
3	Health care policy
3	First Lady
2	Intelligence
2	Experience/Qualifications
1	Presidential campaign
1	Women's issues
1	Good mother/family person
1	Strength
1	Senator
1	Foreign policies (specific)
1	Economic policies
1	Toughness
1	Benghazi
19	Other
11	Nothing
30	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

*Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.*

**ASK ALL**

PEW.7 Just your best guess, how old is Hillary Clinton? [**OPEN END; IF "DON'T KNOW" PROMPT ONCE**  
"Just your best guess."]

(U)

Feb 27-Mar 2

2014

6	Younger than 50
31	50-59
57	60-69
46	60-65
2	66 ( <i>correct</i> )
9	67-69
3	70 or older
4	Don't know/Refused

60 Mean age

60 Median age

**PEW.7 TREND FOR COMPARISON:**

*Just your best guess, how old is Hillary Clinton?*

*Gallup/USA Today*Feb 2008

2	Younger than 44
26	44-53
40	54-59
18	60 ( <i>correct</i> )
8	61-63
4	64 or older
3	Don't know/Refused

56 Mean age

56 Median age

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.8 Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the job Hillary Clinton did as Secretary of State?

(U)

Feb 27-Mar 2

2014

67	Approve
25	Disapprove
8	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

**RANDOMIZE Q.9 AND Q.10****ASK ALL:**

PEW.9 If Hillary Clinton decides to run for president in 2016, do you think her involvement in Bill Clinton's administration would help her, hurt her, or wouldn't it make a difference?

(U)

Feb 27-Mar 2

2014

42	Would help her
17	Would hurt her
39	Wouldn't make a difference
2	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**TREND FOR COMPARISON:**

*If Hillary Clinton is the Democratic Party nominee for president, do you think her involvement in Bill Clinton's administration will help her, hurt her, or won't it make a difference to voters?*

Jan

2008

42	Will help her
29	Will hurt her
25	Won't make a difference to voters
4	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**RANDOMIZE Q.9 AND Q.10****ASK ALL:**

PEW.10 If Hillary Clinton decides to run for president in 2016, do you think the fact that she is a woman would help her, hurt her, or wouldn't it make a difference?

(U)

Feb 27-Mar 2

2014

33	Would help her
20	Would hurt her
44	Wouldn't make a difference
3	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**TREND FOR COMPARISON:**

*If Hillary Clinton is the Democratic Party nominee for president, do you think the fact that she is a woman will help her, hurt her, or won't it make a difference to voters?*

Jan

2008

24	Will help her
35	Will hurt her
36	Won't make a difference to voters
5	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**PEW.11-PEW.23 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****Key to Pew Research trends noted in the topline:**


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(U) Pew Research Center/USA Today polls

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