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Hillary Clinton's Career of Comebacks

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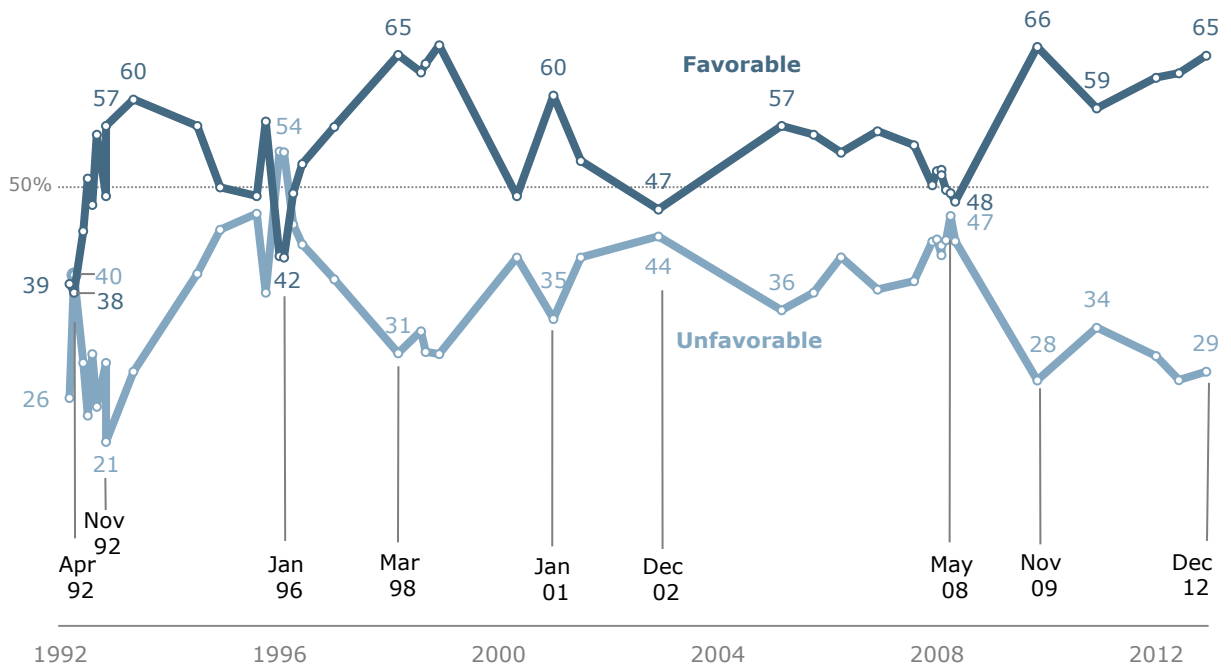
Hillary Clinton's Career of Comebacks

Over the course of her long political career, Hillary Clinton truly has been a comeback kid. On four separate occasions over the past 20 years, Clinton's favorability ratings have fallen sharply – but each time they recovered. It is rare for a political figure to accomplish that feat once in a career, much less four times.

As Clinton prepares to step down as secretary of state, she is again facing criticism. The State Department has been faulted for failing to address the security needs of the U.S. consulate at Benghazi, Libya, where four officials, including Amb. Chris Stevens, were killed in a terrorist attack in September. Clinton, incapacitated by illness and a concussion, has yet to testify before Congress about the issue.

Hillary Clinton's Many Ups and Downs

Favorability ratings of Hillary Clinton, 1992-2012



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec 5-9, 2012. 1993-2012 Data from the Pew Research Center, 1992 data from Gallup (Mar-Aug 1992 based on registered voters).

Before the controversy, Clinton’s popularity was approaching an all-time high. In a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Dec. 5-9 among 1,503 adults, 65% had a favorable impression of Clinton while just 29% had an unfavorable view.

Throughout Clinton’s tenure as secretary of state she has enjoyed consistently high favorability ratings – at least 60% or so. But her ratings during the previous 17 years were often quite mixed.

Early Years: ‘Cookies’ and Controversy

Hillary Clinton first appeared on the national political scene in the spring of 1992, as Bill Clinton was running for the Democratic presidential nomination. In March 1992, when it was clear that her husband had effectively wrapped up the nomination, opinions about Hillary Clinton were mixed: 39% of registered voters had a favorable opinion, 26% viewed her unfavorably, while a significant minority (35%) did not express an opinion, according to a Gallup survey of registered voters.

That same month, Clinton became embroiled in the first of many controversies during her political career. In late March 1992, Nightline aired comments Clinton made to reporters where she strongly defended her role as an adviser on health care policy to her husband’s campaign: “I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas, but what I decided to do was

From the Start, A Wide Gender Gap in Opinions of Hillary Clinton

	Hillary Clinton <i>May 1993</i>		Laura Bush <i>July 2001</i>		Michelle Obama <i>June 2009</i>	
	Fav %	Unfav %	Fav %	Unfav %	Fav %	Unfav %
Total	60	29	64	17	76	14
Men	51	37	62	18	71	15
18-49	51	39	55	24	74	13
50+	49	35	76	6	67	17
Women	69	21	66	16	81	13
18-49	72	22	63	19	83	13
50+	61	20	70	12	78	13

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fulfill my profession, which I entered before my husband was in public life,” she said.

While Clinton’s comments triggered a broad debate over the role of women in the workplace, they also took a toll on her image. In April 1992, Gallup found that about as many had unfavorable impression (40%) as a favorable opinion (38%) of Clinton.

Unfavorable views of Clinton jumped 14 points in the month following her “cookies” remarks, while favorable opinions of her were largely unchanged.

Favorable opinions of Clinton rose through the remainder of the 1992 campaign. In September, 56% viewed her favorably and 25% unfavorably. And in November, a few weeks after Bill Clinton was elected president, 57% had a favorable opinion of Clinton, while 21% had an unfavorable one.

During her initial year as first lady, Clinton was less popular than either of the women who succeeded her – Laura Bush or Michelle Obama. And much of that can be attributed to the fact that Clinton, from her earliest days in the White House, was a polarizing figure among men.

In May 1993, 69% of women – but just 51% of men – expressed a favorable opinion of Hillary Clinton. Clinton also was regarded more highly by younger women than older women. Women younger than 50 viewed Clinton favorably by more than three-to-one (72% to 22%); among older women, the margin was somewhat narrower (61% to 20%).

The gender gap was smaller in opinions about Laura Bush and Michelle Obama at comparable points in their first years. In July 2001, 66% of women and 62% of men viewed Bush favorably. Obama, who had a higher overall rating (76%) in her first year in the White House than either of her predecessors, was viewed favorably by 81% of women and 71% of men in June 2009.

The gender divide in opinions about Hillary Clinton has persisted throughout most of her career. However, in the current survey, her favorable rating is nearly as high among men (62%) as it is among women (68%).

Setbacks and Scandals

During Bill Clinton’s first term, Hillary Clinton’s tenure was characterized by policy failures and personal scandals. Both took a toll on her favorable ratings. She took on a major policy role in leading a task force aimed at revamping the nation’s health care system. But the effort ended in failure in September 1994. Two months later, Republicans won a House majority for the first time in four decades.

During this period, Hillary Clinton also was mired in the so-called Whitewater scandal, which began as a failed real estate deal in Arkansas. In January 1996, special prosecutor Kenneth Starr subpoenaed Clinton in a criminal probe into Whitewater – the first time a wife of a sitting president had been subpoenaed.

In both January and February 1996, 54% expressed unfavorable views of Clinton – the highest negative ratings of her career. But as Bill Clinton sailed to an easy reelection victory in 1996, Hillary Clinton’s image again improved. In January 1997, 57% viewed her favorably while 40% did not.

Yet Hillary Clinton remained a polarizing figure. This was reflected in the one-word descriptions used to describe her in a 1996 Pew Research survey. The top positive descriptions of Clinton were “strong,” and “intelligent,” while the most frequently used negative words were “dishonest” and a derogatory term for women that rhymes with rich.

Hillary in a Word – July 1996

<i>What one word best describes your impression of Hillary Clinton ...</i>	July 1996
Strong	25
Dishonest	24
Intelligent	23
Smart	23
“Rhymes with rich”	22
Good	19
Bossy	15
Aggressive	14
Outspoken	10
Crook	9
Dominating	8
Fake	8
Nice	8
Pushy	8
Arrogant	7
Outgoing	7
Sneaky	7
Independent	7
Liar	7
N	606

PEW RESEARCH CENTER. Figures show actual numbers who offered each response; **these are numbers not percentages.**

“A Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy”

No event had a greater impact on Hillary Clinton’s public image during her years in the White House than the Monica Lewinsky scandal. In the early days of the scandal, as her husband vehemently denied having a sexual relationship with Lewinsky, a White House intern, Hillary Clinton rallied to his defense.

In an interview with Matt Lauer of the Today Show, Hillary Clinton famously ascribed the allegations against the president as a “vast right-wing conspiracy” that had been “conspiring against my husband since the day he announced for president.”

The public rallied behind her: In March 1998, as the Lewinsky scandal raged, 65% expressed a favorable opinion of Hillary Clinton; just 31% viewed her unfavorably. Her favorable ratings remained above 60% through the remainder of 1998, as the House voted to impeach her husband.

Bill Clinton survived the impeachment saga and retained positive approval ratings through the remainder of his presidency. But the public had grown tired of the drama and scandals surrounding the Clinton administration. A new phrase – “Clinton fatigue” – entered the political lexicon. In September 1999, fully 74% agreed with this statement: “I am tired of all the problems associated with the Clinton administration.”

By May 2000, just 49% viewed Hillary Clinton favorably while 42% had an unfavorable impression. Her favorable rating had fallen 17 points since December 1998, shortly before the House voted to impeach Bill Clinton.

Lewinsky Scandal Lifted Hillary Clinton’s Ratings

	Jan 1996	Jan 1997	Mar 1998	96-98 change
<i>Opinion of Hillary Clinton ...</i>	%	%	%	%
Favorable	42	57	65	+23
Unfavorable	54	40	31	-23
DK/Can’t rate	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	
	100	100	100	

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Bitter Defeat, Yet Another Comeback

After leaving the White House, Clinton was easily elected as U.S. senator from New York. By 2007, she had set her sights on a bigger prize – the presidency. Clinton began the race as the odds-on favorite for the Democratic nomination. Pew Research Center surveys in 2007 found that she consistently drew 40% or more of the vote among Democrats and Democratic leaners, while her closest rival for the nomination, Sen. Barack Obama polled in the 20s.

What was expected to be a coronation for Clinton quickly turned into a contest. After finishing second in the Iowa caucuses, Clinton upset Obama in the New Hampshire primary – her most memorable election triumph. The early primaries showed that Clinton’s support lagged among men, particularly younger men. Yet she also only ran about even with Obama among women college graduates, while attracting strong support among less educated women.

Her long primary campaign against Obama also took a toll on Clinton’s support among African Americans. For most of her career, her favorable rating among blacks surpassed 70%. In December 2007, shortly before Iowa caucuses, 82% of blacks expressed a favorable opinion of Clinton, compared with just 43% of whites.

But her favorable ratings among blacks plummeted in the spring of 2008: By May, as Obama secured his hold on the nomination, just 59% of African Americans viewed Clinton favorably.

Obama’s eventual victory, and his appointment of Clinton as his most visible

cabinet member, dissipated any lingering bitterness over the nomination fight. A year after the election, a survey by Pew Social and Demographic Trends found that Clinton’s overall favorability mark had surged to 66%, up 18 points from May 2008. And Clinton’s favorability among blacks – 93% -- was as high as Obama’s.

Clinton’s Support among Blacks Rebounds After Bitter Nomination Fight

<i>% expressing favorable opinion of Hillary Clinton ...</i>	Dec 2007	Feb 2008	Mar 2008	May 2008	Nov 2009	June 2012
Total	50	51	50	48	66	63
White	43	45	44	46	60	58
Black	82	76	68	59	93	87
Black-White diff	+39	+31	+24	+13	+33	+29

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About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted December 5-9, 2012 among a national sample of 1,503 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (900 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 603 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 300 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by Abt SRBI. 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 nativity 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 and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), 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 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:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus...
Total sample	1,503	2.9 percentage points
Form 1	753	4.1 percentage points
Form 2	750	4.2 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.

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DECEMBER 2012 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
December 5-9, 2012
N=1,503

Q.1-17h PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**ASK ALL:**

Q.17 And is your overall opinion of **[INSERT NAME; RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]** very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? How about **[NEXT NAME]**?
[IF NECESSARY: Just in general, is your overall opinion of [NAME] very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable?] [INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE."]

	-----Favorable-----			-----Unfavorable-----			(VOL.)	(VOL.)
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	Never heard of	Can't rate/Ref
ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=750]:								
i.F2 Hillary Clinton								
Dec 5-9, 2012	65	30	35	29	15	15	1	5
Jun 7-17, 2012	63	24	39	28	11	17	1	8
Jan 11-16, 2012	62	26	36	31	16	15	1	6
Dec 2-5, 2010	59	24	35	34	15	20	2	4
Oct 28-Nov 30, 2009	66	26	40	28	11	17	1	6
Late May, 2008	48	17	31	44	22	22	*	8
April, 2008	49	16	33	47	23	24	0	4
March, 2008	50	16	34	44	23	21	*	6
Late February, 2008	51	19	32	44	23	21	0	5
Early February, 2008	52	20	32	42	24	18	*	6
January, 2008	52	20	32	44	25	19	*	4
Late December, 2007	50	21	29	44	26	18	*	6
August, 2007	55	21	34	39	21	18	2	4
December, 2006	56	22	34	39	21	18	*	5
April, 2006	54	20	34	42	21	21	1	3
Late October, 2005	56	20	36	38	19	19	1	5
Late March, 2005	57	22	35	36	17	19	*	7
December, 2002	47	15	32	44	23	21	1	8
July, 2001	53	20	33	42	23	19	1	4
January, 2001	60	25	35	35	16	19	*	5
May, 2000	49	15	34	42	22	20	1	8
Early December, 1998	66	32	34	31	15	16	*	3
Early October, 1998 (RVs)	58	24	34	36	18	18	*	6
Early September, 1998	64	24	40	31	13	18	0	5
Late August, 1998	63	25	38	34	13	21	*	3
March, 1998	65	26	39	31	14	17	*	4
January, 1997	57	17	40	40	17	23	*	3
June, 1996	53	13	40	43	17	26	*	4
April, 1996	49	12	37	46	19	27	0	5
February, 1996	42	14	28	54	27	27	0	4
January, 1996	42	10	32	54	26	28	0	4
October, 1995	58	14	44	38	14	24	--	4
August, 1995	49	16	33	47	22	25	*	4
December, 1994	50	17	33	45	20	25	1	4
July, 1994	57	19	38	40	18	22	1	2
May, 1993	60	19	41	29	11	18	1	10

NO QUESTIONS 18-29**QUESTIONS 30-91 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
Dec 5-9, 2012	23	33	38	3	1	2	14	19
Oct 31-Nov 3, 2012	26	34	34	3	1	3	13	16
Oct 24-28, 2012	28	33	33	4	*	2	12	16
Oct 4-7, 2012	27	31	36	3	1	3	15	15
Sep 12-16, 2012	24	35	36	2	*	2	14	16
Jul 16-26, 2012	22	33	38	4	*	3	14	15
Jun 28-Jul 9, 2012	24	33	37	3	*	3	15	17
Jun 7-17, 2012	24	33	39	2	*	2	17	17
May 9-Jun 3, 2012	24	32	36	4	*	4	13	14
Apr 4-15, 2012	24	31	39	3	*	2	15	15
Mar 7-11, 2012	24	34	36	3	1	2	16	17
Feb 8-12, 2012	26	32	36	4	1	2	13	17
Jan 11-16, 2012	22	31	42	3	*	2	17	16
Jan 4-8, 2012	26	31	35	4	*	4	14	14
Yearly Totals								
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--