

ABC NEWS.COM POLL: CARTER – 9/26/99

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Jimmy Carter Improves with Age

Jimmy Carter's not getting older, he's getting better. At least in retrospect.

Carter's the least popular post-war president, ranked by job approval rating while in office. By the time he left Washington in 1980 a mere 34 percent of Americans approved of his work, and his career average was worse than even Gerald Ford's or Richard Nixon's.

Yet time has improved the picture immensely. Asked today to rate Carter's performance as president, 66 percent of Americans approve – nearly double the number at the time of his departure nearly 20 years ago.

Carter was to be interviewed by ABC's Sam Donaldson at 12:30 p.m. Friday on the ABCNEWS.com Webcast.

WHY? – There are several likely reasons for Carter's rehabilitation in the public eye. One is his departure from the fray; presidents often gain esteem when they leave the hurly-burly of politics. Another is his humanitarian work: Even more Americans, 73 percent, approve of the work Carter has done since leaving office, and this may be boosting assessments of his presidency.

Carter also may be benefiting from fuzzy memories; the taking of U.S. hostages in Iran and the failing economy of 1980 today seem things of the dim past. And, in terms personal rectitude, he could be gaining by comparison to the current White House occupant.

In any case, Carter's renaissance is not entirely new; his retrospective job rating approval was 59 percent four years ago, also far above his rating while in office.

	Carter's Job as President	
	Approve	Disapprove
9/26/99	66%	18
1/11/95	59	31
12/8/80*	34	55
Career averages:*		
Kennedy	70%	17
Eisenhower	65	21
Bush	62	34
Johnson	56	31
Reagan	56	39

Clinton	56	39
Nixon	49	38
Ford	48	35
Carter	46	39

*Pre-Reagan polls by Gallup

GROUPS – Carter's ratings for his work in office are lowest among adults aged 18-34, because a significant number (30 percent) don't have an opinion – no surprise, since he left the job when most of them were still tykes.

Naturally, views of his performance in office are influenced by party affiliation. Seventy-nine percent of Democrats approve, compared with 61 percent of independents and 56 percent (still a majority) of Republicans.

Partisanship disappears when it comes to Carter's more recent work. He wins approval for his post-presidency labors from large and roughly equal numbers of Democrats (79 percent) and Republicans (77 percent) alike.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News.com survey was conducted by telephone Sept. 22-26, 1999, among a random national sample of 1,011 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Daniel Merkle.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:

<http://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

13. I want to ask you about the work Jimmy Carter did when he was president from 1977 through 1980, and separately about the work Carter has done since leaving office. First, thinking back to when Jimmy Carter was in office, would you say you approve or disapprove of the way Carter handled his job as president? (Probe: We just want your impression as best you remember it, and from what you've heard or read.)

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
9/26/99	66	18	16
1/11/95	59	31	10
12/8/80*	34	55	11

*Gallup

Separately, do you approve or disapprove of Carter's work since he left office?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
9/26/99	73	7	20