



The American Panel Survey

Trump Topple: Which Trump Supporters Are Disapproving of the President's Job Performance?

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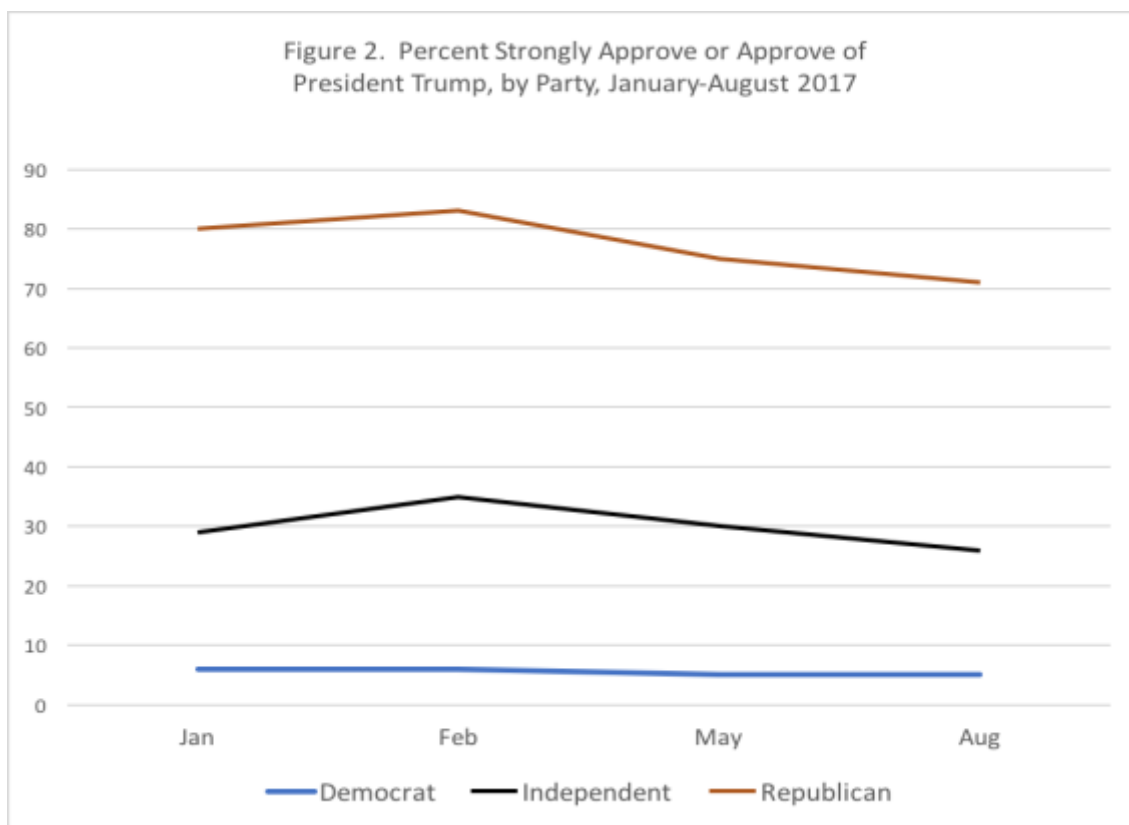
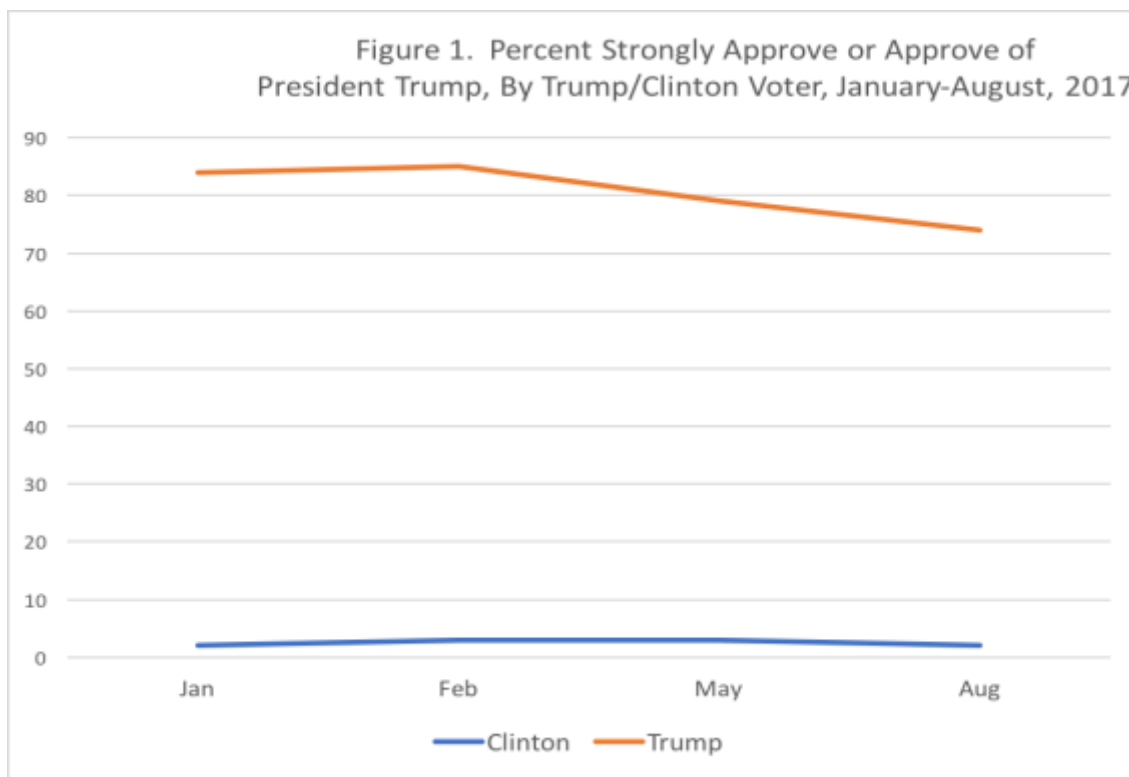
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Our question: As President Donald Trump's approval rating declined during his first eight months in office, what kind of Trump voters no longer approval of his job performance?

The high point of President Donald Trump's approval rating in the Gallup daily tracking poll was in his fifth day in office. The daily tracking number is a three-day moving average of Gallup's 500-respondents-per-day poll. The "job performance" approval rating is the percentage of respondents who answered "approve" or "strongly approve" to the question, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?" The approval number for January 20-22, 2017, was 45 percent, and he reached 46 a few days later. This is the lowest approval rating for a president at inauguration in Gallup's experience. By late August, the approval rating dropped to 35 percent and it moved back to 38 percent by mid-September.

Trump won the electoral vote but lost the popular vote to Hillary Clinton 48.2 percent to 46.1 (a 2.9 million vote gap). Trump's vote percentage is almost precisely what his approval rating was in his first week in office. To identify the characteristics of Trump voters who approved of Trump initially but changed to during the first eight months of his presidency, we use TAPS.¹ TAPS is a panel study that asked the Gallup question at six-week intervals to a national sample of the same individuals in each wave. These data allow us to observe individuals' changes in attitudes and evaluate correlates of change and stability.

In Figure 1, we show the percentage who approve of Trump's job performance for Trump and Clinton voters. It is not surprising that Clinton voters exhibit a very low rate of approval throughout the first eight months. A large majority of Trump voters approved of his early job performance, but by August a considerable number of Trump voters did not approve.



In Figure 2, we show approval ratings for Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. Plainly, most of the change in Trump approval between January and August 2017 was among self-identified Republicans. Republicans moved from about 80 percent to about 70 percent approval, with some change among Independents, too. Trump's problems are with his party's own partisans.

One of the challenges of answering a question like this one with a national survey is the small number respondents. While we have a large panel (over 1500 respondents in the November 2016 wave), some did not vote, some voted for Clinton or another candidate, and only about third voted for Trump. That creates a small sample of nearly 500 from the universe of Trump voters, which is a small sample for drawing inferences about the many factors that may shape attitudes about Trump's job performance.

The first thing to note about Trump voters is that there are very few who disapproved of Trump's job performance in January and approved in August. It was nearly all no change or a switch from approve to disapprove. Thus, in the statistical estimates described here, nearly all the action is between no change and a change to disapproving among Republicans and Independents who voted for Trump.

In Table 1, we show the statistical estimates for the effect of several variables on change in Trump job approval between January and August for Trump voters. The Trump voters who were most likely to move to disapprove were young people, people who supported Kasich in the late primaries, and people with at least some college education. Older, less well educated, and original Trump supporters continued to approve of Trump's job performance in August.

Table 1: Logistic Regression of Change in Trump Approval

| | <i>Dependent variable:</i> | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| | Approval Change | |
| Gender | | -0.301 (0.400) |
| Age | | -0.386** (0.193) |
| College Educated | | 1.924*** (0.702) |
| Income | | -0.216 (0.134) |
| Midwest | | 0.500 (0.655) |
| South | | 0.112 (0.618) |
| West | | 0.052 (0.680) |
| Party ID (7 Point Scale) | | 0.021 (0.143) |
| Cruz | | -0.035 (0.478) |
| Kasich | | 0.952** (0.456) |
| Constant | | -1.923 (1.355) |
| Observations | | 435 |
| Log Likelihood | 1 | -97.802 |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | | 217.604 |

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

About the Authors

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About *The American Panel Survey*

The American Panel Survey (TAPS) is a monthly online panel survey of over 2,200 people. Panelists were recruited as a national probability sample with an addressed-based sampling frame. The survey is conducted by GfK Knowledge Networks for the Weidenbaum Center at Washington University. Individuals without Internet access were provided a laptop and internet service at the expense of the Weidenbaum Center. In a typical month, about 1,700 of the panelists complete the online survey. Analyses in this report use weights based on CPS benchmarks. Technical information about TAPS is available at taps.wustl.edu.

¹ We conducted the January survey before Trump was inaugurated. The standard Gallup-type presidential job approval question was used in all months, but for January it was modified to refer to the “president-elect.”