

The end of the Gallup Poll as we know it

di Geoffrey Skelley

Quick summary:

- *Gallup announced that it would no longer track presidential approval. Quantitatively, removing Gallup's monthly approval poll will not greatly alter the polling averages that track President Donald Trump's standing with the public. Still, Gallup's move could subtly produce a higher approval rating for Trump because the pollster had regularly released numbers on the lower end of Trump's approval spectrum.*
- *After decades of leading the political polling field, Gallup has shifted away from some of its more polarizing survey questions over the past dozen or so years. After struggling in the 2012 presidential election, the firm ceased polling elections ahead of the 2016 race. And after increasing its approval polling during President Barack Obama's tenure, the pollster began dialing back its output, releasing approval data monthly at the time of its termination.*

It's [the end of the world as we know it](#). Well, the end of a polling era, that is. Last Wednesday, [Gallup announced](#) it would cease measuring presidential approval ratings — ending an 88-year run of tracking how the American public views its chief executive.

In some ways, this was only the latest step in the slow demise of Gallup's traditional political polling. The pollster stopped surveying presidential elections after the 2012 contest. Similarly, the firm had dialed back its approval polling, offering fewer data points about public attitudes in recent years than it had in the past. Still, it's striking that *the* gold standard name in polling will no longer release numbers regarding the president's standing, one of the most commonly polled questions in U.S. politics.

Gallup's move will have some consequences for contemporary political analysis, as a long-running and well-regarded poll will no longer appear in polling averages. More broadly, the decision to stop surveying this important question will curtail a nine-decade long time series of approval data that has served as one of the cornerstones of understanding American politics. And, this latest step back from political polling could also portend further erosion in Gallup's public-facing political information.

You won't have Gallup [to kick around anymore](#)

The immediate effects of Gallup ending its presidential approval polling won't be earth-shattering. This is one of the most-polled questions asked by pollsters, and one that most major firms regularly include in their surveys. Quantitatively then, removing Gallup's monthly approval poll will not greatly alter the polling averages that track President Donald Trump's standing with the public.

Still, Gallup's exit could subtly produce a higher approval rating for Trump. During his second term, Trump has regularly polled worse in Gallup's surveys than his average approval in five trackers: [Decision Desk HQ](#), [FiftyPlusOne](#), [The New York Times](#), [RealClearPolitics](#), and [Silver Bulletin](#). In Gallup's polling in 2025, with just one exception, Trump's net approval was lower than his average net approval in each of these trackers on the same date. The only exception was November 2025, when Gallup's net rating equaled the -13 net average in FiftyPlusOne's tracker.

Now, some of these trackers adjust a pollster's results to account for "[house effects](#)" when calculating an average. That is, the tracker's model accounts for the tendency of some firms to consistently produce more favorable or unfavorable approval numbers — not because of a particular bias (in most cases), but more due to aspects of a pollster's methodological choices. Considering Gallup tended to find Trump doing worse than most other pollsters, a house effects adjustment would generally increase Gallup's raw approval numbers before affecting an average, at least slightly. Even then, Gallup's adjusted approval would remain on the low side. Take Silver Bulletin's calculations: In 10 of 12 surveys conducted in 2025, Silver Bulletin's adjusted approval figures for Gallup still fell below Silver Bulletin's overall average.

Gallup's absence will also remove a pollster whose polls often held somewhat more influence in many averages. For instance, Gallup is one of about 20 pollsters marked

as “select” by The New York Times that has released approval data during Trump’s second term. The Times identifies a pollster as “select” if it meets two of three criteria: accuracy in recent elections, membership in a [professional polling organization](#), and/or use of probability-based sampling in its polling. The Times’s tracker [gives surveys from select firms](#) somewhat more weight in their average.

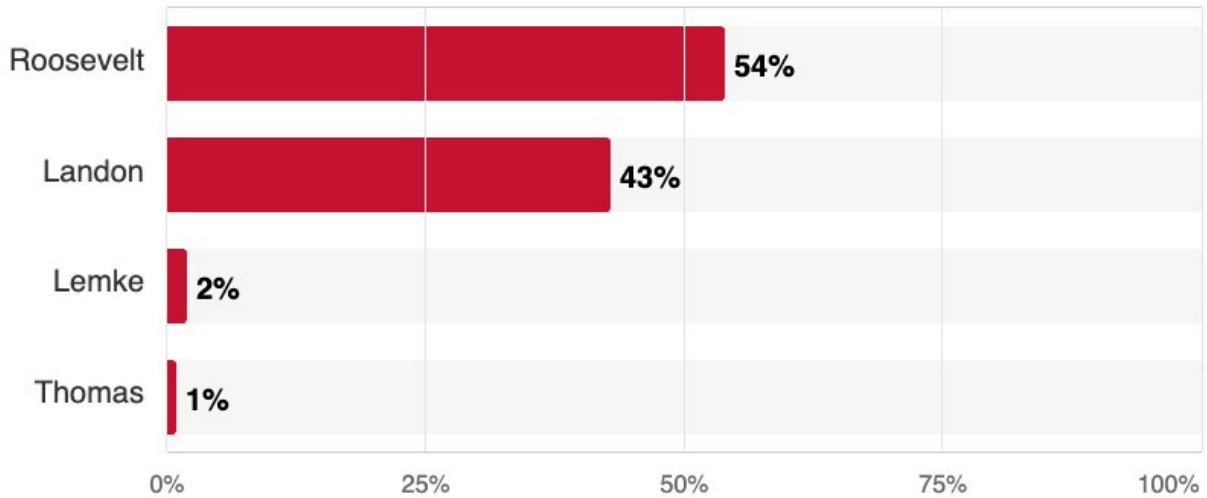
As a side effect, this also means that Gallup’s polls will no longer influence election forecasts. Historically, presidential approval is a [fairly predictive indicator](#) of the overall electoral environment, particularly in a midterm election. For that reason, average presidential approval is often an input in election forecasting models as a “[fundamental](#),” that is, one of the underlying factors that helps tilt the overall electoral landscape in one direction or the other before even going through the circumstances surrounding each race on the ballot.

Not with a bang but a whimper

While Gallup’s departure perhaps registers as a 5.0 earthquake from a quantitative standpoint, historically it amounts to a much larger convulsion. Dr. George Gallup, the firm’s founder, helped [pioneer public opinion research](#). In the 1936 presidential election, Gallup’s scientific survey famously [proved more accurate](#) than [the Literary Digest’s straw poll](#), which foresaw President Franklin Roosevelt losing reelection (he won in a landslide).¹

Which candidate do you prefer for President?

Sample: National adult (n=1500)



Source: Gallup Organization Poll: October 1936. October, 1936. Roper Center at Cornell University

Interview Dates: October 23, 1936 - October 28, 1936

Geographic Coverage: United States

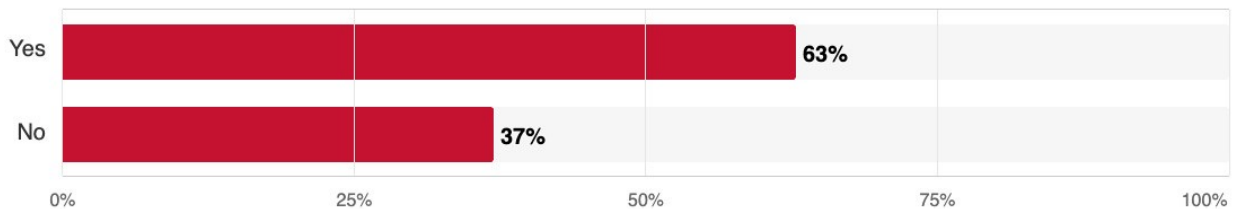
Survey Organization: Gallup Organization



In 1937, Gallup [began asking](#) respondents if they were “for or against” Roosevelt, the firm’s initial attempt to gauge approval and disapproval for the president.

Are you for or against President Roosevelt?

Sample: National adult (n=2972)



Source: Gallup Poll # 1937-0102: Roosevelt Administration/Minimum Wage/Presidential Election. October, 1937. Roper Center at Cornell University

Interview Dates: October 30, 1937 - November 4, 1937

Geographic Coverage: United States

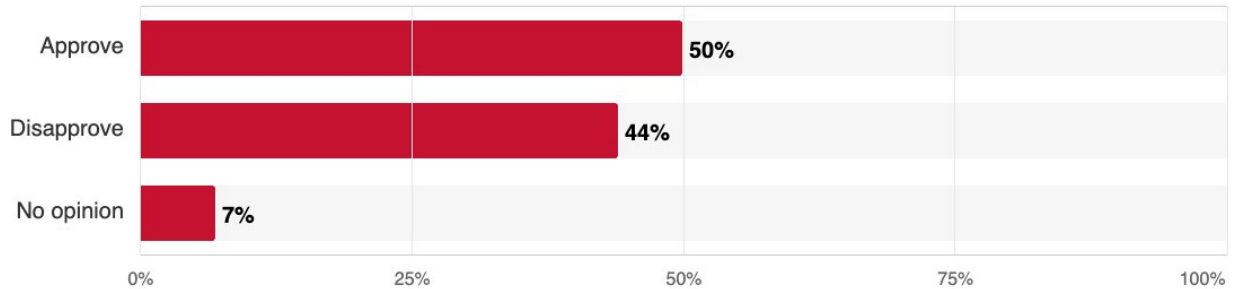
Survey Organization: Gallup Organization



In 1938, the pollster tweaked the question to more directly ask if respondents approved or disapproved of the president.

In general, do you approve or disapprove of President (Franklin) Roosevelt today?

Sample: National Adult (n=3135)



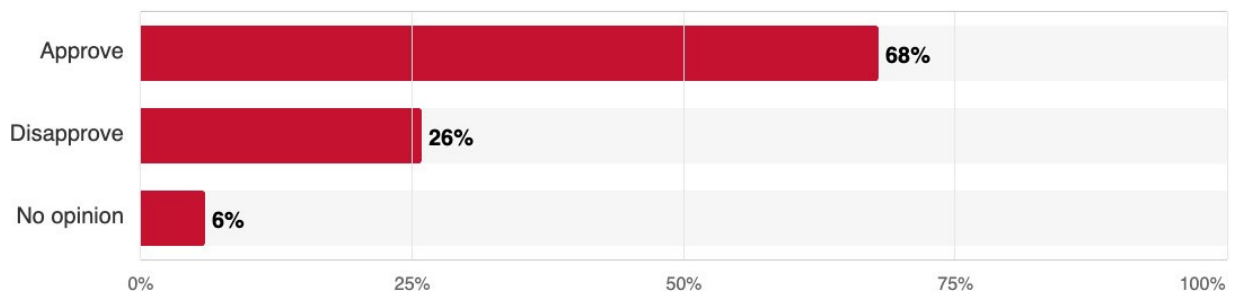
Source: Gallup Poll # 1938-0131: Recreation/Marital Status of Teachers/James Roosevelt/Railroads/Elections. August, 1938.
Roper Center at Cornell University
Interview Dates: August 18, 1938 - August 23, 1938
Geographic Coverage: United States
Survey Organization: Gallup Organization



And by 1941, the wording looked much like how pollsters have asked it for nearly nine decades: Do you “approve or disapprove” of how the president is handling his job?

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Franklin Roosevelt is handling his job as President today?

Sample: National Adult (n=3099)



Source: Gallup Poll # 230. February, 1941. Roper Center at Cornell University
Interview Dates: February 16, 1941 - February 21, 1941
Geographic Coverage: United States
Survey Organization: Gallup Organization



Gallup established a deep well of polling on presidential approval, elections, issues, and most everything under the sun.² In the age of the internet, the [Gallup Presidential Job Approval Center](#) has served as an incredibly helpful portal for comparing public attitudes toward presidents over time. Having built up such a lengthy record, it is hard not to feel sad (as an analyst) that a nine-decade time series of public opinion data is coming to an end.

Still, this news is not all that stunning when we put it in the context of Gallup’s shift away from political and electoral polling — and [the financial realities](#) of the survey business.

The first major hit came in the 2012 presidential election. In the final weeks of the campaign, Gallup regularly found Republican Mitt Romney ahead of President Barack Obama, sometimes by sizable margins. This looked bad for Gallup when Obama went on to win 51%-47%, though Gallup’s [final survey](#) had Romney only nominally ahead 49%-48% among likely voters and actually had Obama up 49%-46% among registered voters.

Gallup Final 2012 Pre-Election Presidential Ballot

Nov. 1-4, 2012

	Mitt Romney/ Paul Ryan	Barack Obama/ Joe Biden	Other (vol.)	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
Likely voters	49	48	1	3
Final allocated estimate [^]	50	49	1	--
Registered voters	46	49	1	4

[^] The allocated estimate represents the vote choice of likely voters with undecided voters removed from the sample. Undecided votes were allocated proportionally; due to rounding, this resulted in one-percentage-point increases in the final result for each candidate.

(vol.) = volunteered response

Gallup Daily tracking

GALLUP

All together, though, Gallup [had just about the worst showing](#) of any major pollster in that election. In response, Gallup [reviewed what happened](#) and [tested various approaches](#) that would enable it to better identify likely voters — one of the main problems the firm had run into in the Obama-Romney matchup. But by the time 2015 rolled around, Gallup [decided it would not survey](#) the presidential race, making the 2016 contest the first since 1932 to not feature a Gallup horserace poll.

Yet Gallup did continue to invest in its presidential approval polling. Throughout Obama's presidency and the first year of Trump's first term, Gallup [released daily updates](#) for presidential approval. But in 2018, it [reduced its output](#) to a weekly approval figure — still quite often, to be sure. The downshift happened at least partly due to methodological realities. The pollster had used phone surveys to produce its approval polling, but it began shifting to mail surveys, which made a daily figure impossible. By 2019, Gallup had returned to periodic surveys rather than the daily or weekly approval surveys it used for a time.

But during President Joe Biden's tenure, Gallup shifted to releasing its approval polling [on a monthly basis](#), a practice it continued into the first year of Trump's second term in office. While Gallup's polls usually had relatively large sample sizes — about 1,000 or more respondents — they were conducted over an unusually long period of around [two to three weeks](#). This gave the firm more time to acquire a larger sample without costing as much as a three- or four-day survey of the same size. The long survey period was not necessarily a huge negative when it came to measuring presidential approval, which is often quite stable. But it did make Gallup's approval polling somewhat less responsive to major events that could affect the president's standing in a short period of time.

In the wake of last week's announcement, observers [have wondered](#) if Gallup's routinely poor numbers for Trump may have contributed to its decision to drop the approval question. If that played into Gallup's choice, it would not be the first company to make a business decision aimed at avoiding Trump's potential wrath. As Chris Stirewalt [noted at The Hill](#) last week, Trump has filed lawsuits against pollsters before, such [as one aimed at](#) Ann Selzer and the Des Moines Register over their final survey of Iowa in the 2024 presidential race.³

The firm [explained its decision](#) as “an evolution in how Gallup focuses its public research and thought leadership.” Gallup pointed out (not incorrectly) that approval ratings are “widely produced, aggregated, and interpreted,” so the pollster felt it no longer could “make its most distinctive contribution” by polling that question. Regardless of what went into the decision, polling is more costly and difficult these days, which may have made it easier to forsake asking a polarizing question that, from the firm’s statement, it viewed as having limited upside for differentiation.

Nonetheless, having cut election and presidential approval polling, it’s easy to wonder what might be next on Gallup’s chopping block. For instance, media outlets and analysts often look to the firm’s [long-running data on party identification](#) as an indicator of how the political winds are shifting. Will the firm continue releasing that data? And what of the public-facing presidential approval data? Will that portal cease to exist in the near future because it is no longer adding new data?

In [his own response to the Gallup news](#), Charles Franklin, director of the Marquette Law School Poll, pointed out with chagrin that there just is not much of a financial interest in providing public opinion data to the public these days. Gallup’s withdrawal from the approval scene is just the latest sign. That’s a big change from when George Gallup started polling: Back then, newspapers subscribed to Gallup’s polls and distributed the results to readers across the country. But not anymore; news media is increasingly fragmented and short on money to pay for surveys; as Franklin noted, it’s easier to just report on someone else’s poll.