

Official Results of the 2024 Presidential Greatness Project Expert Survey

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About the Survey

The 2024 Presidential Greatness Project Expert Survey was conducted online via Qualtrics from November 15 to December 31, 2023. Respondents included current and recent members of the Presidents & Executive Politics Section of the American Political Science Association, which is the foremost organization of social science experts in presidential politics, as well as scholars who had recently published peer-reviewed academic research in key related scholarly journals or academic presses. 525 respondents were invited to participate, and 154 usable responses were received, yielding a 29.3% response rate.¹

Rating and Ranking the Presidents

The primary purpose of this survey was to create a ranking of presidential greatness that covered all presidents from George Washington to Joe Biden. To do this, we asked respondents to rate each president on a scale of 0-100 for their overall greatness, with 0=failure, 50=average, and 100=great. We then averaged the ratings for each president and ranked them from highest average to lowest.

The results of this ranking are quite similar to the results from our previous surveys (released in 2015 and 2018): Abraham Lincoln again tops the list (95.03 average), followed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt (90.83), George Washington (90.32), Teddy Roosevelt (78.58), Thomas Jefferson (77.53), Harry Truman (75.34), Barack Obama (73.8), and Dwight Eisenhower (73.73). The most notable changes in this ordering are Franklin Delano Roosevelt moving up to #2 from the third spot last year, and Dwight Eisenhower falling back to #8 from #6 last year. The bottom of the rankings is also relatively stable. Donald Trump rates lowest (10.92), behind James Buchanan (16.71), Andrew Johnson (21.56), Franklin Pierce (24.6), William Henry Harrison (26.01), and Warren Harding (27.76).

What is most noteworthy about the remaining presidents concerns who has risen and fallen over time. Since our initial survey, several presidents have had significant changes in their rankings. Barack Obama has risen 9 places (from #16 to #7), as has Ulysses S. Grant (from #26 to #17), while Andrew Jackson has fallen 12 places (from #9 to #21) and Calvin Coolidge has dropped 7 spots (from #27 to #34).

Examining the partisan and ideological differences among our respondents also indicates some interesting dynamics. While partisanship and ideology don't tend to make a major difference overall, there are a few distinctions worth noting. For example, Republicans and Conservatives rank

¹ Responses where respondent did not confirm they officially agreed to participate were dropped and are not included in the submission figure. Similarly, in the event a respondent completed the survey twice, the second submission was dropped, as was any submission where the respondent did not complete the questionnaire through the initial presidential greatness rating sections. Incomplete submissions were otherwise included, with responses being analyzed for those questions where answers were provided.

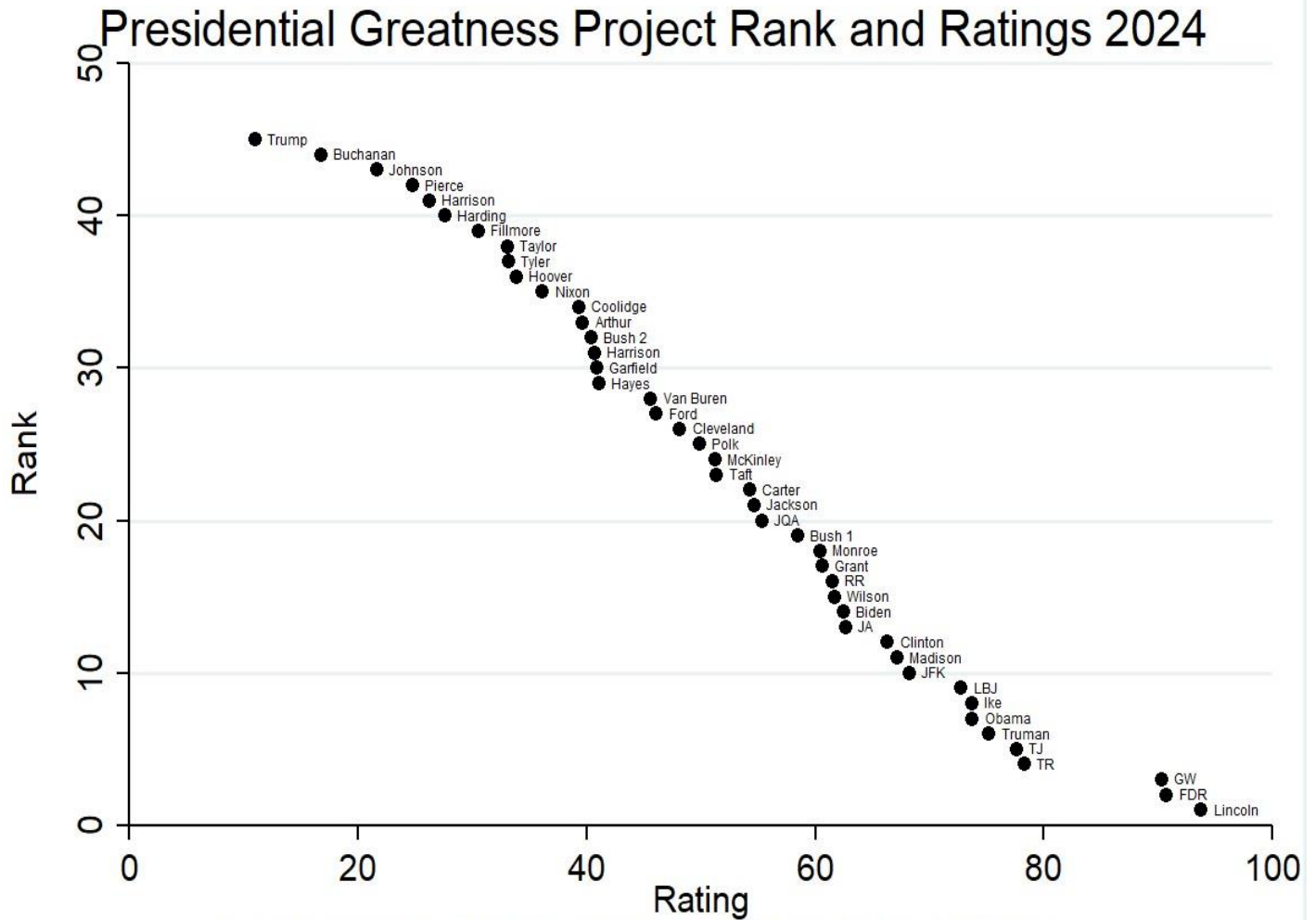
George Washington as the greatest president and James Buchanan as the least great. There are also several presidents where partisan polarization is evident – Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Obama, and Biden – but interestingly not for Bill Clinton.

Table 1: Overall Presidential Greatness Ratings and Rankings

2024 Rank	President	2024 Rating	Change 2015-2024	Change 2018-2024
1	Lincoln	93.87		
2	FD Roosevelt	90.83	Up 1	Up 1
3	Washington	90.32	Down 1	Down 1
4	T Roosevelt	78.58		
5	Jefferson	77.53		
6	Truman	75.34		Up 1
7	Obama	73.8	Up 9	Up 1
8	Eisenhower	73.73	Down 1	Down 2
9	LB Johnson	72.86	Up 3	Up 1
10	Kennedy	68.37	Up 4	Up 6
11	Madison	67.16	Up 2	Up 1
12	Clinton	66.42	Down 4	Up 2
13	J Adams	62.66	Up 2	
14	Biden	62.66		
15	Wilson	61.8	Down 5	Down 4
16	Reagan	61.62	Down 5	Down 7
17	Grant	60.93	Up 9	Up 4
18	Monroe	60.15	Up 2	Down 3
19	GHW Bush	58.54	Down 2	Down 2
20	JQ Adams	55.41	Up 2	Up 4
21	Jackson	54.7	Down 12	Down 3
22	Carter	54.26	Up 4	Up 4
23	Taft	51.67	Down 3	Down 1
24	McKinley	51.23	Down 3	Down 5
25	Polk	49.83	Down 6	Down 5
26	Cleveland	48.31	Down 3	Down 3
27	Ford	46.09	Down 3	Down 2
28	Van Buren	45.46	Down 3	Down 1

29	Hayes	41.15	Up 1	Up 1
30	Garfield	40.98	Up 1	Up 5
31	Harrison	40.64	Down 2	Up 1
32	GW Bush	40.43	Up 3	Down 1
33	Arthur	39.61	Down 1	Down 4
34	Coolidge	39.38	Down 7	Down 6
35	Nixon	36.41	Down 1	Down 2
36	Hoover	34.08	Up 2	Down 2
37	Tyler	32.99	Down 1	
38	Taylor	32.97	Down 5	Down 2
39	Fillmore	30.33	Down 2	Down 1
40	Harding	27.76	Up 2	Down 1
41	Harrison	26.01	Down 2	Up 1
42	Pierce	24.6	Down 2	Down 1
43	Johnson	21.56	Down 2	Down 3
44	Buchanan	16.71	Down 1	Down 1
45	Trump	10.92		Down 1

Figure 1: Presidential Greatness By Rank and Ratings



Note: Scatter plot of scholars' ranking and rating of each president.

Table 2: Presidential Greatness Rankings by Party and Ideology

Name	Republican Rank	Democrat Rank	Independent/ Other Rank	Conservative Rank	Liberal Rank	Moderate Rank
Washington	1	3	2	1	3	2
Adams	20	15	13	16	14	19
Jefferson	6	5	4	4	5	7
Madison	16	11	12	14	11	13
Monroe	17	17	17	17	17	17
JQ Adams	29	21	20	24	21	23
Jackson	12	22	22	18	22	14
VanBuren	31	27	28	31	27	29
WH Harrison	42	41	42	42	41	41
Tyler	40	37	37	37	37	37
Polk	23	25	24	27	25	21
Taylor	37	36	38	36	36	38
Fillmore	38	39	39	39	39	39
Pierce	43	42	41	44	42	42
Buchanan	45	44	44	45	44	44
Lincoln	2	1	1	2	1	1
A. Johnson	44	43	43	41	43	43
Grant	28	14	18	21	15	18
Hayes	33	30	30	33	30	34
Garfield	36	29	29	38	29	32
Arthur	32	32	34	35	32	33
Cleveland	26	26	26	26	26	25
B. Harrison	34	31	32	34	31	31
McKinley	18	24	21	22	24	22
T. Roosevelt	4	4	5	7	4	4
Taft	21	23	23	23	23	24
Wilson	13	16	16	15	16	15
Harding	39	40	40	40	40	40
Coolidge	24	34	33	28	34	28
Hoover	35	38	35	32	38	36
FDR	3	2	3	3	2	3
Truman	7	7	7	8	8	5
Eisenhower	8	9	6	6	9	6
Kennedy	14	10	10	11	10	10
LB Johnson	9	8	9	12	7	8
Nixon	25	35	36	29	35	35
Ford	22	28	27	25	28	27
Carter	27	20	25	20	19	26
Reagan	5	18	14	5	18	11
GHW Bush	11	19	15	9	20	16
Clinton	10	12	11	10	12	12

GW Bush	19	33	31	19	33	30
Obama	15	6	8	13	6	9
Trump	41	45	45	43	45	45
Biden	30	13	19	30	13	20

Note: Conservative column includes those who self-identified as either Conservative or Somewhat Conservative. Liberal column includes those who self-identified as either Liberal or Somewhat Liberal.

Table 3: Presidential Greatness Ratings by Party and Ideology

Name	Republican Average Rating	Democrat Average Rating	Independent/ Other Average Rating	Conservative Average Rating	Liberal Average Rating	Moderate Average Rating
Washington	96.94	90.19	88.71	97.10	88.75	91.50
Adams	58.25	62.84	63.60	62.90	62.71	62.42
Jefferson	79.63	78.88	74.24	81.19	77.22	76.89
Madison	61.19	69.42	64.06	63.76	67.67	67.31
Monroe	60.63	60.76	59.48	61.76	59.30	62.65
JQ Adams	49.06	55.88	56.23	52.71	54.72	58.45
Jackson	64.50	52.90	55.23	59.52	49.93	64.79
VanBuren	45.81	44.85	47.06	43.76	44.87	48.45
WH Harrison	29.13	25.96	25.80	27.85	24.63	29.58
Tyler	32.06	31.36	36.94	36.33	31.57	35.46
Polk	53.94	47.68	53.06	49.57	46.12	59.83
Taylor	35.81	31.46	35.78	37.67	32.06	33.78
Fillmore	33.38	28.60	33.52	34.14	28.83	33.00
Pierce	27.00	23.27	27.14	25.81	23.50	27.55
Buchanan	14.50	16.33	18.34	17.57	16.24	17.70
Lincoln	94.31	94.73	91.48	91.29	93.60	95.40
A. Johnson	23.88	20.00	24.39	28.57	20.36	21.61
Grant	49.44	62.96	59.02	54.48	61.01	62.61
Hayes	41.56	39.69	43.92	41.38	39.79	44.35
Garfield	36.56	39.81	44.41	35.62	40.07	45.68
Arthur	41.63	38.22	41.96	39.57	37.40	45.60
Cleveland	50.44	46.38	51.10	50.19	45.17	54.95
B. Harrison	41.06	39.65	42.76	40.95	38.62	45.88
McKinley	58.75	48.09	55.32	54.48	47.55	59.50
T. Roosevelt	81.31	79.83	74.20	77.67	78.17	79.04
Taft	57.19	49.34	53.76	54.14	48.25	58.37
Wilson	64.00	61.80	60.06	63.43	60.08	64.47
Harding	32.63	26.13	29.08	34.10	25.58	29.71
Coolidge	53.88	35.87	42.12	47.95	34.23	48.64
Hoover	39.94	30.24	39.79	42.57	29.77	40.65

FDR	86.75	93.13	86.61	87.00	91.39	90.69
Truman	77.13	76.29	72.26	76.38	73.85	78.47
Eisenhower	75.38	73.42	73.94	77.95	71.45	78.05
Kennedy	63.88	69.61	66.48	65.48	68.08	69.84
LB Johnson	68.19	75.33	68.53	65.19	74.10	72.65
Nixon	50.81	33.09	38.35	47.29	32.46	40.78
Ford	56.19	43.42	48.81	52.29	43.73	49.47
Carter	50.19	56.12	51.41	54.86	55.35	51.07
Reagan	80.56	58.64	62.65	79.14	55.85	69.17
GHW Bush	66.44	56.50	60.40	67.71	54.98	63.61
Clinton	67.88	67.13	64.13	66.81	65.54	68.17
GW Bush	58.44	36.62	43.24	56.38	34.67	48.36
Obama	61.56	77.57	68.87	65.00	76.23	70.96
Trump	31.38	6.66	13.96	26.76	6.97	14.21
Biden	47.69	66.88	57.00	45.52	65.44	62.04

Note: Conservative column includes those who self-identified as either Conservative or Somewhat Conservative. Liberal column includes those who self-identified as either Liberal or Somewhat Liberal.

The Next President on Mt. Rushmore

When it comes to which president should join Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Teddy Roosevelt on Mt. Rushmore, Franklin Delano Roosevelt again comes in first, by a wide margin (65.4%). Barack Obama came in second (11%), followed by a three-way tie between Dwight Eisenhower, James Madison, and John F. Kennedy (4% each)

The Most and Least Polarizing Presidents

In the current polarized political climate, we thought it would again be interesting to ask which presidents were considered by presidency experts to be the most polarizing. To do so, we asked respondents to identify up to five individual presidents they believed were the most polarizing, and then rank order them with the first president being the most polarizing, the second as next most polarizing, and so on. We then calculated how many times a president was identified as well as their average ranking. We then repeated the same process but asked which presidents were the least polarizing. The results of these questions can be seen in the tables below.

Donald Trump is by far the most polarizing of the ranked presidents, selected by 170 respondents and earning a 1.64 average (1 is a “most polarizing” ranking). Andrew Jackson is second-most polarizing (74, 3.4), followed by Obama (69, 3.4), and Reagan (66, 3.6). Conversely, George Washington is clearly the least polarizing president, selected by 125 respondents and earning a 1.25 average (1 is a “least polarizing” ranking). Washington is followed by Eisenhower (91, 2.7), Lincoln (60, 1.8), and Truman (45, 3.5).

Table 4: Most Polarizing Presidents

Name	# of times identified	Average Polarization Rank
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Trump	170	1.4
Jackson	74	3.4
Obama	69	3.5
Reagan	66	3.6
Nixon	55	3.5
GW Bush	55	3.6
A Johnson	39	3.1
Biden	36	3.6
Lincoln	33	3.6
FD Roosevelt	31	4.5
LB Johnson	24	4.8
Clinton	24	4.9
Wilson	21	4

Table 5: Least Polarizing Presidents

Name	# of times identified	Average Polarization Rank
Washington	125	1.5
Eisenhower	91	2.7
Lincoln	60	1.8
Truman	45	3.5
FD Roosevelt	28	2.9
Kennedy	28	3.6
Monroe	27	3.1
Ford	26	3.3
T Roosevelt	24	3.4
Harrison	22	3.2
Carter	19	3.6

The Most Under-Rated and Over-Rated Presidents

Often, a president’s reputation does not fully match their performance. For myriad reasons, popular assessments of some presidents are rosier than their actual record merits, while other presidents deserve more positive assessments than they currently enjoy. We approached capturing scholarly assessments of these reputational mismatches by asking respondents to identify up to five individual presidents they believed were the most under-rated, and then rank order them with the first president being the most under-rated, the second as next most under-rated, and so on. We then calculated how many times a president was identified as well as their average ranking. We then repeated the same process but asked which presidents were the most over-rated. The results of these question can be seen in the tables below.

Unlike our questions about polarization, there isn’t as much consensus on underrated presidents. Jimmy Carter is the most under-rated president, selected by 64 respondents and earning a 2.2 average (1 is a “most under-rated” ranking). Ulysses Grant is the second-most under-rated

(56, 2.4), followed by George H.W. Bush (47, 2.9), Eisenhower (45, 2.8), Lyndon Johnson (43 (2.3), and Biden (42, 2.9). Conversely, John F. Kennedy is considered the most over-rated president, selected by 84 respondents and earning a 2.4 average (1 is a “most over-rated” ranking), followed very closely by Ronald Reagan (83, 2.1), then Jackson (70, 2.3), Wilson (60, 2.9), Jefferson (37, 3.3), and Teddy Roosevelt (40, 2.5).

Table 6: Most Under-Rated Presidents

Name	# of times identified	Average Most Under-Rated Rank
Carter	64	2.2
Grant	56	2.4
GHW Bush	47	2.9
Eisenhower	45	2.8
LB Johnson	43	2.3
Biden	42	2.9
Truman	34	2.7
Polk	24	3.7
J Adams	24	3.1
Ford	21	2.7
JQ Adams	21	3.5
Obama	20	2.8
Nixon	19	2.8
Taft	19	3.4

Table 7: Most Over-Rated Presidents

Name	# of times identified	Average Most Over-Rated Rank
Kennedy	84	2.4
Reagan	83	2.1
Jackson	70	2.3
Wilson	60	2.9
Jefferson	40	2.5
T Roosevelt	37	3.3
Obama	27	3.3
Trump	27	2.7
Washington	20	1.8

The Most Difficult to Assess Presidents

Some presidents are more difficult than others to assess on, even for academic experts, whether because of a dearth of evidence, a lack of scholarly examination, or complexity. We approached capturing scholarly assessments of which presidents were most difficult to assess by asking respondents to identify up to five individual presidents they believed were the most difficult to assess, and then rank order them with the first president being the most difficult to assess, the second as next most difficult, and so on. We then calculated how many times a president was identified as well as their average ranking. The results of this question can be seen in the tables below.

William Henry Harrison is the president our respondents considered most difficult to assess, selected by 92 respondents and earning a 2.1 average (1 is a “most difficult to assess” ranking). The fact that Harrison only served in office for a month makes a robust assessment of his presidential greatness elusive. Other presidents who were viewed as difficult to assess include James Garfield (53, 3.5), Millard Fillmore (45, 3.8), Zachary Taylor (42, 3.4), Joe Biden (36, 3.1), and John Tyler (35, 3.3).

Table 6: Difficult to Assess Presidents

Name	# of times identified	Average Most Difficult to Assess Rank
Harrison	92	2.1
Garfield	53	3.5
Fillmore	45	3.8
Taylor	42	3.4
Biden	36	3.1
Tyler	35	3.3
LB Johnson	31	2.6
Arthur	30	5.3
Jackson	27	2.7
Pierce	27	5.4
Ford	23	3.6
Nixon	22	2.9

Missing Data

There is variation in whether respondents answer each question or not. In Table 7 we include details about the number of missing observations missing a response, unique values, and the minimum and maximum value. Most respondents completed the full rating across presidents but responses for some presidents (Harrison, Tyler, Polk, Arthur) had more missing observations than later presidents likely due to more information about those presidents.

Table 7: Presidential Greatness Ratings Missing Observations

Name	Observations Missing	Observations	Unique Values	Minimum	Maximum
Washington	52	195	30	20	100
Adams	61	186	55	0	100
Jefferson	57	190	49	0	100
Madison	60	187	55	10	100
Monroe	63	184	57	0	99
JQ Adams	68	179	54	9	100
Jackson	66	181	65	0	100
VanBuren	74	173	56	0	85
WH Harrison	81	166	50	0	100
Tyler	75	172	52	0	82
Polk	73	174	64	0	91
Taylor	75	172	53	0	90
Fillmore	75	172	48	0	73
Pierce	77	170	47	0	64
Buchanan	77	170	43	0	64
Lincoln	54	193	29	10	100
A. Johnson	71	176	49	0	81
Grant	67	180	56	8	97
Hayes	78	169	62	0	81
Garfield	80	167	61	0	99
Arthur	79	168	56	0	83
Cleveland	75	172	58	0	87
B. Harrison	78	169	54	0	83
McKinley	74	173	60	0	90
T. Roosevelt	58	189	47	7	100
Taft	72	175	61	0	100
Wilson	61	186	63	8	100
Harding	73	174	54	0	84
Coolidge	69	178	59	0	92

Hoover	65	182	58	0	87
FDR	54	193	31	28	100
Truman	60	187	49	7	100
Eisenhower	59	188	51	7	100
Kennedy	57	190	53	18	100
LB Johnson	53	194	52	9	100
Nixon	58	189	62	0	100
Ford	59	188	61	0	90
Carter	54	193	61	0	100
Reagan	54	193	63	0	100
GHW Bush	53	194	63	0	100
Clinton	54	193	49	10	100
GW Bush	57	190	60	0	100
Obama	53	194	47	20	100
Trump	66	181	38	0	100
Biden	53	194	56	9	95

Note: Data accessed using mi function in Stata 17.