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**American Presidents: Greatest and Worst**  
*Siena's 7<sup>th</sup> Presidential Expert Poll 1982 - 2022*

**Top Five, Rushmore Plus 1 Remain Unchanged; FDR, Lincoln,  
Washington, Teddy Roosevelt & Jefferson**

***Worst Five Again – Andrew Johnson, Buchanan, Trump, Harding & Pierce***

**Biden Enters Ranking 19<sup>th</sup>, LBJ Moves into Top Ten, Obama 11<sup>th</sup>, Ike firmly  
6<sup>th</sup>, Ronald Reagan rated 18<sup>th</sup> Best President**

**Loudonville, NY** – For the seventh time since its inception in 1982, the Siena College Research Institute's (SCRI) Survey of U.S. Presidents finds that experts rank Franklin D. Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt and Thomas Jefferson as the United States' top five chief executives. The 141 participating presidential scholars agree with their peers over the last 40 years naming the same five leaders as America's finest. For the second time, scholars include Donald Trump along with Andrew Johnson, James Buchanan, Warren Harding and Franklin Pierce in the bottom five.

Joseph Biden enters the ranking after only a year in office at 19<sup>th</sup> rated highly on his ability to compromise (9<sup>th</sup>), court appointments (10<sup>th</sup>), executive appointments (10<sup>th</sup>) and integrity (12<sup>th</sup>) but lower on luck (34<sup>th</sup>), his relationship with Congress (31<sup>st</sup>) and his communication ability (30<sup>th</sup>). Lyndon Johnson is ranked 8<sup>th</sup>, entering the top 10 for the first time due to his work with Congress (1<sup>st</sup>) and court appointments (4<sup>th</sup>) but weighed down by foreign policy accomplishments (39<sup>th</sup>) and avoiding crucial mistakes (35<sup>th</sup>). Barack Obama is in 11<sup>th</sup> position, his highest ever, Dwight Eisenhower is once again rated the 6<sup>th</sup> best president and Ronald Reagan remains in the top twenty at 18<sup>th</sup> scoring highly on luck (3<sup>rd</sup>), party leadership (6<sup>th</sup>), communication (7<sup>th</sup>) and relationship with Congress (8<sup>th</sup>).

“The scholars that participate in this study have changed over 40 years but the top five – FDR, Abe, Washington, Teddy and Jefferson remain carved in granite year after year. In fact, this year a large plurality of 41% say that if we added onto Rushmore, it should be FDR's face gracing the South Dakota hills,” according to Don Levy, SCRI's director.

“Four of the worst rated presidents, Andrew Johnson, James Buchanan, Warren Harding and Franklin Pierce have been in the bottom five in each of the seven surveys. History appears to have spoken about those four presidents. Joined now by Donald Trump who gets higher scores for luck, willingness to take risks and party leadership, it is too early to say how history will ultimately rate Mr. Trump. Despite a third, a plurality, saying Trump contributed most of any president to weakening the office, a few would like to see Trump rather than FDR added to Rushmore,” according to Levy.

Results of Siena College Research Institute Presidential Ranking Survey							
Top Ten Presidents by Survey Year							
Rank	1982	1990	1994	2002	2010	2018	2022
1	F. Roosevelt	F. Roosevelt	F. Roosevelt	F. Roosevelt	F. Roosevelt	Washington	F. Roosevelt
2	Jefferson	Lincoln	Lincoln	Lincoln	T. Roosevelt	F. Roosevelt	Lincoln
3	Lincoln	Jefferson	T. Roosevelt	T. Roosevelt	Lincoln	Lincoln	Washington
4	Washington	Washington	Washington	Washington	Washington	T. Roosevelt	T. Roosevelt
5	T. Roosevelt	T. Roosevelt	Jefferson	Jefferson	Jefferson	Jefferson	Jefferson
6	Wilson	Wilson	Wilson	Wilson	Madison	Eisenhower	Eisenhower
7	Truman	Truman	Truman	Truman	Monroe	Madison	Truman
8	Kennedy	Madison	Eisenhower	Monroe	Wilson	Monroe	L. Johnson
9	Madison	Jackson	Madison	Madison	Truman	Truman	Kennedy
10	J. Adams	Kennedy	Kennedy	Eisenhower	Eisenhower	Kennedy	Madison

Scholars rate presidents on each of twenty categories that include **attributes** – background, imagination, integrity, intelligence, luck and willingness to take risks, **abilities** – compromising, executive ability, leadership, communication, and overall ability and **accomplishments** – party leadership, relationship with Congress, court appointments, handling the economy, executive appointments, domestic accomplishments, foreign policy accomplishments and avoiding mistakes. Theodore Roosevelt is rated highest on attributes, Lincoln tops the list on abilities and Franklin Roosevelt leads on accomplishments.

Results of Siena College Research Institute Presidential Ranking Survey						
Bottom Five Presidents by Survey Year						
1982	1990	1994	2002	2010	2018	2022
Harding (39)	Harding (40)	Harding (41)	A. Johnson (42)	A. Johnson (43)	A. Johnson (44)	A. Johnson (45)
A. Johnson (38)	A. Johnson (39)	A. Johnson (40)	Buchanan (41)	Buchanan (42)	Buchanan (43)	Buchanan (44)
Buchanan (37)	Buchanan (38)	Buchanan (39)	Harding (40)	Harding (41)	Trump (42)	Trump (43)
Grant (36)	Grant (37)	Grant (38)	Pierce (39)	Pierce (40)	Harding (41)	Harding (42)
Pierce (35)	Pierce (36)	Pierce (37)	Fillmore (38)	GW Bush (39)	Pierce (40)	Pierce (41)

“While some have questioned the results of this survey, we note that participating scholars for over 40 years have been incredibly consistent in naming the top and most of the bottom presidents. Some presidents like Grant, Eisenhower and Lyndon Johnson have risen and others like Andrew Jackson and Woodrow Wilson have dropped as time took a longer look at their record. Some have argued that the

rankings favor Democrats over Republicans but Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt are in the top five, and Eisenhower is sixth. We don't ask the historians and political scientists that respond to name their political ideology, just to painstakingly rate each of 45 individual presidents on 20 attributes, abilities and accomplishments," Levy explained.

### **Survey Odds and Ends**

- By 44-35%, scholars believe the office of President of the United States has become too powerful.
- 51% say they think the framers of the constitution would say that our system of checks and balances is working not very or not at all well.
- 63% given a choice would argue in favor of electing the President by a national popular vote rather than 17% that prefer the Electoral College.
- By 75-5%, scholars think it at least somewhat or very likely rather than not too or not at all likely that through 2032, the United States will continue to be a democratic republic.
- 69% believe it likely that by 2032 a woman will be elected president.

The Siena College Research Institute (SCRI) Survey of U.S. Presidents is based on responses from 141 presidential scholars, historians and political scientists that responded via mail or web to an invitation to participate. Respondents ranked each of 45 presidents on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) on each of twenty presidential attributes, abilities and accomplishments. Overall rankings were computed by assigning equal weight to each of those twenty categories. For additional information about the survey visit [www.siena.edu/sri/research](http://www.siena.edu/sri/research) or contact Don Levy at 518-783-2901, [dlevy@siena.edu](mailto:dlevy@siena.edu) .

## 20 Presidential Categories Top and Bottom Two in Each

	Background	Imagination	Integrity	Intelligence	Luck
Top Rated	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>Washington</b>
Second Rated	<b>J.Q. Adams</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>Carter</b>	<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>T. Roosevelt</b>
Next to Last	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>Nixon</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>Hoover</b>
Rated Last	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>W. Harrison</b>

	Willing to take risks	Avoid crucial mistakes	Court appointments	Domestic accomplishments	Executive appointments
Top Rated	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>Washington</b>	<b>Washington</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>Washington</b>
Second Rated	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>
Next to Last	<b>Hoover</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>
Rated Last	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>Trump</b>

	Foreign Policy accomplishments	Handling of U.S. economy	Party leadership	Relationship w/Congress	Ability to compromise
Top Rated	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>L. Johnson</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>
Second Rated	<b>Washington</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>
Next to Last	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>Trump</b>
Rated Last	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Hoover</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>

	Communication ability	Executive ability	Leadership ability	Overall ability	Present overall view
Top Rated	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>
Second Rated	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>	<b>F. Roosevelt</b>
Next to Last	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>Trump</b>
Rated Last	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>A. Johnson</b>	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>Buchanan</b>

Nature of the Sample	
<b>Age</b>	
Under 35	0%
35 to 60	28%
Over 60	52%
Prefer not to answer	20%
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	68%
Female	9%
Refused	23%

\* Grover Cleveland was the 22<sup>nd</sup> and the 24<sup>th</sup> president. As such there are 45 unique individuals who have held the U.S. Presidency.