

**TO: INTERESTED PARTIES**  
**FR: BILL McINTURFF/ELIZABETH HARRINGTON/GEOFF GARIN**  
**DT: SEPTEMBER 14, 2020**  
**RE: BETTER WORLD CAMPAIGN – INDEX OF PUBLIC OPINION ON THE UNITED NATIONS AND U.S./UN RELATIONS**

---

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

A national telephone survey conducted from September 2-8, 2020 by Public Opinion Strategies and Hart Research Associates, on behalf of the Better World Campaign, shows majorities of voters:

- Have a favorable opinion of the United Nations (64%)
- Believe it is important (85%) that the United States maintain an active role within the UN
- View the United Nations as a relevant organization that is needed in the world today (73%)
- Support the U.S. paying our dues to the UN on time and in full (pay regular budget dues – 68% favor, peacekeeping dues – 69% favor)
- Believe the UN supports America’s goals and objectives around the world (60%)

The events of 2020 have not changed voters’ views about the United Nations. All views about the UN noted above are consistent with last summer’s (June 2019) national survey track.

Even when disagreements arise between the U.S. and the UN or their agencies and when the U.S. does not achieve all of its objectives at the UN, the majority of voters continue to believe that the path the U.S. should take is trying to find new diplomatic solutions (59%) rather than leaving the negotiating table (19%).

This is further reflected in voters’ attitudes about the World Health Organization (WHO), where two-thirds of voters (67%) say the U.S. should not withdraw from WHO.

**DETAILED FINDINGS:**

1. **More than six in ten voters (64%) have a favorable opinion of the United Nations. Voters say they have favorable views of the United Nations because the organization allows for multilateral engagement between countries, fosters international cooperation and global unity, and provides a forum for preventing wars, resolving conflicts, and promoting and keeping the peace.**

	<i>United Nations Image</i>	
	<b><u>Favorable</u></b>	<b><u>Unfavorable</u></b>
June 2009	54%	35%
October 2009	50%	36%
April 2010	60%	30%
October 2010	59%	29%
May 2011	59%	28%
October 2011	56%	30%
April 2012	58%	30%
October 2012	50%	32%
January 2013	57%	28%
October 2013	60%	28%
April 2014	59%	28%
October 2014	58%	28%
October 2015	63%	26%
December 2016	61%	26%
October 2017	65%	28%
June 2019	68%	23%
September 2020	64%	27%

As we have witnessed in our years of tracking, partisanship impacts voters’ perception of the United Nations. Democrats have very favorable impressions of the UN (88% favorable/4% unfavorable) and majorities of Independents have favorable views (58% favorable/30% unfavorable), but Republicans have a net unfavorable image of the UN (40% favorable/51% unfavorable).

Overall, the United Nations maintains the highest favorable image rating among the organizations and institutions we tested in this survey.

Image	% Total Favorable	% Total Unfavorable	% Total Heard Of
The United Nations	<b>64%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>98%</b>
WHO	<b>60%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>97%</b>
NATO	<b>56%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>88%</b>
The United States Congress	<b>34%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>99%</b>

2. **More than eight in ten voters (85%) say that it is “very important” or “somewhat important” for the U.S. to maintain an active role in the UN, with a substantial majority (60%) saying it is “very important” for the United States to do so. Very comfortable majorities of Republicans (71%), Independents (84%), and Democrats (98%) believe it is “very important” or “somewhat important.”**

- We asked the following question: *“How important do you think it is for the United States to maintain an active role within the United Nations? Would you say...it is very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?”*

	<u>Total Important</u>	<u>Total Not Important</u>
June 2009	85%	15%
May 2011	85%	15%
October 2011	86%	13%
April 2012	83%	17%
January 2013	86%	13%
October 2013	88%	12%
April 2014	86%	13%
October 2014	87%	11%
October 2015	89%	11%
December 2016	88%	11%
October 2017	88%	12%
June 2019	83%	16%
September 2020	85%	14%

3. **More than seven in ten voters (73%) say the United Nations is an organization that is still needed today.**

- We asked the following question: *“Thinking about the United Nations overall as an organization... do you think...it is an organization that is still needed today...or...it is an organization that has outlived its usefulness?”*

	<u>Still Needed Today</u>	<u>Outlived Usefulness</u>
June 2009	69%	27%
October 2009	67%	26%
April 2010	67%	26%
October 2010	68%	24%
May 2011	67%	28%
October 2011	68%	24%
April 2012	70%	25%
January 2013	72%	22%
October 2013	71%	23%
April 2014	67%	24%
October 2014	74%	22%
October 2015	69%	26%
December 2016	73%	23%
October 2017	79%	20%
June 2019	72%	22%
September 2020	73%	22%

Majorities of Republicans, Independents, and Democrats agree the UN is an organization that is still needed today.

	<u>Still Needed Today</u>	<u>Outlived Usefulness</u>
Republicans	50%	43%
Independents	74%	19%
Democrats	93%	4%

**4. Majorities of voters continue to support the U.S. paying our dues for the UN regular budget (68% favor) and for UN peacekeeping (69% favor) on time and in full.**

- Respondents were read the following information and asked the following question: *“Each member-nation of the United Nations pays a portion of the UN regular budget in the form of dues. These dues are based on a member-nation’s capacity to pay or its share of world income. The United States represents approximately twenty-five percent of the world’s income, and is assessed to pay twenty-two percent of the UN’s budget. Knowing this, do you... favor...or...oppose...the United States paying our dues to the UN on time and in full?”*

**Pay UN General Dues On Time/In Full**

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>
October 2010	63%	31%
May 2011	60%	34%
October 2011	64%	31%
April 2012	64%	32%
January 2013	67%	28%
October 2013	63%	31%
April 2014	65%	31%
October 2014	66%	27%
October 2015	67%	30%
December 2016	67%	28%
October 2017*	71%	27%
June 2019*	72%	25%
September 2020*	68%	27%

*\*Note: Compared to question language in surveys before October 2017, U.S. income as a percentage of the world’s income was changed from 26% to 25%, and “is assessed to pay” was changed from “currently pays.”*

- Respondents were read the following information and asked the following question: *“As you may know, the United Nations organizes peacekeeping operations around the world. Each member-nation of the United Nations pays for a portion of the United Nations peacekeeping missions in the form of dues. The United States represents approximately twenty-five percent of the world’s income, and is assessed to pay twenty-eight percent of the UN’s peacekeeping budget. Do you favor or oppose the United States paying our peacekeeping dues to the UN on time and in full?”*

**Pay UN Peacekeeping Dues On Time/In Full**

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>
April 2012	68%	30%
January 2013	67%	29%
October 2013	71%	27%
April 2014	66%	31%
October 2014	72%	24%
October 2015	73%	24%
December 2016	70%	25%
October 2017*	73%	23%
June 2019*	67%	28%
September 2020*	69%	27%

*\*Note: Compared to question language in surveys before October 2017, U.S. income as a percentage of the world’s income was changed from 26% to 25%, and “is assessed to pay” was changed from “currently pays.”*

Independents and Democrats favor paying our general UN dues on time and in full, while Republicans are very divided in their views.

**Pay UN General Dues On Time/In Full – By Sub-groups**

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>
Republicans	44%	50%
Independents	65%	31%
Democrats	91%	6%

**Pay UN Peacekeeping Dues On Time/In Full – By Sub-groups**

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>
Republicans	48%	48%
Independents	70%	27%
Democrats	91%	7%

**5. Majorities of voters believe the United Nations is supportive of America’s goals and objectives around the world (60% UN supportive of U.S. goals/31% UN not supportive of U.S. goals).**

- We asked the following question: *“Thinking about the UN’s support for America’s objectives around the world, would you say the UN has been very supportive, somewhat supportive, not too supportive, or not at all supportive of America’s goals and objectives around the world?”*

This is especially true among Democrats, while a majority of Independents agree. Republicans are closely divided with this premise.

	<u>Total Supportive</u>	<u>Total Not Supportive</u>
Republicans	47%	48%
Independents	53%	35%
Democrats	77%	13%

6. **When disputes arise or when the U.S. does not achieve all of its objectives with other countries at the UN, a majority of voters (59%) say the U.S. should try to find a new diplomatic strategy and new allies at the UN to achieve its objectives, while only 19% of voters say the U.S. should leave the negotiating table and try to achieve its objectives without working through the UN. Two in ten voters say they don't have a strong opinion about this one way or the other (20%) or say they don't know what the U.S. should do (2%).**

- We asked the following question: *“The United States negotiates with other countries at the United Nations on initiatives that promote our economic, security and political interests. However, since it is a negotiation, the US does not always achieve all of its objectives. When the US does not achieve all of its objectives, should it try to find a new diplomatic strategy and new allies at the UN to achieve its objectives or leave the negotiating table and try to achieve its objectives without working through the UN or do you not have a strong opinion about this one way or the other?”*

A plurality of Republicans and majorities of Independents and Democrats believe the U.S. should find new diplomatic strategies rather than leave the negotiating table.

	<u>Find New Diplomatic Strategy</u>	<u>Leave Negotiating Table</u>
Republicans	42%	35%
Independents	54%	17%
Democrats	76%	6%

7. **Two-thirds of voters (67%) say the U.S. should not withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO), 28% say the U.S. should withdraw and 5% have no opinion one way or the other.**

- We asked the following question: *“Do you think the United States should or should not withdraw from the World Health Organization?”*

There is a strong partisan divide on this question, with a majority of Republicans saying the U.S. should withdraw (59% should withdraw) while majorities of Independents (71% should not withdraw) and Democrats (94% should not withdraw) say the U.S. should not withdraw from WHO.

Six in ten voters (60%) have a favorable opinion of the World Health Organization, 32% have an unfavorable opinion, 5% have neither a favorable or unfavorable opinion and 3% have never heard of WHO. There has been an 18-point increase in WHO's unfavorable rating since the last time we asked this question in October 2015, however, there has essentially been no shift (above the margin of error) in WHO's favorable rating over this same time. The increase in WHO's unfavorable rating is coming from: those who either were not familiar with the organization in 2015, those who had neither a favorable or unfavorable view in 2015, and from Republican-leaning audiences.

***The World Health Organization Image***

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>
June 2009	60%	17%
October 2009	55%	15%
April 2010	57%	16%
October 2010	56%	17%
May 2011	56%	16%
October 2011	52%	17%
April 2012	58%	17%
October 2012	53%	12%
January 2013	61%	14%
October 2013	57%	16%
April 2014	54%	16%
October 2014	57%	20%
October 2015	61%	14%
September 2020	60%	32%

**8. Seven in ten voters believe it is better for the United States to work with allies and through international organizations (71%) than to act mainly on our own (26%). This viewpoint holds true across partisan lines. We have seen movement from our last track on this measure with a 10-point rise in voters saying the U.S. should act mainly on our own. Not surprisingly, this shift in the data is coming from Republican-leaning audiences. Though, a majority of Republicans still say the U.S. should work with allies and through international organizations (50%), with 47% of Republicans saying we should go it alone. Larger majorities of Independents (67%) and Democrats (92%) believe it is better for the U.S. to work with allies through international organizations.**

- We asked the following question: *“Now, thinking about the United States foreign policy in general...To achieve our foreign policy goals, do you think it is better for the United States to work with allies and through international organizations or act mainly on our own?”*

	<u>Work with major allies/through international organizations</u>	<u>Act mainly on own</u>
October 2012	78%	18%
October 2013	78%	18%
October 2014	79%	16%
October 2015	82%	15%
December 2016	81%	14%
October 2017	83%	15%
June 2019	80%	16%
September 2020	71%	26%

**METHODOLOGY:**

Public Opinion Strategies and Hart Research Associates conducted a national telephone survey of 800 registered voters (60% cells, 40% land lines), from September 2-8, 2020 on behalf of the Better World Campaign. The purpose of the survey was to measure American attitudes toward the United Nations and U.S.-UN relations. The margin of error on a sample of 800 interviews is  $\pm 3.46\%$ .