

CNN Poll: The nation remains divided on impeachment as House vote approaches

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(CNN)The American public is about evenly split over whether President Donald Trump should be impeached and removed from office, according to a new CNN Poll conducted by SSRS, with the House of Representatives poised to vote on articles of impeachment this week.

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Support for impeaching Trump and removing him from office stands at 45% in the new poll, down from 50% in a poll conducted in mid-November just after the conclusion of the House Intelligence Committee's public hearings. Opposition to impeachment and removal stands at 47% in the new poll, up from 43% in November. Support for impeachment and removal among Democrats has dipped from 90% in November to 77% now.

That finding comes even as public views on the facts driving the impeachment process have held steady. Americans are about evenly divided over whether there is enough evidence against Trump for the House to vote to impeach him and send the case to the Senate for trial (47% say yes, 48% no, about the same as in November). And a narrow majority (51% now, 53% in November) continue to say Trump used the presidency improperly in his interactions with the President of Ukraine by attempting to gain political advantage against

a possible 2020 rival.

The poll finds that Trump's approval rating has also held steady in the last month: 43% currently approve of the way he is handling his job, 53% disapprove.

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Looking ahead to a possible Senate trial should the House vote in favor of impeachment, half of adults (50%) say it is not at all likely that anything that might come up during that trial would change their minds on removing Trump from office. That is lower than the 59% who said they were not at all likely to change their minds about removing Bill Clinton from office in 1999 ahead of his Senate trial.

Among the 24% who say a Senate trial on the charges facing Trump would be at least somewhat likely to sway their views, 19% are currently undecided about impeachment and removal, 38% support it and 43% oppose it.

About a third of Americans (32%) believe the impeachment inquiry will ultimately help Trump's reelection bid, while 25% say it will hurt his chances and 37% say it will make no difference. Republicans are fairly bullish on the impact it will have for the President, with a majority of Republicans (54%) saying they believe it will help Trump in 2020. Among Democrats, 40% believe it will hurt the President's shot at a second term, while 38% believe that it will make no difference.

Across 15 battleground states which could decide the election in 2020, views about impeaching and removing Trump are just as divided as they are nationally. In these states -- all of which were decided by 8 points or less in 2016 -- 46% say Trump should be impeached and removed, while 45% say that he should not. But residents of these states also lean toward believing Trump did improperly use his office to gain political advantage in next year's election: 50% say yes, 45% no.

Nationwide, those who support impeaching Trump and removing him from office are more apt to say they do so because of the particular offenses raised in the impeachment inquiry than for his overall behavior. Nearly nine in 10 who support removing Trump from office say a major reason they do so is because they believe he "sought foreign assistance to benefit his 2020 presidential campaign," or because "Trump used his office improperly to gain political advantage in the 2020 presidential election." More than eight in 10 in this group say a major reason they back removal is because "Trump has obstructed Congressional attempts to investigate his administration." Fewer, 68%, say a major reason they support impeachment and removal is because of other impeachable offenses Trump has committed which are not covered in the charges the House is considering, while 50% say a major reason to back it is because Trump is doing a bad job running the country.

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Those who oppose impeaching and removing Trump, however, are more likely to cite Trump's overall job performance (64%) than his innocence (56%) as a major reason to oppose impeachment and removal. About two-thirds say a major reason to oppose impeaching and removing Trump is because he has been "the victim of an unfair

investigation" (66%), and 64% say a major reason they oppose impeachment is because they do not think "the offenses Democrats say Trump has committed rise to the level of an impeachable offense."

Attention to the impeachment proceedings has held steady compared with last month, with about three-quarters (76%) saying they are following at least somewhat closely and about a quarter (23%) largely tuned out.

Both major parties and the President generally receive negative reviews for their handling of the inquiry, and the leaders of both houses of Congress have seen drops in their favorability ratings.

Overall, 42% approve of the way Democrats in Congress are handling the current impeachment inquiry, while 49% disapprove, about the same as in October. Republicans fare slightly worse (37% approve of their handling of impeachment), but that's better than in October, when 30% approved. Forty percent say they approve of Trump's handling of the inquiry, 52% disapprove.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has seen her favorability rating dip from 44% in October, just after she announced the opening of an impeachment inquiry, to 39% now, with the dip concentrated among independents. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell remains less well known than Pelosi (26% say they don't know enough to have a view on McConnell). His favorability rating stands at 25% in the poll, down from 30% in late January. His favorability rating has dipped more among Republicans than others.

The CNN Poll was conducted by SSRS December 12 through 15 among a random national sample of 1,005 adults reached on landlines or cellphones by a live interviewer. Results for the full sample have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points.