

[Has Obama Lost the Confidence of Black Citizens on Education Reform?](#)

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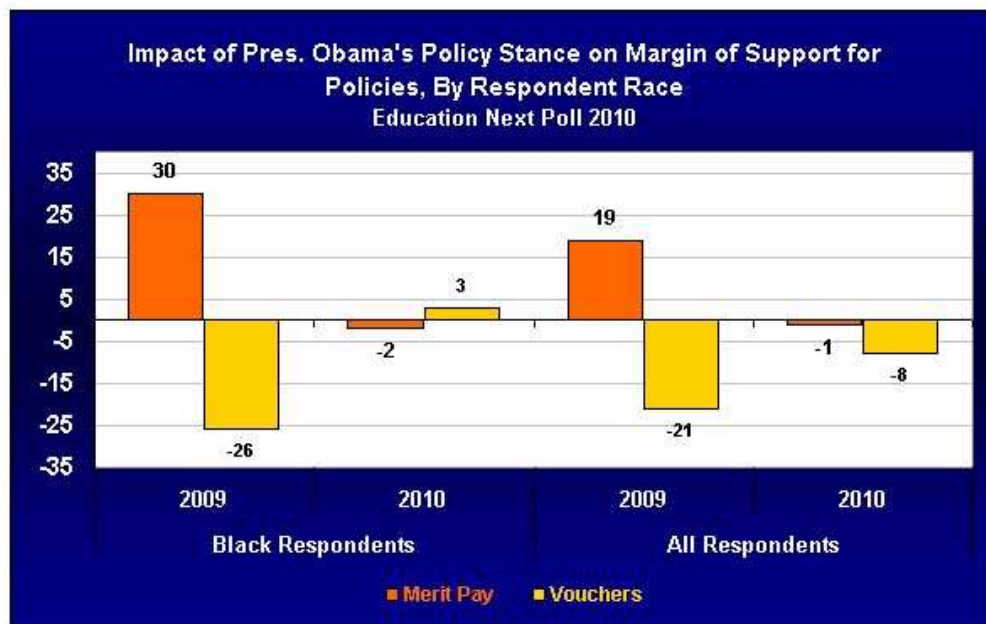
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By [Adam Schaeffer](#)

Polls consistently indicate that President Obama has lost proportionally [more](#) ground on job approval with white and Hispanic than with black Americans.

But data from question-experiments within the yearly [Education Next/Harvard poll](#) suggest the *opposite* in regard to Obama's influence on education policy opinions. **Obama's policy influence with black respondents has dropped significantly more than it has with respondents overall; Obama's position on vouchers and merit pay has *no* impact on black opinion.**

In 2009, informing respondents that Obama supported merit pay for teachers increased the margin of black support for the policy by 30 points. Obama's opposition to vouchers dampened the margin of black support for them by 26 points. And for the full sample, the shift in support was 19 and 21 respectively. **But this year, mentioning that Obama supports merit pay actually *decreases* the black margin of support by a couple of points and his opposition to voucher *increases* the margin of black support by a few points.**



The number of black respondents is small (just 280), but *no* discernable impact?

The intersection of race and politics is a [complicated](#) place; a jumble of socio-economic, ideological, and Party differences. Black Americans are predominantly Democratic, are more liberal than the general population on many issues (although more conservative on some), and on average have lower incomes. All of these characteristics have a major impact on an individual's political opinions, and they are highly correlated with race in America. What this confluence of correlations translates into is [overwhelming support](#) for Democratic Presidents in general and President Obama in particular; [88 percent approval](#) compared to 54 percent from Hispanics and 38 percent from whites.

These data make sense. What is surprising is that Obama's policy preferences on education reform no longer appear to influence the policy preferences of a largely Democratic demographic that still overwhelmingly approves of his performance.

What's going on behind these crosstabs? Does Obama's policy endorsement no longer have an impact on Democrats in general? Why the disconnect between support for the President and his ability to move opinion on policy? Are we seeing through a race/Party [social-desirability impact](#) here?

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