



Ivey
Business School

Ian O. Ihnatowycz
Institute for Leadership

WESTERN UNIVERSITY • CANADA

New study reveals President Donald Trump's character as America's divider-in-chief

LONDON, ON – November 2, 2018 – For the past two years President Donald Trump's character has been on trial. Even though Trump's name is not on the ballot during next week's mid-term elections, how voters perceive his character could be vital to its outcome.

According to new research by the Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership at the Ivey Business School, identified Republicans rate Trump's overall character higher now than they did prior to the general election in 2016. Conversely, identified Democrats rate the president's character lower over the same time period. Independents, however, remained virtually unchanged. Canadians' opinions of Trump's character declined in 2018.

As a follow-up to a similar study in 2016, from October 19-23, 2018, the Institute commissioned a survey of 625 Americans to determine how Trump measured up on 11 leadership character dimensions (accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgement, justice, temperance and transcendence) and to rate the extent to which they thought Trump demonstrated these characteristics.

Respondents were asked to rate Trump's character traits on a 5 point scale (1=not at all, 2=very little, 3=somewhat, 4=quite a bit, 5=to a great extent)

Donald Trump's overall character ratings

Republicans

2016	2018
3.36	3.71

Democrats

2016	2018
2.32	1.74

Independents

2016	2018
2.64	2.72

Canadians

2016	2018
1.97	1.77

“The contrasts on leader character as rated by Republicans and Democrats have become significantly larger,” said Gerard Seijts, Executive Director, Ivey’s Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership. “Trump has been, and continues to be, a polarizing president. These data show further evidence that Trump is dividing America and the major parties are doubling down either for or against their party.”

Interestingly, Republicans are not nearly as hard on former President Barack Obama’s character as Democrats are on that of Trump. And while Independents, as a group, have not moved much, their assessment of Trump’s character remains low.

Barack Obama’s overall character ratings in 2018

Republicans	Democrats	Independents
2.85	4.51	3.66

In spite of the party divide, it is clear voters highly value character as an important consideration in their vote for president. Good leadership is a function of competencies (skills, knowledge), character (virtues, values, traits) and the commitment (aspiration, engagement, sacrifice) to doing the hard work of leadership. When respondents from the United States and Canada were asked to rank the value of these functions, competencies came out only slightly ahead of character.

	US respondents		Canadian respondents	
	2016	2018	2016	2018
Competencies	49%	44%	44%	47%
Character	36%	40%	42%	37%
Commitment	15%	16%	14%	16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

On the topic of gender, character scores of Trump don’t vary that much between men and women. Despite the #MeToo movement, accusations of sexual misconduct, and various disparaging comments directed at select female political opponents, Trump’s rating among

women is only slightly lower than men. Both men and women don't view his character dimensions all that favorably. Republican and Democratic voters appear to be entrenched in their positions on Trump.

QUOTE: What is intriguing is that female independent voters score lower on the overall measure for Trump's character than males (2.45 versus 2.95). Obviously, this group of people makes up a significant portion of the voters.

Trump overall character scores by gender

Male	Female
2.81	2.67

Trump character scores by gender for Independents

Male	Female
2.95	2.45

Overall, Trump does not come close to leader character expectations we have for presidential leadership. When participants were asked to rate the perceived importance of the 11 leader character dimensions for the role of president, all dimensions scored 4 (agree) or higher on a 1 – 5 point scale.

About the Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership

Ivey has been at the forefront of shaping the way leaders develop through both rigorous research and teaching. Today, our commitment to developing the type of leaders who will help their organizations to succeed has not changed. What has changed is the knowledge we have about the components of good leadership. The Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership (www.ivey.ca/leadership) has made research, teaching and outreach on the development of leader character our distinct differentiator in the vast leadership space.

For more information about the Institute:

www.ivey.ca/leadership

leadership@ivey.ca

519-661-3890