

Michelle Obama's popularity soars, topping recent first ladies, survey finds

Public opinion poll shows her appeal crosses party lines

By Mark Silva | Washington Bureau

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WASHINGTON -- [Michelle Obama](#) has "kind of taken the country by storm."

When a serious-minded pollster such as Andrew Kohut offers that explanation for the first lady's soaring approval ratings, it's time to take a look:

The public's opinion of the first lady runs even higher than its opinion of the president, with a 73 percent personal favorability rating for [President Barack Obama](#) in a new Pew Research Center poll, and a 76 percent rating for the first lady.

That's not unusual -- first ladies generally don't become ensnared in the political controversies that can weigh on a politician's public image. But this first lady outpaces recent predecessors: At 76 percent, she ranks higher than [Laura Bush](#) did in July 2001 (at 64 percent favorable) and higher than [Hillary Clinton](#) did in May 1993 (60 percent).

Michelle Obama also is reaching across party lines: 67 percent of Republican women hold a favorable view of her, up 21 percentage points since January.

Just to show what a little vegetable gardening on the South Lawn, a swing set for the girls and a puppy can do to erase the memories of a divisive political campaign: In September 2008, a plurality of [Republicans](#), both men and women, voiced an unfavorable opinion of Michelle Obama.

"In a word," Pew reports, people say this about the first lady: "Classy" (34 people said so in the survey), "Nice/nice lady" (32 said so), "Intelligent" (24 said so), "Strong" (22 said so), "Elegant" (15 said so), "Good" (15 said so).

In a few words of her own, Obama explains it all: "I've worked all my life," she said Thursday, which was Take Your Child to Work Day at the [White House](#). "I've worked in corporate America, I've worked for non-profits and I consider this a very important job. ... I wake up every morning, first of all, making sure that my kids get to school on time and they do their homework."