



THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSITION PROJECT

1997-2021

Smoothing the Peaceful Transfer of Democratic Power

THE BIDEN 100 DAYS

COMPARISON OF PRESIDENTIAL INTERCHANGES WITH REPORTERS AND PUBLIC EVENTS¹

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President 100 Days: 1/20 to 4/29	Addresses to Nation	Joint Session of Congress	Weekly/Radio Addresses	Remarks Only	Remarks & Exchange	Press Conference: Joint	Press Conference: Solo	Interviews	Tweets ***	PRESS INTERCHANGES**	TOTAL PUBLIC EVENTS	PERCENTAGE WITH PRESS
JOSEPH BIDEN First 100 Days	1	2	12	47	75	1	1	9		86	148	58.1%
DONALD TRUMP First 100 Days	0	2	14	94	29	8	1	51	519	89	199	44.7%
BARACK OBAMA First 100 Days	0	2	14	122	18	6	6	46		76	214	35.5%
GEORGE W. BUSH First 100 Days	0	2	14	121	54	3	2	19		78	215	36.3%
BILL CLINTON First 100 Days	1	2	12	72	85	9	4	9		107	194	55.2%
GEORGE H.W. BUSH First 100 Days	0	2	0	98	11	2	9	12		34	134	25.4%
RONALD REAGAN First 100 Days	1	3	0	57	5	0	2	16		23	84	27.4%

All presidents recognize a need to respond to reporters' queries, even if they would prefer to avoid the press. Part of the implicit bargain presidents make to get the cooperation of news organizations bringing their words and image to the public is to realize they must do so not just on their own terms, but also satisfy the needs of news organizations and their reporters stationed at the White House.

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Responding to reporters' queries has been a consistent part of a president's public presentations. Among the seven most recent presidents, a third or more of their public appearances were ones where they responded to one or more questions posed by reporters. For Presidents Biden and Clinton, that figure was over 50% of their public events.

Where the presidents differ is the venues they chose to meet with the press, including press conferences, interviews, and short question and answer sessions, such as those posed to a President as . Presidents Trump and Biden, for example, routinely responded to questions every day or two while President Obama favored long form interviews where he could discuss policy. President Trump often spent ten or more minutes answering questions while Biden takes one or two queries as he finishes remarks.

Presidents most often favor publicity forums they used in their previous positions and in their campaigns. If a president came into office through effectively using television as Reagan did, then he will feature it as a way to get to the public. The same was true with President Trump and his use of Twitter to start the day.

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¹ The figures here are based on counts of official public events as found in White House press releases and pool reports as well as cross-checked with, first, the *Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents* [earlier from the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*] published by the National Archives and Records Administration [<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/cpd/2019/08>] and, second, the entries of public presidential utterances included in the *Public Papers of the President* as found on The American Presidency website, www.americanpresidency.org, and third, the presidential schedule and transcripts for each day that I receive them from the Press Office. My headings are based on ones used by the National Archives though I aggregate them [Remarks and Exchanges and Exchanges without accompanying remarks] into my own categories and divide press conferences into Solo and Joint ones. You can watch most of President Trump and Biden's on-the-record video interchanges with the press as well as speeches at Factba.se. Most are also available on You Tube.

PRESS CONFERENCES. Press conferences are divided into Solo and Joint sessions. The latter are usually held together with a foreign leader where each answers questions from reporters from the foreign and White House press corps members present. Both leaders first make statements, usually about what was discussed in their meeting, and then take questions, usually a small number of them. There also are occasional joint sessions with U.S. government officials. Solo sessions tend to be longer ones

SHORT QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS. "Short question-and-answer sessions" are events where only a small number of reporters representing the White House press corps – a pool - are allowed in to question the President. This category is composed of the National Archives designation of "Exchanges with Reporters" where the President may or may not make remarks at the same time. If he has a speech that is designated by the National Archives as "Remarks and Exchange with Reporters," it is counted twice in my tabulations. His remarks are counted separately in the "Addresses and Remarks" category while the exchanges with reporters are also counted in the "Short Question and Answer Sessions." I also go through pool reports for exchanges that are not found in Archives compilations.

INTERVIEWS. Unlike the other categories, "interviews" are only occasionally publicly released. They are regarded as the property of the news organization and, with some exceptions, the individual organizations control whether and when transcripts are released. For the Obama, George W. Bush, and William Clinton administrations, my figures represent internal counts maintained by White House staff as well as additional interviews I find that may not have been listed on the White House file. For recent presidents, I comb online sources for interviews, use information from Pool Reports issued by reporters covering the President, references in reporters' stories to their discussions with the President, and information I have obtained from reporters about their direct talks with the President either by phone or in person. I include the off-the-record luncheons, dinners, and meetings presidents sometimes have with reporters because inevitably information journalists have acquired in those sessions is shared within their news organizations and sometimes makes its way into print. For the interview numbers for Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush, I have used the White House Daily Diary, which is compiled from official internal records by the Diarist, an employee of the National Archives and Records Administration.

SPEECHES, WEEKLY ADDRESSES AND TWEETS. Speeches to Joint Sessions of Congress, State of the Union, Inaugural Addresses, and Addresses to the Nation form my category, Addresses to the Nation. The Weekly Addresses category includes formal Radio Addresses in the Reagan, George W. Bush and Clinton administrations as well as the radio addresses in the Obama administration that are titled "Weekly Address" presented on several platforms, including YouTube and television as well as radio. Other radio addresses are included in Radio Addresses as well. President Reagan was the first President to adopt and then maintain a practice of delivering weekly radio addresses. Except for President George H. W. Bush and Donald Trump, all of his successors have followed his practice from the early days of their administrations. President Trump's tweets are archived in the Trump Twitter archive at: trumptwitterarchive.com.



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WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

Begun in 1998, the White House Transition Project provides information about individual offices for staff coming into the White House to help streamline the process of transition from one administration to the next. A nonpartisan, nonprofit group, the WHTP brings together political science scholars who study the presidency and White House operations to write analytical pieces on relevant topics about presidential transitions, presidential appointments, and crisis management. Since its creation, it has participated in the 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017, and now the 2021. WHTP coordinates with government agencies and other non-profit groups, e.g., the US National Archives or the Partnership for Public Service. It also consults with foreign governments and organizations interested in improving governmental transitions, worldwide. See the project at <http://whitehousetransitionproject.org>

The White House Transition Project produces a number of materials, including:

- **WHITE HOUSE OFFICE ESSAYS:** Based on interviews with key personnel who have borne these unique responsibilities, including former White House Chiefs of Staff; Staff Secretaries; Counsels; Press Secretaries, etc. , WHTP produces briefing books for each of the critical White House offices. These briefs compile the best practices suggested by those who have carried out the duties of these office. With the permission of the interviewees, interviews are available on the National Archives website page dedicated to this project:
- ***WHITE HOUSE ORGANIZATION CHARTS.** The charts cover administrations from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama and help new White House staff understand what to expect when they arrive and how their offices changed over time or stayed the same.
- ***TRANSITION ESSAYS.** These reports cover a number of topics suggested by White House staff, including analyses of the patterns of presidential appointments and the Senate confirmation process, White House and presidential working routine, and the patterns of presidential travel and crisis management. It also maintains ongoing reports on the patterns of interactions with reporters and the press in general as well as White House staffing.
- ***INTERNATIONAL COMPONENT.** The WHTP consults with international governments and groups interested in transitions in their governments. In 2017 in conjunction with the Baker Institute, the WHTP hosted a conference with emerging Latin American leaders and in 2018 cosponsored a government transitions conference with the National Democratic Institute held in November 2018 in Montreal, Canada .

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