

# THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY  
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS  
**THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD**

**Field Research Corporation**

222 Sutter Street, Suite 700  
San Francisco, CA 94108-4411  
(415) 392-5763 FAX: (415) 434-2541  
EMAIL: [fieldpoll@field.com](mailto:fieldpoll@field.com)  
[www.field.com/fieldpollonline](http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline)

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**BUSH'S JOB RATINGS, PARTICULARLY  
HIS HANDLING OF THE WAR IN IRAQ,  
ARE RATED NEGATIVELY IN  
CALIFORNIA.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Californians continue to hold a negative appraisal of the job that George W. Bush is doing as President. In a statewide survey just completed, *The Field Poll* finds that Bush's job marks remain mired in the trough first evidenced two years ago.

Currently, just 36% of this state's adults approve of the job that Bush is doing as President, while 56% disapprove. These findings are similar to those of three previous *Field Poll* surveys conducted since June of last year.

Contributing the most to Bush's low ratings are continuing very negative assessments of Bush's handling of the war in Iraq. Currently, two in three Californians (65%) disapprove of Bush's handling of the war, while just 30% approve.

The poll also updated Californians' impressions of Vice President Dick Cheney. The results show that a majority (53%) views the Vice President unfavorably, while just 38% hold a favorable impression. This assessment is a complete reversal from the view that Californians had of Cheney four years ago when a 56% to 36% majority had a positive impression of the Vice President.

### **Californians' views of Bush's performance remains negative**

The current very negative assessment of the job Bush is doing as President contrasts sharply with the public's assessment of him four years ago. In the months following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, greater than seven in ten California residents approved of Bush's performance in office. Those glowing evaluations continued throughout all of 2002 and into early 2003.

However, California public opinion became more divided following the invasion of Iraq and remained that way throughout 2003. Beginning in February 2004 majorities began turning against the President, and in the past twelve months the proportion of Californians who disapprove of Bush's performance has ranged between 55% and 60%, while the proportion who approve has remained in the mid 30% range.

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**Table 1**  
**Trend of Californians' overall job appraisal**  
**of George W. Bush as President**

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	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
February 2006	36%	56	8
October 2005*	34%	60	6
August 2005*	38%	55	7
June 2005	34%	57	9
February 2005	41%	54	5
October 2004*	43%	54	3
August 2004*	41%	55	4
May 2004	39%	54	7
February 2004*	43%	51	6
January 2004*	52%	42	6
September 2003*	46%	48	6
August 2003*	50%	45	5
July 2003	49%	41	10
April 2003	61%	31	8
September 2002*	57%	34	9
July 2002*	63%	28	9
April 2002	63%	29	8
January 2002*	72%	21	7
December 2001	74%	20	6
September 2001 (post-attack)	74%	16	10
September 2001 (pre-attack)	42%	44	14
May 2001	42%	44	14

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*Surveys conducted among California adults, unless noted by an \* in which case surveys conducted among registered voters.*

**Sub-group breakdowns**

Differences in voter opinions of Bush by subgroup follow a pattern found in numerous previous surveys: Bush gets the lowest ratings from registered Democrats and non-partisans, liberals, blacks, Latinos, women, and Coastal residents, particularly those living in Los Angeles County and San Francisco Bay Area.

The views of Republicans and conservatives remain positive but are lower than they have been in the past.

**Table 2**  
**Current job appraisal of President Bush – by subgroups**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	36%	56	8
Not registered to vote	32%	55	13
Registered voters	<u>38%</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>6</u>
Democrats	16%	79	5
Republicans	69%	25	6
Non-partisans/others	33%	61	6
<u>Area</u>			
Coastal California	32%	60	8
Inland California	45%	46	9
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	30%	60	10
Other Southern California	43%	49	8
Central Valley	44%	45	9
San Francisco Bay Area	24%	68	8
Other Northern California*	37%	55	8
<u>Gender</u>			
Men	40%	53	7
Women	32%	58	10
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	41%	53	6
Latino	32%	56	12
Black/African-American*	6%	85	9
Asian/other	38%	49	13
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	59%	33	8
Middle-of-the-road	32%	58	10
Liberal	16%	79	5

\* Small sample base.

### **Very negative job ratings in Bush's handling of the war in Iraq**

Californians' views of the way Bush is handling the war in Iraq are among the lowest recorded by *The Field Poll*. Currently, just 30% approve of Bush's handling of the war, while more than twice as many (65%) disapprove.

Democrats disapprove of Bush's handling of the war by a greater than six to one margin (85% disapprove vs. 13% approve). Non-partisans are also highly critical, with 65% disapproving and just 30% approving, while Republicans remain more positive (65%) than negative (30%).

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**Table 3**  
**Trend of Californians' perceptions of the job President Bush**  
**is doing in handling the war in Iraq**

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	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
February 2006	30%	65	5
October 2005*	33%	64	3
August 2005*	34%	60	6
June 2005	28%	68	4
February 2005	34%	63	3
October 2004*	37%	60	3
August 2004*	36%	61	3
May 2004	33%	60	7
February 2004*	43%	52	5
January 2004*	51%	45	4
September 2003*	40%	52	8
August 2003*	52%	44	4
April 2003	61%	34	5
<u>Party</u> (February 2006)			
Democrats	13%	85	2
Republicans	65%	30	5
Non-partisans/others	30%	65	5

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**Evaluations of Bush’s handling of the economy remain negative**

For some time, Californians have been more negative than positive in their evaluations of Bush’s handling of the economy. His current ratings – 53% disapproving and 39% approving – are quite similar to the assessments he has consistently received in this area for the past three years.

**Table 4**  
**Trend of Californians’ perceptions of the job President Bush is doing in handling the nation’s economy**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
February 2006	39%	53	8
October 2005*	35%	60	5
August 2005*	38%	54	8
June 2005	36%	58	6
February 2005	39%	54	7
October 2004*	40%	55	5
August 2004*	41%	54	5
May 2004	37%	54	9
February 2004*	42%	53	5
January 2004*	49%	46	5
September 2003*	39%	55	6
August 2003*	43%	50	7
July 2003	43%	52	5
September 2002*	48%	44	8
July 2002*	49%	41	10
April 2002	57%	34	9
January 2002	57%	35	8
<b>Party (February 2006)</b>			
Democrats	17%	78	5
Republicans	74%	21	5
Non-partisans/others	35%	53	12

*Surveys conducted among California adults, unless noted by an \* in which case surveys conducted among registered voters.*

### **Views of Dick Cheney are more negative than positive**

Currently, 53% of registered voters in this state say they view Cheney unfavorably, while 38% have a positive view. Four years ago Cheney's image was about the reverse of what it is today – 56% favorable and 36% unfavorable.

Over the years there has been a decline in the image ratings that Democrats and non-partisans have of Cheney. While a majority of Republicans hold Cheney in high regard, the proportion holding this view has also dropped since 2002.

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**Table 5**  
**Trend of Californians' impressions of Vice President Dick Cheney**  
**(among California registered voters)**

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	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<u>Total - Statewide</u>			
February 2006	38%	53	9
August 2004	38%	51	11
January 2002	56%	36	8
<u>Democrats</u>			
February 2006	17%	76	6
August 2004	15%	72	13
January 2002	38%	50	12
<u>Republicans</u>			
February 2006	68%	25	7
August 2004	67%	25	8
January 2002	84%	12	4
<u>Non-partisans</u>			
February 2006	34%	52	14
August 2004	33%	51	16
January 2002	45%	49	6

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**More believe U.S. is heading in the wrong direction than the right direction**

For the past two years only about one in three Californians have stated that they feel the U.S. overall is heading in the right direction, while a majority believe the country is seriously off on the wrong track. Today's findings show no appreciable change in that view, with 35% saying the country is moving in the right direction, while 52% feel it is on the wrong track.

**Table 6**  
**Trend of the overall direction the U.S. is heading**

	<b><u>Right direction</u></b>	<b><u>Wrong track</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
February 2006	35%	52	13
October 2005*	30%	60	10
August 2005*	33%	60	7
June 2005	33%	57	10
February 2005	37%	54	9
October 2004*	38%	58	4
August 2004*	38%	56	6
May 2004	33%	57	10
February 2004*	35%	52	13
January 2004*	47%	44	9
2003 (average)*	43%	49	8
2002 (average)	54%	35	11
2001 (average post 9/11)	66%	27	7
2001 (average pre 9/11)	58%	41	11
2000 (average)	67%	25	8
1999 (average)	59%	30	11
1998 (average)	67%	23	10
1997 (average)	43%	43	14
1996 (average)	34%	49	17
1995 (average)	33%	54	13
1994 (average)	41%	50	9
1993 (average)	42%	50	8
1992 (average)	14%	83	3
1989 (average)	49%	43	8
1988 (average)	42%	53	5

*Surveys conducted among California adults, unless noted by an \* in which case surveys conducted among registered voters.*

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 1,000 California adults, including 680 registered voters, conducted by telephone February 12-26, 2006 in English and Spanish.

Households were sampled using a random digit dial methodology, which randomly selects operating landline telephone exchanges within all areas codes serving California households in proportion to population. Within each exchange, telephone numbers are created by adding random digits to the selected telephone exchange. This method gives each phone listing an equal chance of being selected and permits access to all landline telephone numbers statewide, both listed and unlisted.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall sample have a sampling error of +/- 3.2 percentage points.

### **Questions Asked**

Thinking about the country overall, do you think things in the U.S. are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President?

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Bush is doing in handling the nation's economy?

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Bush is doing in handling the war in Iraq?

(ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Is your opinion of Dick Cheney, Vice President, favorable or unfavorable?