

THE FIELD POLL

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

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**CALIFORNIANS CONTINUE TO GIVE
BUSH VERY POOR JOB PERFORMANCE
RATINGS AND OFFER A HIGHLY
NEGATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE
COUNTRY'S DIRECTION.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

For all of 2007, the appraisal that this state's voters have of President George W. Bush's overall job performance, his handling of the war in Iraq and of the nation's economy, has remained stuck at a very low level.

In a statewide survey completed earlier this week, Bush's overall job approval rating was 28%, his handling of the Iraq war was 24%, and his handling of the economy at 34%. Each of these low approval ratings are very similar to earlier *Field Polls* conducted in October, August and March of this year.

Coincident with voters' negative appraisals of Bush is the way Californians feel about the direction that the country is heading. In the current survey, 67% think the U.S. is seriously off on the wrong track, the most negative assessment given by Californians since July 1992.

Job rating trend

Bush first took office in January 2001 and, for the first nine months, voters were about evenly divided in their view of his performance. However, following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, his job approval rating soared to 74%. But, it has declined markedly since then, to the very low levels that he has registered this year.

Table 1
Trend of overall approval of the job Bush is doing as President
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
December 2007	28%	64	8
October 2007	27%	64	9
August 2007	26%	65	9
March 2007	26%	67	7
2006 (average)	32%	61	7
2005 (average)	37%	57	6
2004 (average)	44%	51	5
2003 (average)	49%	45	6
2002 (average)	68%	25	7
September 2001 (post-9/11 attack)	74%	16	10
2001 (pre-9/11 attack average)	42%	46	12

Differences across demographic sub-groups

When examining the differences among voters by partisanship, ideology, region of the state, gender, race/ethnicity and education, majorities disapprove of the President, with very few exceptions. The only voter subgroups which give Bush a positive appraisal are Republicans (55% approve) and strongly conservatives (67%).

Table 2
Current approval ratings of President Bush – by subgroup
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	28%	64	8
<u>Party registration</u>			
(.42) Democrats	10%	84	6
(.34) Republicans	55%	34	11
(.24) Non-partisans/others	21%	72	7
<u>Political ideology</u>			
(.18) Strongly conservative	67%	26	7
(.11) Moderately conservative	43%	43	14
(.47) Middle-of-the-road	21%	69	10
(.11) Moderately liberal	8%	89	3
(.13) Strongly liberal	3%	96	1
<u>Region</u>			
(.25) Los Angeles County	23%	67	10
(.18) San Diego/Orange	37%	56	7
(.15) Other Southern California	30%	62	8
(.16) Central Valley	39%	56	5
(.21) San Francisco Bay Area	17%	77	6
(.05) Other Northern California*	24%	65	11
<u>Gender</u>			
(.47) Male	27%	66	7
(.53) Female	28%	63	9
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
(.64) White non-Hispanic	32%	61	7
(.24) Latino	22%	71	7
(.05) Black*	20%	74	6
(.07) Asian*	21%	63	16
<u>Education</u>			
(.24) High school graduate or less	30%	58	12
(.36) Some college/trade school	28%	64	8
(.24) College graduate	29%	67	4
(.16) Post graduate work	23%	72	5

* Small sample base.

Bush's handling of Iraq war

At the start of the Iraq war in 2003, 60% of California voters approved of Bush's efforts. However, approval of the President's handling of the war began a steady decline in 2004 to where it is now – 24% – and has been there for the whole of this year.

Overwhelming majorities of Democrats and non-partisans – 91% and 80%, respectively – currently disapprove of Bush's handling of the war. Among Republicans, 52% approve and 42% disapprove.

Table 3
Voter appraisal of the job Bush is doing
in handling the situation in Iraq
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
December 2007	24%	72	4
October 2007	24%	70	6
August 2007	24%	72	4
March 2007	24%	72	4
2006 (average)	30%	66	4
2005 (average)	36%	61	3
2004 (average)	41%	56	3
September 2003	40%	52	8
August 2003	52%	44	4
April 2003	60%	37	3
<u>Party registration (December 2007)</u>			
Democrats	8%	91	1
Republicans	52%	42	6
Non-partisans/others	14%	80	6

Bush's handling of the nation's economy

During the first year of the Bush administration, a 57% majority gave the President favorable marks for his handling of the economy. That positive appraisal declined in subsequent years, reaching a low point this year, with about one in three approving.

Four out of five (82%) of Democrats and 64% of non-partisans disapprove of the job that Bush is doing regarding the economy. Republicans, by contrast, give him favorable marks on the economy, with 64% approving and 30% disapproving.

Table 4
Voter appraisal of the job Bush is doing
in handling the nation's economy
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
December 2007	34%	60	6
October 2007	34%	58	8
August 2007	34%	58	8
March 2007	33%	61	6
2006 (average)	38%	55	7
2005 (average)	37%	57	6
2004 (average)	43%	52	5
2003 (average)	42%	53	5
2002 (average)	51%	41	8
2001 (average)	57%	35	8
<u>Party registration (December 2007)</u>			
Democrats	13%	82	5
Republicans	64%	30	6
Non-partisans/others	27%	64	9

Direction of the U.S.

Paralleling the negative appraisal of Bush's job performance is the opinion that California voters have about the direction of the country. Currently, 67% believe the U.S. is seriously off on the wrong track, the largest proportion saying this since July 1992.

Eighty-three percent of Democrats and 68% of non-partisans subscribe to the view that the country is seriously off on the wrong track. Republicans are about evenly divided in their appraisal – 44% believing the U.S. is moving in the right direction and 46% saying it is on the wrong track.

Table 5
Are things in the U.S. generally going in the right direction, or
do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
December 2007	24%	67	9
October 2007	24%	63	13
August 2007	26%	64	10
March 2007	26%	64	10
September 2006	30%	57	13
July 2006	30%	60	10
Late May 2006	28%	64	8
April 2006	26%	64	10
February 2006	36%	55	9
Late October 2005	30%	60	10
August 2005	33%	60	7
June 2005	34%	58	8
February 2005	36%	57	7
October 2004	38%	58	4
August 2004	38%	56	6
May 2004	37%	54	9
February 2004	35%	52	13
January 2004	47%	44	9
September 2003	44%	49	7
August 2003	44%	50	6
July 2003	43%	50	7
September 2002	47%	41	12
July 2002	47%	44	9
January 2002	60%	26	14
December 2001	68%	27	5
September 2001 (pre-9/11 attack)	43%	49	8
January 2001	55%	34	11
August 2000	67%	25	8
February 2000	58%	30	12
August 1999	54%	37	9
April 1998	57%	32	11
February 1997	44%	45	11
February 1996	34%	49	17
March 1995*	33%	54	13
January 1994*	41%	50	9
May 1993*	27%	64	9
July 1992*	14%	81	5
November 1991*	14%	78	7
August 1990*	30%	63	7
January 1989*	49%	43	8
July 1988*	42%	53	5
<u>Party (December 2007)</u>			
Democrats	9%	83	8
Republicans	44%	46	10
Non-partisans/others	22%	68	10

* Surveys conducted among all California adults

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 1,283 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish December 10-17, 2007. Up to six attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize voter fatigue, the overall voters sample was divided into two random subsamples on some of the questions. Because of this, some of the questions in this report are based on random subsamples of either 649 or 634 registered voters statewide. The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. When drawing samples from registration-based lists, *The Field Poll* stratifies the sample by region and age to insure that the poll includes adequate representations of voters across each major region of the state and across different age categories. Once a voter's name and telephone number has been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews can be conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the results are weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depends on the sample size. The maximum sampling error for results based on the overall sample of 1,283 registered voters is +/- 2.9 percentage points, while findings from each random subsample has a maximum sampling error of +/- 4.0 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on percentages in the middle of the sampling distribution (percentages around 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (percentages around 10% or around 90%) have a smaller margin of error. While there are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error, the overall design and execution of the survey minimized the potential for these other sources of error. The maximum sampling error will be larger for analyses based on subgroups of the overall sample.

Questions Asked

(ASKED OF ALL REGISTERED VOTERS)

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

(ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

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 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 situation in Iraq?