



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: December 22, 2003

CONTACT: Adam Clymer at 202-879-6757 or (cell) 202-549-7161

VISIT: www.naes04.org

**BUSH GAINS AFTER CAPTURE OF SADDAM HUSSEIN LEVEL OFF,
WHILE STAYING STRONG, ESPECIALLY AMONG INDEPENDENTS**

President Bush's sharp gains in support following the capture of Saddam Hussein have settled at about the levels recorded in the first three days after the Iraqi president was seized by American troops, the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey shows.

Approval of his handling of his job as President stood at 57 percent from December 9 through 13, the five days preceding the capture. In the next three days, December 14 through 16, it jumped to 64 percent. In the last five days, from December 17 through 21, it stood at 62 percent.

The biggest gains on approval and on other questions were recorded among independents. Republican support was already at such high levels it had little room to improve, and Democrats showed a mixed pattern on different questions.

The president received a similar boost after his visit to troops in Baghdad on Thanksgiving Day, when his approval rating went from 56 to 61 percent. But that 61 percent, recorded from November 28 through December 1, had slipped to 57 percent before the capture of Saddam Hussein.

After the capture, the President's biggest gains were reflected in the public's judgment of his handling of the war on terrorism and of the situation in Iraq. On terrorism, his rating went from 55 percent approval before to 65 percent just after the capture and stayed there in the last five days. On Iraq, his rating climbed from 46 percent approval (and 50 percent disapproval) to 60 percent approval just after the capture and 57 percent in the last five days.

-MORE-

General satisfaction with the state of the nation also showed a striking gain. In the five days before the capture, only 38 percent of the public said things were “generally going in the right direction,” while 50 percent said they were “seriously off on the wrong track.” Just after the capture the public was split about evenly, with 45 percent saying things were going in the right direction and 44 percent saying they were off on the wrong track. By the last five days, 47 percent said “right direction” and just 42 percent said “wrong track.”

One answer that did not change much was the issue of whether the war in Iraq had been worth it. Support has grown from about an even split at the beginning of December to 53 percent saying it was worth it and 40 percent saying it was not in the five days before Saddam’s capture. That went up to 57 percent saying “worth it,” and 39 percent saying “not worth it” in the three days after the capture, and settled at 57 percent saying “worth it” and 39 percent saying “not worth it” in the last five days.

The margin of sampling error for the 1,036 people interviewed by telephone between Dec. 9 and 13 was plus or minus three percentage points. For the 656 people interviewed between Dec. 14 -- when the capture was disclosed early in the morning -- and Dec. 16, it was plus or minus four percentage points. For the 996 people interviewed between the Dec. 17 and 21, it was plus or minus three percentage points.

Bush’s gains were clearest among independents, a key political group in next year’s election. They had recorded 52 percent approval of his handling the Presidency before the capture, but that jumped to 65 percent just afterwards and stayed there in the most recent five days.

Their support for his handling the situation in Iraq jumped even more. Before the capture, 39 percent had approved and 55 percent disapproved. Just afterwards, 63 percent approved and 36 percent disapproved, and in the last five days 57 percent approved and 39 percent disapproved.

Democrats did increase their support for his handling of the war on terrorism from 33 percent to 42 percent and finally 50 percent, and on Iraq from 24 percent to 37 percent and finally 34 percent. But their approval of his overall handling of his job as president changed only from 33 to 38 percent and back to 36 percent.

Women, a group that President Bush has often impressed less than he impresses men, showed an increase in overall approval of his handling of his job as President -- from 53 percent before the capture to 61 percent just after it, and stayed at 61 percent in the last five days. Men went from 61 percent to 68 percent and back to 63 percent, leaving only a very small gender gap.

-MORE-

Other factors may have contributed to the change in the President's ratings, but the economy, an apparent booster in recent weeks, did not seem to play a major part. Fifty percent of the public approved of his handling of the economy before the capture, 52 percent in the next three days, and 50 percent in the last five days.

That National Annenberg Election Survey is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. It has been tracking the presidential campaign since October, and interviewing will continue until after Election Day. Dr. Kathleen Hall Jamieson is the director of the survey. Ken Winneg is the managing director of the survey. Adam Clymer is the political director of the survey.

Survey Methodology

The National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) is a survey conducted each presidential election year by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. The 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey is based on telephone interviews which began October 7, 2003 and will continue past Election Day.

The sample of telephone exchanges called was randomly selected by a computer from a complete list of thousands of active residential exchanges across the country. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was designated by a random procedure to be the respondent for the survey. The interviewing is conducted by Schulman, Ronca, Bucuvalas, Inc.

The results have been weighted to take account of household size and number of telephone lines into the residence and to adjust for variation in the sample relating to geographic region, sex, race, age and education.

This report deals with three periods in December: the five days before the capture of Saddam Hussein, the three days that began with his capture, and the next five days. From December 9 through 13, 1,036 people were interviewed. From December 14, the day of his capture, through December 16, 656 people were interviewed. From December 17 through 21, 996 people were interviewed.

In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results for the earliest and latest groups will differ by no more than three percentage points, up or down, from what would have been obtained by interviewing all American adults. For the middle group, the margin of sampling error would be plus or minus four percentage points. For smaller subgroups, the margin of sampling error would be higher. Moreover, some questions were not asked of all respondents, which would lead to a larger potential sampling error.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce other sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

-MORE-

Questions

In the tables below:

Before: 12/9/03—12/13/03, Just After: 12/14/03—12/16/03, Later: 12/17/03-12/21/03

Don't know and Refusals not shown

A. Do you feel things in this country are generally going in the right direction, or do you think things are seriously off on the wrong track?

	Before	Just After	Later
Right direction	38	45	47
Wrong track	50	44	42

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

	Before	Just After	Later
Approve	57	64	62
Disapprove	40	34	36

C. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the nation's economy?

	Before	Just After	Later
Approve	50	52	50
Disapprove	46	45	46

D. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the war on terrorism?

	Before	Just After	Later
Approve	55	65	65
Disapprove	39	34	32

Note: Before: 519 people questioned; Just After: 333 people questioned; Later: 490 people questioned.

E. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is currently handling the situation in Iraq?

	Before	Just After	Later
Approve	46	60	57
Disapprove	50	37	39

F. All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over, or not?

	Before	Just After	Later
Yes, worth it	53	57	56
No, not worth it	40	39	40

Note: Before: 519 people questioned; Just After: 333 people questioned; Later: 490 people questioned.

###