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**Bush Enters Election Year with His Approval Higher  
As Support on Iraq Increases, Annenberg Survey Shows**

President Bush enters the election year with the public increasingly cheerful about the general situation in the country, and with approval of his handling of the Presidency and particularly terrorism and Iraq up markedly from where they stood last fall, the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey shows.

The gains that appeared just after the capture of Saddam Hussein on December 14 have been sustained, and opposition to spending to rebuild Iraq has declined. A solid majority of the public, in polling from December 16 through January 5, says that going to war in Iraq was worth it, and the 55 percent who say it was worth it hold their views more firmly than the 39 percent who say it was not.

Forty-seven percent of the 3,243 people polled in that period say things "in this country are generally going in the right direction," while 43 percent say they "are seriously off on the wrong track." But in the whole month of November, when 4,683 people were interviewed, only 38 percent said "right direction," while 51 percent said "wrong track."

In the most recent polling, approval of Bush's handling of his job as president stands at 63 percent, with 34 percent disapproving. In the first half of November it was lower; 55 percent approved and 42 percent disapproved. The margin of sampling error for each time period is plus or minus two percentage points.

Both of these questions are affected by a variety of perceptions, among which good economic news ranks high. But while 70 percent of registered voters say the economy will matter more to them than Iraq in determining their vote, close examination of the relations of various questions indicates that both the economy and Iraq count heavily in tentative voting decisions.

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And while approval of Bush's handling of the economy went from 46 percent in October to 51 percent in the latest polling, his gains on Iraq were greater. In October, 49 percent approved of his handling of the situation in Iraq, and 45 percent did so in the first half of November. In the most recent polling, 59 percent approve, while 37 percent disapprove. For the first time since the polling began, a majority of women, 54 percent, approve of his handling of Iraq. Forty-one percent remain opposed. In October, the month when interviewing began, a majority of women disapproved, with 54 percent disapproving and 43 percent of women approving.

Bush has gained almost as much on attitudes toward his handling of the war on terrorism. For the first two months of polling, approval stayed at or just below 60 percent, the total in October.

But in the most recent polling, 67 percent approve and 30 percent disapprove. Here his sharpest gains were among Democrats. In October, 37 percent of them approved and in the most recent polling 49 percent do. Republicans moved only from 89 to 92 percent, and independents from 60 to 64 percent approving.

Public opposition to spending for the rehabilitation of Iraq has also declined. This drop began before the capture of Saddam. In the second half of November, 59 percent wanted to spend less or no money at all. In the first half of December, 52 percent wanted less or none. Now 53 percent want less or none, and 43 percent want spending kept at current levels or increased.

Younger respondents, those 18 to 29, have changed the most on the spending question. In October, 40 percent wanted current levels or spending or more, while 58 percent wanted less or none. In the December 16-Jan. 5 polling, 48 percent want to spend at current levels or higher, while 50 percent want less or none, a statistically insignificant difference. In all other age cohorts, clear majorities want to spend the same or less.

Another Iraq question on which answers changed before Saddam was seized was "All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over, or not." In October, 50 percent of the public said it was worth it and 45 percent said it was not. In early November, Americans were evenly split; as news spread of Army helicopters being shot down, the one-point difference between the 48 percent saying "worth it" and the 49 percent saying "not worth it" was statistically insignificant. In late November 49 percent said it was worth it, and 46 percent said it was not. In early December, though, a majority was supportive, 52 to 42 percent, and in the latest polling that level of support remained; 55 percent said the war was worth it, and 39 percent said it was not.

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Each group in the latest polling was asked a follow up question to see how firmly it held its view. The 55 percent who said the war was “worth it,” were asked, “Some people say that the continuing deaths of American troops in Iraq and the cost in dollars outweigh the benefits. Considering that, are you sure the situation was worth going to war over, or are you uncertain about it?” Forty-four of the original 55 percent held to that view, while only ten percent said they had become uncertain.

The 39 percent who said the war was not worth it were asked, “Some people say that the benefits of removing Saddam Hussein, a tyrant who used chemical weapons against his own people and threatened other countries, outweigh the costs. Considering that, are you sure the situation was not worth going to war over, or not?” Twenty-three of the original 39 percent stuck to their opinion, while 14 percent said they had become uncertain.

That National Annenberg Election Survey, the largest academic election poll, is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania ([www.appcenn.org](http://www.appcenn.org)). It has been tracking the presidential campaign since October 7, 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.

### **Tables**

Those not answering or responding “Don’t Know” are not included.

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?

Period (%)	October 7-31	Nov. 1-15	Nov. 16-30	Dec. 1-15	Dec. 16-Jan. 5
<b>Right Direction</b>	41	37	38	41	47
<b>Wrong Track</b>	50	52	51	48	43

B. Now, for each of the following programs I read to you, please tell me if you think the federal government should spend more on it, the same as now, less, or no money at all. . . .Rebuilding Iraq?

Period (%)	October 7-31	Nov. 1-15	Nov. 16-30	Dec. 1-15	Dec. 16-Jan. 5
<b>More</b>	11	7	8	9	10
<b>Same</b>	28	28	29	33	33
<b>Less</b>	33	35	35	32	34
<b>No money</b>	24	27	24	20	19

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

Period (%)	October 7-31	Nov. 1-15	Nov. 16-30	Dec. 1-15	Dec. 16-Jan. 5
Approve	58	55	57	59	63
Disapprove	40	42	41	38	34

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

Period (%)	October 7-31	Nov. 1-15	Nov. 16-30	Dec. 1-15	Dec. 16-Jan. 5
Approve	60	56	57	58	67
Disapprove	37	42	40	37	30

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

Period (%)	October 7-31	Nov. 1-15	Nov. 16-30	Dec. 1-15	Dec. 16-Jan. 5
Approve	49	45	46	49	59
Disapprove	48	51	51	47	37

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

Period (%)	October 7-31	Nov. 1-15	Nov. 16-30	Dec. 1-15	Dec. 16-Jan. 5
Yes	50	48	49	52	55
No	45	49	46	42	39

G. (Asked only of those who said the war was worth it.) Some people say that the continuing deaths of American troops in Iraq and the cost in dollars outweigh the benefits. Considering that, are you sure the situation was worth going to war over or are you uncertain about it?

Period (%)	October 7-31	Nov. 1-15	Nov. 16-30	Dec. 1-15	Dec. 16-Jan. 5
Worth it	NA	NA	75	76	79
Uncertain	NA	NA	21	21	18

H. (Asked only of those who said the war was not worth it.) Some people say that the benefits of removing Saddam Hussein, a tyrant who used chemical weapons on his own people and threatened other countries outweigh the costs. Considering that, are you sure the situation was not worth going to war over or are you uncertain about it?

Period (%)	October 7-31	Nov. 1-15	Nov. 16-30	Dec. 1-15	Dec. 16-Jan. 5
Not Worth it	NA	NA	54	55	60
Uncertain	NA	NA	38	38	35

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**For the Period December 16-January 5**

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?

Gender (%)	Men	Women
Right Direction	52	42
Wrong Track	39	46

Party ID (%)	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Right Direction	70	30	45
Wrong Track	22	59	42

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Right Direction	52	48	45	41
Wrong Track	40	39	46	48

B. Now, for each of the following programs I read to you, please tell me if you think the federal government should spend more on it, the same as now, less, or no money at all . . . . Rebuilding Iraq?

Gender (%)	Men	Women
More	11	9
Same	32	34
Less	32	35
No Money	20	18

Party ID (%)	Republican	Democrat	Independent
More	10	7	14
Same	46	23	32
Less	30	42	31
No Money	11	25	19

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
More	15	11	7	9
Same	33	32	33	34
Less	33	33	36	33
No Money	18	20	19	19

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

Gender (%)	Men	Women
Approve	66	61
Disapprove	32	36

Party ID (%)	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Approve	92	40	64
Disapprove	7	58	34

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Approve	59	68	64	60
Disapprove	39	29	34	37

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

Gender (%)	Men	Women
Approve	69	65
Disapprove	26	33

Party ID (%)	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Approve	92	49	64
Disapprove	7	48	31

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Approve	59	67	73	67
Disapprove	38	29	24	31

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

Gender (%)	Men	Women
Approve	64	54
Disapprove	34	41

Party ID (%)	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Approve	88	37	58
Disapprove	11	58	38

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Approve	53	62	60	57
Disapprove	43	33	37	38

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

Gender (%)	Men	Women
Yes	59	52
No	36	42

Party ID (%)	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Yes	81	36	53
No	15	60	41

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Yes	54	59	59	43
No	43	35	34	51

G. (Asked only of those who said the war was worth it.) Some people say that the continuing deaths of American troops in Iraq and the cost in dollars outweigh the benefits. Considering that, are you sure the situation was worth going to war over or are you uncertain about it?

Gender (%)	Men	Women
Worth it	82	77
Uncertain	14	22

Party ID (%)	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Worth it	89	68	73
Uncertain	8	30	24

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Worth it	80	77	82	77
Uncertain	18	19	16	21

H. (Asked only of those who said the war was not worth it.) Some people say that the benefits of removing Saddam Hussein, a tyrant who used chemical weapons on his own people and threatened other countries outweigh the costs. Considering that, are you sure the situation was not worth going to war over or are you uncertain about it?

Gender (%)	Men	Women
Not worth it	69	52
Uncertain	27	41

Party ID (%)	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Not worth it	55	61	62
Uncertain	40	34	32

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Not worth it	53	70	67	43
Uncertain	34	28	27	54

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## Survey Methodology

The National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) is a survey conducted each presidential election 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 five periods since the interviewing began. From Oct. 7 through Oct. 31, there were 1,537 people interviewed. From Nov. 1 through Nov. 15, there were 1,940 people interviewed. From Nov. 16 through 30, there were 2,742 people interviewed. From Dec. 1 through Dec. 15, there were 3,046 people interviewed. From Dec. 16 through January 5, 2004, there were 3,243 people interviewed.

In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results for the each of these interviewing periods will differ by no more than two percentage points, up or down, from what would have been obtained by interviewing all American adults. 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.

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