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**Bush Makes Gains on Personal Traits, Some Issues, With General Public  
But is Stable Among Persuadable Voters, Annenberg Data Show**

In a period marked by his eulogy for Ronald Reagan, UN approval of sovereignty transfer in Iraq while terrorist strikes continued amid reports of good economic news, George W. Bush improved his image with the American people significantly on attributes such as experience, steadiness, caring, knowledgeability, and trustworthiness, the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey shows.

But those changes, measured in interviews of 1,431 adults between June 8 and 21, were not repeated among persuadable potential voters in all states, those who are either undecided or say there is a "good chance" they could change their current preference for Bush, John Kerry or Ralph Nader. In that group, his ratings either stayed about the same, or in one case, his rating as a "strong leader," actually fell.

The one-fourth of the population in that persuadable category may have not given Bush improved ratings for two reasons. First, they include a very large share of independents, whose middle ground ratings of Bush changed little. (Republicans who gave Bush high ratings in May, gave him still higher ratings in June; Democrats, who gave him very low ratings in May, raised him a bit, though their ratings were still quite low.)

Second, the persuadables, a group that pays less attention to politics, did not see the gains on the economy and Iraq that others discerned. When compared with polling of 4,117 people from May 17 through 31, the general public in mid-June gave Bush modestly improved ratings on his handling of his job as president, the economy and the war on terrorism and was more likely than before to think he had a "clear plan" for success in Iraq. But on none of those measures did the persuadables give him improved ratings.

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“Since Reagan’s death and the ceremonies honoring him that dominated the news,” said Adam Clymer, political director of the survey, “politicians and pollsters have been speculating on whether the Reagan aura would enhance Bush’s image. First Bush and then Kerry have started running television advertisement stressing that they were ‘optimistic,’ plainly trying to identify with Reagan’s own sunny perspective on America,” Clymer said.

Nevertheless, the public thought that Bush was more like Reagan, as a person and as a leader, than was Kerry. Republicans gave Bush overwhelming margins on the comparisons. Democrats divided more narrowly and a plurality of them said Kerry, rather than Bush, was more like Reagan as a leader. Independents, who showed a high regard for Reagan’s domestic record which Democrats denied him, clearly saw Bush, not Kerry, as more like Reagan.

Despite the lack of influence on persuadable voters, some of the changes in ratings were striking. Bush’s gains on knowledgeability erased a lead Kerry had enjoyed on that attribute. And where Kerry had surprisingly stood even with Bush on whether each had “the right kind of experience to be president,” Bush regained an incumbent’s traditional advantage on that measure.

But there was good news for Kerry in another finding. Among the persuadable voters, Bush and Kerry were now even on their ratings as a “strong leader.” In May, Bush held an advantage on that attribute.

Perhaps the single most importance change between the two polling periods came on the benchmark question of “Do you feel things in this country are generally going in the right diction or do you think things are seriously off on the wrong track?”

In May, 33 percent of the public said “right direction” and 58 percent said “wrong track.” In June the balance was still negative, but the reading improved to 40 percent saying right direction and 50 percent saying wrong track.

Even persuadable voters were less likely to be critical on this measure; as 52 percent said the country was going in the wrong direction, compared to 60 percent in May. Among persuadables, the percentage saying right track remained steady at 27 percent.

Another important measure for Bush was that he regained a majority favoring keeping troops in Iraq until a stable government was formed. Fifty-two percent took that view, while 43 percent said the troops should leave as soon as possible. In late May, there was a tie, with 47 percent taking each position.

There was also an increase in the share of people rating that nation’s economy as good or excellent, up to 27 percent from 22 percent in May.

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But even numbers that improved showed less than robust support for the president. Fifty-two percent approved his handling of his job as president, up from 48 percent in late May. Disapproval dropped from 49 to 45 percent. Forty-four percent approved his handling of the economy, up from 41 percent in May. Fifty-three percent approved his handling of the war on terrorism, up from 49 percent in May. Those shifts were all statistically significant.

But changes in the percentage who approved of Bush's handling of Iraq, from 39 to 41 percent, or in those who believed the war in Iraq was worth it, from 42 to 43 percent, were statistically insignificant, considering this poll's margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points and the May survey's margin of two points.

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.AnnenbergPublicPolicyCenter.org](http://www.AnnenbergPublicPolicyCenter.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.

Another major election project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center is [FactCheck.org](http://FactCheck.org), a project that tries to hold politicians accountable by exposing false or misleading campaign statements. It is available online at [www.FactCheck.Org](http://www.FactCheck.Org).

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## Questions

**A.** I am going to read you some phrases. For each one, please tell me how well that phrase applies to [George W. Bush/John Kerry]. Please use a scale from zero to ten, where “zero” means it does not apply at all and “ten” means it applies extremely well.

### Bush

	May 17-31		June 8-21	
	All	Persuadables	All	Persuadables
Cares about people like me	5.0	4.6	5.3	4.3
Inspiring	4.8	4.4	5.1	4.4
Strong leader	5.9	5.8	6.0	5.2
Trustworthy	5.2	4.9	5.6	4.6
Shares my values	5.0	4.7	5.2	4.4
Knowledgeable	5.7	5.5	6.0	5.3
Reckless	4.8	5.4	4.7	5.4
Steady	5.9	5.6	6.2	5.6
Says one thing, does another	4.9	5.3	4.9	5.4
Has the right kind of experience to be president	5.5	5.3	5.9	5.4
Easy to like as a person	5.9	5.5	6.0	5.6
Changes his mind for political reasons	5.0	5.5	5.0	5.6
Out of touch with people like me	5.0	5.3	5.1	5.5
Stubborn	6.4	6.2	6.5	6.3
Arrogant	5.3	5.6	5.3	5.9

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## Kerry

	May 17-31		June 8-21	
	All	Persuadables	All	Persuadables
<b>Cares about people like me</b>	5.0	4.8	4.9	4.9
<b>Inspiring</b>	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.7
<b>Strong leader</b>	5.3	5.1	5.1	5.3
<b>Trustworthy</b>	5.0	4.9	5.0	5.1
<b>Shares my values</b>	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.9
<b>Knowledgeable</b>	6.3	6.2	6.3	6.1
<b>Reckless</b>	4.0	4.0	4.3	4.5
<b>Steady</b>	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.4
<b>Says one thing, does another</b>	5.4	5.2	5.5	5.4
<b>Has the right kind of experience to be president</b>	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.3
<b>Easy to like as a person</b>	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.6
<b>Changes his mind for political reasons</b>	6.0	5.8	6.2	6.2
<b>Out of touch with people like me</b>	5.1	5.1	5.0	5.2
<b>Stubborn</b>	4.9	4.9	5.1	5.0
<b>Arrogant</b>	5.0	5.1	5.2	5.2

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**B.**

	May 17-31		June 8-21	
	All	Persuadables	All	Persuadables
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?				
<b>Right Direction</b>	33%	27%	40%	27%
<b>Wrong Track</b>	58%	60%	50%	52%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?				
<b>Approve</b>	48%	45%	52%	44%
<b>Disapprove</b>	49%	47%	45%	49%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the nation's economy?				
<b>Approve</b>	41%	31%	44%	31%
<b>Disapprove</b>	55%	58%	52%	59%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the war on terrorism?				
<b>Approve</b>	49%	41%	53%	43%
<b>Disapprove</b>	47%	51%	43%	48%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is currently handling the situation in Iraq?				
<b>Approve</b>	39%	27%	41%	26%
<b>Disapprove</b>	57%	64%	56%	68%
All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over, or not?				
<b>Yes, worth it</b>	42%	34%	43%	34%
<b>No, not worth it</b>	52%	55%	51%	59%
Has the war in Iraq reduced the risk of terrorism against the United States or increased the risk of terrorism against the United States?				
<b>Reduced the risk</b>	25%	19%	27%	17%
<b>Increased the risk</b>	64%	66%	63%	71%
<b>Made no difference</b>	7%	8%	5%	4%
Do you think the U.S. should keep military troops in Iraq until a stable government is established there, or do you think the U.S. should bring its troops home as soon as possible?				
<b>Keep troops in Iraq</b>	47%	39%	52%	37%
<b>Bring troops home</b>	47%	53%	43%	57%

	May 17-31		June 8-21	
	All	Persuadables	All	Persuadables
Do you think George W. Bush has a clear plan for bringing the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion, or don't you think so?				
<b>Has a clear plan</b>	32%	19%	36%	20%
<b>Doesn't have a clear plan</b>	61%	69%	57%	69%
Would you say that the economic policies of the Bush administration are making the economy better, worse, or are having no effect one way or the other?				
<b>Better</b>	26%	14%	28%	12%
<b>Worse</b>	44%	47%	39%	47%
<b>No effect one way or the other</b>	25%	30%	28%	34%
Now I'd like to talk to you about the state of the economy. How would you rate economic conditions in this country today?				
<b>Excellent</b>	2%	1%	2%	1%
<b>Good</b>	20%	12%	25%	14%
<b>Fair</b>	43%	47%	44%	50%
<b>Poor</b>	34%	38%	29%	33%
How would you rate your own personal economic situation today?				
<b>Excellent</b>	7%	3%	7%	3%
<b>Good</b>	36%	29%	37%	30%
<b>Fair</b>	38%	43%	38%	44%
<b>Poor</b>	18%	25%	17%	21%
Thinking about one year from now, do you think economic conditions in the country will be much better than they are right now, somewhat better, the same, somewhat worse, or much worse?				
<b>Much better</b>	8%	4%	8%	3%
<b>Somewhat better</b>	39%	31%	43%	35%
<b>Same</b>	27%	31%	28%	32%
<b>Somewhat worse</b>	15%	22%	11%	18%
<b>Much worse</b>	5%	6%	3%	4%
Please tell me if your opinion of Bush is favorable or unfavorable.				
<b>Unfavorable</b>	38%	33%	38%	37%
<b>Favorable</b>	47%	40%	49%	41%
Please tell me if your opinion of Kerry is favorable or unfavorable.				
<b>Unfavorable</b>	33%	24%	32%	21%
<b>Favorable</b>	38%	26%	39%	31%

## 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 interviewing conducted from June through 21, when 1,431 people were interviewed, and from May 17 through 31, when 4,117 people were interviewed.

In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results for the May interviews will differ by no more than two percentage points, up or down, from what would have been obtained by interviewing all American adults. For the June interviews, it would be plus or minus three percentage points. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error would be higher, and some questions were not asked of fall respondents, which would also lead to a higher 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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