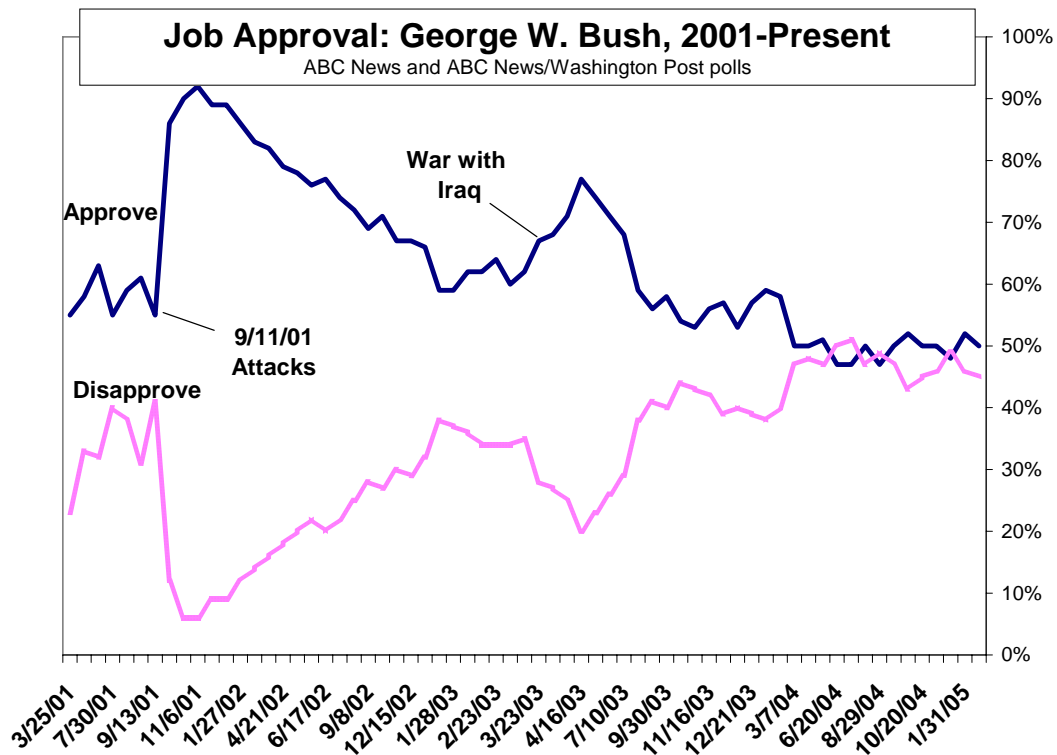


State of the Union: Divided on Bush

George W. Bush tonight addresses a nation as split by his policies and performance as it's ever been: With one term down and one to go, precisely half of Americans approve of his performance as president, while 45 percent don't.

It's far from a soaring score: At 50 percent, Bush's job approval rating is just three points above his career low (47 percent last spring and summer), 42 points below his career high (92 percent shortly after the 9/11 attacks) and 14 points below his career average.



The successful elections in Iraq may yet have an effect, especially if they contribute to improved security there; handling the situation in Iraq has been the public's top priority since the election. This poll was conducted Wednesday through Monday, with interviews both before and after the Iraq vote.

Deep partisanship is at play in Bush's ratings: While 87 percent of Republicans approve of Bush's work in office, just 14 percent of Democrats agree. But partisanship isn't new, and Bush's real challenge is that he gets just 48 percent approval from independents. At

this point eight years ago Bill Clinton’s rating among independents was 13 points higher, 61 percent.

GROUPS – Partisan divisions aren’t the only ones. Bush’s approval rating in this latest survey is 11 points higher among men than among women. He does especially well with married men (62 percent approval), followed by married women, then unmarried men. As in the fall election, he’s weakest among unmarried women, with just 37 percent approval.

Bush has 55 percent approval in the “red” states – those he won in November – compared with 43 percent in the “blue” states, won by John Kerry. Bush’s rating is lower in Kerry’s home region, the Northeast (39 percent), compared with elsewhere. It’s 14 points worse among lower- rather than upper-income adults. And it’s particularly weak among minorities: Fifty-five percent of whites approve of his work, while 30 percent of minorities (and just 17 percent of blacks) agree.

There’s also a striking gap by residential area: Bush has a 60 percent approval rating from people living in rural areas (about a fifth of the population), but just 42 percent from big-city dwellers (about a sixth of all Americans).

Partisanship does inform many of these. Blacks, women, Northeasterners, lower-income Americans, city dwellers – all the groups that like Bush least – have among the most Democrats in their ranks.

	Bush Rating		% Democrat
	Approve	Disapprove	
All	50%	45	34%
Democrats	14	83	
Independents	48	43	
Republicans	87	11	
Men	55	40	28
Women	44	49	39
Married men	62	35	27
Married women	53	40	34
Unmarried men	46	48	30
Unmarried women	37	57	44
Northeast	39	55	40
West	47	47	34
South	54	41	32
Midwest	55	40	30
Red states	55	40	31
Blue states	43	50	37
Income <\$35K	42	52	40
>\$75K	56	42	31
Whites	55	40	29
Non-whites	30	64	52

Blacks*	17	78	67
Rural	60	32	26
Town	50	44	33
Suburb	47	50	36
Big city	42	53	41

*1/31 and 1/16 polls combined

STABLE – While not strong, Bush’s rating is stable: He’s ranged between 47 and 52 percent approval in 15 ABC News/Washington Post polls since last February, and his rating today almost precisely matches its 2004 average, a 50-47 percent split. That’s about the same as Clinton’s worst year, 1993.

While higher would be better, all Bush’s recent predecessors have seen worse ratings: Clinton’s career low was 43 percent; Bush’s father’s, 33 percent; Ronald Reagan’s, 42 percent; Jimmy Carter’s, 28 percent, Gerald Ford’s, 37 percent, and Richard Nixon’s, 23 percent. Some of those make 50 percent look practically popular.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Jan. 26-31, 2005, among a random national sample of 1,204 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/us/pollvault/>

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Results follow:

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	-----Approve-----			-----Disapprove-----			No opin.
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/31/05	50	34	15	45	11	34	5
1/16/05	52	33	19	46	11	35	2
12/19/04	48	27	21	49	12	38	2
10/20/04	50	30	20	46	11	35	4
9/26/04	50	33	18	45	13	32	5
9/8/04	52	35	17	43	11	32	5
8/29/04	50	31	19	47	13	34	3
8/1/04	47	28	18	49	13	36	5
7/25/04	50	32	19	47	13	34	3
7/11/04	48	31	17	50	11	39	2
6/20/04	47	30	17	51	13	39	1
5/23/04	47	31	17	50	14	36	3
4/18/04	51	33	18	47	13	34	1
3/7/04	50	32	18	48	12	36	2

2/11/04	50	30	21	47	14	34	2
1/18/04	58	35	24	40	9	30	2
12/21/03	59	39	21	38	15	23	3
12/14/03	57	37	20	39	10	29	5
12/7/03	53	32	21	40	13	27	7
11/16/03	57	34	23	39	11	28	4
10/29/03	56	30	26	42	13	29	2
10/13/03	53	33	20	43	13	29	4
9/30/03	54	34	20	44	15	29	2
9/13/03	58	35	23	40	14	27	2
9/7/03	56	34	22	41	13	28	4
8/11/03	59	37	22	37	14	23	4
7/10/03	59	35	24	38	13	25	3
6/22/03	68	45	23	29	11	18	4
4/30/03	71	50	22	26	17	9	3
4/16/03	74	52	22	23	9	14	3
4/9/03	77	58	19	20	6	14	4
4/3/03	71	54	16	25	7	19	4
3/23/03	68	NA	NA	27	NA	NA	4
3/20/03	67	NA	NA	28	NA	NA	5
3/2/03	62	38	23	35	13	22	4
2/23/03	60	NA	NA	34	NA	NA	6
2/9/03	64	42	21	34	14	20	3
2/1/03	62	41	21	34	13	22	4
1/28/03	62	43	19	36	13	23	2
1/27/03	59	39	21	37	15	22	4
1/20/03	59	36	23	38	16	22	2
12/15/02	66	37	28	32	12	20	2
10/27/02	67	39	28	29	13	16	4
9/26/02	67	42	25	30	12	18	3
9/8/02	71	42	28	27	12	15	3
7/28/02	69	39	31	28	14	14	3
7/15/02	72	42	31	25	12	13	2
6/17/02	74	42	32	22	9	13	4
6/9/02	77	41	36	20	9	11	3
5/19/02	76	48	28	22	8	13	3
4/21/02	78	47	31	20	9	10	2
3/28/02	79	49	30	18	8	10	3
3/10/02	82	52	30	16	9	7	2
1/27/02	83	56	27	14	7	7	3
12/19/01	86	64	22	12	6	6	2
11/27/01	89	69	21	9	4	5	1
11/6/01	89	65	24	9	5	4	2
10/9/01	92	76	16	6	3	3	1
9/27/01	90	70	20	6	3	3	4
9/13/01	86	63	23	12	5	6	2
9/9/01	55	26	29	41	20	22	3
8/12/01	61	28	33	31	14	17	8
7/30/01	59	28	30	38	17	22	3
6/3/01	55	27	28	40	18	22	6
4/22/01	63	33	30	32	16	16	5
3/25/01	58	NA	NA	33	NA	NA	8
2/25/01	55	NA	NA	23	NA	NA	22

END