

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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**71% OF CALIFORNIA VOTERS
DISAPPROVE OF BUSH'S JOB
PERFORMANCE, EQUALING THE
ALL-TIME LOW RATING GIVEN
NIXON IN 1974.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

There has been no abatement in the steady continuing decline in Californians' approval of the job George W. Bush is doing as President.

In a statewide survey completed this week Bush's approval rating is just 24%, while 71% disapprove of his performance. This is not only the highest level of disapproval recorded during Bush's seven and one-half years in office, it also matches the lowest job appraisal ever given a President by *The Field Poll* in California.

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>
July 2008	24%	71	5
May 2008	25%	69	6
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

Bush's rating as low as Nixon's

When comparing Bush's current job rating to those of his six immediate predecessors, only Richard Nixon, who resigned the office in disgrace, was viewed as negatively. In August 1974, Nixon's rating was 24% approve and 70% disapprove, virtually identical to Californians' current assessment of Bush.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<u>George W. Bush (R)</u>			
Lowest – July 2008	24%	71	5
Highest – September 2001	74%	16	10
<u>Bill Clinton (D)</u>			
Lowest - August 1993	45%	52	3
Highest – February 1998	68%	25	7
<u>George H.W. Bush (R)</u>			
Lowest – July 1992	37%	62	1
Highest – February 1991	77%	23	*
<u>Ronald Reagan (R)</u>			
Lowest – March 1982	53%	47	*
Highest – April 1981	74%	18	8
<u>Jimmy Carter (D)</u>			
Lowest – July 1980	33%	66	1
Highest – March 1977	68%	20	2
<u>Gerald Ford (R)</u>			
Lowest – November 1975	47%	51	2
Highest – October 1974	55%	36	9
<u>Richard Nixon (R)</u>			
Lowest – August 1974	24%	70	6
Highest – November 1970	59%	38	3

* Less than 1/2 of 1% (R) denotes Republican (D) denotes Democrat.

Note: For surveys conducted prior to October 1994, job performance was measured among all adults using a five-point scale, which was converted to the two-point approve-disapprove scale for comparative purposes

Sub-group appraisals

In examining the opinions of this state's voters across various sub-groups of the voting population, only two voter segments, which overlap one another to some extent, view Bush in positive terms. These are registered Republicans and voters who classify themselves as strong conservatives continue to approve of Bush. However, Democrats, non-partisans, liberals, moderates and moderate conservatives disapprove of Bush by majorities ranging from 60% to 94%.

Voters in every area of the state have a negative opinion of Bush's performance.

Men and women hold very similar views in their disapproval of the President. Sixty-eight percent of white non-Hispanics do not approve of Bush. Larger proportions of Latinos, Blacks, Asians and other minorities also register their disapproval.

Table 3
Current approval ratings of President Bush – by subgroup
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	24%	71	5
<u>Party registration</u>			
(.43) Democrats	6%	90	4
(.33) Republicans	54%	38	8
(.24) Non-partisans/others	14%	83	3
<u>Political ideology</u>			
(.18) Strongly conservative	65%	27	8
(.11) Moderately conservative*	35%	60	5
(.47) Middle-of-the-road	15%	79	6
(.11) Moderately liberal	4%	94	2
(.13) Strongly liberal	4%	94	2
<u>Area</u>			
(.70) Coastal counties	19%	76	5
(.30) Inland counties	35%	59	6
<u>Region</u>			
(.25) Los Angeles County	18%	77	5
(.18) San Diego/Orange	29%	64	7
(.15) Other Southern California	31%	66	3
(.16) Central Valley	38%	55	7
(.21) San Francisco Bay Area	12%	84	4
(.05) Other Northern California*	16%	81	13
<u>Gender</u>			
(.47) Male	25%	70	5
(.53) Female	23%	72	5
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
(.64) White non-Hispanic	28%	68	4
(.24) Latino	19%	74	7
(.05) Black*	4%	91	5
(.07) Asian/other*	19%	75	6

* Small sample base.

Bush's handling of the economy

One of the factors contributing to Californians' lower assessment of Bush relates to his handling of the economy. By a 78% to 18% margin, voters now downrate the President for the job he is doing in managing the nation's economy. This rating is even more negative than it was in May of this year.

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>
July 2008	18%	78	4
May 2008	24%	70	6
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 (July 2008)</u>			
Democrats	5%	91	4
Republicans	43%	51	6
Non-partisans/others	6%	90	5

Bush's handling of the Iraq war

The marks that Californians give his handling of the Iraq war, which had been steadily declining, may have bottomed out. Between March 2007 and May 2008, 71% or 72% disapproved of Bush's performance in handling the war in Iraq. The proportion feeling this way now is 68%.

Table 5
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>
July 2008	28%	68	4
May 2008	27%	71	2
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 (July 2008)</u>			
Democrats	10%	87	3
Republicans	59%	35	6
Non-partisans/others	17%	78	5

Direction of the country

The proportion of Californians who now feel the country is moving in the right direction (15%) is at its lowest point in seventeen years. This compares to 75% who believe the country is seriously off on the wrong track.

Table 6
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>
July 2008	15%	75	10
May 2008	17%	75	8
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 (July 2008)</u>			
Democrats	10%	81	9
Republicans	23%	63	14
Non-partisans/others	12%	83	5

Note: Surveys prior to 1996 conducted among all California adults

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Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 809 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between the period July 8-14, 2008. 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 voter 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 422 or 387 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. 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 809 registered voters is +/- 3.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings from each random subsample has a maximum sampling error of +/- 5.0 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

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? (ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLE)

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

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Bush is doing in handling the nation's economy? (ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLE)

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Bush is doing in handling the situation in Iraq? (ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLE)