

# THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY  
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS  
**THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD**

**Field Research Corporation**

222 Sutter Street, Suite 700  
San Francisco, CA 94108-4411  
(415) 392-5763 FAX: (415) 434-2541  
EMAIL: [fieldpoll@field.com](mailto:fieldpoll@field.com)  
[www.field.com/fieldpollonline](http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline)

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**GROWING MAJORITY OF CALIFORNIANS  
THINK IRAQI WAR NOT WORTH ITS COSTS.  
MAJORITIES RATE BUSH'S JOB  
PERFORMANCE NEGATIVELY AND THINK  
U.S. MOVING IN WRONG DIRECTION.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

By a two to one margin (63% to 31%) Californians do not believe the war in Iraq is worth the toll it is taking in American lives and other costs. This represents a complete reversal from opinions that state residents held thirteen months ago, at the start of the war.

Six in ten of this state's adults and its registered voters also say they disapprove of the President's handling of the Iraqi war, and a majority disapprove of the President's job performance overall.

The proportion of Californians who feel the direction of the country is seriously off on the wrong track is larger now than at any time since 1992.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* of the California public conducted May 18-23 by Field Research Corporation.

**War not worth toll it is taking**

By a two to one margin (63% to 31%), Californians now believe the Iraqi war is not worth the toll it has taken on American lives and other costs. Support for the war is now at its lowest level since it began in early 2003.

Attitudes against the war now include majorities of all demographic subgroups of the state's population, except registered Republicans and conservatives.

**Table 1**  
**Is the war in Iraq worth the toll it has taken in American lives  
 and other kinds of costs?**

|                                      | <u>Yes, worth<br/>the costs</u> | <u>No, not<br/>worth it</u> | <u>No<br/>opinion</u> |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| May 2004                             | 31%                             | 63                          | 6                     |
| January 2004*                        | 43%                             | 50                          | 7                     |
| August 2003*                         | 49%                             | 35                          | 6                     |
| April 2003                           | 58%                             | 35                          | 7                     |
| <u>Voter registration (May 2004)</u> |                                 |                             |                       |
| Not registered                       | 25%                             | 68                          | 7                     |
| Registered voters                    | <u>35%</u>                      | <u>60</u>                   | <u>5</u>              |
| Democrats                            | 13%                             | 84                          | 3                     |
| Republicans                          | 67%                             | 27                          | 6                     |
| Non-partisans/others                 | 24%                             | 69                          | 7                     |
| <u>Region (May 2004)</u>             |                                 |                             |                       |
| Los Angeles County                   | 26%                             | 68                          | 6                     |
| Other Southern California            | 39%                             | 57                          | 4                     |
| San Francisco Bay Area               | 19%                             | 71                          | 10                    |
| Other Northern California            | 39%                             | 58                          | 3                     |
| <u>Political ideology (May 2004)</u> |                                 |                             |                       |
| Conservative                         | 52%                             | 43                          | 5                     |
| Middle-of-the-road                   | 28%                             | 67                          | 5                     |
| Liberal                              | 13%                             | 80                          | 7                     |
| <u>Gender (May 2004)</u>             |                                 |                             |                       |
| Male                                 | 36%                             | 58                          | 6                     |
| Female                               | 27%                             | 68                          | 5                     |
| <u>Race/ethnicity (May 2004)</u>     |                                 |                             |                       |
| White non-Hispanic                   | 37%                             | 58                          | 5                     |
| Latino                               | 24%                             | 69                          | 7                     |
| Other minorities                     | 27%                             | 66                          | 7                     |
| <u>Age (May 2004)</u>                |                                 |                             |                       |
| 18 – 39                              | 28%                             | 65                          | 7                     |
| 40 – 49                              | 38%                             | 58                          | 4                     |
| 50 or older                          | 28%                             | 68                          | 4                     |

\* Conducted among registered voters. Other surveys conducted among all California adults.

### **Increasing criticism of Bush's handling of the Iraqi war**

By a nearly two to one margin (60% to 33%) Californians disapprove of the job President Bush is doing in handling the war in Iraq. This rating is the most critical assessment of the President's war performance since poll measurements on this began over a year ago.

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**Table 2**  
**Trend of Californians' perceptions of the job President Bush is doing in handling the war in Iraq**

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|                                      | <u>Approve</u> | <u>Disapprove</u> | <u>No opinion</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| May 2004                             | 33%            | 60                | 7                 |
| February 2004*                       | 43%            | 52                | 5                 |
| January 2004*                        | 51%            | 45                | 4                 |
| September 2003*                      | 40%            | 52                | 8                 |
| August 2003*                         | 52%            | 44                | 4                 |
| April 2003                           | 61%            | 34                | 5                 |
| <u>Voter registration</u> (May 2004) |                |                   |                   |
| Not registered                       | 26%            | 60                | 14                |
| Registered voters                    | <u>37%</u>     | <u>60</u>         | <u>3</u>          |
| Democrats                            | 16%            | 82                | 2                 |
| Republicans                          | 73%            | 24                | 3                 |
| Non-partisans/others                 | 17%            | 75                | 8                 |

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\* Conducted among registered voters. Other surveys conducted among all California adults.

### **Negative ratings of Bush's overall job performance**

A majority (54%) of adults now disapprove of the job the President is doing overall, while 39% approve. Registered voters are slightly less critical, but still rate the President's performance negatively.

Following is the trend of *Field Poll* measures of how Californians assess Bush's overall performance as President.

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**Table 3**  
**Trend of Californians' overall job appraisal of George W. Bush as President**

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|                              | <u>Approve</u> | <u>Disapprove</u> | <u>No opinion</u> |
|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| May 2004 (All adults)        | 39%            | 54                | 7                 |
| May 2004 (Registered voters) | 43%            | 52                | 5                 |
| February 2004*               | 43%            | 51                | 6                 |
| January 2004*                | 52%            | 42                | 6                 |
| September 2003*              | 46%            | 48                | 6                 |
| August 2003*                 | 50%            | 45                | 5                 |
| July 2003                    | 49%            | 41                | 10                |
| April 2003                   | 61%            | 31                | 8                 |
| 2002* (average)              | 64%            | 28                | 8                 |
| 2001 (average post 9/11)     | 74%            | 18                | 8                 |
| 2001 (average pre 9/11)      | 42%            | 44                | 14                |

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\* Conducted among registered voters. Other surveys conducted among all California adults.

### **Large subgroup differences in Bush's job ratings**

There are wide differences of opinion about Bush's job performance across different subgroups of the state's population. While 80% of Republicans approve of President, a comparable proportion of Democrats (78%) disapproves. Conservatives give the Bush positive ratings by a greater than two to one margin, but liberals rate him negatively by an even larger four to one margin. Moderates have a more negative than positive view of Bush's performance (58% to 34%).

Residents of the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area are more negative in their assessments of the President than residents living in other parts of the state.

Women hold a more critical view of the President than men, disapproving of the President 57% to 36%. Men rate him negatively but by a narrower 52% to 43% margin. White non-Hispanics disapprove of Bush by a 52% to 43% margin. Latinos are somewhat more negative (55% to 39%), while other minorities disapprove by a greater than two to one margin.

While more registered voters hold a negative (52%) than positive (43%) view of the President's performance in office, those adults who are not registered to vote rate him by a nearly negatively two to one margin (58% to 34%).

**Table 4**  
**Current job appraisal of President Bush – by subgroup**

|                              | <u>Approve</u> | <u>Disapprove</u> | <u>No opinion</u> |
|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Statewide – May 2004         | 39%            | 54                | 7                 |
| <u>Voter registration</u>    |                |                   |                   |
| Not registered               | 34%            | 58                | 8                 |
| Registered voters            | <u>43%</u>     | <u>52</u>         | <u>5</u>          |
| Democrats                    | 16%            | 78                | 6                 |
| Republicans                  | 80%            | 16                | 4                 |
| Non-partisans/others         | 32%            | 63                | 5                 |
| <u>Region</u>                |                |                   |                   |
| Los Angeles County           | 38%            | 53                | 9                 |
| Other Southern California    | 47%            | 47                | 6                 |
| San Francisco Bay Area       | 23%            | 73                | 4                 |
| Other Northern California    | 45%            | 49                | 6                 |
| <u>Gender</u>                |                |                   |                   |
| Men                          | 43%            | 52                | 5                 |
| Women                        | 36%            | 57                | 7                 |
| <u>Race/ethnicity</u>        |                |                   |                   |
| White non-Hispanic           | 43%            | 52                | 5                 |
| Latino                       | 39%            | 55                | 6                 |
| Other                        | 28%            | 63                | 9                 |
| <u>Political ideology</u>    |                |                   |                   |
| Conservative                 | 65%            | 28                | 7                 |
| Middle-of-the-road           | 34%            | 58                | 8                 |
| Liberal                      | 18%            | 80                | 2                 |
| <u>Religion</u>              |                |                   |                   |
| Protestant                   | 59%            | 35                | 6                 |
| Catholic                     | 35%            | 59                | 6                 |
| Other                        | 19%            | 70                | 11                |
| No religious preference      | 19%            | 76                | 5                 |
| <u>Evangelical Christian</u> |                |                   |                   |
| Yes                          | 64%            | 31                | 5                 |
| No                           | 29%            | 64                | 7                 |

**Majority thinks country on the wrong track**

The proportion of Californians who believe the U.S. is seriously off on the wrong track is now higher than at any time since 1992. A majority of state residents (57%) now feel the state is on the wrong track, while 33% feel it is heading in the right direction.

**Table 5**  
**Trend of the overall direction the U.S. is heading**

|   | <b><u>Right<br/>direction</u></b> | <b><u>Wrong<br/>track</u></b> | <b><u>No opinion</u></b> |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| May 2004                                    | 33%                               | 57                            | 10                       |
| February 2004*                              | 35%                               | 52                            | 13                       |
| January 2004*                               | 47%                               | 44                            | 9                        |
| 2003 (average)*                             | 43%                               | 49                            | 8                        |
| 2002 (average)                              | 54%                               | 35                            | 11                       |
| 2001 (average post 9/11)                    | 66%                               | 27                            | 7                        |
| 2001 (average pre 9/11)                     | 58%                               | 41                            | 11                       |
| 2000 (average)                              | 67%                               | 25                            | 8                        |
| 1999 (average)                              | 59%                               | 30                            | 11                       |
| 1998 (average)                              | 67%                               | 23                            | 10                       |
| 1997 (average)                              | 43%                               | 43                            | 14                       |
| 1996 (average)                              | 34%                               | 49                            | 17                       |
| 1995 (average)                              | 33%                               | 54                            | 12                       |
| 1994 (average)                              | 41%                               | 50                            | 9                        |
| 1993 (average)                              | 42%                               | 50                            | 8                        |
| 1992 (average)                              | 14%                               | 83                            | 3                        |
| 1989 (average)                              | 49%                               | 43                            | 8                        |
| 1988 (average)                              | 42%                               | 53                            | 5                        |
| <b><u>Voter registration (May 2004)</u></b> |                                   |                               |                          |
| Not registered                              | 26%                               | 63                            | 11                       |
| Registered voters                           | <u>37%</u>                        | <u>54</u>                     | <u>9</u>                 |
| Democrats                                   | 19%                               | 76                            | 5                        |
| Republicans                                 | 68%                               | 22                            | 10                       |
| Non-partisans/others                        | 23%                               | 64                            | 13                       |

\* Conducted among registered voters. Other surveys conducted among all California adults.

**Negative assessment of Bush's handling of the economy**

A majority of Californians (54%) give the President negative marks on his handling of the nation's economy, while 37% approve. This represents a slight worsening in Californians' views of Bush on the economy from earlier this year.

**Table 6**  
**Trend of Californians' perceptions of the job President Bush**  
**is doing in handling the nation's economy**

|                                      | <u>Approve</u> | <u>Disapprove</u> | <u>No opinion</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| May 2004                             | 37%            | 54                | 9                 |
| February 2004*                       | 42%            | 53                | 5                 |
| January 2004*                        | 49%            | 46                | 5                 |
| September 2003*                      | 39%            | 55                | 6                 |
| August 2003*                         | 43%            | 50                | 7                 |
| July 2003                            | 43%            | 52                | 5                 |
| September 2002*                      | 48%            | 44                | 8                 |
| July 2002*                           | 49%            | 41                | 10                |
| April 2002                           | 57%            | 34                | 9                 |
| January 2002                         | 57%            | 35                | 8                 |
| <u>Voter registration (May 2004)</u> |                |                   |                   |
| Not registered                       | 29%            | 56                | 15                |
| Registered voters                    | <u>42%</u>     | <u>53</u>         | <u>5</u>          |
| Democrats                            | 17%            | 78                | 5                 |
| Republicans                          | 78%            | 18                | 4                 |
| Non-partisans/others                 | 29%            | 59                | 12                |

\* Conducted among registered voters. Other surveys conducted among all California adults.

## **Information About the Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a cross-section sampling of 514 adult residents of California. The survey was conducted between the period May 18-23, 2004 by telephone in English and Spanish using a random digit dialing sampling methodology. Up to five attempts were made to reach a randomly selected adult at each household dialed. After the completion of interviewing the sample was weighted to Field Poll estimates of the state's adult population.

According to statistical theory, results from the overall sample have a sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. There are other possible sources of error in any survey in addition to sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sequencing or through omissions or errors in sampling, interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

### **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?

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?

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Bush is doing in handling the war in Iraq?

In your view, is the war in Iraq worth the toll it has taken in American lives and other kinds of costs, or isn't the war worth these costs?