

Friends,

Things went bad for the President and Republicans in the spring, got worse in the summer and are absolutely horrendous this fall. It is one thing to suffer a bad news day, week or month. It is quite another to have successive bad news cycles for more than half a year.

The cumulative effect of the war in Iraq, the economy, soaring gas prices, the response to Katrina and the emerging Delay and CIA leak scandals have damaged the President and the GOP considerably. Before we get to what this all means moving forward, let's take a quick snapshot of the situation:

- **President Bush's job approval rating is well below his vote share in 2004, which means he is losing his own voters.** If we use the most recent Gallup Presidential job approval number (39%) and subtract his percent of the vote in '04 (51%), it is clear that some people who voted for Bush in 2004 now disapprove of his job performance. Even among white men – a core voting bloc for the President in the last election – more than half disapprove of the job he is doing. While Republicans appear to be staying with the President, independents are moving away in large numbers. There is no way to sugarcoat this. The Presidents' approval rating needs to get back to at least the high 40's or he will be a drag on most GOP candidates in next year's elections. There is not enough "base" to offset the loss of independents. If this approval rating remains unchanged it very well could cost Republican candidates 1%-2% in a competitive race.
- **The President's rating is intrinsically tied to the economy and Iraq and neither of those situations are improving anytime soon.** The President's economic and Iraq job approval ratings are both at 32% in the latest polls. That represents the lowest ratings for each during his presidency. The rating on Iraq has dropped 10 points in 6 months and is 15 points below what it was a year ago on the eve of the election.
- **The "wrong track" measure is in the danger zone for an incumbent President and an incumbent party.** Two recent national polls have it at nearly 68%-69%. The last two times that the percent who thought the country was on the wrong track exceeded 70% – 1979-80 and 1991-92 – the President and his party suffered severe losses. Now both of those were Presidential election years with larger turnouts, but there is enough evidence to suggest that it will have a similar impact for Republicans if it holds into next summer.
- **Consumer confidence is low and, most importantly, people are worried about the future.** A recent CBS/NY Times poll showed that slightly more than half of Americans (54%) think the economy is getting worse. Only 10% believe it is getting better. A very good election barometer is how voters feel about the *future*, making this (perceptions of the economy) hugely problematic for the GOP. Additionally, more than a third of the public is greatly concerned about paying their heating bills this winter. Another 28% are somewhat concerned.

Given the above, one might conclude that Democrats are poised to take the House in 2006 and perhaps the Senate. They may be, but on the other hand they may not...and here is why.

- **The Democratic Party is virtually un-branded.** Our colleague Alex Gage often talks about the GOP “brand” as being about low taxes, strong on security and moral values. It is a clearly articulated and simple brand value proposition. The Democratic party is a weak and disparate brand at best. There is no clear brand personality or value proposition. The Democrats need to articulate who they are, what they intend to do and why it matters to people. Until Democrats can create a “brand gap” with Republicans, they will be unable capitalize on the situation.
- **People do not see a qualitative difference in the leadership of the two parties.** There is no leadership gap or differentiation among voters. Yes, according to a Pew Research Center survey the approval rating for Republican congressional leaders was only 32%...but guess what it was for Democratic leaders? That’s right, also 32%. No difference.
- **Democrats lack a thematic for 2006.** Sure, they will try and create one in the coming months, but it will be difficult. They need to frame a myriad of issues in a simple, easy-to-understand bumper sticker. The problem is that the issues do not easily cluster under one theme and some (like national security) are quite divisive for many Democrats. Additionally, voters need to be presented with a real choice on an important issue that transcends parties or coalitions. That is hard to do.
- **Non-presidential congressional elections are – by their nature – more local than national.** Democrats will try to make this a national referendum on Bush and congressional Republicans, but that is hard to do when the incumbent president is not running. Most post-election analyses have shown that these elections are about motivating the base since there is usually low voter turnout. It is difficult to “nationalize” 435 races. They are usually either non-competitive or turn on very local or candidate issues. The exception, of course, is 1994 when Republicans won majorities in both the House and the Senate (picking up 52 House seats and 8 seats in the Senate), taking control of both chambers for the first time since 1954. While some consider this to be a possible “realigning election” and others argue that it is too early to tell ... it does serve as blueprint for Democrats. The Contract with America helped frame the election for people.

Also, we should remember that except for his post 9/11 bounce, the President’s approval rating has never been very high. He garnered 51% of the vote last year with an approval rating that ranged between 48% and 50%. We also think that voters are no longer giving out “A”s for politicians anymore. Gone are the days when Eisenhower and Kennedy had an average approval rating during their terms in the mid 60’s to 70. Even Reagan only had an average approval rating during both his two terms of only 52% (the recession of 1982-83 and Iran-Contra bringing down his numbers).

Having said this, we still think things are decidedly negative for the GOP at this time. In October of 1985, a year prior to Reagan’s 2<sup>nd</sup> mid-term election, the President’s approval

rating was 63%. In October 1997, a year prior to Clinton's 2<sup>nd</sup> mid-term election, his job rating was 59% approve. In 1986 Reagan (with his high approval rating) and Republicans lost a net of 13 seats and in 1998 Clinton and the Democrats gained a net of 5 seats. Every election is different, but with Bush's rating at 39% and the "wrong track" at nearly 70% the prospects for Democrats are clearly good.

We have included in this monitor some tracking results for several races including the big off-year elections in NJ and VA. While our tracking in New Jersey and Virginia show those races to be tight, we believe that the Democrats will likely win both of those races.

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# Opinion Monitor ©

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**A Compilation of Publicly-Available Survey Data**

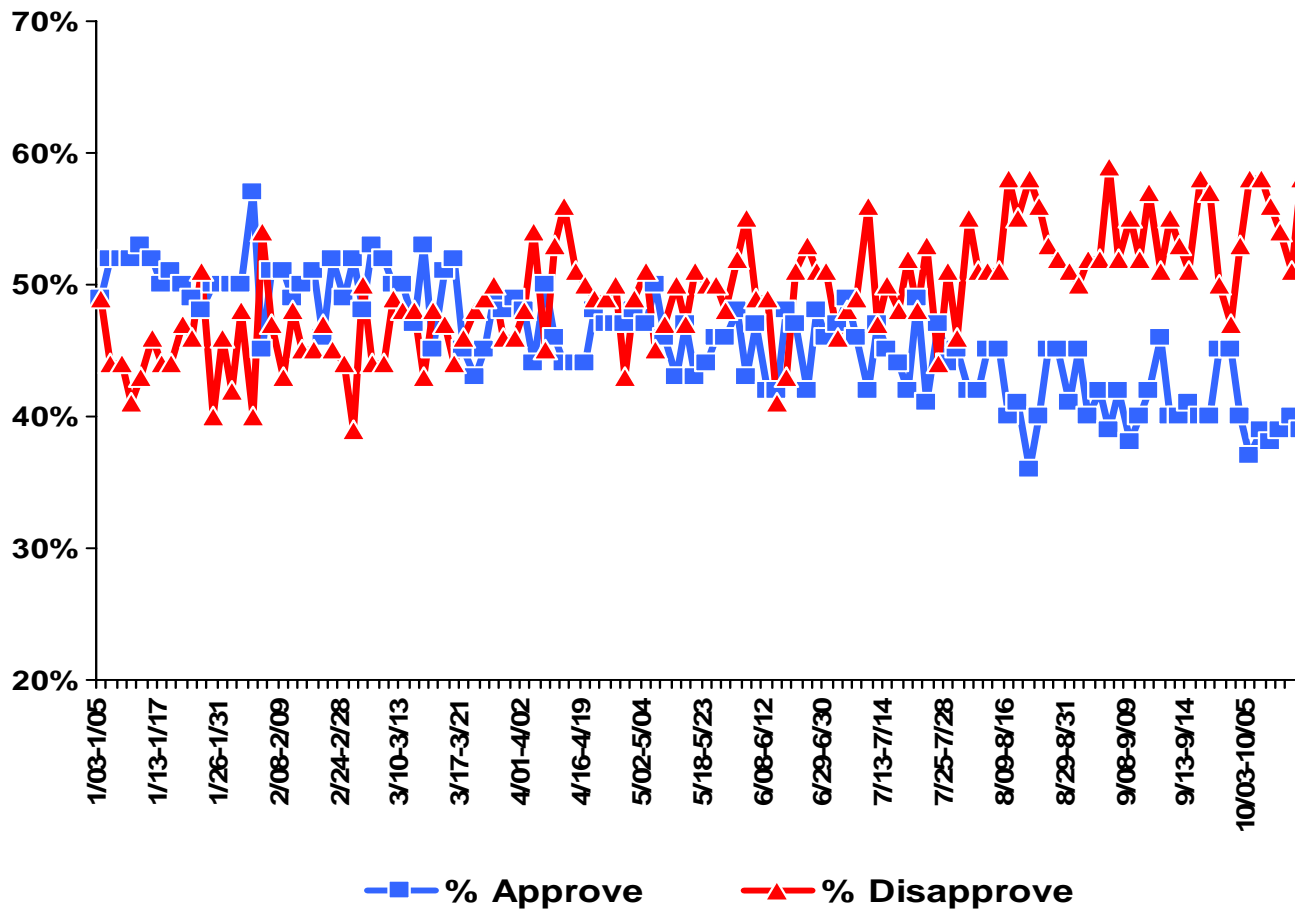
**January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 - Present**

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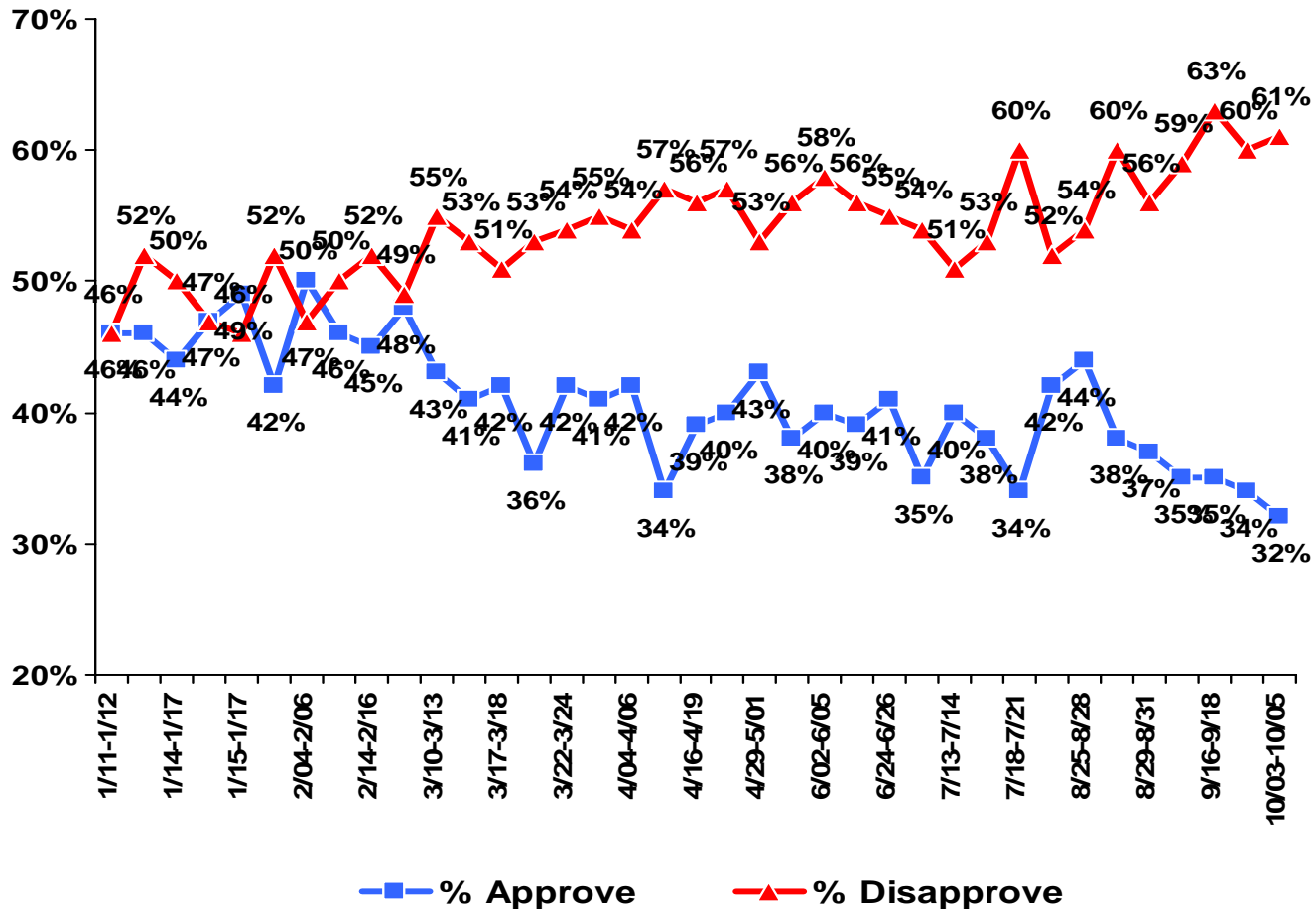
## Executive Summary

- **Presidential Approval.** George W. Bush's job approval numbers continued to sink as of late—reaching 39% approval in this week's Gallup Poll, the lowest of his presidency in that survey. A few weeks ago, the President enjoyed a brief surge in approval in the wake of Hurricane Rita and the John Roberts nomination, which brought his numbers back to the mid 40s before trailing off again.
- **Irate over Iraq.** Between Hurricane Katrina stealing the daily headlines and pushing bad news from Iraq to the back pages, and the recent coverage of the Constitutional Referendum there—64% of Americans continue to disapprove of the job that President Bush is doing with regards to the Iraq war effort. Nearly one in three Americans currently support withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq, and six in ten believe that sending troops was a mistake in the first place.
- **Economic Outlook.** While plummeting consumer confidence has slowed down lately due to slight improvement of gasoline prices, it remains low amidst worries of heating costs as winter approaches. 54% of Americans believe that the economy is getting worse—while 10 % believe it is getting better.
- **Generic Congressional Ballot.** According to a recent Newsweek survey, if the midterm elections for Congress were held today, 47% of Americans would vote for the Democratic candidate, 42% for the Republican candidate, with 11% undecided. This is an improvement from a Pew survey just a few weeks earlier that showed a +12% margin for Democrats. Although elections are many months away, these numbers may trouble Congressional Republicans.

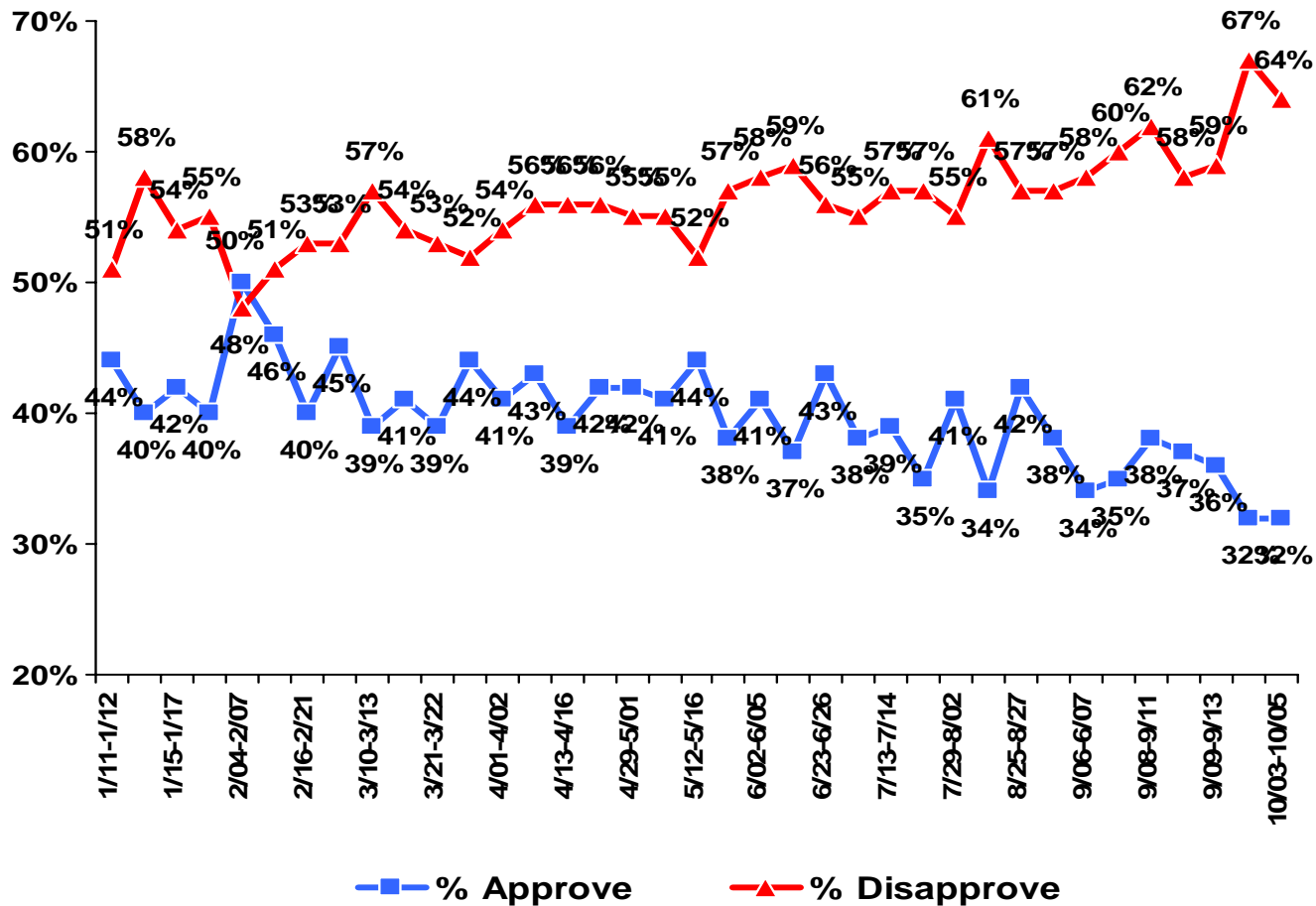
# George W. Bush Job Approval Rating



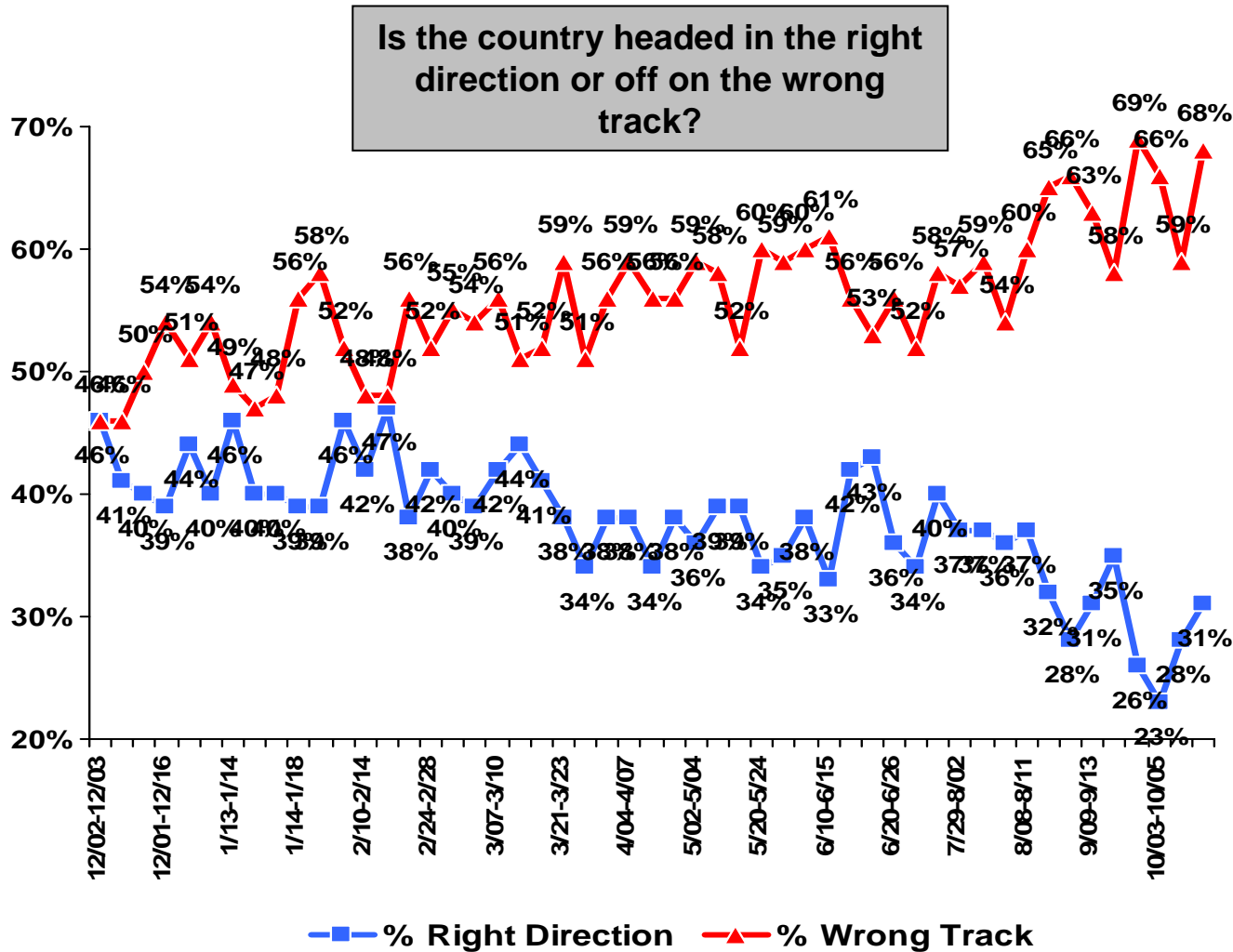
# The Economy: George W. Bush Job Approval Rating



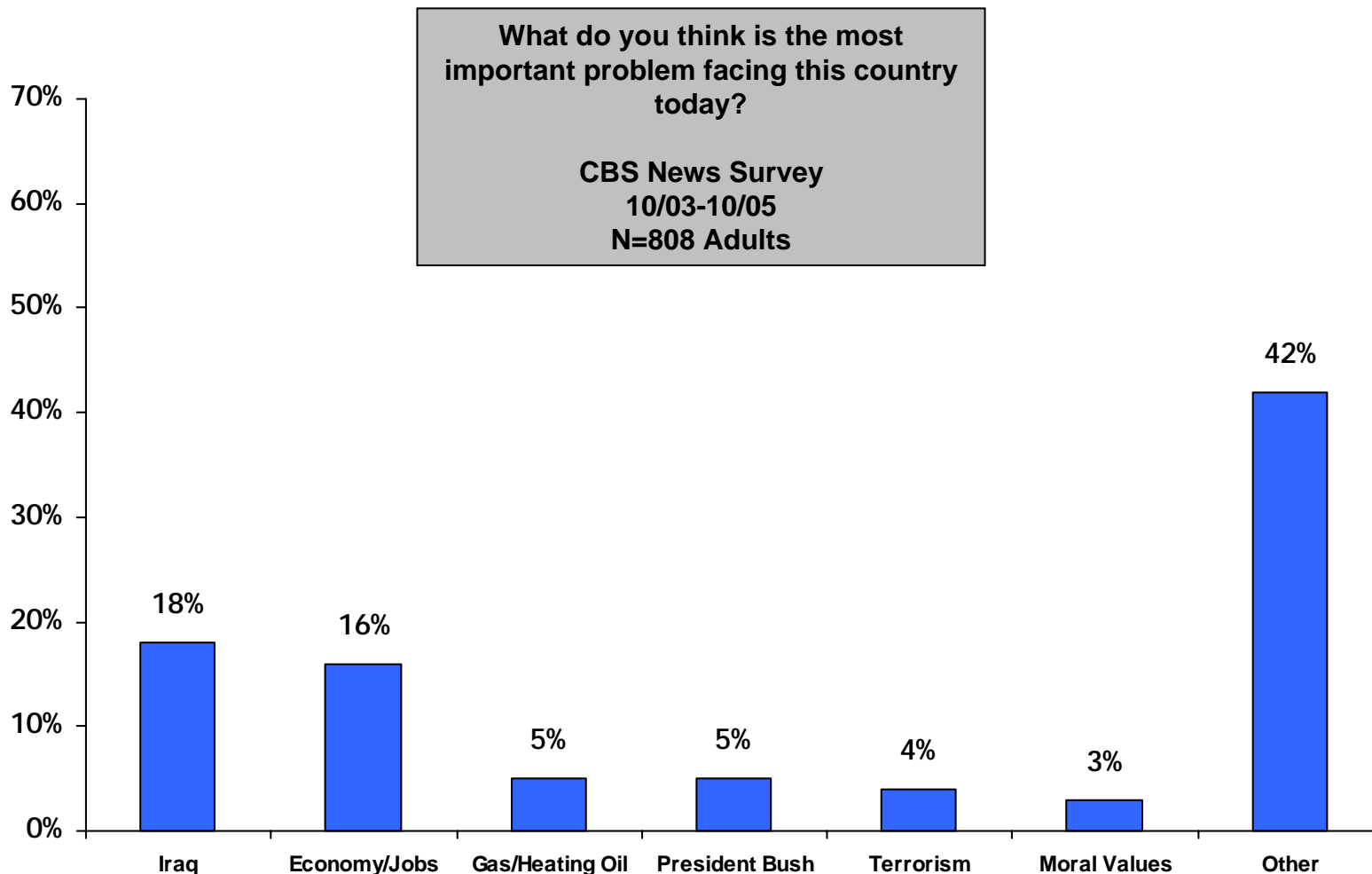
# War in Iraq: George W. Bush Job Approval Rating



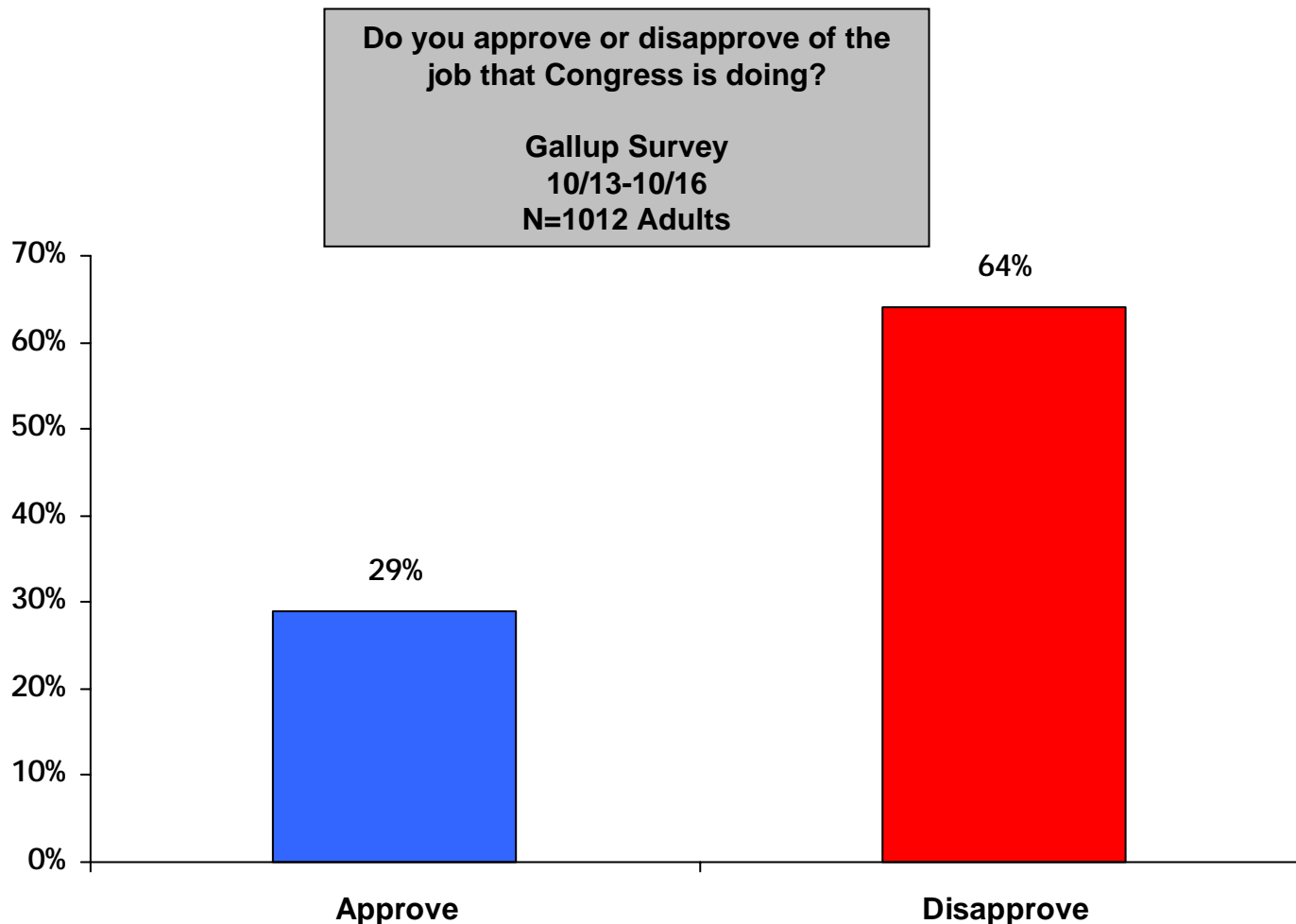
# Direction of the Country



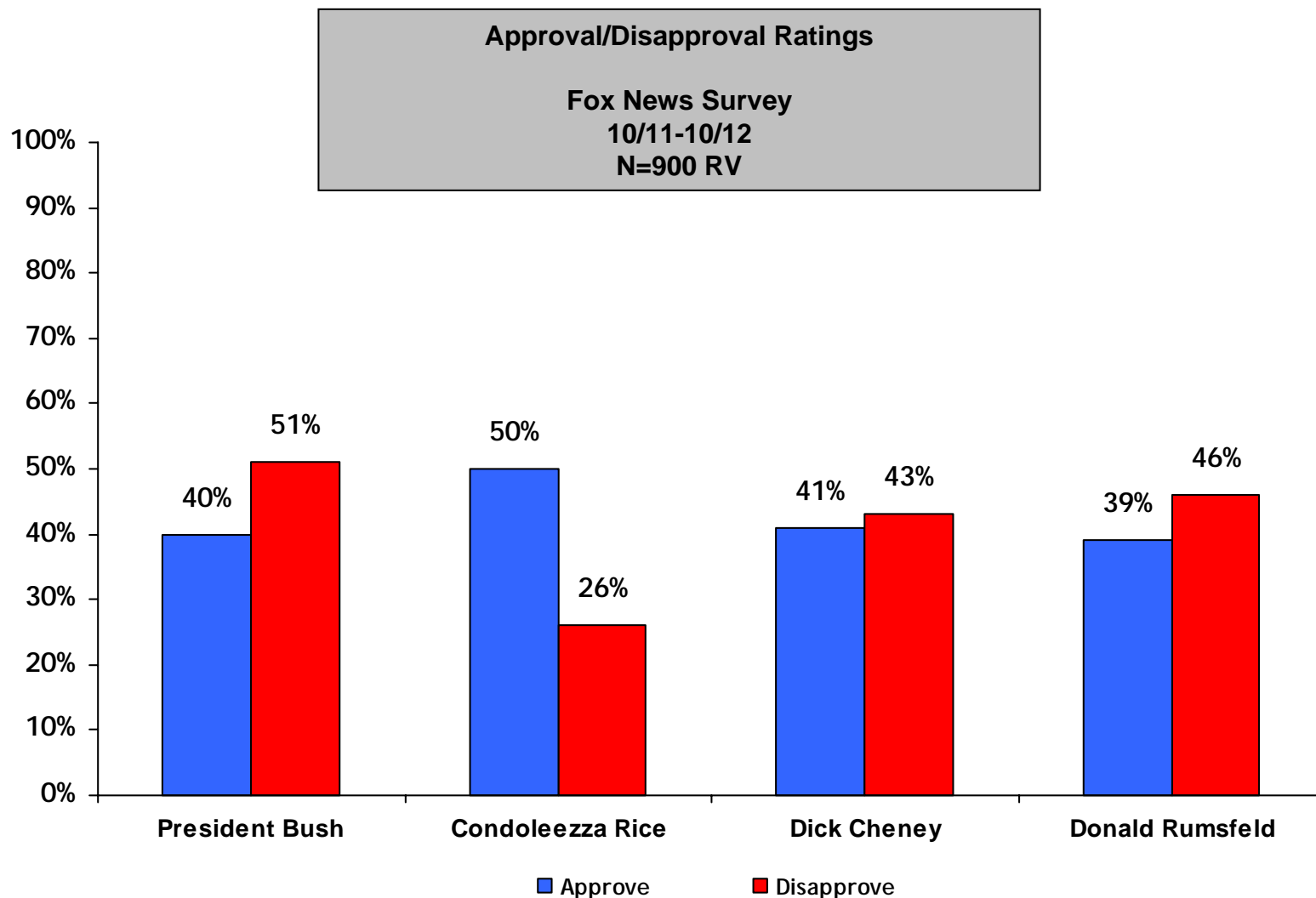
# Opinion Monitor Perspective: National Priorities



# Opinion Monitor Perspective: Congressional Job Approval



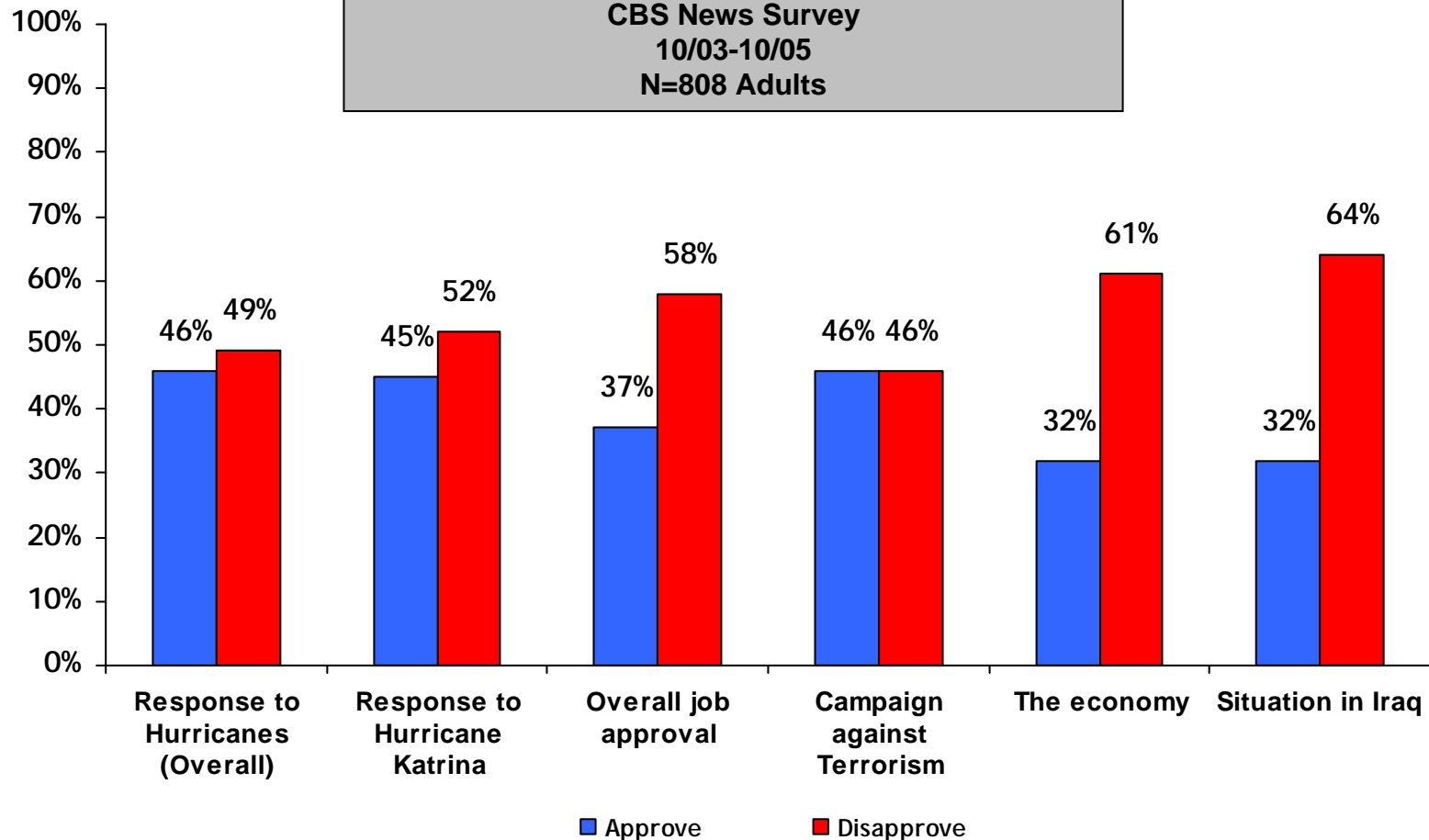
# Opinion Monitor Perspective: Cabinet Job Approval Overview



# Opinion Monitor Perspective: Presidential Approval Overview

Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the following?

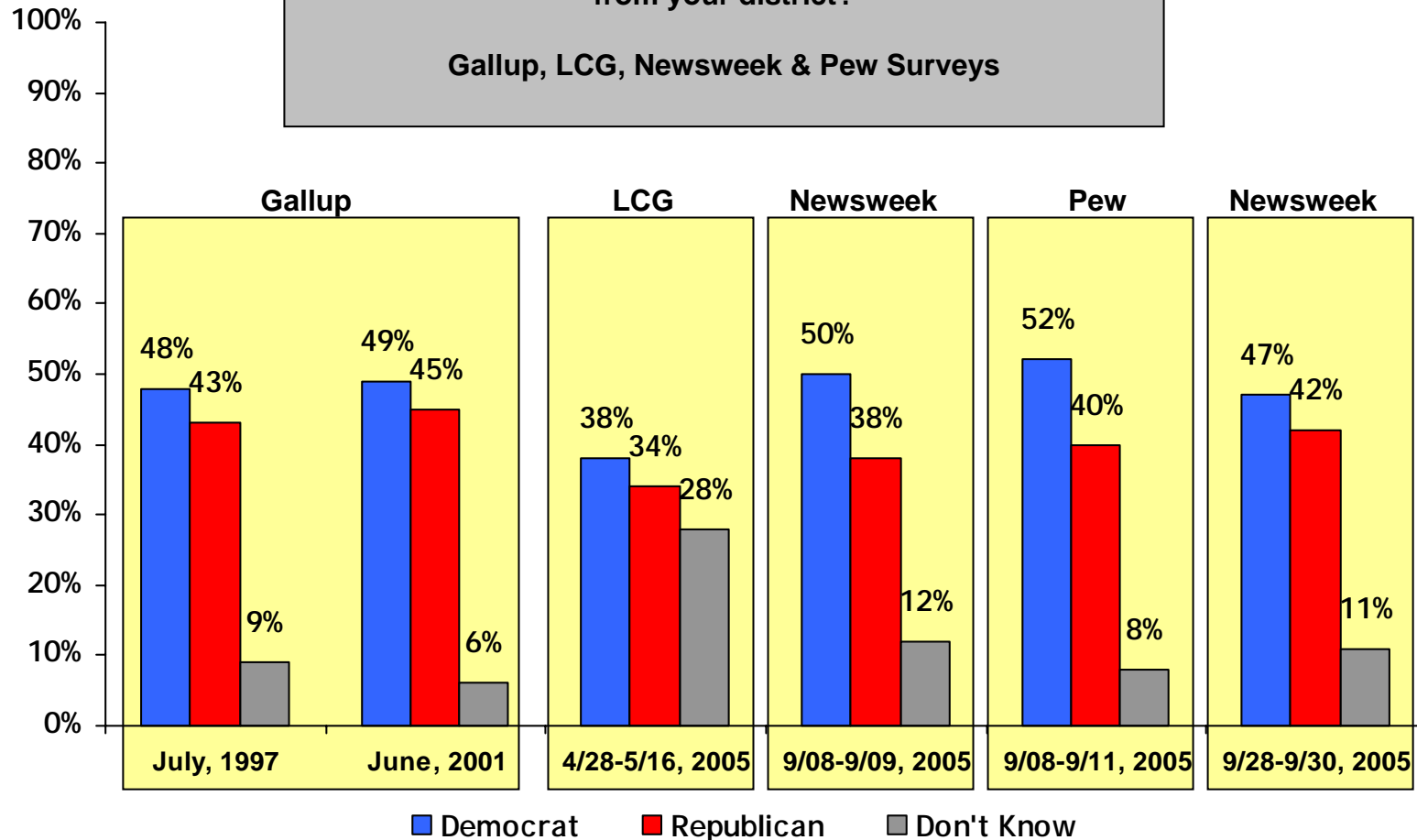
CBS News Survey  
10/03-10/05  
N=808 Adults



# Opinion Monitor Perspective: Generic Congressional Ballot

If the election for Congress were held today, would you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate from your district?

Gallup, LCG, Newsweek & Pew Surveys



# Opinion Monitor Perspective: The War in Iraq

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

**CBS News Surveys**

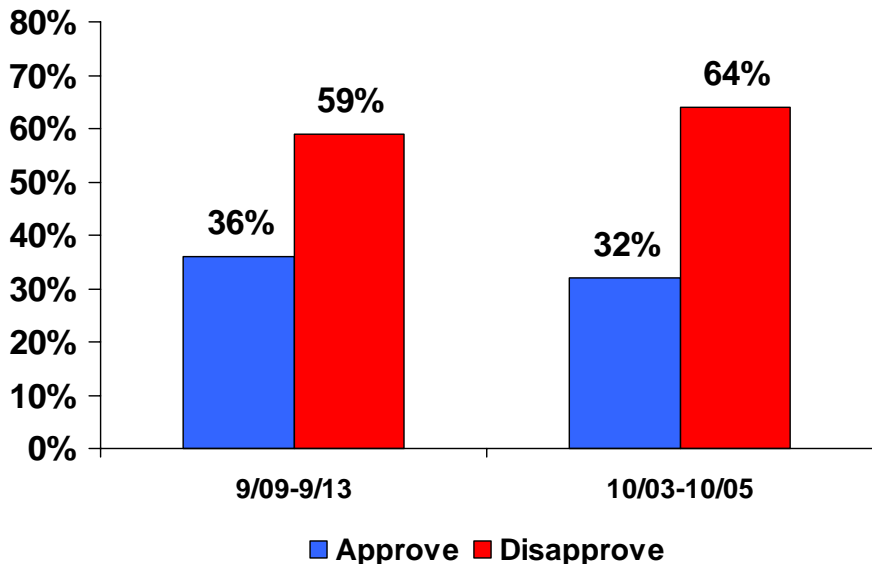
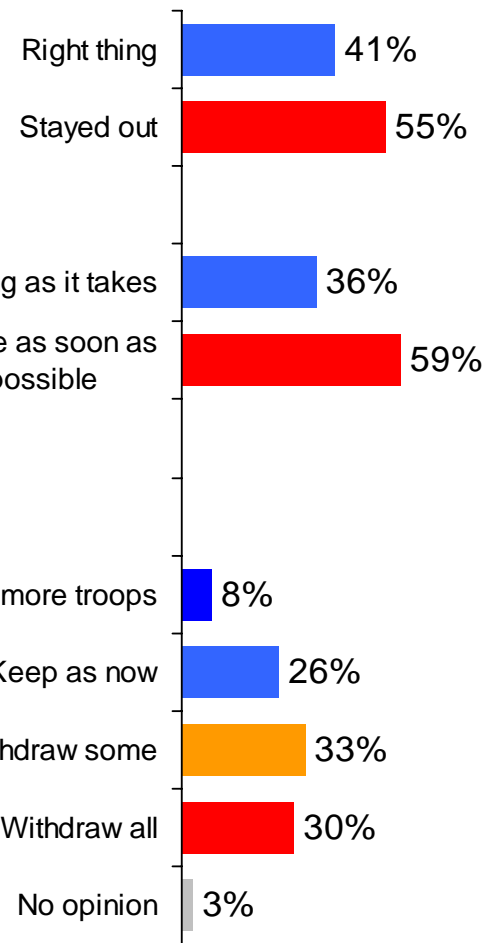
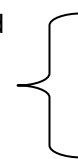
**CBS News Survey  
10/03-10/05  
N=808 Adults**

Do you think the U.S. did the right thing in taking military action against Iraq, or should the U.S. have stayed out?

Should the U.S. troops stay in Iraq as long as it takes to make sure Iraq is a stable democracy...or should U.S. troops leave Iraq as soon as possible?

**CNN/USA Today/Gallup Survey  
9/16-9/18  
N=818 Adults**

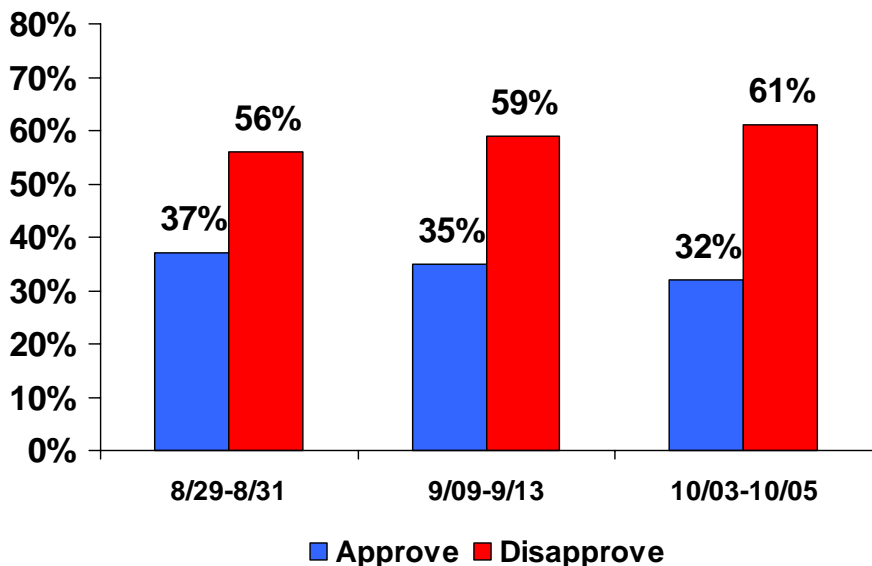
Which comes closest to your view about what the U.S. should now do about the number of troops in Iraq?



# Opinion Monitor Perspective: The Economy

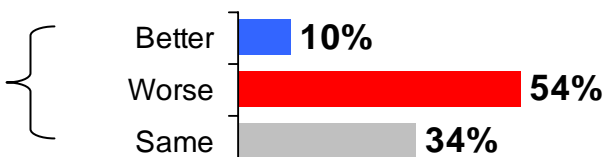
**Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the economy?**

**CBS News/NYT Surveys**



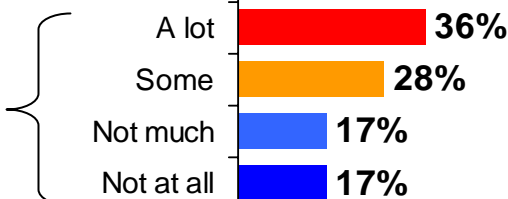
CBS News Survey  
10/03-10/05  
N=808 Adults

Do you think the economy is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

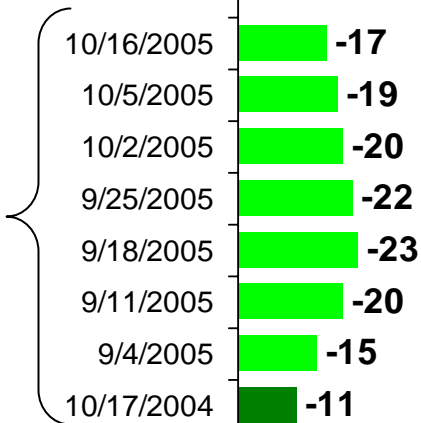


CBS News/NYT Survey  
9/09-9/13  
N=1167 Adults

How concerned are you about being able to pay your heating bills this winter?



ABC News/Washington Post Consumer Comfort Index

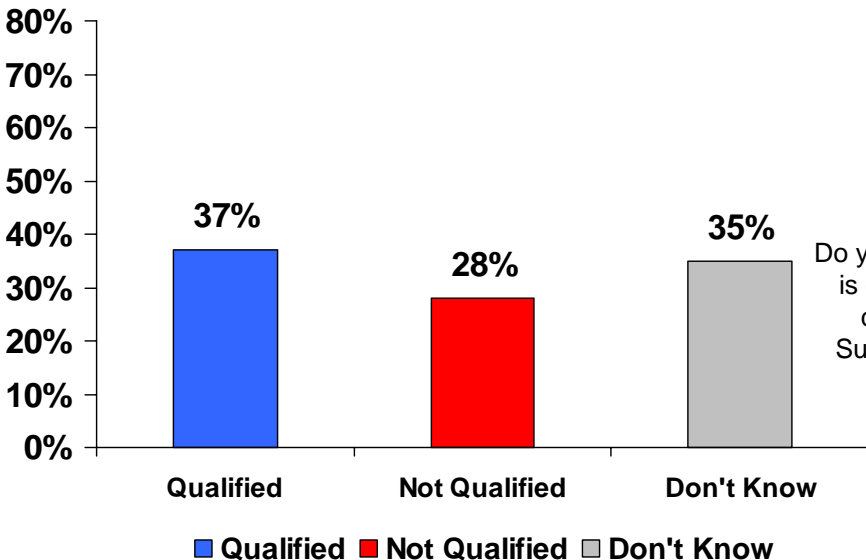


# Opinion Monitor Perspective: Harriet Miers Nomination

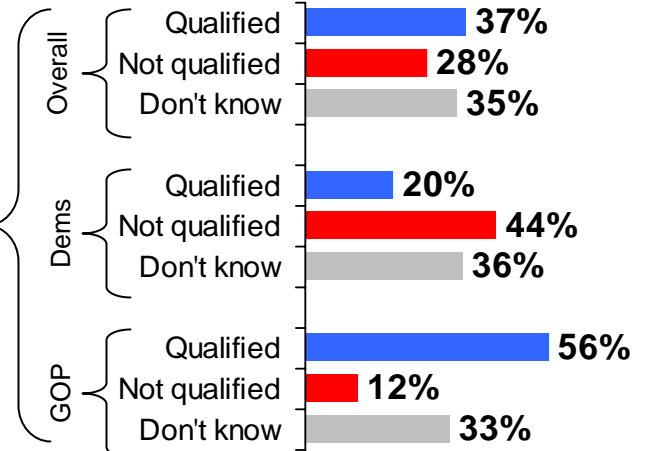
Fox News Surveys

Overall, do you think Harriet Miers is qualified to serve as a justice on the Supreme Court or not?

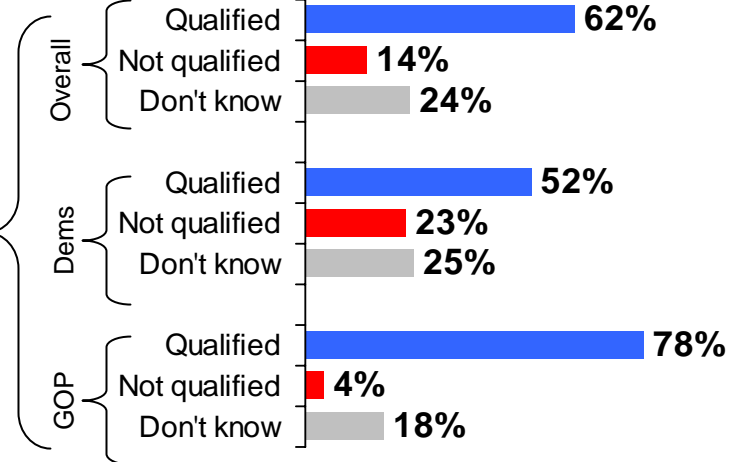
**Fox News Survey**  
10/11-10/12  
N=900 RV



Do you think Harriet Miers is qualified to serve as a justice on the Supreme Court or not?

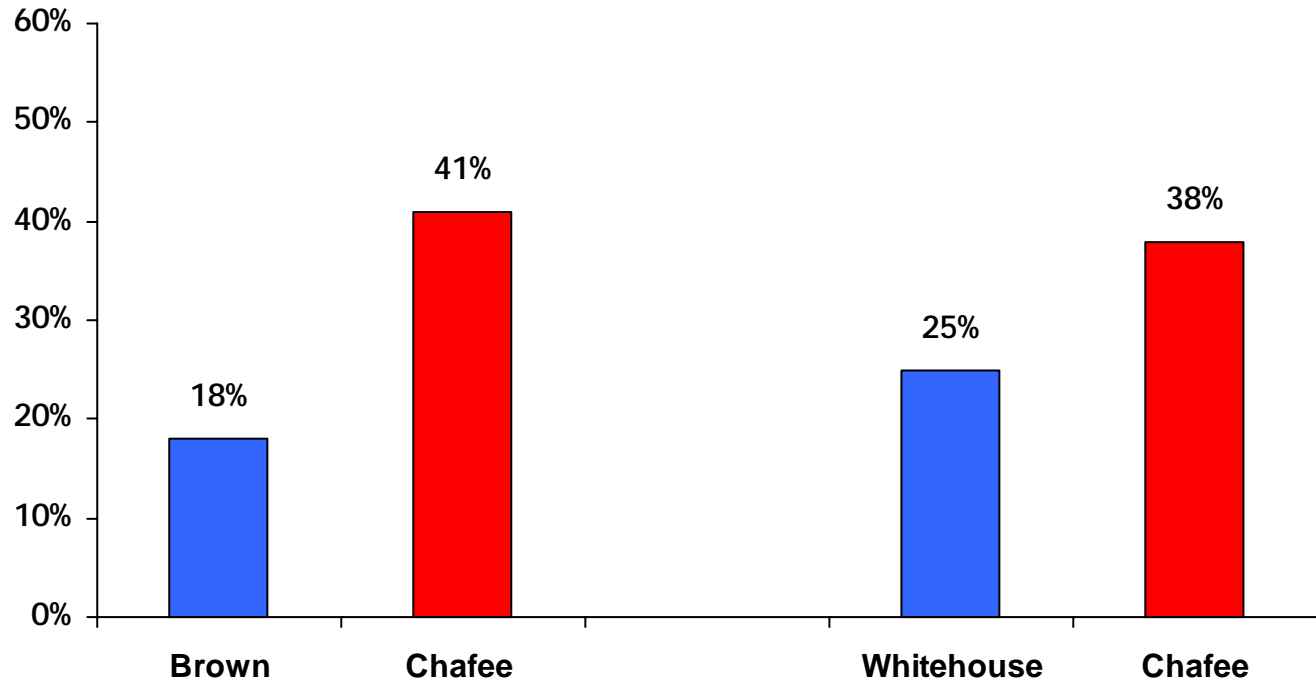


Do you think John Roberts is qualified to serve as chief justice on the Supreme Court or not?



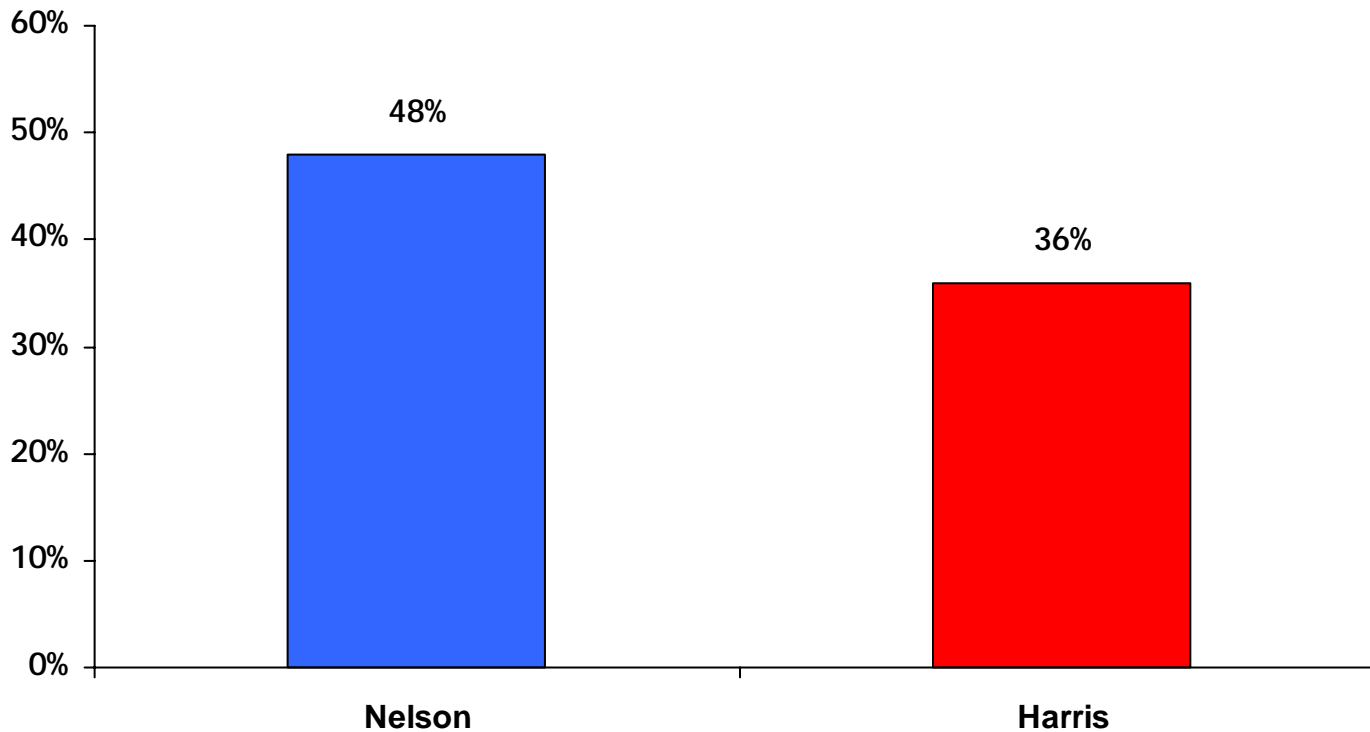
# Opinion Monitor Outlook: Rhode Island Senate Race

Brown University Survey  
9/10-9/11  
N=449 RV

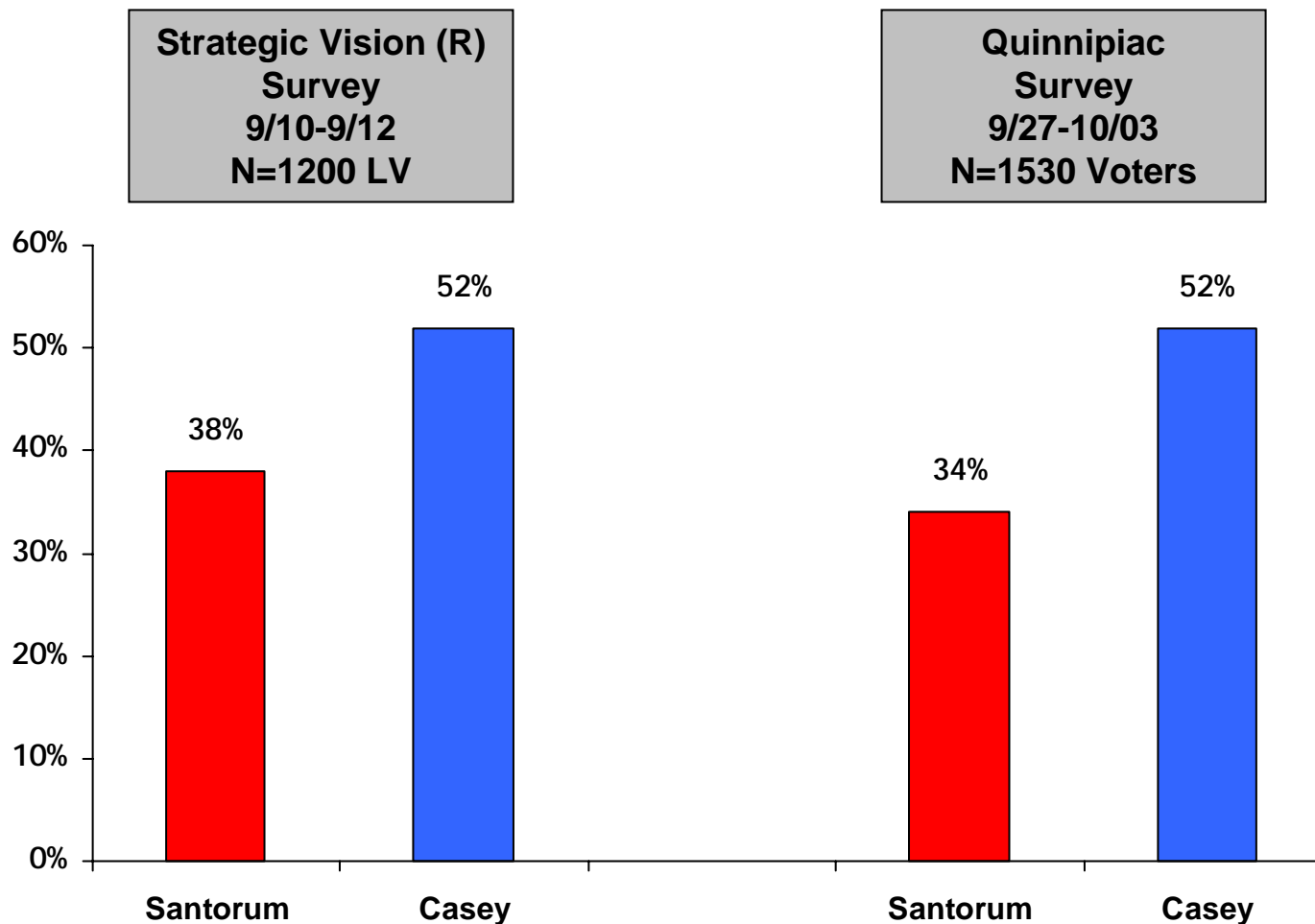


# Opinion Monitor Outlook: Florida Senate Race

Strategic Vision (R) Survey  
9/16-9/20  
N=1200 LV

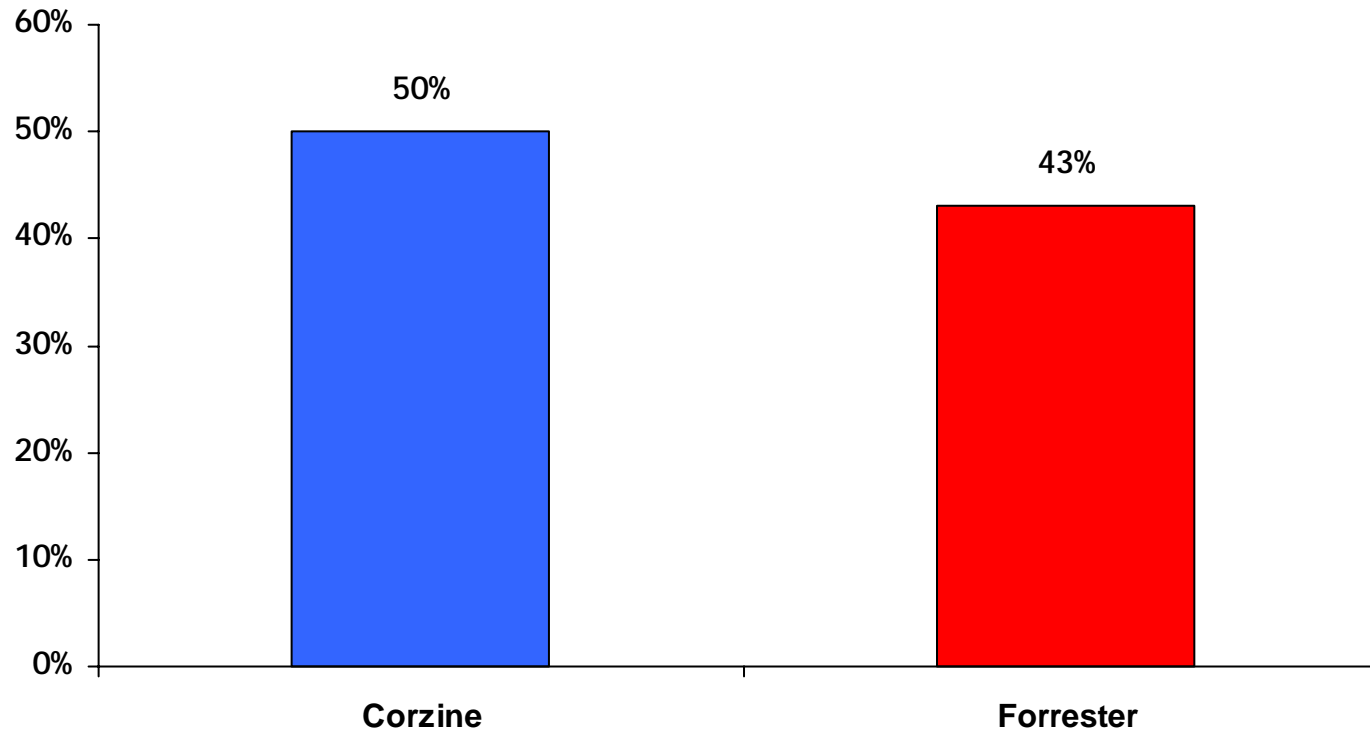


# Opinion Monitor Outlook: Pennsylvania Senate Race



# Opinion Monitor Outlook: New Jersey Governor's Race

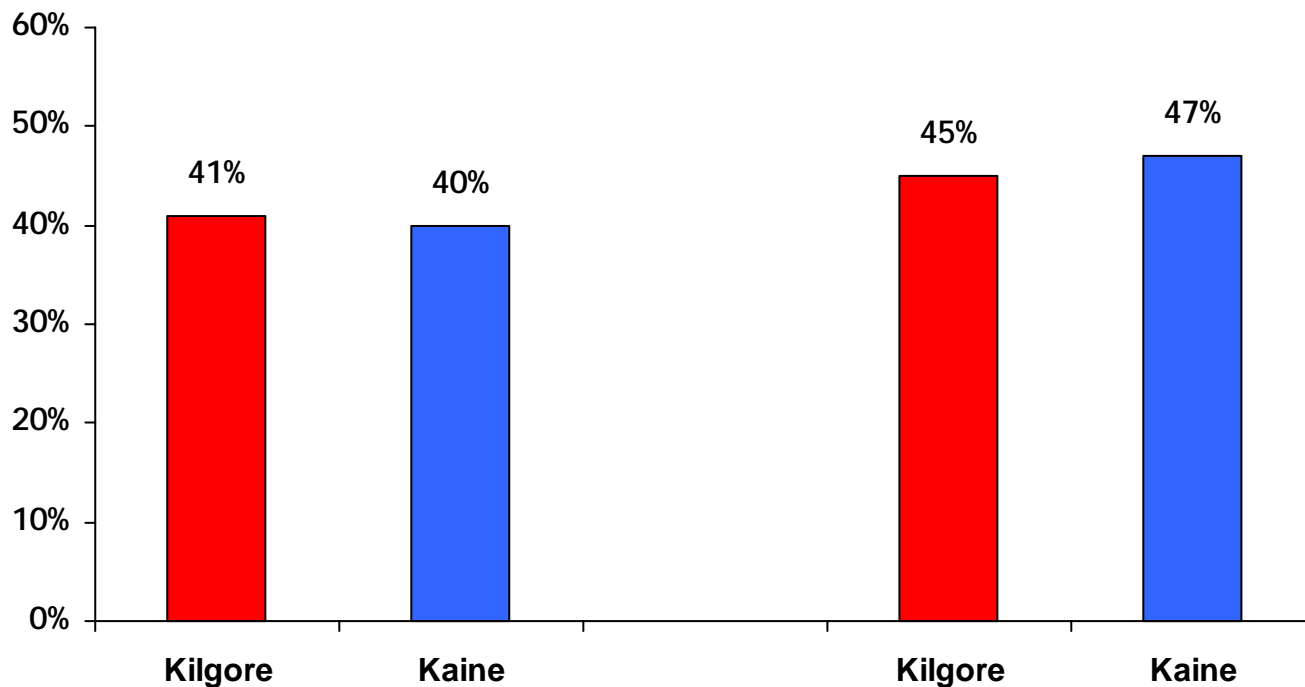
Quinnipiac Survey  
10/11-10/17  
N=702 LV



# Opinion Monitor Outlook: Virginia Governor's Race

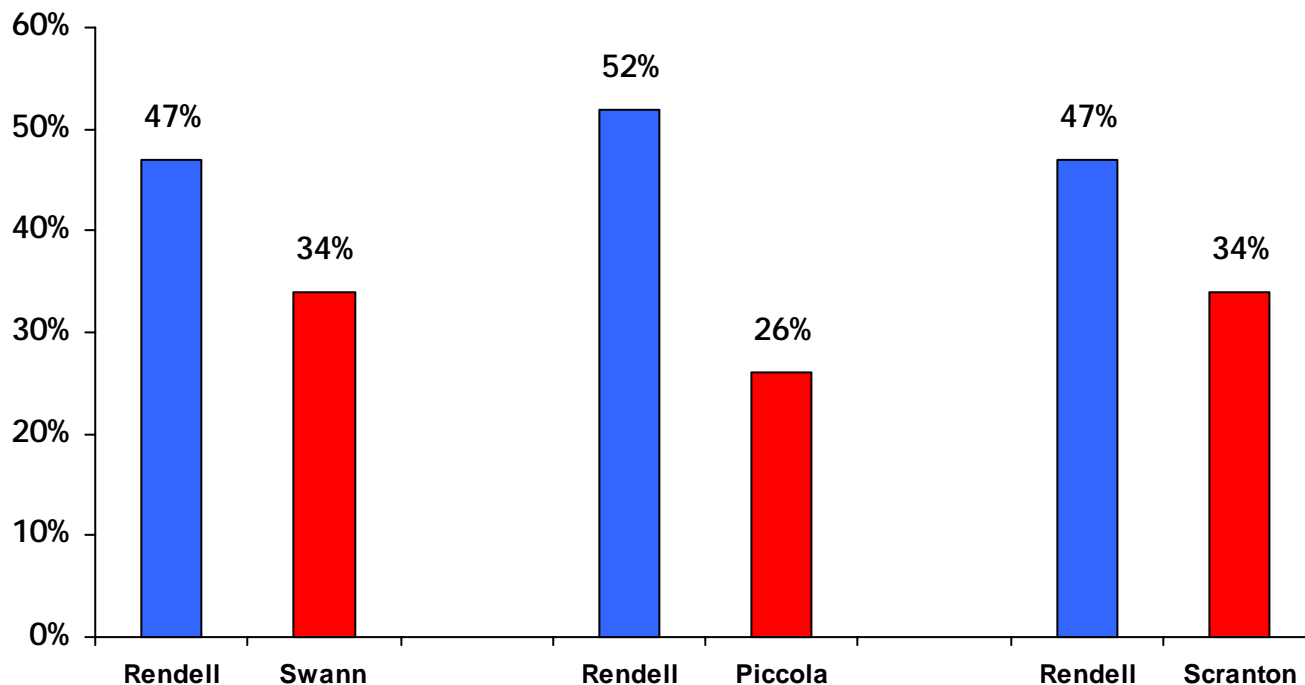
**Mason-Dixon  
Survey  
9/13-9/15  
N=625 LV**

**Survey USA  
Survey  
10/14-10/16  
N=750 LV**



# Opinion Monitor Outlook: Pennsylvania Governor's Race

Quinnipiac Survey  
9/27-10/03  
N=1530 Voters



## Lombardo Consulting Group

The LCG Opinion Monitor is a compilation and analysis of various publicly-available surveys pertaining to selected political and policy-related issues including but not limited to:

- ABC News/Washington Post
- American Research Group
- Associated Press/Ipsos
- CBS News
- CNN
- Fox News/Opinion Dynamics
- Gallup
- Annenberg Election Survey
- Newsweek
- The Pew Research Center
- Time
- USA Today

Data updated daily