

Friends,

There is really no other way to interpret this political year as anything other than a failure for the Bush administration. Politically, the President took a beating and his end of year numbers reflect that. While a few recent polls show some improvement -- taking the communications offensive on Iraq has helped team Bush stop the hemorrhaging -- the President finds himself with some of the worst 2nd term approval ratings in the last 30 years.

When you compare the approval ratings of the two most recent two-term Presidents – Clinton and Reagan – we see how dismal Bush’s numbers are. We took a look at the Gallup approval ratings of each President after their inaugural and at the end of their first year of the second term. In January of 1997 61% approved of Clinton’s performance and 26% disapproved. By the end of the year he had an approval/disapproval rating 56/36 – some decline but not significant. In January of 1985, 59% of Americans approved of Reagan’s job performance and 31% disapproved. By the end of the year he actually improved his numbers to a job rating of 63/27. Bush started the year with 57% approval and 40% disapproval. According to the latest national poll by ABC News/Washington Post he has a rating of 47/52. That is a net change of 22%. Other surveys have shown his approval rating in the 35-39% range. While the President may have “bottomed-out” he clearly has still not regained the kind of electoral support necessary for his legislative agenda or his policies.

These numbers are being driven by continuing disapproval of the President’s job performance on Iraq and the economy. Iraq is particularly problematic because of the depth and intensity of the dissatisfaction and the unlikelihood of a major change in the operating environment that would improve public opinion.

In the latest ABC News/Washington Post survey, 52% say the war was “not worth fighting” which is identical to 52% who say it was a “mistake” in CNN/USA Today/Gallup. There is a consistent and deep pessimism that has crept into the public mood on the war. Other than temporary improvements in public opinion over the capture of Saddam, the transfer of sovereignty and both Iraqi elections, the overall trend in the public’s opinion has been downward (see slide in attached document).

Particularly disconcerting for the President’s team has to be the speed with which this war has become intolerable. A comparative analysis of Gallup Poll data from the 1960’s during Vietnam and now for Iraq illustrates the problem. The first time a majority of the public reached the “I think the war is a mistake” point in Vietnam was in 1968 after the Tet Offensive (3 years after the start of the war) and nearly 20,000 dead; while in Iraq, it was in 2004 – one year after the start of the war with less than 1,000 dead.

In a recent issues of Foreign Affairs, political scientist John Mueller suggest that public support for the Iraq war has collapsed more quickly than it did in Vietnam, and that because we view the number of U.S. casualties as unacceptable, support is unlikely to rebound significantly—regardless. Mueller’s argument is summed up in this example:

“If you buy a car for twice what it’s worth, even if you come to like the car, you’ll still consider the deal to be a mistake.”

Two Duke political scientists Chris Gelpi and Peter Feaver (who is now working for the NSA) think that the public will tolerate increased casualties as long as they believe the war is “winnable.” They cite their own research that shows even if people believe that the justifications for going to war are wrong...they will support increased casualties if they believe victory is in sight. This may explain some of Bush’s rebound. His recent speeches on the war -- combined with the elections – have stemmed the tide. Clearly it suggests that the President continue to take the offensive in communicating the importance of being in Iraq and what we are doing to “win”.

Looking at the generic congressional ballot and related issues, we continue to see some Democratic strength. We have seen three consecutive national polls showing a 9-12 point lead for Democrats on the generic congressional ballot. These are enough data points to suggest that a very real gap has emerged. As recently as two years ago, it was anywhere from a 4-point Democrat lead or even. However, this is not translating to the belief that Democrats are necessarily better on all issues. In a recent CBS/NYT poll Democrats were believed to “better” on only two of seven issues (Medicare by a large margin and the economy by a small one). Republicans only led on one – terrorism – by 29 points. On the other 4 issues the parties were at parity or within the statistical margin of error. This means that while voters may prefer Democrats (generic not real races) that does not necessarily mean that they think they are better at handling issues.

We have included polls on the Florida, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Ohio Senate races as well as the Pennsylvania governor’s race.

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A Compilation of Publicly-Available Survey Data

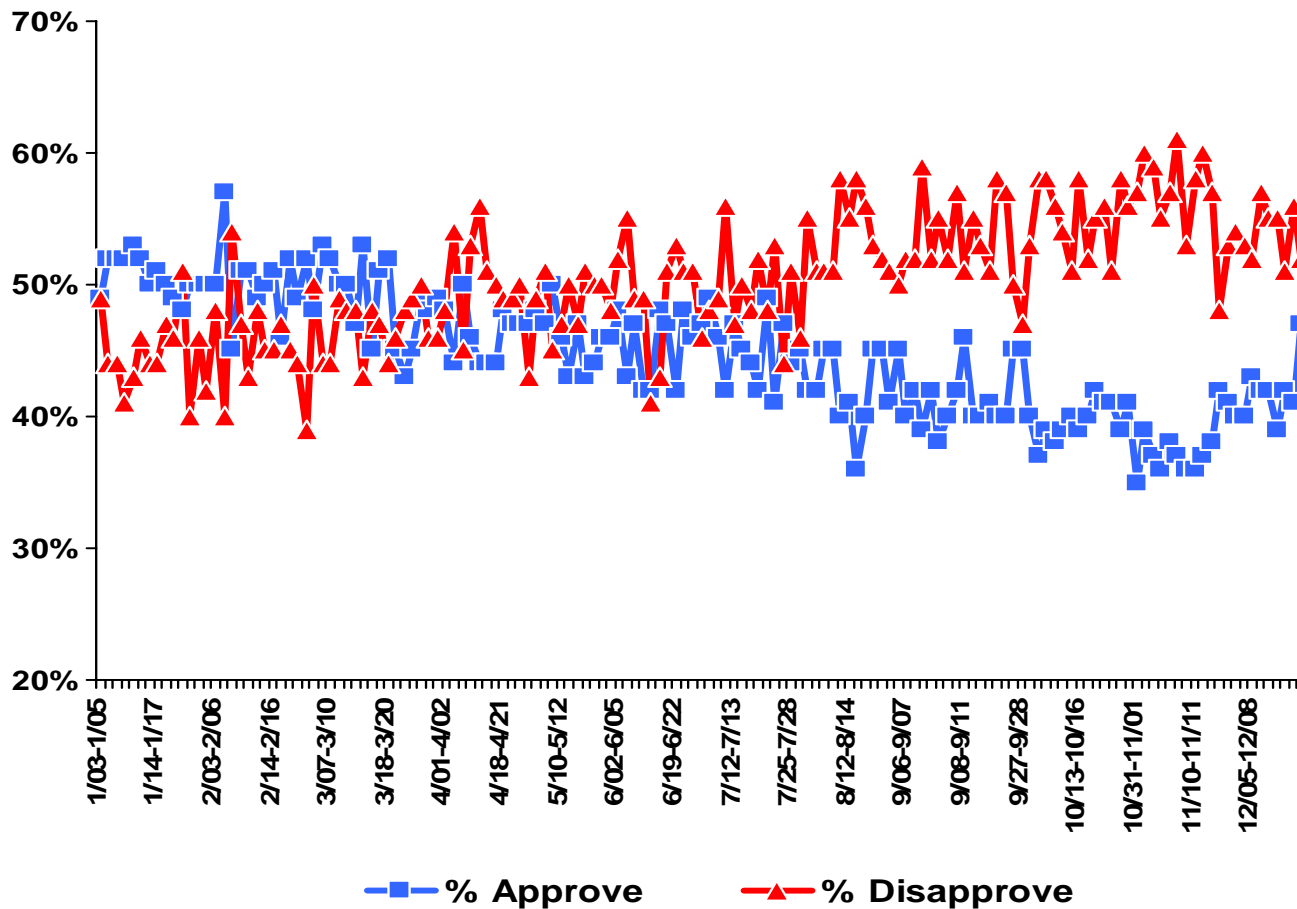
January 1st, 2005 - Present

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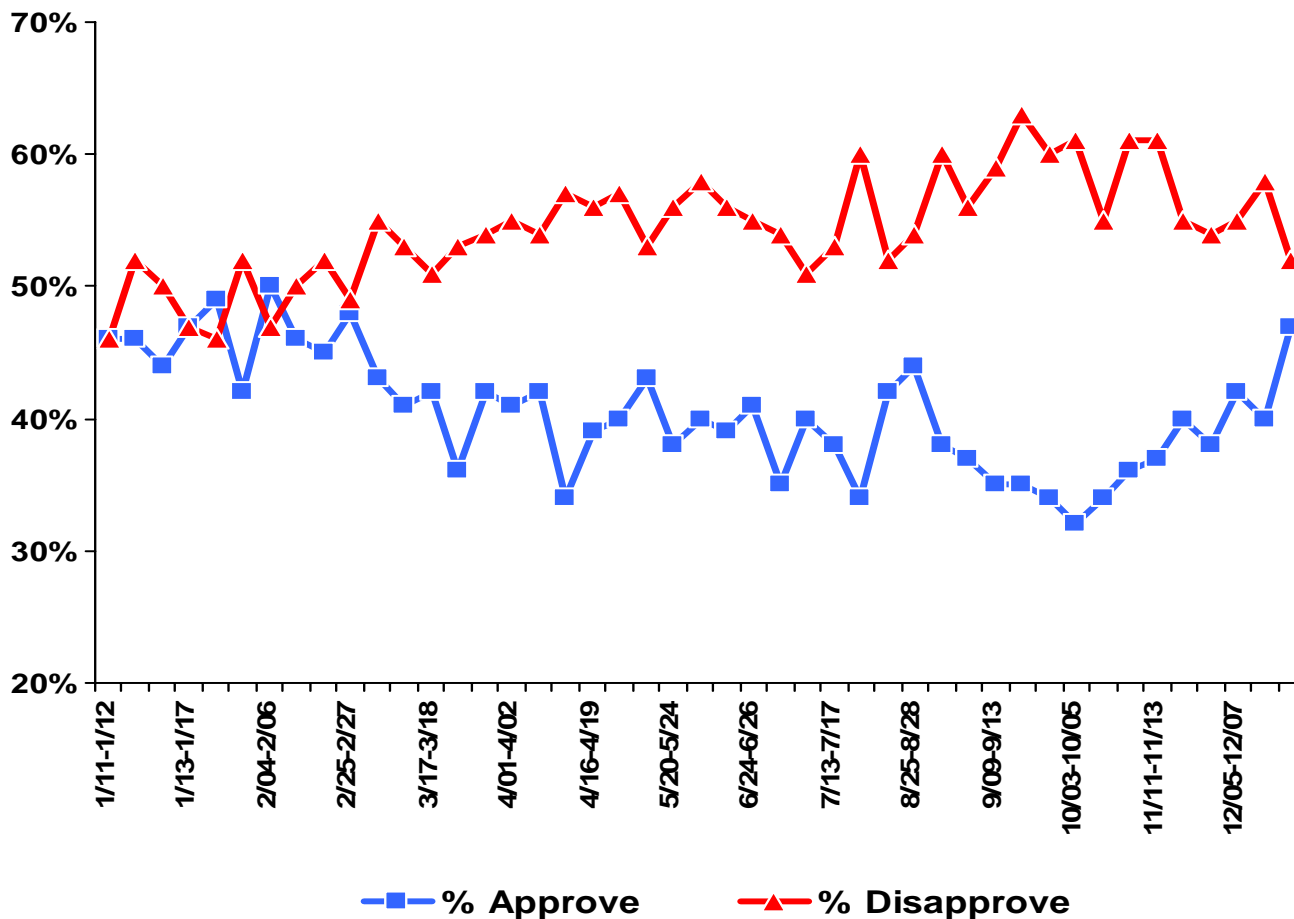
Executive Summary

- **The President Rebounds.** Recent survey data indicate that President Bush's poll numbers may have taken an up tick as of late, effectively ending a several month-long decline. Currently, 47% of Americans approve of the job the President is doing, while 52% disapprove, up significantly from a career low of 35% approval in late October.
- **The Iraq Issue.** President Bush's job approval on the war in Iraq appears to have risen lately as well, with 46% approving of the President's job there, and 53% disapproving. It remains to be determined whether this increase in support is the start of an upward trend, or instead the temporary result of last week's Iraqi elections.
- **Immigration Importance?** Early signs point to immigration as a key issue for 2006. Although this issue falls "under the radar" as a national concern, with fewer than one-third (31%) of Americans citing it as an "extremely important" concern, there is potential for the immigration issue to influence local races next November. Currently, 64% of Americans disapprove of the job President Bush is doing with regards to Immigration issues, while only 28% approve.
- **Generic Congressional Ballot.** Democrats continue to enjoy a sizeable lead in recent Generic Congressional Ballot questions. An ABC News/Washington Post poll this week showed that if elections were held today, 50% of respondents would vote for the Democratic candidate from their district, while 41% would choose the Republican candidate.

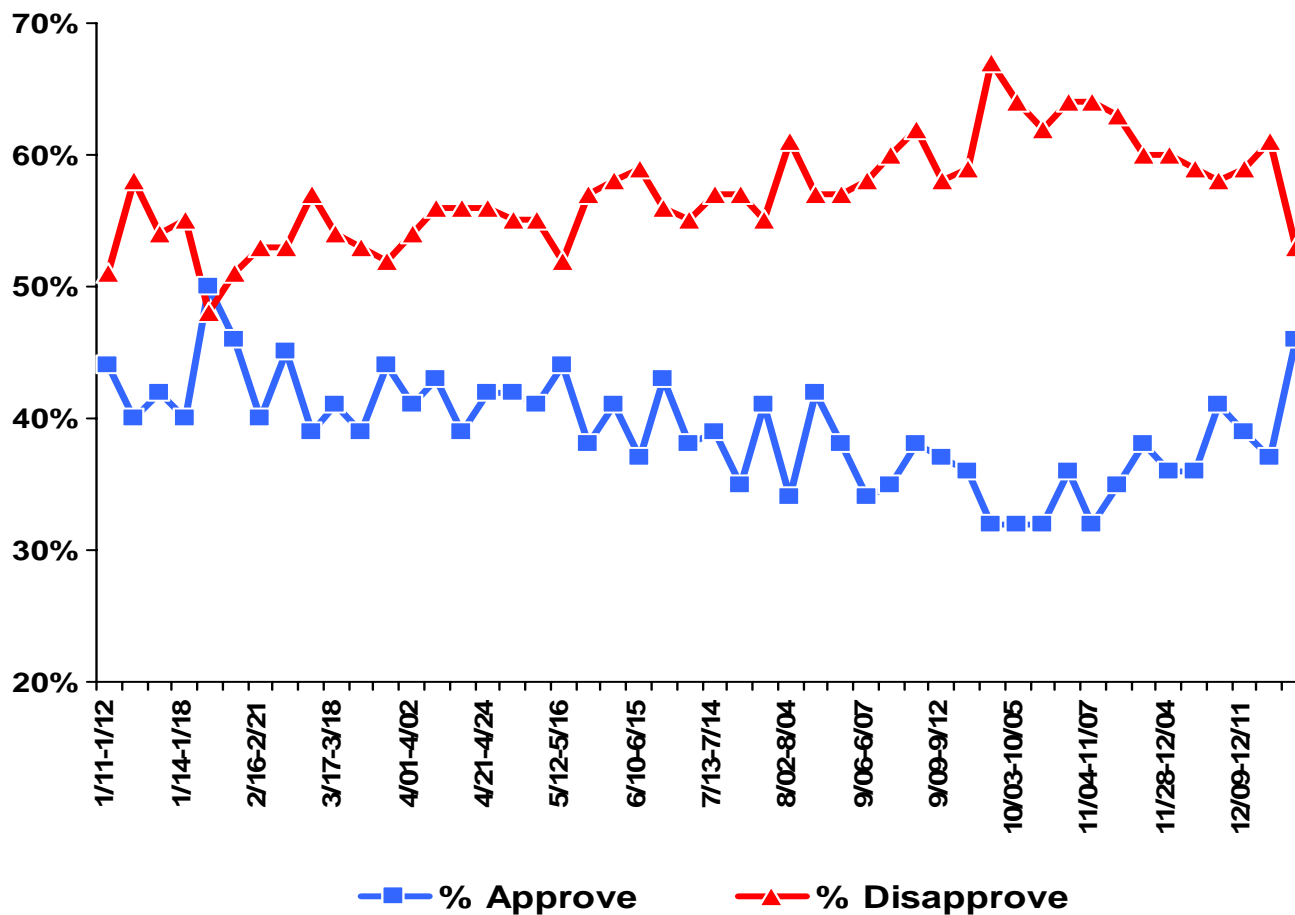
George W. Bush Job Approval Rating



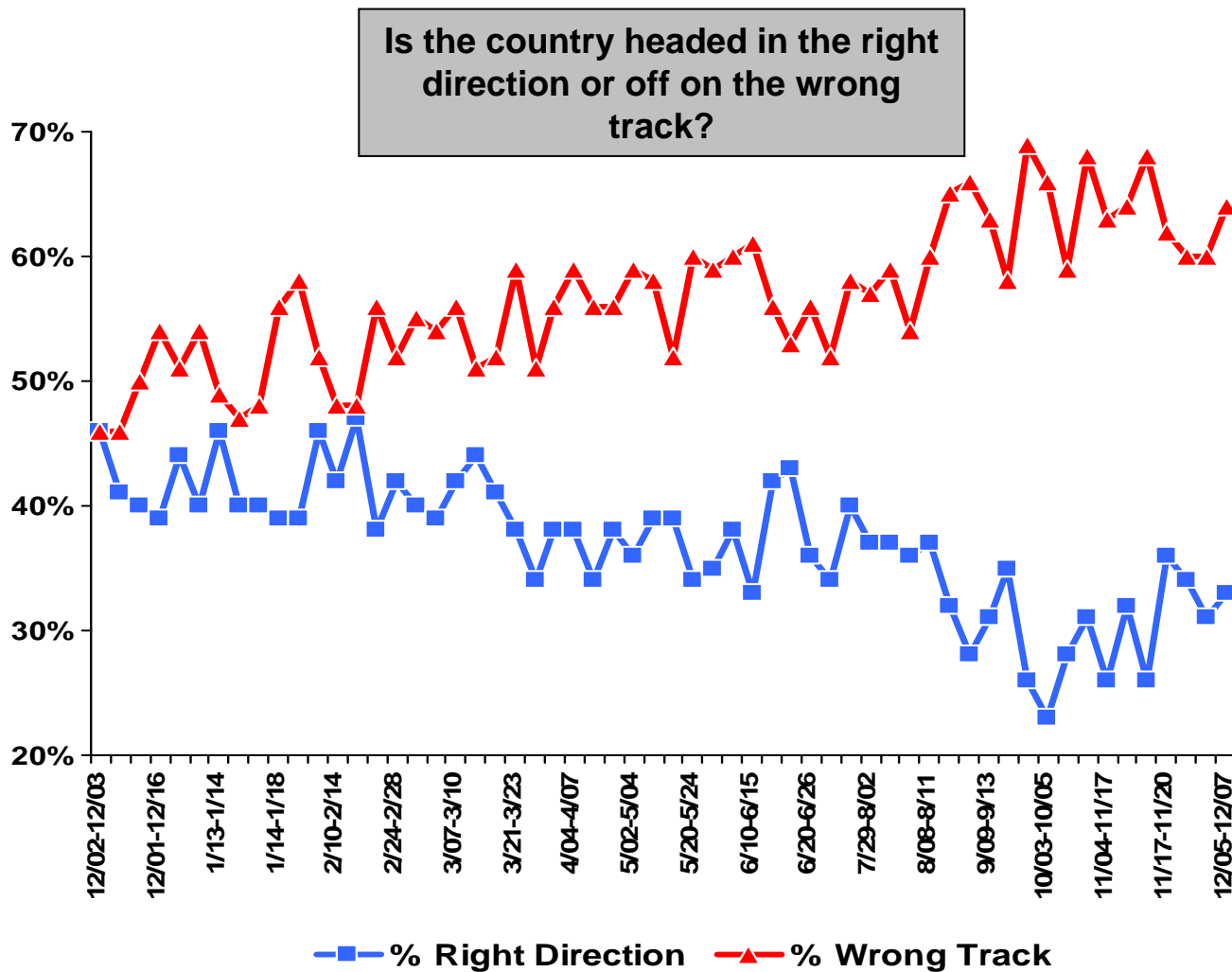
The Economy: George W. Bush Job Approval Rating



War in Iraq: George W. Bush Job Approval Rating



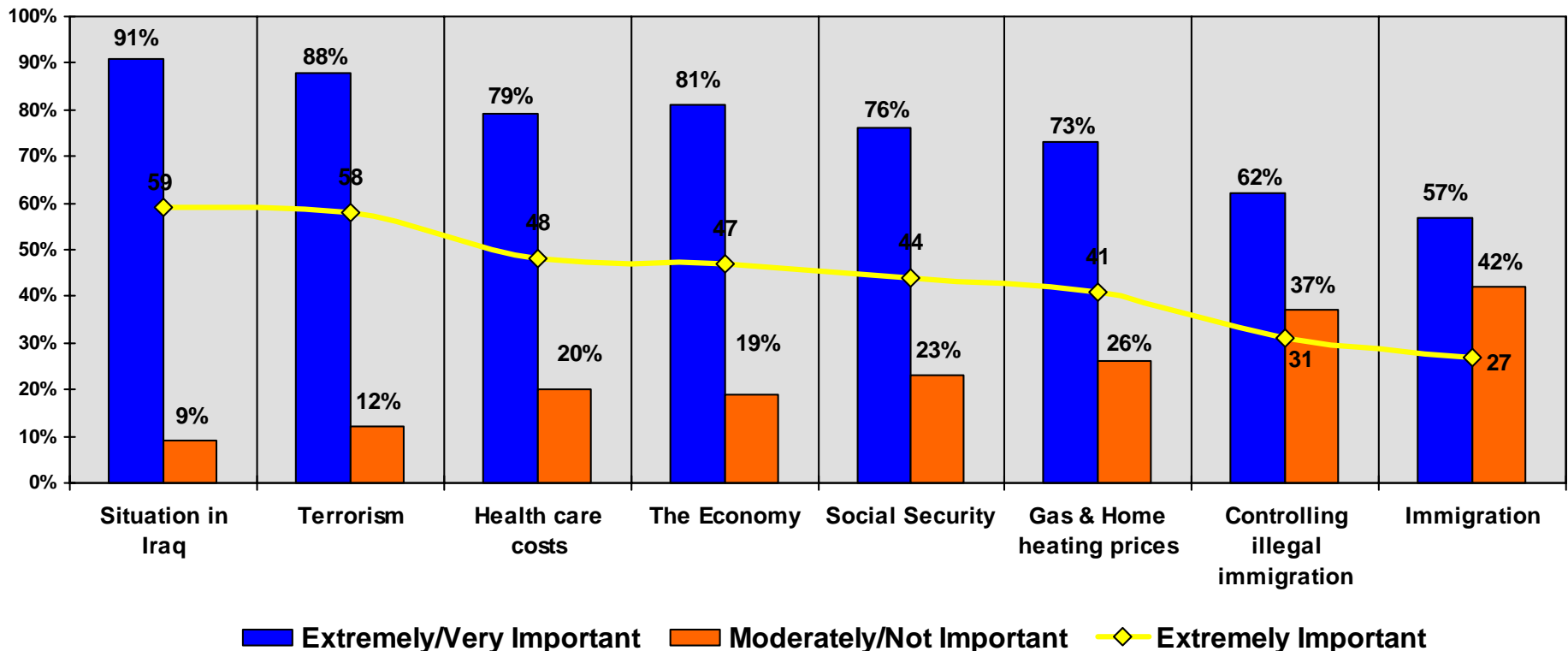
Direction of the Country



Opinion Monitor Perspective: National Priorities

How important is it to you that the president and Congress deal with each of the following issues in the next year?

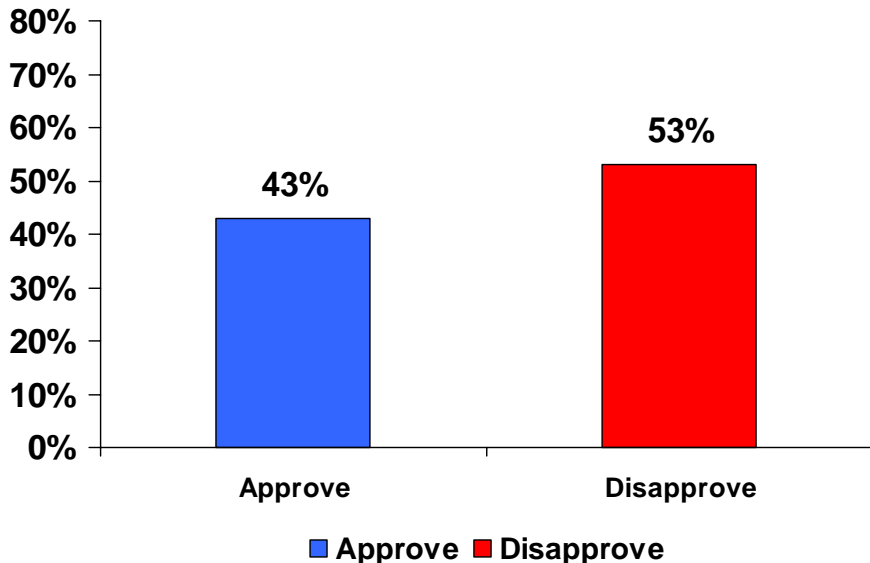
CNN/USA Today/Gallup Survey
12/09-12/11
N=1003 Adults



Opinion Monitor Perspective: Rating Congress & The Parties

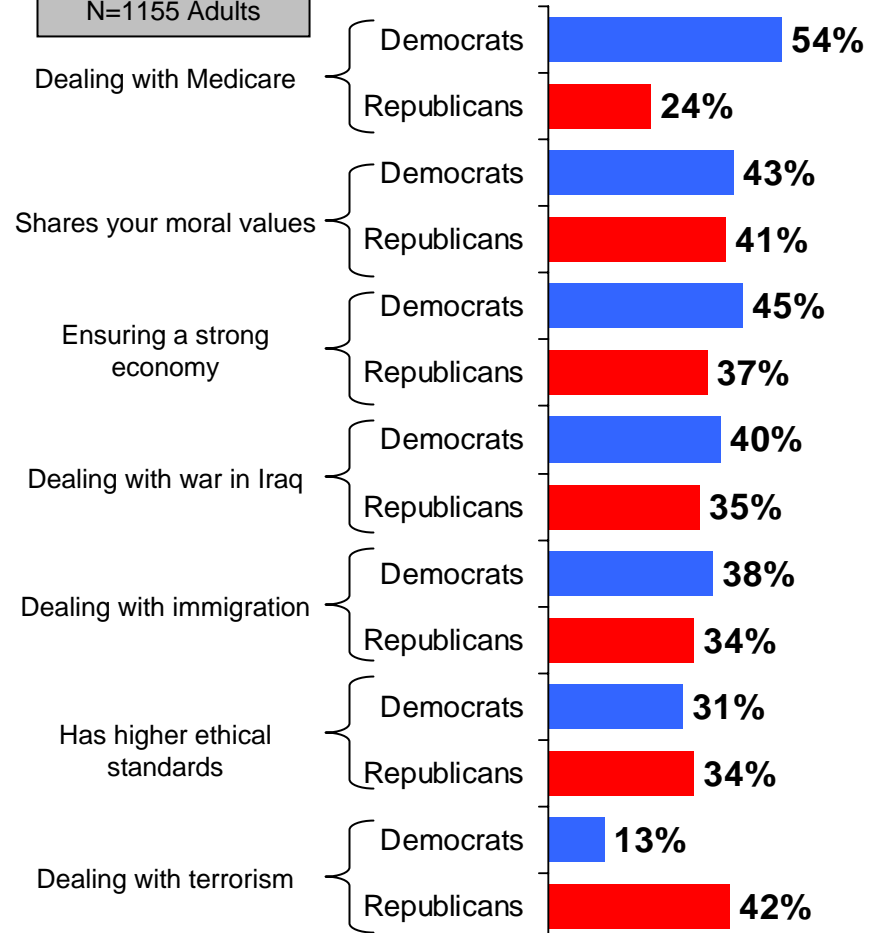
Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

ABC News/Post Survey
12/15-12/18
N=1003 Adults



CBS News/NYT
Survey
12/02-12/06
N=1155 Adults

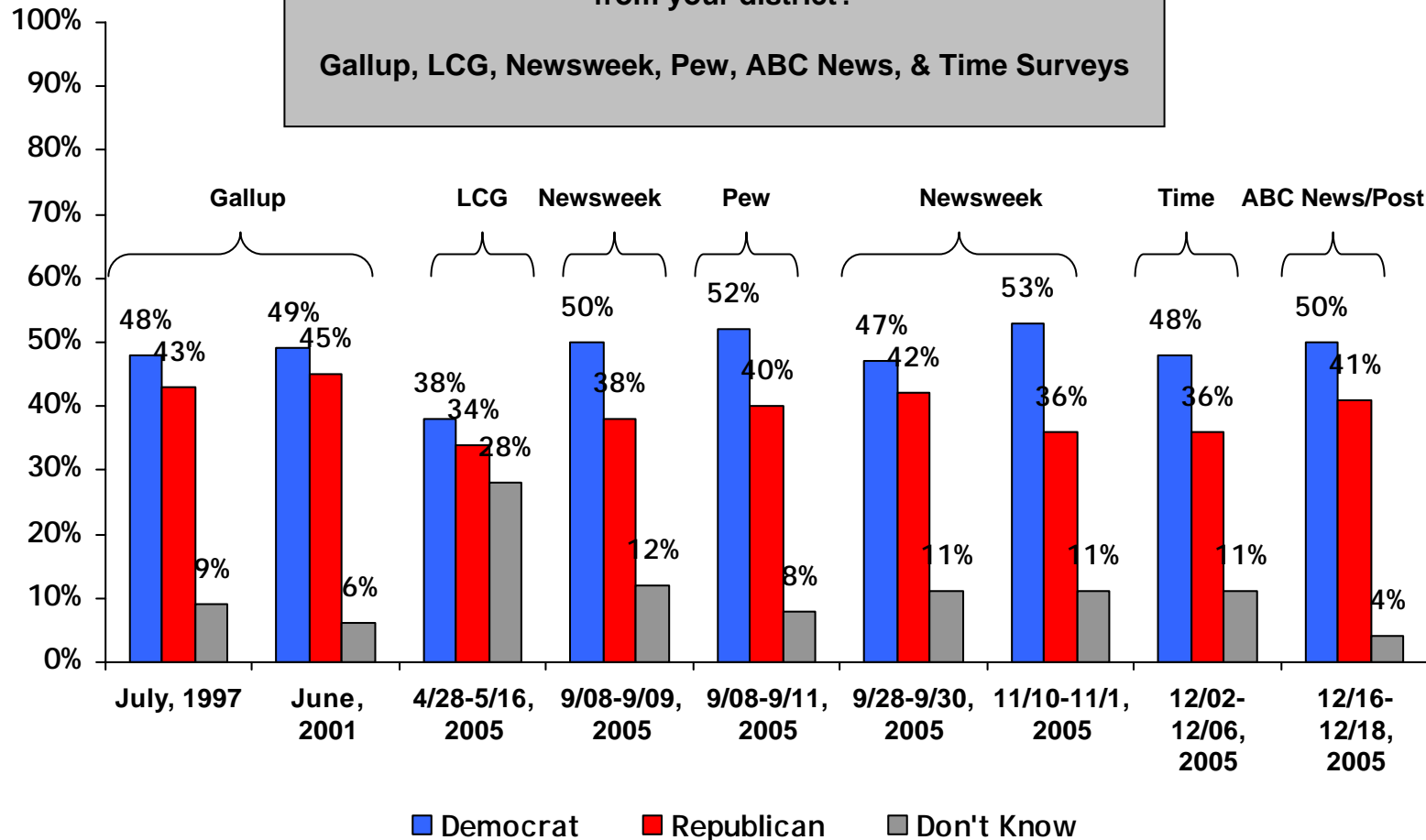
Which party is better at..?



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, ABC News, & Time Surveys

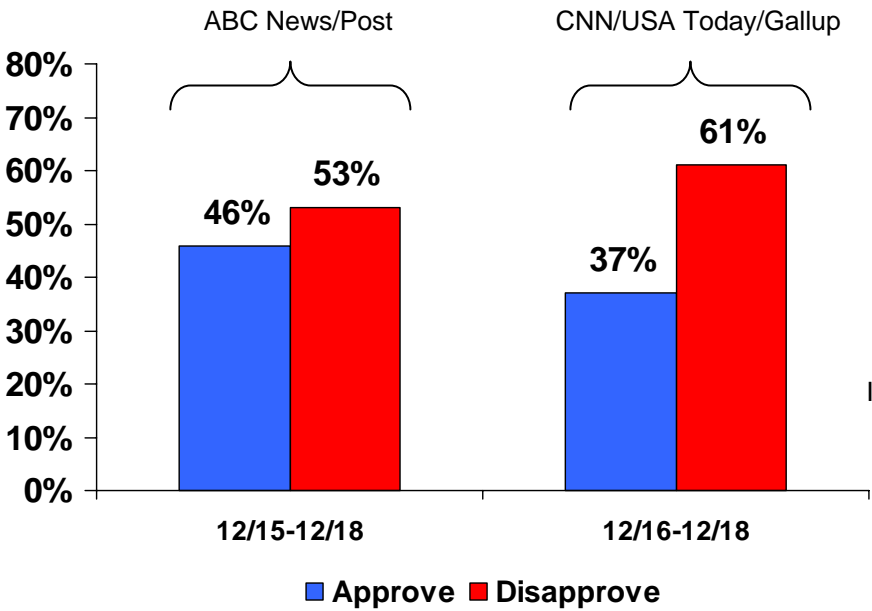


Opinion Monitor Perspective: The War in Iraq

ABC News/Post Survey
12/15-12/18
N=1003 Adults

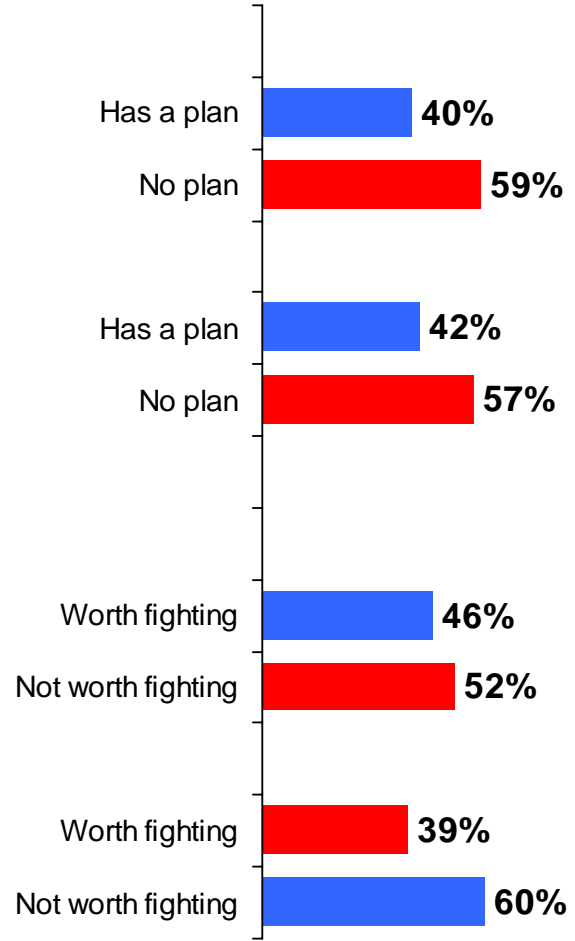
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the situation in Iraq?

ABC News/Post & CNN/USA Today/Gallup Surveys



Do you think the Bush Administration does – or does not – have a clear plan for handling the situation in Iraq

12/18/2005
3/13/2005
12/18/2005
11/2/2005



...do you think the war in Iraq was worth fighting, or not?

Opinion Monitor Perspective: The War in Iraq (Cont'd)

Do you think the U.S. should—or should not—set a timetable for withdrawal of troops from Iraq?

CBS News/NYT Survey

Some people say the Bush administration should set a deadline for withdrawing U.S. military forces from Iraq in order to avoid further casualties. Others say knowing when the U.S. would pull out would only encourage and anti-government insurgents. Do you think the U.S. should or should not set a deadline for withdrawing troops from Iraq?

ABC News/Post Survey

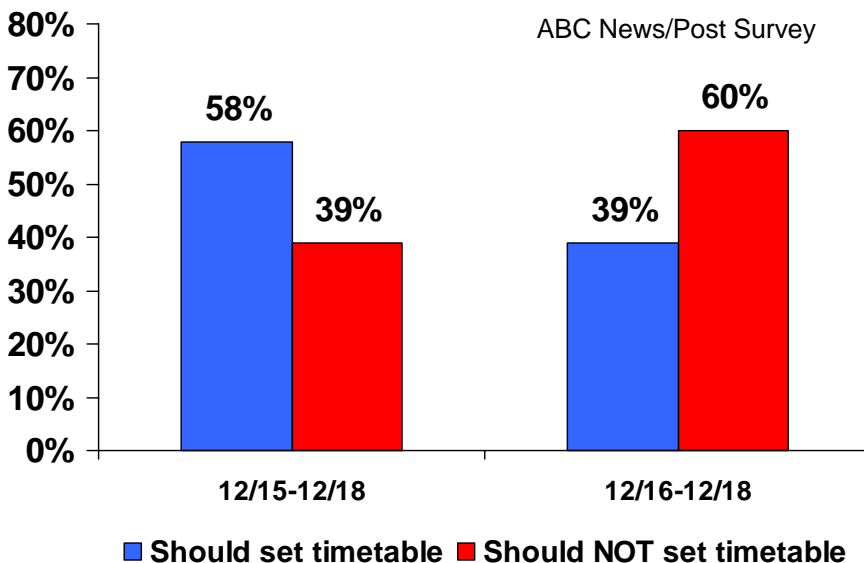
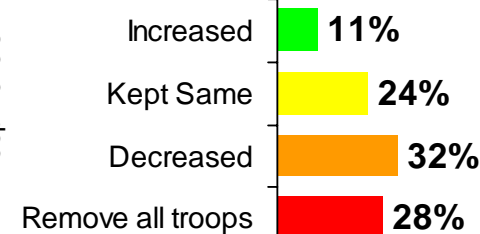
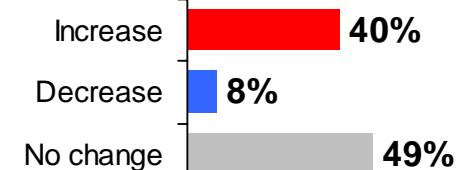
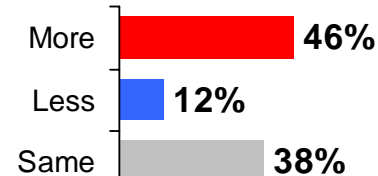
CBS News/NYT Survey
12/02-12/06
N=1155 Adults

If the U.S. withdrew its troops from Iraq, would there be more or less violence than there is now?

If the U.S. withdrew its troops from Iraq, would the threat of terrorism against the U.S. increase or decrease?

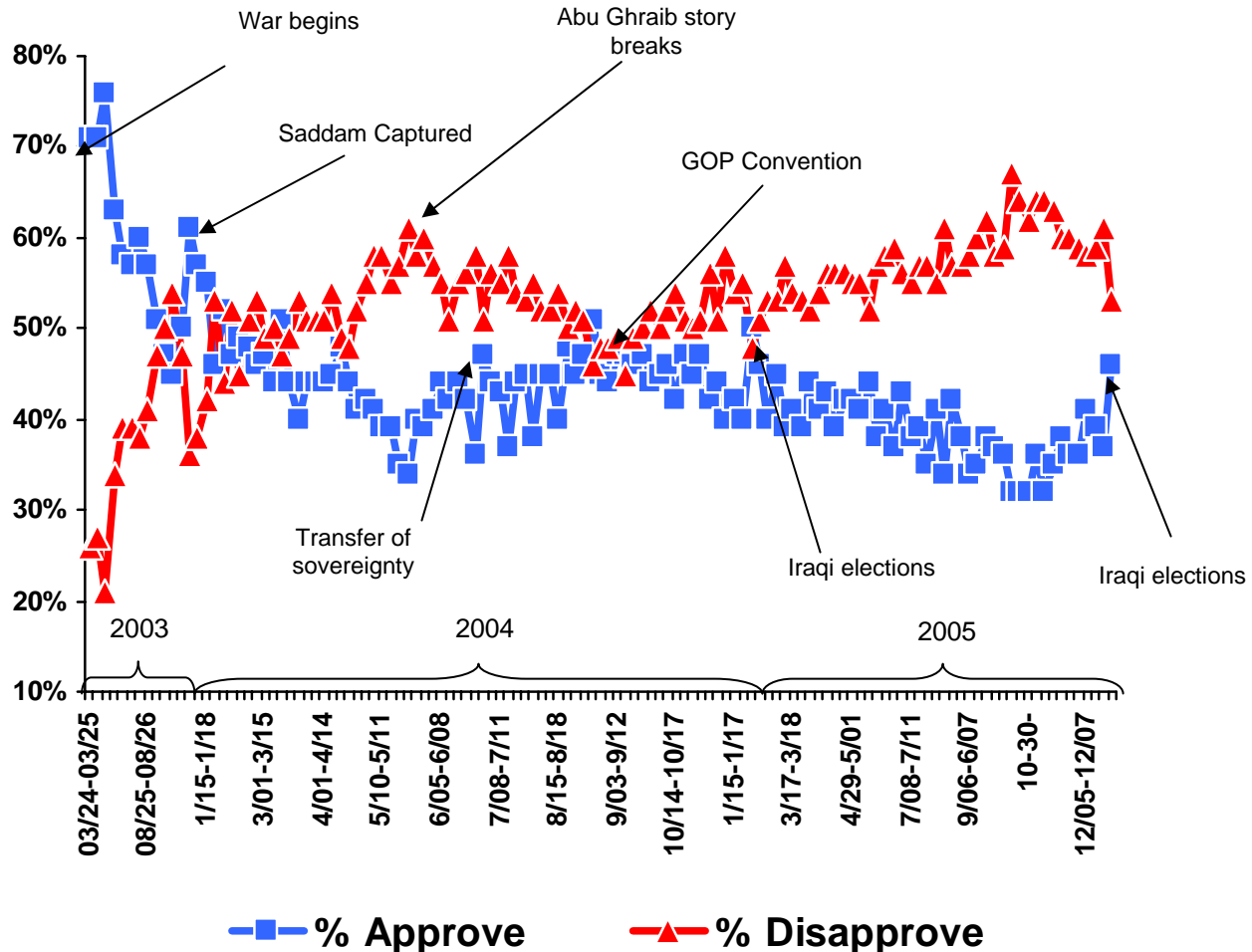
Do you agree or disagree with President Bush that withdrawing U.S. troops now would be a recipe for disaster?

What should the U.S. do NOW in Iraq?



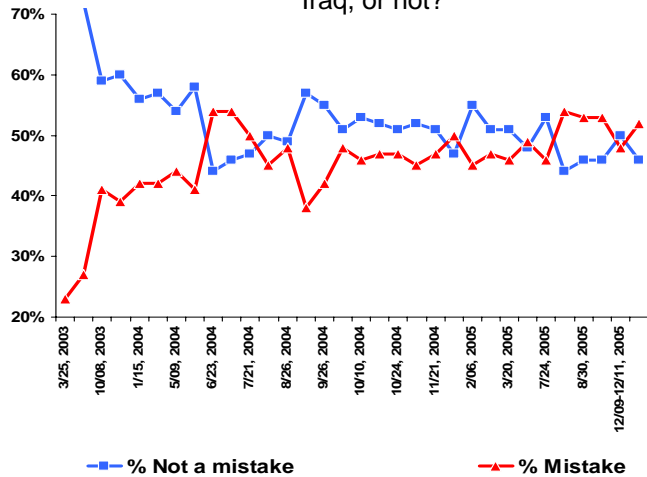
Opinion Monitor Perspective: The War in Iraq Timeline

The Situation in Iraq: George W. Bush Job Approval Rating

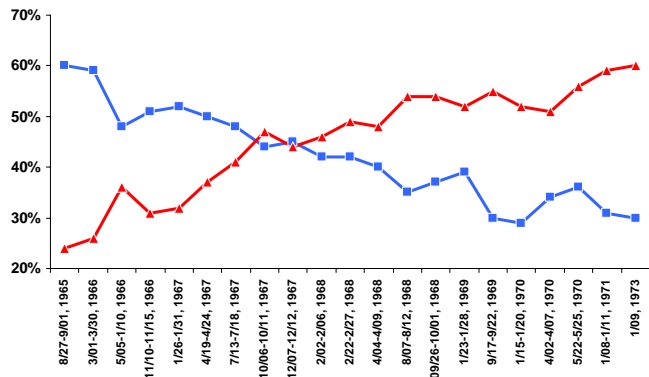


Opinion Monitor Perspective: Public Opinion on Iraq & Vietnam

In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the U.S. made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?



In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam?



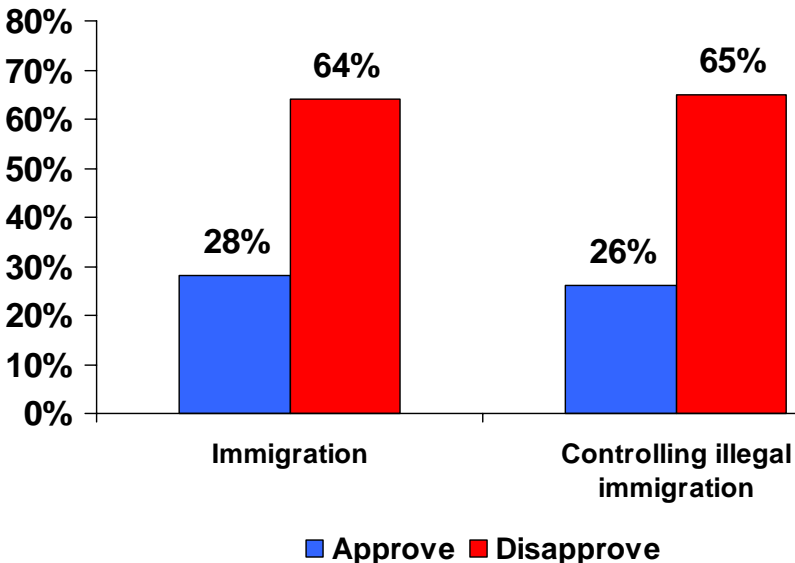
Conflict	1 st Gallup poll showing majority of Americans believe sending troops was a "mistake"	Historical Perspective
Iraq (2003-Present)	June 23, 2004 (54% "Mistake")	Post Abu-Graib prisoner scandal. Fewer than 1000 total U.S. soldiers killed.
Vietnam (1965-1973)	August 12, 1968 (54% "Mistake")	After beginning of Tet Offensive. 20,000+ U.S. soldiers killed.

Opinion Monitor Perspective: Immigration

CBS News/NTT Survey
12/02-12/06

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Bush is doing with... (Split Samples)

CBS News/NTT Survey
12/02-12/06
N=503 Adults (Immigration)
N=500 Adults (Controlling illegal...)

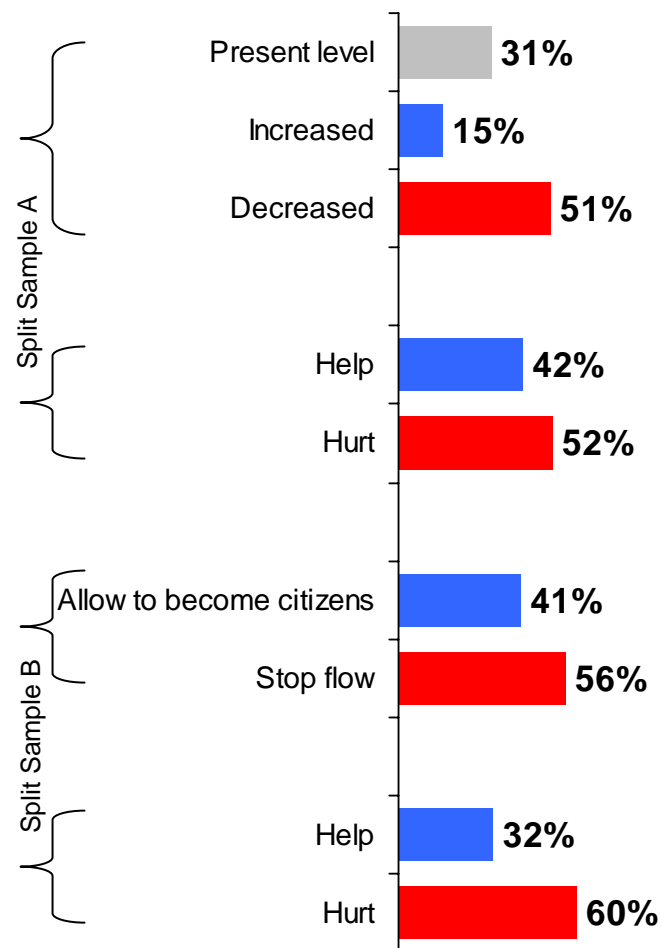


In your view should immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?

Do you think legal immigrants mostly help the economy by providing low cost labor, (or) mostly hurt the economy by driving wages down for many Americans?

What should be the main focus of the U.S. government in dealing with the issue of illegal immigration?

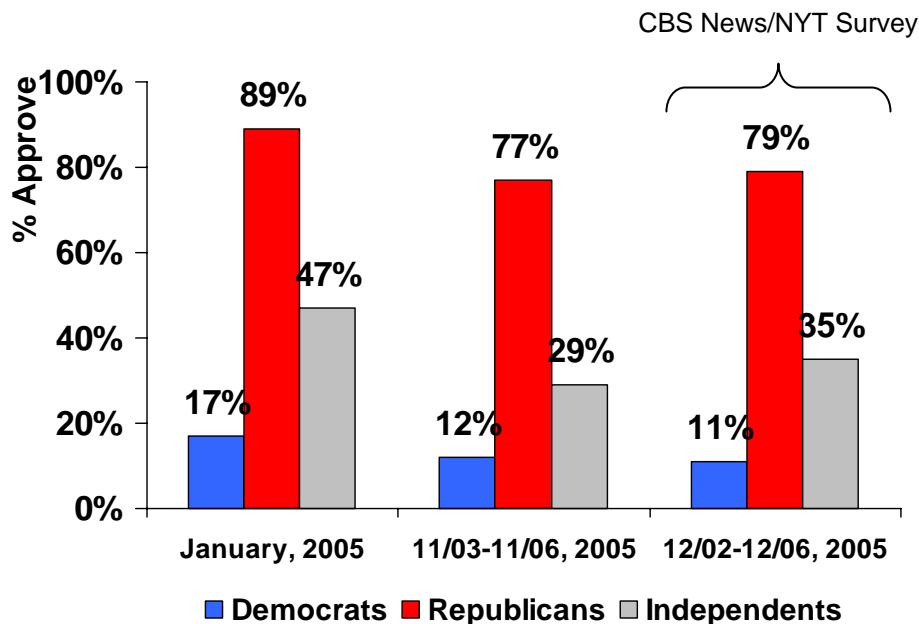
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Opinion Monitor Perspective: President Bush's Base

George W. Bush Approval/Disapproval since January, 2005.
Pew Surveys

George W. Bush
Job Approval by Party ID
January, 2005-Present Pew & CBS/NYT Surveys



	Conservative Republicans		Moderate/Liberal Republicans	
	Approve	Disapprove	Approve	Disapprove
Bush Job Approval %	%	%	%	%
November	84	12	66	29
Late Oct.	87	9	71	23
Mid Oct.	87	9	71	25
Mid Sept.	88	10	60	28
Early Sept/	84	14	70	26
July	91	6	81	15
June	89	7	80	15
May	89	8	78	20
March	89	8	85	11
February	93	6	78	17
January	94	3	82	14

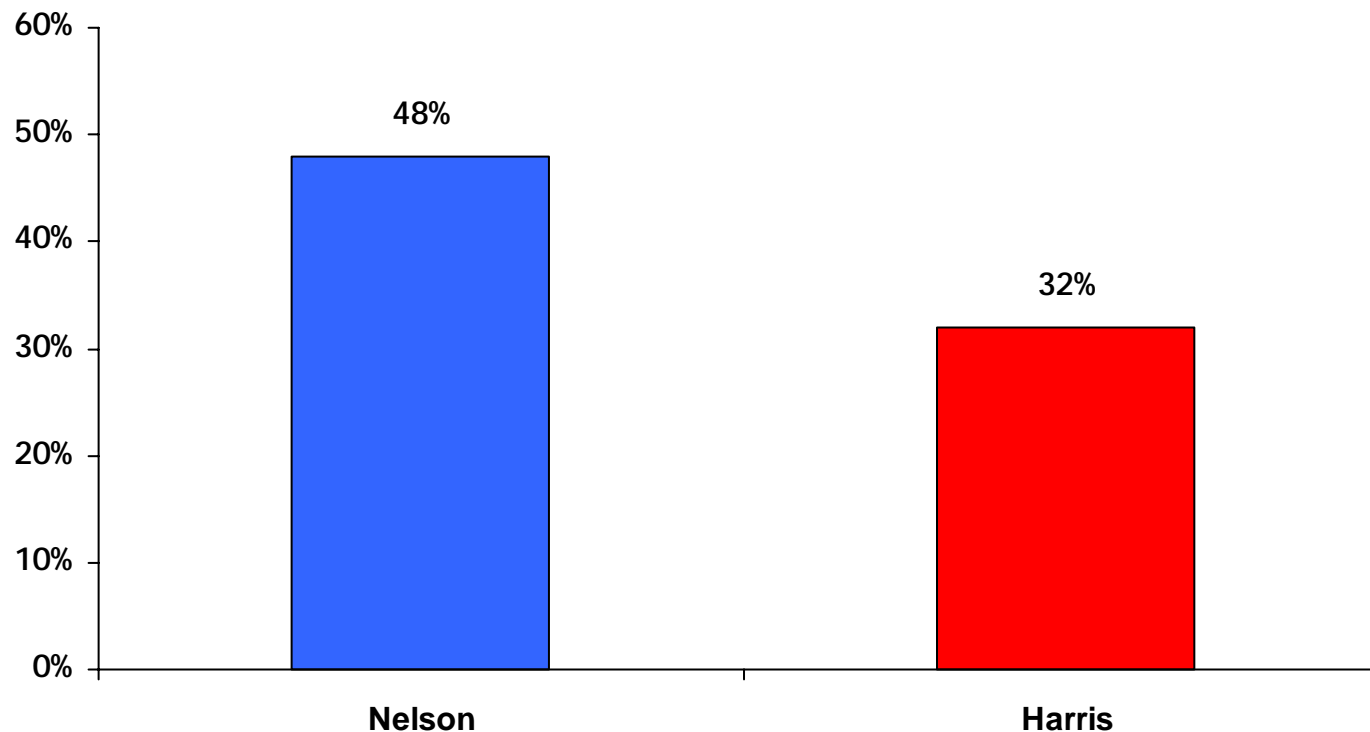
Opinion Monitor Perspective: President Bush's Base

2 Term Presidents: 1st Year of 2nd Term Job Approval Ratings

	George W. Bush		Bill Clinton		Ronald Reagan	
	Approve	Disapprove	Approve	Disapprove	Approve	Disapprove
Post-Inauguration (2 nd Term)	57%	40%	61%	26%	59%	31%
End of 1 st Year (2 nd Term)	47%	52%	56%	36%	63%	27%

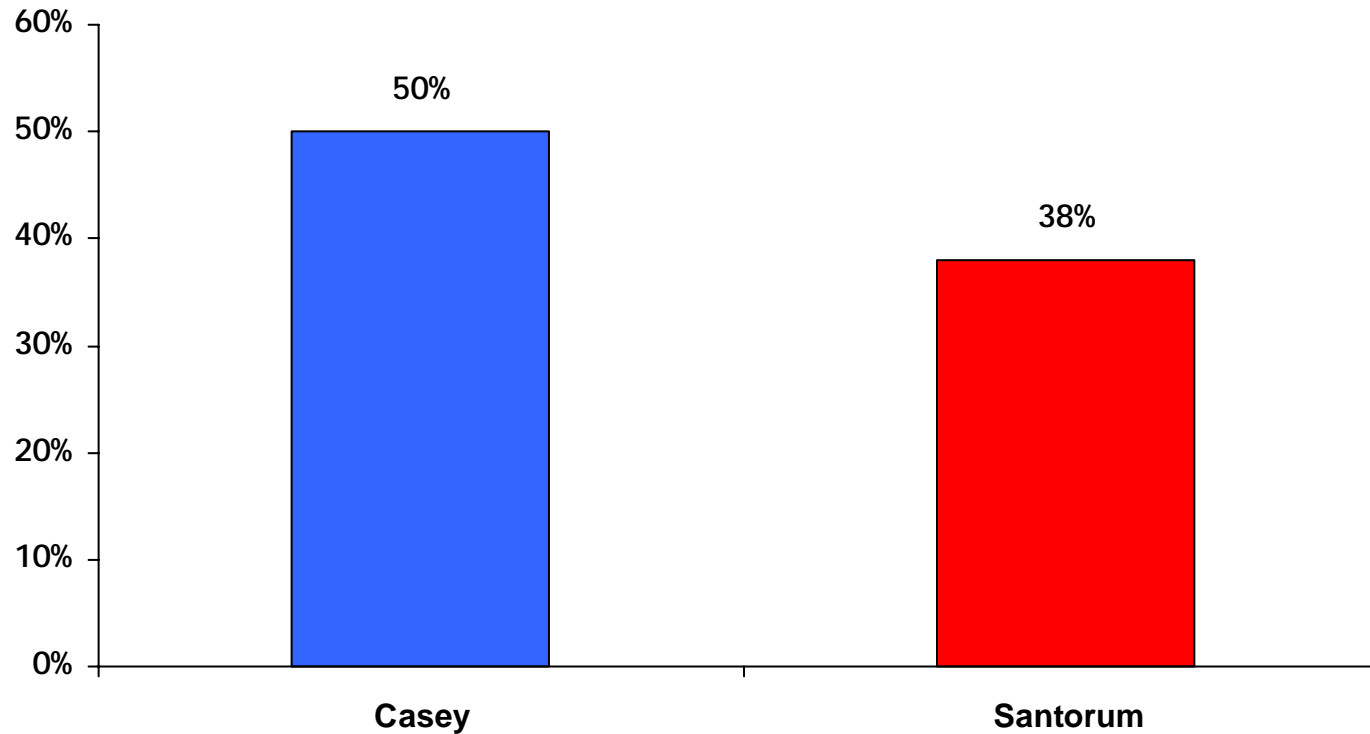
Opinion Monitor Outlook: Florida Senate Race

Strategic Vision (R) Survey
11/25-11/28
N=1200 LV



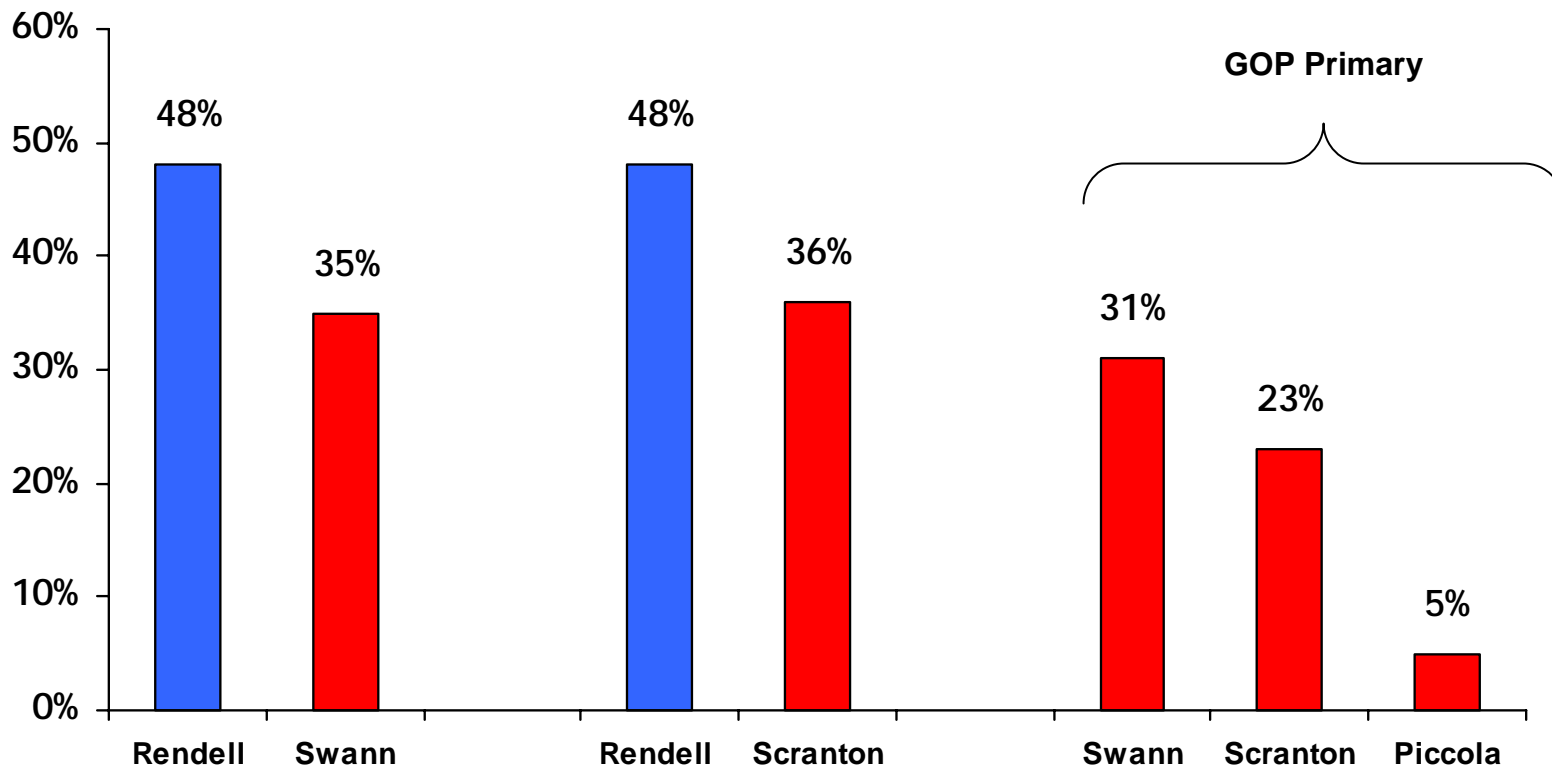
Opinion Monitor Outlook: Pennsylvania Senate Race

Quinnipiac Survey
11/30-12/06
N=1447 RV



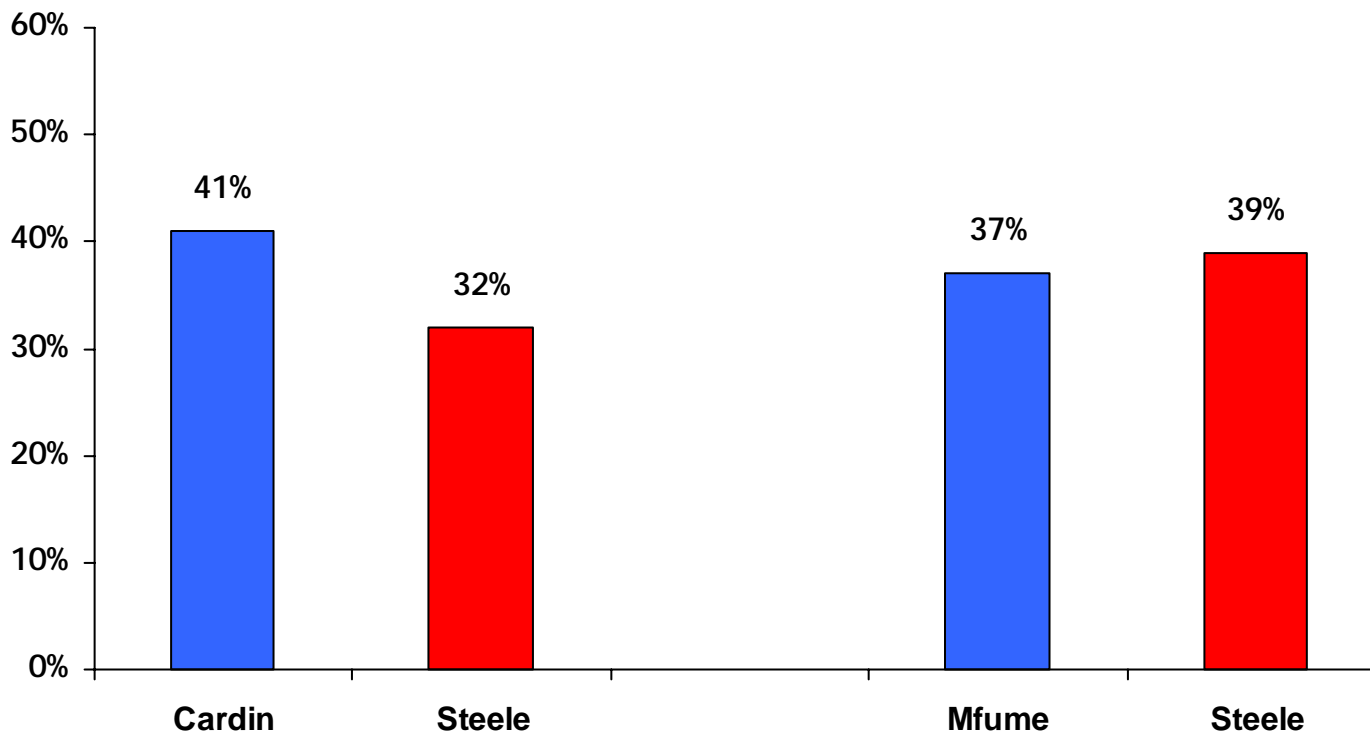
Opinion Monitor Outlook: Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Race

Quinnipiac Survey
11/30-12/06
N=1447 RV



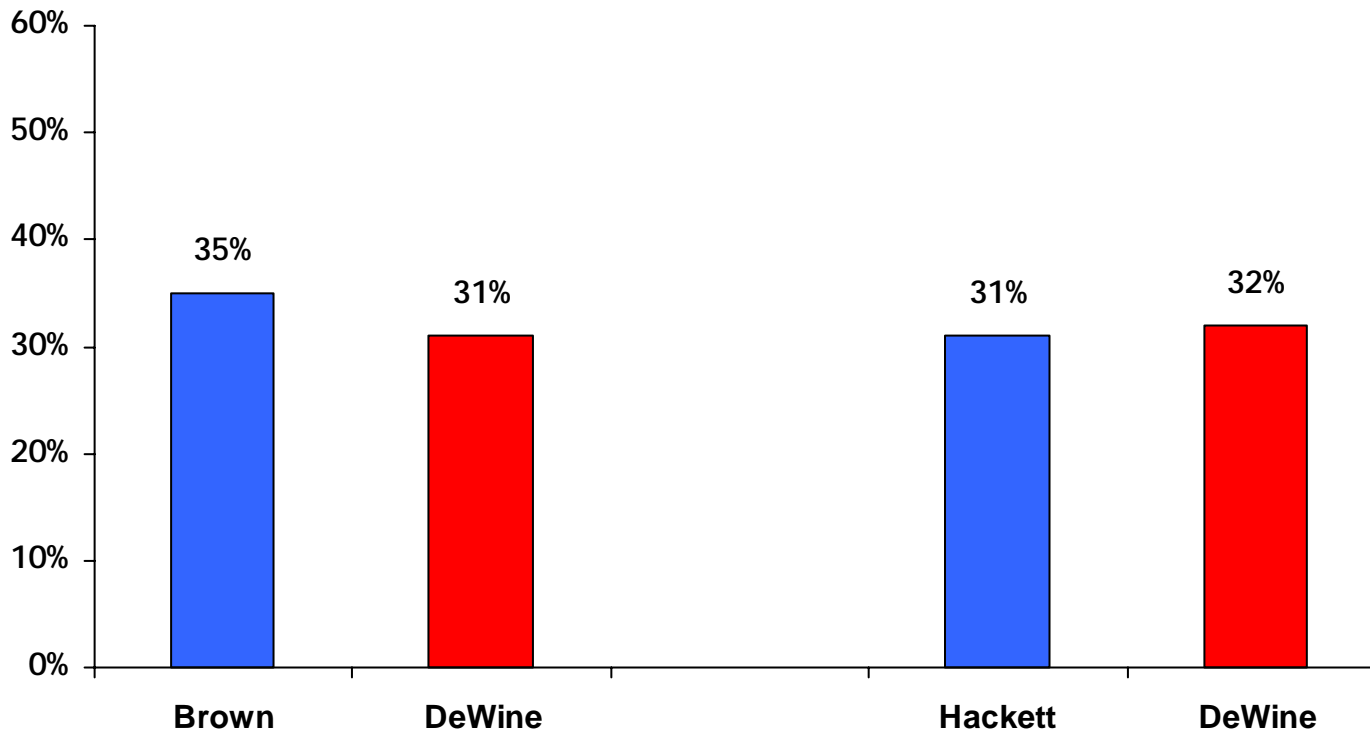
Opinion Monitor Outlook: Maryland Senate Race

Potomac Survey
10/27-11/01
N=1008 LV



Opinion Monitor Outlook: Ohio Senate Race

Rasmussen Survey
10/24-11/03
N=1872 RV



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