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Opinion of Clinton and Congress Improves
A PARTISAN PUBLIC AGENDA

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andrew Kohut, Director
Robert C. Toth, Senior Associate
Kimberly Parker, Research Director
Claudia Deane, Survey Analyst
Pew Research Center for The People & The Press
202/293-3126
<http://www.people-press.org>

Opinion of Clinton and Congress Improves A PARTISAN PUBLIC AGENDA

As Inauguration Day approaches, Bill Clinton is getting his highest ever approval rating (59%). Favorable opinion of Congress is also up sharply (56%) as the GOP begins its second consecutive term of control for the first time in more than sixty years. Newt Gingrich is the only unpopular national leader in the picture (65% unfavorable), according to the latest *Pew Research Center* survey.

Although the public is feeling better about its national leaders for the most part, Americans have a partisan view of the national agenda. Fixing Social Security is the *only* top priority issue that gets equal emphasis from Republicans, Democrats and Independents. Three-in-four Americans want action from Washington on this problem. Improving the educational system gets a comparably high rating from the public. Reducing crime, improving the job situation, taking steps to make Medicare financially sound, and reducing the budget deficit follow in the public's ranking of important issues.

Republicans give higher priority than Democrats to reducing the budget deficit. They also give higher priority than Democrats to dealing with the nation's moral crisis and cutting the capital gains tax. Democrats assign relatively higher rankings to education, jobs, crime and protecting Medicare. They also place much more emphasis than Republicans on dealing with the problems of the poor, protecting the environment, and working to reduce racial tension. Independents fall between members of the two parties on this latter set of issues.

The importance of fixing Social Security is also seen in the amount of public attention paid to news about recent proposals to reform the system. Nearly two-thirds (64%) reported closely following stories about the proposals to reform Social Security (29% said they paid *very* close attention). Only interest in the storms in the Pacific Northwest attracted more public attention this month. However, Social Security even out polled the bad weather for news interest among people 65 years of age and older.

	<u>All</u> %	<u>Rep.</u> %	<u>Dem.</u> %
Social Security	75	77	76
Education	75	62	79
Crime	70	64	70
Job situation	65	55	75
Medicare	64	60	70
Budget deficit	60	66	54
Poor and needy	57	39	70
Health care	56	40	69
Environment	54	40	62
Morals	52	57	50
Racial tensions	50	41	60
Taxes	42	43	41
Campaign finance	31	30	35
Capital gains tax	29	40	24

Albright Reaction

By more than three-to-one, Secretary of State designate Madeleine Albright is a big hit with the American public. Her 57% favorable, 16% unfavorable rating is better than that of her fellow Cabinet officer, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin (43% to 17%). She also receives a better public evaluation than did her predecessor, Warren Christopher (34% to 21%).¹ Although she is the highest ranking female American official in history, Albright is no more popular among women than men (57%/57%). Also surprising is that although she has been a member of the Clinton Cabinet, she was rated favorably by a 54% majority of Republicans.

Clinton's second honeymoon with the American public is typical for second term presidents and comparable to Ronald Reagan's standing after reelection in January 1985. The President's ratings have improved most since mid-year among people under 50 years of age. Hillary Clinton's public image has changed little over the past six months. Her favorability rating is lower than the President's (57% vs. 66%, respectively), which is unusual for a First Lady.

Approval Ratings (1956-96)		
	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %
Clinton (Jan 1997)	59	31
Reagan (Jan 1985)	62	29
Nixon (Jan 1973)	67	25
Johnson (Jan 1965)	71	15
Eisenhower (Jan 1957)	73	14

* 1957-85 results from Gallup Poll

Clinton's approval ratings are high despite the reemergence of the Paula Jones allegations and growing public concern about campaign contributions made to the Democratic National Committee (DNC) from Indonesian sources. Fully 70% of those polled said the campaign finance controversy is an important issue, and 63% said a special committee in Congress should be set up to investigate these charges -- up from 54% in November.²

By way of comparison, 79% think that Newt Gingrich's admission that he gave false statements to the House Ethics Committee is an important issue. However, when asked to choose between the Democratic campaign finance irregularities or the charges against Gingrich, the public split on which was more serious -- 39% said the DNC contributions, 36% the Gingrich charges.

¹ Times Mirror Center nationwide survey February 1995.

² November percentage is based on voters.

Opinion of Gingrich himself is highly partisan: 80% of Democrats and 68% of Independents have an unfavorable opinion of him, while 54% of Republicans hold a favorable view of the Speaker. Among those who have been following the Gingrich story very closely, nearly four-in-ten hold a *very* unfavorable view of the Speaker. This compares with 26% of the general public.

Party Woes

The drumbeat of coverage on the Gingrich ethics story continues to weigh down approval ratings for the GOP Congressional leadership. Just 38% approve of their policies and proposals, much as throughout the last year. But the leadership's disapproval rating has fallen steadily over the last year, from 54% to 43% now.

News of the DNC fund-raising scandal has not had any immediate impact on public perceptions of the Democratic Party. Ratings of the party are about where they were four years ago, when Clinton embarked on his first term. As with the Gingrich ethics story, however, those who have been paying close attention to news about the DNC problem express more negative opinions: 18% hold a very unfavorable view of the party, compared to 8% of the general public.

While men and women are equally likely to see the DNC story as important, there is a gender gap in perceptions of the Gingrich charges. Eighty-three percent of women said the issue of Gingrich's ethics is important, compared to 74% of men. Young people are less concerned than older ones about the DNC controversy; 62% of those under 30 said it is important compared to 77% of those over 50. There is no such generation gap with regard to the charges against Gingrich.

Republicans more than Democrats view the DNC story as important, though a strong majority of Democrats (64%) agreed the story is an important one. Similarly, Democrats more than Republicans view the Gingrich story as important. Even so, seven-in-ten Republicans said it is an important issue.

Almost one-fourth of Americans followed the stories about Gingrich's ethics charges very closely (23%), a slightly larger number than paid attention to news about foreign campaign contributions to the Democratic Party (17%). Republicans and Democrats followed the Speaker's ethics case in roughly equal proportion (24% of Republicans and 29% of Democrats said they are following very closely). Republicans were slightly more likely to have paid attention to the stories about money given to the DNC (22% followed it very closely, compared to 16% of Democrats). Among those who have been following both stories very closely, a plurality viewed the DNC's potential violations as more serious than the Speaker's (48% vs. 30%).

News Interest Index

The disastrous floods in the West and Northwest were the most closely followed story of the month: about a third of Americans (34%) said they followed these stories "very closely". This number rose to 62% in the West.

But the top *Washington* story was the proposed reform of the Social Security system rather than one of the scandals dogging each party. Almost one-in-three (29%) Americans said they followed the Social Security reform story very closely. Current beneficiaries followed the story much more closely than younger people -- fully half of those over age 65 paid very close attention, compared to only 16% of those under 30, and 22% of those aged 30 to 50 -- despite the fact that reform proposals are aimed at ensuring that the Social Security system is still viable when younger generations retire.

Clinton's current Cabinet selections and high level appointments failed to attract as much interest as his first term choices did. Two-thirds of the public (66%) said they followed these appointments very closely *or* fairly closely in January 1993 compared to slightly less than half now (47%).

About half of Americans followed closely stories about the new content-based television rating system which took effect on network television at the start of the year. Women followed the TV ratings story slightly more than men (51% very or fairly closely vs. 42% of men), and parents more than non-parents (52% compared to 44% of non-parents). Parents with younger children (under age 8) were more likely than those with older kids to follow the TV ratings story closely.

One-in-five Americans (22%) followed very closely the controversy over treating black English or Ebonics as a second language. African-Americans were more likely than whites to say they followed it very closely (31% compared to 21%).

Least interest was shown in foreign news stories. The hostage crisis in Peru was followed very closely by only 14% of the public, renewed tensions between Israelis and Palestinians in Hebron by 12%, the ongoing protests against Serbian President Milosevic in Belgrade by 7%, and the debate over possible NATO expansion into Eastern Europe by 5%.

Trust in Government!!

With the era of big government waning, the public expresses a good deal of trust and confidence in the ability of *state governments* to carry out their responsibilities. Seven-in-ten Pew respondents said they have either a great deal (17%) or a fair amount (53%) of trust and confidence in their own state government, up significantly from 51% in June of 1992 and similar to the high marks given state government ten years ago, amid Ronald Reagan's federalism initiatives.

Strong trust in state government is evident among most demographic groups, with a few important exceptions. Blacks expressed lower levels of trust than whites (51% vs. 72%). Those with annual incomes under \$20,000 -- many of whom may have benefited from the federal safety net -- were also less trusting (61% vs. 70% of all respondents). Predictably, Republicans, who tend to favor devolution, are more trusting of state government than are Democrats (78% vs. 66%).

In general, trust in state government is more often based on things people have heard or read than on personal experiences (58% vs. 29%). However, those who are less trusting of state government more often based their opinion on personal experience than did those who are more trusting. Almost four-in-ten of the respondents distrustful of government attributed their lack of trust to things they have personally experienced.

When asked which level of government they had the most trust and confidence in to handle various social programs and policy issues, the public expressed clear preferences in some areas and ambivalence in others. Strong majorities expressed confidence in the federal government's ability to provide services to immigrants (62%, vs. 19% state and 11% local) and protect civil rights (59%, vs. 21% state and 13% local). The federal government was also seen as being marginally more effective in providing health care for the disabled, poor and elderly (44% vs. 36% state).

State governments were seen as better able to handle job training (45% vs. 20% federal), rules on the dissemination of welfare benefits (44% vs. 28% federal), and early education for low income children -- a responsibility now handled by the federal government through the Head Start program. The public has more trust and confidence in local government than in state and federal government to fight crime. More than four-in-ten chose local government as best able to handle this issue.

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Trust</u>	<u>Distrust</u>
	%	Gov't %	Gov't %
Things heard or read	58	64	44
Personal experience	29	25	39
Both	11	10	14
Don't know	<u>2</u> 100	<u>1</u> 100	<u>3</u> 100

Optimism About TV Ratings

Fully 75% of Americans said there is too much violence on television programs today, and by a margin of nearly two-to-one they are more concerned about violence than sex on TV.

The public is optimistic that the new television ratings system will help parents decide which television shows their children should be allowed to watch. Twenty-seven percent said the new ratings will be very helpful, another 42% said somewhat helpful. However, only half of the public said they now understand how the ratings system works (21% understand very well, 30% fairly well). Four-in-ten adults have already seen the rating for a specific show, while more than half (54%) have not yet noticed ratings on any of the shows they have been watching.

Parents were more likely than non-parents to report having seen the rating for a particular show (52% vs. 37%, respectively). Parents of young children -- under the age of 8 -- more often reported having seen a rating than did parents of older kids. Women were as likely as men to have seen the ratings firsthand, but were more optimistic about the potential for the new system to help parents discriminate among TV programs (34% very helpful vs. 20% among men).

When asked how often they monitor their children's TV time, 44% of parents said they always or usually watch television with their youngsters. Almost one-third (31%) said they watch with their kids half the time, 16% said sometimes, and 8% said hardly ever or never. Women reported watching TV with their children at a much higher rate than men -- 54% watch always or usually compared to 34% of men. Not surprisingly, many more parents of children under 8 said they watch TV with their kids (54%) than did parents with older kids (39%).

While many parents said they often do not watch TV with their children, most said they *do* monitor which shows their children are watching when they are not present. Nearly three out of four parents (73%) said when their children are watching TV without them, they always (18%) or usually (55%) know what their kids are watching. Again, parents of young children (under 8) reported keeping closer tabs on what their kids are watching when they are not present. One-in-four volunteered that they *always* know what their kids are watching, compared to 12% of parents with kids 8 and older.

About half of the parents surveyed (46%) said their families have specific rules about the times of day their children can watch TV. Just over half (53%) said they have no such rules.

Parents expressed high levels of concern over their children's exposure to violent content, sexual content and adult language on TV. Fifty-four percent expressed a great deal of concern about their children seeing violence and sex on TV, another 25% said they were somewhat concerned. A nearly equal percentage (51%) voiced their concern about exposure to adult language.

In Their Own Words

Respondents were asked to tell us what one word best described their reaction to Clinton's starting a second term in office and to name the most important news event of 1996.

One Word Reactions To Clinton's Re-Election	
	<u>Frequency</u>
1. Good	57
2. Disappointed	51
3. OK	36
4. Great	31
5. Happy	20
6. Hopeful	20
7. Surprised	20
8. Glad	17
9. Fine	15
10. Disgusted	13
11. Satisfied	11
12. Relieved	11
13. Unbelievable	11
14. No!	8
15. Wonderful	7
16. Yuck	6
17. Expected	5
18. Scary	5
19. Ridiculous	5
20. Unhappy	5
Number of interviews	(748)

*This table shows the number of respondents who offered each response; the numbers are not percentages.

The Public's Top Ten Stories of 1996	
	<u>%</u>
Presidential campaign/election	16
TWA plane crash	14
Bosnia	5
Oklahoma City bombing	4
O.J. Simpson case/trial	3
Breakdown of peace in Mid-East	2
Olympic bombing	2
Whitewater investigation	2
Summer Olympics in Atlanta	2
Welfare reform	1
Can't think of any	37

**PERCENT FOLLOWING EACH
NEWS STORY "VERY CLOSELY"**

	**Floods In Pacific Northwest	Social Security Reform	Charges Against Gingrich	Controversy Over Ebonics	(N)
<i>Total</i>	34	29	23	22	(1503)
<i>Sex</i>					
Male	35	28	26	22	(754)
Female	32	30	21	22	(749)
<i>Race</i>					
White	34	28	24	21	(1256)
*Hispanic	32	26	24	30	(102)
Black	35	36	23	31	(126)
<i>Age</i>					
Under 30	31	16	15	22	(286)
30-49	30	22	19	18	(657)
50+	40	44	34	28	(541)
<i>Education</i>					
College Grad.	33	28	30	30	(448)
Other College	33	27	25	26	(387)
High School Grad	33	28	19	18	(528)
< H. S. Grad	38	32	23	17	(134)
<i>Region</i>					
East	26	33	28	24	(300)
Midwest	23	27	20	15	(360)
South	30	28	22	22	(525)
West	62	28	25	29	(318)
<i>Party ID</i>					
Republican	36	25	24	22	(417)
Democrat	35	36	29	27	(499)
Independent	32	24	17	18	(504)

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

* The designation, Hispanic, is unrelated to the white-black categorization.

** These items were only asked of half the sample; the 'N' does not apply.

CONTINUED...

**PERCENT FOLLOWING EACH
NEWS STORY "VERY CLOSELY"**

	DNC Contributions	Clinton's Cabinet Choices	Hostage Crisis In Peru	New TV Rating System	(N)
<i>Total</i>	17	15	14	13	(1503)
<i>Sex</i>					
Male	20	14	18	11	(754)
Female	14	16	10	15	(749)
<i>Race</i>					
White	17	14	14	12	(1256)
*Hispanic	14	15	24	21	(102)
Black	11	20	9	19	(126)
<i>Age</i>					
Under 30	9	8	9	12	(286)
30-49	11	13	12	12	(657)
50+	27	22	17	15	(541)
<i>Education</i>					
College Grad.	20	19	15	9	(448)
Other College	16	15	16	13	(387)
High School Grad	14	11	11	13	(528)
< H. S. Grad	19	17	13	19	(134)
<i>Region</i>					
East	19	17	11	14	(300)
Midwest	14	12	11	12	(360)
South	18	17	15	14	(525)
West	16	12	16	12	(318)
<i>Party ID</i>					
Republican	22	15	15	13	(417)
Democrat	16	18	17	17	(499)
Independent	13	10	8	9	(504)

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

* The designation, Hispanic, is unrelated to the white-black categorization.

** These items were only asked of half the sample; the 'N' does not apply.

CONTINUED...

**PERCENT FOLLOWING EACH
NEWS STORY "VERY CLOSELY"**

	**Tensions Between Israelis and Palestinians	**Protests In Belgrade	**NATO Expansion	(N)
<i>Total</i>	12	7	5	(1503)
<i>Sex</i>				
Male	16	8	7	(754)
Female	10	5	3	(749)
<i>Race</i>				
White	12	7	5	(1256)
*Hispanic	16	1	5	(102)
Black	13	7	4	(126)
<i>Age</i>				
Under 30	11	4	4	(286)
30-49	11	6	4	(657)
50+	16	9	7	(541)
<i>Education</i>				
College Grad.	16	11	8	(448)
Other College	14	7	5	(387)
High School Grad	9	5	4	(528)
< H. S. Grad	13	4	5	(134)
<i>Region</i>				
East	18	7	6	(300)
Midwest	6	4	3	(360)
South	13	6	5	(525)
West	15	11	6	(318)
<i>Party ID</i>				
Republican	13	5	4	(417)
Democrat	14	9	7	(499)
Independent	11	6	4	(504)

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

* The designation, Hispanic, is unrelated to the white-black categorization.

** These items were only asked of half the sample; the 'N' does not apply.

TABLES

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL

Current vs. June 1996

	<i>January 1997</i>		<i>June 1996</i>	
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
	%	%	%	%
<i>Total</i>	59	31	54	38
<i>Sex</i>				
Male	58	34	53	39
Female	60	29	55	36
<i>Age</i>				
Under 30	62	31	55	36
30-49	61	29	53	39
50-64	54	35	54	38
65+	53	32	56	33
50+	54	34	55	36
<i>Sex and Age</i>				
Men 18-29	58	35	55	38
Women 18-29	68	25	56	34
Men 30-49	64	30	53	40
Women 30-49	59	29	53	39
Men 50+	49	39	52	39
Women 50+	57	30	56	33
<i>Race</i>				
White	55	35	52	40
Non-white	81	10	68	20
Black	83	6	72	17
Other/Mixed	76	18	61	30
Hispanic	73	20	61	31
<i>Race and Sex</i>				
White Men	54	38	51	42
White Women	56	32	52	39
<i>Education</i>				
College Grad.	61	32	58	38
Some College	55	38	54	39
High School Grad.	59	30	51	38
<H.S. Grad	62	22	58	34

Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President? **[IF DON'T KNOW ENTER AS DK. IF 'DEPENDS' PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President? IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]**

Continued ...

	<i>January 1997</i>		<i>June 1996</i>	
	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %
<i>Total</i>	59	31	54	38
<i>Family Income</i>				
\$50,000+	54	40	53	41
\$75,000+	50	43	48	48
\$50,000-\$74,999	58	36	56	35
\$30,000-\$49,999	61	29	49	44
\$20,000-\$29,999	60	30	62	30
<\$20,000	63	26	60	31
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>				
Total White Protestant	48	41	46	46
White Prot. Evangelical	43	48	36	56
White Prot. Non-Evang.	54	34	55	36
White Catholic	66	27	60	34
Jews	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Region</i>				
East	59	32	64	29
Midwest	59	29	55	35
South	56	33	49	43
West	62	31	53	39
<i>Community Size</i>				
Large City	63	28	57	34
Suburb	66	28	56	35
Small City/Town	58	31	54	38
Rural Area	49	39	50	43
<i>Party ID</i>				
Republican	31	61	24	68
Democrat	86	8	82	12
Independent	54	33	55	35
Rep./Lean Rep.	30	61	25	68
Dem./Lean Dem.	83	10	80	13

CONGRESS FAVORABILITY

Current vs. June 1996

	<i>January 1997</i>		<i>June 1996</i>	
	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>
	%	%	%	%
<i>Total</i>	55	40	45	50
<i>Sex</i>				
Male	53	44	42	55
Female	58	36	47	46
<i>Age</i>				
Under 30	56	41	50	43
30-49	54	42	44	52
50-64	57	36	45	49
65+	55	39	38	55
50+	56	37	42	52
<i>Sex and Age</i>				
Men 18-29	57	41	46	49
Women 18-29	54	40	55	37
Men 30-49	50	48	39	58
Women 30-49	59	36	49	47
Men 50+	53	41	41	56
Women 50+	59	34	42	48
<i>Race</i>				
White	57	39	45	50
Non-white	50	45	43	51
Black	45	50	41	53
Other/Mixed	62	34	46	49
Hispanic	65	35	46	52
<i>Race and Sex</i>				
White Men	54	44	42	55
White Women	60	34	48	45
<i>Education</i>				
College Grad.	54	44	39	58
Some College	59	37	48	48
High School Grad.	55	40	47	48
<H.S. Grad	53	37	43	46

Question: Now I'd like your views on some people and things in the news. As I read from a list, please tell me which category best describes your overall opinion of who or what I name. (First) would you say that your overall opinion of Congress is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? **[INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE".]**

Continued ...

	<i>January 1997</i>		<i>June 1996</i>	
	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>
	%	%	%	%
<i>Total</i>	55	40	45	50
<i>Family Income</i>				
\$50,000+	56	43	43	55
\$75,000+	60	38	44	53
\$50,000-\$74,999	53	46	42	56
\$30,000-\$49,999	56	40	45	52
\$20,000-\$29,999	58	38	44	47
<\$20,000	53	40	47	46
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>				
Total White Protestant	59	36	47	47
White Prot. Evangelical	61	33	51	41
White Prot. Non-Evang.	56	40	42	54
White Catholic	58	41	46	49
Jews	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Region</i>				
East	56	40	45	49
Midwest	59	37	43	51
South	52	42	48	46
West	56	40	41	56
<i>Community Size</i>				
Large City	51	45	39	55
Suburb	58	39	43	54
Small City/Town	58	38	49	46
Rural Area	53	39	46	48
<i>Party ID</i>				
Republican	70	26	61	35
Democrat	52	45	38	56
Independent	50	46	38	57
Rep./Lean Rep.	65	31	56	41
Dem./Lean Dem.	51	45	38	57

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

The survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,503 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period January 9-12, 1997. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on either Form 1 (N=755) or Form 2 (N=748), the sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY IN DETAIL

The sample for this survey is a random digit sample of telephone numbers selected from telephone exchanges in the continental United States. The random digit aspect of the sample is used to avoid "listing" bias and provides representation of both listed and unlisted numbers (including not-yet-listed). The design of the sample ensures this representation by random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of their area code, telephone exchange, and bank number.

The telephone exchanges were selected with probabilities proportional to their size. The first eight digits of the sampled telephone numbers (area code, telephone exchange, bank number) were selected to be proportionally stratified by county and by telephone exchange within county. That is, the number of telephone numbers randomly sampled from within a given county is proportional to that county's share of telephone households in the U.S. Estimates of the number of telephone households within each county are derived from 1990 Census data on residential telephone incidence that have been updated with state-level information on new telephone installations and county-level projections of the number of households. Only working banks of telephone numbers are selected. A working bank is defined as 100 contiguous telephone numbers containing three or more residential listings.

The sample was released for interviewing in replicates. Using replicates to control the release of sample to the field ensures that the complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample.

At least four attempts were made to complete an interview at every sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making a contact with a potential respondent. All interview breakoffs and refusals were re-contacted at least once in order to attempt to convert them to completed interviews. In each contacted household, interviewers asked to speak with the "youngest male 18 or older who is at home". If there is no eligible man at home, interviewers asked to speak with "the oldest woman 18 or older who lives in the household". This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown empirically to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender.

Non-response in telephone interview surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, and these subgroups are likely to vary also on questions of substantive interest. In order to compensate for these known biases, the sample data are weighted in analysis.

The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (March 1994). This analysis produced population parameters for the demographic characteristics of households with adults 18 or older, which are then compared with the sample characteristics to construct sample weights. The analysis only included households in the continental United States that contain a telephone.

The weights are derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distributions of all weighting parameters.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS
 JANUARY 1997 NEWS INTEREST INDEX
 -- FINAL TOPLINE --
 January 9 - 12, 1997
 N=1,503

Hello, I am _____ calling for Princeton Survey Research Associates in Princeton, New Jersey. We are conducting a telephone opinion survey for leading newspapers and TV stations around the country. I'd like to ask a few questions of the youngest male, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home. **[IF NO MALE, ASK: May I please speak with the oldest female, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home?]**

Q.1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President? **[IF DK ENTER AS DK. IF DEPENDS PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President? IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
January, 1997	59	31	10=100
July, 1996	54	38	8=100
June, 1996	54	38	8=100
April, 1996	53	39	8=100
March, 1996	55	38	7=100
February, 1996	51	39	10=100
January, 1996	50	43	7=100
October, 1995	48	42	10=100
September, 1995	45	42	13=100
August, 1995	44	44	12=100
June, 1995	50	40	10=100
April, 1995	47	43	10=100
March, 1995	44	44	12=100
February, 1995	44	44	12=100
December, 1994	41	47	12=100
November, 1994	48	40	12=100
October, 1994	41	47	12=100
Early October, 1994	38	47	15=100
September, 1994	41	52	7=100
July, 1994	45	46	9=100
June, 1994	42	44	14=100
May, 1994	46	42	12=100
March, 1994	45	42	13=100
January, 1994	51	35	14=100
Early January, 1994	48	35	17=100
December, 1993	48	36	16=100
October, 1993	44	42	14=100
September, 1993	49	35	16=100
Early September, 1993	43	43	14=100
August, 1993	39	46	15=100
May, 1993	39	43	18=100
Early May, 1993	45	37	18=100
April, 1993	49	29	22=100
February, 1993	56	25	19=100

ASK Q.1a OF FORM 1 ONLY: [N = 755]

Q.1aF1 Do you approve or disapprove of the policies and proposals of the Republican leaders in Congress? **(IF "DON'T KNOW," ENTER AS CODE 9. IF "DEPENDS," PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the proposals and policies of the Republican leaders in Congress? IF STILL "DEPENDS," ENTER AS CODE 9.)**

		July 1996	June 1996	April 1996	March 1996	Feb 1996	Jan 1996	Oct 1995	Sept 1995	Aug 1995	June 1995	April 1995	March 1995	Dec 1994 ³
38	Approve	38	36	39	35	33	36	36	36	38	41	44	43	52
43	Disapprove	48	50	46	51	53	54	51	50	45	45	43	39	28
<u>19</u> 100	DK/Refused	<u>14</u> 100	<u>14</u> 100	<u>15</u> 100	<u>14</u> 100	<u>14</u> 100	<u>10</u> 100	<u>13</u> 100	<u>14</u> 100	<u>17</u> 100	<u>14</u> 100	<u>13</u> 100	<u>18</u> 100	<u>20</u> 100

ASK Q.1b OF FORM 2 ONLY: [N = 748]

Q.1bF2 Do you approve or disapprove of the job the Republican leaders in Congress are doing? **[IF DK ENTER AS DK. IF DEPENDS PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall do you approve or disapprove of the job the Republican leaders in Congress are doing? IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]**

38	Approve
47	Disapprove
<u>15</u> 100	Don't know/Refused

³

In December the question asked "As best you can tell, do you approve or disapprove of Republican congressional leaders' policies and plans for the future?"

ASK Q.2 OF FORM 1 ONLY: [N = 755]

Q.2F1 What do you think was the single most important news event that happened in the nation or in the world in 1996?
(ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES)

- 53 DOMESTIC STORIES
 - 16 Presidential campaign/Election
 - 14 TWA Plane Crash
 - 4 Oklahoma city bombing
 - 3 O J Simpson Case/Trial
 - 2 Olympic bombing
 - 2 Ongoing Whitewater investigation
 - 2 Summer Olympics in Atlanta
 - 1 Welfare reform
 - 1 Gingrich ethics violation/Investigation
 - 1 Plane crashes (unspecified)
 - 1 Congressional election
 - 1 Natural disasters
 - 1 Federal government shutdown
 - 1 Unabomber arrest
 - 1 Economy
 - 6 Other

- 11 INTERNATIONAL STORIES
 - 5 Sending troops to Bosnia/Ongoing conflict
 - 2 Breakdown of Mid-East peace/Renewed conflict
 - 1 Bombing of US Base in Saudi Arabia
 - 1 Rabin assassination
 - 3 Other

- 37 Don't know/Refused

ASK Q.2a OF FORM 2 ONLY: [N = 748]

Q.2aF2 What one word best describes your REACTION to Bill Clinton's starting a second term in office? Tell me just the ONE best word that describes your reaction. (ACCEPT UP TO TWO RESPONSES)

SEE PAGE 7 FOR "TOP 20" RESPONSES.

**ASK ALL:
ON A DIFFERENT SUBJECT...**

Q.3 All in all, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today?

		July 1996	March 1996	Oct 1995	April 1995	July 1994	Mar 1994	Early Oct 1993	Sept 1993	June 1993	Jan 1993	Jan 1992	Nov 1991	May 1990	Feb 1989	May 1988	Jan 1988
38	Satisfied	29	28	23	23	24	24	22	20	22	39	28	34	41	45	41	39
58	Dissatisfied	67	70	73	74	73	71	73	75	71	50	68	61	54	50	54	55
<u>4</u> 100	No Opinion	<u>4</u> 100	<u>2</u> 100	<u>4</u> 100	<u>3</u> 100	<u>3</u> 100	<u>5</u> 100	<u>5</u> 100	<u>4</u> 100	<u>7</u> 100	<u>11</u> 100	<u>4</u> 100	<u>5</u> 100	<u>5</u> 100	<u>5</u> 100	<u>5</u> 100	<u>6</u> 100

Q.3a Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement... Most people in this country are trustworthy. Would you say you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly DISagree, or completely disagree?

3	Completely agree
54	Mostly agree
33	Mostly disagree
8	Completely disagree
<u>2</u> 100	Don't know/Refused

Q.4 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely?
[READ AND ROTATE LIST]

SPLIT FORM ITEMS AS INDICATED: FORM 1 [N = 755]; FORM 2 [N=748]

		Very <u>Closely</u>	Fairly <u>Closely</u>	Not too <u>Closely</u>	Not at all <u>Closely</u>	VOL DK
a.F1	Protests and demonstrations in Belgrade against Serbian President Milosevic	7	14	29	49	1=100
	December, 1996	10	16	24	49	1=100
b.	Charges of improper campaign contributions to the Democrats by Indonesian business interests	17	29	26	28	*=100
	December, 1996	22	26	22	30	*=100
c.	Bill Clinton's cabinet choices and other high level appointments for his second term	15	32	30	23	*=100
	January, 1993	24	42	22	11	1=100

Q.4 con't ...

SPLIT FORM ITEMS AS INDICATED

		<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	VOL DK
d.	Charges that Newt Gingrich violated House ethics rules	23	35	22	19	1= 100
e.F2	The hostage crisis at the Japanese Embassy in Peru	14	37	24	24	1=100
f.F1	Floods in the Pacific Northwest	34	37	14	14	1=100
g.	The controversy over treating black English, or Ebonics, as a second language in school	22	34	22	21	1=100
h.	The new ratings system for television programs	13	33	27	26	1=100
i.F2	Renewed tensions between Israelis and Palestinians over Hebron May, 1988 ⁴	12 18	23 37	29 34	35 9	1=100 2=100
j.	The discussion and debate about expanding NATO into Eastern Europe	5	15	32	47	1=100
k.	Proposals to reform the Social Security system	29	35	22	13	1=100

ON ANOTHER SUBJECT...

Q.5 Right now, which is more important for President Clinton to focus on... domestic policy or foreign policy?

		<u>Dec 1994</u>	<u>Oct 1993</u>
86	Domestic policy	85	76
7	Foreign policy	7	13
*	Neither (VOL)	2	*
5	Both (VOL)	4	7
<u>2</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>2</u> 100	<u>4</u> 100

⁴

In previous month story was listed as "The conflict in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis in the occupied territories."

Q.6 Now a few questions about priorities for President Clinton and the new Congress this year. As I read from a list tell me if you think the item that I read should be a priority. First... should (**READ AND ROTATE**) be a top priority, important but lower priority, not too important, or should it not be done?

SPLIT FORM ITEMS a.-n. AS INDICATED: FORM 1 [N = 755]; FORM 2 [N=748]

		<u>Top Priority</u>	<u>Important But lower Priority</u>	<u>Not too Important</u>	<u>Should Not be Done</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
a.F1	Improving the job situation	66	26	5	2	1=100
	December, 1994	64	27	5	2	2=100
b.F2	Reforming health care	56	32	7	4	1=100
	December, 1994	54	27	9	7	3=100
c.F1	Cutting the capital gains tax	29	38	17	8	8=100
	December, 1994	27	38	16	7	12=100
d.F2	Reducing crime	70	25	3	2	*=100
	December, 1994	78	17	2	1	2=100
e.F1	Reducing the budget deficit	60	30	5	2	3=100
	December, 1994	65	26	5	1	3=100
f.F2	Reducing federal income taxes for the middle class	42	38	10	8	2=100
	December, 1994	53	32	9	3	3=100
g.F1	Reforming the campaign finance system	31	37	23	5	4=100
h.F2	Improving the educational system	75	20	3	2	*=100
i.F1	Taking steps to make the Social Security system financially sound	75	20	2	2	1=100
j.F2	Taking steps to make the Medicare system financially sound	64	31	3	1	1=100
k.F1	Working to reduce racial tensions	50	34	9	5	2=100
l.F2	Dealing with the problems of poor and needy people	57	35	6	2	*=100
m.F1	Protecting the environment	54	35	8	2	1=100
n.F2	Dealing with the moral breakdown in the country	52	29	10	6	3=100

Q.7 Now I'd like your views on some people and things in the news. As I read from a list, please tell me which category best describes your overall opinion of who or what I name. (First,) would you say your overall opinion of... **(INSERT ITEM. ROTATE a-f; THEN ROTATE g-j)** is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? **(INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE")**

		Very Favor- <u>able</u>	Mostly Favor- <u>able</u>	Mostly Unfavor- <u>able</u>	Very Unfavor- <u>able</u>	Never Heard <u>Of</u>	Can't <u>Rate</u>
a.	Bill Clinton	17	49	18	14	*	2=100
	October, 1996 ⁵	12	45	22	19	0	2=100
	June, 1996	16	45	23	14	*	2=100
	April, 1996	16	41	24	16	0	3=100
	February, 1996	20	35	22	21	0	2=100
	January, 1996	13	43	27	15	0	2=100
	August, 1995	13	36	29	20	0	2=100
	February, 1995	14	41	25	17	0	3=100
	December, 1994	17	34	24	22	0	3=100
	July, 1994	15	43	25	16	*	1=100
	May, 1993	18	42	23	12	0	5=100
	July, 1992	17	42	25	9	0	7=100
	June, 1992	10	36	33	14	1	6=100
	May, 1992	11	42	32	10	*	5=100
	March, 1992	10	43	29	11	1	6=100
	February, 1992	15	44	24	7	2	8=100
	January, 1992	9	28	11	4	27	21=100
	November, 1991	5	25	8	2	39	21=100
b.	Hillary Clinton	17	40	23	17	*	3=100
	June, 1996	13	40	26	17	*	4=100
	April, 1996	12	37	27	19	0	5=100
	February, 1996	14	28	27	27	0	4=100
	January, 1996	10	32	28	26	0	4=100
	October, 1995	14	44	24	14	-	4=100
	August, 1995	16	33	25	22	*	4=100
	July, 1994	19	38	22	18	1	2=100
	May, 1993	19	41	18	11	1	10=100
c.	Newt Gingrich	4	24	39	26	2	5=100
	August, 1995	9	21	29	25	4	12=100
	February, 1995	12	29	22	15	10	12=100
	December, 1994	7	18	15	13	30	17=100
	July, 1994	2	12	8	4	65	9=100

5

October 1996 trend based on registered voters.

Q.7 con't ...

		<u>Very Favorable</u>	<u>Mostly Favorable</u>	<u>Mostly Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very Unfavorable</u>	<u>Never Heard Of</u>	<u>Can't Rate</u>
d.	Al Gore	18	47	21	8	1	5=100
	July, 1994	18	49	19	7	2	5=100
	August, 1992	22	44	15	5	2	12=100
	July, 1992 ⁶	15	32	14	5	6	28=100
	September, 1987	6	23	11	3	23	34=100
e.	Secretary of State designate, Madeleine Albright	13	44	12	4	9	18=100
	February, 1995	2	16	11	5	47	19=100
f.	Treasury Secretary, Robert Rubin	5	38	14	3	18	22=100
g.	Congress	6	50	32	8	*	4=100
	June, 1996	6	39	38	12	*	5=100
	April, 1996	6	39	37	13	0	5=100
	January, 1996	4	38	38	16	*	4=100
	October, 1995	4	38	42	13	0	3=100
	August, 1995	5	40	34	13	*	7=100
	June, 1995	8	45	31	11	*	5=100
	February, 1995	10	44	27	10	0	9=100
	July, 1994	7	46	34	9	*	4=100
	May, 1993	8	35	35	13	0	9=100
	November, 1991	7	44	34	9	0	6=100
	May, 1990	6	53	25	9	1	6=100
	May, 1988	8	56	23	5	0	8=100
	January, 1988	6	58	25	4	0	7=100
	May, 1987	10	64	16	4	*	6=100
	January, 1987	7	52	23	8	0	10=100
	June, 1985	9	58	21	5	*	7=100
h.	The Democratic Party	13	47	28	7	*	5=100
	October, 1995	9	40	37	11	-	3=100
	July, 1994	13	49	27	7	*	4=100
	May, 1993	14	43	25	9	0	9=100
	July, 1992	17	44	24	9	*	6=100
i.	The Republican Party	8	44	33	10	*	5=100
	October, 1995	10	42	28	16	*	4=100
	July, 1994	12	51	25	8	*	4=100
	May, 1993	12	42	25	10	0	11=100
	July, 1992	9	37	31	17	*	6=100

⁶

July 1992 trend based on 461 respondents asked on July 9, 1992 only.

Q.7 con't ...

		Very Favorable	Mostly Favorable	Mostly Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Never Heard Of	Can't Rate
j.	NATO	9	44	23	8	3	13=100
	June, 1995	8	53	18	7	4	10=100

ON ANOTHER SUBJECT...

Q.12 Overall, how much trust and confidence do you have in your STATE government to do a good job in carrying out its responsibilities... a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

		----- Gallup ⁷ -----				
		June 1992	June 1987	June 1976	April 1974	May 1972
17	A great deal	5	11	13	16	15
53	A fair amount	46	62	59	59	48
23	Not very much	36	19	19	17	27
6	None at all	8	4	7	3	6
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused -- GO TO Q.14	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>
100		100	100	100	100	100

Q.13 Do you say that you have (**INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q.12; FOR '4' NONE AT ALL, INSERT 'NO' AND OMIT 'OF'**) of trust and confidence in your state government to do a good job in carrying out its responsibilities mainly because of what you've heard or read OR because of things you've personally experienced?

58	Heard/read
29	Personally experienced
11	Both (VOL)
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

⁷

Question wording for June 1976, April 1974 and May 1972 was as follows: "Overall, how much trust and confidence do you have in the government of this state where you live when it comes to handling state problems: a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?"

ASK ALL:

Q.14 In which level of government -- federal, state or local -- do you have the most trust and confidence to handle each of the following problems most effectively... **(READ AND ROTATE)?**

		<u>Federal</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Local</u>	VOL <u>All</u>	VOL <u>None</u>	<u>DK</u>
a.	Provide services to immigrants <i>Gallup: May, 1990</i>	62 60	19 15	11 6	1 2	2 7	5=100 11=100
b.	Provide job training <i>Gallup: May, 1990</i>	20 24	45 37	30 23	1 2	2 6	2=100 8=100
c.	Provide EARLY education to low income children	25	39	32	1	1	2=100
d.	Provide health care for the disabled, poor and elderly <i>Gallup: May, 1990</i>	44 36	36 28	15 18	1 3	2 10	2=100 5=100
e.	Fight crime	24	26	42	4	2	2=100
f.	Establish rules on who can receive welfare or public assistance for poor people	28	44	23	1	1	3=100
g.	Protect civil rights	59	21	13	2	2	3=100

NO QUESTION 15

NOW A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT TELEVISION...

Q.16 What would you say bothers you more: the amount of violence on TV or the amount of sex on TV?

		<u>Feb</u> <u>1993</u>
43	Violence	37
24	Sex	30
24	Both equally (VOL)	25
8	Neither (VOL)	--
<u>1</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>8</u> 100

Q.17 How do you feel about the amount of violence portrayed on television programs today, not including news programs? Do you think there is too much violence, a reasonable amount, or very little violence?

		<u>Feb</u> <u>1993</u>	<i>Harris</i> <u>1971</u>
75	Too much violence	72	71
21	A reasonable amount	25	24
2	Very little violence	2	3
<u>2</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>1</u> 100	<u>2</u> 100

Q.18 As you may know, the television industry recently adopted a new ratings system for television programs. How well do you feel you understand this new ratings system... very well, fairly well, just somewhat well, or not very well at all?

21	Very well
30	Fairly well
20	Just somewhat well
27	Not very well at all
<u>2</u> 100	Don't know/Refused

Q.19 Since this new system has been in place, have you yourself seen the rating for a specific show while watching television, OR have you not noticed ratings on any of the shows you've been watching?

42	Yes, have seen ratings
54	No, haven't seen ratings
3	Don't watch TV/Don't have a TV (VOL)
<u>1</u> 100	Don't know/Refused

Q.20 How helpful do you think the new ratings system will be in helping parents decide which television shows their children should be allowed to watch... will it be very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful or not at all helpful?

27	Very helpful
42	Somewhat helpful
18	Not too helpful
9	Not at all helpful
<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q.21 Are you the parent or guardian of any children under 18 now living in your household?
ASK Q.21a-Q.25 OF PARENTS ONLY (Q.21=1):

36	Yes -- GO TO Q.21a How many of those children are between the ages of 14 and 17? How many of those children are between the ages of 8 and 13? How many of those children are between the ages of 5 and 7? How many of those children are under the age of 5?
64	No -- GO TO Q.26
<u>0</u>	Don't know/Refused -- GO TO Q.26
100	

Q.22-25 BASED ON PARENTS: N = 552

Q.22 When your (child watches/children watch) TV, how often do you watch WITH (him or her/them)... usually, about half the time, only sometimes, or hardly ever?

9 Always (**VOL**)
35 Usually
31 Half the time
16 Sometimes
8 Hardly ever/Never
1 Don't know/Refused
100
(**N=552**)

Q.23 When your (child is watching/children are watching) TV and you're NOT with (him or her/them), about how often do you know WHAT (he or she is/they are) watching... usually, about half the time, only sometimes, or hardly ever?

18 Always (**VOL**)
55 Usually
13 Half the time
9 Sometimes
4 Hardly ever/Never
1 Don't know/Refused
100
(**N = 552**)

Q.24 Does your family have specific rules about which times of day your (child/children) can watch TV and which times of day (he or she/they) can't?

46 Yes
53 No
1 Don't know/Refused
100
(**N = 552**)

Q.25 How concerned are you that your (child is/children are) being exposed to too much (**INSERT ITEM; ROTATE**) in the TV shows (he or she watches/they watch)... a great deal, somewhat, not too much, or not at all? (N = 552)

		Great <u>Deal</u>	Some- <u>what</u>	Not too <u>much</u>	Not at all <u>concerned</u>	<u>DK</u>
a.	Violent content	54	26	11	9	*=100
b.	Sexual content	54	25	11	10	*=100
c.	Adult language	51	27	13	9	*=100

**ASK ALL:
ON ANOTHER SUBJECT...**

ROTATE Q.26/27 AND Q.28

Q.26 As you may know, the Democratic National Campaign Committee received campaign contributions which came indirectly from foreign sources in Indonesia. Do you think this is an important issue or not important?

		<i>W. Post</i> <u>Dec 1996</u>
70	Important	68
26	Not important	29
$\frac{4}{100}$	Don't know/Refused	$\frac{3}{100}$

Q.27 Do you think a special committee should be set up in Congress to investigate these charges, or not?

		Based on Voters <u>Nov 1996</u>
63	Yes	54
33	No	42
$\frac{4}{100}$	Don't know/Refused	$\frac{4}{100}$

Q.28 As you may know, Speaker Newt Gingrich recently admitted that he violated House rules by giving false statements to the House Ethics Committee about his use of tax deductible contributions. Do you think this is an important issue or not important?

79 Important

18 Not important

3 Don't know/Refused
100

Q.29 Which would you say is more important, the investigation into the Democratic campaign contributions from foreign sources OR the investigation into charges against Newt Gingrich?

39 DNC contributions

36 Gingrich activities

18 Both equally important (**VOL**)

7 Don't know/Refused
100