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For The People & The Press

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After Falluja

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR WAR STEADY, BUT BUSH JOB RATINGS SLIP

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After Falluja

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR WAR STEADY, BUT BUSH JOB RATINGS SLIP

Public support for war in Iraq has been unaffected by the murders and desecration of the corpses of American citizens in Falluja. However, continued turmoil and violence in Iraq may be taking a toll on President Bush's approval ratings. More Americans now disapprove of the way he is doing his job than approve, though by only a slight margin (47% disapprove vs. 43% approve). Just four-in-ten approve of the way Bush is handling the situation in Iraq, his lowest rating ever and down from 59% in January. Bush's evaluations on other issues – the economy, energy and even terrorism – have fallen as well. And by a wide margin (57% to 32%) the public does not think he has a clear plan for bringing the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion.

	Sept	Jan	Feb	Mar	Mar	Apr
				Mid	Late	
<i>Bush job approval</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	55	56	48	46	47	43
Disapprove	36	34	44	47	44	47
Don't know	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>War in Iraq</i>						
Right decision	63	65	56	55	--	57
Wrong decision	31	30	39	39	--	35
Don't know	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	--	<u>8</u>
	100	100	100	100		100

Nonetheless, nearly six-in-ten Americans (57%) continue to believe that the United States made the right decision in using military force against Iraq, which is unchanged from a mid-March Pew survey. However, public attitudes toward most aspects of the U.S. mission in Iraq have turned more negative since January, in the aftermath of the capture of Saddam Hussein. Just 50% of Americans favor keeping troops in Iraq until a stable government is established there, while 44% support bringing the troops home as soon as possible. In January, the public by nearly two-to-one favored maintaining U.S. troops in Iraq until a stable government is formed (63%-32%).

The latest Pew Research Center national survey of 790 adults, conducted April 1-4, finds just 39% approve of Bush's handling of the economy, in spite of a government report released April 2 showing a sharp increase in job growth. At this point, the spiraling price of gas may be overshadowing jobs on the public's radar. Public attention to news about rising gas prices, already quite high, increased markedly in early April – fully 58% paid very close attention to reports on the high price of gasoline, compared with 36% who followed the recent attacks on Americans in Iraq very closely. Only about three-in-

	Sept	Jan	Apr
<i>What to do in Iraq</i>	%	%	%
Keep troops in	64	63	50
Bring troops home	32	32	44
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100	100
<i>Bush's Iraq policy</i>	Sept	Dec	Apr
	%	%	%
Has a clear plan	32	44	32
Does not	58	45	57
Don't know	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>
	100	100	100
<i>Most Iraqis...</i>			
Support US policies	39	47	37
Oppose US policies	47	34	48
Don't know	<u>14</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>15</u>
	100	100	100

ten (29%) approve of Bush's handling of energy policy.

The president continues to receive majority support for his handling of terrorism (53% approve), down from 64% last September. Bush's ratings on this issue also declined in other national polls following allegations by former White House aide Richard Clarke that the administration did not treat terrorism as an urgent priority before Sept. 11.

In general, the public feels news organizations did a good job of covering the disturbing events in Falluja, while being careful to avoid presenting overly graphic images. Half feel news organizations did a good job in this regard, while 21% think news organizations showed too many graphic images and 7% felt the media held back too much.

In general, however, public attention to those events, while broad, was not overwhelming. A narrow majority (55%) say they saw video or pictures of the American citizens who were killed in Falluja, while 45% say they did not. Among those who report seeing these images, two-thirds say news organizations struck the right balance between showing important news while being careful about the graphic nature of the images.

Bush Job Handling...			
	<u>Sept</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Apr</u>
<i>The economy</i>	%	%	%
Approve	43	47	39
Disapprove	48	47	53
Don't know	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>
	100	100	100
<i>Situation in Iraq</i>			
Approve	52	59	40
Disapprove	40	37	53
Don't know	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>
	100	100	100
<i>Terrorist threats</i>			
Approve	64	65*	53
Disapprove	28	33	38
Don't know	<u>8</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>
	100	100	100
<i>Energy policy</i>			
Approve	47**	--	29
Disapprove	44	--	48
Don't know	<u>9</u>	--	<u>23</u>
	100		100

* Figures from Gallup, Dec 2003
 ** Figures from Gallup, Aug 2003

Gas Prices Top News Interest		
<i>Following news about...</i>	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>
	%	%
The price of gasoline	58	23
Attacks in Iraq	36	39
9-11 Commission	29	34
Clarke's criticisms	28	25

Favorable Ratings for Falluja Coverage			
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Saw Images</u>	<u>Didn't See Any</u>
	%	%	%
Press did a good job	50	66	31
Too graphic	21	22	19
Too limited (Vol)	7	5	9
Don't know (Vol)	<u>22</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>41</u>
	100	100	100
Number of cases	(790)	(453)	(334)

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a nationwide sample of 790 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period April 1-4, 2004. 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 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.

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PERCENT FOLLOWING EACH NEWS STORY “VERY CLOSELY”

	High price of <u>gasoline</u>	Recent Attacks on Civilians and <u>Troops in Iraq</u>	9/11 Commission <u>Hearings</u>	Clarke criticism of Bush <u>Administration</u>	<u>(N)</u>
	%	%	%	%	
Total	58	36	29	28	(790)
Sex					
Male	57	42	31	32	(364)
Female	59	32	28	26	(426)
Race					
White	56	36	26	29	(635)
Non-white	67	39	41	29	(143)
Black	74	43	43	31	(90)
Race and Sex					
White Men	55	41	28	33	(284)
White Women	56	32	25	25	(351)
Age					
Under 30	56	15	32	16	(126)
30-49	56	37	25	24	(307)
50-64	58	45	31	39	(195)
65+	63	51	35	40	(154)
Education					
College Grad.	49	44	31	39	(249)
Some College	65	42	24	30	(192)
High School Grad.	61	31	32	25	(267)
Less than H.S.	54	30	26	17	(81)
Income					
\$75,000+	50	43	27	35	(175)
\$50,000-\$74,999	59	42	25	35	(115)
\$30,000-\$49,000	67	36	32	23	(159)
\$20,000-\$29,000	60	36	37	31	(80)
<\$20,000	53	28	29	23	(141)
Region					
East	53	42	31	30	(138)
Midwest	64	36	30	33	(160)
South	56	37	29	26	(286)
West	59	32	26	26	(206)
Party ID					
Republican	52	41	25	30	(252)
Democrat	65	39	34	27	(261)
Independent	53	30	27	27	(217)

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?

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS
EARLY APRIL 2004 NEWS INTEREST INDEX
FINAL TOPLINE
April 1 - 4, 2004
N=790

Q.1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush 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 George W. Bush is handling his job as president? IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]

	<u>Approve</u>	Dis- approve	Don't know		<u>Approve</u>	Dis- approve	Don't know
April, 2004	43	47	10=100	2001			
Late March, 2004	47	44	9=100	Mid-November, 2001	84	9	7=100
Mid-March, 2004	46	47	7=100	Early October, 2001	84	8	8=100
February, 2004	48	44	8=100	Late September, 2001	86	7	7=100
Mid-January, 2004	56	34	10=100	Mid-September, 2001	80	9	11=100
Early January, 2004	58	35	7=100	Early September, 2001	51	34	15=100
2003				August, 2001	50	32	18=100
December, 2003	57	34	9=100	July, 2001	51	32	17=100
November, 2003	50	40	10=100	June, 2001	50	33	17=100
October, 2003	50	42	8=100	May, 2001	53	32	15=100
September, 2003	55	36	9=100	April, 2001	56	27	17=100
Mid-August, 2003	56	32	12=100	March, 2001	55	25	20=100
Early August, 2003	53	37	10=100	February, 2001	53	21	26=100
Mid-July, 2003	58	32	10=100				
Early July, 2003	60	29	11=100				
June, 2003	62	27	11=100				
May, 2003	65	27	8=100				
April 10-16, 2003	72	22	6=100				
April 9, 2003	74	20	6=100				
April 2-7, 2003	69	25	6=100				
March 28-April 1, 2003	71	23	6=100				
March 25-27, 2003	70	24	6=100				
March 20-24, 2003	67	26	7=100				
March 13-16, 2003	55	34	11=100				
February, 2003	54	36	10=100				
January, 2003	58	32	10=100				
2002							
December, 2002	61	28	11=100				
Late October, 2002	59	29	12=100				
Early October, 2002	61	30	9=100				
Mid-September, 2002	67	22	11=100				
Early September, 2002	63	26	11=100				
Late August, 2002	60	27	13=100				
August, 2002	67	21	12=100				
Late July, 2002	65	25	10=100				
July, 2002	67	21	12=100				
June, 2002	70	20	10=100				
April, 2002	69	18	13=100				
Early April, 2002	74	16	10=100				
February, 2002	78	13	9=100				
January, 2002	80	11	9=100				

More specifically...

Q.2 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling [INSERT ITEM, RANDOMIZE]

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>
a. The economy	39	53	8=100
Mid-January, 2004	47	47	6=100
September, 2003	43	48	9=100
February, 2003	43	48	9=100
January, 2003	47	45	8=100
Early October, 2002	49	40	11=100
June, 2002	53	36	11=100
January, 2002	60	28	12=100
Early September, 2001	47	44	9=100
February, 2001	50	22	28=100
Clinton: Early September, 1998	71	23	6=100
Clinton: September, 1997	60	34	6=100
Clinton: January, 1996	50	42	8=100
Clinton: June, 1995	46	46	8=100
Clinton: October, 1994	45	46	9=100
Clinton: July, 1994	38	56	6=100
Bush, Sr.: August, 1990	40	52	8=100
Bush, Sr.: May, 1990	42	47	11=100
b. The situation in Iraq	40	53	7=100
Mid-January, 2004	59	37	4=100
September, 2003	52	40	8=100
April 10-16, 2003 ¹	77	17	6=100
April 8-9, 2003	71	23	6=100
--April 9, 2003	76	18	6=100
--April 8, 2003	65	28	7=100
April 2-7, 2003	73	21	6=100
March 28-April 1, 2003	69	26	5=100
March 25-27, 2003	73	23	4=100
March 23-24, 2003	72	22	6=100
March 20-22, 2003	70	23	7=100
February, 2003	56	37	7=100
January, 2003	56	36	8=100
Early October, 2002	56	34	10=100
Gallup: Late January, 1991	84	11	5=100
c. Energy policy	29	48	23=100
Gallup/CNN/USA Today: 8/03	47	44	9=100
June, 2002	41	39	20=100
CBS News: 8/01	43	42	15=100

¹ From March to April 2003 the item was worded: "... dealing with the war in Iraq?" The 1991 Gallup trend was worded "...George Bush is handling the situation in the Persian Gulf region."

Q.2 CONTINUED...

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK/Ref.</u>
d. Terrorist threats	53	38	9=100
<i>Gallup/CNN/USA Today: 12/03</i>	65	33	2=100
September, 2003	64	28	8=100
February, 2003	67	25	8=100
January, 2003	69	23	8=100
Early October, 2002	71	22	7=100
June, 2002	74	18	8=100
Mid-September, 2001 ²	85	6	9=100
Clinton: Early September, 1998	72	20	8=100

Q.3 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. **[INSERT ITEM, IN ORDER]**

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
a. Recent attacks on U.S. civilians and troops in Iraq	36	39	13	11	1=100
b. Former White House aide Richard Clarke's criticisms of the Bush administration for mishandling the war on terrorism	28	25	21	24	2=100
c. The Sept 11 Commission's hearings on the 2001 terrorist attacks	29	34	20	16	1=100
d. The high price of gasoline these days	58	23	10	8	1=100
Mid-March, 2004	47	27	14	10	2=100
September, 2003	45	27	15	11	1=100
March, 2003	52	27	11	9	1=100
February, 2003	53	25	12	9	1=100
June, 2001	56	31	7	5	1=100
May, 2001	61	26	6	6	1=100
Early October, 2000	56	25	12	6	1=100
June, 2000 ³	61	25	9	5	*=100
March, 2000	58	28	10	4	*=100
October, 1990	62	26	8	4	*=100
September, 1990	56	28	11	5	*=100
August, 1990	57	27	10	5	1=100

² In Mid-September, 2001 the question was worded: "...dealing with the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington." In Early September 1998 the question was worded: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling current threats from international terrorist groups?"

³ In August 1990 through June 2000 the question was worded "Recent increases in the price of gasoline."

ASK ALL:

Now thinking about Iraq...

Q.4 Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force against Iraq?

	<u>Right decision</u>	<u>Wrong decision</u>	<u>Don't know/ Ref.</u>
April, 2004	57	35	8=100
Mid-March, 2004	55	39	6=100
Late February, 2004	60	32	8=100
Early February, 2004	56	39	5=100
Mid-January, 2004	65	30	5=100
Early January, 2004	62	28	10=100
December, 2003	67	26	7=100
October, 2003	60	33	7=100
September, 2003	63	31	6=100
August, 2003	63	30	7=100
Early July, 2003	67	24	9=100
May, 2003	74	20	6=100
<i>April 10-16, 2003</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>7=100</i>
<i>April 8-9, 2003</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>7=100</i>
<i>April 2-7, 2003</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>8=100</i>
<i>March 28-April 1, 2003</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>6=100</i>
<i>March 25-27, 2003</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>5=100</i>
<i>March 23-24, 2003</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>5=100</i>
<i>March 20-22, 2003</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>7=100</i>
Late January, 1991	77	15	9=100

Q.5 How well is the U.S. military effort in Iraq going? **[READ IN ORDER]**

	<u>Very well</u>	<u>Fairly well</u>	<u>Not too well</u>	<u>Not at all well</u>	<u>Don't know/ Ref.</u>
April, 2004	14	43	26	13	4=100
Mid-March, 2004	16	45	26	11	2=100
Early February, 2004	17	46	23	11	3=100
Mid-January, 2004	22	51	18	6	3=100
Early January, 2004	23	47	18	7	5=100
December, 2003	28	47	16	6	3=100
October, 2003	16	44	25	11	4=100
September, 2003	15	47	26	9	3=100
August, 2003	19	43	24	11	3=100
Early July, 2003	23	52	16	5	4=100
<i>April 10-16, 2003</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3=100</i>
<i>April 8-9, 2003</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2=100</i>
<i>April 2-7, 2003</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3=100</i>
<i>March 25-April 1, 2003</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5=100</i>
<i>March 23-24, 2003</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>6=100</i>
<i>March 20-22, 2003</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>7=100</i>

Q.6 Do you think the U.S. should keep military troops in Iraq until a stable government is established there, or do you think the U.S. should bring its troops home as soon as possible?

		Early Jan <u>2004</u>	Oct <u>2003</u>	Sept <u>2003</u>
50	Keep troops in Iraq	63	58	64
44	Bring troops home	32	39	32
<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
100		100	100	100

Q.7 Do you think George W. Bush has a clear plan for bringing the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion, or don't you think so?

		Dec <u>2003</u>	Oct <u>2003</u>	Sept <u>2003</u>
32	Has a clear plan	44	35	32
57	Doesn't have a clear plan	45	54	58
<u>11</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>
100		100	100	100

Q.8 Based on what you've seen and read, do MOST people in Iraq support or do most oppose America's current policies in Iraq?

		Dec <u>2003</u>	Sept <u>2003</u>
37	Support	47	39
48	Oppose	34	47
<u>15</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>19</u>	<u>14</u>
100		100	100

Q.9 Which concerns you more... [READ AND ROTATE]

		Mid-Jan <u>2004</u>
36	That the U.S. will leave Iraq before a stable democracy is in place OR	41
52	That the U.S. will wait too long to withdraw its troops from Iraq	48
2	Neither (VOL.)	5
<u>10</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>6</u>
100		100

Q.10 A few days ago, there were violent attacks against Americans in and around Falluja, Iraq, that resulted in the deaths of four U.S. civilians and five soldiers. Did you happen to see any video or pictures of these events in the news, or not?

55	Yes
45	No
<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

Q.11 Based on what you've seen or heard...which comes closer to your view: **[READ PUNCH 1 AND 2, IN ORDER]**

50 News organizations did a good job of showing the public what happened to the Americans killed in Iraq last week while being careful to avoid overly graphic images

OR

21 News organizations showed too many graphic images that did not need to be printed or aired

7 News organizations held back too much / Should have covered more **[VOL.]**

22 Don't know/Refused **[VOL.]**

100