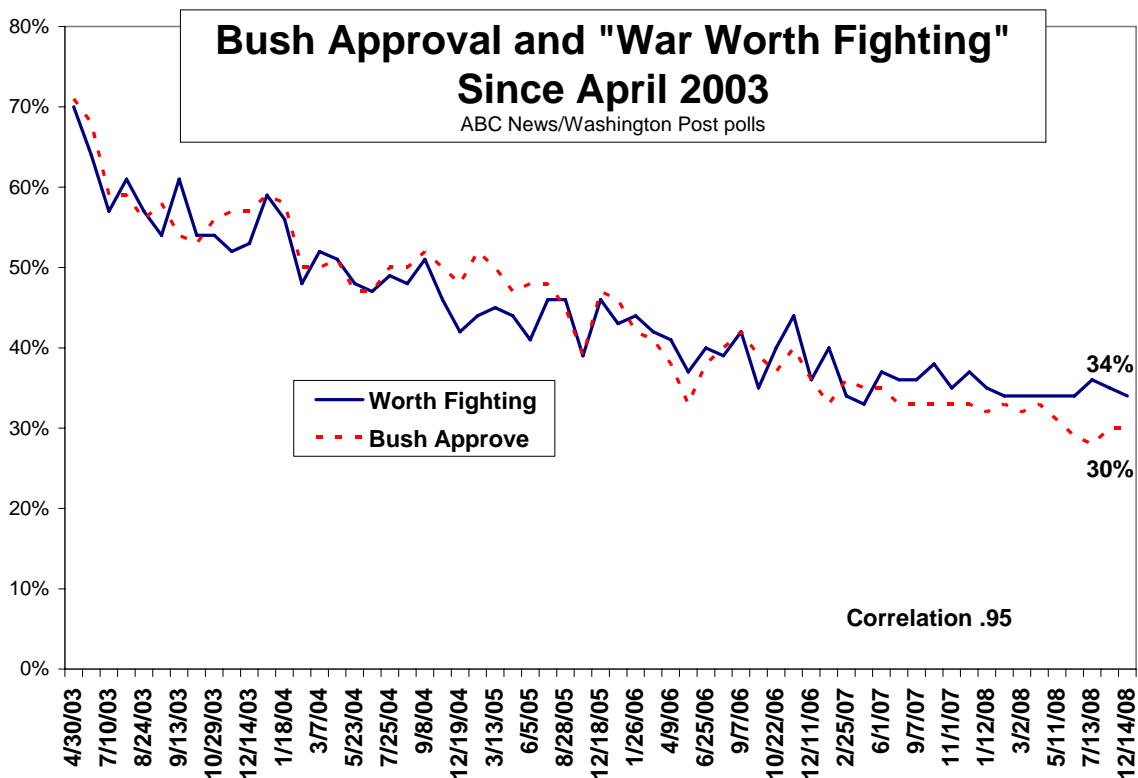


Iraq War Stays Unpopular, with Bush in Tow; On Afghanistan, Optimism's in Short Supply

Iraqis aren't the only ones throwing shoes: Americans remain broadly critical of U.S. involvement in Iraq, a view unaltered by security gains. And Afghanistan presents its own challenges, with broad public worries about progress and prospects alike.

On Iraq, George W. Bush's surprise trip Sunday took him to the root of his own unpopularity: Sixty-four percent of Americans in this new ABC News/Washington Post poll say the war was not worth fighting, steady for two years. And in the dwindling days of his presidency, 68 percent disapprove of Bush's job performance overall.

The two are inextricably linked. Bush and the war have been unpopular for four years running, with an almost perfect correlation between the two views. While the economy's taken center stage, it's the Iraq war that's most damaged Bush over the long term.



The success of the "surge" of U.S. forces in improving security is almost an ironic twist. Bush heralded it Sunday, and indeed 56 percent now say the United States is making

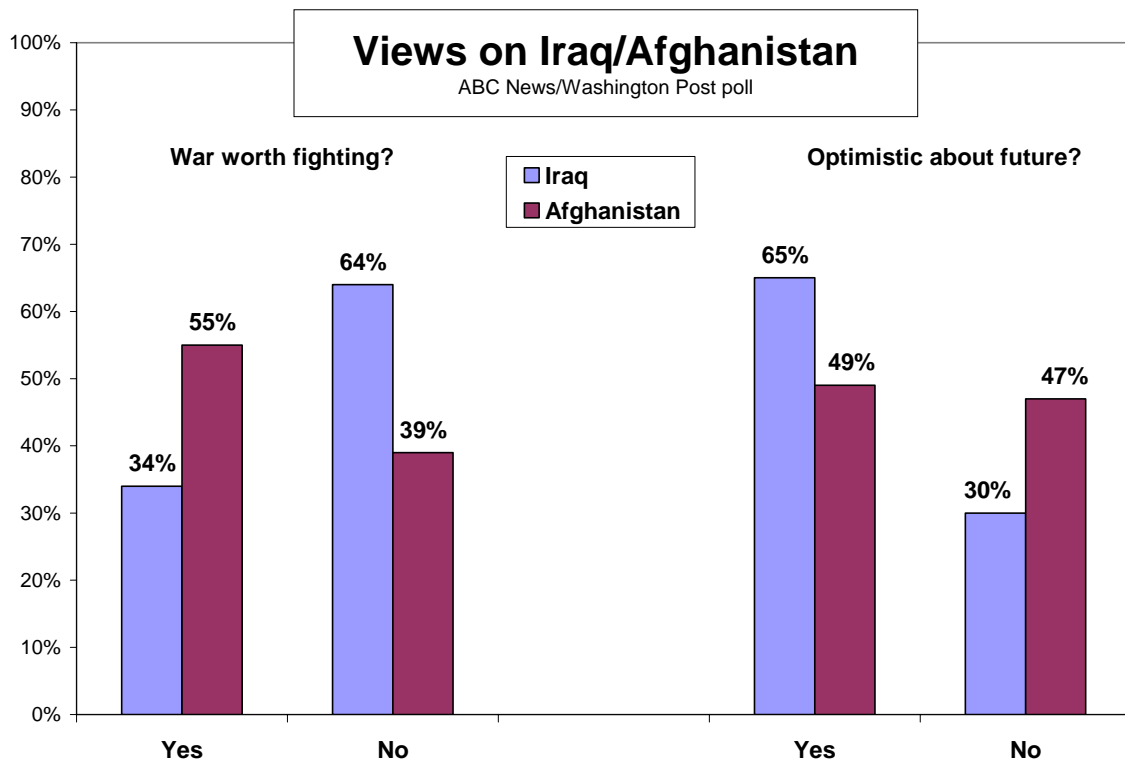
“significant progress” restoring civil order in Iraq, up from 40 percent in April. (The rest may be reflecting on the ongoing, if less numerous, car-bomb attacks there.)

Even more, 65 percent, are now optimistic about Iraq’s prospects in the year ahead, up 19 points from last year to a new high since 2004. Some of that stems from better ratings of security there; some, instead, from greater optimism among Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents encouraged by Barack Obama’s election.

In any case it’s in the broader analysis, beyond the situation on the ground – the cost in lives and dollars vs. perceived benefits – that nearly two-thirds continue to call the war not worth fighting. And as that view is unchanged, so is its intensity: Fifty percent feel “strongly” that the Iraq war was not worth it. Fewer than half as many, 21 percent, strongly feel the opposite – tying the all-time low in strong support for the war.

Such views put some heat on Obama; not only do 70 percent say he should withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq, but, among many high expectations for the incoming president, 64 percent think in fact he will end the U.S. involvement there.

AFGHANISTAN and TERROR – Views of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, also subject to a farewell Bush visit, are at once less critical but also less optimistic. Fifty-five percent see the war there as worth fighting, a marked contrast with Iraq, where it’s 34 percent. However just 44 percent characterize U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan as successful, vs. 51 percent who say it’s been unsuccessful.



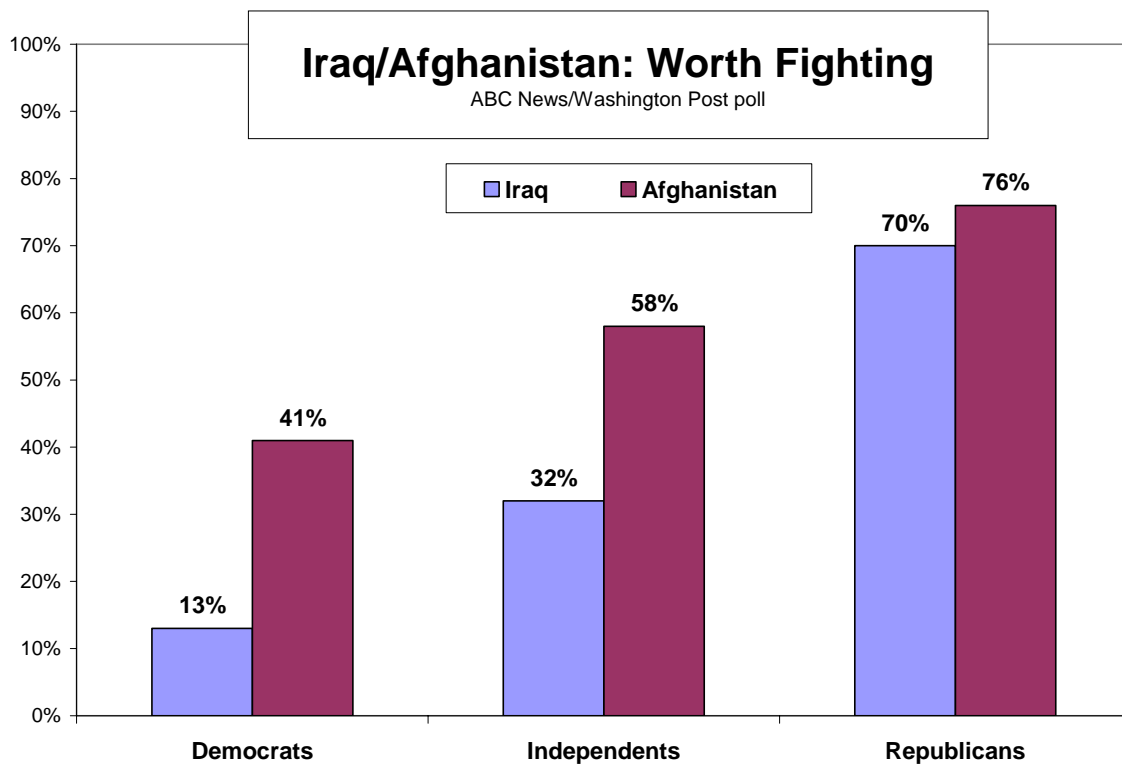
That's a vast difference from early in that war: In October 2002, 70 percent called the war in Afghanistan successful. And, as noted, optimism is in short supply, with just 49 percent optimistic about the prospects in Afghanistan in the next year, well below the level of optimism about Iraq.

Those concerns are especially significant because Americans by a 51-40 percent margin believe that success in Afghanistan is necessary if the United States is to prevail in its broader campaign against terrorism. Those numbers are reversed in Iraq; the public by 51-42 percent says winning there is not necessary to defeat terrorism more broadly.

Nonetheless, as ratings of security in Iraq have improved, so has the sense that winning there is necessary; today's 42 percent is up from a low of 31 percent last spring.

PARTISANSHIP – In Iraq, as noted, the change in optimism is not just a result of progress in security. Even among those who see no such progress, 52 percent are now optimistic, up from 26 percent a year ago. Again, that's because these people are disproportionately Democrats, brightened by Obama.

Specifically, a year ago a mere 30 percent of Democratic and Democratic-leaning independents were optimistic about Iraq; today it's 67 percent. Republicans and Republican-leaning independents meanwhile have held steady – 71 percent optimistic about Iraq a year ago, 68 percent now.



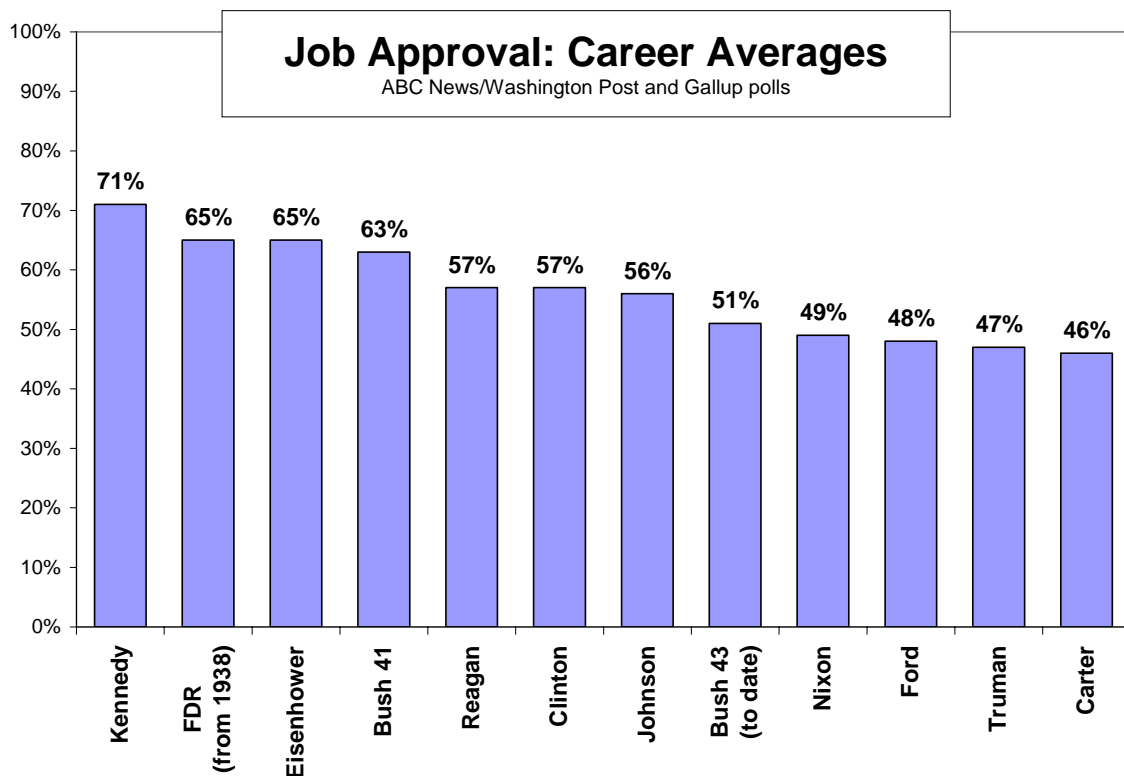
Other views on Iraq remain highly partisan. Seventy percent of Republicans (and 78 percent of conservative Republicans) say the war was worth fighting; just 32 percent of independents and 13 percent of Democrats agree. There's partisanship on Afghanistan as well, but somewhat less so: Seventy-six percent of Republicans say that war was worth fighting; 58 percent of independents and 41 percent of Democrats agree.

BUSH – As for Bush, he's now gone 47 months without majority approval of his job performance overall, a record by far in 70 years of presidential approval polls, well beyond Harry Truman's 38 months in the doghouse from 1949-52.

Thirty percent now approve of Bush's work in office, up from his low of 23 percent in October (presidents generally recover somewhat as they leave office and step away from the political fray) but still remarkably low. Sixty-eight percent disapprove, 5 points from Bush's record 73 percent disapproval two months ago, another record in presidential approval polls.

At 6 percent, Bush's approval rating among Democrats is 1 point from his all-time low Oct. 11; he's got 30 percent approval from independents and 66 percent from Republicans, up by 12 and 11 points, respectively. He's got one new career low this month, 45 percent approval among conservatives.

The intensity of sentiment also remains strongly against Bush. Fifty-two percent of Americans not only disapprove of his job performance, but "strongly" disapprove. Just 12 percent strongly approve.



And Bush, who received 92 percent approval a month after 9/11, the highest on record for any president in polls since Franklin Roosevelt, has subsided to a career average 51 percent approval across his eight years in office. Only four presidents since 1938 have averaged lower – Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Truman and Jimmy Carter, at 49, 48, 47 and 46 percent career average approval, respectively.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 11-14, 2008, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults, including landline and cell-only respondents. Results for the full sample have a 3-point error margin; click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error and [here](#) for a pdf version with question wording and results. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1 held for release.

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/14/08	30	12	18	68	15	52	3
10/29/08	24	8	16	71	18	53	5
10/11/08	23	7	17	73	15	58	4
9/29/08	26	10	17	70	14	56	3
8/22/08	30	13	17	66	16	50	4
7/13/08	28	12	16	69	13	56	3
6/15/08	29	10	19	68	14	54	3
5/11/08	31	15	16	66	14	52	2
4/13/08	33	16	17	64	15	49	2
3/2/08	32	15	17	66	16	50	2
2/1/08	33	17	16	65	14	51	2
1/12/08	32	16	16	66	15	51	2
12/9/07	33	17	16	64	14	50	3
11/1/07	33	17	16	64	13	50	3
9/30/07	33	15	18	64	14	49	3
9/7/07	33	16	17	64	15	49	3
7/21/07	33	16	17	65	13	52	2
6/1/07	35	17	18	62	16	46	3
4/15/07	35	17	18	62	14	49	2
2/25/07	36	19	17	62	12	49	2
1/19/07	33	17	16	65	14	51	2
12/11/06	36	18	18	62	13	49	2
11/4/06	40	24	16	57	12	46	2
10/22/06	37	21	16	60	15	45	3
10/8/06	39	23	16	60	12	48	1
9/7/06	42	24	18	55	12	43	3
8/6/06	40	23	17	58	12	46	2
6/25/06	38	20	18	60	12	48	2
5/15/06	33	17	16	65	18	47	2

4/9/06	38	20	18	60	13	47	1
3/5/06	41	24	17	58	14	44	1
1/26/06	42	25	18	56	14	42	2
1/8/06	46	29	17	52	13	39	2
12/18/05	47	29	17	52	12	40	1
11/2/05	39	20	18	60	13	47	1
10/29/05	39	22	17	58	13	45	3
9/11/05	42	27	15	57	12	45	1
8/28/05	45	27	18	53	12	41	2
6/26/05	48	27	21	51	11	40	1
6/5/05	48	27	21	52	14	38	1
4/24/05	47	25	22	50	13	38	3
3/13/05	50	31	19	48	11	37	3
1/31/05	50	34	15	45	11	34	5
1/16/05	52	33	19	46	11	35	2
12/19/04	48	27	21	49	12	38	2
10/20/04	50	30	20	46	11	35	4
10/17/04 LV	54	35	19	45	9	36	2
10/16/04 LV	54	35	19	44	10	34	2
10/15/04 LV	54	35	19	44	10	34	2
10/3/04 LV	53	36	17	46	11	34	1
9/26/04	50	33	18	45	13	32	5
9/8/04	52	35	17	43	11	32	5
8/29/04	50	31	19	47	13	34	3
8/1/04	47	28	18	49	13	36	5
7/25/04	50	32	19	47	13	34	3
7/11/04	48	31	17	50	11	39	2
6/20/04	47	30	17	51	13	39	1
5/23/04	47	31	17	50	14	36	3
4/18/04	51	33	18	47	13	34	1
3/7/04	50	32	18	48	12	36	2
2/11/04	50	30	21	47	14	34	2
1/18/04	58	35	24	40	9	30	2
12/21/03	59	39	21	38	15	23	3
12/14/03	57	37	20	39	10	29	5
12/7/03	53	32	21	40	13	27	7
11/16/03	57	34	23	39	11	28	4
10/29/03	56	30	26	42	13	29	2
10/13/03	53	33	20	43	13	29	4
9/30/03	54	34	20	44	15	29	2
9/13/03	58	35	23	40	14	27	2
9/7/03	56	34	22	41	13	28	4
8/11/03	59	37	22	37	14	23	4
7/10/03	59	35	24	38	13	25	3
6/22/03	68	45	23	29	11	18	4
4/30/03	71	50	22	26	17	9	3
4/16/03	74	52	22	23	9	14	3
4/9/03	77	58	19	20	6	14	4
4/3/03	71	54	16	25	7	19	4
3/23/03	68	NA	NA	27	NA	NA	4
3/20/03	67	NA	NA	28	NA	NA	5
3/2/03	62	38	23	35	13	22	4
2/23/03	60	NA	NA	34	NA	NA	6
2/9/03	64	42	21	34	14	20	3
2/1/03	62	41	21	34	13	22	4
1/28/03	62	43	19	36	13	23	2
1/27/03	59	39	21	37	15	22	4
1/20/03	59	36	23	38	16	22	2
12/15/02	66	37	28	32	12	20	2
11/4/02 LV	67	45	23	31	12	20	1
11/3/02 LV	67	45	22	32	12	20	1
11/2/02 LV	67	47	20	32	9	23	1
10/27/02	67	39	28	29	13	16	4

9/26/02	67	42	25	30	12	18	3
9/8/02	71	42	28	27	12	15	3
7/28/02	69	39	31	28	14	14	3
7/15/02	72	42	31	25	12	13	2
6/17/02	74	42	32	22	9	13	4
6/9/02	77	41	36	20	9	11	3
5/19/02	76	48	28	22	8	13	3
4/21/02	78	47	31	20	9	10	2
3/28/02	79	49	30	18	8	10	3
3/10/02	82	52	30	16	9	7	2
1/27/02	83	56	27	14	7	7	3
12/19/01	86	64	22	12	6	6	2
11/27/01	89	69	21	9	4	5	1
11/6/01	89	65	24	9	5	4	2
10/9/01	92	76	16	6	3	3	1
9/27/01	90	70	20	6	3	3	4
9/13/01	86	63	23	12	5	6	2
9/9/01	55	26	29	41	20	22	3
8/12/01	61	28	33	31	14	17	8
7/30/01	59	28	30	38	17	22	3
6/3/01	55	27	28	40	18	22	6
4/22/01	63	33	30	32	16	16	5
3/25/01	58	NA	NA	33	NA	NA	8
2/25/01	55	NA	NA	23	NA	NA	22

3-4 held for release.

5-6 previously released.

7-12 held for release.

13. Apart from dealing with the economy, do you think Obama should or should not [ITEM]? (IF SHOULD) Should he start that right after taking office, or wait until later in his presidency?

12/14/08 - Summary Table*

	NET	Should Right after	Wait	Should not	No opinion
a. Withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq within the next 16 months	70	43	27	26	4

* Half sample asked item a.

b-h held for release.

14. As president, do you think Obama will or will not be able to [ITEM]?

12/14/08 - Summary Table

	Will	Will not	No opinion
a. End the U.S. involvement in Iraq	64	32	4

b-c held for release.

15-16 held for release.

17. Thinking about the next 12 months, would you say you feel (optimistic) or (pessimistic) about (ITEM)?

12/14/08 - Summary Table*

	Optimistic	Pessimistic	No opinion
d. the situation in Iraq	65	30	5

g. the situation in Afghanistan 49 47 4

a-c, e-f held for release.

Trend where available:

d. the situation in Iraq

12/14/08	65	30	5
12/9/07	46	50	4
12/11/06	40	57	3
10/22/06	42	55	3
5/15/06	43	55	2
12/18/05	54	44	2
12/19/04	46	51	2
6/20/04	52	45	3
5/23/04	55	43	2
1/18/04*	58	39	2

*"Thinking about the coming year"

g. No trend.

18-33 held for release.

34. On another topic, all in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war with Iraq was worth fighting, or not? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Worth fighting -----			--- Not worth fighting ---			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/14/08	34	21	13	64	14	50	2
9/7/08	36	24	13	61	13	48	3
8/22/08	35	22	13	63	13	50	2
7/13/08	36	22	13	63	13	50	1
6/15/08	34	21	13	63	9	54	3
4/13/08	34	24	11	64	11	52	2
3/2/08	34	24	11	63	12	51	2
2/1/08	34	23	11	65	11	53	1
1/12/08	35	21	13	64	13	51	2
12/9/07	37	25	12	61	11	50	2
11/1/07	35	23	12	63	12	51	2
9/30/07	38	25	14	59	12	47	3
9/7/07	36	23	13	62	11	51	2
7/21/07	36	25	12	63	10	53	1
6/1/07	37	24	12	61	12	50	2
4/15/07	33	22	11	66	12	54	1
2/25/07	34	22	12	64	13	51	2
1/10/07	40	28	12	58	11	47	2
12/11/06	36	25	11	61	12	50	2
11/4/06 RV	44	33	12	53	10	44	2
10/22/06	40	28	12	57	11	47	2
10/8/06	35	25	10	63	13	50	2
9/7/06	42	29	13	56	11	45	2
8/6/06	39	29	10	59	12	47	1
6/25/06	40	25	15	58	13	45	2
5/15/06	37	24	14	62	12	50	1
4/9/06	41	30	11	58	10	48	1
3/5/06	42	29	14	57	11	46	1
1/26/06	44	32	12	55	13	42	1
1/8/06	43	30	13	55	12	43	2
12/18/05	46	33	14	52	11	42	1

11/2/05		39	25	13	60	12	48	1
8/28/05		46	33	12	53	9	44	1
6/26/05		46	33	13	53	10	43	1
6/5/05		41	29	12	58	12	46	1
4/24/05		44	31	13	54	12	42	2
3/13/05		45	34	11	53	11	42	2
1/16/05		44	32	12	55	10	45	1
12/19/04		42	31	11	56	10	47	2
10/3/04	LV	49	34	15	48	11	37	3
9/26/04	RV	46	35	12	51	8	42	3
9/8/04	RV	51	38	13	45	10	34	4
8/29/04	RV	48	34	14	50	11	39	2
7/25/04		49	36	13	48	11	37	3
7/11/04		45	34	10	53	12	42	2
6/20/04		47	32	14	52	13	39	2
5/23/04		48	35	13	50	13	37	1
5/6/04		49	NA	NA	47	NA	NA	5
4/18/04		51	"	"	47	"	"	2
3/7/04		52			44			3
2/11/04		48			50			2
1/18/04		56			41			3
12/21/03		59			39			2
12/14/03		53			42			5
11/16/03		52			44			4
10/29/03		54			44			2
10/13/03		54			44			2
9/13/03		61			37			2
9/7/03		54			42			4
8/24/03		57			37			5
8/11/03		61			35			4
7/10/03		57			40			3
6/22/03		64			33			3
4/30/03		70			27			4
2/2/92*		66			32			2
7/28/91		67			30			3
6/2/91		70			26			3
3/4/91		86			13			1

*2/2/92 and previous: "the Persian Gulf war"; 3/4/91: "this war"

35. Do you think the United States is or is not making significant progress toward restoring civil order in Iraq?

	Is making significant progress	Is not making significant progress	No opinion
12/14/08	56	40	4
9/7/08	52	40	7
8/22/08	50	46	4
7/13/08	46	51	3
4/13/08	40	57	3
3/2/08	43	51	6
2/1/08	42	54	4
1/12/08	42	54	4
12/9/07	41	55	4
11/1/07	39	59	2
9/7/07	36	60	4
6/1/07	32	64	4
12/11/06	31	66	3
6/25/06	48	49	2
3/5/06	43	56	2
12/18/05	60	37	2
11/2/05	44	55	2
8/28/05	48	50	2

6/26/05	48	51	1
12/19/04	44	49	7
6/20/04	51	48	1

36. Do you think (the United States must win the war in Iraq in order for the broader war on terrorism to be a success), or do you think (the war on terrorism can be a success without the United States winning the war in Iraq)?

	US must win war in Iraq for success	Can be a success without US winning war in Iraq	No opinion
12/14/08	42	51	7
7/13/08	34	60	6
4/13/08	31	61	8
9/7/07	37	54	9
6/1/07	37	56	7
4/15/07	37	57	6
1/10/07	45	47	8

37. Thinking now about Afghanistan, all in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war in Afghanistan was worth fighting, or not?

	Yes, worth fighting	No, not worth fighting	No opinion
12/14/08	55	39	5
7/13/08	51	45	4
2/25/07	56	41	3

38. Overall, do you think the U.S. military action in Afghanistan against the Taliban and Al Qaeda has been successful or not successful?

	Successful	Not successful	No opinion
12/14/08	44	51	5
7/13/08	44	51	5
10/6/02	70	24	6

39. Do you think (the United States must win the war in Afghanistan in order for the broader war on terrorism to be a success), or do you think (the war on terrorism can be a success without the United States winning the war in Afghanistan)?

	US must win war in Afghanistan for success	Can be a success without US winning war in Afghanistan	No opinion
12/14/08	51	40	9
7/13/08	51	42	7

40 previously released.

END