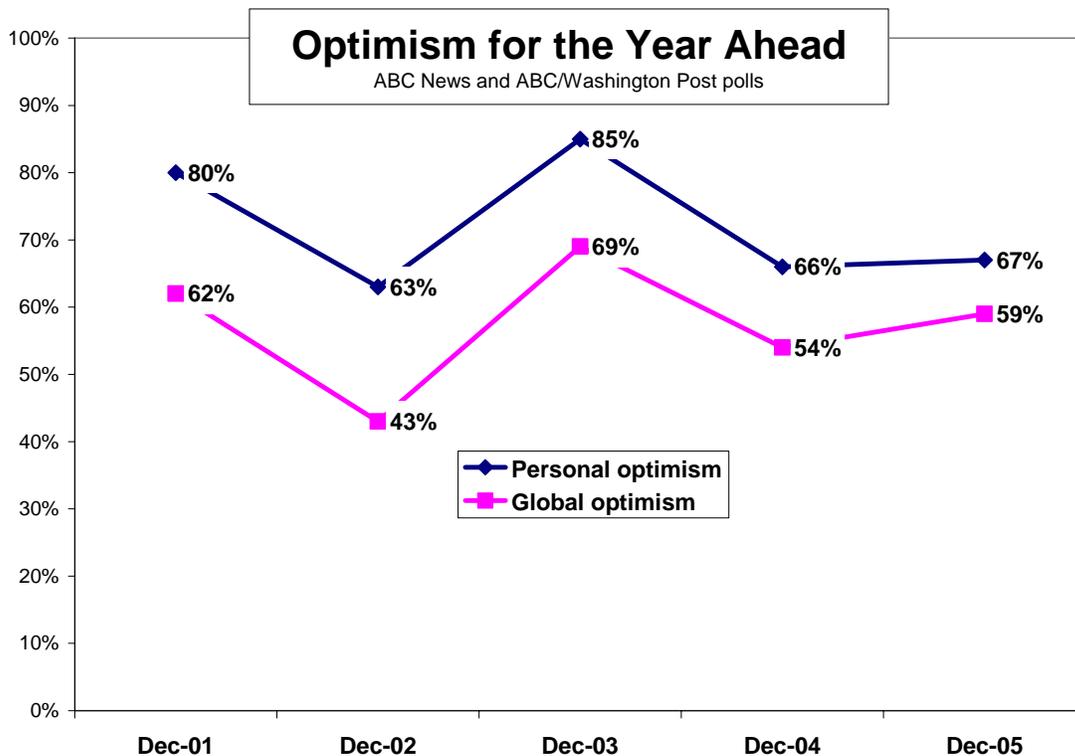


## Outlook for 2006 is Positive, But Wide Partisan Gap Remains

Americans are optimistic about the year ahead, but Democrats and Republicans, whose outlooks diverged following the 2004 presidential election, continue to view the future through very different lenses.

Two-thirds of Americans are more hopeful than fearful about what 2006 has in store for them personally, and six in 10 are optimistic about the world more broadly in the year to come. Despite a spate of natural disasters, the positive outlook for the world is slightly improved from last year, while the level of personal optimism is about the same.

Optimism is down from late 2003, when 85 percent were personally optimistic and seven in 10 were hopeful for the world's prospects. Part of the change stems from partisan gaps since George W. Bush's re-election, but divergent assessments of the situation in Iraq and the nation's economy also independently color expectations for 2006.



Two years ago, most Democrats, independents and Republicans alike were hopeful about 2004. Today, Democrats are 32 points less likely to be hopeful about what 2006 has in store for them personally, and 17 points less likely to be hopeful for the world.

Optimism has eroded among independents as well, but has remained more stable among Republicans. These changes all were evident last year, with the disparate views further cemented this year.

	Personal outlook: Hopeful				
	12/05	12/04	12/03	'03-'05	Change
Democrats	50%	53	82	-32	
Independents	69	64	82	-13	
Republicans	84	88	92	-8	

	World outlook: Hopeful				
	12/05	12/04	12/03	'03-'05	Change
Democrats	42%	39	59	-17	
Independents	56	55	70	-14	
Republicans	78	76	79	-1	

IRAQ AND ECONOMY – Views on the situation in Iraq and the U.S. economy are closely linked to expectations for the coming year. In personal and global outlooks alike, hopefulness is higher among people who say the war was worth fighting, think progress is being made in Iraq and believe United States eventually will win the war. It's also significantly higher among those who think the economy here at home is in excellent or good shape.

Much of the connection between optimism and views on Iraq and the economy is explained by political allegiance, but regression analyses show that these views also are independently related to 2006 personal and global outlooks alike.

	U.S. outcome in Iraq war	
	Will win	Will lose
World outlook:		
More hopeful	72%	32%
More fearful	28	66

	U.S. economy:	
	Excellent/good	Fair/poor
World outlook:		
More hopeful	78%	43%
More fearful	21	56

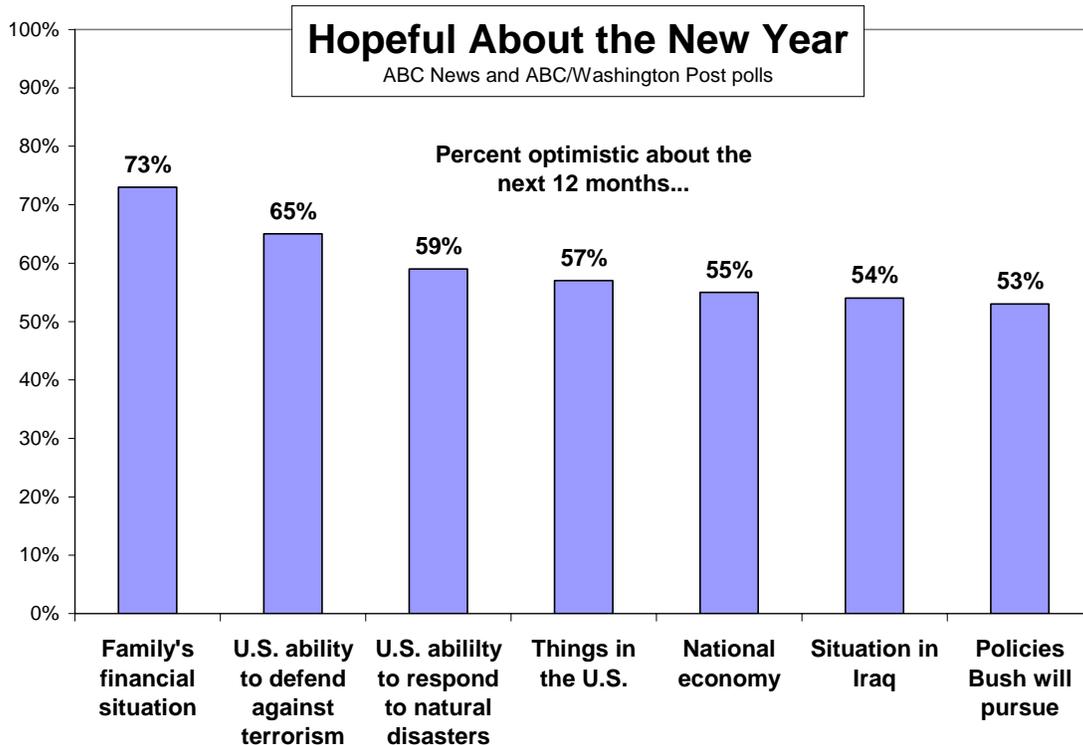
ISSUES – Optimism and partisan divisions also prevail in attitudes about what 2006 has in store in a variety of specific areas.

Fifty-four percent of Americans are optimistic about the situation in Iraq, up from 46 percent last year, likely a result of the recent elections there. Fifty-five are now optimistic

about the nation’s economy, about what it was last year. Republicans are 54 points more optimistic that Democrats on Iraq and 43 points more optimistic on the economy.

On other issues, most Americans, 73 percent, are optimistic about their family’s financial situation, and nearly two-thirds are confident in the country’s ability to defend itself against terrorist attacks. Even with the controversial federal response to Hurricane Katrina, six in 10 are optimistic about the country’s ability to respond to natural disasters.

Fifty-seven percent are optimistic about “the way things are going in the country” overall, and 53 percent express optimism about the policies Bush will pursue in the year to come.



Democrats range from 24 to 54 points less optimistic than Republicans on this set of issues. They’re closest when assessing their families’ economic prospects: Eighty-four percent of Republicans are optimistic, as are 60 percent of Democrats. Outlooks diverge most significantly on the issues with the strongest political component – Bush’s policies and the situation in Iraq – on which about eight in 10 Republicans are optimistic, compared with fewer than three in 10 Democrats.

	Percent optimistic			Dem-Rep Diff.
	Dem	Rep	Ind	
The policies Bush will pursue	28	82	49	-54
The situation in Iraq	29	83	50	-54
The state of the national economy	38	81	47	-43
The way things are going in this country	39	80	53	-41
The country's ability to defend				

itself against terrorist attacks	52	81	64	-29
The country's ability to respond to natural disasters	48	74	56	-26
Your own family's financial situation	60	84	75	-24

**OTHER GROUPS** – Among other factors in views on 2006, money and religiosity link to optimism. Americans with the lowest incomes (under \$20,000) are less likely than higher-earners to be hopeful about their own lives and about the world in the coming year. And more frequent churchgoers are more hopeful about the year ahead than those who attend services less often.

Part of the reason income and church attendance both relate to outlook: Democrats are 17 points more likely than Republicans to be in the lowest income category and Republicans are 16 points more likely than Democrats to attend church services once a week or more.

**METHODOLOGY** – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 15-18, 2005, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Jon Cohen.

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

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

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

1-31 Previously released.

32. Looking ahead to next year, are you more hopeful, or more fearful, about what the year 2006 holds in store for you personally?

	More hopeful	More fearful	No opin.
12/18/05	67	31	2
12/19/04	66	30	4
12/21/03	85	12	4
12/15/02	63	35	2
12/19/01	80	16	4

33. How about for the world in general? Are you more hopeful, or more fearful, about what the year 2006 holds in store for the world in general?

	More hopeful	More fearful	No opin.
12/18/05	59	40	1
12/19/04	54	43	2
12/21/03	69	27	4
12/15/02	43	56	1
12/19/01	62	35	3

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

12/18/05 - Summary Table\*

	Optimistic	Pessimistic	No op.
a. the way things are going in this country	57	42	2
b. the situation in Iraq	54	44	2
c. the state of the national economy	55	44	1
d. your own family's financial situation	73	26	1
e. the country's ability to defend itself against terrorist attacks	65	34	1
f. the policies Bush will pursue	53	43	4
g. the country's ability to respond to natural disasters	59	40	1

\*Full sample asked item a; half sample asked items b-d, other half asked items e-g.

Trend where available:

a. the way things are going in this country

	Optimistic	Pessimistic	No opinion
12/18/05	57	42	2
12/19/04	57	41	2
7/25/04 RV	67	30	3
6/20/04	62	36	2
1/14/03	69	29	2

b. the situation in Iraq

	Optimistic	Pessimistic	No opinion
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"

c. the state of the national economy

	Optimistic	Pessimistic	No opinion
12/18/05	55	44	1
12/19/04	58	40	2
6/20/04	64	34	2
1/14/03	63	35	2

d. your own family's financial situation

	Optimistic	Pessimistic	No opinion
12/18/05	73	26	1
12/19/04	75	23	2

e. the country's ability to defend itself against terrorist attacks

	Optimistic	Pessimistic	No opinion
12/18/05	65	34	1
12/19/04	66	30	4
6/20/04	66	31	3
1/14/03	75	23	3

f,g. No trend.