

UNH Poll Finds Bush Approval Slips Slightly, but Support Remains High

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DURHAM, N.H. -- President George W. Bush continues to enjoy strong job approval ratings in New Hampshire, according to the latest Granite State Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. His ratings have fallen since February, but are still at remarkably high levels.

The Granite State Poll is sponsored by UNH. Six hundred ninety-four (694) New Hampshire adults were interviewed between April 10 and 18, 2002. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/-3.7 percent. For more detailed results and methodology, visit the Survey Center Web site at www.unh.edu/survey-center and click on Press Releases.

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL

Despite ongoing trouble in the Middle East and lingering economic problems at home, Bush continues to enjoy high approval ratings among New Hampshire residents for his performance as president. In the most recent Granite State Poll, 81 percent of New Hampshire adults say they approve of the job Bush is doing as president, only 13 percent disapprove, and 6 percent are neutral. Bush's approval ratings have slipped somewhat since the February 2002 Granite State Poll, when 87 percent of New Hampshire adults approved of his performance as president, 9 percent disapproved, and 4 percent were neutral.

"Eventually, Bush's job approval figures will return to more normal levels, but he continues to enjoy tremendous support in the wake of September 11, and the war on terrorism," says Andrew Smith, director of

the UNH Survey Center. The slip in Bush's approval rating among New Hampshire residents mirrors those measured nationwide. The Gallup Poll's measure of job approval for President Bush fell from 82 percent in early February to 75 percent in mid-April.

A second indicator of strong support for Bush in New Hampshire is that his personal favorability ratings remain very high. Currently, 78 percent of New Hampshire adults say they have a favorable opinion of Bush, 15 percent have an unfavorable opinion of him, and 7 percent are neutral. In February, 84 percent of New Hampshire adults said they had a favorable opinion of Bush, 11 percent had an unfavorable opinion, and 5 percent were neutral. Bush's net favorability rating, the percentage having a favorable opinion minus the percentage having an unfavorable opinion, is +63, down from +73 in February. Nationally, Bush's favorability rating fell from 81 percent in early February to 75 percent in April, according to the FOX News/Opinion Dynamics poll.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Bush has recently been criticized at home and abroad for his Middle East policy, but support for his overall handling of foreign affairs remains strong. When asked about the job Bush is doing handling foreign affairs, 76 percent of Granite Staters say they approve, 19 percent disapprove, and 5 percent are neutral. Approval of Bush's handling of foreign affairs has dropped 10 percent since the February Granite State Poll, when 86 percent said they approved of the job Bush was doing handling foreign affairs, 10 percent disapproved, and 4 percent were neutral.

ECONOMIC APPROVAL RATING

Bush has maintained high approval ratings for his handling of the economy in the face of an economic downturn. Currently, 70 percent of New Hampshire residents say they approve of the job President Bush is doing handling the economy, 23 percent disapprove, and 7 percent are neutral. In February, 69 percent approved of Bush's handling of the economy, 25 percent disapproved, and 6 percent were neutral.

SUB-GROUP ANALYSIS

While Bush enjoys high job approval ratings from all groups of New Hampshire adults, his strongest supporters remain Republicans and conservatives. While somewhat less supportive, groups that usually give low ratings to Republican presidents -- Democrats, liberals, people with post graduate degrees, and residents of western New Hampshire -- also give Bush high job performance ratings.

Similarly, Bush enjoys high approval rating for his handling of foreign affairs from all groups of New Hampshire adults. Those least likely to approve of his handling of foreign affairs include Democrats, liberals, and residents over 60 years of age. Republicans and conservatives strongly approve of Bush's handling of the economy, but Democrats, liberals, and people with post-graduate educations are split over Bush's handling of the economy.

GRANITE STATE POLL METHODOLOGY

These findings are based on the most recent Granite State Poll conducted by the UNH Survey Center from April 10-18, 2002. A random sample of 694 New Hampshire adults was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 3.7 percent. Results reported for other subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population.

The data have been weighted to adjust for numbers of adults and telephone lines within households, respondent sex, and for region of the state. In addition to potential sampling error, all surveys have other potential sources of non-sampling error including question order effects, question wording effects, and non-response.

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