

## Bush Finishes 19th Quarter in Office on Low Note

**Quarterly average only in 18th percentile**

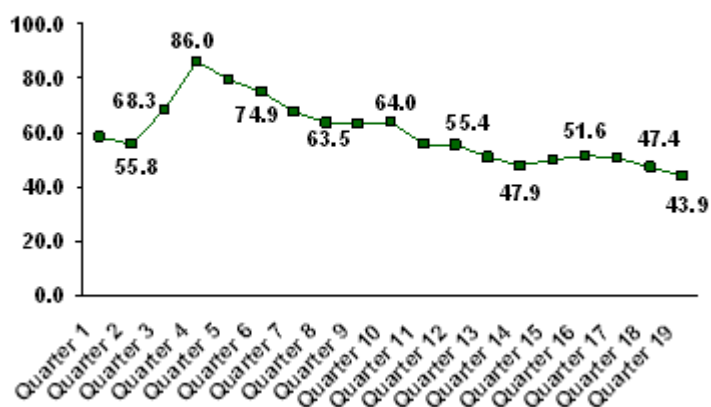
*by Jeffrey M. Jones*

PRINCETON, NJ -- George W. Bush has now completed 19 quarters in office, and finds himself at the low point of his presidency with a quarterly average that puts him in the bottom 20% of all presidential quarters for which Gallup has job approval measures.

The latest CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup poll shows Bush with a 39% job approval rating. Bush's most recent quarterly average -- for the period from July 20 to Oct. 19 -- is 43.9%. The president's 19th-quarter average represents a significant decline from his 18th-quarter average of 47.4%, which was, in turn, a significant decline from a 50.7% average in his 17th quarter in office.

The decline in Bush's job approval rating becomes starkly clear when put in the context of quarterly averages for all other presidents since Harry Truman. Bush's 19th-quarter average of 43.9% ranks in just the 18th percentile, meaning that just 18% of all quarterly averages for all other presidents in Gallup's historical database have been lower. By way of contrast, Bush's post-Sept. 11 averages in late 2001 and 2002 ranked at or near the top of the quarterly percentile rankings, scoring in the 94th to 99th percentiles.

**George W. Bush Quarterly Approval Averages**



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QuarterDates		Percentile compared to Average (%)other presidents since Truman	
1	Jan 20-Apr 19, 2001	58.4	57
2	Apr 20-Jul 19, 2001	55.8	49
3	Jul 20-Oct 19, 2001	68.3	84
4	Oct 20, 2001-Jan 19, 2002	86.0	99
5	Jan 20-Apr 19, 2002	79.5	98
6	Apr 20-Jul 19, 2002	74.9	94
7	Jul 20-Oct 19, 2002	67.7	82
8	Oct 20, 2002-Jan 19, 2003	63.5	74

9	Jan 20-Apr 19, 2003	63.3	73
10	Apr 20-Jul 19, 2003	64.0	76
11	Jul 20-Oct 19, 2003	55.7	49
12	Oct 20, 2003-Jan 19, 2004	55.4	48
13	Jan 20-Apr 19, 2004	50.9	38
14	Apr 20-Jul 19, 2004	47.9	30
15	Jul 20-Oct 19, 2004	50.1	36
16	Oct 20, 2004-Jan 19, 2005	51.6	39
17	Jan 20, 2005-Apr 19, 2005	50.7	37
18	Apr 20, 2005-Jul 19, 2005	47.4	28
19	Jul 20-Oct 19, 2005	43.9	18

The sharpest quarter-to-quarter decline in Bush's quarterly approval ratings came between his 10th and 11th quarters, at a time when approval of the Iraq war dropped precipitously. The only times at which Bush's ratings went up by at least a point since his fourth quarter were the two quarters in the midst of last year's presidential election -- from July 20, 2004, to Jan. 19, 2005, when his quarterly average rose from the 30th percentile to the 39th percentile.

There are limited data available to compare Bush's standing with other presidents' standings at the same point in their presidencies. Only Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton served second terms, and two of these -- Truman and Johnson -- initially became president on the death of their predecessor.

Bush compares unfavorably with three two-term presidents who served a full eight years. Eisenhower, Reagan, and Clinton all averaged close to a 60% job approval rating in their 19th quarters in office.

Nixon, who in July-October 1973 was mired in the Watergate scandal, averaged a 31.8% approval rating during his 19th quarter in office. During that time, former White House counsel John Dean alleged that Nixon was aware of plans to cover up the Watergate burglary. Later, the White House's secret taping system was revealed, and the Nixon administration refused to turn over the tapes to the special prosecutor and the Senate committee investigating the matter.

### 19th-Quarter Averages of Recent Presidents

		19th-quarter	
President	Dates of 19th quarter	average (%)	Number of polls
Eisenhower	Jul 20-Oct 19, 1957	59.5	4
Nixon	Jul 20-Oct 19, 1973	31.8	6
Reagan	Jul 20-Oct 19, 1985	61.3	4
Clinton	Jul 20-Oct 19, 1997	58.8	6
Bush	Jul 20-Oct 19, 2005	43.9	11

Because Truman and Johnson served less than two full terms, their 19th-quarter averages were not their 3rd quarters after being re-elected, as it was for the other aforementioned presidents. Truman

had a 45.0% average during his 19th quarter in office (October 1949-January 1950) and Johnson had a 41.8% average in his (April-July 1968). During his 19th term, Johnson was beset by the problems in Vietnam.

### **Survey Methods**

The averages are based on telephone interviews with randomly selected national samples of approximately 1,000 adults each, aged 18 and older, conducted July 20-Oct. 19, 2005.