



The Gallup Poll

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Doubts about Bush's Character Allayed by GOP Convention

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PRINCETON, N.J. — Historical precedent suggests that the boost given to George Bush's presidential campaign by the Republican convention may be short-lived. Of perhaps more lasting value, Bush's performance at the convention did much to soften voters' antipathy toward him and allayed many long-standing doubts about his character.

The convention moved Bush into a statistical tie with Michael Dukakis for the November election, 48% to 44%. Dukakis had been the front runner, at times by substantial margins, from mid-May until the GOP convention.

Throughout this period voters consistently had a lower personal regard for Bush than for his Democratic rival. In an early-August, pre-convention poll, for instance, favorable opinions about Bush narrowly outnumbered unfavorable ones, 51% to 42%. In contrast, assessments of Dukakis were 61% to 30% favorable.

The candidates now are on an equal footing in voters' perceptions, Bush with a favorable-unfavorable ratio of 60% to 33%, and Dukakis with 55% to 32%.

Bush Gains on Leadership Traits

Bush also has managed to dispel many of the doubts voters previously harbored about his leadership and other character traits. Before the convention, for example, 59% described him as "sincere"; currently, 74% do so. Perceptions of Bush as "steady and reliable" have increased from 59% to 73%. Fewer voters thought of him as "intelligent" before the convention than do so now, 61% to 70%. He has made a similar gain for being "confident," 56% to 67%. Bush also has made considerable headway in being seen as "warm and friendly," from 49% to 65%. Earlier, voters were evenly divided between those who saw Bush as "strong" (42%) and "weak" (39%); today, the figures are 57% and 28%, respectively.

One of Bush's greatest achievements has been to enhance voters' perceptions of him as a "leader" rather than a "follower," from 37% - 52% prior to the convention, to 50% - 39% at present. Obviously, there still is room for improvement in this critical area.

Following are the questions and key findings:

Is your overall opinion of (candidate) very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Favorability Ratings

	July* 21-22	Aug. 5-7	Aug.* 18-19
George Bush	%	%	%
Favorable	48	51	60
Unfavorable	45	42	33
Can't say	7	7	7
Michael Dukakis			
Favorable	69	61	55
Unfavorable	22	30	32
Can't say	9	9	13

*Gallup/Newsweek surveys.

Please tell me which word or phrase better describes your impression of George Bush. If you feel neither phrase describes Bush, please say so.

Impressions of Bush

	Aug. 5-7	Aug. 19-21
	%	%
Sincere	59	74
Insincere	26	15
Neither, not sure	15	11
Steady, reliable	59	73
Undependable	27	19
Neither, not sure	14	8
Intelligent	61	70
Only average	33	27
Neither, not sure	6	3
Confident	56	67
Insecure	32	25
Neither, not sure	12	8
Warm, friendly	49	65
Cold, unfriendly	28	18
Neither, not sure	23	17
Strong	42	57
Weak	39	28
Neither, not sure	19	15
A leader	37	50
A follower	52	39
Neither, not sure	11	11

The latest candidate favorability ratings are based on telephone interviews with 1,000 registered voters conducted in scientifically selected locations for Newsweek by The Gallup Organization August 18-19. The other findings are from a similar survey of 1,000 registered voters conducted August 19-21. For results based on samples of this size, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be plus or minus 3 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. *This report conforms to the standards of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.*
