



**FOR RELEASE:**  
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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**  
**Andrew Kohut, Director**  
**Carroll J. Doherty, Editor**

**No One Dislikes Her!**

**LAURA BUSH’S CHANGING IMAGE: NO LONGER JUST ‘NICE’**

Americans like Laura Bush even more than they did a year ago, and her public image is better defined these days. Seven-in-ten (69%) say they approve of the way Mrs. Bush is handling her job, up from 58% last July. A year ago, fully a third of the public (34%) had not formed an opinion of the First Lady’s job performance; that number has declined to 23%. And Mrs. Bush’s negative rating – just 8%, unchanged from last year – remains much lower than those of other recent first ladies.

The terms people use to describe Mrs Bush reflect changing public perceptions of her. Asked for one-word descriptions of the First Lady, the responses are almost uniformly positive, as they were last year. Once again, “nice” leads the list, but terms like “honest,” “confident” and “sincere,” are mentioned much more often than a year ago. Fewer people describe her as “elegant” or emphasize her role as a mother (for list, see pg. 4).

Mrs. Bush draws support from across the political spectrum, even when compared with the president, who has relatively strong approval ratings among the opposing party. By more than four-to-one (60%-13%) Democrats approve of her job performance; President Bush’s ratings among Democrats are positive but more mixed (53%-37%). Republican ratings for the president and First Lady are overwhelmingly positive.

Age and gender are associated with impressions of the First Lady. Women below the age of 50, in particular, emphasize Laura Bush’s confidence and intelligence; men in that age group most often cite her honesty or describe her as “classy.” Older men view Mrs. Bush as “nice” and “classy,” while women age 50 and older most frequently describe her as “ladylike.”

<b>Power Couple</b>				
	<i>Party Identification</i>			
<i>Job Rating:</i>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Ind</u>
<i>George Bush</i>	%	%	%	%
Approve	70	95	53	66
Disapprove	20	2	37	22
Don’t know	<u>10</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>12</u>
	100	100	100	100
<i>Laura Bush</i>				
Approve	69	85	60	67
Disapprove	8	3	13	7
Don’t know	<u>23</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>26</u>
	100	100	100	100

<b>One-Word Descriptions of Laura Bush</b>	
<i>Age 18-49</i>	
<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Honest	Confident
Classy	Intelligent
Caring	Supportive
<i>Age 50+</i>	
<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Nice	Lady/ladylike
Classy	Intelligent
Concerned	Nice

There is no consensus as to who represents the ideal First Lady despite Mrs. Bush's current popularity. Asked to name which recent First Lady comes closest to that idea, 30% mention Sen. Hillary Clinton, while almost as many (26%) cite Barbara Bush, Laura Bush's mother-in-law. Roughly one-in-five (19%) name Laura Bush and the same number mention Nancy Reagan. A year ago, when Mrs. Bush was new on the job, just 6% pointed to her as fitting the idea of a First Lady.

Partisanship is a factor here. Among the last four First Ladies (including Laura Bush), Sen. Clinton has the advantage of being the only Democrat. While half of Democrats (51%) name Clinton as coming closest to the idea of what a First Lady should be, Republicans are split between Barbara Bush (35%), Laura Bush (29%) and Nancy Reagan (27%).

Conservative Republicans are most likely to view Laura Bush as coming closest to the idea of a First Lady: as many conservative Republicans name her (34%) as cite Barbara Bush (33%). However, for moderate and liberal Republicans Barbara Bush (38%) is the top choice. Nearly twice as many of these more centrist Republicans name Barbara Bush as cite Laura Bush (20%).

Sen. Clinton is overwhelmingly popular among liberal Democrats, but just 46% of moderate and conservative Democrats see her as the ideal First Lady. On balance as many of the latter group named one of the Republican First Ladies as chose Hillary Clinton.

There also is a generation gap when it comes to First Ladies. For those under age 50, Hillary Clinton is seen as coming closest to the ideal First Lady (33%). For those over 50, Barbara Bush is seen as coming closest to that ideal (31%). Laura Bush fares about the same in both groups (17% under 50, 22% 50 and over). But Republicans age 50 and over are slightly more likely to name Mrs. Bush than their younger counterparts (35% vs. 26%).

	<u>Total</u>	---Republicans---		---Democrats---	
		Conserv- <u>ative</u>	Mod / <u>Liberal</u>	Conserv / <u>Mod</u>	<u>Liberal</u>
Nancy Reagan	19	26	30	17	11
Barbara Bush	26	33	<b>38</b>	21	6
Hillary Clinton	30	5	10	<b>46</b>	<b>63</b>
Laura Bush	19	<b>34</b>	20	10	12
Other / DK	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>
	100	100	100	100	100

## ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,212 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period June 19-23, 2002. Based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. For results based on either Form 1 (N=608) or Form 2 (N=604), the sampling error is plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS**  
**JUNE NEWS INTEREST INDEX**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**JUNE 19-23, 2002**  
**N=1,212**

On a different subject...

Q.16 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Laura Bush is handling her job as First Lady?

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
June, 2002	69	8	23=100
July, 2001	58	8	34=100
<b>Hillary Clinton:</b>			
Gallup: November 2000	66	30	4=100
ABC News: August 1998*	71	24	5=100
Gallup: October 1997	62	31	7=100
ABC News/W. Post: January 1997	60	36	4=100
ABC News/W. Post: March 1996	51	46	4=100
ABC News: January 1996	46	42	12=100
ABC/W. Post: August 1994	60	37	3=100
ABC News: April 1994	57	38	6=100
ABC/W. Post: March 1994	60	37	3=100
Gallup: January 1993	67	16	17=100
<b>Barbara Bush:**</b>			
US News & World Report: April 1992	77	20	3=100
Harris: July 1989	66	28	6=100
<b>Nancy Reagan:</b>			
Gallup: May 1988	53	31	16=100
Gallup: April 1987	58	23	19=100
CBS/New York Times: January 1985	71	14	14=100
Gallup: December 1981	57	26	17=100

\* Question wording for all ABC News /W. Post trends: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Hillary Clinton is handling her position as First Lady?"

\*\* Question wording for Barbara Bush trends: "How would you rate the job Barbara Bush has done as a First Lady? Would you say she has been an excellent, good, only fair or poor First Lady?" (Note: Excellent and good shown as approval / only fair and poor shown as disapproval.)

Q.17 Now a different kind of question. Please tell me what one word best describes your impression of Laura Bush. Tell me just the ONE best word that describes her. [ACCEPT UP TO TWO RESPONSES.]

\* This table shows the number of respondents who offered each response; the numbers ARE NOT percentages.

<b>June 2002: Laura Bush's "Top 20"</b>		<b>July 2001: Laura Bush's "Top 20"</b>	
(Based on 1,212 interviews)		(Based on 1,003 interviews)	
	<u>Frequency*</u>		<u>Frequency*</u>
1. Nice/Nice lady	44	1. Nice/Nice lady	72
2. Intelligent	33	2. Lady/Lady like	68
3. Classy/Has class	32	3. Classy/Has class	48
4. Honest	31	4. Intelligent	43
5. Lady/Lady like	30	5. Quiet	31
6. Caring	27	6. Good/Good person	29
7. Good/Good person	27	7. Conservative	28
8. Confident	22	8. Loyal/loyalty	24
9. Concerned	20	9. Mother/Motherly	24
10. Sincere	20	10. Dignified/Dignity	21
11. Dedicated	18	11. OK	20
12. Supportive	18	12. Elegant	17
13. Dignified	17	13. Pleasant	17
14. Gracious	16	14. Competent	16
15. Great	15	15. Invisible	16
16. Mother/Motherly	14	16. Great	16
17. Integrity	13	17. Sophisticated	16
18. Kind	13	18. Unknown	16
19. Quiet	13	19. Dedicated	15
20. Competent	12	20. Honest	15
21. Loyal	12		

Q.18 Thinking of the last four American first ladies, who comes closest to your idea of what a first lady should be... Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton or Laura Bush?

		---- Gallup ----		
		<u>July 2001</u>	<u>Feb 1999</u>	<u>Sept 1993</u>
19	Nancy Reagan	29	17	11
26	Barbara Bush	30	40	39
30	Hillary Clinton	31	29	36
19	Laura Bush	6	n/a	n/a
n/a	Rosalyn Carter	n/a	11	7
*	All/Any (VOL)	*	1	1
1	None (VOL)	2	1	2
<u>5</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>
100		100	100	100