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More Also Fault Media Coverage

**WHITEWATER WEIGHS DOWN CLINTON IN PUBLIC'S EYES**

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## More Also Fault Media Coverage

# **WHITEWATER WEIGHS DOWN CLINTON IN PUBLIC'S EYES**

The Whitewater scandal is sapping public confidence in Bill Clinton. Almost as many Americans now disapprove, as approve of the way the President is handling his job, and there is a growing belief that the Whitewater case is disrupting the government's ability to deal with major policy issues such as crime, healthcare reform, and the economy.

A nationwide *Times Mirror* survey, conducted this past weekend, found the President's job ratings dipping to 45% approve, 42% disapprove. As recently as late January, public approval of Clinton's performance (51%) ran well ahead of disapproval (35%). The current poll also found 81% of respondents thinking that the Whitewater case was disrupting the government's effectiveness. As many as 44% said the scandal was causing a *major* disruption.

The telephone survey of 2001 adults also revealed increased criticism of the amount of press coverage devoted to Whitewater, even as a growing number of Americans say they are paying at least some attention to the controversy.

A 55% majority of the public thinks the news media is paying too much attention to the Whitewater story, while 40% believes the press is either devoting the right amount of attention to news about this issue (33%), or too little attention (7%). In early March, a *Newsweek Poll* found the public evenly divided on this question, (44% too much attention, 46% too little/right amount).

Since late January, the percentage of Americans who say they are following news of Whitewater either very or fairly closely has increased from 39% to 49%. However, as in the earlier surveys, only a very small percentage of Americans (11%) currently report they are paying *very* close attention to news about the scandal. Also as in January, those who paid the closest attention to Whitewater were more critical than the average citizen of Bill Clinton - 58% *disapproved* of the way he was handling his job.

Looking more broadly, Clinton's job approval ratings have seriously slipped in all demographic and political groups since January. In the current poll, he only achieved majority approval rating from non-whites, Easterners, Democrats and those who voted for him in 1992. Clinton approval ratings declined the most over the past six weeks among Republicans (26% to 17%), Independents (53% to 43%), the Midwest (53% to 44%), and among College graduates (58% to 48%).

On balance, Bill Clinton's job performance ratings continued to be stronger among younger people - those under 30 - than among middle-aged and older Americans. Correspondingly, public interest in Whitewater was lower among younger people.

### *Some Wrongdoing Seen*

The percentage of Americans who think the Clintons are guilty of some wrongdoing with regard to Whitewater has increased from 45% in January to 67% in the current survey. But most Americans (52%) think that Bill and Hillary Clinton are guilty of only *minor* offenses. Just one in six Americans (15%) believe the first couple is guilty of a serious offense. Since January there has not been a meaningful increase in the percentage who believe the first couple is guilty of a major Whitewater offense.

On the other hand, most Americans (52%) believe the White House has covered up information about the scandal that could be damaging to the Clintons. Partisanship was very evident in public views on these questions. Majorities of Republicans (74%) and Independents (55%) think a White House cover-up has occurred, but only 30% of Democrats share that view. However, there was bipartisan belief that the Clintons are guilty of at least some wrongdoing back in Arkansas - expressed by 79% of Republicans, 67% of Independents and 59% of Democrats.

# **SELECTED TABLES**

# CLINTON JOB APPROVAL

	<u>% APPROVE</u>		<u>% DISAPPROVE</u>			N
	<i>Jan. 94</i>	<i>Mar. 94</i>	<i>Jan. 94</i>	<i>Mar. 94</i>	<i>Diff.</i>	
<i>Total</i>	51	45	35	42	+7	2001
<i>Sex</i>						
Male	48	41	41	47	+6	974
Female	54	47	30	38	+8	1027
<i>Race</i>						
White	47	41	38	46	+8	1697
Non-white	74	63	14	23	+9	286
<i>Age</i>						
Under 30	56	48	33	41	+8	415
30-49	49	45	38	44	+6	842
50+	50	42	33	42	+9	721
<i>Education</i>						
College Grad.	58	48	32	41	+9	594
Some College	49	45	37	44	+7	451
High School Grad.	50	44	37	43	+6	763
< H.S. grad.	47	41	33	39	+6	188
<i>Family Income</i>						
\$50,000+	53	44	36	47	+11	488
\$30,000-\$49,999	53	45	37	43	+6	514
\$20,000-\$29,999	45	48	38	40	+2	373
< \$20,000	52	41	33	42	+9	384
<i>Region</i>						
East	52	51	28	36	+8	385
Midwest	53	44	37	44	+7	541
South	49	41	38	45	+7	737
West	49	45	35	42	+7	338
<i>Community Size</i>						
Large City	N/A	48	N/A	36		363
Suburb	N/A	49	N/A	42		509
Small City/Town	N/A	44	N/A	42		732
Rural Area	N/A	37	N/A	50		390
<i>Party ID</i>						
Republican	26	17	59	74	+15	629
Democrat	74	75	13	13	0	610
Independent	53	43	35	41	+6	689

*Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President?*

**CONT.**

**CONT.**

	<u>% APPROVE</u>		<u>% DISAPPROVE</u>			<i>N</i>
	<i>Jan. 94</i>	<i>Mar. 94</i>	<i>Jan. 94</i>	<i>Mar. 94</i>	<i>Diff.</i>	
<i>Past Vote</i>						
Bush	N/A	14	N/A	77		588
Clinton	N/A	79	N/A	10		643
Perot	N/A	34	N/A	54		235
Other	N/A	40	N/A	39		535
<i>Political Vocalization</i>						
Regular Listener						
To Talk Radio	50	40	43	50	+7	257
Contacted Washington						
In Past 12 Months	45	43	46	49	+3	329
Both	38	38	58	56	-2	93
Neither	52	47	31	38	+7	805

# OPINIONS ABOUT "WHITEWATER"

(Based on Form 1 & 3 Respondents - N=989)

	<i>% Following News About Whitewater Closely*</i>	<i>% Believe Guilty Of Wrongdoing**</i>	<i>% Believe Media Give Too Much Attention To Case</i>
<i>Total</i>	49	67	55
<i>Sex</i>			
Male	52	69	55
Female	46	65	54
<i>Race</i>			
White	51	69	55
Non-white	38	58	56
<i>Age</i>			
Under 30	38	67	46
30-49	50	69	54
50+	54	65	61
<i>Education</i>			
College Grad.	65	67	57
Some College	51	68	54
High School Grad.	43	70	54
< H.S. grad.	39	58	56
<i>Family Income</i>			
\$50,000+	57	73	58
\$30,000-\$49,999	55	70	57
\$20,000-\$29,999	41	70	60
< \$20,000	43	64	46
<i>Region</i>			
East	45	64	60
Midwest	49	68	58
South	47	66	51
West	55	70	51
<i>Community Size</i>			
Large City	43	64	55
Suburb	53	65	57
Small City/Town	48	67	55
Rural Area	50	72	52
<i>Party ID</i>			
Republican	60	79	43
Democrat	41	59	69
Independent	47	67	53

*Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President?*

\* Very or Fairly

\*\* Only Minor or Serious Offenses

**CONT.**

**CONT.**

	<i>% Following News About Whitewater Closely*</i>	<i>% Believe Guilty Of Wrongdoing**</i>	<i>% Believe Media Give Too Much Attention To Case</i>
<i>Past Vote</i>			
Bush	62	82	40
Clinton	51	60	73
Perot	51	67	57
Other	33	61	49
<i>Political Vocalization</i>			
Regular Listener To Talk Radio	75	72	52
Contacted Washington In Past 12 Months	64	71	57
Both	86	84	57
Neither	39	63	58

\* Very or Fairly

\*\* Only Minor or Serious Offenses



# **SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

## ABOUT THIS SURVEY

The survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 2,001 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period March 16-21, 1994. For results 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 2 percentage points. For results based on Forms 1 and 3 (N=989), one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 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.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY IN DETAIL

The sample for this survey is a random digit sample of telephone numbers selected from telephone exchanges in the continental United States. The random digit aspect of the sample is used to avoid "listing" bias and provides representation of both listed and unlisted numbers (including not-yet-listed). The design of the sample ensures this representation by random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of their area code, telephone exchange, and bank number.

The telephone exchanges were selected with probabilities proportional to their size. The first eight digits of the sampled telephone numbers (area code, telephone exchange, bank number) were selected to be proportionally stratified by county and by telephone exchange within county. That is, the number of telephone numbers randomly sampled from within a given county is proportional to that county's share of telephone households in the U.S. Estimates of the number of telephone households within each county are derived from 1990 Census data on residential telephone incidence that have been updated with state-level information on new telephone installations and county-level projections of the number of households. Only working banks of telephone numbers are selected. A working bank is defined as 100 contiguous telephone numbers containing three or more residential listings.

The sample was released for interviewing in replicates. Using replicates to control the release of sample to the field ensures that the complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample.

At least three attempts were made to complete an interview at every sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making a contact with a potential respondent. All interview breakoffs and refusals were re-contacted at least once in order to attempt to convert them to completed interviews. In each contacted household, interviewers asked to speak with the "youngest male 18 or older who is at home". If there is no eligible man at home, interviewers asked to speak with "the oldest woman 18 or older who lives in the household". This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown empirically to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender.

Non-response in telephone interview surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, and these subgroups are likely to vary also on questions of substantive interest. In order to compensate for these known biases, the sample data are weighted in analysis.

The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (March 1992). This analysis produced population parameters for the demographic characteristics of households with adults 18 or older, which are then compared with the sample characteristics to construct sample weights. The analysis only included households in the continental United States that contain a telephone.

The weights are derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distributions of all weighting parameters. After an optimum sample balancing solution is reached, the weights were constrained to fall within the range of 1 to 5. This constraint is useful to ensure that individual respondents do not exert an inordinate effect on the survey's overall results.

# **THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**TIMES MIRROR CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS**  
**MOOD OF AMERICA SURVEY**  
**March 16 - 21,1994**  
**N=2001**

**INTRODUCTION:** Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling for Princeton Survey Research of Princeton, New Jersey. We're conducting a national opinion survey for leading newspapers, radio, and TV stations. I'd like to ask a few questions of the youngest male age 18 or older, who is now at home. **(IF NO MALE AT HOME NOW: Then, may I speak with the oldest female age 18 or older who is now at home) (REPEAT INTRODUCTION IF RESPONDENT DID NOT ANSWER THE TELEPHONE.)**

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as president?

		<u>Jan</u> <u>1994</u>	<u>Early</u> <u>Jan</u> <u>1994</u>	<u>Dec</u> <u>1993</u>	<u>Oct</u> <u>1993</u>	<u>Early</u> <u>Sept</u> <u>1993</u>	<u>Sept</u> <u>1993</u>	<u>Aug</u> <u>1993</u>	<u>June</u> <u>1993</u>	<u>May</u> <u>1993</u>	<u>April</u> <u>1993</u>	<u>Feb</u> <u>1993</u>
45	Approve	51	48	48	44	49	43	39	39	45	49	56
42	Disapprove	35	35	36	42	35	43	46	43	37	29	25
<u>13</u> <u>100</u>	DK/Refused	<u>14</u> <u>100</u>	<u>17</u> <u>100</u>	<u>16</u> <u>100</u>	<u>14</u> <u>100</u>	<u>16</u> <u>100</u>	<u>14</u> <u>100</u>	<u>15</u> <u>100</u>	<u>18</u> <u>100</u>	<u>18</u> <u>100</u>	<u>22</u> <u>100</u>	<u>19</u> <u>100</u>

**Q's 19-24 BASED ON NATIONAL FORM RESPONDENTS [N=989]:**

19. How closely have you have you followed recent news stories about the Whitewater case and White House handling of it? Would you say...(READ)<sup>1</sup>

		<u>Jan</u> <u>1994</u>	<u>Early</u> <u>Jan</u> <u>1994</u>
11	Very closely	14	13
38	Fairly closely	25	29
28	Not too closely	28	31
21	OR not at all closely?	32	26
<u>2</u> <u>100</u>	Don't know <b>(DO NOT READ)</b>	<u>1</u> <u>100</u>	<u>1</u> <u>100</u>

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<sup>1</sup> In previous months story was listed "Questions about Bill and Hillary Clinton's failed real estate investments in Arkansas".

20. Do you think the Clinton Administration is knowingly covering up information about Whitewater that could be damaging to the President or Hillary Clinton?

**Newsweek Poll**  
March 11th  
1994

52	Yes, cover-up	52
28	No cover-up	29
<u>20</u> 100	Don't know	<u>19</u> 100

21. From what you've heard or read about Bill and Hillary Clinton's involvement with the Whitewater Development Corporation and a failed Savings and Loan bank in Arkansas, do you think the Clintons are...(READ)

**Newsweek Poll**  
March 11  
1994      Jan  
1994

13	NOT guilty of any wrongdoing	14	19
52	Guilty of only MINOR offenses	44	31
	OR		
15	Guilty of SERIOUS offenses	20	14
<u>20</u> 100	Don't know ( <b>DO NOT READ</b> )	<u>22</u> 100	<u>36</u> 100

22. What effect do you think the Whitewater case is having on the federal government's efforts in major areas such as crime, health care reform, and economic policy? Is Whitewater disrupting efforts a lot, disrupting efforts a little or not disrupting efforts?

**Newsweek Poll**  
March 11th  
1994

44	Disrupting a lot	39
37	Disrupting a little	34
10	Not disrupting	17
<u>9</u> 100	Don't know	<u>10</u> 100

**NO Q.23**

24. Do you think the media is giving TOO MUCH attention to the Whitewater case and White House handling of it, TOO LITTLE attention, or about the right amount?

**Newsweek Poll**  
March 11th  
1994

55	Too much attention	44
7	Too little attention	10
33	About the right amount	36
$\frac{5}{100}$	Don't know	$\frac{10}{100}$