

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**JANUARY 1998 NEWS INTEREST INDEX**  
**-- FINAL TOPLINE --**  
**Jan 14 - 18, 1998**  
**N=1,218**

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_ calling for Princeton Survey Research Associates in Princeton, New Jersey. We are conducting a telephone opinion survey for leading newspapers and TV stations around the country. I'd like to ask a few questions of the youngest male, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home. **[IF NO MALE, ASK: May I please speak with the oldest female, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home?]**

Q.1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President? **[IF DK ENTER AS DK. IF DEPENDS PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President? IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
January, 1998	61	30	9=100
November, 1997	58	31	11=100
September, 1997	58	29	13=100
August, 1997	59	32	9=100
June, 1997	54	34	12=100
May, 1997	57	34	9=100
April, 1997	55	34	11=100
February, 1997	60	32	8=100
Early February, 1997	57	30	13=100
January, 1997	59	31	10=100
November, 1996	57	34	9=100
July, 1996	54	38	8=100
June, 1996	54	38	8=100
April, 1996	53	39	8=100
March, 1996	55	38	7=100
February, 1996	51	39	10=100
January, 1996	50	43	7=100
October, 1995	48	42	10=100
September, 1995	45	42	13=100
August, 1995	44	44	12=100
June, 1995	50	40	10=100
April, 1995	47	43	10=100
March, 1995	44	44	12=100
February, 1995	44	44	12=100
December, 1994	41	47	12=100
November, 1994	48	40	12=100
October, 1994	41	47	12=100
Early October, 1994	38	47	15=100
September, 1994	41	52	7=100
July, 1994	45	46	9=100
June, 1994	42	44	14=100
May, 1994	46	42	12=100
March, 1994	45	42	13=100
January, 1994	51	35	14=100
Early January, 1994	48	35	17=100

Q.1 CONTINUED ...

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
December, 1993	48	36	16=100
October, 1993	44	42	14=100
September, 1993	49	35	16=100
Early September, 1993	43	43	14=100
August, 1993	39	46	15=100
May, 1993	39	43	18=100
Early May, 1993	45	37	18=100
April, 1993	49	29	22=100
February, 1993	56	25	19=100

Q.2 Do you approve or disapprove of the job the Republican leaders in Congress are doing? **[IF DK ENTER AS DK. IF DEPENDS PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall do you approve or disapprove of the job the Republican leaders in Congress are doing? IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
January, 1998	43	41	16=100
November, 1997	41	43	16=100
August, 1997	42	44	14=100
June, 1997	33	50	17=100
May, 1997	40	44	16=100
April, 1997	40	44	16=100
February, 1997	44	42	14=100
January, 1997	38	47	15=100
November, 1996	40	43	17=100
July, 1996	38	48	14=100
June, 1996	36	50	14=100
April, 1996	39	46	15=100
March, 1996	35	51	14=100
February, 1996	33	53	14=100
January, 1996	36	54	10=100
October, 1995	36	51	13=100
September, 1995	36	50	14=100
August, 1995	38	45	17=100
June, 1995	41	45	14=100
April, 1995	44	43	13=100
March 1995	43	39	18=100
December, 1994	52	28	20=100

Q.3 All in all, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today?

	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
January, 1998	46	50	4=100
August, 1997	49	46	5=100
January, 1997	38	58	4=100
July, 1996	29	67	4=100
March, 1996	28	70	2=100
October, 1995	23	73	4=100
June, 1995	25	73	2=100
April, 1995	23	74	3=100
July, 1994	24	73	3=100
March, 1994	24	71	5=100
October, 1993	22	73	5=100
September, 1993	20	75	4=100
May, 1993	22	71	7=100
January, 1993	39	50	11=100
January, 1992	28	68	4=100
November, 1991	34	61	5=100
<i>Late February, 1991 (Gallup)</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>3=100</i>
August, 1990	47	48	5=100
May, 1990	41	54	5=100
January, 1989	45	50	5=100
September, 1988	50	45	5=100
May, 1988	41	54	5=100
January, 1988	39	55	6=100

**ON ANOTHER SUBJECT...**

**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=614]:**

Q.4F1 What is the FIRST news story that comes to mind when you think about what's been in the news on television, radio or in the newspapers lately. **(OPEN-END. ACCEPT MULTIPLES RESPONSES, BUT DO NOT PROBE.)**

14	Iraq/Situation in Iraq/Saddam Hussein
10	Bad Weather/Storms/Snow/Ice Storms
7	Miscellaneous Crime stories
6	Paula Jones/Sexual harassment suit against Bill Clinton
6	Miscellaneous Murder stories
5	Bill Clinton/The President and all of his problems
4	Miscellaneous domestic stories
4	Terry Nichols trial/Oklahoma city bombing
3	Theodore Kaczynski Trial
3	Fatal ski accidents
3	Asian financial crisis
2	Miscellaneous Middle East conflicts
2	Jon Benet-Ramsey case
2	US Stock Market
2	Drugs
2	Miscellaneous International Stories
2	Kidnapings/Missing children
1	John Glenn
1	Miscellaneous economic stories
1	Medicare reform proposal
1	El Nino and its effects
1	Princess Diana
1	Iran
10	All others
13	Don't Know/Refused

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=604]:**

Q.5F2 Can you recall the name of anyone who has been in the news lately? (IF YES: Who was that?) **(OPEN-END. IF "DON'T KNOW," PROBE ONCE. ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE.)**

27	Bill Clinton
8	Sonny Bono
5	Saddam Hussein
5	Paula Jones
4	Newt Gingrich
2	Princess Diana
2	Michael Kennedy
2	Theodore Kaczynski
2	O.J. Simpson
2	John Glenn
2	Terry Nichols
2	Hillary Clinton
1	The Pope
1	Al Gore
1	Madeline Albright
18	OTHER
30	None/Don't know/Refused

**ASK ALL:**

Q.6 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely? **[READ AND ROTATE LIST]**

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	<b>(VOL)</b> <u>DK</u>
a. The trial of accused "Unabomber" Theodore Kaczynski	18	37	30	15	*=100
b. The sentencing of Terry Nichols, convicted in the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City December, 1997 <sup>1</sup>	24 19	46 31	21 31	9 18	*=100 1=100
c. The outbreak of an Asian flu spread by birds or chickens	19	36	25	20	*=100
d. President Clinton's proposal to offer Medicare to younger retirees and uninsured Americans between 55 and 64	18	30	27	25	*=100
e. The deepening financial crisis in many Asian countries	15	25	27	33	*=100
f. Recent major ups and downs in the U.S. stock market	21	25	23	31	*=100
November, 1997 <sup>2</sup>	25	36	18	20	1=100
April, 1997	17	21	22	40	*=100
February, 1996	12	20	25	42	1=100
g. President Clinton's child care proposal calling for tax credits and expanded funding	16	29	29	25	1=100
h. Plans by a Chicago scientist to open a clinic for cloning people	21	29	24	26	*=100

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<sup>1</sup> This month the story was listed as "The trial of Terry Nichols, accused of bombing the federal building in Oklahoma City."

<sup>2</sup> In November 1997, April 1997 and February 1996 the story was listed as "Recent major ups and downs in the stock market."

**Q.6 CONTINUED ...**

		<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	<b>(VOL)</b> <u>DK</u>
i.	The debate about how to reform the Social Security system	18	27	29	25	1=100
	February, 1997	23	26	22	28	1=100
	January, 1997 <sup>3</sup>	29	35	22	13	1=100
j.	The conflict in Iraq over UN weapons inspectors	32	35	18	15	*=100
	November, 1997 <sup>4</sup>	44	32	10	13	1=100

**ON ANOTHER SUBJECT,**

Q.7 If the elections for U.S. Congress were being held TODAY, would you vote for the Republican Party's candidate or the Democratic Party's candidate for Congress in your district?

**IF RESPONDENT ANSWERED '3' OR '9' IN Q.7 , ASK:**

Q.8 As of TODAY, do you LEAN more to the Republican or the Democrat?

**BASED ON REGISTERED VOTERS: [N=922]**

		Early		Late Early			Early										
		Aug 1997	Nov 1996 <sup>5</sup>	Oct 1996	Sept 1996	Sept 1996	July 1996	June 1996	March 1996	Jan 1996	Oct 1995	Aug 1995	Nov 1994	Oct 1994	Oct 1994	Sept 1994	July 1994
41	Rep/Lean Rep	45	44	42	43	43	46	44	44	46	48	50	45	47	52	48	45
51	Dem/Lean Dem	48	48	49	49	51	47	50	49	47	48	43	43	44	40	46	47
<u>8</u> 100	Other/Undecided	<u>7</u> 100	<u>8</u> 100	<u>9</u> 100	<u>8</u> 100	<u>6</u> 100	<u>7</u> 100	<u>6</u> 100	<u>7</u> 100	<u>7</u> 100	<u>4</u> 100	<u>7</u> 100	<u>12</u> 100	<u>9</u> 100	<u>8</u> 100	<u>6</u> 100	<u>8</u> 100

<sup>3</sup> This month the story was listed as "Proposals to reform the Social Security System"

<sup>4</sup> This month the story was listed as "Iraq's refusal to let Americans participate in weapons inspections."

<sup>5</sup> Based on Likely Voters.

**ASK ALL:**

Q.9 Now a few questions about priorities for President Clinton and Congress this year. As I read from a list, tell me if you think the item that I read should be a priority. (First,) should (**INSERT ITEM; ROTATE**) be a top priority, important but lower priority, not too important, or should it not be done? (What about (**INSERT ITEM**)?)

		<u>Top Priority</u>	<u>Important But lower Priority</u>	<u>Not too Important</u>	<u>Should Not be Done</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
<b>FORM 1 [N=614]:</b>						
a.F1	Improving the job situation	54	32	10	3	1=100
	January, 1997	66	26	5	2	1=100
	December, 1994	64	27	5	2	2=100
b. F1	Reforming health care	62	27	6	3	2=100
	January, 1997	56	32	7	4	1=100
	December, 1994	54	27	9	7	3=100
c.F1	Cutting the capital gains tax	25	40	20	7	8=100
	January, 1997	29	38	17	8	8=100
	December, 1994	27	38	16	7	12=100
d.F1	Reducing crime	71	25	2	1	1=100
	January, 1997	70	25	3	2	*=100
	December, 1994	78	17	2	1	2=100
e.F1	Paying off the national debt	46	40	9	3	2=100
f.F1	Reducing federal income taxes for the middle class	54	33	8	3	2=100
	January, 1997	42	38	10	8	2=100
	December, 1994	53	32	9	3	3=100
g.F1	Reforming the campaign finance system	32	34	24	5	5=100
	January, 1997	31	37	23	5	4=100
h.F1	Dealing with the problems of families with children	55	30	9	4	2=100
<b>FORM 2 [N=604]:</b>						
i.F2	Improving the educational system	78	17	3	2	*=100
	January, 1997	75	20	3	2	*=100
j.F2	Taking steps to make the Social Security system financially sound	71	24	4	1	*=100
	January, 1997	75	20	2	2	1=100
k.F2	Taking steps to make the Medicare system financially sound	64	31	3	1	1=100
	January, 1997	64	31	3	1	1=100

**Q.9 CONTINUED ...**

		<u>Top Priority</u>	<u>Important But lower Priority</u>	<u>Not too Important</u>	<u>Should Not be Done</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
l.F2	Working to reduce racial tensions January, 1997	41 50	38 34	13 9	7 5	1=100 2=100
m.F2	Dealing with the problems of poor and needy people January, 1997	57 57	34 35	6 6	2 2	1=100 *=100
n.F2	Protecting the environment January, 1997	53 54	37 35	8 8	1 2	1=100 1=100
o.F2	Dealing with the moral breakdown in the country January, 1997	48 52	31 29	13 10	6 6	2=100 3=100

Q.10 If it turns out that the federal government has a budget SURPLUS this year, in your opinion, which ONE of the following should be done with the available money? Should the money be used (**INSERT ITEM; ROTATE**)

- 11 For a tax cut
- 22 To pay off the national debt more quickly
- 33 For increased spending on domestic programs such as health, education, and the environment
- 32 To help make the Social Security and Medicare programs financially sound
- 2 Don't know/Refused (**VOL**)  
100

**Now, I'd like your opinion of some new proposals and decisions that have been made in Washington recently...**

Q.11 It has been proposed to expand Medicare to also include younger retirees and uninsured Americans between the ages of 55 and 64 who would pay higher premiums than people 65 and older now do. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?

- 51 Favor
- 41 Oppose
- 8 Don't know/Refused  
100



Q.12 Do you favor or oppose giving tax credits to families that earn less than \$60,000 to help them pay for child care costs?

71 Favor  
 26 Oppose  
 $\frac{3}{100}$  Don't know/Refused

Q.13 Do you favor or oppose increasing federal spending to provide child care assistance to working parents?

63 Favor  
 34 Oppose  
 $\frac{3}{100}$  Don't know/Refused

**ASK FORM 1 [N=614]:**

Q.14 Do you approve or disapprove of the presence of U.S. troops in Bosnia?

		<i>CNN/USA Today/Gallup</i>				
		<u>Nov</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Dec</u>
		<u>1997</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1995</u>
43	Approve	50	39	42	36	41
50	Disapprove	42	53	51	58	54
$\frac{7}{100}$	Don't know/Refused	$\frac{8}{100}$	$\frac{8}{100}$	$\frac{7}{100}$	$\frac{6}{100}$	$\frac{5}{100}$

**ASK FORM 2 [N=604]:**

Q.15 As you may know, the U.S. troops currently stationed in Bosnia along with troops from other Western European countries were originally scheduled to be withdrawn from Bosnia by June. President Clinton recently announced that U.S. troops would remain in Bosnia beyond that deadline. Do you approve or disapprove of Clinton's decision to extend their stay?

		<i>CNN/USA Today/Gallup</i>
		<u>Dec 1997</u>
43	Approve	43
50	Disapprove	50
$\frac{7}{100}$	Don't know/Refused	$\frac{7}{100}$

**ASK ALL:**

Q.16 President Clinton has asked Congress for authority to negotiate trade agreements. This would mean that once negotiations are completed, Congress would vote yes-or-no on the agreement as a whole, but could NOT make any amendments or changes. Do you favor or oppose giving the President this so-called "fast-track" authority to negotiate free trade agreements?

27 Favor  
 67 Oppose  
5 Don't know/Refused  
 100

**AND ON ANOTHER SUBJECT...**

Q.17 Would you like to see your Representative in Congress be re-elected in the next congressional election, or not?

**BASED ON REGISTERED VOTERS: [N=922]**

		Aug 1997	Early Nov 1996	Oct 1996	Late Sept 1996	Early Sept 1996	Nov 1994	Oct 1994	Early Oct 1994	---Gallup--- Oct 25-28 1990
66	Yes	66	60	62	55	62	58	55	49	62
23	No	22	16	19	17	19	25	30	29	22
0	Congressman is not running (VOL)	0	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
<u>11</u> 100	No opinion	<u>12</u> 100	<u>21</u> 100	<u>17</u> 100	<u>26</u> 100	<u>17</u> 100	<u>16</u> 100	<u>13</u> 100	<u>20</u> 100	<u>14</u> 100

Q.18 Regardless of how you feel about your own Representative, would you like to see most members of Congress re-elected in the next congressional election, or not?

**BASED ON REGISTERED VOTERS: [N=922]**

		Aug 1997	Early Sept 1996	Nov 1994	Late Oct 1994	Early Oct 1994
44	Yes	45	43	31	31	28
43	No	42	43	51	56	56
<u>13</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>13</u> 100	<u>14</u> 100	<u>18</u> 100	<u>13</u> 100	<u>16</u> 100

**ON A DIFFERENT SUBJECT...**

Q.19 Which of the following two statements about the news media do you agree with more...(READ)

		<u>Feb</u> <u>1997</u>	<u>March</u> <u>1995</u>	<u>July</u> <u>1994</u>
31	The news media helps society to solve its problems	36	33	25
	OR			
63	The news media gets in the way of society solving its problems	54	57	71
<u>6</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>10</u> 100	<u>10</u> 100	<u>4</u> 100

Q.20 Which of the following two statements best describes you... (READ)

31	I follow the news closely ONLY when something important or interesting is happening
	OR
67	I follow the news closely most of the time, whether or not something important or interesting is happening
<u>2</u> 100	Don't know/Refused (VOL)

Q.21 Do you often find stories about what's going on in Washington confusing and unclear, OR are these stories generally clear and understandable to you?

61	Confusing and unclear
38	Clear and understandable
<u>1</u> 100	Don't know/Refused

Q.22 Do you have a great deal, quite a lot, only some, or very little confidence in the way the jury system works in criminal trials in the courts?

*Los Angeles Times*  
Oct 95

12	Great deal	15
18	Quite a lot	18
31	Only some	34
36	Very little	29
<u>3</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>5</u> 100

Q.23 We're interested in what things people are talking about with family, friends and co-workers. As I read from a list, tell me if this is something that you've talked about recently, or not? (First,) how about...(INSERT ITEM; ROTATE)

		<u>Yes, have talked about</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
a.	The NFL playoffs	54	45	1=100
a2.	Senator John Glenn's return trip to space <sup>6</sup>	42	57	1=100
b.	The skiing deaths of Michael Kennedy and Sonny Bono	80	20	*=100
c.	Jerry Seinfeld's decision to end his show after this season	32	67	1=100
d.	Professional basketball player Latrell Sprewell's attack on his coach	39	61	*=100
e.	Comedian Chris Farley's death	48	52	*=100
f.	Efforts to rein in the power of the computer software company Microsoft	31	68	1=100
g.	Recent movies like "Titanic" and "Amistad"	64	36	*=100
h.	Unusual winter weather	85	15	*=100

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<sup>6</sup> Item only asked of respondents Friday through Sunday, N=510.

**Q.23 CONTINUED ...**

	<u>Yes, have talked about</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	
<b>FORM 1 [N=614]:</b>				
i.	The trial of accused "Unabomber" Theodore Kaczynski	51	48	1=100
j.	The sentencing of Terry Nichols, convicted in the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City	60	40	*=100
k.	The outbreak of an Asian flu spread by birds or chickens	56	44	*=100
l.	President Clinton's proposal to offer Medicare to younger retirees between 55 and 64	43	57	*=100
m.	The deepening financial crisis in many Asian countries	38	61	1=100
<b>FORM 2 [N=604]:</b>				
n.	Recent major ups and downs in the stock market	47	52	1=100
o.	President Clinton's child care proposal calling for tax credits and expanded funding	37	63	0=100
p.	Plans by a Chicago scientist to open a clinic for cloning people	51	49	*=100
q.	The debate about how to reform the Social Security system	39	61	*=100
r.	The conflict in Iraq over UN weapons inspectors	53	47	*=100

**ON A DIFFERENT SUBJECT...**

Q.24 Do you use a computer at your workplace, at school, or at home on at least an occasional basis?

		<u>Nov</u> <u>1997</u>	<u>July</u> <u>1996</u>	<u>April</u> <u>1996</u>	<u>March</u> <u>1996</u>	<u>Feb</u> <u>1996</u>	<u>Jan</u> <u>1996</u>
65	Uses a PC at home, work or school	66	56	58	61	60	59
35	Does not use PC	34	44	42	39	40	41
<u>*</u> <u>100</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>*</u> <u>100</u>	<u>*</u> <u>100</u>	<u>*</u> <u>100</u>	<u>*</u> <u>100</u>	<u>0</u> <u>100</u>	<u>0</u> <u>100</u>

**IF RESPONDENT ANSWERED '1' YES IN Q.24, ASK:**

Q.24a Do you ever use a computer at work, school or home to connect with other computers over the Internet, with the World Wide Web, or with information services such as America Online or Prodigy?

		<u>Nov</u> <u>1997</u>	<u>July</u> <u>1996</u>	<u>April</u> <u>1996</u>	<u>March</u> <u>1996</u>	<u>Feb</u> <u>1996</u>	<u>Jan</u> <u>1996</u>
<b>BASED ON TOTAL RESPONDENTS:</b>							
37	Goes on-line	36	23	21	22	21	21
28	Does not go on-line	29	33	37	39	39	38
0	Don't know/Refused	1	0	*	0	*	0
<u>35</u> <u>100</u>	Not a computer user	<u>34</u> <u>100</u>	<u>44</u> <u>100</u>	<u>42</u> <u>100</u>	<u>39</u> <u>100</u>	<u>40</u> <u>100</u>	<u>41</u> <u>100</u>