

March 15, 2006 In a Word...Incompetent!

President Bush's declining image also is reflected in the single-word descriptions people use to describe their impression of the president. Three years ago, positive one-word descriptions of Bush far outnumbered negative ones. Over the past two years, the positive-negative balance has been roughly equal. But the one-word characterizations have turned decidedly negative since last July.

	May 2003	Feb 2004	May 2004	Feb 2005	Jul 2005	Mar 2006
<i>One-word description</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Positive	52	36	33	34	36	28
<i>*Good, Christian, Honest</i>						
Negative	27	36	37	42	40	48
<i>*Incompetent, Idiot, Liar</i>						
Neutral	9	13	13	11	12	10
<i>*OK, President, Conservative</i>						
No answer/DK	12	15	17	13	12	14
	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Current top three words in each category

Currently, 48% use a negative word to describe Bush compared with just 28% who use a positive term, and 10% who use neutral language.

The changing impressions of the president can best be viewed by tracking over time how often words come up in these top-of-the-mind associations. Until now, the most frequently offered word to describe the president was "honest," but this comes up far less often today than in the past. Other positive traits such as "integrity" are also cited less, and virtually no respondent used superlatives such as "excellent" or "great" terms that came up fairly often in previous surveys.

February 2005	July 2005	March 2006
38 Honest	31 Honest	29 Incompetent
20 Good	26 Incompetent	23 Good
15 Integrity	24 Arrogant	21 Idiot
15 Arrogant	18 Good	17 Liar
14 Incompetent	18 Integrity	14 Christian
13 Leader	15 Determined	14 Honest
11 Fair	13 Liar	13 Arrogant
11 Idiot	12 Stupid	13 Strong
9 Strong	11 Idiot	10 Integrity
9 Liar	11 Strong	8 Ass
8 Poor	10 Leader	8 Leader
8 Excellent	9 Okay	7 Jerk
8 Trustworthy	9 Christian	7 Okay
8 Dishonest	9 Great	7 Sincere
7 Conservative	8 Fair	7 Stupid
7 Great	8 Sincere	6 President
7 Sucks	7 Aggressive	6 Selfish
7 Christian	7 Honorable	6 Untrustworthy
7 Honorable	(N=751)	(N=710)
(N=761)		

Figures show the actual number of respondents who offered each response; these are NOT percentages.

The single word most frequently associated with George W. Bush today is "incompetent," and close behind are two other increasingly mentioned descriptors: "idiot" and "liar." All three are mentioned far more often today than a year ago.