

## **U.S. PUBLIC OPINION AND THE ICC**

**Public opinion polls consistently show strong American support for U.S. ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The level of support ranges from a low of 54% to a high of 71%.**

When the question mentions that the US does not currently support the court, support is lowest at 54% (Roper/ASW). In two separate polls, support hits 65-66% when the question mentions that some oppose the court “because trumped up charges may be brought against Americans, for example, US soldiers who use force in the course of a peacekeeping operation” (Americans on Globalization, Worldviews 2002). Two polls that do not contain a negative argument in the question but simply ask whether the U.S. should sign/ratify the treaty find that 66% and 71%, respectively, support the U.S. joining the ICC (Yankeovich Partners, Worldviews 2002)

**Seven in ten Americans agree that because of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the United States, it is particularly important for the U.S. government to work with other nations to create this International Criminal Court.**

Seventy-one percent of Americans strongly or somewhat agree that, “given the events of September 11th, it is more important for the United States to work in concert with other nations to establish an international criminal court.” Thirty seven percent strongly agree, whereas only 8% strongly disagree. (Roper/ASW)

**However, most Americans haven’t heard much about the International Criminal Court.**

Four in ten Americans (39%) say they have heard or read about the possibility of forming a permanent International Criminal Court, including 4% who know a lot and 13% who know some. The majority of Americans (61%) report that they have not heard or read anything at all about this initiative. (Roper/ASW)

### **Addendum: Recent Polls on the ICC**

#### **A. Americans on Globalization, October 1999**

**Americans on Globalization: A Study of U.S. Public Attitudes, Program on International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland, conducted by Research Data Design and Communications Center, Inc., 1,826 telephone interviews conducted between October 21-29, 1999.**

Question 67: A permanent international criminal court has been proposed by the UN to try individuals suspected of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. Some say the US should not support the proposed court because trumped up charges may be brought against Americans, for example, US soldiers who use force in the course of a peacekeeping operation. Others say that the US should support such a court because the world needs a better way to prosecute war criminals, many of whom go unpunished today. Do you think the US should or should not support a permanent international criminal court?

Should support	65.6%
Should not support	29%
Don't know	4.8%
Refused	0.6%

**B. Roper/ASW, April 2002**

**Prepared for the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1,043 telephone interviews conducted from March 28 to March 30, 2002.**

How much have you heard or read about the possibility of a permanent international criminal court being established? Would you say you have heard a lot, some, not too much or nothing at all?

A lot .....	4%
Some.....	13
Not too much.....	21
None at all .....	61
(VOL) Don't Know/No response .....	*

Over 100 countries have agreed to establish a permanent international criminal court to try individuals suspected of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. However the US government is not supporting this court. Do you think the US should support or not support this court?

Support .....	54%
Not support.....	37
(VOL) Don't Know/No response .....	10

Please tell me how much you agree with the following statement. Given the events of September 11th, it is more important for the United States to work in concert with other nations to establish an international criminal court. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree, or do the events of September 11" make "no difference."

Strongly Agree .....	37%
Somewhat Agree.....	33
Somewhat disagree .....	10
Strongly disagree .....	8
No difference.....	9
(VOL) Don't Know/No response .....	3

**C. Worldviews, June 2002**

**Sponsored by the German Marshall Fund and the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, conducted by Harris Interactive, 2862 telephone interviews and 400 personal in-home interviews, nationally, June 5 – June 30, 2002**

*Question 580/4:* Based on what you know, do you think the U.S. should or should not participate in the following treaties and agreements?

The agreement to establish an International Criminal Court that would try individuals for war crimes, genocide, or crimes against humanity if their own country won't try them.

Should participate	71%
Should not participate	22%
Not sure/decline	7 %
Total	100%

Question 595: A permanent International Criminal Court has been established by the UN (United Nations) to try individuals suspected of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Some say the U.S. (United States) should not support the Court because trumped up charges may be brought against Americans, for example, US soldiers who use force in the course of a peacekeeping operation. Others say that the U.S. should support the court because the world needs a better way to prosecute war criminals, many of whom go unpunished today. Do you think the U.S. should or should not support the permanent international criminal court?

Should support	65%
Should not support	28%
Not sure/decline	7%
Total	100%

**D. Yankelovich Partners, October 2002**

**Prepared for EarthAction. 1,010 phone interviews conducted between October 6 and October 9, 2002.**

Question 6: A treaty has been negotiated to set up an International Criminal Court to bring individuals to justice for crimes of genocide, war crimes or other major abuses of human rights if their own country won't try them. Would you favor or oppose the US signing the treaty?

Favor .....	66%
Oppose.....	24%
Don't know/ Not sure (VOL.) .....	10%

# FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH RESULTS

## ON THE

# INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

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In August 2003, the World Federalist Association and the Campaign for UN Reform conducted a series of focus groups with the general public and in-depth interviews with foreign policy experts, during which the International Criminal Court was one of the issues discussed. The research was conducted by the Bethesda firm Equals Three Communications on a range of international issues and focused on assessing the views of key stakeholders (policymakers, congressional staffers, media, funders) and civically-minded, middle-class, internet-savvy voters. The International Criminal Court was raised in the context of broader discussions about the field of international affairs and the role of America in the world.

Below are key findings from the final research reports that address the International Criminal Court. For more detailed excerpts from the reports, please contact Heather Hamilton at [hbhamilton@wfa.org](mailto:hbhamilton@wfa.org).

Among the key findings from the focus groups that I would like to highlight are the following:

- There was little previous knowledge of the ICC in all groups, and some groups had no previous knowledge of the ICC as separate from the World Court.
- Republicans were much more likely to have an opinion, and most often a negative opinion.
- Perceived benefits of the court include decreasing the likelihood of war, lessening the global police burden on the U.S., prevention of atrocities, and quicker justice for victims of terrorism.
- Expressed concerns include what laws the court would enforce, who would make these laws, how would it be free of politics? Also of concern: how the court would enforce its decisions, whether it would have retroactive jurisdiction, and whether the world needs a permanent court.
- There was a reluctance to expose soldiers and spies who are risking their lives for the country abroad to an international court, and people recognized that they sometimes break laws to keep us safe.
- On the other hand, others felt that the U.S. should be held to the same standards as everyone else, a finding that is in line with previous in-depth communications research, which finds that people think that the U.S. should play by the same rules as everyone else.
- There was a strong discomfort with other countries judging our system of justice.

The fact that many more Republicans had heard about the court than democrats is especially telling. When asked where they had heard about the court, the few people who knew something about it had heard almost exclusively statements from President Bush or other Bush administration officials. The debate is being defined by the administration at this point, and counter-arguments are not being heard.

The ICC will issue its first indictments soon, and its actions will be increasingly featured in the mainstream media. This represents a critical opportunity for Court supporters to deliver positive messages about the court, answer concerns and correct misunderstandings.