



Marist College Institute for Public Opinion
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 ♦ Phone 845.575.5050 ♦ Fax 845.575.5111 www.maristpoll.marist.edu

National Poll

Campaign 2004: Hit and Miss

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Contact: Dr. Lee M. Miringoff
Dr. Barbara L. Carvalho
Marist College
845.575.5050

This Marist College Institute for Public Opinion poll reports:

- **Taking the low road:** Many Americans view the 2004 presidential campaign as too negative. 58% say the presidential candidates have spent more time attacking each other rather than speaking about the issues. Only 28% think President Bush and Senator Kerry are focusing more on the issues.¹

Question Wording: Do you feel that the candidates for president have spent more time talking about their positions on issues or attacking each other?

April 2004	Talking Issues	Attacking	Unsure
Americans	28%	58%	14%
Battleground states	24%	61%	15%
Registered voters	30%	59%	11%
Democrats	30%	63%	7%
Republicans	31%	53%	16%
Independents	26%	59%	15%
Bush supporters	31%	53%	16%
Kerry supporters	31%	64%	5%
Undecided	16%	65%	19%

¹ The battleground states include 17 states. Nine of the battleground states were carried by less than seven points by Former Vice President Gore in 2000. The Gore states include Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin. Eight of the battleground states were carried by less than seven points by President Bush in 2000. The Bush states include Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, and West Virginia. Gore's home state of Tennessee is not included.

- **What Americans want to hear:** Domestic issues such as health care and education are what many Americans want to hear about in the presidential campaign. Jobs and the economy are next, followed by homeland security, the war against terrorism, and the situation in Iraq.

Question Wording: Which of the following issues are you most interested in hearing about during the presidential campaign:

April 2004	Domestic Issues	Jobs & Economy	Homeland Security	War on Terrorism	Situation in Iraq	Unsure
Americans	35%	26%	15%	13%	8%	3%
Battleground states	36%	26%	13%	11%	8%	6%
Registered voters	33%	27%	14%	15%	8%	3%
Democrats	37%	31%	7%	11%	10%	4%
Republicans	27%	24%	18%	23%	6%	2%
Independents	40%	24%	17%	8%	8%	3%
Bush supporters	23%	23%	19%	24%	8%	3%
Kerry supporters	46%	30%	9%	5%	8%	2%
Undecided	27%	35%	9%	14%	6%	9%

- **What Americans are getting from the campaigns:** 56% of Americans think the presidential candidates are not talking enough about the issues that are most important. Americans who place domestic issues such as health care and education or jobs and the economy at the top of their list of concerns, 61%, are feeling particularly short-changed. In contrast, many people who believe homeland security or the war on terrorism is most important feel the presidential candidates have addressed their concerns. Nearly half of the Americans who see the situation in Iraq as a top priority think the attention given to this issue in the presidential campaign is about right.

Question Wording: Do you feel the candidates for president are talking about (issue most important) too much, too little, or about the right amount?

April 2004	Too Much	Too Little	About Right
Americans	4%	56%	40%
Battleground states	3%	63%	34%
Issue most important			
Domestic issues	1%	75%	24%
Jobs/Economy	1%	68%	31%
Homeland security	4%	37%	59%
War on terrorism	6%	21%	73%
Situation in Iraq	23%	30%	47%

April 2004	Too Much	Too Little	About Right
Registered voters	5%	54%	41%
Democrats	5%	63%	32%
Republicans	2%	45%	53%
Independents	4%	61%	35%
Bush supporters	6%	44%	50%
Kerry supporters	3%	63%	34%
Undecided	4%	72%	24%

- **Most Americans think there's a lot at stake in this presidential election:** 82% of Americans think it matters whether George Bush or John Kerry takes the oath of office next January, with 66% saying it matters a great deal.

Question Wording: Do you think it matters a great deal, somewhat, not too much, or not at all whether George Bush or John Kerry wins the presidential election this year?

April 2004	A Great Deal	Somewhat	Not Too Much	Not at all
Americans	66%	16%	9%	9%
Battleground states	63%	15%	11%	11%
Registered voters	70%	16%	8%	6%
Democrats	71%	16%	10%	3%
Republicans	78%	15%	3%	4%
Independents	55%	18%	13%	14%
Bush supporters	72%	19%	6%	3%
Kerry supporters	76%	12%	9%	3%
Undecided	32%	27%	14%	27%

- **Americans are paying attention:** 59% say they are following the Bush-Kerry match-up closely. 41% are not paying a lot of attention to the candidates.

Question Wording: Would you say that you are following the presidential campaign very closely, closely, not very closely, or not at all?

April 2004	Very Closely	Closely	Not Very Closely	Not Closely at all
Americans	16%	43%	28%	13%
Battleground states	18%	40%	27%	15%
Registered voters	20%	47%	26%	7%
Democrats	16%	50%	25%	9%
Republicans	25%	47%	22%	6%
Independents	11%	37%	34%	18%
Bush supporters	23%	50%	23%	4%
Kerry supporters	18%	49%	27%	6%
Undecided	11%	22%	48%	19%

Nature of the Sample: 1,032 Americans

This survey was conducted from April 20th through April 23rd, 2004. 1,032 adults 18 years of age or older within the continental United States were interviewed by telephone. Telephone numbers were selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the nation. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each region was represented in proportion to its population. The results of the entire survey are statistically significant at $\pm 3\%$. There are 787 registered voters. The results for this sub-sample are statistically significant at $\pm 3.5\%$. The margin for error increases for cross-tabulations.