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National Poll: Campaign 2004

The Candidates and the Agenda

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This Marist College Institute for Public Opinion poll reports:

- **Voters divide:** George Bush and John Kerry are closely matched nationwide among registered voters. Bush has the support of 47% of the national electorate compared with 44% for Kerry. 9% are undecided. In the 17 battleground states, Bush receives the support of 44% of registered voters and Kerry receives 47%.¹

Question Wording: If November's presidential election were held today, whom would you support if the candidates are:

Registered voters	George Bush Republican	John Kerry Democrat	Undecided
April 2004	47%	44%	9%
Battleground states	44%	47%	9%
March 2004	46%	45%	9%
November 2003	48%	42%	10%

- **Minds made up:** 69% of registered voters strongly support their choice for president and 22% say they somewhat support their candidate. Just 8% say they might vote differently on Election Day.

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.

Question Wording: Would you say that you strongly support (candidate) somewhat support him, or do you think that you might vote differently on Election Day?

Registered voters	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Might Vote Differently	Unsure
April 2004	69%	22%	8%	1%
Bush supporters	74%	18%	7%	1%
Kerry supporters	63%	26%	9%	2%
Battleground states	69%	26%	4%	1%

- **The Nader factor:** When support for Ralph Nader is taken into account, George Bush is still the choice of 47% of the national electorate compared with 43% for John Kerry. Nader receives 5%. The battleground states are deadlocked at 45% each for Bush and Kerry with Nader at 5%.

Question Wording: If November's presidential election were held today, whom would you support if the candidates are:

Registered voters	George Bush Republican	John Kerry Democrat	Ralph Nader Independent	Undecided
April 2004	47%	43%	5%	5%
Battleground states	45%	45%	5%	5%

- **And the winner is...** A majority of registered voters believe George Bush will be re-elected in November.

Question Wording: Regardless of whom you are planning to vote for, who do you think will win the election for president?

Registered voters	George Bush	John Kerry	Unsure
April 2004	52%	37%	11%
Bush supporters	87%	6%	7%
Kerry supporters	16%	72%	12%
Battleground states	49%	40%	11%

- **The Public's agenda:** Jobs and the economy weigh heavily on voter's minds followed by the war on terrorism and the situation in Iraq. A majority of voters who cite either the economy or the situation in Iraq as their number one concern prefer John Kerry. George Bush is the overwhelming choice among voters who are most concerned about the war on terrorism.

Question Wording: Thinking about the future, are you most concerned about the war on terrorism, jobs and the economy, or the situation in Iraq?

Registered voters	War on Terrorism	Jobs & Economy	Situation in Iraq	Unsure
April 2004	33%	44%	20%	3%
Battleground states	33%	44%	20%	3%
Democrats	19%	56%	21%	4%
Republicans	47%	35%	16%	2%
Independents	34%	40%	23%	3%

Registered voters	George Bush	John Kerry	Undecided
War on terrorism	72%	23%	5%
Jobs & economy	34%	56%	10%
Situation in Iraq	35%	57%	8%

- The economy:** When all voters assess George Bush and John Kerry on the economy, Kerry edges Bush. By narrow margins, voters are more likely to think Kerry cares about the economic problems facing the nation, has a better plan, is a better leader, and is more truthful. Voters divide over who can be trusted more to deal with the economy and who better understands it. President Bush is viewed by voters as having a better economic record.

Question Wording: Do you think George Bush or John Kerry (attribute) the economic problems facing the nation?

Registered voters	Bush	Kerry	Unsure
Cares more about	41%	48%	11%
Has a better plan for	43%	49%	8%
Is a better leader for	45%	50%	5%
Is more truthful about	43%	48%	9%
Trust more to deal with	46%	49%	5%
Better understands	46%	46%	8%
Has a better record on	47%	41%	12%

- The fight against terrorism:** When all voters assess George Bush and John Kerry on the fight against terrorism, Bush beats Kerry on all seven candidate qualities presented.

Question Wording: Do you think George Bush or John Kerry (attribute) the fight against terrorism?

Registered voters	Bush	Kerry	Unsure
Has a better record on	65%	22%	13%
Cares more about	64%	23%	13%
Better understands	63%	30%	7%
Has a better plan for	58%	32%	10%
Is a better leader for	60%	34%	6%
Trust more to deal with	58%	36%	6%
Is more truthful about	53%	38%	9%

- **Situation in Iraq:** Registered voters are more likely to see George Bush as having the qualities to deal with the situation in Iraq.

Question Wording: Do you think George Bush or John Kerry (attribute) the situation in Iraq?

Registered voters	Bush	Kerry	Unsure
Cares more about	62%	25%	13%
Has a better record on	62%	26%	12%
Better understands	61%	31%	8%
Is a better leader for	56%	36%	8%
Has a better plan for	52%	36%	12%
Trust more to deal with	54%	39%	7%
Is more truthful about	48%	42%	10%

- **Voters rate the job George Bush is doing as president:** 51% of registered voters nationwide approve of the job President Bush is doing in office. This is statistically unchanged from a similar poll conducted last month.

Question Wording: Do you approve or disapprove of the job George Bush is doing as president?

Registered voters	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
April 2004	51%	47%	2%
March 2004	52%	45%	3%
November 2003	53%	42%	5%
April 2003	70%	23%	7%
February 2003	56%	34%	10%
January 2003	57%	34%	9%
October 2002	65%	27%	8%
April 2002	74%	17%	9%
January 2002	81%	11%	8%

Registered voters	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
November 2001	85%	8%	7%
March 2001	50%	24%	26%
January 2001	50%	20%	30%

Democrats	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
April 2004	18%	80%	2%
March 2004	19%	77%	4%
November 2003	27%	67%	6%
April 2003	47%	42%	11%
February 2003	31%	55%	14%
January 2003	28%	61%	11%
October 2002	41%	45%	14%
April 2002	55%	30%	15%
January 2002	71%	19%	10%

Republicans	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
April 2004	89%	11%	<1%
March 2004	94%	5%	1%
November 2003	84%	13%	3%
April 2003	97%	2%	1%
February 2003	89%	6%	5%
January 2003	90%	6%	4%
October 2002	89%	9%	2%
April 2002	97%	2%	1%
January 2002	96%	2%	2%

Independents	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
April 2004	48%	50%	2%
March 2004	50%	46%	4%
November 2003	51%	43%	6%
April 2003	66%	27%	7%
February 2003	54%	37%	9%
January 2003	51%	36%	13%
October 2002	65%	26%	9%
April 2002	73%	19%	8%
January 2002	81%	9%	10%

- **Handling the situation in Iraq:** A majority of registered voters, 51%, disapprove of President Bush's handling of the situation in Iraq, an increase from 45% last month.

Question Wording: Do you approve or disapprove of how President George Bush is handling the situation in Iraq?

Registered Voters	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
April 2004	47%	51%	2%
March 2004	52%	45%	3%
November 2003	48%	47%	5%
April 2003	76%	20%	4%

- **Handling the economy:** 47% of registered voters approve of President Bush's handling of the economy, up from 40% last month.

Question Wording: Do you approve or disapprove of how President George Bush is handling the economy?

Registered Voters	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
April 2004	47%	51%	2%
March 2004	40%	57%	3%
November 2003	46%	50%	4%
April 2003	50%	44%	6%

- **Handling the war on terrorism:** 55% of registered voters approve of President Bush's handling of the war on terrorism, down from 61% in March.

Question Wording: Do you approve or disapprove of how President George Bush is handling the war on terrorism?

Registered Voters	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
April 2004	55%	42%	3%
March 2004	61%	36%	3%
November 2003	59%	38%	3%
April 2003	78%	18%	4%

- **Direction of the country:** 43% of Americans think the country is headed in the right direction and 51% think it is headed in the wrong direction. 55% of registered voters in the battleground states think the nation is headed in the wrong direction and 40% think things are on the right track.

Question Wording: In general, thinking about the way things are going in the country, do you feel things are going in the right direction or that things are going in the wrong direction?

April 2004	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	Unsure
Americans	43%	51%	6%
Registered voters	46%	50%	4%
Battleground voters	40%	55%	5%
Previous Polls: Americans			
March 2004	43%	52%	5%
November 2003	45%	48%	7%
April 2003	55%	34%	11%
January 2003	42%	48%	10%
October 2002	45%	46%	9%
April 2002	60%	32%	8%
January 2002	60%	30%	10%
March 2001	41%	44%	15%
January 2001	56%	32%	12%

- **Team Kerry?** John Edwards is preferred by more voters to be John Kerry's running mate. Wesley Clark is second, Dick Gephardt is third, and many voters remain undecided.

Question Wording: Which one of the following Democrats would you most like to see Senator John Kerry choose to run with him as vice president:

April 2004	Registered Voters	Battleground States	Democrats & Dem Leaning Independents
North Carolina Senator John Edwards	28%	27%	34%
Retired General Wesley Clark from Arkansas	14%	17%	12%
Missouri Congressman Dick Gephardt	9%	9%	10%
Florida Senator Bob Graham	6%	7%	6%
New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson	5%	4%	6%
Former Georgia Senator Sam Nunn	4%	3%	1%
Indiana Senator Evan Bayh	3%	2%	3%
Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano	3%	4%	4%
Virginia Governor Mark Warner	3%	3%	2%
Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack	2%	3%	1%
Unsure	23%	21%	21%

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.