



## **National Poll: Campaign 2004 and Debate Preview**

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This Marist College Institute for Public Opinion poll reports:

- **Presidential contest is neck and neck:** With Election Day less than one month away, President George Bush and Senator John Kerry are in a close contest nationwide. Among registered voters, Bush receives the support of 47% compared with 46% for Kerry. Nader has 1%, and 6% are undecided. Those likely to vote also divide. Bush has the support of 49% of likely voters nationwide compared with 46% for Kerry. Ralph Nader receives 1%, and only 4% are undecided. Last month Bush had a six point edge over Kerry among likely voters.

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

<b>Registered voters</b>	<b>Bush/Cheney Republican</b>	<b>Kerry/Edwards Democrat</b>	<b>Nader/Camejo Independent<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Undecided</b>
October 2004	47%	46%	1%	6%
Battleground states	45%	46%	2%	7%
September 2004	47%	45%	3%	5%
August 2004	44%	45%	3%	8%
July 2004	44%	45%	2%	9%

<b>Likely voters</b>	<b>Bush/Cheney Republican</b>	<b>Kerry/Edwards Democrat</b>	<b>Nader/Camejo Independent</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
October 2004	49%	46%	1%	4%
Battleground states <sup>2</sup>	47%	48%	1%	4%

<sup>1</sup> As of the October poll, support for the Nader/Camejo ticket is based on respondents in states where they are on the presidential ballot when interviewing began.

<sup>2</sup> 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

<b>Likely voters</b>	Bush/Cheney Republican	Kerry/Edwards Democrat	Nader/Camejo Independent	Undecided
September 2004	50%	44%	2%	4%
August 2004	47%	47%	1%	5%
July 2004	46%	47%	1%	6%

<b>Voting Groups October 2004</b>	Bush/Cheney Republican	Kerry/Edwards Democrat	Nader/Camejo Independent	Undecided
Democrats	10%	85%	2%	3%
Republicans	86%	12%	<1%	2%
Independents	46%	43%	2%	9%
East	40%	49%	4%	7%
Central	50%	46%	<1%	4%
South	51%	43%	<1%	6%
West	45%	46%	2%	7%
Big city	32%	60%	1%	7%
Small city	43%	50%	3%	4%
Suburban	46%	49%	1%	4%
Small town	54%	37%	2%	7%
Rural	64%	31%	<1%	5%
Liberal	19%	72%	6%	3%
Moderate	37%	56%	1%	6%
Conservative	68%	26%	1%	5%
Not college graduate	47%	45%	1%	7%
College graduate	47%	48%	1%	4%
Less than \$50,000	43%	48%	3%	6%
\$50,000 or more	52%	44%	<1%	4%
Men	51%	43%	2%	4%
Women	44%	48%	1%	7%
Veteran HH	52%	40%	1%	7%
Evangelical Christian	63%	32%	<1%	5%
Att. religious serv. often	55%	40%	<1%	5%
Does not attend often	41%	51%	2%	6%
Money worries - always	28%	61%	3%	8%
No money worries	61%	32%	2%	5%

- Support for both presidential candidates is strong:** Overall, 77% of registered voters strongly support their choice for president, and 18% say they somewhat support their candidate. Just 5% say they might vote differently on Election Day. 79% of President Bush supporters are strongly committed to him, and 77% of voters who support Senator Kerry say they are firmly committed to their choice.

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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?

<b>Registered voters</b>	<b>Strongly Support</b>	<b>Somewhat Support</b>	<b>Might Vote Differently</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
October 2004	77%	18%	5%	<1%
Bush supporters				
October 2004	79%	17%	4%	<1%
September 2004	77%	18%	4%	1%
August 2004	78%	14%	7%	1%
July 2004	73%	20%	5%	2%
Kerry supporters				
October 2004	77%	17%	5%	1%
September 2004	70%	21%	8%	1%
August 2004	70%	22%	6%	2%
July 2004	67%	23%	8%	2%
September 2004	72%	20%	7%	1%
August 2004	72%	19%	7%	2%
July 2004	69%	22%	7%	2%

- **It's all about the incumbent:** 81% of registered voters who support George Bush say they are voting for him because they feel positively towards the president. In contrast, John Kerry backers divide over whether they see their vote as a vote for Kerry or whether they see it as a vote against the president.

**Question Wording:** Did you choose (George Bush/John Kerry) because you are for him or because you are against (George Bush/John Kerry)?

<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>For Candidate</b>	<b>Against Candidate</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
October 2004	65%	31%	4%
Bush supporters	81%	17%	2%
Kerry supporters	48%	47%	5%
September 2004	63%	32%	5%

- **Voters' perceptions of the candidates:** More voters see President Bush as someone who stands up for what he believes in, as a strong leader, as more likely to prevent future terror attacks, and as the best choice for commander in chief. Senator Kerry is seen by voters as more likely to improve the economy and as the candidate for change. Voters divide over which candidate cares about the needs of people like themselves, has a vision for the future, is closer to them on the issues, is honest and trustworthy, shares their values, and has a better plan for Iraq.

**Question Wording:** Please tell me whether each of the following statements applies more to George Bush or John Kerry:

	<b>Registered Voters</b>	Bush	Kerry	Unsure
He stands up for what he believes in	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>6%</b>
	September 2004	58%	37%	5%
He is a strong leader	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>4%</b>
	September 2004	56%	36%	8%
He will be more likely to prevent future terrorist attacks on the U.S.	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>7%</b>
	September 2004	54%	36%	10%
He is the best choice for commander-in-chief of the armed forces	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>2%</b>
	September 2004	50%	44%	6%
He cares about the needs of people like you	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>6%</b>
	September 2004	43%	50%	7%
He has a vision for the future	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>4%</b>
	September 2004	46%	47%	7%
He is closer to you on the issues	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>3%</b>
	September 2004	46%	48%	6%
He is honest and trustworthy	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>8%</b>
	September 2004	46%	44%	10%
He shares your values	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>5%</b>
	September 2004	49%	45%	6%
He has a better plan for Iraq	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>7%</b>
	September 2004	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
He will be more likely to improve the economy	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>5%</b>
	September 2004	44%	51%	5%
He is the candidate for change	<b>October 2004</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>7%</b>
	September 2004	29%	65%	6%

- **Domestic issues still top concern:** Domestic issues such as health care and education are what many voters want to hear about in the presidential campaign. The economy is next, followed by the war on terrorism, homeland security, and the situation in Iraq.

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

<b>Registered voters</b>	Domestic Issues	Economy	War on Terrorism	Homeland Security	Situation in Iraq	Unsure
October 2004	33%	27%	15%	11%	10%	4%
Bush supporters	25%	22%	25%	15%	9%	4%
Kerry supporters	40%	34%	7%	5%	11%	3%

<b>Registered voters</b>	Domestic Issues	Economy	War on Terrorism	Homeland Security	Situation in Iraq	Unsure
September 2004	35%	26%	14%	11%	11%	3%
August 2004	31%	25%	14%	14%	12%	4%
July 2004	34%	26%	17%	11%	8%	4%

- Voters who cite domestic issues, the economy, or Iraq as their number one concern prefer John Kerry. George Bush is the choice among voters who are most concerned about the war on terrorism or homeland security.

<b>Registered voters October 2004</b>	Bush/Cheney Republican	Kerry/Edwards Democrat	Nader/Camejo Independent	Undecided
Domestic issues	36%	54%	2%	8%
Economy	38%	57%	1%	4%
War on terrorism	76%	22%	<1%	2%
Homeland security	67%	23%	3%	7%
Situation in Iraq	44%	52%	<1%	4%

- **Direction of the country:** 53% of voters think the country is headed in the wrong direction and 41% think it is headed in the right direction.

**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?

<b>Registered voters</b>	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	Unsure
October 2004	41%	53%	6%
September 2004	38%	53%	9%
August 2004	41%	48%	11%
July 2004	38%	52%	10%
<b>Americans</b>			
October 2004	39%	53%	8%
September 2004	38%	52%	10%
August 2004	40%	48%	12%
July 2004	37%	52%	11%
April 2004	43%	51%	6%
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%

- **Majority sees President Bush as the frontrunner:** 56% of registered voters think President Bush is likely to be re-elected, a decline from 63% last month.

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

Registered voters	Bush/Cheney Republican	Kerry/Edwards Democrat	Nader/Camejo Independent	Unsure
October 2004	56%	32%	<1%	12%
Bush supporters	89%	3%	<1%	8%
Kerry supporters	27%	63%	<1%	10%
September 2004	63%	28%	<1%	9%
August 2004	44%	43%	0%	13%
July 2004	45%	40%	1%	14%

- **Voters divide over the job George Bush is doing as president:** 49% of registered voters nationwide approve of the job President Bush is doing in office, and 48% disapprove.

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

Registered voters	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
October 2004	49%	48%	3%
September 2004	49%	49%	2%
August 2004	49%	47%	4%
July 2004	49%	48%	3%
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%
November 2001	85%	8%	7%
March 2001	50%	24%	26%
January 2001	50%	20%	30%

- **Majority disapproves of the president's handling of Iraq:** 53% of registered voters disapprove of President Bush's handling of the situation in Iraq.

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

Registered Voters	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
October 2004	44%	53%	3%
September 2004	43%	55%	2%
August 2004	41%	55%	4%
July 2004	42%	55%	3%
April 2004	47%	51%	2%
March 2004	52%	45%	3%
November 2003	48%	47%	5%
April 2003	76%	20%	4%

- **National electorate concerned over the president’s handling of the economy:**

54% of registered voters disapprove of President Bush’s handling of the economy.

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

Registered Voters	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
October 2004	43%	54%	3%
September 2004	42%	56%	2%
August 2004	46%	51%	3%
July 2004	47%	50%	3%
April 2004	47%	51%	2%
March 2004	40%	57%	3%
November 2003	46%	50%	4%
April 2003	50%	44%	6%

- **Majority of voters approve of President Bush’s handling of the war on**

**terrorism:** 52% of registered voters approve of President Bush’s handling of the war on terrorism.

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

Registered Voters	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
October 2004	52%	45%	3%
September 2004	52%	46%	2%
August 2004	52%	44%	4%
July 2004	53%	43%	4%
April 2004	55%	42%	3%
March 2004	61%	36%	3%
November 2003	59%	38%	3%
April 2003	78%	18%	4%

- **Most voters plan to tune in for debates:** 83% of voters plan to watch or listen to at least some of this Friday's presidential debate, and nearly one in five say the debate will help them decide their vote.

**Question Wording:** Do you plan on watching or listening to a great deal, some, not too much, or none of the presidential debate this Friday night between George Bush and John Kerry?

Registered voters	A Great Deal	Some	Not Too Much	Not at All
October 2004	55%	28%	6%	11%

**Question Wording:** Will the debates help you decide whom to vote for president or have you already made up your mind?

Registered voters	Help Decide Vote	Made Up Mind	Unsure
October 2004	19%	79%	2%

- **Voters flip-flop...give expectations edge to Kerry in second debate:** More voters think John Kerry is likely to win the second presidential debate on Friday night, although a majority of voters expect George Bush to improve on last week's debate performance.

**Question Wording:** Who do you expect will win the presidential debate this Friday?

Registered voters	George Bush	John Kerry	Unsure
October 2004	39%	49%	12%

**Question Wording:** Do you expect that (George Bush/John Kerry) will do better, worse, or about the same in this Friday's debate as he did last Thursday?

Registered voters	Better	Worse	About the Same
George Bush	58%	9%	33%
John Kerry	32%	8%	60%

- **What voters expect from the candidates in the debate:** Voters expect President Bush will be more likely than Senator Kerry to be more consistent. They also think he is more likely than John Kerry to make a mistake. Voters think Senator Kerry will



better present his ideas than President Bush. They divide over which candidate will be more believable, more informed, and more likeable.

**Question Wording:** Do you think George Bush or John Kerry is more likely to do each of the following in the debate:

Registered voters	George Bush	John Kerry	Unsure
Make a mistake	61%	28%	11%
Be more consistent	53%	40%	7%
Be more believable	49%	46%	5%
Be more informed	48%	45%	7%
Be more likeable	45%	47%	8%
Better present his ideas	39%	55%	6%

- **Tell us about the next four years:** Many voters want both candidates to use the debate as an opportunity to spell out their plans for the next four years. Other debate tips from voters for the candidates include: admit that you've learned from past mistakes, express yourself more clearly, respond directly to your opponent's criticisms, be forceful, and be likeable.

**Question Wording:** What would you most like to see George Bush do in the debate?

Registered voters	George Bush
Talk about his plans for the next four years	38%
Say he's learned from his mistakes	21%
Express himself more clearly	21%
Respond to his opponent's criticisms	10%
Be forceful	8%
Be likeable	2%

**Question Wording:** What would you most like to see John Kerry do in the debate?

Registered voters	John Kerry
Talk about his plans for the next four years	57%
Express himself more clearly	16%
Respond to his opponent's criticisms	9%
Say he's learned from his mistakes	8%
Be forceful	7%
Be likeable	3%

### **Nature of the Sample: 1,038 Americans**

This survey was conducted on October 4<sup>th</sup> and October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004. 1,038 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 825 registered voters and 642 likely voters. The results for these sub-samples are statistically significant at  $\pm 3.5\%$  and  $\pm 4\%$ , respectively. The margin for error increases for cross-tabulations.