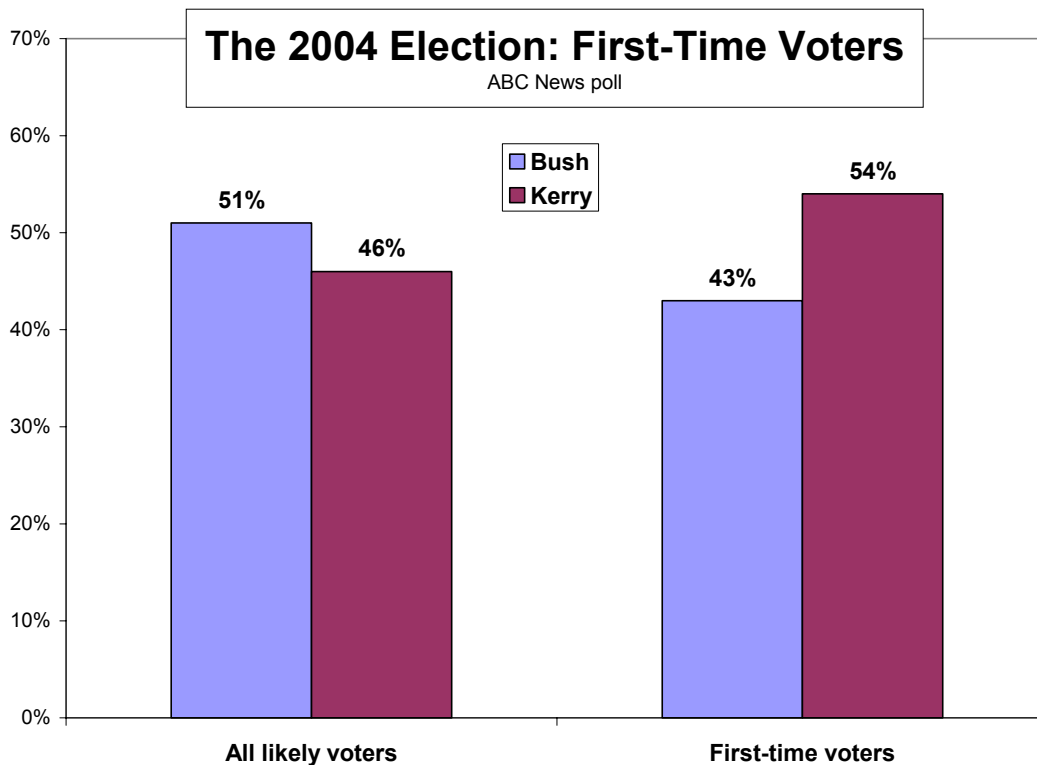


Bush Inches Above 50%; First-Timers are a Wildcard

Support for George W. Bush has crept above the critical 50-percent mark for the first time in two weeks, but one group – new voters – could be John Kerry's wildcard.

Fifty-one percent of likely voters support Bush, 46 percent support Kerry and one percent prefer Ralph Nader in the latest ABC News tracking poll, based on interviews Saturday through Monday. That's a slight lead for the president after a 48-48 percent dead heat the second half of last week.

Kerry could benefit by drawing more first-time voters to the polls: He holds an 11-point advantage among self-identified first-time voters, 54-43 percent. That's about the same as Al Gore's margin among first-timers, nine points, in 2000. The question is whether enough of them show up to make the difference for Kerry.



Ten percent of likely voters say this will be their first time voting in a presidential election, about the same as their turnout in 2000. Turnout overall is looking to be up: Sixty-two percent of likely voters are following the race very closely, up 20 points from

this time in 2000, and Americans are four points more apt to say they're registered to vote.

NEW VOTERS – The vast majority of first-timers – 82 percent – are under age 30. And whether it's their first time at the polls or not, young voters currently are Kerry's best age group, the only one in which he wins majority support.

New voters also are less likely to be Republicans (27 percent, compared with 36 percent of repeat voters) and more apt to be liberals (28 percent vs. 17 percent). There are also twice as many minorities among voting novices; one in four is black or Hispanic.

Befitting a young group, new voters have lower incomes, are less educated and are far more likely to be single than other voters. More than half, 52 percent, are in households earning less than \$50,000 a year, compared with 43 percent of repeat voters. Just 17 percent have college degrees, compared with nearly four in 10 past voters. And two-thirds of new voters never have been married; two-thirds of repeat voters are hitched.

A complication for Kerry is that these groups – younger, lower-income and less-educated – historically have had comparatively low turnout rates.

	First-time voters	Repeat voters
All	10%	90
Support Bush	43	51
Support Kerry	54	46
Age 18-29	82	8
Democrats	34	36
Republicans	27	36
Independents	30	24
Liberals	28	17
Moderates	39	45
Conservatives	30	35
White	66	84
Black	16	9
Hispanic	9	4
Income <\$50K	52	43
Income >\$50K	35	54
College grad	17	38
Married	29	67
Never married	65	11

PARTY TIME – As well as trying to boost turnout among new voters, Kerry may need to close ranks within his own party. After a good night for Bush in last night's tracking results, independents are once again dividing evenly between the candidates. But Bush is

winning away more Democrats, 13 percent, than Kerry draws Republicans, five percent. Independents split evenly, 48-48 percent.

Perceptions of the candidates ideologically, combined with the ideological makeup of Democrats and Republicans, help explain why Kerry's losing more Democrats. Three in 10 Democrats are liberals, and Kerry wins them by 92-5 percent. But he does a bit less well among moderate Democrats, 83-14 percent, and less well again among conservative Democrats, who divide by 73-25 percent.

The numbers are similar on the other side: Bush wins conservative Republicans by 96-2 percent, moderate Republicans by 86-8 percent and liberal Republicans by 77-21 percent.

The difference is that conservatives dominate the ranks of Republicans, while Democrats include a much higher share of moderates and even conservatives. Using data across the full length of this tracking poll, 51 percent of Democrats identify themselves as moderates, 30 percent as liberals and 16 percent as conservatives. Among Republicans, by contrast, 61 percent are conservatives, 32 percent moderates, five percent liberals.

	Vote preference			Share of group**
	Bush	Kerry	Nader	
Liberal Dems	5	92	0	30%
Moderate Dems	14	83	1	51
Conservative Dems*	25	73	2	16
Liberal Reps**	77	21	0	5
Moderate Reps	86	8	5	32
Conservative Reps	96	2	0	61

*Aggregated since 10/12

**Aggregated since 10/1

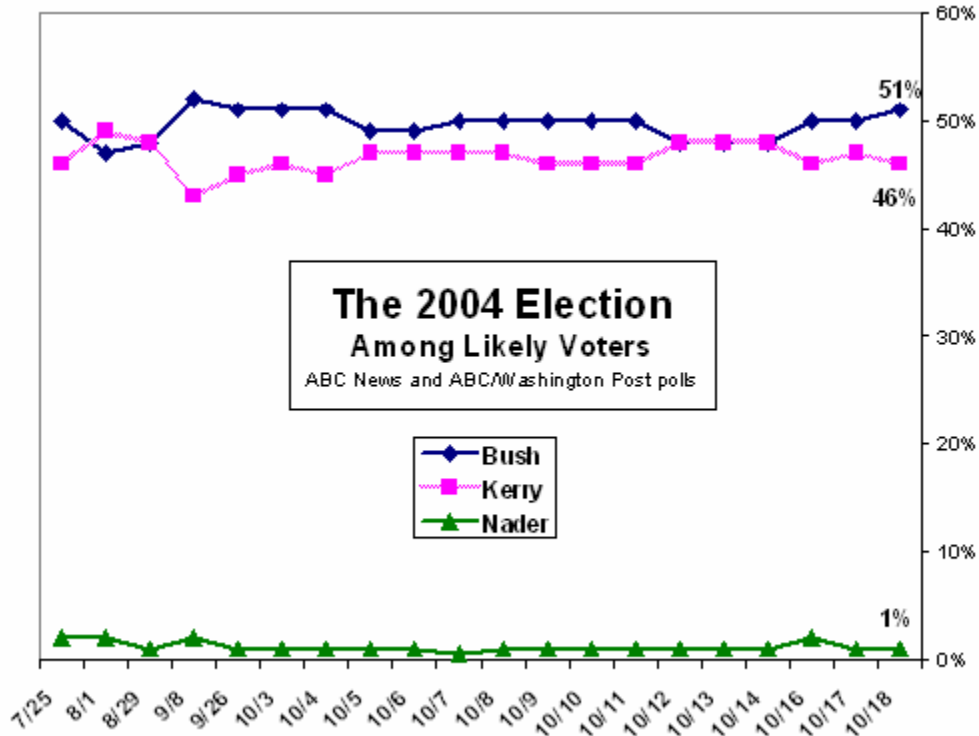
Among likely voters in this survey, 36 percent are Democrats, 34 percent Republicans and 26 percent independents.

WOMEN – Kerry's also having fresh trouble with women. A usually Democratic-leaning group, they divide by a close 50-47 percent, Kerry-Bush, in this poll. Given Bush's strength among men – he leads Kerry by 14 points – Kerry needs to restore his support from women. (In 2000, Bush won men by 11 points, while Al Gore won women by the same margin.)

Kerry's problems with women are underscored by their assessments of the candidates' personal qualities. More women say Bush is the stronger leader and has taken a clearer stand on the issues, and they closely divide on who's more honest and trustworthy.

MOVEABLES – Bush leads Kerry by 53-47 percent among voters who say they've definitely made up their minds. Moveable voters, 12 percent of the total, divide by 41-37 percent, Bush-Kerry, with four percent for Nader and 18 percent undecided.

Moveables move: Their preferences have ranged across tracking, since Oct. 1, from +17 Kerry to +6 Bush. And this group, like new voters, may present challenges in terms of turnout – they’re more apt to be independents, they’re following the race less closely and they’re younger.



METHODOLOGY – This poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 16-18, 2004 among a random national sample of 1,802 adults, including 1,593 registered voters and 1,147 likely voters. The results have a three-point error margin for the likely voter sample. ABC News and The Washington Post are sharing data collection for this tracking poll, then independently applying their own models to arrive at likely voter estimates. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman and Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934, or Lisa Finkel, (212) 456-6190.

Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

3. (and 3a) If the 2004 presidential election were being held today, would you vote for (George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, the Republicans), (John Kerry and John Edwards, the Democrats), or Ralph Nader and Peter Camejo, the independents? Which candidate are you leaning toward?

Net Leaned Vote, Likely Voters:

	Bush	Kerry	Nader	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote	No op.
10/18/04	51	46	1	*	*	0	2
10/17/04	50	47	1	*	*	*	2
10/16/04	50	46	2	*	*	*	2
10/14/04	48	48	1	*	1	*	1
10/13/04	48	48	1	*	1	0	2
10/12/04	48	48	1	*	1	0	2
10/11/04	50	46	1	*	1	0	2
10/10/04	50	46	1	*	1	0	2
10/9/04	50	46	1	*	1	0	2
10/8/04	50	47	1	*	1	0	2
10/7/04	50	47	*	*	1	0	1
10/6/04	49	47	1	1	1	0	1
10/5/04	49	47	1	1	1	0	1
10/4/04	51	45	1	*	1	0	1
10/3/04	51	46	1	*	1	*	1
9/26/04	51	45	1	*	1	0	2
9/8/04	52	43	2	*	1	0	2
8/29/04	48	48	1	*	1	0	2
8/1/04	47	49	2	*	1	0	1
7/25/04	50	46	2	*	1	*	1

Net Leaned Vote, Registered Voters:

	Bush	Kerry	Nader	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote	No op.
10/18/04	51	44	1	*	1	*	3
10/17/04	49	46	1	*	1	*	3
10/16/04	49	45	2	*	1	*	3
10/14/04	47	48	2	*	1	*	2
10/13/04	47	47	2	*	2	*	2
10/12/04	47	47	2	*	2	*	2
10/11/04	48	46	2	*	1	*	2
10/10/04	48	46	1	*	1	*	3
10/9/04	48	47	1	*	2	*	3
10/8/04	48	46	1	*	2	*	3
10/7/04	48	47	1	*	2	*	2
10/6/04	49	46	1	1	2	*	2
10/5/04	50	45	2	*	1	*	2
10/4/04	52	43	2	*	1	*	2
10/3/04	50	45	2	*	1	*	2
9/26/04	51	44	2	1	1	*	2
9/8/04	50	44	2	*	2	*	2
8/29/04	48	47	2	*	1	*	2
8/1/04	44	50	2	*	1	1	2
7/25/04	48	46	3	*	1	*	1
7/11/04	46	46	4	1	2	1	1
6/20/04	44	48	6	*	1	*	1
5/23/04	46	46	4	*	1	1	1
4/18/04	48	43	6	*	2	1	*
3/7/04	44	48	3	*	1	2	2

4. (IF NAMED CANDIDATE) Will you definitely vote for (CANDIDATE), or is there a chance you could change your mind and vote for someone else? (IF CHANCE CHANGE MIND) Is there a good chance you'll change your mind, or would you say it's pretty unlikely?

	Definitely vote	---Chance change mind---	No opin.
Likely voters:		NET Good Unlikely	

10/18/04 All	90	9	3	6	1
Bush	90	9	4	5	1
Kerry	90	9	3	7	*

Call for full trend.

5. (Was this/will this be) the first time you've voted in a presidential election, or have you voted in previous presidential elections?

	First time	Voted in previous	No opinion
10/18/04 LV	10	90	0

END