ABC NEWS POLL: CAMPAIGN TRACKING #18 – 10/23/04
EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 7 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 24, 2004

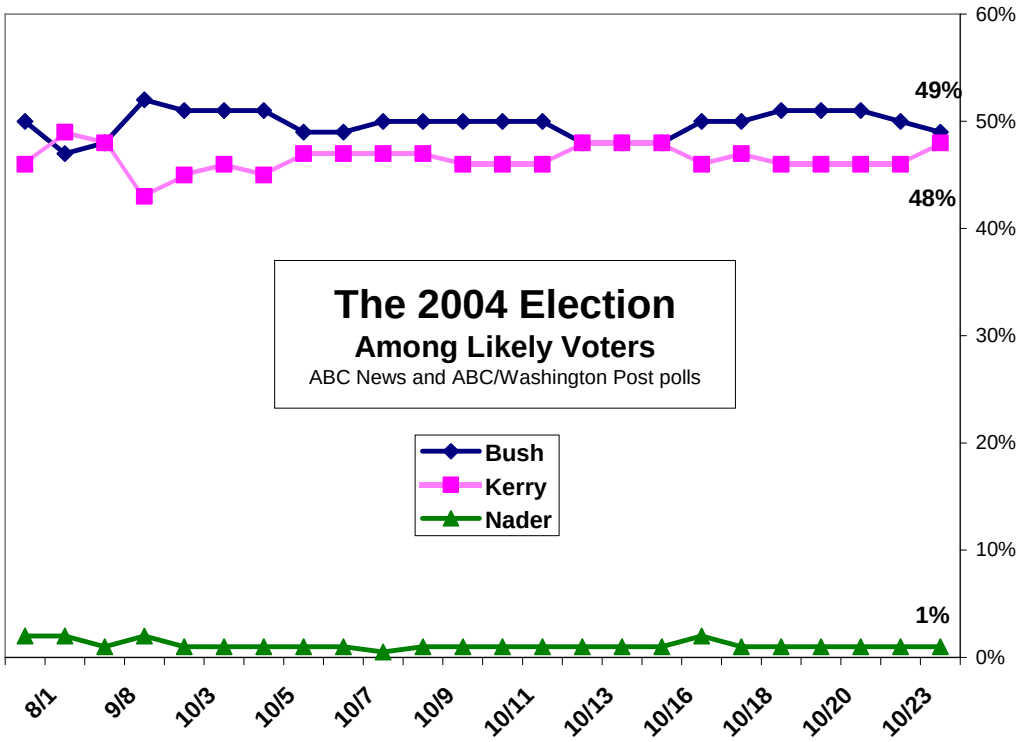
Close Race Nudges Closer

The close presidential race nudged even closer in the latest ABC News tracking poll, with 49 percent of likely voters favoring George W. Bush and 48 percent for John Kerry – a bare point between them with less than a week and a half of campaigning to go.

Much continues to rest on turnout. Young voters are Kerry's best age group by far; he holds a 21-point lead among 18- to 29-year-olds. And more than half of likely voters that age say it'll be their first time voting in a presidential election.

While young voters would help Kerry, Bush has his own strengths – and one underlying factor, enthusiasm, is among them. Sixty percent of Bush's supporters are "very enthusiastic" about their candidate, compared with 50 percent of Kerry's. Still, that's up five points for Kerry from a week ago.

At the same time, despite the close race, 55 percent of all likely voters say they expect Bush to win, unchanged in the last week.



The race tightened slightly, from 51-46 percent most of last week and 50-46 percent Friday, because Saturday was Kerry's best single day since this tracking poll began Oct.1. Still, these are small shifts, all within polling tolerances; the race has been close and still is.

MEN/WOMEN – Most of the slight change occurred among one group that's been giving Bush some unexpected trouble – men, but specifically unmarried (and thereby mostly younger) men. Single men now favor Kerry over Bush by 65-32 percent, while married men favor Bush by 59-39 percent; the result is a surprisingly close race among men overall, 51-47 percent. And it remains close among women as well – 48-48 percent.

That's quite unlike the traditional gender gap in presidential politics; in 2000 Bush won men by 11 points, and lost women by the same margin. As Friday's tracking poll analysis first described, the gender gap may be passé, replaced this year by a marriage gap, itself at least partly a function of age.

Indeed in this poll, Bush not only leads by 20 points among married men, but also by 16 points among married women, 56-40 percent. And Kerry leads not only by 21 points among single women (a core Democratic group), 59-38 percent, but, as noted, by an even larger 33 points among single men. Single men are less likely to cite terrorism – Bush's key issue – as their top concern, and more likely to cite the economy.

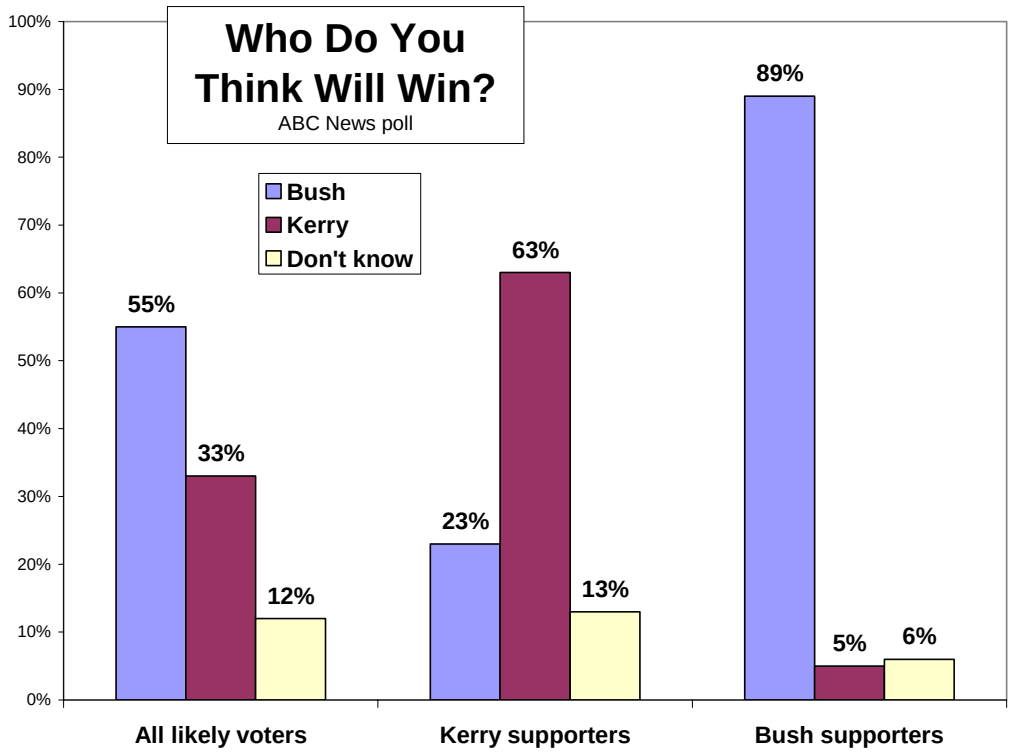
There is a strong economic component at work; singles, naturally, have lower household incomes. Among likely voters in households with less than $35,000 in annual income, Kerry leads by 54-41 percent. Among those in $35,000 to $50,000 households, it's a close 48-47 percent. And among people with household incomes over $50,000, Bush holds a 54-43 percent lead.

EXPECTATIONS – Wherever confidence leads, there is more of it on Bush's side. Among likely voters who support Bush, 89 percent think he'll win the election. Among those who support Kerry, far fewer, 63 percent, are willing to predict their man will win.

Uncertainty isn't the prime reason; only six percent of Bush supporters and 13 percent of Kerry's say they aren't sure who'll win. A bigger cause is that 23 percent of Kerry's own supporters think Bush will win the election; just five percent of Bush backers think Kerry will win.

The difficulty of unseating incumbents may be one reason more people expect Bush to win: Incumbent presidents have run for re-election eight times previously since World War II, and five of them have won. Those who lost, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush, all did so in years when consumer confidence was more negative than it is now. Past trends, though, are not reliable election predictors.

Expectations that Bush will win are down from their peak, 63 percent the week after his convention, and quite similar to their level a week ago, 56 percent.



ENTHUSIASM – Between 57 and 60 percent of Bush's supporters have been "very enthusiastic" about his candidacy since early October, and 45 to 50 percent of Kerry's supporters have felt that way about their guy. Kerry's enthusiasm bumped up by eight points after the first debate but did not progress further; Bush's lost eight points after the first debate but then stabilized.

Enthusiasm for Bush is highest in some of his core groups – 71 percent among conservatives, for instance, and 69 percent among Republicans. Kerry, by contrast, has lower enthusiasm in his comparable base groups – 54 percent among liberals and 56 percent among Democrats.

There are also differences among groups in expectations of who'll win. Liberals by 58-31 percent think it'll be Kerry, but conservatives by 77-13 percent think Bush will win, as do moderates by 49-38 percent. Just seven percent of Republicans think Kerry will win, while 27 percent of Democrats think Bush will. Independents, by a substantial 57-31 percent margin, think it'll be Bush.

METHODOLOGY – This poll was conducted October 20-23 among a random national sample of 2,408 adults, including 2,085 registered voters and 1,638 likely voters. The results have a 2.5-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 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.
10/23/04	49	48	1	*	1	*	2
10/21/04	50	46	1	*	1	*	2
10/20/04	51	46	1	*	*	*	2
10/19/04	51	46	1	*	*	*	2
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.
10/23/04	49	45	1	*	1	*	3
10/21/04	50	44	1	*	1	*	3
10/20/04	51	44	1	*	1	*	3
10/19/04	51	44	1	*	1	*	2
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. Thinking about his candidacy for president so far, how enthusiastic are you about (Bush/Kerry) - very enthusiastic, fairly enthusiastic, not too enthusiastic, or not enthusiastic at all?

10/23/04 - Summary Table - Among Likely Voters, Leaned Bush/Kerry Supporters

	----Enthusiastic---			-----Not Enthusiastic-----			No
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	op.
a. Bush	93	60	33	7	6	1	*
b. Kerry	91	50	41	9	7	1	1

Trend:

		----Enthusiastic---			-----Not Enthusiastic-----			No
		NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	op.
Bush:								
10/23/04	LV	93	60	33	7	6	1	*
10/17/04	LV	94	59	35	6	6	1	1
10/3/04	LV	94	57	37	6	4	1	*
9/26/04	LV	94	65	29	5	4	1	1
	RV	91	61	31	8	6	2	*
9/8/04	RV	95	63	32	5	4	*	*
8/29/04	RV	94	56	38	6	5	1	*
8/1/04	RV	90	53	37	10	8	2	*
7/25/04	RV	90	49	41	10	8	1	*
6/20/04	RV	90	50	40	9	7	2	*
	All	90	48	42	10	8	2	*
Kerry:								
10/23/04	LV	91	50	41	9	7	1	1
10/17/04	LV	94	45	49	6	5	1	*
10/3/04	LV	91	50	42	8	8	*	1
9/26/04	LV	85	42	43	13	10	4	1
	RV	87	39	47	12	9	3	1
9/8/04	RV	85	39	46	14	10	4	1
8/29/04	RV	89	40	49	11	9	2	*
8/1/04	RV	92	56	36	7	6	1	1
7/25/04	RV	90	41	49	10	9	1	0
6/20/04	RV	85	34	51	15	12	3	0
	All	83	33	50	17	13	4	0

5. Regardless of whom you support, who do you think will win the election this November: (Bush) or (Kerry)?

Bush	Kerry	Nader (vol.)	Someone else (vol.)	No opinion

10/23/04 LV	55	33	0	0	12
10/16/04 LV	56	33	*	0	11
9/8/04 RV	63	26	0	*	11

END