



EMBARGOED: Not for use before noon Saturday, January 17, 2004
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**Away From Early Test States of Iowa and New Hampshire,
Democratic Voters Say They Don't Know Enough About Candidates
To Choose Among Them, Annenberg Survey Shows**

With Monday's Iowa caucuses to be followed by eight other delegate contests in the next 15 days, events that could leave the Democratic nomination settled by early February, most Democrats nationally say they do not know enough about the candidates. Across the country, four fifths of registered voters who want to take part in Democratic primaries or caucuses say they do not know enough about the candidates to make an informed choice, according to the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey.

In national polling from January 1 through 15, only 17 percent of the 746 would-be Democratic primary and caucus participants said they knew enough to make an informed choice. Eighty-one percent said they did not know enough. The margin of sampling error for that group was plus or minus four percentage points.

In the first nine, generally small, states that vote by February 3 or earlier – Iowa, New Hampshire, Arizona, Delaware, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Carolina – polling of 154 would-be Democratic primary and caucus participants from Dec. 16 through January 15 showed that 25 percent said they knew enough to make an informed choice. Seventy-three percent said they did not. That was not much better than the results in all later states, where 18 percent said they knew enough and 80 percent said they did not.

Iowa and New Hampshire, where the candidates have spent most of their time and advertising budgets, appear to be exceptions. The national sample does not produce enough respondents from those two states to judge their opinions confidently. But Annenberg is conducting separate polling in New Hampshire. Polling of 324 respondents from Jan. 8 through 15, showed that 54 percent of New Hampshire registered voters who want to participate in the January 27 Democratic primary said they knew enough to make an informed choice, almost triple the national percentage.

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But in the seven states that vote on February 3, one week after New Hampshire, Democratic voters seem no better informed than those in states which vote much later. In the national polling conducted between December 16 and January 15, only 21 percent of respondents from Arizona, Delaware, Missouri, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Carolina, said they knew enough to make an informed choice, while 77 percent said they did not.

Different states have different voting laws and rules. Some like New Hampshire, allow independents to vote in party primaries. Some, like Iowa, require participants to say they are Democrats and will be registered by Election Day. This analysis studied those registered voters who said they intended to take part in a Democratic primary or caucus.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center and of the survey, explained “There is a natural ebb and flow to the process of learning about presidential candidates. The closer that one gets to a primary or general election where one gets a chance to cast a vote, the greater the attention paid by those in that area. But With two small states, Iowa and New Hampshire going first, we increase the likelihood that a frontrunner will be designated and some candidates eliminated before most of the country is aware of who the candidates are and the distinctions between them, and ultimately, which candidates to select as nominees.”

Adam Clymer, political director of the survey, said “The NAES findings strongly suggest that large numbers of voters, whose February 3 choices will surely eliminate some candidates, will be deciding on the basis of what they know is inadequate information, probably cued heavily by what the media tell them about which candidates are frontrunners or are at least ‘viable.’

“After 1968,” he said, “both parties greatly increased public participation in the nomination process by picking most delegates through primaries and caucuses. But without enough time to absorb political information, putting nomination decisions in the hands of voters becomes a hollow exercise.”

In the January 1-15 national polling, 36 percent of the prospective primary and caucus participants said the media had designated someone as a frontrunner, while 51 percent said the media considered the race wide open. The more attention people were paying to the campaign, the more likely they were to say the media had chosen a frontrunner. Most of those who said a frontrunner had been identified by the media said the designated favorite was Governor Howard Dean of Vermont.

Despite the growing intensity of coverage of political events in recent weeks, there has been no meaningful national increase in knowledge. In the first half of December, just 17 percent of would-be Democratic primary and caucus voters nationally said they knew enough about the candidates to make an informed choice, the same as the national percentage in the January 1-15 period.

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In the Jan 1-15 national polling, fully 79 percent of the intended Democratic primary and caucus voters who said they had chosen a candidate to support conceded that they did not know enough to make an informed choice. And for many of them, that support was weak and they said they could change their minds. Forty-nine percent of those who had picked a candidate said there was “a good chance” they would change their minds. Even among the minority who said they had learned enough to make an informed choice, 28 percent said there was a good chance they would change their minds, and another 18 percent said they might shift but it was unlikely.

The campaign has yet to draw great attention nationally. In the latest national polling of registered Democrats who said they wanted to take part in primaries or caucuses, only 18 percent said they were following their party’s campaign “very closely.” Forty-nine percent said they were following it “somewhat closely,” and 32 percent said “not too closely” or “not closely at all.” But even among those who said they were following the campaign very closely, a majority said they did not know enough to make an informed choice. Fifty-seven percent said they did not know enough, while 42 percent said they knew enough.

That National Annenberg Election Survey, the largest academic election poll, is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania (www.appcpenn.org). It has been tracking the presidential campaign since October 7, and interviewing will continue until after Election Day. Dr. Kathleen Hall Jamieson is the director of the survey. Ken Winneg is the managing director of the survey. Adam Clymer is the political director of the survey.

Questions

Responses apply only to those registered to vote and intending to vote in the Democratic primary. Those refusing to answer and saying they “don’t know” are not included in charts below.

A. How closely are you following the presidential campaigns of the Democratic candidates? (READ LIST)

Period	December 1-15	December 16-31	January 1-15
Very closely	15	17	18
Somewhat closely	49	47	49
Not too closely	23	27	23
Not closely at all	12	9	9

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B. So far have you learned enough about the Democratic presidential candidates and the issues to make an informed choice among the candidates, or have you found it difficult to choose because you feel you have not learned enough?

Period	December 1-15	December 16-31	January 1-15
Learned enough	17	15	17
Not learned enough	82	83	81

C. Do you think the news media has decided that one of the Democratic candidates is a clear frontrunner, or do they still think it is a wide-open race?

Period	December 1-15	December 16-31	January 1-15
Clear front runner	35	41	36
Wide open race	50	45	51

For the Period January 1– January 15

A. How closely are you following the presidential campaigns of the Democratic candidates? (READ LIST)

Gender (%)	Men	Women	Total
Very closely	21	15	18
Somewhat closely	50	48	49
Not too closely	19	26	23
Not closely at all	8	10	9

Early/Late State (%)	Early Vote State	Later Vote State
Very closely	9	19
Somewhat closely	56	48
Not too closely	25	23
Not closely at all	11	9

Note: Early states vote on or before February 3. Late states vote after that.

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Very closely	10	14	20	23
Somewhat closely	47	46	55	43
Not too closely	29	28	17	23
Not closely at all	14	10	7	8

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Education (%)	High school or less	Some College or Degree	Post College
Very closely	17	16	20
Somewhat closely	46	49	54
Not too closely	25	25	20
Not closely at all	11	9	6

B. So far have you learned enough about the Democratic presidential candidates and the issues to make an informed choice among the candidates, or have you found it difficult to choose because you feel you have not learned enough?

Gender (%)	Men	Women	Total
Learned enough	21	14	17
Not learned enough	77	85	81

Early/Late State (%)	Early Vote State	Later Vote State
Learned enough	30	16
Not learned enough	70	83

Note: Early states vote on or before February 3. Late states vote after that.

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Learned enough	15	15	16	23
Not learned enough	85	84	82	75

Education (%)	High school or less	Some College or Degree	Post College
Learned enough	14	15	25
Not learned enough	84	84	74

Follow Democratic Campaign (%)	Very Closely	Somewhat Closely	Not too Closely	Not Closely at all
Learned enough	42	17	4	3
Not learned enough	57	80	96	97

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C. Do you think the news media has decided that one of the Democratic candidates is a clear frontrunner, or do they still think it is a wide-open race?

Gender (%)	Men	Women	Total
Clear front runner	37	35	36
Wide open race	54	49	51

Early/Late State (%)	Early Vote State	Later Vote State
Clear front runner	36	30
Wide open race	52	45

Note: Early states vote on or before February 3. Late states vote after that.

Age (%)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Clear front runner	30	33	43	25
Wide open race	51	58	42	63

Education (%)	High school or less	Some College or Degree	Post College
Clear front runner	26	32	53
Wide open race	55	60	38

Follow Democratic Campaign (%)	Very Closely	Somewhat Closely	Not too Closely	Not Closely at all
Clear front runner	52	40	24	15
Wide open race	41	51	58	47

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Survey Methodology

The National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) is a survey conducted each presidential election by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. The 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey is based on telephone interviews which began October 7, 2003 and will continue past Election Day.

The sample of telephone exchanges called was randomly selected by a computer from a complete list of thousands of active residential exchanges across the country. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was designated by a random procedure to be the respondent for the survey. The interviewing is conducted by Schulman, Ronca, Bucuvalas, Inc.

The results have been weighted to take account of household size and number of telephone lines into the residence and to adjust for variation in the sample relating to geographic region, sex, race, age and education.

This report deals with registered voters who said they intended to vote in Democratic primaries or caucuses. Nationally there were 873 of them interviewed between Dec 1 and 15. There were 755 between Dec. 16 and Dec. 31. From January 1 through 15, there were 746 people interviewed.

In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results for the Dec. 1-15 interviewing period will differ by no more than three percentage points, up or down, from what would have been obtained by interviewing all Americans who were registered voters and wanted to vote in Democratic primaries or caucuses. For the two later groups it would be plus or minus four percentage points. For smaller subgroups, the margin of sampling error would be higher. Moreover, some questions were not asked of all respondents, which would lead to a larger potential sampling error.

In separate New Hampshire polling, 324 registered voters who said they intended to vote in the Democratic primary were interviewed between January 8 and 15. The margin of sampling error for that group would be plus or minus five percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce other sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

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