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Opinions of Kerry Decline Nationally, Especially In Battleground States, Annenberg Data Show

Several weeks of general election intensity campaigning have clearly dimmed Senator John F. Kerry's image with the American people and among potential voters in battleground states, the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey shows.

Polling of 2,759 adults from April 15 through May 2 showed that 38 percent had a favorable opinion of Kerry and 33 percent an unfavorable view. That was a turn for the worse from the first two weeks of March, when 40 percent had a favorable opinion and 24 percent an unfavorable view. In both surveys, the margin of sampling error was plus or minus two percentage points.

The shift was even more striking in the 18 battleground states where both presidential campaigns and some of Kerry's Democratic allies have run television advertisements. In those states, 35 percent now view Kerry favorably and 36 percent unfavorably. In early March the rating was much stronger; 41 percent had a favorable view and 28 percent an unfavorable opinion.

The major consolation for Kerry in the data was that there had been a much smaller change, and one that was not statistically significant, in the numbers among persuadable voters: those who say they either have not made up their minds but said there was a "good chance" that they could change their minds.

Among those swing voters, 38 percent had a favorable opinion of Kerry and just 18 percent an unfavorable opinion in the latest polling. In early March, 37 percent had a favorable opinion and 15 percent an unfavorable one.

Moreover, among those swing voters, President Bush's numbers showed a clearer decline than Kerry's. Fifty percent have favorable opinion of him and 36 percent an unfavorable view. In early March, 58 percent had a favorable opinion and 23 percent an unfavorable opinion.

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President Bush's numbers hardly changed over the same period among the population as a whole, or in the 18 battleground states of Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Adam Clymer, political director of the survey, said that while the data cannot identify with certainty why Kerry declined, the most obvious explanation for the shifts in Kerry's standing was a delayed impact from the heavy advertising of the Bush campaign in March and early April, even though it has now been cut back heavily. "From early to late March," he said, "there were no statistically significant shifts, either overall or in the battleground states. But in April, especially in late April, the negatives began to stick to Kerry."

"The most dramatic changes were in ratings on issues where the Bush campaign and its ads have hit hard at Kerry," Clymer said. For example, when people in battleground states were asked to rate Kerry on a zero to ten scale on whether it was accurate to say he "says one thing and does another," the average rating in the March 21-April 7 period was 5.2. The average increased to 5.9 in the latest polling.

Among the "persuadable" voters, there was one change that was even greater, and it, too, correlated with Bush campaign's theme of attack on Kerry. In the March 21-April 7 period, swing voters rated Kerry at 5.2 on the characteristic that he "changes his mind for political reasons." In the latest polling, the average increased sharply, to 6.2.

Another major election project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center is FactCheck.org, a project that tries to hold politicians accountable by exposing false or misleading campaign statements. It is available online at www.FactCheck.org.

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Question

A. Please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable, using a scale from zero to ten. Zero means very unfavorable, and ten means very favorable. Five means you do not feel favorable or unfavorable toward that person. Of course you can use any number between zero and ten. The person is George W. Bush/John Kerry. On a scale of zero to ten, how would you rate George W. Bush/John Kerry?

	Bush			Kerry		
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
April 15-May 2	51%	36%	12%	38%	33%	22%
April 1-14	49%	37%	12%	40%	30%	20%
March 16-31	47%	38%	13%	39%	28%	21%
March 1-15	50%	37%	12%	40%	24%	23%
February 16-29	49%	38%	11%	39%	23%	22%
February 1-15	52%	36%	11%	38%	20%	24%
January 16-31	52%	35%	12%	34%	17%	26%
January 1-15	55%	33%	11%	19%	21%	28%

Those with no opinion are not shown.

Battleground States

B.

Bush						
	Other			Battleground States		
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
April 15-May 2	52%	34%	13%	48%	39%	12%
April 1-14	50%	37%	12%	48%	37%	12%
March 16-31	47%	37%	14%	48%	40%	11%
March 1-15	50%	36%	12%	49%	39%	11%

Kerry

	Other			Battleground States		
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
April 15-May 2	39%	31%	21%	35%	36%	24%
April 1-14	41%	29%	20%	37%	31%	21%
March 16-31	39%	27%	21%	39%	29%	22%
March 1-15	40%	22%	14%	41%	28%	21%

"Battleground States" are the 18 states the campaigns consider closely contested, where they show television commercials. The states are: Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Persuadable Voters

C.

Bush						
	Persuadable Voters			Other		
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
April 15-May 2	47%	34%	19%	53%	37%	10%
April 1-14	42%	31%	24%	51%	41%	8%
March 16-31	47%	32%	19%	49%	41%	10%
March 1-15	58%	23%	18%	50%	41%	9%

Kerry

	Persuadable Voters			Other		
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
April 15-May 2	38%	18%	38%	40%	37%	18%
April 1-14	34%	15%	33%	45%	36%	16%
March 16-31	32%	18%	39%	46%	33%	17%
March 1-15	37%	15%	38%	46%	29%	21%

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D.

	Bush			Kerry		
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
Total	51%	36%	12%	38%	33%	22%
Republicans	88%	6%	5%	14%	63%	18%
Democrats	21%	61%	17%	62%	9%	22%
Independents	50%	35%	14%	36%	30%	28%
Men	53%	35%	12%	37%	35%	22%
Women	49%	38%	13%	38%	31%	22%
Whites	55%	31%	13%	35%	37%	22%
African-Americans	20%	63%	15%	57%	10%	19%
Latinos	55%	29%	15%	42%	22%	21%
High school graduate or less	52%	31%	15%	32%	31%	26%
Some college	51%	37%	11%	39%	35%	21%
College degree or more	47%	44%	8%	46%	34%	17%
18-29 years old	48%	44%	8%	40%	27%	21%
30-44	53%	33%	12%	39%	28%	25%
45-64	52%	34%	13%	34%	40%	22%
65 and over	47%	35%	16%	38%	35%	20%
Household income below \$35,000	45%	39%	15%	39%	23%	26%
\$35,000 to less than \$75,000	56%	31%	13%	36%	37%	22%
\$75,000 and over	53%	39%	8%	41%	39%	19%
Union household	41%	46%	13%	45%	28%	23%
Conservatives	74%	17%	9%	21%	51%	21%
Moderates	45%	37%	18%	42%	26%	25%
Liberals	23%	66%	10%	62%	12%	19%
Northeast	44%	41%	14%	44%	28%	22%
Midwest	49%	37%	14%	37%	35%	23%
South	56%	31%	12%	34%	33%	23%
West	50%	38%	10%	39%	34%	21%

April 15- May 2

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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 interviewing of 2,759 adults conducted from April 15 through May 2, 2003. In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results for these interviews will differ by no more than two percentage points, up or down, from what would have been obtained by interviewing all American adults. For smaller subgroups, the margin of sampling error would be higher. For example, for respondents from 18 battleground states, the margin of sampling error would be plus or minus three percentage points, and for “persuadable” voters it 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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