



For Immediate Release: March 24, 2008

For more information: Kate Kenski: (215) 888-4477, [kkenski@email.arizona.edu](mailto:kkenski@email.arizona.edu)

Kathleen Hall Jamieson: [kjamieson@asc.upenn.edu](mailto:kjamieson@asc.upenn.edu)

Visit: [www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org](http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org)

## Americans Following Presidential Campaign More Closely Than In 2004, Annenberg Data Show

Americans are following the 2008 presidential campaign more closely than they did in 2004, according to data released today by the National Annenberg Election Survey of the University of Pennsylvania. The level of interest in the campaign has remained high throughout the campaign season among all ideological segments of the population, Democrats, Republicans, and independents (see Table 3).

More than three-quarters of adults in the United States (78%) report following the 2008 presidential campaign “very closely” or “somewhat closely.” When asked a comparable question in 2004, 57% of adults reported following the Democratic primary “very closely” or “somewhat closely.”

“The 2008 presidential campaign has produced a surge in political interest among all demographic groups,” said Kate Kenski, a senior analyst for the National Annenberg Election Survey and an assistant professor of communication at the University of Arizona. “Political scholars often worry that Americans do not pay enough attention to politics. This campaign season has demonstrated that competitive races with the right candidates can trigger interest.”

“The percentage of Americans paying close attention to the presidential campaign increased from mid-December to the beginning of February, and it has remained high ever since.”

Among demographic groups this year, older respondents were more likely to follow the campaign closely than were younger respondents. Respondents with higher incomes were more likely to report following the campaign closely than were those with lower incomes. Those living in urban areas were more likely to report following the campaign closely than were those in rural areas. Democrats were slightly more likely to report following the campaign very closely than were Republicans and independents.

Data for this study were collected between December 17, 2007 and March 18, 2008 from 20,225 adults and between December 1, 2003 and March 8, 2004 from 18,007 adults in the United

States. The margin of sampling error was plus or minus 0.7 percentage points for the samples overall. For subsamples within the study, the margins of sample error are larger, depending on the sample sizes of the groups being analyzed. The wording of the question was slightly different in 2004 from 2008 because in 2004 there was only one competitive major party primary race, the Democratic one.

For more information, see Appendix below.

## Appendix

Table 1.

2008: How closely are you following the 2008 presidential campaign?								
2004: How closely are you following the presidential campaigns of the Democratic candidates?								
		Very closely	Some what closely	Not too closely	Not closely at all	Don't Know	Refused	N
Total	2008	31.2%	46.5%	15.0%	6.8%	0.4%	0.1%	20,225
	2004	14.8%	42.6%	24.8%	17.1%	0.5%	0.1%	18,007
Men	2008	33.4%	45.0%	14.5%	6.5%	0.5%	0.1%	8,828
	2004	17.7%	42.7%	23.3%	15.8%	0.4%	0.1%	8,242
Women	2008	29.1%	47.9%	15.6%	7.0%	0.3%	0.1%	11,397
	2004	12.3%	42.5%	26.3%	18.3%	0.6%	0.1%	9,765
Whites	2008	31.5%	47.3%	14.7%	6.1%	0.3%	0.1%	16,826
	2004	15.1%	43.6%	24.3%	16.6%	0.4%	0.1%	14,926
Blacks	2008	34.9%	45.9%	13.2%	5.7%	0.2%		1,576
	2004	17.5%	40.5%	25.3%	15.4%	1.0%	0.3%	1,476
Hispanics/Latinos	2008	21.5%	40.9%	23.6%	12.6%	1.2%	0.2%	1,377
	2004	12.0%	35.3%	31.4%	20.3%	1.1%		1,346
18-29 years old	2008	18.0%	51.3%	21.1%	9.3%	0.3%		1,660
	2004	7.7%	37.7%	30.6%	23.4%	0.5%		2,784
30-44 years old	2008	27.1%	47.9%	17.0%	7.6%	0.2%	0.2%	4,531
	2004	11.4%	42.8%	26.2%	19.1%	0.4%	0.1%	5,358
45-64 years old	2008	35.1%	46.5%	12.4%	5.6%	0.3%	0.1%	8,692
	2004	17.8%	45.5%	21.9%	14.4%	0.3%	0.1%	6,498
65 and older	2008	42.3%	39.5%	11.7%	5.6%	0.9%	0.1%	4,979
	2004	24.6%	42.9%	20.7%	10.4%	1.2%	0.3%	3,171

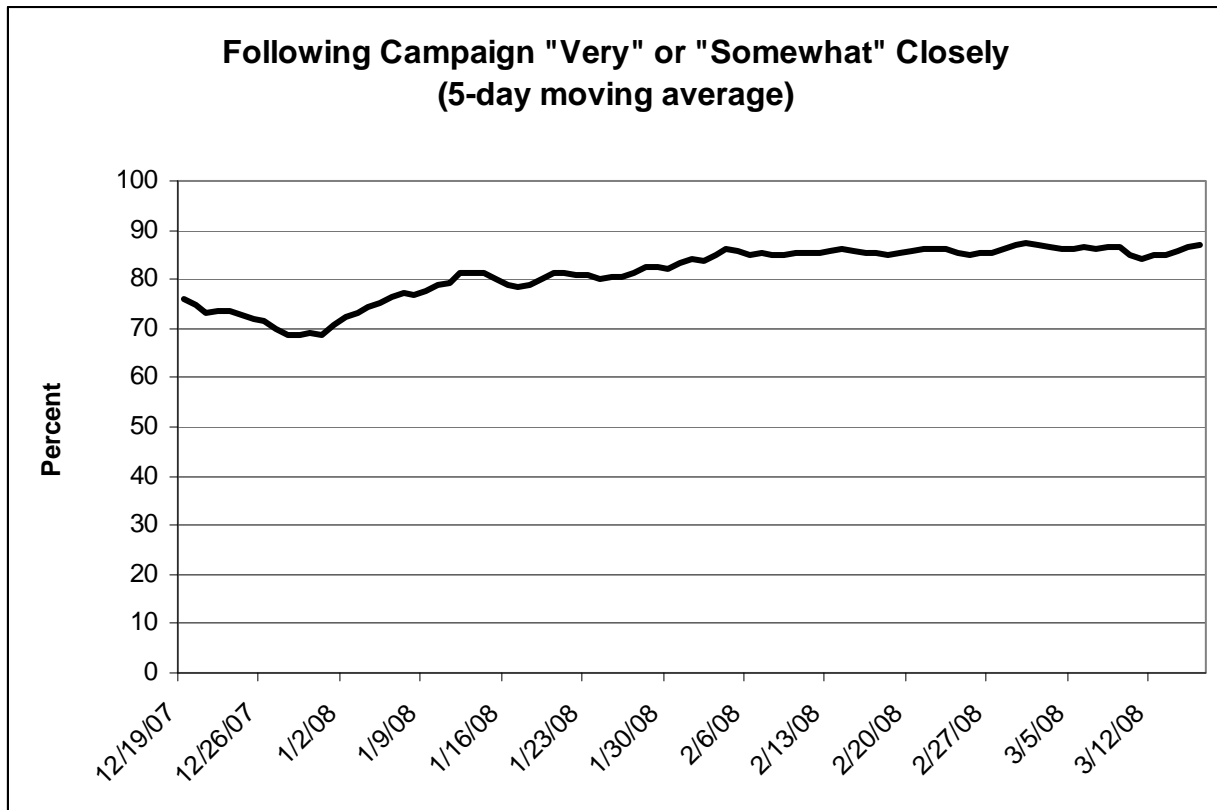
Table 2.

2008: How closely are you following the 2008 presidential campaign?								
2004: How closely are you following the presidential campaigns of the Democratic candidates?								
		Very closely	Some what closely	Not too closely	Not closely at all	Don't Know	Refused	N
High school or less	2008	24.2%	45.4%	19.2%	10.4%	0.7%	0.1%	6,371
	2004	11.8%	38.8%	27.8%	20.7%	0.8%	0.1%	6,086
Some college	2008	31.3%	48.8%	14.5%	5.2%	0.2%	0.1%	5,510
	2004	15.1%	44.3%	23.5%	16.6%	0.3%	0.2%	5,150
College degree or more	2008	41.8%	45.9%	9.2%	2.9%	0.1%	0.1%	8,013
	2004	20.2%	47.9%	20.8%	10.9%	0.2%		6,612
Household income below \$35,000	2008	25.4%	43.9%	19.8%	10.3%	0.5%	0.1%	4,864
	2004	13.1%	39.3%	26.7%	20.3%	0.6%	0.1%	5,524
\$35,000 to less than \$75,000	2008	30.4%	48.7%	14.8%	5.8%	0.2%	0.1%	5,892
	2004	13.7%	44.8%	25.6%	15.7%	0.2%	0.1%	6,060
\$75,000 and over	2008	38.0%	48.0%	10.5%	3.3%	0.1%	0.1%	6,756
	2004	19.1%	47.7%	20.4%	12.5%	0.2%		4,504
Married	2008	32.9%	47.0%	13.8%	5.8%	0.3%	0.1%	11,750
	2004	16.0%	43.7%	24.3%	15.6%	0.3%	0.1%	9,901
Living as married	2008	29.1%	45.8%	17.4%	7.0%	0.8%		489
	2004	11.8%	43.2%	22.7%	22.0%	0.3%		540
Widowed	2008	33.4%	42.5%	14.5%	8.4%	1.2%	0.2%	2,157
	2004	19.2%	42.2%	24.7%	11.6%	2.0%	0.4%	1,505
Divorced	2008	33.0%	44.4%	14.2%	7.9%	0.3%	0.1%	2,539
	2004	14.8%	40.6%	23.7%	20.3%	0.5%	0.1%	2,346
Separated	2008	24.3%	43.4%	22.2%	10.1%			362
	2004	10.0%	35.3%	26.4%	28.1%		0.2%	411
Never married	2008	24.2%	48.1%	18.6%	8.5%	0.5%	0.1%	2,616
	2004	10.9%	41.3%	27.2%	19.8%	0.7%		3,142
Northeast	2008	32.9%	46.6%	13.6%	6.4%	0.4%	0.1%	4,272
	2004	16.5%	44.2%	23.0%	15.5%	0.7%	0.1%	3,848
Midwest	2008	28.5%	48.6%	16.3%	6.2%	0.3%	0.1%	5,007
	2004	13.5%	44.2%	24.7%	17.1%	0.5%	0.1%	4,329
South	2008	32.7%	46.0%	14.1%	6.6%	0.5%	0.1%	6,695
	2004	15.1%	42.2%	25.0%	17.0%	0.6%	0.1%	6,021
West	2008	29.8%	45.0%	16.6%	8.1%	0.3%	0.2%	4,251
	2004	14.3%	40.0%	26.5%	18.8%	0.3%	0.2%	3,809
Urban	2008	33.2%	45.3%	14.5%	6.3%	0.5%	0.1%	5,946
	2004	16.2%	42.1%	24.3%	16.7%	0.6%	0.1%	5,405
Suburban	2008	31.3%	47.6%	14.6%	6.2%	0.3%	0.1%	10,275
	2004	14.7%	43.9%	24.4%	16.3%	0.5%	0.1%	8,792
Rural	2008	27.4%	45.5%	17.1%	9.4%	0.5%	0.1%	4,004
	2004	13.3%	40.5%	26.4%	19.2%	0.4%	0.1%	3,810

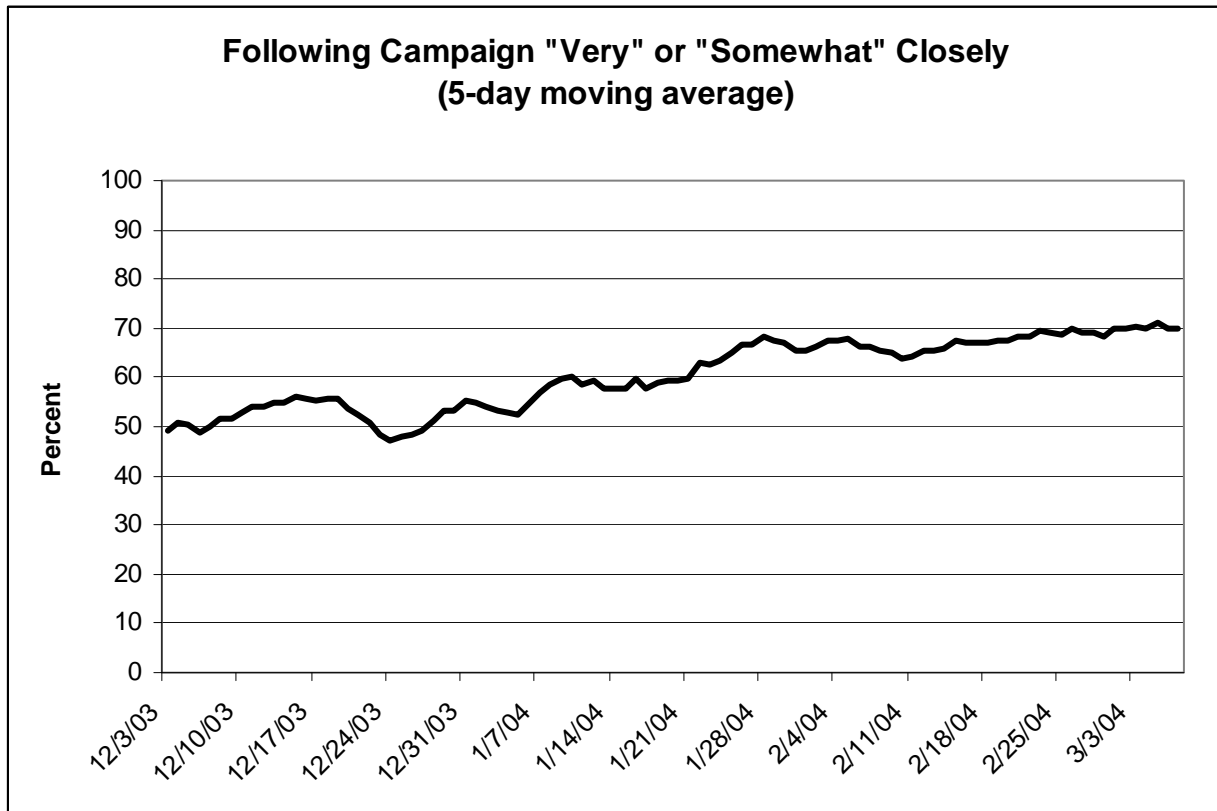
Table 3.

2008: How closely are you following the 2008 presidential campaign?								
2004: How closely are you following the presidential campaigns of the Democratic candidates?								
		Very closely	Some what closely	Not too closely	Not closely at all	Don't Know	Refused	N
Republican	2008	31.7%	49.0%	14.1%	4.8%	0.3%	0.1%	5,894
	2004	13.6%	42.8%	26.0%	17.3%	0.3%	0.1%	5,504
Democrat	2008	35.9%	46.5%	12.7%	4.5%	0.3%	0.1%	6,997
	2004	19.0%	46.1%	23.4%	11.0%	0.4%	0.1%	5,794
Independent	2008	28.4%	47.0%	16.8%	7.6%	0.2%	0.1%	5,676
	2004	13.2%	43.3%	26.1%	17.1%	0.2%	0.1%	4,757
Conservative	2008	33.0%	46.1%	14.2%	6.3%	0.3%		7,788
	2004	15.7%	41.5%	24.9%	17.4%	0.4%	0.1%	6,783
Moderate	2008	26.9%	49.8%	17.3%	5.6%	0.3%	0.1%	6,333
	2004	12.7%	44.3%	27.1%	15.7%	0.1%	0.1%	6,621
Liberal	2008	35.0%	45.6%	13.4%	5.6%	0.2%	0.1%	5,353
	2004	17.4%	44.8%	21.8%	15.5%	0.5%		4,083

Graph 1. Closely following the 2008 presidential campaign across time (5-day moving average)



Graph 2. Closely following the 2004 presidential campaign across time (5-day moving average)



The analysis for this release was conducted by Kate Kenski, Ph.D., a senior analyst for the National Annenberg Election Survey and an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Arizona.

### **About the Survey**

The National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) is a survey conducted each presidential election by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. It is the largest academic election survey being conducted during the 2008 campaign. It ultimately will include between 45,000 and 50,000 rolling cross-section telephone interviews (one interview per respondent) and almost 100,000 web interviews (including up to five interviews with the same person) as the campaign evolves. The first web wave began in October 2007; the final interviews will be completed following the general election, November 4, 2008.

National Annenberg Election Surveys also were conducted in 2000 and 2004.

The 2008 survey, as with past NAES polls, will examine a wide range of political attitudes about candidates, issues and the traits Americans want in a president. It will also place a particular emphasis on the effects of media exposure through campaign commercials and news from radio, television, newspapers and the internet. Additionally, the survey measures the effects of other kinds of political communication, from conversations at home and on the job to various efforts by campaigns to influence potential voters.

### **Methodology**

Data for this analysis come from the NAES rolling cross-sectional telephone survey. The recent field period ran from December 17, 2007 through March 18, 2008; the total number of respondents interviewed during this period was 20,225. The 2004 field period was from December 1, 2003 through March 9, 2004; the total number of respondents interviewed during this period was 18,007.

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. The sample sizes reported in the tables, however, are the unweighted number of cases.

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.

###