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**Bush Erases Kerry's Post-Convention Gains on Optimism,
Inspiration and Values, Annenberg Polling Shows**

George W. Bush has erased the modest gains John Kerry made on him after the Democratic National Convention on such traits as optimism, inspiration and sharing Americans' values, the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey shows.

But as the Republican National Convention prepares to nominate Bush tonight for a second term, a wide variety of trait ratings now stand just about where they were before the Democratic convention.

In polling conducted from August 9 through 29 among 5,146 registered voters, 50 percent rated Bush favorably and 40 percent rated him unfavorably. From July 5 to 25, the day before the Democratic convention began, 48 percent rated him favorably and 41 percent unfavorably. The margin of sampling error for the August polling was plus or minus one percentage point; for the July data it was plus or minus two points.

In the August polling, 45 percent rate Kerry favorably and 36 percent unfavorably. In July it was 43 percent favorable and 34 percent unfavorable. Kerry declined slowly from a post convention high near the beginning of the polling period to a low around August 22 and then rebounded. Bush was at his highest around August 17 and has slipped since.

"But when you look at the final data on all these personal ratings," said Adam Clymer, political director of the survey, "it's almost as if the last five weeks didn't happen, at least to the country as a whole. Both candidates maintained their strengths, and their weaknesses."

Most data for the "persuadable" voters -- those who either say they are undecided or have a preference but say there is a "good chance" they will change their minds -- also closely matched the July numbers.

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But one change on attitudes about Kerry personally stood out among the persuadables, who constitute 18 percent of all registered voters. Kerry's overall unfavorable rating increased from 20 percent in July to 26 percent in August, while his favorables only increased from 34 to 36 percent. Bush went from 45 percent favorable, 30 percent unfavorable in July to 47 percent favorable, 30 percent unfavorable in August.

On several other questions involving all registered voters, Bush is slightly stronger than he was in July on overall job approval, handling of terrorism and Iraq. But the changes did not exceed three percentage points, yielding numbers that were just statistically significant but changed no standings from positive to negative or vice versa.

For example, in July 50 percent of the public approved of his handling of his job as president and 48 percent disapproved. In August 53 percent approved and 46 percent disapproved.

When it came to handling the war on terrorism, 50 percent approved in July and 53 percent did in August. But there was striking good news for Bush in the attitudes of the persuadable voters. In July just 40 percent of them approved of Bush's handling the war on terrorism and 54 percent disapproved. In August 53 percent approved and 42 percent disapproved.

But the negative rating given the president on the economy was basically unchanged. In July, 45 percent of registered voters approved of his handling of the economy and 52 percent disapproved. In August 45 percent still approved and 51 percent disapproved.

On three of the personal traits, which Clymer called "building blocks of voting decisions," the whole sample shifted back to where it was before the Democratic convention, when the Annenberg data was first released. On leadership, inspiration, and optimism, Kerry made short-term gains after his convention.

In August, 48 percent rated Bush higher than Kerry as a strong leader, while 39 percent called Kerry stronger. From July 5 through 25, the day before the Democratic convention began, 46 percent picked Bush and 39 percent picked Kerry. In polling conducted from July 30 through August 5, Kerry had narrowed the gap to a 45 to 42 percent Bush advantage.

As to which candidate was better described as "inspiring," Bush and Kerry were tied at 44 percent each in the August polling. In July, 43 percent said Kerry and 42 percent said Bush. Kerry had improved a little just after the convention.

When respondents were asked which candidate was better described as "optimistic," Bush held a 43 to 36 percent advantage. In July, it was 42 to 35 percent, though after his convention, Kerry temporarily advanced to a 40 to 37 percent advantage.

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The July to August changes among persuadable voters (the early August poll was smaller and had too few persuadables to analyze) were generally small. But some changes stood out and all were bad news for Kerry.

In July, the term “says one thing, does another” seemed to 34 percent of persuadables to describe Bush better, while 30 percent said it described Kerry better. In the latest polling, however, 39 percent of this swing group said it was better description of Kerry, and only 29 percent said it described Bush better.

There were several other smaller shifts. Bush improved from 39 to 45 percent saying he was better described than was Kerry as having the right kind of experience to be president, and from 35 to 40 percent on likeability, from 41 to 46 percent on effectiveness. On those items, he widened leads he had held in July.

Kerry’s advantages narrowed on the perceptions that Bush was more arrogant and out of touch with ordinary Americans.

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.AnnenbergPublicPolicyCenter.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.

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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All charts reflect citizens who say they are registered to vote.

Tables

A. Favorability

	8/9 – 8/29/04	7/30 – 8/5/04	7/5 – 7/25/04
	Persuadables	Total	Total
Bush			
Favorable	47%	50%	48%
Unfavorable	30%	40%	41%
Kerry			
Favorable	36%	45%	43%
Unfavorable	26%	36%	34%
Cheney			
Favorable	32%	40%	37%
Unfavorable	34%	39%	41%
Edwards			
Favorable	36%	43%	38%
Unfavorable	15%	26%	25%

B. Favorability among Persuadables

	Persuadables		
	8/9 – 8/29/04	7/30 – 8/5/04	7/5 – 7/25/04
Bush			
Favorable	47%	52%	45%
Unfavorable	30%	29%	30%
Kerry			
Favorable	36%	38%	34%
Unfavorable	26%	26%	20%
Cheney			
Favorable	32%	32%	30%
Unfavorable	34%	35%	33%
Edwards			
Favorable	36%	42%	33%
Unfavorable	15%	15%	13%

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C. Respondents were asked to rate George W. Bush and John Kerry on each trait using a scale of zero to ten. The following data represents the percentage of people ranking Bush higher, Kerry higher, or both equal.

	8/9 – 8/29/04		7/30 – 8/5/04	7/5 – 7/25/04
	Persuadables	Total	Total	Total
Optimistic				
Bush higher	38%	43%	37%	42%
Kerry higher	28%	36%	40%	35%
Equal	24%	16%	16%	16%
Cares about people like me				
Bush higher	30%	41%	39%	38%
Kerry higher	40%	44%	45%	45%
Equal	20%	9%	9%	9%
Inspiring				
Bush higher	36%	44%	43%	42%
Kerry higher	35%	44%	47%	43%
Equal	20%	8%	7%	10%
Strong leader				
Bush higher	45%	48%	45%	46%
Kerry higher	27%	39%	42%	39%
Equal	18%	9%	8%	8%
Trustworthy				
Bush higher	38%	44%	43%	41%
Kerry higher	33%	41%	44%	43%
Equal	19%	9%	6%	8%
Shares my values				
Bush higher	36%	44%	42%	41%
Kerry higher	37%	43%	46%	44%
Equal	16%	8%	7%	8%
Knowledgeable				
Bush higher	31%	38%	38%	36%
Kerry higher	37%	44%	46%	47%
Equal	22%	13%	10%	11%
Reckless				
Bush higher	41%	44%	46%	44%
Kerry higher	20%	32%	30%	30%
Equal	23%	15%	15%	15%

	8/9 – 8/29/04		7/30 – 8/5/04	7/5 – 7/25/04
	Persuadables	Total	Total	Total
Steady				
Bush higher	44%	49%	44%	44%
Kerry higher	25%	33%	36%	34%
Equal	18%	11%	11%	14%
Says one thing, does another				
Bush higher	29%	34%	36%	35%
Kerry higher	39%	44%	38%	40%
Equal	15%	13%	15%	13%
Has the right kind of experience to be president				
Bush higher	45%	46%	43%	43%
Kerry higher	25%	40%	43%	42%
Equal	20%	9%	8%	8%
Easy to like as a person				
Bush higher	40%	44%	44%	42%
Kerry higher	26%	37%	39%	39%
Equal	21%	10%	9%	11%
Out of touch with people like me				
Bush higher	35%	41%	44%	42%
Kerry higher	29%	38%	36%	36%
Equal	24%	15%	13%	14%
Stubborn				
Bush higher	47%	52%	56%	53%
Kerry higher	16%	20%	17%	17%
Equal	20%	17%	15%	15%
Arrogant				
Bush higher	39%	43%	45%	46%
Kerry higher	28%	37%	35%	33%
Equal	21%	14%	13%	13%
Effective, gets things done				
Bush higher	46%	47%	46%	45%
Kerry higher	22%	35%	36%	33%
Equal	16%	9%	8%	9%

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D. Respondents were asked to rate George W. Bush and John Kerry on each trait using a scale of zero to ten. The following data represents the percentage of people ranking Bush higher, Kerry higher, or both equal.

Persuadables		
	8/9 – 8/29/04	7/5 – 7/25/04
Optimistic		
Bush higher	38%	35%
Kerry higher	28%	28%
Equal	24%	24%
Cares about people like me		
Bush higher	30%	27%
Kerry higher	40%	42%
Equal	20%	16%
Inspiring		
Bush higher	36%	34%
Kerry higher	35%	34%
Equal	20%	18%
Strong leader		
Bush higher	45%	43%
Kerry higher	27%	28%
Equal	18%	17%
Trustworthy		
Bush higher	38%	36%
Kerry higher	33%	31%
Equal	19%	16%
Shares my values		
Bush higher	36%	33%
Kerry higher	37%	36%
Equal	16%	17%
Knowledgeable		
Bush higher	31%	28%
Kerry higher	37%	42%
Equal	22%	17%
Reckless		
Bush higher	41%	40%
Kerry higher	20%	23%
Equal	23%	18%

Persuadables		
	8/9 – 8/29/04	7/5 – 7/25/04
Steady		
Bush higher	44%	41%
Kerry higher	25%	23%
Equal	18%	22%
Says one thing, does another		
Bush higher	29%	34%
Kerry higher	39%	30%
Equal	15%	15%
Has the right kind of experience to be president		
Bush higher	45%	39%
Kerry higher	25%	32%
Equal	20%	16%
Easy to like as a person		
Bush higher	40%	35%
Kerry higher	26%	31%
Equal	21%	19%
Out of touch with people like me		
Bush higher	35%	40%
Kerry higher	29%	24%
Equal	24%	23%
Stubborn		
Bush higher	47%	49%
Kerry higher	16%	14%
Equal	20%	15%
Arrogant		
Bush higher	39%	44%
Kerry higher	28%	26%
Equal	21%	15%
Effective, gets things done		
Bush higher	46%	41%
Kerry higher	22%	25%
Equal	16%	15%

- Trait questions were only asked of a random two-thirds of the sample. Data for persuadables from 7/30 – 8/5/04 is not included because there were too few respondents to analyze.

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E. Issues

	8/9 – 8/29/04	7/30 – 8/5/04	7/5 – 7/25/04
	Persuadables	Total	Total
Do you feel things in this country are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?			
Right direction	33%	39%	37%
Wrong track	48%	52%	55%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?			
Approve	56%	53%	50%
Disapprove	39%	46%	48%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the nation's economy?			
Approve	39%	45%	45%
Disapprove	54%	51%	52%
How would you rate economic conditions in this country today?			
Excellent or good	19%	27%	30%
Fair or poor	80%	73%	69%
How would you rate your own personal economic situation today?			
Excellent or good	39%	48%	48%
Fair or poor	60%	52%	52%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the war on terrorism?			
Approve	53%	53%	50%
Disapprove	42%	44%	47%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is currently handling the situation in Iraq?			
Approve	42%	45%	42%
Disapprove	55%	52%	55%
All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over, or not?			
Worth it	40%	44%	43%
Not worth it	50%	51%	53%
Has the war in Iraq reduced the risk of terrorism or increased the risk of terrorism?			
Reduced the risk	21%	29%	28%
Increased the risk	62%	59%	61%
Do you think the U.S. should keep military troops in Iraq until a stable government is established there, or do you think the U.S. should bring its troops home as soon as possible?			
Keep troops in Iraq	49%	55%	54%
Bring troops home	47%	41%	43%

Do you think George W. Bush has a clear plan for bringing the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion, or don't you think so?				
Has a clear plan	30%	36%	33%	36%
Doesn't have a clear plan	59%	58%	59%	59%
Do you think John Kerry has a clear plan for bringing the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion, or don't you think so?				
Has a clear plan	17%	29%	30%	25%
Doesn't have a clear plan	55%	56%	55%	57%

F. Issues among Persuadables

	Persuadables		
	8/9 – 8/29/04	7/30 – 8/5/04	7/5 – 7/25/04
Do you feel things in this country are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?			
Right direction	33%	36%	31%
Wrong track	48%	50%	55%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?			
Approve	56%	52%	50%
Disapprove	39%	40%	44%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the nation's economy?			
Approve	39%	44%	40%
Disapprove	54%	51%	54%
How would you rate economic conditions in this country today?			
Excellent or good	19%	20%	22%
Fair or poor	80%	79%	78%
How would you rate your own personal economic situation today?			
Excellent or good	39%	44%	41%
Fair or poor	60%	55%	59%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the war on terrorism?			
Approve	53%	*	40%
Disapprove	42%	*	54%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is currently handling the situation in Iraq?			
Approve	42%	33%	36%
Disapprove	55%	59%	59%

	Persuadables		
	8/9 – 8/29/04	7/30 – 8/5/04	7/5 – 7/25/04
All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over, or not?			
Worth it	40%	*	34%
Not worth it	50%	*	60%
Has the war in Iraq reduced the risk of terrorism or increased the risk of terrorism?			
Reduced the risk	21%	24%	20%
Increased the risk	62%	58%	67%
Do you think the U.S. should keep military troops in Iraq until a stable government is established there, or do you think the U.S. should bring its troops home as soon as possible?			
Keep troops in Iraq	49%	48%	45%
Bring troops home	47%	45%	50%
Do you think George W. Bush has a clear plan for bringing the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion, or don't you think so?			
Has a clear plan	30%	*	23%
Doesn't have a clear plan	59%	*	69%
Do you think John Kerry has a clear plan for bringing the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion, or don't you think so?			
Has a clear plan	17%	*	15%
Doesn't have a clear plan	55%	*	54%

* Several questions were only asked of a random half of the sample. For these questions, data for persuadables from 7/30 – 8/5/04 is not included because there were too few respondents to analyze.

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 three interviewing periods. From July 5 through 25, 5,051 adults were interviewed, of whom 4,137 said they were citizens registered to vote. In theory, in 19 out of 20 cases, results for all registered voters will differ by no more than two percentage points, up or down, from what would have been obtained by interviewing all American adults. From July 30 through August 5, 1,997 people were interviewed. In that period, 1,646 said they were registered citizens; for them, the margin of sampling error would also be plus or minus two percentage points. From August 9 through August 29, 6,058 adults were interviewed. In that period, 5,146 said they were registered citizens; for them the margin of sampling error would be plus or minus one percentage point.

For smaller subgroups, the margin of sampling error would be higher. For “persuadable” voters, for example, it would be plus or minus four percentage points in the July 5-25 period, plus or minus six percentage points in the July 30-August 5 period, and plus or minus three percentage points in the August 5-25 period.

Moreover, some questions were not asked of all respondents, which would lead to higher potential error. 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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