



**DATE: June 4, 2004**

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### **Swing Voters in Swing States Troubled By Iraq, Economy; Unimpressed With Bush and Kerry, Annenberg Data Show**

Potential swing voters in swing states – the real target of the presidential campaign these days – are more critical of the economy and the situation in Iraq and less impressed with either George W. Bush or John Kerry than the electorate generally, the University of Pennsylvania’s National Annenberg Election Survey shows.

These persuadable voters in the battleground states – about 11 percent of the nation’s public -- are less conservative and more moderate than other Americans, and less likely to identify with either party. Demographically, they are whiter, less educated, less wealthy and less religious than other Americans.

“The survey plainly shows opportunities for Bush and Kerry among the ‘persuadables,’ the respondents who say they are undecided or who say they have a preference but there is a ‘good chance’ they could change their minds,” said Dr. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center and of the survey. “But it also shows the difficulties the campaigns will face with this key slice of the electorate.”

“Compared to the public generally,” she said “The persuadables are less interested in the campaign or in watching or reading news about it and they talk about it less with their family and friends. Persuading them is only one part of the task ahead. First the campaigns have to get them interested, and then keep them interested so they to go out and vote.”

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“In aggregate, fewer of the persuadables are likely to vote than are those people who have picked a candidate and say nothing can change their minds,” she said. “But these people are not non-voters. Two-thirds of them say they voted in 2000, compared to three-fourths of the public as a whole. Both of those figures are certainly exaggerations, since only 54 percent of the public did vote in 2000. But research has found that registration claims are reasonably accurate, and 68 percent of them say they are registered, compared to 79 percent of the general public. So most of them are eligible now, and both parties are trying to register more of them.”

The survey focused on 832 persuadable voters in swing states out of a total of 8,314 adults polled nationally during May. The margin of sampling error for those persuadable voters was plus or minus three percentage points. For the whole sample, it was plus or minus one percentage point.

“They are so small a slice of the general public that most polls simply don’t reach enough of these target voters to offer much precision about the results,” said Adam Clymer, political director of the survey. “But since the campaigns are not spending millions to reach undecided voters in California or Texas, or for that matter those with their minds firmly made up in Ohio or Florida, we thought it was important to look at the attitudes and characteristics of the people whom the campaigns are trying to win over right now with television advertising.”

The persuadable voters in the battleground states were particularly gloomy about the economy, now and in the future. Only 14 percent of them, compared to 24 percent of the general public, said the economy was excellent or good now. And only 36 percent of them, compared to 48 percent of the public, thought the economy would be better in a year.

And they were dubious about Bush’s record on the economy. Thirty percent approved of the way he was handling the economy, and only 14 percent said his administration’s policies had made things better. Among all respondents, 41 percent approved of Bush’s economic stewardship and 26 percent said his policies had made things better.

The personal experiences of the persuadable voters in battleground states seemed to matter, too. Just 35 percent said their own economic situation was excellent or good, compared to 43 percent of the public. And 20 percent said they had benefited a “great deal” or “some” from Bush’s tax cuts, compared to 33 percent of the general public.

On Iraq, a majority of this key group wanted to bring American troops home as soon as possible. Fifty-two percent favored that course, while 41 percent wanted them to remain until a stable government is formed. In the public as a whole, 46 percent wanted to move out now and 49 percent wanted to stay.

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The persuadables in battleground states were also more likely than the public generally to think Bush lacked a clear plan to achieve success in Iraq. They were less likely to think the war had reduced the risk of terrorism against the United States, or to approve of his handling of the situation there, or to approve of his handling of the war on terrorism.

With the economy and Iraq dominating choices as the most important problems facing the nation, only 34 percent of the general public said “things in this country are generally going in the right direction.” But among these key swing voters, the total was even lower -- at 25 percent. And when asked if they approved of how Bush was handling his job as president, 44 percent approved and 50 percent disapproved. In the public generally, 48 percent approved and 49 percent disapproved.

But despite these negatives, and findings on personal traits like being knowledgeable that favored Kerry over Bush, the overall balance the persuadable voters in battleground states struck for each of the two major party candidates was quite comparable. Thirty-nine percent had a favorable view of Bush and 36 percent an unfavorable view. Twenty-seven percent had a favorable opinion of Kerry and 24 percent an unfavorable view.

On Vice President Dick Cheney, 24 percent were favorable and 34 percent unfavorable. That was a similarly negative balance to the one they struck on Ralph Nader, the independent presidential candidate. Just 20 percent had a favorable opinion, while 31 percent were unfavorable.

Demographically, the persuadables in the battleground states were 86 percent white and only 6 percent African-American. In the general public 79 percent are white and 11 percent African-American. Only 9 percent in this group attended religious services more than once a week, compared to 13 percent in the public, and 23 percent of them never attended, compared to 19 percent in the public. Twenty-one percent had a college degree or more, compared to 26 percent in the public. Eighteen percent had household incomes of \$75,000 or more, compared to 23 percent of the public.

Sixteen percent said they were Republicans, 26 percent Democrats and 37 percent independents. In the public generally, 27 percent said they were Republicans, 34 percent Democrats and 27 percent independents. On some questions, they showed a gender gap similar to that in the general public; for example, women were more likely than men to call themselves Democrats. But on other issues – such as approving of Bush’s handling of his job as president or his handling of Iraq or the economy – the gender gap that was clear in the general public disappeared among the persuadables in battle ground states. That happened because the men in that group were much more critical than men in the general population, while the women in that group were about as negative as those in the general public.

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Their low level of political interest was shown by many measures, starting with the fact that only 11 percent said they were following the campaign very closely, compared to 24 percent of the public generally. Similarly, 18 percent said they paid attention to the government most of the time, while 30 percent of the general public said they did.

Their professed lack of interest was backed up by what they said about their behavior. Thirty-nine percent said they had never discussed the presidential campaign with family or friends in the past week, compared to 27 percent of the public generally.

Despite watching television news and reading newspapers at about the same levels as the public, the persuadables in battleground states paid markedly less attention than did the public generally to news of the campaign, on network or cable news, on local television, or in newspapers.

There were few specific campaign issues on which their views stood in stark contrast to the general public. But fewer of them believed in vouchers for private schools or in greater government efforts to restrict gun purchases.

The images of the candidates held by the persuadables in battleground states were not very different from those in the public generally. They found Bush steadier and a stronger leader than Kerry, but also more reckless, stubborn and arrogant. They found Kerry more knowledgeable than Bush, and were much less likely than the public generally to say Kerry was more likely than Bush to say one thing and do another.

And despite their stated lack of interest in political news on television, these key voters were at least as likely as others in their states to believe dubious claims made in attack ads widely shown in their states, from the claim that Bush favors sending American jobs overseas to the contention that Kerry favors raising gasoline taxes by 50 cents a gallon. Ads making those charges are shown heavily in and around local news programs, which the persuadables watch as much as everyone else.

The 20 battleground states are Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

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](http://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](http://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](http://www.FactCheck.Org).

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## Political Opinions, Attributes

%	Persuadables in battleground states	All Respondents	All respondents in battleground states
<b>Approve of Bush's handling of his job as President</b>	44%	48%	47%
<b>Disapprove</b>	50%	49%	51%
<b>Favorable opinion of George W. Bush</b>	39%	47%	46%
<b>Unfavorable opinion</b>	36%	39%	41%
<b>Neutral</b>	22%	13%	12%
<b>Favorable opinion of John Kerry</b>	27%	39%	40%
<b>Unfavorable opinion</b>	24%	33%	33%
<b>Neutral</b>	38%	22%	22%
<b>Favorable opinion of Ralph Nader</b>	20%	18%	18%
<b>Unfavorable opinion</b>	31%	38%	39%
<b>Neutral</b>	31%	31%	31%
<b>Favorable opinion of Dick Cheney</b>	24%	35%	33%
<b>Unfavorable opinion</b>	34%	36%	36%
<b>Neutral</b>	33%	23%	25%
<b>Believe Bush fulfilled Air National Guard obligations</b>	43%	47%	47%
<b>Believe he did not</b>	36%	37%	38%
<b>Approve of Kerry's anti-Vietnam war activities</b>	36%	41%	42%
<b>Disapprove</b>	45%	47%	46%
<b>Republican</b>	16%	27%	27%
<b>Democrat</b>	26%	34%	34%
<b>Independent</b>	37%	27%	28%
<b>Conservative</b>	29%	37%	35%
<b>Moderate</b>	44%	37%	39%
<b>Liberal</b>	20%	22%	22%

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## Economy

%	Persuadables in battleground states	All Respondents	All respondents in battleground states
<b>Consider US economy:</b>			
Excellent	1%	2%	2%
Good	13%	22%	21%
Fair	45%	42%	41%
Poor	40%	33%	35%
<b>Consider own economic situation:</b>			
Excellent	3%	7%	6%
Good	32%	36%	37%
Fair	40%	39%	38%
Poor	24%	18%	18%
<b>A year from now, nation's economy will be:</b>			
Much better	4%	8%	8%
Somewhat better	32%	40%	38%
Same	32%	28%	30%
Somewhat worse	20%	14%	14%
Much worse	5%	5%	5%
<b>Bush's handling of economy:</b>			
Approve	30%	41%	39%
Disapprove	60%	55%	56%
<b>Bush's economic polices have made the economy:</b>			
Better	14%	26%	26%
Worse	45%	42%	44%
No effect	32%	26%	25%
<b>Personally benefited from Bush tax cuts:</b>			
Great deal	3%	5%	7%
Some	17%	28%	23%
Not much	35%	30%	31%
Not at all	42%	35%	37%
<b>Have you or someone you know lost a job because of economy</b>			
Yes	48%	42%	44%
No	51%	57%	56%
<b>Which party better to cut deficit:</b>			
Republicans	18%	33%	31%
Democrats	34%	42%	43%

<b>Best way to cut deficit:</b>			
<b>Increase taxes</b>	5%	12%	11%
<b>Cut spending</b>	81%	74%	76%

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## Iraq, terrorism

%	Persuadables in battleground states	All Respondents	All respondents in battleground states
U.S. should keep troops in Iraq until stable government is formed	41%	49%	48%
Bring troops home as soon as possible	52%	46%	46%
War in Iraq has reduced risk of terrorist against U.S.	19%	25%	25%
Has increased risk	67%	63%	64%
All in all, situation in Iraq was worth going to war over	40%	44%	44%
Was not worth war	53%	51%	50%
To rebuild Iraq, the federal government should spend:			
More than now	8%	10%	10%
Same as now	26%	27%	28%
Less than now	28%	34%	33%
No money at all	32%	25%	25%
Bush has clear plan to bring the situation to successful conclusion	20%	31%	31%
Does not have clear plan	69%	62%	63%
Approve Bush's handling of situation in Iraq	30%	40%	39%
Disapprove	60%	56%	56%
As a result of Bush presidency, how is the United States regarded around the world:			
Better than before he took office	9%	15%	14%
Worse than before he took office	51%	52%	54%
No difference	32%	29%	27%
As a result of government steps taken since September 11, do you feel			
Much more safe	13%	16%	17%
Somewhat more safe	58%	57%	56%
Somewhat less safe	8%	10%	10%
Much less safe	7%	6%	6%
Approve Bush's handling of war on terrorism	44%	50%	50%
Disapprove	50%	46%	46%

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## Demographics

%	Persuadables in battleground states	All Respondents	All respondents in battleground states
<b>Men</b>	46%	48%	48%
<b>Women</b>	54%	52%	52%
<b>Whites</b>	86%	79%	85%
<b>African Americans</b>	6%	11%	9%
<b>Latinos</b>	9%	12%	8%
<b>Attend religious services</b>			
<b>More than once a week</b>	9%	13%	11%
<b>Once a week</b>	24%	27%	27%
<b>One or twice a month</b>	15%	15%	15%
<b>A few times a year</b>	28%	26%	26%
<b>Never</b>	23%	19%	20%
<b>High school or less</b>	54%	48%	49%
<b>Some college</b>	25%	27%	27%
<b>College degree or more</b>	21%	26%	24%
<b>18-29 years old</b>	24%	21%	20%
<b>30-44</b>	32%	30%	29%
<b>45-64</b>	30%	32%	33%
<b>65 and over</b>	14%	16%	17%
<b>Household income below \$35,000</b>	37%	34%	34%
<b>\$35,000 to less than \$75,000</b>	32%	33%	34%
<b>\$75,000 and over</b>	18%	23%	21%
<b>Union household</b>	16%	15%	17%
<b>Northeast</b>	16%	21%	14%
<b>Midwest</b>	38%	23%	39%
<b>South</b>	23%	34%	25%
<b>West</b>	22%	22%	22%
<b>Married or living as married</b>	60%	63%	63%
<b>Other living arrangements</b>	40%	37%	36%
<b>Children under 18 at home</b>	41%	42%	40%
<b>No children under 18 at home</b>	59%	58%	60%
<b>Gun in household</b>	37%	39%	41%

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## Interest and political communication

%	Persuadables in battleground states	All Respondents	All respondents in battleground states
<b>Registered to vote</b>	68	79	80
<b>Following campaign very closely</b>	11	24	25
<b>Somewhat closely</b>	43	45	46
<b>Not too closely</b>	23	20	17
<b>Not closely at all</b>	22	12	12
<b>Follow what is going on in government:</b>			
<b>Most of the time</b>	18	30	31
<b>Some of the time</b>	37	37	39
<b>Only now and then</b>	29	22	21
<b>Hardly at all</b>	14	10	9
<b>Voted Bush in 2000</b>			
<b>Gore</b>	22	30	32
<b>Nader</b>	3	2	2
<b>Did not vote</b>	34	27	24
<b>Voted in 2002 election</b>	44	57	59
<b>Believe government in Washington can be trusted to do right thing:</b>			
<b>Always</b>	1	2	2
<b>Most of the time</b>	19	23	22
<b>Some of the time</b>	72	65	67
<b>Never</b>	8	9	9
<b>Discussed politics with family and friends in last week</b>			
<b>Never</b>	39	27	28
<b>On 1 or 2 days</b>	30	29	29
<b>On 3 to 6 days</b>	21	28	28
<b>On 7 days</b>	8	14	15
<b>In past week, paid how much attention to national TV news on presidential campaign:</b>			
<b>A great deal</b>	11	17	19
<b>Some</b>	39	43	43
<b>Not too much</b>	29	24	24
<b>No attention at all</b>	21	14	14
<b>Watched network news last week</b>			
<b>Never</b>	41	39	39
<b>1 or 2 days</b>	21	19	19
<b>3 to 6 days</b>	24	27	27
<b>7 days</b>	12	15	15

<b>Watched cable news last week</b>			
Never	46%	37%	38%
1 or 2 days	19%	19%	17%
3 to 6 days	17%	21%	21%
7 days	18%	23%	24%
<b>Watched late night comedy last week</b>			
Never	71%	70%	71%
1 or 2 days	13%	14%	13%
3 to 6 days	13%	13%	14%
7 days	2%	2%	2%
<b>In past week, paid how much attention to local TV news on presidential campaign:</b>			
A great deal	7%	12%	13%
Some	40%	42%	42%
Not too much	30%	28%	28%
No attention at all	23%	18%	18%
<b>Watched local news in last week</b>			
Never	18%	21%	19%
1 or 2 days	16%	13%	13%
3 to 6 days	32%	32%	31%
7 days	33%	34%	37%
<b>In past week, paid how much attention to newspaper articles about presidential campaign:</b>			
A great deal	11%	16%	16%
Some	37%	42%	42%
Not too much	24%	22%	23%
No attention at all	27%	19%	19%
<b>Read daily newspaper in last week</b>			
Never	26%	26%	23%
1 or 2 days	20%	20%	20%
3 to 6 days	24%	22%	22%
7 days	29%	32%	34%

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## Believing TV Ads

%	Persuadables in battleground states	All Respondents	All respondents in battleground states
<b>John Kerry wants to raise taxes by 900 billion dollars</b>			
Definitely or probably true	38%	36%	40%
Definitely or probably not true	43%	49%	48%
<b>George Bush favors sending American jobs overseas</b>			
Definitely or probably true	61%	52%	57%
Definitely or probably not true	28%	39%	36%
<b>John Kerry voted for higher taxes 350 times</b>			
Definitely or probably true	53%	51%	54%
Definitely or probably not true	28%	33%	32%
<b>Three million American jobs have been lost while George W. Bush was president</b>			
Definitely or probably true	70%	70%	72%
Definitely or probably not true	20%	22%	22%
<b>John Kerry wants to raise gas taxes by 50 cents a gallon</b>			
Definitely or probably true	43%	36%	40%
Definitely or probably not true	42%	49%	47%
<b>George W. Bush raided Social Security to pay for tax cuts for millionaires</b>			
Definitely or probably true	48%	44%	47%
Definitely or probably not true	39%	45%	44%

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## Candidate Traits

I am going to read you some phrases. For each one, please tell me how well that phrase applies to [CANDIDATE]. Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where "zero" means it does not apply at all and 10 means it applies extremely well.  
(Average ratings below)

	Persuadables in battleground states		All Respondents		All respondents in battleground states	
	Bush	Kerry	Bush	Kerry	Bush	Kerry
Cares about people like me	4.4	4.7	5.0	5.1	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.2</b>
Inspiring	4.4	4.5	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.6</b>	4.8	4.7
Strong leader	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.4</b>
Trustworthy	4.8	4.8	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.0</b>	5.2	5.0
Shares my values	4.5	4.7	<b>5.0</b>	<b>4.8</b>	4.9	4.9
Knowledgeable	<b>5.6</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>6.5</b>
Reckless	<b>5.4</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.0</b>
Steady	<b>5.6</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.0</b>
Says one thing but does another	5.3	5.4	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.5</b>
Has right kind of experience to be president	5.5	5.2	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.6
Easy to like as a person	5.5	5.1	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.4</b>
Changes his mind for political reasons	5.6	5.9	<b>5.1</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>6.0</b>
Out of touch with people like me	5.4	5.2	5.1	5.0	5.1	5.0
Stubborn	<b>6.7</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>4.9</b>
Arrogant	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>4.9</b>

*Note:* Highlighted numbers indicate statistically significant differences between perceptions of Bush and Kerry.

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## Other Issues

%	Persuadables in battleground states	All Respondents	All respondents in battleground states
<b>Believe things in this country are generally going in the right direction</b>	25%	34%	34%
<b>Things are seriously off on the wrong track</b>	59%	57%	57%
<b>Believe most important problem facing country is:</b>			
<b>Iraq</b>	22%	23%	24%
<b>Terrorism</b>	4%	8%	6%
<b>Economy</b>	19%	18%	18%
<b>Jobs, unemployment</b>	10%	8%	10%
<b>Politicians, government</b>	6%	5%	5%
<b>Health care</b>	6%	4%	5%
<b>Education</b>	5%	3%	4%
<b>Lack of moral values, family values</b>	4%	5%	4%
<b>Favor vouchers to help parents send children to private schools</b>			
	45%	50%	48%
<b>Oppose</b>	49%	45%	47%
<b>Government should do more to restrict immigration</b>			
	64%	61%	61%
<b>Same as now</b>	21%	21%	23%
<b>Less or nothing</b>	12%	14%	13%
<b>Favor allowing workers to invest some Social Security contributions in the stock market</b>			
	58%	57%	58%
<b>Oppose</b>	35%	36%	37%
<b>Government should do more to restrict kinds of guns people buy</b>			
	52%	58%	54%
<b>Same as now</b>	25%	20%	23%
<b>Less or nothing</b>	19%	20%	20%
<b>Favor complete elimination of estate tax</b>			
	63%	65%	66%
<b>Oppose</b>	28%	27%	27%
<b>Favor banning all abortions</b>			
	27%	31%	30%
<b>Oppose</b>	65%	62%	64%
<b>Favor banning partial birth abortions</b>			
	40%	42%	42%
<b>Oppose</b>	47%	47%	47%
<b>Favor constitutional amendment barring states from allowing same-sex marriages</b>			
	39%	41%	42%
<b>Oppose</b>	47%	49%	49%
<b>Favor law in own state allowing same-sex marriages</b>			
	24%	28%	26%
<b>Oppose</b>	65%	63%	66%

## 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. For this study, separate weights were used to reflect the sex, age, race and education for results involving the 20 battleground states of Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

This report deals with interviewing conducted from May 1 through May 31, when 8,314 people were interviewed. In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results 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 the 3,418 people in the 20 battleground states, it would be plus or minus three percentage points. For the 832 "persuadable" respondents in those states it would be plus or minus three percentage points. Moreover, some questions were not asked of all respondents, which would also result in a higher potential sampling 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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