

August 25, 2000

**Annenberg Survey:
The public learned about
Bush and Gore from
conventions; half ready
to make an informed
choice.**

***Men were more likely than women to
know the candidates' positions and
feel informed.***

For more information

Please direct questions to Kathleen Hall Jamieson at (215) 898-7041. More information on the Annenberg Public Policy Center and its studies can be found at <http://www.appcpenn.org>.

**Annenberg Public Policy Center
Annenberg School for Communication
University of Pennsylvania**

About the researchers

KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON
is Professor and Dean at the Annenberg School for Communication of the University of Pennsylvania and Director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center.

RICHARD JOHNSTON
is a Visiting Scholar at the Annenberg School for Communication.

MICHAEL G. HAGEN
is a Senior Researcher at the Annenberg Public Policy Center.

PAUL WALDMAN
is a Research Fellow at the Annenberg Public Policy Center.

KATE KENSKI
is a doctoral student at the Annenberg School for Communication.

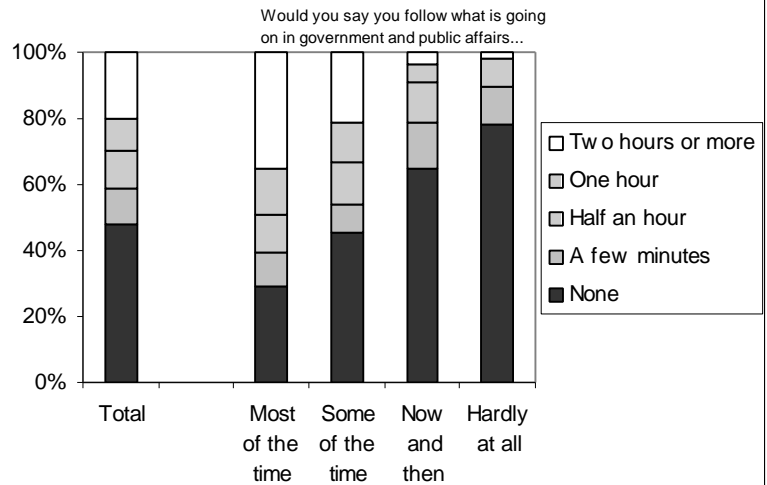
About the survey

The Annenberg 2000 Election Study is a daily, year-long monitor of the electorate, comprised of national samples and oversamples of key states. To date, over 54,000 interviews have been conducted. The survey asks about turnout and vote intention, candidate recognition, knowledge, and evaluation, opinions on issues, media use and political discussion, candidate chances, and a wide range of demographics. Fieldwork is managed by Princeton Survey Research Associates (PSRA) and carried out by Schulman, Ronca & Bucavala (SRBI) and Princeton Data Services (PDS). All interviews except post-election reinterviews are conducted as a "rolling cross-section" (RCS): the date of interview, like selection of the sample, is a product of random selection.

The Convention Audience and the News Audience

Although the Democratic convention received slightly higher viewership than the Republican one, a majority of Americans chose to ignore the Los Angeles events. Just under half of those we surveyed (47%) watched none of the convention, and only 20% tuned in for two hours or more. Those who did watch were more likely to be people who pay a great deal of attention to politics.

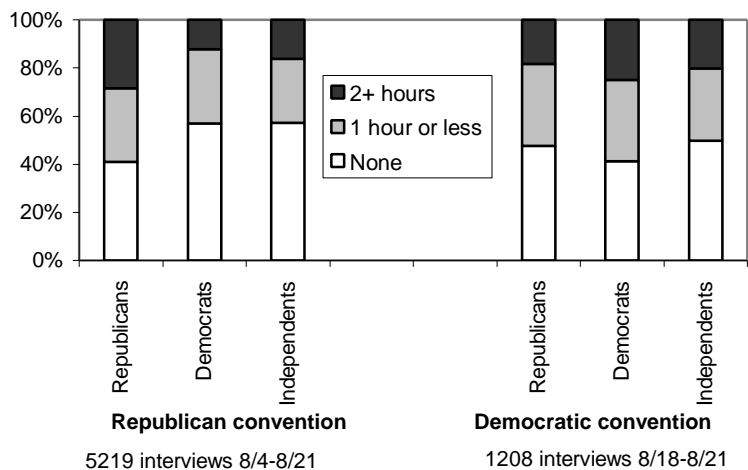
How much of the convention did you see or hear?



Based on 1270 interviews conducted 8/18-8/21

Both parties' conventions were more likely to attract viewers from their own party than independents or those of the other party. More than twice as many Republicans as Democrats tuned in to two or more hours of the Republican convention (28% vs. 12%). This difference was smaller in the audience for the Democratic convention, where 25% of Democrats watched more than two hours, compared to 18% of Republicans.

How much of the convention did you see or hear?

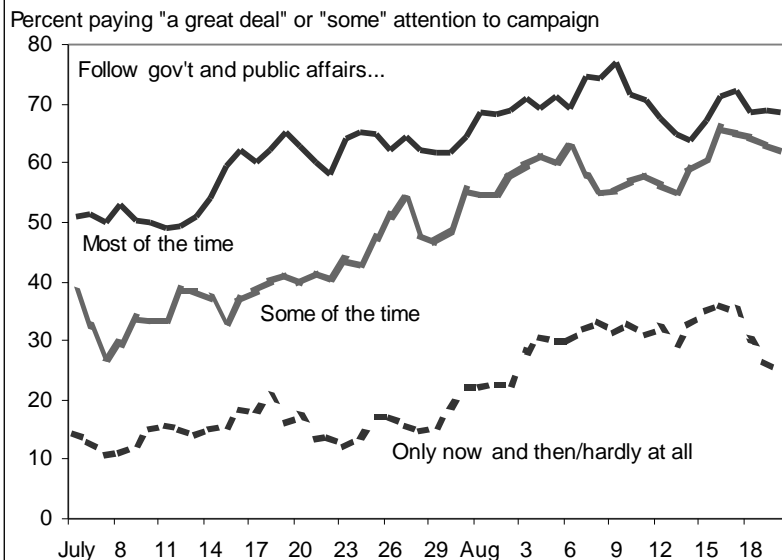


5219 interviews 8/4-8/21

1208 interviews 8/18-8/21

Despite the fact that those who regularly follow politics were more likely to watch the conventions, during this period all of our respondents, even those who seldom pay attention to politics, followed the campaign more closely. While six weeks ago an average of 15% of those who seldom follow politics said they were paying some or a great deal of attention to the campaign, that figure doubled to approximately 30% by the end of the Democratic convention.

Attention to the Campaign on Television News



Learning from Convention News Coverage

Despite hand wringing over low viewership of the two major party conventions, citizens learned from both. Learning occurred even among those who report paying little attention to the conventions themselves, a finding that suggests the importance of national and local news coverage and political talk among families, friends, and business associates.

From pre- to post-Democratic convention (8.4 – 8.13 compared with 8.18 – 8.21), more know Gore favors the following policies:

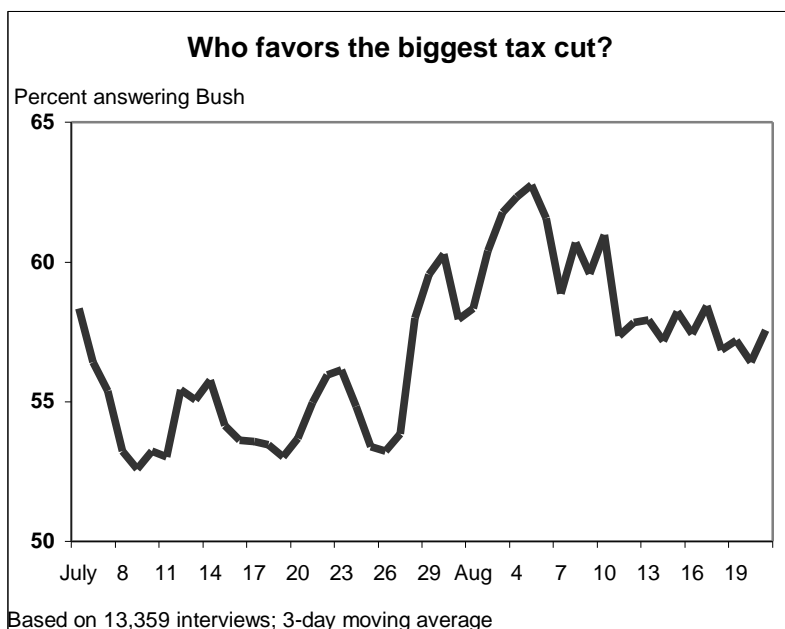
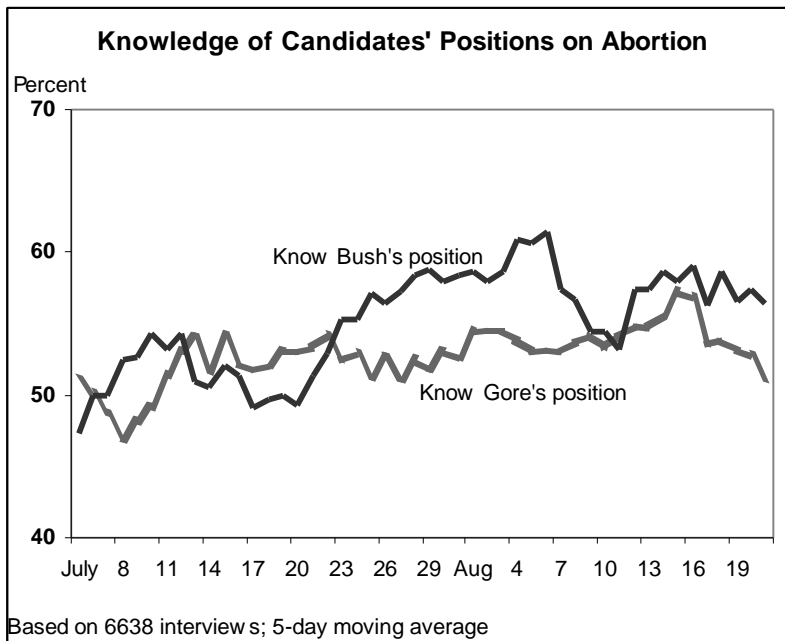
- allowing patients to sue their HMOs
- using government funds to make sure that every child in the US is covered by health insurance
- banning soft money political contributions
- allowing gays to serve openly in the military
- covering prescription drugs for senior citizens through Medicare

In addition, more accurately report that Gore favors the death penalty. By a small percent more also have concluded inaccurately that he wants to allow workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market. In short, Gore's distinction between his proposal, which he calls Social Security plus, and Bush's, which he calls Social Security minus, did not become clearer as a result of the Democratic convention or its coverage.

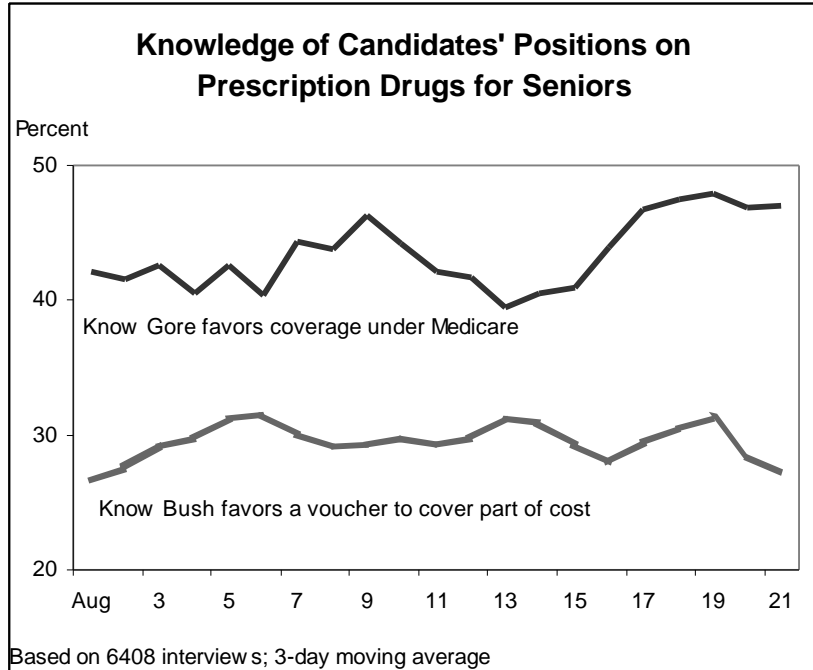
Percent knowing Gore's position	Pre-Dem convention (8.4 - 8.13)	Post-Dem convention (8.18 - 8.21)
Allowing HMO suits	42%	51%
Health insurance for children	69	78
Soft money ban	32	37
Death penalty	31	38
Gays in military	48	53
Medicare prescription drug benefit	42	47
Social Security in stock market	45	44

Knowledge of Bush's positions also increased in the wake of the Republican convention. While voters are beginning to clarify the differences between the candidates, the distinctions are clearer on some issues than others. While a majority of Americans are aware of the candidates' positions on restricting abortion, only the Republican convention led to increases in knowledge on this issue. After Philadelphia more people were aware of Bush's position on abortion, but knowledge of Gore's position remained unchanged in the wake of the Los Angeles convention. Nor did the Democratic convention lead to improvements in knowledge of Gore's position on handgun licenses or school vouchers. Although there was a fair amount of contrastive argument during the Democratic convention, knowledge of Bush's positions changed on only two issues: health insurance, where the number of people knowing that Bush is not in favor of insuring all children climbed from 31% to 41%, and a ban on soft money, which 44% of respondents knew Bush opposed after the Democratic convention as opposed to 39% before.

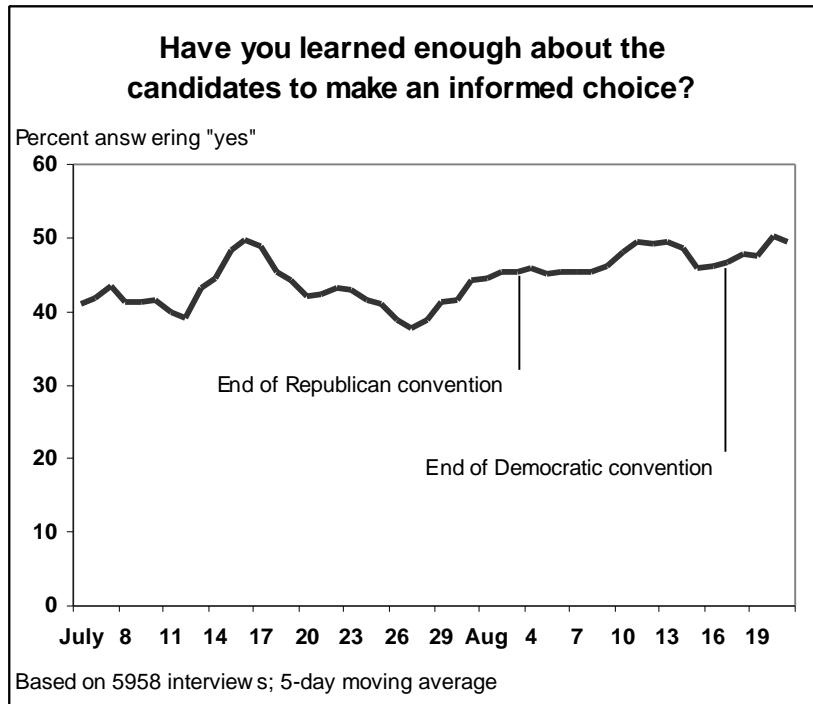
The number of respondents knowing that Bush favors the larger tax cut increased during the Republican convention, but actually declined slightly over the Democratic convention.



While fewer than 30% of voters know that Bush favors giving senior citizens a voucher to cover part of the cost of prescription drugs, nearly half know that Gore favors prescription drug coverage under Medicare. The number knowing Gore's position increased from the period before the convention.

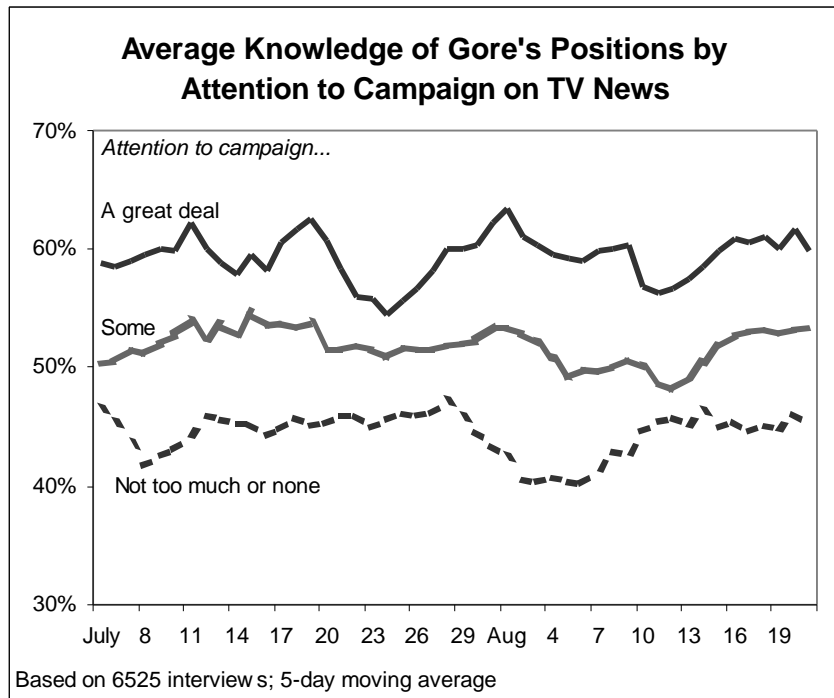


The number of voters feeling they have learned enough about the candidates to make an informed choice continues to climb, albeit slowly. Whereas at the beginning of the year only 20% felt they had learned enough, that number now stands at approximately 50%. The period of the conventions saw an increase of 10% in this figure.

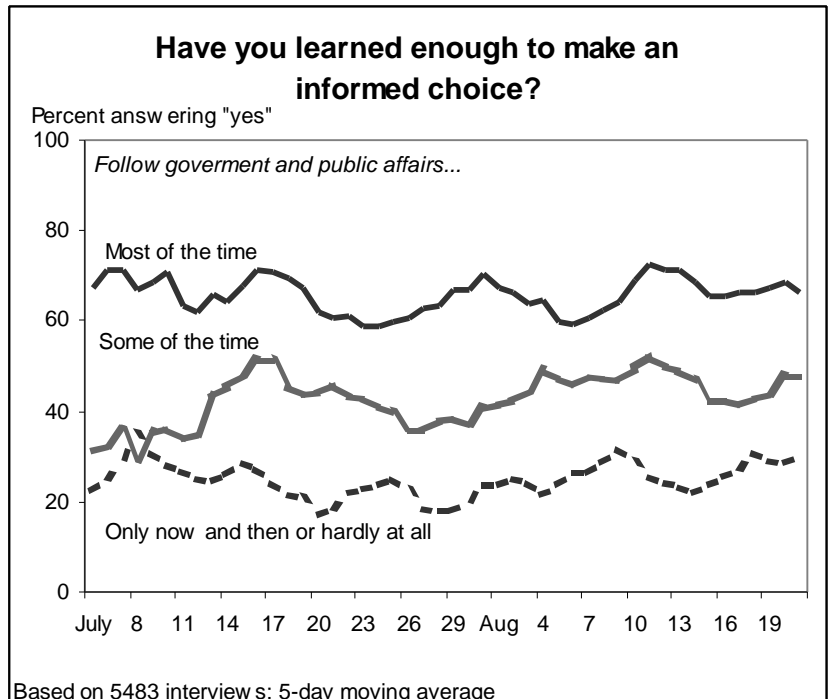


Who learned?

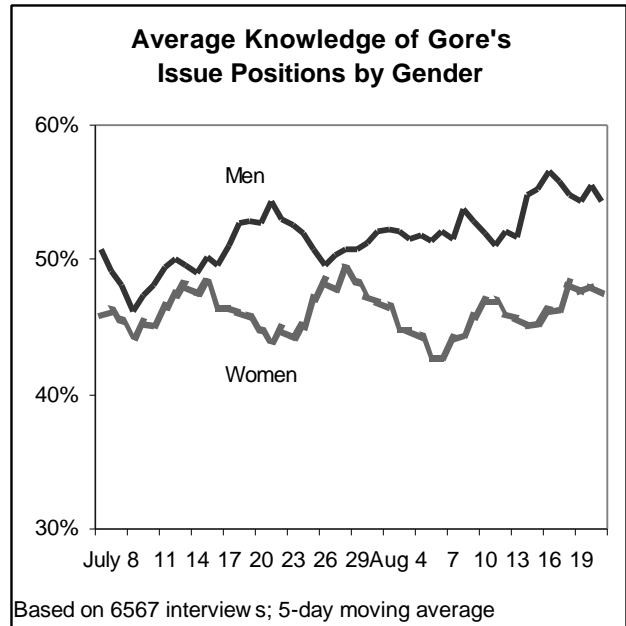
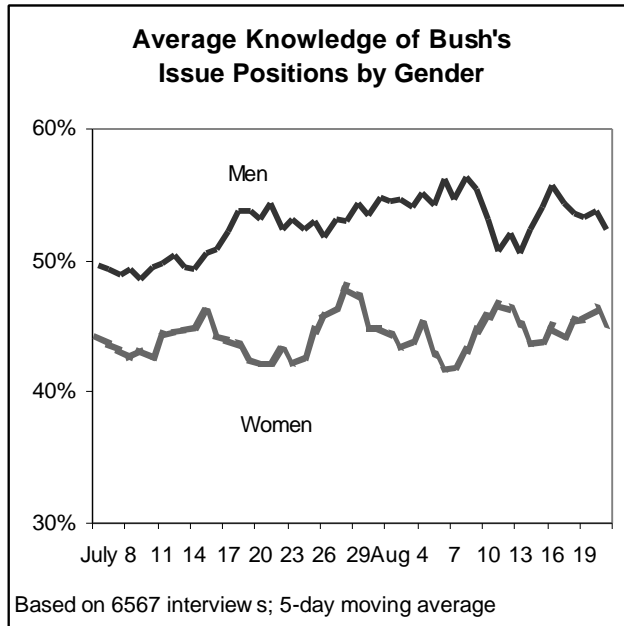
Over the course of both conventions, voters showed learning on the issue positions of the candidate being showcased. This learning occurred not only among those highly attentive to the campaign, but among those paying less attention as well. Furthermore, in the case of both the Republican and Democratic conventions the gains in learning actually began a few days before the convention opened. This result indicates that the learning may be attributed not only to the conventions themselves but to the attendant news coverage, which reached many who did not choose to tune in to the conventions.



Although those who usually pay a great deal of attention to public affairs and those who pay less attention are both feeling more informed as the campaign proceeds, differences between these groups persist, with a large majority of those who pay little attention feeling they have not yet learned enough about the candidates. While two-thirds of those who follow politics most of the time feel that they have sufficient information to cast a vote, only one-third of those who don't follow politics feel the same way.



While men and women both showed learning about the candidates, differences between the genders persist. As we have reported previously, the fact that men score better on political knowledge quizzes is only partially explained by their slightly higher interest in politics.



It is consequently not surprising that men feel somewhat more informed than women. The period of the conventions did however give more women confidence in deciding their votes. While in the week before the Republican convention only 33% of women said they had learned enough about the candidates to make an informed choice, in the days immediately following the Democratic convention 45% said they had learned enough. Men also were more likely to say they had learned enough, but the movement in their case was less sharp: 50% said they had learned enough before the conventions, while 54% said so afterward.

