

**Press Release, April 13, 2004 – “University of Oregon Election Survey”
Oregon Survey Research Laboratory**

UO Survey Shows Narrow Bush Lead Over Kerry

If the 2004 presidential were held right now, the results in the state of Oregon would be as close as they were four years ago, but possibly with the opposite outcome, according to a new poll conducted by the University of Oregon.

The survey of 444 registered voters, conducted between March 19th and April 7th, shows George W. Bush leading presumptive Democratic nominee, John Kerry, 47% to 45%, well within the poll’s margin of error of 4.7%. Only 1% of Oregonians supported Ralph Nader, and 6% remained undecided.

This survey shows an apparent reversal in the race compared to a poll conducted March 4th by Tim Hibbitts for the *Oregonian*, in which Kerry led Bush 45-40%, although the change is within both polls’ margins of error.

According to University of Oregon political scientist and survey researcher Joel Bloom, who directed the survey, “this strongly confirms what has become conventional wisdom, namely that Oregon is a battleground state in the 2004 election, with no clear favorite.”

“While Democrats have carried Oregon in the last four consecutive elections, Gore did so by a margin of fewer than 7,000, votes,” Bloom continued. “Despite a Democratic edge in party registration, the state does seem to be trending Republican, making it a critical state for Democrats to hold onto, and providing Republicans with a golden opportunity for a pick-up.”

Several national polls suggest that while the combination of escalating violence in Iraq and the controversy over the 9/11 Commission have undermined Bush’s support to some extent, Bush’s advertising campaign portraying Kerry as favoring tax increases has increased Kerry’s negative ratings. “Those Bush ads seem to be tailor-made for Oregon’s increasingly anti-tax environment,” Bloom stated.

While a number of national polls show Kerry pulling ahead, Bush leads in “battleground” states like Oregon. “This campaign is just getting started and this survey is just a snapshot in time, not a prediction,” Bloom reminded. “At this point Kerry is not well known to most Oregonians, so it is easy for Bush to affect perceptions of him. The most important thing for John Kerry to do right now is to introduce himself to voters and make a case for why they should support him as an alternative to Bush. He hasn’t done that yet.”

Other findings of the survey include:

- While Kerry leads in the Portland area, 53%-40%, Bush leads elsewhere, 51%-39%;*
- While Bush leads among men, 50%-43%, Kerry leads among women, 46%-44%;
- Kerry leads among independents and political moderates, while Bush retains strong loyalty among Republicans and conservatives;
- Bush leads among 18-44 year old voters, while Kerry leads among voters over 45;
- Kerry leads among college-educated voters, while Bush leads among voters without a college degree;

*When the sample is subdivided into categories, margins of error increase.

How the Survey was Conducted

Between March 19th and April 7th, the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory at the University of Oregon conducted a random-digit-dial telephone survey administered to a statewide sample of Oregonians. In order to ensure the representativeness of the sample, each number was dialed up to 20 times at a variety of times of day, including evenings and weekends. After the survey was completed, the sample was weighted to a number of demographic characteristics to further ensure the sample's representativeness.

The sample size of 444 respondents is consistent with a 4.7% margin of error, meaning that we can be 95% sure that our results do not diverge from the true population value by more than 4.7%. Given the narrow margin shown in the survey, it is important to emphasize the fact that, while we do show a Bush lead, it is possible that this result is a product of sampling error. Survey respondents were asked the following questions:

Are you registered to vote in the State of Oregon?

(Asked of registered voters only) If the 2004 presidential election were being held today, would you vote for George W. Bush, the Republican, or for John Kerry, the Democrat?

(Asked of undecided voters only) Would you say that you lean more toward George W. Bush, the Republican, or John Kerry, the Democrat?

Of the 444 Oregonians who responded to these questions, Bush led by 2% both before and after the follow-up question to undecided voters:

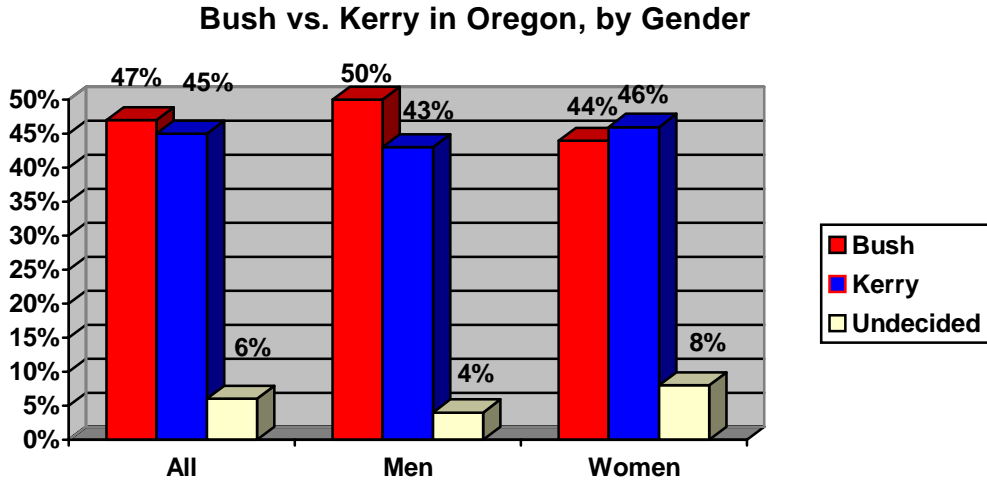
	Presidential Vote	Including Leaners
Bush	43%	47%
Kerry	41%	45%
Nader	1%	1%
Other	1%	1%
Undecided	13%	6%

FAQs:

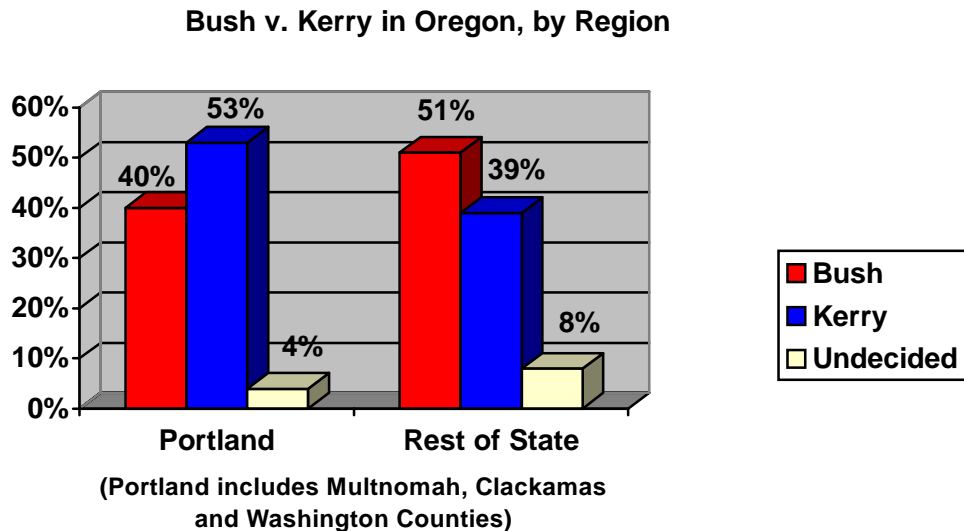
- Q: Why didn't you explicitly mention Ralph Nader as an option?
- A: At this point it is not yet known whether Nader will be on Oregon's ballot. Voting for an independent candidate like Nader (Nader is not seeking the Green Party nomination this year) also requires an extraordinary level of voter commitment, one that we feel is similar to "volunteering" a candidate's name when it has not been specifically mentioned as an option in the survey. When Nader's name is included as an option his support does increase as seen when comparing national polls using both types of wording.
- Q: Why don't you include tenths of percentage points in your data presentation?
- A: Given the 4.7% margin of error in this survey (and similar margins in others) we feel that showing tenths of a point gives a false sense of precision to survey findings. That is why all of our results are shown rounded to the nearest full percentage point.
- Q: Does this mean we are predicting a Bush victory in Oregon?
- A: No. Any survey is a snapshot in time, reflecting public opinion during the time the questions are being asked, and we are a long way from November. In addition, Bush's lead is small and within the margin of error, meaning that while a Bush lead is our best estimate of Oregon's opinion at the moment, we cannot be certain that Bush is really ahead.

Specific Findings

Gender: As is frequently the case in American elections since 1980, we find a “gender gap,” in which men tend more towards Republicans and women tend more toward Democrats. As shown in the figure below, Bush leads by seven points among men, while Kerry leads by two points among women.

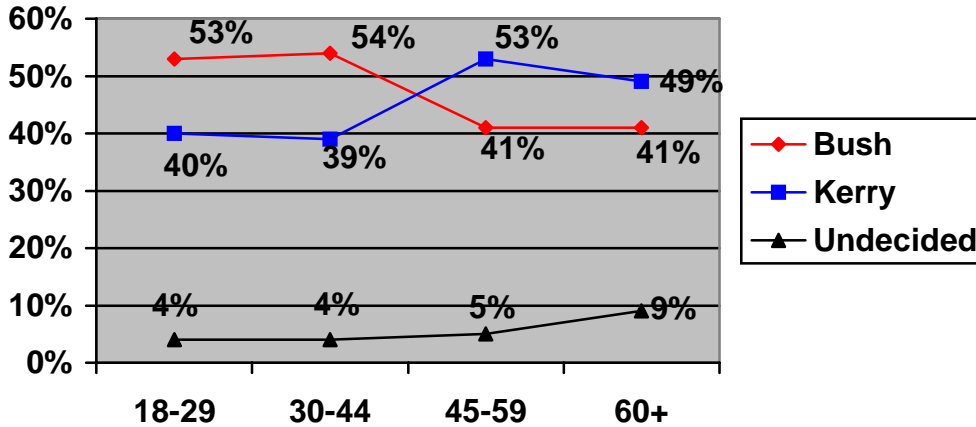


Region. With roughly half of the state’s population residing with the Portland metropolitan area, Portland vs. the rest of the state constitutes Oregon’s most important regional distinction. As is usually the case nationally as well as in Oregon, Democrats tend to do very well in urban areas, with Republicans doing better in more rural areas. Looking at the three counties forming the core of the Portland metropolitan area – Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington – we find Kerry leading 53%-40%. In the rest of the state, however, Bush leads by a similar margin of 51% to 39%. Since nearly 60% of the state’s population lives outside of these three counties, this gives Bush an edge.



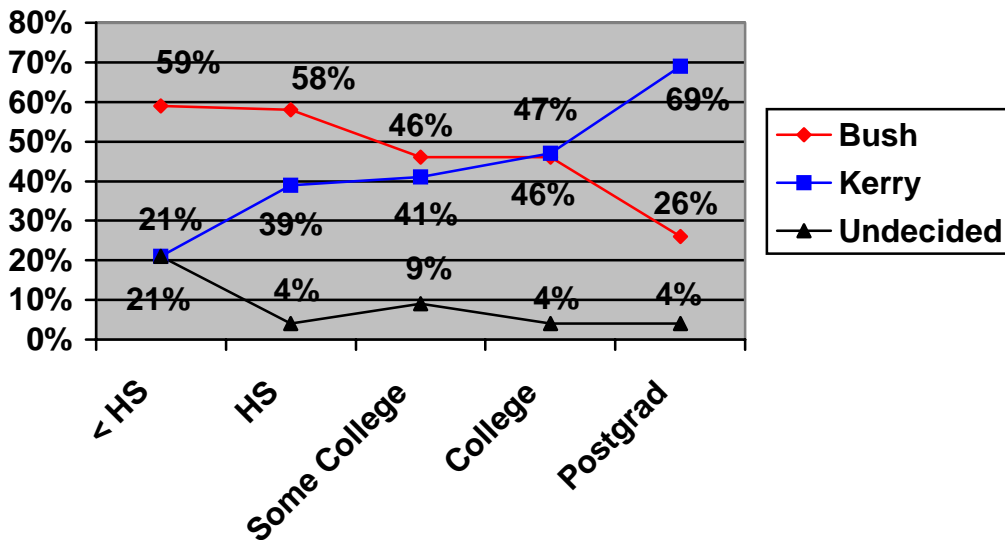
Age. Bush runs very strongly among younger voters through the age of 44, while Kerry leads among voters over 45.

Bush v. Kerry in Oregon, by Age



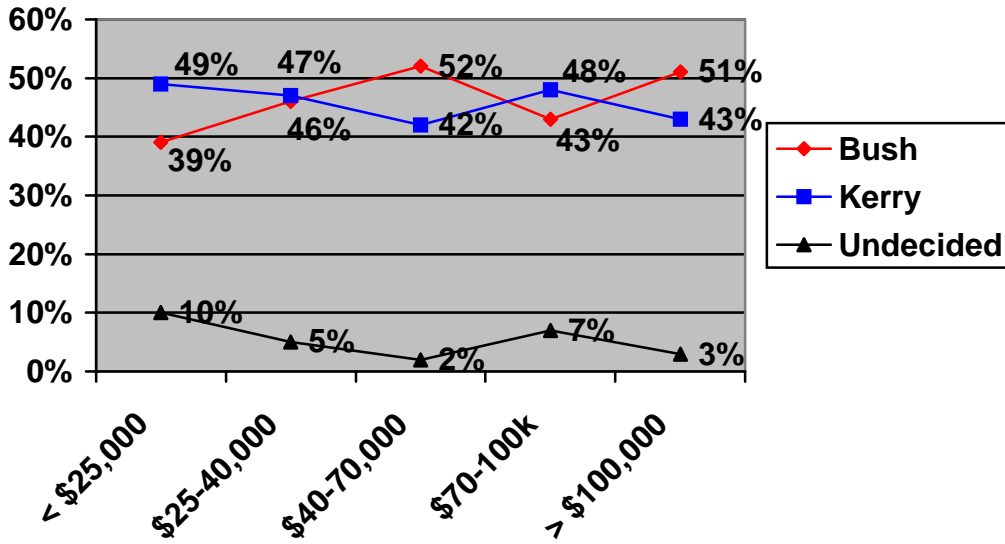
Education. Our data show a clear relationship between vote and education, with Bush doing best among the least educated voters, and Kerry doing the best among the most educated. While Bush leads in all educational groups up to some college and associate's degrees, Kerry leads only among those with college degrees and post-graduate education (a surprisingly large category in Oregon).

Bush v. Kerry in Oregon, by Education



Income. Somewhat surprisingly, we do not find a clear relationship between income and vote. While Kerry does fare best among the lowest income category and Bush does well among the highest, consistent with typical trends in which Republican vote increases with income, the trend is not consistent in the intermediate categories. Bush does best among middle class voters earning between \$40,000 and \$70,000, while Kerry actually leads among upper middle-class voters earning between \$70,000 and \$100,000.

Bush v. Kerry in Oregon, by Income

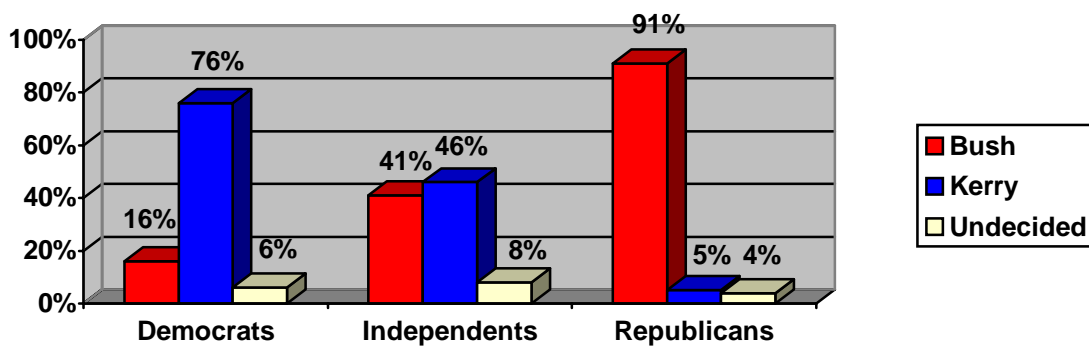


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Partisanship. It is typical in election polls to find high levels of party loyalty in voting and this survey is no exception. However, in this regard the edge clearly goes to Bush. While Kerry leads among Democrats 76% to 16%, Bush leads among Republicans 91% to 5%. Bush's ability to obtain the support of 16% of Democrats, combined with Kerry's inability to draw more than 5% support from Republicans is a very strong showing for Bush. This is somewhat mitigated by the fact that more Oregonians still identify as Democrats than as Republicans.

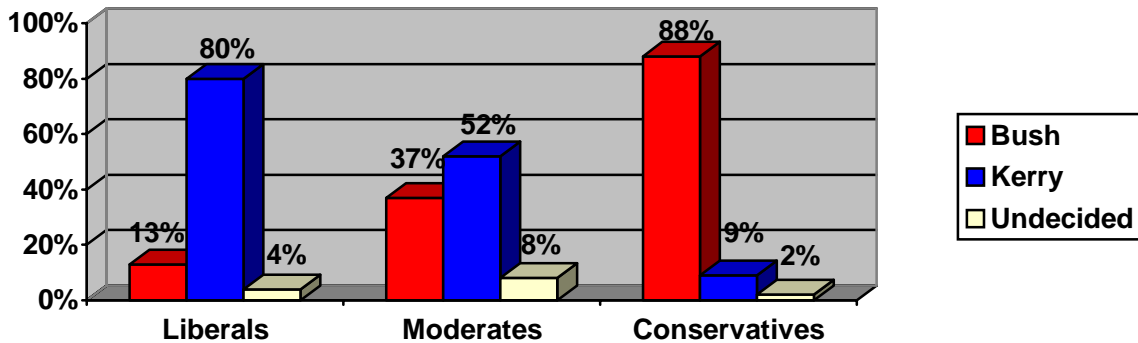
Independents provide better news for Kerry, providing him with a 46% to 41% margin. It is almost always the case that the candidate who carries a state is the one who receives the most votes from independents. This suggests that if Kerry can shore up his support among Democrats, while maintaining his appeal to independents, he will have a good chance of winning the state.

Bush. v. Kerry in Oregon, by Party



Ideology. Ideology paints a picture very similar to partisanship in most regards. As with partisanship, Bush does a better job of gaining the loyalty of conservatives than Kerry does with liberals. While Bush leads among conservatives 88% to 9%, Kerry leads among liberals by 80% to 13%. When one adds in the fact that conservatives outnumber liberals in Oregon, Bush's advantage is compounded. As with partisanship, Kerry's silver lining comes with the intermediate category of moderates. This is the single largest category in Oregon, and here Kerry leads by a comfortable margin of 52% to 37%.

Bush v. Kerry in Oregon, by Ideology



Conclusion

The fact that a Republican would be even narrowly ahead in a statewide survey in Oregon is an indication of how volatile the political landscape in this state, and nationwide, has become. After Michael Dukakis' landslide defeat in 1988, for example, most Democratic Party strategists have tended to assume that any state Dukakis carried should be safely in the Democratic column. Yet, the 2000 election showed that this was not the case.

That year, Al Gore lost West Virginia, a Dukakis state in 1988. Similarly, Gore won by razor-thin margins in several other states carried by Dukakis and every Democrat since, including Oregon, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. At the same time, Gore won several states that Dukakis lost, and nearly won in Florida, which no Democrat has carried since 1976.

In this context, we find that Oregon has shifted away from the Democratic column, but is a long way from becoming a Republican state, as the table below indicates. In other words, Oregon has gone from being a state the Democrats could count on to one that they need to work hard for and run a strong risk of losing.

Partisan Trends in Oregon's Presidential Voting, 1988-2004.

	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004?
Democrat	51.3%	42.5%	47.2%	47.1%	47%
Republican	46.6%	32.5%	39.1%	46.6%	45%
Dem. Margin	4.7%	10%	8.1%	0.5%	-2%

Because our survey concluded on April 7th it is already possible that public opinion may have shifted since then; a number of national polls have shown Kerry establishing or increasing a lead over Bush over the last several days, likely due to the increasingly bad news from Iraq. And National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice's appearance before the 9/11 Commission was not the slam-dunk Republicans were hoping it would be. Because of the Iraq stories and the 9/11 commission controversies, Bush was not able to benefit from the strong jobs growth in March as much as he otherwise might have. On the other hand, Bush's advertisements portraying Kerry as favoring tax increases have been running frequently in the State and as mentioned earlier, those advertisements do seem to be an effective way of hitting the anti-tax nerve that is increasingly sensitive here, shown most recently by the resounding defeat (58%-42%) of Ballot Measure 30, which would have temporarily increased some taxes in order to prevent another round of budget cuts.

Because John Kerry is not yet well known in Oregon, he runs the risk of allowing Bush to determine the public's image of him. Bush has already managed to portray Kerry as a "flip-flopper" and a tax increaser at a time when Kerry has not yet fully developed his public persona in a more positive way for most voters.

But it is very early and the best guess is that by the time of the election, most voters will have developed a fairly strong sense of who Kerry is. Oregon's seven electoral votes are truly up for grabs.