

## **McCain Shows Crossover Appeal, But Many Don't Know his Views**

While public interest in John McCain has soared in the last few weeks, the sale is hardly closed: Two-thirds of Americans still feel they know relatively little about his positions on specific issues, and most have trouble placing him ideologically.

Seven in 10 Americans think of McCain either as a moderate (44 percent), a liberal (14 percent) or can't place him at all ideologically (14 percent more). Only 28 percent identify him as a conservative, which is what McCain calls himself.

What's John McCain?			
Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Don't Know
28%	44	14	14

A mere four percent think of McCain as "very" conservative – this for a senator with a lifetime rating of 86 (out of 100) from both the American Conservative Union and the National Right to Life Committee, and a nine from the liberal Americans for Democratic Action.

Indeed, these scores aside, just 16 percent of Americans say McCain is "too conservative" for them, compared to 33 percent who say George W. Bush is too conservative, and about 35 percent who say both Bill Bradley and Al Gore are too liberal.

POSITION – McCain's moderate image has given him difficulties winning support from core Republicans, both in the primaries to date and in this national ABC News/Nightline poll. A tepid 59 percent of Republicans and only 46 percent of conservatives say they'd seriously consider supporting McCain for president, far below their interest in Bush.

At the same time, McCain shows more potential for cross-party and cross-ideological support than any of the other current candidates. Four in 10 Democrats and liberals alike say they'd seriously consider supporting him. Far fewer Democrats or liberals would consider Bush, and far fewer Republicans or conservatives would consider Gore or Bradley.

	Would seriously consider:			
	McCain	Bush	Gore	Bradley
Conservatives	46%	71%	21%	19%
Moderates	56	42	51	28
Liberals	39	20	66	38

Republicans	59%	84%	10%	16%
Independents	51	42	42	33
Democrats	41	23	72	30

In a direct measure of the positive buzz surrounding the Straight Talk Express, 51 percent of Americans say that the more they hear about McCain the more they like him; that considerably outstrips the 32 percent who like him less. His score on this measure is about 10 points better among moderates and liberals than it is among conservatives.

The more I hear about McCain...	
...the more I like him	51%
...the less I like him	32

XOVER - There's no guarantee this crossover appeal will hold. In national polls last year, George W. Bush did unusually well with independents and Democrats. But his edge has been sharply diminished recently, as more people began paying closer attention.

McCain, too, could face difficulty once his record is better known. That's because 59 percent in this poll say a presidential candidate's specific positions on the issues are more important to them than his personal qualities. And, as noted above, 66 percent say they don't know much yet about McCain's positions (albeit down from 83 percent in October).

ISSUES – Majorities do know his positions on some key issues: Sixty-one percent say correctly that McCain favors strengthening Social Security before cutting taxes. And 59 percent say he favors stronger patients' rights (McCain backs the right to sue HMOs).

On gun control and abortion, however, majorities of Americans either misstate McCain's views, or don't know them:

-Six in 10 are unaware of McCain's opposition to legal abortion, including 30 percent who think he supports current law and a third who don't know his position. (He opposes abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the mother's life is endangered.)

-Seven in 10 are unaware of McCain's views on gun control, including 39 percent who think he supports stricter gun control and 34 percent who don't know. (McCain has opposed most gun control legislation, including the Brady Bill requiring background checks on gun buyers).

On another issue, 56 percent believe McCain supports higher federal spending on education; he does support school vouchers, charter schools and education savings accounts. Finally, just two in 10 think he opposes organized prayer in the public schools, and 36 percent are unsure. McCain favors voluntary school prayer.

GAP – McCain does face a gender gap, at least partly the result of the greater likelihood of women to identify themselves as Democrats. While 56 percent of men say they'd seriously consider supporting McCain, this falls to 43 percent among women.

METHODOLOGY – This poll was conducted by telephone Feb. 24 among a random national sample of 509 adults. The results have an error margin of 4.5 percentage points. Fieldwork by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet, at: <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

Here are the full results (\*= less than 0.5 percent):

1. For each candidate I name, please tell me if you would seriously consider voting for that person for president, or if you would not seriously consider him. First is... (McCain/Bush/Gore/Bradley)

2/24/00:

	Would consider	Would not consider	No opin.
John McCain	49	46	5
George W. Bush	47	51	2
Al Gore	44	55	1
Bill Bradley	27	69	4

2. Do you think (McCain/Bush/Gore/Bradley) views on most issues are too liberal for you, too conservative for you, or just about right? How about (McCain/Bush/Gore/Bradley) ...

2/24/00

	Too liberal	Too conservative	About right	No opinion
McCain's	20	16	49	15
Bush's	12	33	43	12
Gore's	36	11	43	9
Bradley's	35	14	28	23

Trend (where available):

	Too liberal	Too conservative	About right	No opinion
Gore:				
2/24/00	36	11	43	9
9/2/99	35	12	46	7
3/14/99	31	10	44	15
Bush:				
2/24/00	12	33	43	12
9/2/99	10	20	58	13
3/14/99	7	20	53	20

4. Which of these two views best describes yours: (The more I hear about McCain, the more I like him); or, (the more I hear about McCain, the less I like him).

McCain:

	More I like him	Less I like him	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
2/24/00	51	32	14	3

Compare to Perot:

	More I like him	Less I like him	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
11/11/93	30	59	8	3
5/23/93	50	42	7	2
10/1/92 RV	25	57	14	4
7/8/92	45	45	6	4
6/28/92	39	39	13	9

5. Which is more important to you in choosing a candidate for president - his personal qualities or his positions on specific issues?

	Personal qualities	Positions on issues	Both (vol.)	No opin.
2/24/00	22	59	18	1

6. How much do you feel you know about McCain's positions on specific issues - a great deal, a good amount, only some, or little or none?

	-Great deal/Good amount-			-Only some/Little-none-			No opin.
	NET	Great	Good amt	NET	Some	Little	
2/24/00	32	6	26	66	40	27	2
10/31/99	16	4	12	83	22	60	1

7. Do you think of McCain as very liberal, liberal, moderate, conservative or very conservative?

	-----Liberal-----				-----Conservative-----			No opin.
	NET	Very	Liberal	Moderate	NET	Conservative	Very	
2/24/00	14	2	13	44	28	24	4	14

8. As far as you know, does McCain support or oppose (read item). How about (next item) - as far as you know does he support or oppose that?

2/24/00:

	Supports	Opposes	No opin.
a. Current laws on legal abortion	30	39	32
b. Stricter gun control laws	39	27	34
c. Allowing organized prayer in public schools	43	21	36
d. Strengthening the Social Security system before cutting taxes	61	14	26
e. Laws protecting patients' rights in the health care system	59	9	32
f. Higher federal spending on education	56	16	28

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