

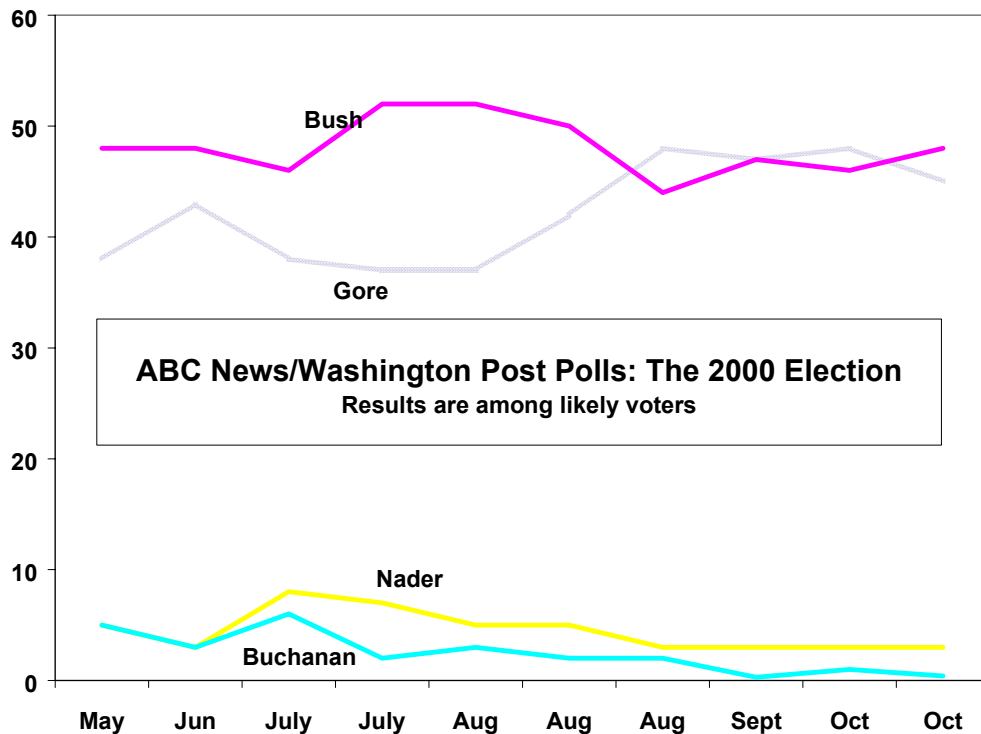
## Bush Shows Improvement; The Race Remains Close

George W. Bush found some traction in the past week, gaining on key issues, painting his opponent as a big-government Democrat and persuading voters he offers a "fresh start." Yet Al Gore still leads on experience and empathy – and the race remains very close.

Bush leads Gore by 21 points in public trust to hold down the size of government, his best advantage on any issue. And 54 percent of registered voters think Bush represents a "fresh start" for the country, compared to 33 percent who say that of Gore. Bush employed both those themes at the first presidential debate, and since.

**THE RACE** – In terms of vote preferences there's a slight shift toward Bush in this poll, fueled by Republicans becoming a bit more energized to vote. Among likely voters, Bush has 48 percent support, Gore 45 percent. It was 46-48 last week and 47-47 a month ago.

	Gore	Bush	Nader	Buchanan
10/9	45%	48	3	*
10/1	48	46	3	1
9/6	47	47	3	*



**THE ISSUES** – Conventional wisdom held that Gore would benefit from a debate on the issues. But after the first round, it's Bush who's gained. He's erased Gore's lead on education and Medicare, improved his own position on taxes and even narrowed the gap on "helping the middle class."

On education, one of the public's top priorities, Gore led by 11 points a week ago, but it's now Bush +1. That's even though 55 percent of registered voters oppose government-funded vouchers, which are part of Bush's education plan.

On helping the middle class and handling Medicare and prescription drugs, Bush has trimmed Gore's 18-point lead to single digits. Gore has held his single-digit lead on Social Security – arguably smaller than expected on this traditionally Democratic issue.

TAXES - Gore's efforts to paint Bush's tax plan as a giveaway to the wealthy don't look to have resonated. Bush now leads Gore by 10 points in trust to hold down taxes, compared to Bush +2 last week. A sizable group of voters thinks Bush cares more about serving the wealthy (41 percent), but that hasn't budged in the last month.

Indeed, the public now splits evenly between the Bush and Gore tax plans. Forty-eight percent prefer a large, across-the board tax cut for all Americans (i.e., Bush-style), and 48 percent prefer a smaller tax cut targeted to lower and middle-income people (i.e., Gore-style). The Gore plan had the edge a month ago, 53-45 percent.

	Advantage among registered voters	
	10/9	10/1
Holding down taxes	Bush +10	Bush + 2
Improving education	Bush + 1	Gore +11
Handling Medicare/prescription drugs (9/6)	Gore + 2	Gore +18
Protecting Social Security (9/6)	Gore + 7	Gore + 8
Helping the middle class	Gore + 7	Gore +18

QUALITIES – Substantially more voters continue to identify Gore as having the right experience, and he still leads on "understanding the problems of average Americans." He's also maintained his relatively newfound competitiveness on leadership.

The Bush campaign hasn't gained any new adherents to its suggestion that Gore exaggerates or speaks untruths. But the charge does get some credence: Sixty-one percent of registered voters do say Gore would do or say anything to get elected. But 53 percent say Bush would, too.

The prospect of a "fresh start" looks to give Bush a better advantage. It's the reverse side of Gore's advantage in experience: While his two terms as vice-president may give him the better resume, they also prevent him from credibly claiming to be an agent of change.

	Ratings of personal qualities		
	Gore, yes	Bush, yes	Gap
Right experience	74%	58%	Gore +16
Understand your problems	60	50	Gore +10
Will say anything to win	61	53	Gore +8
Strong leader	55	62	Bush +7
Give country a fresh start	33	54	Bush +21

GOVERNMENT SIZE – As noted, Bush holds the upper hand in the size-of-government battle. Nearly seven in 10 registered voters think Gore favors "larger government with

many services." By contrast, nearly six in 10 say they personally prefer "smaller government with fewer services," and six in 10 think Bush does, as well.

Bush has gained ground here. The number of people who think Gore favors larger government has gained 10 points since midsummer, and the number who think Bush favors smaller government likewise has grown.

	Smaller government	Larger government
Bush favors:		
Today	60%	23
7/23/00	51	33
Gore favors:		
Today	16%	69
7/23/00	26	59

GROUPS - Bush's gains on issues may be helping boost his prospects in some voter groups. He's doing better among older Americans (Medicare/drugs) and he leads Gore among parents with school-age children (education).

Among women, Gore's lead is down from 18 points last week to nine now, with most of the change coming among white women. Men still favor Bush by a large margin, 17 points. This makes the gender gap about twice its average in the last five elections.

Even with Bush's advances in these groups, the race is deadlocked among independents, ultimately the key swing voter group in this or any election. Bush is supported by 44 percent of independents to Gore's 43 percent, similar to where it was a week ago.

In fact vote preferences among Democrats, independents and Republicans haven't changed; instead more Republicans are showing up as likely voters. In last week's poll there were six points more Democrats than Republicans among likely voters; in this week's poll, there's one point more. (The average in the last three presidential elections was three points.)

A smaller but critical group is changeable voters – those who say they don't have a strong preference and may change their minds, or are outright undecided. They account for 10 percent of all likely voters, and this week they split evenly between Gore and Bush.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 6-9, 2000. The horse-race results are based on a random sample of 826 likely voters, estimating a 50 percent turnout. The issues questions are based on interviews with 965 registered voters. The results have a three-point error margin. Field work by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Daniel Merkle.

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 (\* is less than 0.5 percent.):

3. The candidates in November's presidential election are (Al Gore and Joseph Lieberman, the Democrats,) (George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, the Republicans), (Ralph Nader and Winona LaDuke of the Green Party) and (Pat Buchanan and Ezola Foster of the Reform Party). If the election were being held today, who would you vote for - (Gore), (Bush), (Nader) or (Buchanan)?

Net Leaned Vote, Likely Voters:

	Gore	Bush	Buchanan	Nader	None (vol.)	Other (vol.)	Wouldn't vote (vol.)	No op.
10/9/00	45	48	*	3	*	1	*	2
10/1/00	48	46	1	3	1	*	*	2
9/6/00	47	47	*	3	1	1	0	2
8/20/00	48	44	2	3	1	*	*	1
8/10/00	42	50	2	5	*	*	*	1
8/6/00	37	52	3	5	*	0	*	2
7/29/00	37	52	2	7	1	1	*	1
7/23/00	38	46	6	8	1	*	1	1
6/11/00	43	48	3	3	1	*	*	2
5/10/00	38	48	5	5	2	0	*	2

Net Leaned Vote, Registered Voters:

	Gore	Bush	Buchanan	Nader	None (vol.)	Other (vol.)	Wouldn't vote (vol.)	No op.
10/9/00	46	44	1	4	1	*	*	3
10/1/00	47	44	2	3	1	1	1	3
9/6/00	45	45	1	3	2	*	1	3
8/20/00	46	44	3	4	*	1	1	2
8/10/00	40	48	2	5	1	1	1	2
8/6/00	37	51	4	5	1	*	1	2
7/29/00	37	49	4	7	1	1	1	1
7/23/00	39	44	6	7	1	*	1	1
6/11/00	41	47	4	4	2	*	1	2
5/10/00	39	45	5	5	2	0	1	3

Net Leaned Vote, General Population:

	Gore	Bush	Buchanan	Nader	None (vol.)	Other (vol.)	Wouldn't vote (vol.)	No op.
8/6/00	36	49	4	5	2	*	3	2
7/29/00	35	48	4	7	1	1	2	2
7/23/00	38	43	6	7	2	*	1	2
6/11/00	42	44	4	3	2	*	2	2
5/10/00	38	44	5	5	2	*	3	3

4. Do you support (Gore/Bush/Buchanan/Nader) strongly, or not strongly?

10/9/00

	Strongly	Not strongly	No opin.
Registered Voters:			
Gore	74	24	2
Bush	73	24	3

Gore/Bush Trend:

	-----Gore-----			-----Bush-----		
	Strngly	Not	No opin.	Strngly	Not	No opin.
Registered Voters:						
10/9/00	74	24	2	73	24	3
10/1/00	72	24	4	76	21	3
9/6/00	75	24	1	73	25	2
8/20/00	74	24	2	72	26	2
8/10/00	72	26	2	72	27	1
7/23/00	56	41	3	65	33	2
General Population:						
7/23/00	52	46	3	63	35	2
2/27/00	58	40	2	54	44	2
2/6/00	52	45	3	57	40	2
1/16/00	51	45	3	53	44	3

12/15/99	50	46	4	58	39	3
10/31/99*	35	65	*	37	62	1
9/2/99	38	61	1	43	56	1
3/14/99	38	62	*	40	58	2

\*10/99 and previous: "strongly or only somewhat"

5. Will you definitely vote for (Gore/Bush/Nader/Buchanan) in November, or is there a chance you could change your mind and vote for someone else? Is there a good chance you'll change your mind or would you say it's pretty unlikely?

10/9/00

	Definitely vote	-----Change mind----- Good chance	Unlikely	No opinion
Gore	71	10	15	4
Bush	72	11	14	3

Trend:

Gore:

	Definitely vote	-----Change mind----- Good chance	Unlikely	No opinion
Registered Voters:				
10/9/00	71	10	15	4
10/1/00	68	15	15	2
9/6/00	69	11	18	2
8/20/00	71	9	18	2
8/6/00	65	14	18	3
General Population:				
8/6/00	62	16	20	2
7/23/00	58	15	26	2

Bush:

	Definitely vote	-----Change mind----- Good chance	Unlikely	No opinion
Registered Voters:				
10/9/00	72	11	14	3
10/1/00	71	14	13	2
9/6/00	70	13	16	1
8/20/00	68	12	20	1
8/6/00	68	14	16	1
General Population				
8/6/00	65	15	18	2
7/23/00	63	14	22	2

6. If the only candidates were (Gore) and (Bush), who would you vote for?

Net Leaned Vote, Likely Voters:

	Gore	Bush	Neither (vol.)	Other (vol.)	Wouldn't vote (vol.)	No opin.
10/9/00	46	50	1	*	1	1
10/1/00*	51	46	1	*	*	2
9/6/00	47	49	1	*	1	1
8/20/00**	53	45	*	2	1	1
8/10/00***	44	53	2	*	*	1
8/6/00	41	55	2	*	*	2
7/29/00	43	54	2	1	*	1
7/23/00	45	51	3	*	1	1
6/11/00	45	51	1	*	0	2
5/10/00	44	50	2	1	*	2
4/2/00	50	46	2	1	*	2
3/11/00	46	50	2	1	*	1
2/27/00	44	50	2	1	1	2
2/6/00	44	52	2	*	2	*
1/16/00	42	53	1	1	1	2

\*10/1/00 and after: Asked only of those who said Nader, Buchanan, other or don't know in the four-way match-up. The Gore and Bush responses are taken from the four-way.

\*\*8/20/00 and before: If the election for president in November 2000 were

being held today, and the candidates were (Al Gore and Joseph Lieberman, the Democrats), and (George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, the Republicans), for whom would you vote?

\*\*\*Added v.p. names

Net Leaned Vote, Registered Voters:

	Gore	Bush	Neither (vol.)	Other (vol.)	Wouldn't vote (vol.)	No opin.
10/9/00	46	49	2	*	1	2
10/1/00*	51	44	1	*	1	2
9/6/00	49	46	2	*	2	1
8/20/00**	50	45	2	*	1	2
8/10/00***	43	52	2	1	1	1
8/6/00	40	54	3	*	1	2
7/29/00	42	53	2	1	1	2
7/23/00	45	48	3	*	1	2
6/11/00	45	49	3	*	1	2
5/10/00	44	49	3	*	1	3
4/2/00	47	46	2	*	2	2
3/11/00	48	45	2	1	2	3
2/27/00	44	50	2	1	1	2
2/6/00	45	50	2	*	2	1
1/16/00	42	52	1	1	2	2
12/15/99	41	55	1	*	2	1
10/31/99	39	55	2	*	1	2

\*10/1/00 and after: Asked only of those who said Nader, Buchanan, other or don't know in the four-way match-up. The Gore and Bush responses are taken from the four-way.

\*\*8/20/00 and before: If the election for president in November 2000 were being held today, and the candidates were (Al Gore and Joseph Lieberman, the Democrats), and (George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, the Republicans), for whom would you vote?

\*\*\*Added v.p. names

Net Leaned Vote, General Population:

	Gore	Bush	Neither (vol.)	Other (vol.)	Wouldn't vote (vol.)	No opin.
8/6/00	39	53	4	*	2	2
7/29/00	40	52	3	1	2	2
7/23/00	44	47	4	*	2	2
6/11/00	44	49	3	*	2	2
5/10/00	43	49	3	*	2	3
4/2/00	45	47	3	*	2	2
3/11/00	48	45	2	1	3	2
2/27/00	44	50	2	1	2	2
2/6/00	45	49	3	*	2	1
1/16/00	41	51	2	*	3	2
12/15/99	39	55	2	*	3	1
10/31/99	39	55	2	*	2	2
9/2/99	37	56	3	*	3	2
8/22/99	37	49	5	2	3	3
6/6/99	40	53	3	1	1	3
3/14/99	41	54	1	*	2	2

Unleaned, General Population:

	Gore	Bush	Neither (vol.)	Wouldn't vote (vol.)	No opin.
10/25/98	34	45	7	1	13
8/21/98	41	43	6	2	7
1/19/98	40	45	5	2	7
9/23/97	35	40	12	4	9

7. Which presidential candidate, (Gore) or (Bush), do you trust to do a better job on each of these issues? First is (INSERT ITEM)

10/9/00

	Gore	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
A. Holding taxes down	39	49	1	6	5

B. Improving education and the schools	43	44	3	5	5
C. Protecting the Social Security system	48	41	3	4	5
D. Holding down the size of government	33	54	1	6	7
E. Helping the middle class	49	42	1	5	4
F. Handling Medicare and prescription drug coverage	45	43	*	6	6

Trend (where available):

A. Holding taxes down

	Gore	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
Registered Voters:					
10/9/00	39	49	1	6	5
10/1/00	43	45	2	8	3
9/6/00	41	47	2	7	3
8/20/00	42	47	3	5	3
7/23/00	35	51	3	5	5
General Population:					
7/23/00	36	49	3	6	7
4/2/00	35	51	3	5	6
3/11/00	41	41	2	12	4
10/31/99	34	53	2	6	4

B. Improving education and the schools

	Gore	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
Registered Voters:					
10/9/00	43	44	3	5	5
10/1/00	50	39	3	5	2
9/6/00	50	38	5	3	4
8/20/00	51	39	2	4	3
7/23/00	44	44	4	4	5
General Population:					
7/23/00	43	43	4	4	6
4/2/00	48	39	4	4	6
3/11/00	44	44	4	5	3
10/31/99	41	45	6	3	4

C. Protecting the Social Security system

	Gore	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
Registered Voters:					
10/9/00	48	41	3	4	5
9/6/00	48	40	4	4	4
8/20/00	48	37	2	6	7
7/23/00	42	43	4	4	6
General Population:					
7/23/00	43	42	4	5	7
6/11/00	43	40	1	8	8
5/10/00	46	38	2	6	8
4/2/00	43	43	4	4	6
3/11/00	48	35	3	8	6
10/31/99	42	45	3	3	6

D. No trend.

E. Helping the middle class

	Gore	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
Registered Voters:					

10/9/00	49	42	1	5	4
10/1/00	54	36	2	5	3
9/6/00	52	38	1	4	5
8/20/00	52	40	1	4	2
10/31/99	44	41	4	6	5
General Population:					
10/31/99	44	42	3	6	5

F. Handling Medicare and prescription drug coverage

	Gore	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
Registered Voters:					
10/9/00	45	43	*	6	6
9/6/00*	53	35	2	4	7
5/10/00*	48	35	2	6	8
3/11/00**	49	37	4	6	4
10/31/99**	47	42	2	3	6

\*Handling the issue of prescription drug benefits for the elderly

\*\*Protecting the Medicare system

8. Please tell me whether the following statement applies to (Gore/Bush), or not?

10/9/00

	-----Gore-----			-----Bush-----		
	Yes	No	op.	Yes	No	op.
A. He is a strong leader	55	39	7	62	33	5
B. He understands the problems of people like you	60	36	4	50	44	6
C. He has the right kind of experience to be president	74	23	3	58	38	4
D. He'd give the country a fresh start	33	63	4	54	42	4
E. He will say or do anything to get elected	61	35	4	53	43	4

Trend where available:

A. He is a strong leader

	-----Gore-----			-----Bush-----		
	Yes	No	No op.	Yes	No	No op.
Registered Voters:						
10/9/00	55	39	7	62	33	5
9/6/00	54	43	4	65	28	7
8/20/00	56	39	5	65	29	5
8/10/00	47	48	5	67	29	5
7/23/00	46	49	5	61	33	6
General Population:						
7/23/00	48	47	5	62	32	5
6/11/00	48	45	6	65	30	6
4/2/00	54	39	7	68	27	5
3/11/00	55	40	5	63	31	6
2/27/00	45	50	5	62	32	6
2/6/00	46	48	5	65	30	7
1/16/00	41	53	6	65	28	7
12/15/99	43	51	7	67	26	7
10/31/99	47	47	6	77	18	5
9/2/99	38	52	10	70	18	12
6/13/99	39	51	9	NA	NA	NA
3/14/99	41	47	12	68	13	20

B. He understands the problems of people like you

	-----Gore-----			-----Bush-----		
	Yes	No	No op.	Yes	No	No op.
Registered Voters:						
10/9/00	60	36	4	50	44	6

9/6/00	54	42	4	47	49	4
8/20/00	62	33	4	50	46	5
7/23/00	51	46	3	44	51	5
General Population:						
7/23/00	49	46	4	44	51	5
6/11/00	53	42	6	48	47	5
4/2/00	54	40	6	48	46	6
3/11/00	55	39	5	47	47	6
2/27/00	49	47	5	43	51	6
2/6/00	50	47	4	43	52	5
1/16/00	46	47	7	46	49	6
12/15/99	46	49	6	47	46	7
10/31/99	57	38	4	54	39	7
9/2/99	47	45	8	50	39	11
6/13/99	44	44	12	NA	NA	NA
3/14/99	48	41	11	52	27	21

C. He has the right kind of experience to be president

	-----Gore-----			-----Bush-----		
	Yes	No	No op.	Yes	No	No op.
Registered Voters:						
10/9/00	74	23	3	58	38	4
9/6/00	76	22	1	59	36	5
8/20/00	74	23	2	61	35	4
7/23/00	69	25	6	62	33	4
General Population:						
7/23/00	67	27	6	61	33	6
1/16/00	66	30	4	61	33	6
12/15/99	69	27	5	62	32	6
10/31/99	70	27	3	66	28	6
9/2/99	69	27	4	61	30	9

D. No trend.

E. He will say or do anything to get elected.

	-----Gore-----			-----Bush-----		
	Yes	No	No op.	Yes	No	No op.
Registered Voters:						
10/9/00	61	35	4	53	43	4
9/6/00	60	38	2	57	40	3
7/23/00	60	36	4	60	36	4
General Population:						
7/23/00	61	35	4	59	36	5

9. Which of these would you prefer: (A large tax-cut plan that provides an across-the-board tax cut for everyone), or (A smaller tax cut plan that provides targeted tax cuts mainly for lower and middle-income people).

	Large cut	Smaller cut	No opinion
Registered Voters:			
10/9/00	48	48	4
9/6/00	45	53	2

10. I have a question about the debate between (Gore) and (Bush) last Tuesday night. From what you've seen, heard or read about it - who, in your opinion, won the debate?

	Gore	Bush	Tie	No opinion
Registered Voters:				
10/9/00	33	27	24	16
10/3/00*	42	39	13	5

\*Among those who watched the debate.

11. Would you say you favor smaller government with fewer services, or larger government with many services?

	Smaller govt. fewer services	Larger govt. many services	No opinion
Registered Voters:			
10/9/00	58	32	10
10/1/00	58	33	9
7/23/00	61	32	7
General Population:			
7/23/00	59	34	7
4/2/00	56	38	7
8/16/98	59	35	6
8/5/96	63	32	5
1996 Rep Dels	98	1	1
Dem Dels	33	45	22
7/8/92	55	38	7
1992 Rep Dels	97	2	1
Dem Dels	34	45	20
1988 Rep Dels	90	4	6
Dem Dels	18	62	21
1984 Dem Dels	23	58	19

12. Do you think (Gore/Bush) favors smaller government with fewer services, or larger government with many services?

	-----Gore-----			-----Bush-----		
	Smaller	Larger	No opin.	Smaller	Larger	No opin.
Registered Voters:						
10/9/00	16	69	15	60	23	17
7/23/00	26	59	15	51	33	16

13. Overall, would you say (Gore/Bush) cares more about serving poor and lower income people, middle income people, upper income people, or would you say he cares equally about serving all people?

Gore:					
	Poor	Middle	Upper	All	No opinion
Registered Voters:					
10/9/00	19	21	11	38	11
9/6/00	17	15	13	50	6
8/20/00	17	16	12	48	8
7/23/00	15	17	18	42	8
General Population:					
7/23/00	14	17	19	42	8
9/2/99	14	10	15	48	12
Bush:					
	Poor	Middle	Upper	All	No opinion
Registered Voters:					
10/9/00	3	8	41	43	6
9/6/00	2	7	44	43	4
8/20/00	2	10	42	40	6
7/23/00	3	13	40	38	5
General Population:					
7/23/00	3	13	39	38	6
9/2/99	3	9	31	44	12
Compare to:					
Clinton:					
8/5/96	15	16	19	44	6
7/17/95	19	16	20	42	4
1/29/95	17	20	16	44	3
4/26/93	15	13	14	56	2
1/17/93	12	10	11	64	4
8/23/92 RV	16	25	6	44	9
Dole:					
8/5/96	2	16	43	33	6

President Bush:					
1/17/93*	2	6	61	28	3
8/23/92 RV	1	7	56	33	3
8/9/92	1	8	62	25	4
2/2/92	3	10	56	30	1
12/15/91	1	7	58	32	2
10/21/91	1	7	48	41	2
11/4/90 LV	3	5	55	36	2
2/4/90	3	11	35	51	*

\*"has cared"

Reagan:					
1/16/85	2	10	52	35	1
7/8/84	1	6	56	34	3
12/13/83	2	7	52	35	2
6/19/83	1	7	58	32	2
8/17/82	2	8	56	29	5
6/1/82	1	5	55	33	6
1/30/82	1	7	52	39	2
11/22/81	1	7	54	35	3
10/5/81	1	10	53	33	3
9/26/81	2	6	43	45	4
9/20/81	1	8	52	35	3
4/22/81	1	6	29	58	5
3/29/81	2	5	34	54	4
2/20/81	3	6	23	64	4

14. On another subject, would you support or oppose having the government give parents money to help pay for their children to attend a private or religious school instead of their local public school?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
Registered Voters:			
10/9/00	40	55	5

\*\*\*END\*\*\*