

ABC NEWS POLL: THE THIRD PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE - 10/17/00
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Third Debate:

**Gore Ties with a Tough Audience
And Wins it Among Independents**

Al Gore battled back to a tie with George W. Bush in the third presidential debate - a strong showing for the Democrat since it was another disproportionately Republican audience that tuned in. Indeed, for the first time, independents who watched gave Gore the win.

Among all registered voters who watched the debate, 41 said Gore won and an identical 41 percent called Bush the winner - a much better showing for Gore than the second debate, when viewers picked Bush as the winner by a 16-point margin.

	Who won?		
	10/17/00	10/11/00	10/3/00
Gore	41%	30%	42%
Bush	41	46	39
Tie	14	18	13

Gore's showing was particularly respectable given the nature of the audience. Viewers were a more pro-Bush group than likely voters at large, favoring Bush by a 13-point margin going into the debate. (Republicans tend to be better-educated and more engaged in politics, which makes them more likely debate watchers.)

Independents are the key swing voter group, and among independents who watched, 47 percent picked Gore as the winner compared to 33 percent for Bush - Gore's best showing by far among independents in any of the three debates. In the second debate, by contrast, independents picked Bush as the winner by an eight-point margin; in the first they picked Bush by five.

	Who won?		
	Among independents		
	10/17/00	10/11/00	10/3/00
Gore	47%	32%	35%
Bush	33	40	40
Tie	15	21	20

HOMERS - Gore also did a much better job this time satisfying his own supporters. Among Gore's pre-debate supporters, 86 percent picked him as the winner; fewer of Bush's supporters, 72 percent, said their guy won. That's a turnaround from last week, when only 63 percent of Gore supporters picked him as the winner, while 76 percent of Bush's supporters said he won. Gore improved by 23 points among his rooters.

	Who won?					
	10/17/00			10/11/00		
	Gore	Bush	Tie	Gore	Bush	Tie
Among:						
Gore supporters	86%	3	10	63%	11	20
Bush supporters	8	72	15	4	76	13

As noted, it was an even more pro-Bush audience than watched the second debate. Viewers this time favored Bush over Gore by 53 to 40 percent before the debate; that compares to a much closer 48-44 percent among likely voters nationally in an ABC News/Washington Post poll completed Sunday.

Again few minds were directly changed: Gore's support among viewers went from 40 percent before the debate to 42 percent afterward; Bush's was unchanged.

	Vote preference - registered voters who watched the debate	
	Before debate	After debate
Gore	40%	42%
Bush	53	53
Nader	3	2
Buchanan	1	1

WHO VIEWS - A more pro-Bush audience has tuned in to each debate. Viewers of the first debate favored Bush by three points; viewers of the second debate favored him by 10; and viewers of the third debate favored him by 13 points.

That's not surprising given the nature of the candidates' supporters. Among Republicans in the last ABC/Post poll, 41 percent said they were following the race "very closely," while among Democrats just 28 percent were following it very closely. That level of attention is what leads more Republicans - and thus more Bush supporters - to tune in, especially to subsequent debates.

GENDER - The gender gap was back in this debate: More women picked Gore as the winner, more men picked Bush. That's also better for Gore than the second debate, when women - a key group for him - divided about evenly on who won.

	Who won?					
	10/17 debate		10/11 debate		10/3 debate	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Gore	34%	47	24%	37	32%	52
Bush	46	35	50	41	45	33
Tie	17	12	19	16	18	9

METHODOLOGY - This survey was conducted by telephone among a random-sample panel of 507 registered voters who watched Tuesday's debate. Respondents were initially

interviewed Oct. 12-15. The results have a 4.5-point error margin. Fieldwork by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

Here are the full results:

1. Who, in your opinion, won the debate?

	Gore	Bush	Tie	No opin.
10/17/00	41	41	14	4
10/11/00	30	46	18	7
10/3/00	42	39	13	5
	Lieberman	Cheney	Tie	No opin.
10/5/00	24	43	27	5

2. 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)?

	Gore	Bush	Buchanan	Nader	Other	No op.
Third presidential debate:						
10/17/00 - post-debate	42	53	1	2	0	2
10/15/00 - pre-debate	40	53	1	3	0	2
Second presidential debate:						
10/11/00 - post-debate	41	54	1	2	1	1
10/9/00 - pre-debate	42	52	1	2	1	2
Vice-presidential debate:						
10/5/00 post-debate	44	51	1	1	0	1
10/4/00 pre-debate	45	49	1	2	*	1
First presidential debate:						
10/3/00 - post-debate	45	49	1	2	*	2
10/1/00 - pre-debate	45	48	1	3	1	2