

A Debate Win for Cheney With Help From His Friends

Dick Cheney prevailed in the vice-presidential debate with help from a more Republican audience – and more support from his ticket’s side than John Edwards got from his.

Among registered voters who watched the debate, 43 percent said Cheney won, 35 percent called Edwards the winner and 19 percent called it a tie. One factor is that more Republicans tuned in – 38 percent of viewers were Republicans, 31 percent Democrats, the rest independents.

Who won? (among debate viewers)	
Cheney	43%
Edwards	35
Tie	19

But Cheney also did better with his side’s backers. Among supporters of the Republican ticket, 80 percent called Cheney the winner. Among supporters of the Kerry/Edwards ticket, fewer, 69 percent, called Edwards the winner, and more called it a tie.

	Who won?		
	Cheney	Edwards	Tie
Bush supporters	80%	4	13
Kerry supporters	6	69	23

As is usually the case, the debate did not immediately change minds among those who watched. Viewers were divided by 51-48 percent for Bush/Cheney and Kerry/Edwards before the debate, and by 50-49 percent after it, an insignificant change. Note, these preferences are among debate viewers only, not among all registered or likely voters.

	Vote preference among debate viewers	
	Before the debate	After the debate
Bush/Cheney	51%	50
Kerry/Edwards	48	49
Nader/Camejo	<.5	0

Looking at it another way, compared with their pre-debate preference, 98 percent of Bush supporters stayed with Bush and 98 percent of Kerry supporters stayed with Kerry.

PARTY – Who “wins” a debate among viewers depends in part on who tunes in. Political party allegiance of viewers of the first presidential debate was evenly divided – 35 percent were Democrats, 35 percent Republicans, 24 percent independents. This time, more Republicans watched.

It’s happened this way before; Republicans tuned in disproportionately to the second presidential debate in 2000 – 40 percent of debate watchers then were Republican, 31 percent Democrat. Viewers that night said Bush won by 16 points.

	Party ID of debate viewers	
	VP debate	First presidential debate
Democrats	31%	35
Republicans	38	35
Independents	27	24

Among these groups, 70 percent of Republicans said Cheney was the winner, 68 percent of Democrats said it was Edwards, and independents split 42-37 percent, Cheney-Edwards.

GROUPS – Men called Cheney the winner by a 12-point margin, women by a narrower five points. Viewers in the East and West were more apt to say Edwards won the debate, while debate watchers in the Midwest and South picked Cheney.

Cheney is now two for two in vice-presidential debates, albeit this time around his margin of victory is much smaller. In 2000, debate viewers called him the winner over Joe Lieberman by 19 points.

METHODOLOGY - This survey was conducted by telephone among a random-sample panel of 509 registered voters who watched the vice-presidential debate. Respondents were initially interviewed Oct. 1-4. The results have a 4.5-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer and Dalia Sussman.

Here are the full results:

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

	Cheney	Edwards	Tie	No opin.
10/5/04	43	35	19	3

For comparison – first presidential debate:

	Kerry	Bush	Tie	No opin.
9/30/04	45	36	17	2

2. Presidential preference among debate viewers:

Bush/Cheney	Kerry/Edwards	Nader/Camejo	Other	No op.
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Post-debate	50	49	0	*	1
Pre-debate	51	48	*	*	*

* = less than one percent

END