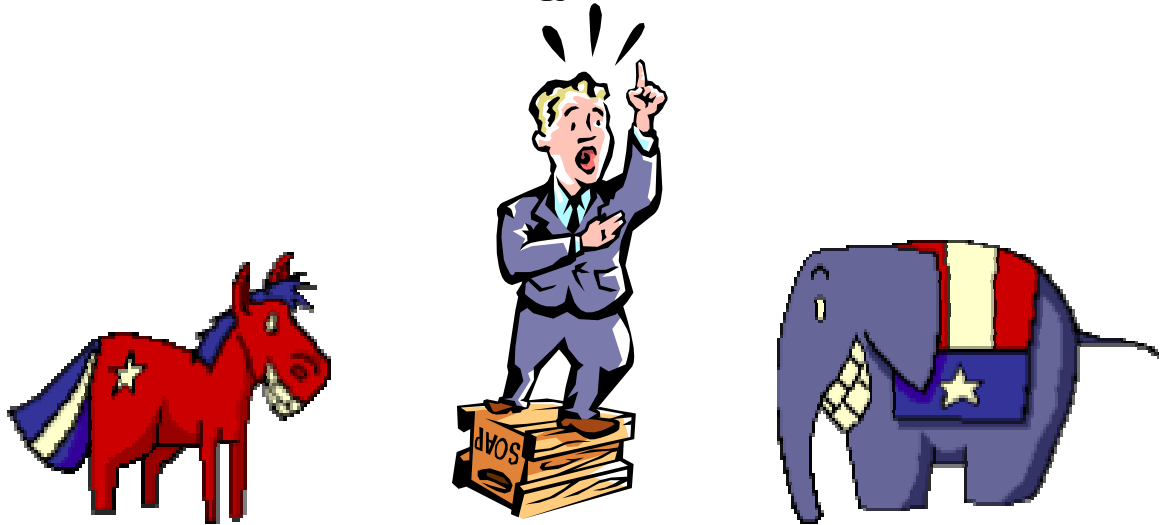


15th Year!



Access & Excellence



THE MSU-Billings Poll
October 2004

Dr. Craig Wilson
And
Dr. Joe Floyd, Co-Directors

The following students completed interviews for the survey:

Jeremy Carlson, Billings, MT
Anzie DeZont, Cut Bank, MT
Victor Hernandez, Billings, MT
Ashley Holmes, Butte, MT
Jennifer Hurd, Billings, MT
Misty Jackson, Billings, MT
Kristina Johnson, Helena, MT
Chelsie Kerns, Laurel, MT
Krista Marshall, Shepherd, MT
Travis McCullough, Laurel, MT
Ross McLinden, Richey, MT
Tracy Schweigert, Billings, MT
Kelsey Toft, Casper, WY
Sean Whiting, Billings, MT

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the nineteenth “MSU-Billings Poll,” a statewide random sample telephone survey of adult Montanans conducted October 7-10, 2004. This is the fifteenth year the survey has been conducted. The students enrolled in Sociology 493, Applied Survey Research and Political Science 350, Public Opinion and Polling, completed the 411 interviews for this survey. Only adult Montanans who said they were both registered to vote and very likely to vote in the 2004 general election were polled. The Co-Directors of the “MSU-Billings Poll” are Dr. Craig Wilson (Political Science) and Dr. Joe Floyd (Sociology).

The survey was completed using random digit dial methodology, which selects both phone numbers and members of a household to interview. The poll was conducted at the MSU-Billings’ CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) Laboratory. Up to five attempts were made to reach selected households. The survey results have a +/- 5% margin of error and a confidence level of 95% (95% of the time the results will fall within the +/- 5% margin of error). Factors such as question order and wording can also affect survey results. The respondents are representative of the gender, urban (eight most populous counties) – rural and east-west distribution of Montana’s population.

Statistical tests were employed to determine whether statistically significant relationships ($p=.05$) existed between key variables.

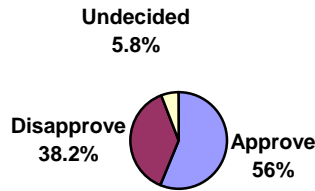
I. NATIONAL ISSUES

1. President George W. Bush's Overall Job Performance

This is the fourth year the “MSU-Billings Poll” asked those surveyed whether “at this point in time,” they “approve or disapprove of George W. Bush’s overall performance in office as President.” A majority (56%) replied “approve.”

In the 2001 poll the President had an 86.7% positive approval rating, 69.7% in 2002 and 59.4% in 2003.

President Bush's Overall Job Performance



Statistically Significant Relationships:

- 91.7% of those who approved of Bush planned on voting for him, while 83.4% of those saying “disapprove” were voting for Kerry.
- 83.9% of the respondents approving of the President supported the Iraq war, 86.6% of those disapproving of his performance also opposed the war.
- On a 1-5 scaled question about media reporting on the Iraq war where “1” represented “very biased” and “5” “very objective,” 50% of those who approved of Bush’s job performance found the media “very biased” (1). A plurality (29.1%) of those who responded “3” disapproved of the job he is doing.
- On a 1-5 scaled question about the importance of religion in the respondents’ lives where “1” represented “not important at all” and “5” “very important,” majorities of those replying “1” (75%) or “2” (51.4%) disapproved of Bush. Majorities answering “3” (61.8%), “4” (58.7%) or “5” (60.3%) approved of the president.
- A majority (83.1%) of Democrats disapproved of Bush. A majority (91%) of Republicans and half (50%) of the independents approved his job performance.

2. Interest in General Election

Those interviewed were asked a 1-10 scaled question, where “1” represented “no interest” and “10” “great interest,” about their interest “in the upcoming general election.” A majority (92.4%) replied that to some extent (6-10) they were “interested” in the general election. The mean response was 8.8. A majority (55.7%) of the respondents replied “10.”

The 2000 question on this topic was asked on a 1-10 scale. In that year the mean response was 7.7 and a plurality (35.4%) answered “10.” A similar question asked in 2002, was scaled on a 1-5 basis. The mean response was 3.9 and a plurality (43%) of those interviewed chose “5” (very interested).

Interest in General Election

<u>Not Interested (1-5)</u>	<u>Interested (6-10)</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>
7.8%	92.4%	100%	8.8

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- In terms of importance of religion in their lives, those who felt religion was “very important” had the most (9.1 mean) interest in the election.
- In terms of age, those most interested in the election were aged 59-69 (9.1 mean) and those relatively the least interested were aged 18-39 (8.4 mean).
- Non-native Montanans had somewhat more interest (9.1 mean) in the election than did native-born interviewees (8.6 mean).

3. Vote in Presidential Race

A majority of 55.3% of the interviewees replied “George Bush” when queried: “If this year’s presidential election were being held today for whom do you think you would vote?”

Vote in Presidential Race

	<u>%</u>
Republican George Bush	55.3%
Democrat John Kerry	34.3%
Independent Ralph Nader	2.2%
Green Party David Cobb	0%
Libertarian Michael Badnarik	0%
Constitution Michael Peroutka	.7%
Undecided	<u>7.5%</u>
Total	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (88.7%) of those planning on voting for Kerry felt he would do the best job managing the economy, while a majority (88.5%) of Bush supporters said the president would be best at handling this issue. A plurality (35.5%) of undecided voters were also undecided about which candidate would be the best for the economy.
- In terms of insuring homeland security, majorities of Bush (96%) and undecided voters (61.3%) viewed the president as being the best person for dealing with this issue. A majority of Kerry voters (70.2%) said he would be superior in this area.
- In dealing with international terrorism, majorities of Bush (97.8%) and undecided voters (54.8%) felt the president would best handle this issue. A majority of Kerry (81.6%) voters said the senator would be superior in dealing with this concern.
- A majority of Bush (93.4%) and plurality (45.2%) of undecided voters thought the president would be best at handling the Iraq conflict. A majority of Kerry (85.8%) voters felt the senator would best deal with this ongoing conflict.
- A majority of Bush (82.8%) voters supported the decision to go to war with Iraq. Majorities of Kerry (84.4%) and undecided (54.8%) voters opposed the conflict.
- On the 1-5 scaled questions about media bias in covering the Iraq war, a majority of Bush (50.9%) backers gave the media a “1” (very biased), a plurality of Kerry’s (29.5%) supporters chose a neutral “3” and a plurality of undecided (40.7%) voters also replied “3.”

- On a 1-5 scaled question about Iraq’s impact on the U. S. economy where “1” represented “very negatively” and “5” “very positively,” a plurality of Kerry (41.4%) voters replied “1,” a majority of Bush (54.7%) supporters said “3” as did a plurality of undecided (36.4%) voters.
- Majorities of Kerry (52.9%), Bush (60.9%) and undecided (67.7%) voters all said they felt “no change” in how safe they felt compared to four years ago.
- While a majority (52.2%) of voters reporting having no guns in their house backed Kerry, majorities of those with 1 or more gun(s) in their home backed Bush. The president’s greatest support was found among respondents in homes with more than 10 (76.4%) guns.
- In terms of the 1-5 question about importance of religion in their lives, a plurality (38.3%) of Kerry backers answered “not important at all” (1). A majority (52%) of Bush voters replied “very important” (5), as did a plurality (48.4%) of undecided respondents.
- Vote intent in the presidential election was not related to gender.
- A majority of Republicans (90%) and half (50%) of independents said they would vote for Bush. A majority of Democrats backed Kerry (81.2%).

4. Perceptions of the Candidates

Next, five questions were asked regarding the interviewees perceptions about various aspects of the major party candidates and the presidential race.

First, those surveyed were asked: “Which candidate do you feel has run the most negative campaign?” A plurality (35%) said “Kerry”. Next, the poll asked which man “would do the best job of managing the U. S. economy.” A majority (52.4%) said “Bush”. The next query asked “which candidate would do the best job of insuring homeland security.” A majority (62.2%) replied “Bush”. The fourth question wanted to know which man would be the best at “dealing with international terrorism.” A majority (61.8%) said “Bush”. The final question inquired whether George Bush or John Kerry “would do the best job of directing the ongoing conflict in Iraq. A majority (56.7%) replied “Bush”.

<u>Perceptions of the Candidates</u>						
	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Kerry</u>	<u>Both the Same</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
Most Negative Campaign	26%	35%	22.1%	4.9%	12%	100%
Best at Managing Economy	52.4%	36%	1.2%	3.6%	6.8%	100%
Best at Homeland Security	62.3%	25.5%	2.7%	3.4%	6.1%	100%
Best at Int’l Terrorism	61.8%	29.7%	1.7%	2.2%	4.6%	100%
Managing Iraq Conflict	56.7%	32.6%	1.7%	3.6%	5.4%	100%

A. Most Negative Campaign

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- A majority of Republicans (55.9%) and plurality (47.1%) of independents said Kerry had run the most negative campaign. A majority of Democrats (55.8%) answered “Bush.”

B. Best Job of Managing U. S. Economy

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority of rural (58.9%) and plurality of urban (48.7%) respondents said Bush would do the best job managing the economy.
- A plurality (35.8%) of those feeling Kerry would do best at managing the economy and a majority (54.9%) of respondents feeling Bush would be best in this area said religion was “very important” in their lives.
- A majority of Democrats (76%) said Kerry could best handle economic issues. A majority of Republican (85.8%) and plurality (41.2%) of independents favored Bush in this policy area.

C. Best Job of Managing Homeland Security

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A plurality (39%) of respondents who said Kerry could best handle domestic security and a majority (52%) of those identifying Bush as best prepared to deal with homeland security said religion was “very important” in their lives.
- A majority of Democrats (60.4%) viewed Kerry as best prepared to deal with this issue. A majority of Republicans (92.9%) and independents (61.8%) replied “Bush” when asked this question.

D. Best Job of Dealing With International Terrorism

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A plurality (34.4%) of those favoring Kerry and a majority (69.3%) of respondents saying Bush could best deal with international terrorism identified religion as being “very important” in their lives.
- A majority (71.4%) of Democrats regarded Kerry as best able to deal with international terrorism. Majorities of Republicans (93.8%) and independents (67.6%) said Bush would be best at handling this issue.
- Majorities of every age cohort said Bush could best deal with international terrorism. His greatest support (67.7%) was found among the 59-69 age group.

E. Best Job of Directing the Ongoing Conflict in Iraq

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- More residents of Montana’s former eastern (60.9%) than western (53.7%) congressional district said Bush could best handle the ongoing Iraq conflict.
- A plurality (36.6%) of respondents who viewed Kerry as best able to deal with Iraq said religion was “very important” in their lives as did a majority (51.9%) of those identifying Bush as most qualified on this issue.
- A majority of Democrats (74.7%) favored having Kerry deal with Iraq. Majorities of Republicans (89.1%) and independents (64.7%) said Bush would be most skilled at handling the conflict.

5. U. S. Decision to Go to War

A majority (52.8%) of those polled said “support” when asked the question “do you support or oppose the United State’s decision to go to war against Iraq?”

In the 2003 poll a majority (61.9%) of the interviewees replied “support” when asked this same question.

<u>U. S. Decision to Go to War</u>			
<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
52.8%	41.1%	6.1%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Majorities of respondents who identified newspapers (52.5%) or magazines (63.6%) as their primary news source opposed the Iraq war. Majorities of those relying on television (58%), radio (56.8%) or the Internet (51.6%) as their primary news source supported the war.
- A majority of males (62.5%) backed the war and a plurality of females (48.3%) opposed it. Women (7.7%) were also more undecided than men (4.5%) about the conflict.
- Pluralities of those supporting (49.3%), opposed to (41.4%) or undecided (48%) about the war said religion was “very important” in their lives.
- A majority of Democrats opposed (79.2%) the war, while majorities of Republicans (79.1%) and independents (55.9%) supported it.

- When age and gender were combined the strongest support for the war was found among males aged 18-39 (71.7%) and the greatest opposition among females 18-39 (52.5%).

6. National Media Coverage of Iraq War

The following scaled question was asked about the national media coverage of the Iraq War: “On a scale of 1 to 5 where “1” is very biased and “5” is very objective, how would you rate the national media’s coverage of the conflict in Iraq?”

A majority of those polled (56.8%) felt that to some extent (1-2) the coverage was biased.

<u>National Media Coverage of Iraq War</u>				
<u>To Some Extent Biased (1-2)</u>	<u>Neutral (3)</u>	<u>To Some Extent Objective (4-5)</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>
56.8%	25.8%	17.4%	100%	2.3

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Among those who found the media “very biased” in its coverage of the war, a majority (58.9%) felt that religion was “very important” in their life. Among those who the media was “very objective,” a majority (61.8%) also said religion was “very important” to them.
- A majority of Republicans (51.2%) and plurality (43.8%) of independents replied “1” to the bias question, while a plurality (29.9%) of Democrats answered “3.”
- Pluralities of every age cohort, 18-39 (32.1%), 40-58 (40.3%), 59-69 (47.5%) and 70+ (39%), regarded the media as “very biased” in its coverage.
- In terms of gender/age those most likely to say the media was “very biased” (21.9%) were males aged 40-58 and those most apt to regard the media as “very objective” (20.6%) were females aged 59-69.

7. Iraq War’s Impact on U. S. Economy

Another scaled question was asked regarding the Iraq war’s impact on the U. S. economy: “On a scale of 1 to 5 where “1” is very negatively and “5” is very positively, how do you think the war in Iraq has affected the economy of the United States?” A plurality (44.1%) of the interviewees to some extent (1-2) viewed the war as having a negative impact on the U. S. economy.

<u>Iraq War’s Impact on U. S. Economy</u>				
<u>To Some Extent Negative (1-2)</u>	<u>Neutral (3)</u>	<u>To Some Extent Positive (4-5)</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>
44.1%	40.9%	15%	100%	2.6

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- A plurality of Democrats (38.6%) felt the war had “very negatively” affected the U. S. economy. A majority of Republicans (54%) and plurality (39.4%) of independents responded “3” to this question.

II. MONTANA STATE ISSUES

1. Vote in U. S. House Race

A majority (58.9%) replied “Rehberg” when asked: “If the election for Montana’s seat in the U. S. House of Representatives were held today, would you vote for [names read].”

<u>Vote in U. S. House Race</u>				
<u>Rehberg</u>	<u>Velazquez</u>	<u>Fellows</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
58.9%	19.2%	4.6%	17.3%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Those least likely to say they would vote for Rehberg (41.7%) had no guns at home, while those most likely to vote for him (78.2%) lived in homes with more than 10 guns.
- More men (66.5%) than women (52.2%) planned on voting for Rehberg. Women were also more undecided (22.5%) than men (12%) about their vote.
- A majority (52.5%) of Rehberg voters and pluralities of Velazquez (34.2%) and undecided (38%) voters identified religion as being “very important” in their lives.
- A plurality of Democrats (40.9%) intended on voting for Velazquez. A majority of Republicans (85.8%) and plurality of independents (38.2%) supported Rehberg.

III. SOCIAL AND LIFESTYLE ISSUES

1. Religious Questions

A. Importance of Religion in Life

A scaled question about individual religiosity read: “On a scale of 1 to 5 with “1” being not important at all and “5” being very important, how important is religion in your everyday life?” To some extent (4-5) a majority of those interviewed (64.2%) said that religion was important in their life. A plurality (46%) of those polled replied “5.”

<u>Importance of Religion in Life</u>				
<u>To Some Extent Not Important (1-2)</u>	<u>Neutral (3)</u>	<u>To Some Extent Important (4-5)</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>
17.3%	18.5%	64.2%	100%	3.8

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority of women (56.9%) and plurality of males (34.5%) said religion was “very important” in their lives.
- More non-native born Montanans said that to some extent religion was not important (answered 1 or 2) in their life (23%) than natives (12.2%). But more natives (67.2%) than non-natives (64.1%) responded that to some extent (answered 4 or 5) religion was important in their life.
- A majority of Republicans (52.6%) and pluralities of independents (47.1%) and Democrats (37.7%) identified religion as being “very important” to them.

- A majority or plurality of every age group, 70+ (66.7%), 59-69 (58.5%), 40-58 (44.6%), 18-39 (29.8%) said religion was “very important” in their lives.
- In terms of gender/age women aged 70+ (78.4%) were most likely to say religion was “very important” to them, while males aged 18-39 (22.6%) were least likely to give this response.

B. Should Montana Churches Be Taxed

A majority (70.3%) of the likely voters polled said “no” when asked if they thought “churches in Montana should be taxed?”

<u>Should Montana Churches Be Taxed</u>			
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
17.8%	70.3%	11.9%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Majorities of every income group, except 50% of the individuals living in households making less than \$10,000 a year, who avored taxing churches, opposed levies on churches. Those in households earning \$20,001-\$30,000 a year most opposed (77.8%) taxation.
- 50% of those who identified religion as “not important at all (1) in their lives favored taxing churches. A plurality or majority who responded “2-5” to the religious question opposed the idea. 84.1% of the respondents who replied “very important” (5) to the religiosity question opposed church taxation.

2. Health Related Questions

A. Do You Have Health Insurance

A majority (85%) of the interviewees said “yes” when asked “do you have health insurance?”

<u>Have Health Insurance</u>		
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>
85%	15%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Those most likely (96%) to have health insurance lived in households earning more than \$100,000 a year. Those least likely to have insurance (63.6%) resided in homes earning less than \$10,000 a year.
- More Democrats (92.2%) than Republicans (82%) or independents (73.5%) reported having insurance.
- Those most likely to report having insurance were aged 70+ (96.8%), while the cohort most likely not to have insurance (21.1%) were aged 18-39.
- Those with a post-graduate education (96.2%) were the educational group most likely to be insured, while individuals with 1-11 years of education (33.3%) were most likely not to be insured.
- In terms of gender/age, females aged 70+ (97.3%) were most likely to be insured, while women 18-39 (26.2%) were most likely not to have insurance.

B. Should Health Insurance Pay for Gastric Bypass Surgery?

A question was asked about whether the respondents thought “health insurance should pay for gastric bypass surgery or similar surgeries for severely obese individuals?”

A plurality (47.7%) of those answering this question said “yes.”

Should Health Insurance Pay for Gastric Bypass Surgery

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
47.7%	35.5%	16.8%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (52.6%) of women said insurance should cover this procedure, a plurality (42.5%) of males felt it should not.
- In terms of gender/age those most supportive of covering the procedure were women aged 40-58 (56.6%), while those most opposed to covering this surgery were males 40-58 (47%) years old.

C. Been On a Low Carbohydrate Diet?

A majority (85.7%) of those surveyed said they had not “been on the Atkins or other low carbohydrate diet in the last year.”

Been on Low Carbohydrate Diet

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>
14.3%	85.7%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- Those least likely (93%) to have been on a low carbohydrate diet were aged 18-39. Those most likely to have dieted (29.2%) were age 59-69.