A decorative bar in the top left corner, consisting of a large green rectangle and a smaller gold square at its bottom right corner.

**AARP Pre-Debate
National Survey
Presidential Debate
Tempe, Arizona
October 13, 2004**

A gold square at the bottom right corner, with a horizontal line extending to the left and a vertical line extending upwards from it.

October 2004



**AARP Pre-Debate
National Survey
Presidential Debate
Tempe, Arizona
October 13, 2004**

**Report prepared by
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AARP Pre-Debate National Survey

Presidential Debate

Tempe, Arizona, October 13, 2004

In late-September, 2004, AARP commissioned national and Arizona telephone surveys of registered voters, ages 50 and over. A total of 1,001 people responded to the national survey and 500 responded to the Arizona state survey. These surveys gave AARP an opportunity to present election issues important to the 50+ population and issues that may affect their voting decisions. AARP also wanted to learn more about how the 50+ population in Arizona and nationally feels about domestic policy issues that they want the vice-presidential candidates to address in the Tempe debate.

This report will highlight the national survey data. The survey methodology is described at the end of this report, and a tabulated questionnaire is appended.

AARP is a non-partisan organization. It does not contribute to political campaigns nor does it endorse or oppose any candidates for public office.

Key Findings

Older voters are following the campaigns and they vote:

- Older Americans not only register to vote in proportionately larger numbers than younger voters; they also turn out to vote in proportionately larger numbers. This magnifies their political “clout” compared to younger age groups.
- Nine in 10 older Americans contacted for the national survey said they are registered voters, but only registered voters were actually interviewed. Ninety-two percent of older registered voters say they are certain to vote in November; and 93 percent say they voted in 2000.
- 88 percent of older voters say they are following the 2004 presidential race at least somewhat closely (57% “very closely”).
- Four in five older voters say they have definitely decided how they will vote in November; one in five say they have not yet decided. Compared to decided voters, older undecided voters are disproportionately female, lower income, less educated, less politically engaged, and more likely to be Independents.

The focus of this series of surveys is on the electoral process and the debates, not on the campaigns generally and on the candidates.

- 73 percent of older voters say they watched at least one of the presidential/vice-presidential debates in 2000, and 82 percent say they are at least somewhat likely to watch the debate between the presidential candidates in Tempe, Arizona, on October 13, 2004.
- Three-quarters (75%) of older voters say the debates are at least somewhat important in the election of the president (33% say they are very important).

Which way in the country heading? Half (50%) of older voters believe things in this country have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track; more than one-third (36%) believe things in this country are going in the right direction today.

Voting orientations: issues, candidate qualities, or party? A majority (55%) of older voters say they vote for a presidential candidate more in terms of positions on one or two key issues, rather than personal qualities of the candidates (33%), or political party (6%).

Which is more important: foreign policy issues or domestic policy issues? Almost one-third (32%) of older voters consider domestic issues such as jobs and the economy and health to be more important than foreign policy issues such as the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism (23%). Nearly one-half (45%) consider these issues to be equally important.

Issues of greatest importance in voting for president in 2004: There is one top issue on the minds of voters nationally that will affect their vote for president in November: it is the war in Iraq (29%), followed by the economy and jobs (19%) and terrorism/homeland security (12%).

Domestic issues of greatest importance: Survey respondents were also asked the most important domestic issues that they want to see addressed in the debates by the presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The number one domestic issue for older voters is jobs and the economy (67%). The second biggest issue for older voters in the debates is health care (48%). The third most important issue for older voters is senior issues, such as Social Security and Medicare (26%). Other domestic issues mentioned are education (18%) and terrorism (15%).

Survey respondents were also asked which one question about domestic issues they would ask the vice-presidential candidates if they had the chance to do so. Responses were widely scattered, but far and away the top topic was jobs and the economy (21%), followed by senior issues (such as Medicare and Social Security) (11%), and health care (10%).

Jobs and the economy is the domestic political issue that is more salient to voters ages 50-64 (75%) than it is for voters age 65 or older (58%). Health care is another issue that is more salient for voters ages 50-64 (57%) than it is for voters ages 65 and up (40%). Senior issues, such as Social Security and Medicare, are more salient for voters ages 65 and up (29%) than it is for voters ages 50-64 (23%)

Partisanship:

Our survey findings confirm the divisive nature of this presidential election. There are sharp partisan differences (see Table, below):

- Nationally, Republicans see the country as heading in the right direction (67%); Democrats (75%) and Independents (51%) see the country as seriously having gotten off on the wrong track.
- More Republicans (45%) say they will vote for president this year more in terms of the candidates' personal qualities than will Democrats (27%) and Independents (30%). More Democrats (61%) and Independents (62%) than Republicans (45%) say they will cast their presidential vote based on positions on one or two key issues.
- More Republicans (36%) than Democrats (13%) and Independents (23%) say foreign policy issues are more important than domestic policy issues in voting for president this November. More Democrats (41%) and Independents (34%) than Republicans (20%) say domestic policy issues are more important. More than four in ten older Republicans (43%), Democrats (45%), Independents (42%) say these two types of issues are equally important.

Methodology

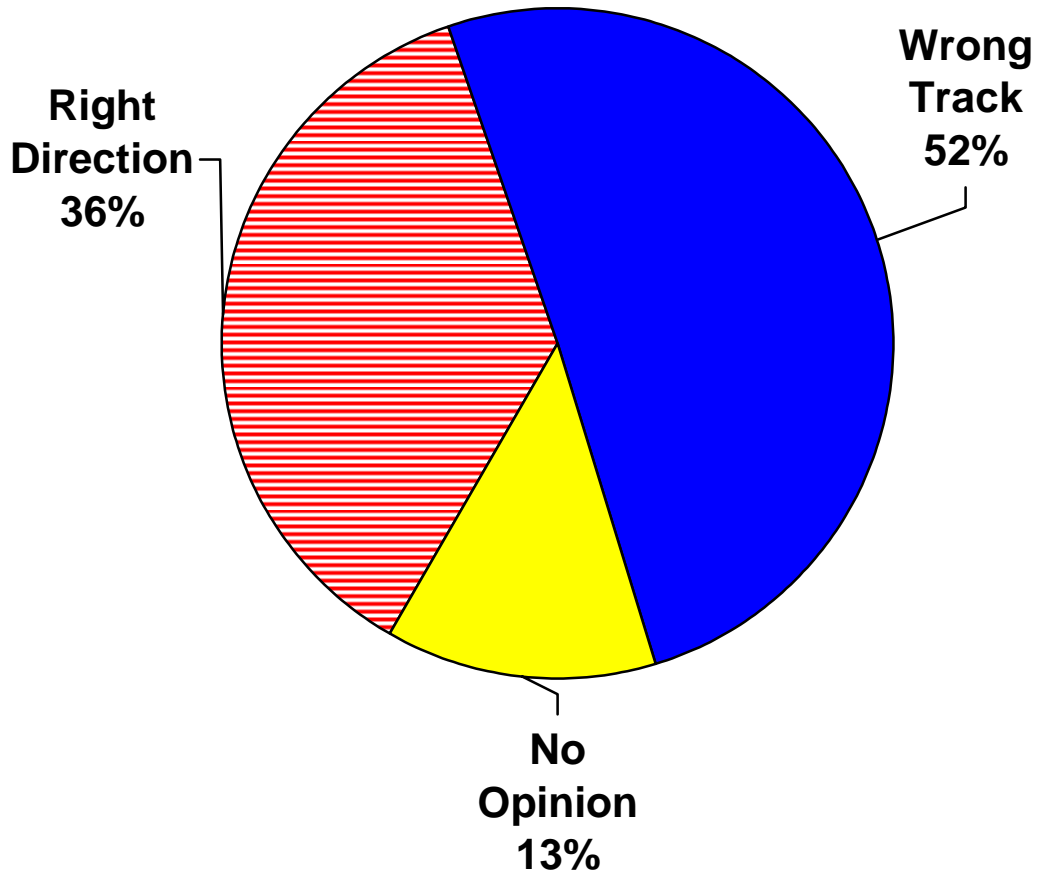
AARP commissioned Woelfel Research, Inc., a national survey research firm, to conduct a random digit dial (RDD) telephone survey of registered voters, age 50+ nationally (n=1,001) and a separate survey of 500 registered voters ages 50+ in the state of Arizona. Interviews in both surveys were conducted between September 22-30, 2004. The national survey has a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would fall in a range of 3 percentage points of what would have been obtained if every person 50+ in the U.S. had been surveyed. The Arizona survey has a sampling error rate of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

For presentation purposes, percentage points have been rounded off to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages in a given table column may total slightly higher or lower than 100%. For questions that permit multiple responses, columns may total to significantly more than 100%, depending on the number of different responses offered by each respondent. Similarly, when only selected responses are shown, percentages may total less than 100%.

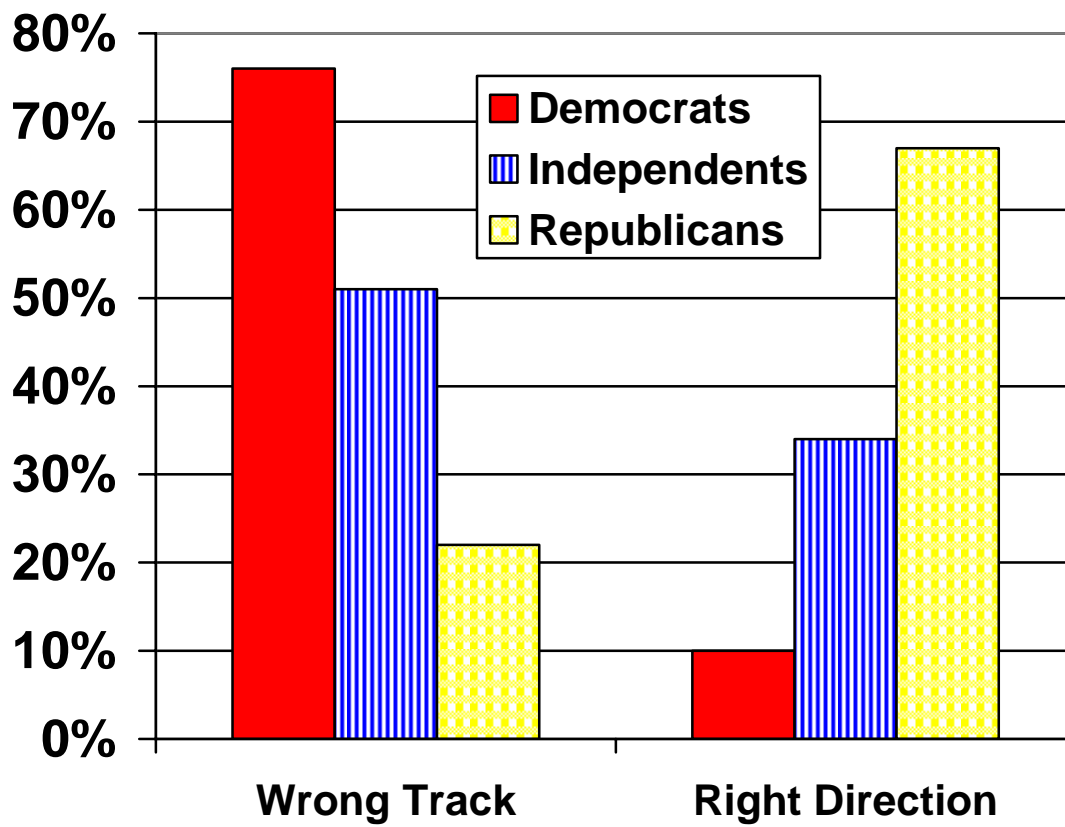
Partisan Differences in Responses to Key Issues

	Party ID			
	Rep	Dem	Ind	Total
Country heading in, Right Direction	67%	10%	34%	36%
Wrong Track	22%	76%	51%	50%
Don't know	11%	14%	13%	13%
Vote in terms of, Candidates personal qualities	39%	27%	30%	33%
Position on one or two key issues	45%	61%	62%	55%
Political party	11%	5%	4%	7%
Foreign policy issues more important	36%	13%	23%	23%
Domestic policy issues more important	21%	41%	34%	32%
Both foreign and domestic policy issues equally	43%	45%	33%	45%

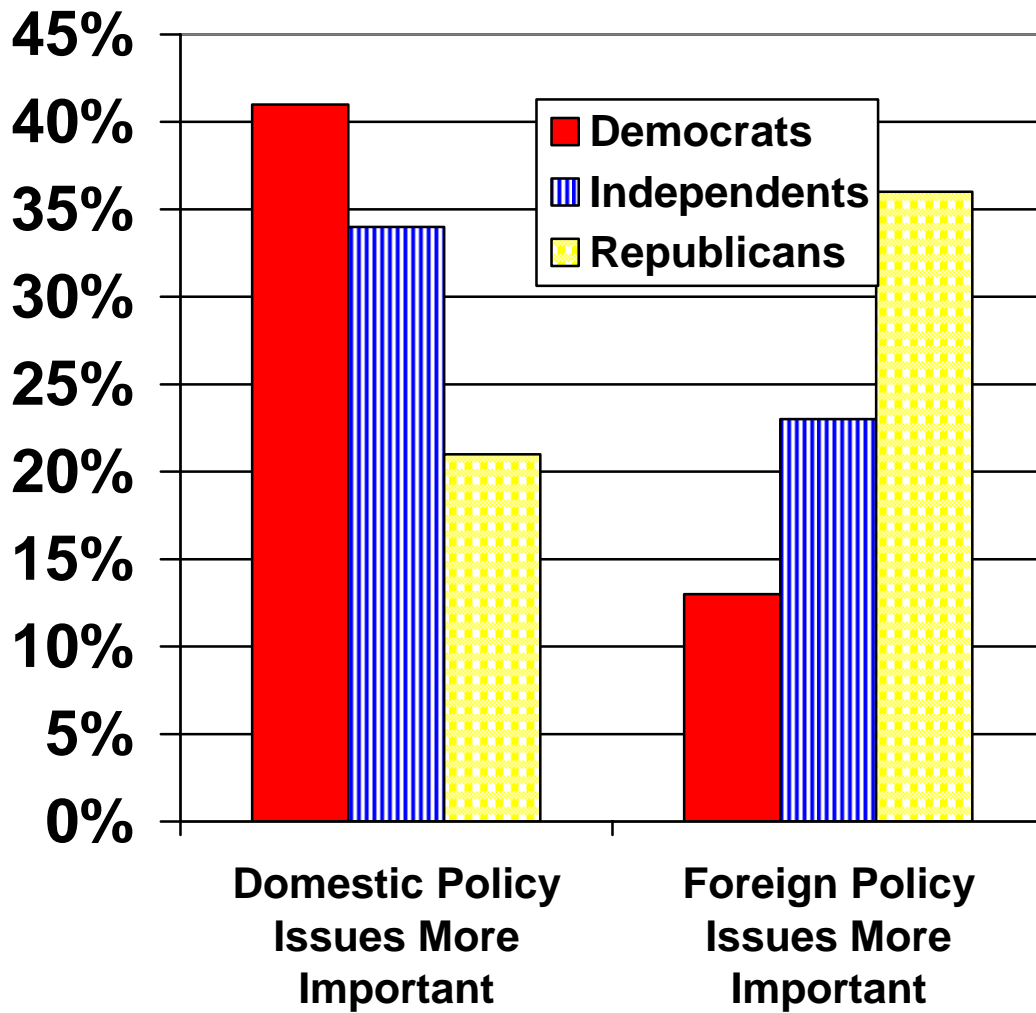
Direction Country is Headed



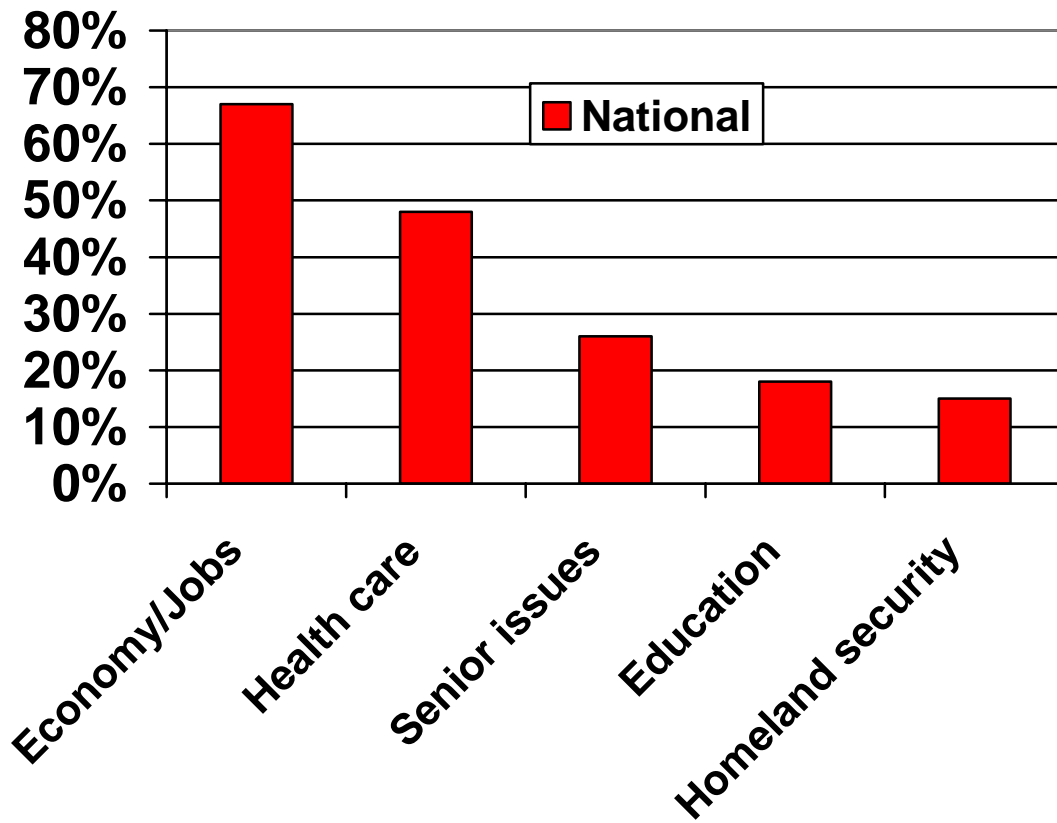
Direction the Country is headed by Party Identification



**The Relative Importance of Domestic Policy Issues
and Foreign Policy Issues by Party Identification**



Most Important Domestic Issues Candidates Should Address



**Questionnaire for the Pre-Debate National Survey
Tempe, Arizona
October 13, 2004**

1. Do you feel things in this country are going in the right direction today or do you feel that things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?

National

36%	Right direction
50%	Wrong track
13%	(DO NOT READ) Don't know
1%	(DO NOT READ) Refused

2. Are you registered to vote at your current address?

100%	Yes	CONTINUE
--	No	TERMINATE

3. I'd like you to rate the chances that you will vote in the presidential election in November: Are you absolutely certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50 or less than that?

National

93%	Certain to vote	CONTINUE
5%	Probably vote	CONTINUE
3%	Chances 50/50	CONTINUE
--	Less than 50/50	CONTINUE
--	Don't think will vote (vol.)	TERMINATE

4. Did you vote in the 2000 presidential election?

National

93%	Yes
7%	No

5. Did you watch any of the presidential/vice presidential debates in 2000?

National

73%	Yes	CONTINUE
18%	No	SKIP TO Q. 6
9%	DK	

5a. Did you watch all of them or just some of them?

National

--	None of them
64%	Some of them
31%	All of them
5%	DK

6. How closely are you following the 2004 presidential race -- very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely or not closely at all?

National

57%	Very closely
31%	Somewhat closely
7%	Not too closely
4%	Not closely at all
1%	No opinion

7. Have you decided definitely which presidential candidate you will vote for or are you still undecided at this point in the campaign?

National

80%	Definitely decided
20%	Undecided

8. How likely are you to watch the upcoming presidential debate from Tempe, AZ on October 13th? Are you very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

National

60%	Very likely
22%	Somewhat likely
6%	Not too likely
10%	Not at all likely
2%	Don't know

9. All things considered, how important do you think the presidential debates are to the election of the president?

National

33%	Very important
42%	Somewhat important
15%	Not too important
9%	Not at all important
1%	DK

10. What will be the most important political issue in your vote for president this November?

(RECORD VERBATIM. PROBE FOR CLARITY. ACCEPT ONE ONLY)

- 1 Answer given (SPECIFY) _____
- 2 None
- D (DO NOT READ) Don't know
- R (DO NOT READ) Refused

10A. What is more important to you, foreign policy issues, such as the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism, or domestic policy issues, such as jobs and the economy and health care?

National

- 23% Foreign policy issues
- 32% Domestic policy issues
- 45% Both are equally important
- 1% No opinion

11. As you may know, the upcoming presidential debate in Tempe on October 13th focuses exclusively on domestic issues. What are the most important domestic issues you want to see addressed by the presidential candidates?

(RECORD VERBATIM. PROBE FOR CLARITY. ACCEPT UP TO 3; ask and code as the most important, the next most important, and the third most important?)

National

- 1% Civil liberties
- 18% Education
- 48% Health care
- 15% Homeland security
- 1% Importation of prescription drugs from Canada or other countries
- Long term care issues
- 8% Medicare/Medicare premium increases
- 6% Prescription drug prices
- 4% Social issues such as abortion and gay marriage
- 15% Social Security
- 12% Taxes
- 67% The economy and jobs
- 3% The environment
- 5% The federal government deficit
- 7% Other
- 10% DK

**12. If you could ask just one question of the candidates concerning domestic issues in the upcoming presidential debate in Tempe on Oct. 13th, what would it be?
(RECORD VERBATIM. PROBE FOR CLARITY. ACCEPT ONE ONLY)**

13. Which of the following matters most when you vote for a candidate for president this year - the candidate's political party, the candidate's position on key issues, or the personal qualities of the candidate?

National

7%	Political party
55%	Position on one or two key issues (PROBE: Which issues?)
33%	Personal qualities (PROBE: Which qualities?)
1%	None of these (vol.)
4%	Don't know (vol.)

14. Do you think the tone of the presidential candidates' campaigns this year thus far is more positive, more negative, or about the same as presidential candidates' campaigns in the past?

National

10%	More positive
36%	More negative
50%	About the same
5%	DK/Refused

**15. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as...?
(READ LIST. ENTER ONE ONLY)**

National

32%	A Republican
33%	A Democrat
29%	An Independent
3% (DO NOT READ)	Other
-- (DO NOT READ)	Don't know
3% (DO NOT READ)	Refused

(SCRAMBLE CODES 1-3)

**16. Generally speaking, would you characterize your political views as being...?
(READ LIST. ENTER ONE ONLY)**

National

42%	Conservative
40%	Moderate
10%	Liberal
2% (DO NOT READ)	None of the Above
5% (DO NOT READ)	Don't know
1% (DO NOT READ)	Refused

Demographic questions:

D1. What is your age as of your last birthday? [RECORD IN YEARS]

National	Age
39%	50-59
12%	60-64
28%	65-74
20%	75+
2%	Refused

Avg. age = 65

D2. What is your marital status? Are you currently....

National

63%	Married,
10%	Divorced,
1%	Separated,
21%	Widowed,
5%	Or have you never been married?
--	Living with partner [DO NOT READ]
--	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
1%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

[ASK ONLY IF RESPONDENT IS 50 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER]

D3. Are you [OR YOUR SPOUSE IF MARRIED] a member of A-A-R-P formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons? [IF NOT "MARRIED" ASK, "Are you a member..."]

National

54%	Yes
44%	No
1%	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
1%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D4. What is the highest level of education you have completed? [READ LIST]

National

8%	Less than high school
29%	High school graduate or equivalent
27%	Some college or technical training beyond high school
19%	College graduate
16%	Or, Post-graduate or professional degree
--	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
1%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D5. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? Are you currently....[READ LIST]

National

27%	Employed full-time
6%	Employed part-time
51%	Retired and not working
1%	Unemployed and looking for work
5%	Homemaker
5%	Disabled
--	Student
4%	Or something else [Specify: _____]
--	Don't Know [DO NOT READ]
1%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D6. Would you say that you always vote in presidential elections, usually vote, sometimes vote, rarely vote, or never vote)

National

81%	Always
13%	Usually
4%	Sometimes
1%	Rarely
--	Never
1%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D7. For statistical purposes only, please stop me when I get to the category that includes your household's income before taxes in 2003. Was it... [READ LIST]

National

5%	Less than \$10,000
9%	\$10,000 but less than \$20,000
12%	\$20,000 but less than \$30,000
12%	\$30,000 but less than \$40,000
10%	\$40,000 but less than \$50,000
13%	\$50,000 but less than \$75,000
8%	\$75,000 but less than \$100,000
10%	\$100,000 or more
3%	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
18%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D8. Are you Spanish, Latino, or Hispanic?

National

5%	Yes
93%	No
--	Don't Know
1%	Refused

D9. Which of the following groups best describes your race? [READ LIST]

National

86%	White
8%	Black or African-American
--	Asian
--	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
1%	American Indian or Alaska Native
3%	Other
--	Don't know
2%	Refused

D10. [RECORD STATE]

D11. What is your gender?

National

45%	Male
55%	Female

D12. Finally, what is your 5-digit zip code?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING! YOUR OPINION COUNTS!