



## AP Poll: Neither Bush nor Kerry gain during turbulent period, but fears grow about Iraq

WASHINGTON DC (AP) Neither President Bush nor Democrat John Kerry has gained an advantage in the presidential race, despite millions of dollars spent on advertising, though Americans are growing concerned that violence in Iraq is increasing the threat of terrorism, an Associated Press poll found.

*The Associated Press Poll is conducted by Ipsos-Public Affairs. Between April 5-7, 2004, the AP/Ipsos poll interviewed a representative sample of 1,001 adults nationwide, including 758 registered voters. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 for all adults, +/- 3.5 for registered voters.*

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WASHINGTON DC (AP) Neither President Bush nor Democrat John Kerry has gained an advantage in the presidential race, despite millions of dollars spent on advertising, though Americans are growing concerned that violence in Iraq is increasing the threat of terrorism, an Associated Press poll found.

Bush was backed by 45 percent of voters and Kerry by 44 percent in the poll conducted for the AP by Ipsos-Public Affairs. Independent candidate Ralph Nader had 6 percent support. The numbers are essentially unchanged from AP-Ipsos polls taken in early and mid-March.

While the presidential race hasn't changed significantly, public opinion has shifted in some areas after a week of growing violence in Iraq.

Asked whether the military action in Iraq has increased or decreased the threat of terrorism around the world, half in the poll, 49 percent, said it has increased the threat, while 28 percent said it has decreased the threat. The number of people who thought the Iraq situation increased the terrorism threat grew slightly from Monday through Wednesday as the poll was conducted.

In a mid-February AP poll, Americans were evenly divided on the effects of military action in Iraq, with 38 percent saying it had increased the terror threat and the same number saying the threat had decreased.

The current poll found that 41 percent approve of Bush's performance on foreign policy issues and 51 percent approve of his handling of the war on terrorism. His standing with the public on those issues has dropped since January.

"I would like if there was a better challenger for Bush," said Justin Tucker, a 21-year-old college student from Prosser, Wash., who supports the president. "I just don't believe in ripping the president out of office during a war on terror \_ especially to replace him with Kerry. Who knows what Kerry's going to do?"

Public confidence in the economy also has slipped over the last month -- a measure often affected by international turbulence.

And the public's view of Bush's handling of the economy was unchanged since March after signs last week that the jobs picture is improving. More than half in the poll, 53 percent, disapproved of Bush's handling of the economy.

Growing fears about the situation in Iraq and doubts about Bush's handling of domestic and foreign issues have not helped Kerry to this point. Bush generally gets higher marks than Kerry on handling of foreign policy and terrorism, despite the recent decline in his own ratings.

"If he had let a west Texas boy run that war, it would be over by now," said Robert DeWoody, a 61-year-old independent from Odessa, Texas, who supports Bush. DeWoody disputed any suggestion that Bush is a Texan. "He lived here a little while, but he doesn't have the west Texas mentality."

The poll comes after both sides have spent more than \$60 million on advertising in swing states, including an estimated \$40 million by Bush's re-election campaign. Bush's ads depict Kerry as a politician who flip-flops on the issues, while many Kerry ads criticize Bush's handling of the economy.

While the public may still have doubts about Kerry, the view of Bush remains lukewarm.

Bush's overall job approval was at 48 percent, with 50 percent disapproving -- basically unchanged from a month ago.

Count Amerilis Patillo, a 75-year-old Chicago Democrat, among those who disapprove of Bush.

"I don't like what the little shrub is doing on Iraq," she said. "If the Supreme Court doesn't select Bush this time, then Kerry will get in."

The AP-Ipsos poll of 1,001 adults, including 758 registered voters, was taken April 5-7. It has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points, slightly larger for registered voters.