

## Americans Support Third Party Candidacies of Jesse Ventura and John McCain

Humphrey Institute Survey  
2004 Elections Project  
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The hot topic in handicapping the presidential election is whether the announced independent candidate **Ralph Nader** will be the spoiler -- again -- by winning a small but decisive percentage of the vote in an evenly divided country.

Nader enjoys the support of 9 percent of Americans and hurts the presumed Democratic nominee John Kerry, according to the Humphrey Institute Survey based on a national sample of 758 adults conducted by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut from February 18-29.

But Nader is not the only third party candidate.

Sixteen percent of Americans are willing to vote for Republican Senator **John McCain** if he ran as an independent.

Eleven percent favored **Jesse Ventura**, former Independence Party Governor of Minnesota.

When posed as alternatives to Bush and the Democratic presidential nominee, 13 percent said they would vote for an unnamed "candidate for a third party."

There is little overlap among the supporters of these different candidates; the pool of voters for individual third party candidates may be as large as 25 percent.

The Humphrey Institute Survey shows (as have other surveys) that Bush and Kerry are locked in a statistical tie -- 44.6 percent for Bush and 42.4 percent for Kerry (4 point margin of error).

The Humphrey Survey reveals two important threats that third party candidates pose to Bush and Kerry.

First, third party candidates drain votes from the bases of the major political parties and, especially, the Republican Party's extraordinarily loyal base of supporters. The opportunity to vote for McCain reduces the Republican vote for Bush from 87 percent when matched in a two man race with Kerry to 79 percent and cuts Bush's overall support to 35.7 percent (below the 37.5 percent that his father received in the 1992 election because of another third party candidate -- Ross Perot). Even the prospect of an unnamed "candidate for a third party" reduced Bush's support among his partisans further to 74.7 percent, suggesting the vulnerability of his base to independent candidates. Nader drained fewer votes from Kerry's base, nudging down the Democrat's pull among his partisans to 70 percent from the 72.8 percent that he received when paired with Bush.

The second challenge of third party candidates is that they eat up independent votes. Kerry was hurt the most, cutting into his 8 point lead over Bush among independents in a two man race (46.4 percent versus 38.6 percent). Nader, who was only a modest draw for Democrats, damaged Kerry most by decreasing his backing among independents by nearly 10 points and putting him slightly behind Bush in this critical group. (Nader also cuts into Kerry's support among African Americans.) McCain was most popular among independents, taking 26.7 percent (nearly equaling Bush's 28.2 percent) and cutting Kerry's share by nearly 15 points to 32 percent.

### **Humphrey Institute Survey of Third Party Candidates**

Center for Survey Research and Analysis, University of Connecticut  
 February 18-29, 2004  
 758 American adults

MN1. If the 2004 presidential election were being held today, for whom would you vote?

**Table A. Total Number and Percentage**

	Number	Percent
George W. Bush	309	40.8%
Democratic nominee for president	338	44.7%
Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)	15	1.9%
Refused	96	12.7%
Total	758	

**Table B. Percentage of Respondents for each response, calculated by Party**

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Other	Don't know	Refused	Totals
George W. Bush	83.0%	10.7%	35.7%	42.4%	37.1%	0.0%	40.9%
Democratic nominee for president	10.1%	79.3%	44.9%	27.3%	17.1%	50.0%	44.7%
Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)	0.5%	1.1%	3.9%	0.0%	2.9%	25.0%	1.8%
Refused	6.4%	8.8%	15.5%	30.3%	42.9%	25.0%	12.5%

MN2: If the 2004 presidential election were held today, and George W. Bush were running as the Republican candidate and John Kerry was the Democratic candidate, for whom would you vote?

**Table A. Total Number and Percentage**

	Number	Percent
George W. Bush	338	44.6%
John Kerry	321	42.4%
Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)	11	1.5%
Refused	88	11.6%
Total	758	

**Table B. Percentage of Respondents for each response, calculated by Party**

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Other	Don't know	Refused	Totals
George W. Bush	87.2%	14.2%	38.6%	42.9%	44.1%	25.0%	44.5%
John Kerry	9.2%	72.8%	46.4%	22.9%	17.6%	50.0%	42.4%
Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)	0.0%	1.9%	1.9%	2.9%	2.9%	0.0%	1.4%
Refused	3.7%	11.1%	13.0%	31.4%	35.3%	25.0%	11.6%

MN3. Third party candidates, such as Ross Perot and Ralph Nader, played important roles in recent presidential elections. I'm curious about your willingness to vote for a third party candidate. If the 2004 presidential election were being held today, would you vote for George W. Bush, the Republican, the Democratic nominee for president, or a candidate for a third party?

**Table A. Total Number and Percentage**

	Number	Percent
George W. Bush	277	36.5%
Democratic nominee for president	269	35.5%
Candidate for a third party	100	13.2%
Other (SPECIFY)	16	2.1%
Refused	112	14.8%
Total	758	

**Table B. Percentage of Respondents for each response, calculated by Party**

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Other	Don't know	Refused	Totals
George W. Bush	74.7%	13.1%	26.6%	37.1%	39.4%	0.0%	36.6%
Democratic nominee for president	6.0%	71.9%	28.0%	22.9%	3.0%	25.0%	35.4%
Candidate for a third party	8.8%	8.1%	24.6%	2.9%	18.2%	25.0%	13.1%
Other (SPECIFY)	1.8%	1.2%	3.9%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	2.1%
Refused	8.8%	5.8%	16.9%	37.1%	36.4%	50.0%	12.7%

MN4. If the next election for president were held today, and George W. Bush was running as the Republican candidate, John Kerry was the Democratic candidate, and John McCain, the Senator from Arizona, ran as an independent, for whom would you vote?

**Table A. Total Number and Percentage**

	Number	Percent
George W. Bush	279	36.9%
John Kerry	271	35.7%
John McCain	119	15.6%
Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)	5	0.6%
Refused	85	11.2%
Total	758	

**Table B. Percentage of Respondents for each response, calculated by Party**

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Other	Don't know	Refused	Totals
George W. Bush	79.3%	9.2%	28.2%	41.2%	26.5%	25.0%	36.8%
John Kerry	6.0%	68.6%	32.0%	26.5%	5.9%	25.0%	35.7%
John McCain	10.1%	13.0%	26.7%	5.9%	14.7%	0.0%	15.6%
Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)	0.5%	0.8%	0.5%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.7%
Refused	4.1%	8.4%	12.6%	26.5%	50.0%	50.0%	11.2%

MN5. If the next election for president were held today, and George W. Bush was running as the Republican candidate, John Kerry was the Democratic candidate, and Ralph Nader, the former Green Party candidate, ran as an independent, for whom would you vote?

**Table A. Total Number and Percentage**

	Number	Percent
George W. Bush	321	42.4%
John Kerry	288	38.0%
Ralph Nader	69	9.1%
Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)	5	0.7%
Refused	74	9.8%
Total	758	

**Table B. Percentage of Respondents for each response, calculated by Party**

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Other	Don't know	Refused	Totals
George W. Bush	82.9%	13.4%	37.9%	41.2%	38.2%	0.0%	42.3%
John Kerry	7.8%	70.1%	36.9%	23.5%	5.9%	50.0%	38.1%
Ralph Nader	5.5%	8.0%	14.6%	2.9%	11.8%	25.0%	9.1%
Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.7%
Refused	3.7%	6.9%	10.7%	32.4%	41.2%	25.0%	9.8%

MN6. If the next election for president were held today, and George W. Bush was running as the Republican candidate, John Kerry was the Democratic candidate, and Jesse Ventura, the former governor of Minnesota ran as an independent, for whom would you vote?

**Table A. Total Number and Percentage**

	Number	Percent
George W. Bush	307	40.5%
John Kerry	294	38.8%
Jesse Ventura	84	11.1%
Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)	3	0.4%
Refused	69	9.1%
Total	758	

**Table B. Percentage of Respondents for each response, calculated by Party**

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Other	Don't know	Refused	Totals
George W. Bush	83.9%	13.0%	30.9%	44.1%	35.3%	0.0%	40.6%
John Kerry	8.3%	69.3%	40.6%	20.6%	5.9%	50.0%	38.8%
Jesse Ventura	5.5%	10.0%	16.9%	14.7%	17.6%	25.0%	11.2%
Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.4%
Refused	2.3%	6.9%	11.6%	20.6%	38.2%	25.0%	9.0%