

10-1-2004

# Louisiana in the 2004 Presidential Election

Susan Howell  
*University of New Orleans*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholarworks.uno.edu/src\\_pubs](http://scholarworks.uno.edu/src_pubs)



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Howell, Susan, "Louisiana in the 2004 Presidential Election" (2004). *Survey Research Center Publications*. Paper 13.  
[http://scholarworks.uno.edu/src\\_pubs/13](http://scholarworks.uno.edu/src_pubs/13)

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Survey Research Center (UNO Poll) at ScholarWorks@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Survey Research Center Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uno.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uno.edu).

# Louisiana in the 2004 Presidential Election



October, 2004

## *Survey Research Center*

**Dr. Susan E. Howell, Director**  
sehowell@uno.edu

**Stephanie Burchard, Research Assistant**  
smburcha@uno.edu

**Megan Hubbard, Research Assistant**  
mhubbard@uno.edu

(504) 280-7379

You can view SRC surveys on:

[www.uno.edu/~poli](http://www.uno.edu/~poli)

*Special thanks to  
Ms. Daxecker's class in  
Methods of Political Research*

## The Survey

The University of New Orleans Survey Research Center conducted a survey of 700 registered voters in Louisiana between October 13 and October 21, 2004. The sample was drawn from the listing of registered voters provided by the State and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7%. Since Louisiana is considered a relatively safe state for President Bush, we focused on two issues that have been prominent in this year's campaign: the war in Iraq and perceptions of the national economy. The gender gap, the potential impact of new registrants, perceptions of Louisiana's economy, and Governor Blanco's approval are also examined. Some of these items have been asked in previous UNO SRC surveys, and, when available, time trends are presented.

### The Presidential Race in Louisiana

As expected, President Bush enjoys a comfortable lead in Louisiana. Among likely voters he leads Senator Kerry by twelve percentage points. The usual racial polarization is evident, with over seventy percent of black registered voters saying they will vote for Kerry (the actual percent will undoubtedly be higher), and two-thirds of white registered voters supporting Bush.

	<b>ALL</b>	<b>WHITES</b>	<b>BLACKS</b>	<b>LIKELY VOTERS*</b>
<b>Bush</b>	48%**	66%	6%	50%
<b>Kerry</b>	40	27	71	38
<b>Nader</b>	2	1	5	2
<b>Undecided</b>	8	5	14	8
<b>N</b>	700	491	209	700

\*Sample weighted based on past voting behavior.

\*\*Numbers do not add to 100% due to a few respondents mentioning other candidates.

White Republicans and African Americans are historically the most predictable groups, so the potential swing voters are white Democrats and white Independents. Throughout this analysis we will focus on these two swing groups and how their opinions and ideologies can help account for Bush's lead in Louisiana.

In this race white Democrats are much less loyal to their candidate than white Republicans, indicating the lack of appeal that a liberal Democrat has for some Louisiana Democrats. Twenty-nine percent of white Democrats say they will defect from their party and vote for President Bush. In addition to a segment of the Democrats, Bush is favored by two-thirds of white Independents. Thus, among whites, Bush has support across the political spectrum.

	<b>WHITE DEMOCRATS</b>	<b>WHITE INDEPENDENTS</b>	<b>WHITE REPUBLICANS</b>
<b>Bush</b>	29%	66%	97%
<b>Kerry</b>	64	20	1
<b>Nader</b>	1	3	0
<b>Undecided</b>	6	8	2
<b>N</b>	146	126	187

### **Political Ideology**

When we look at the self-described political ideologies of the swing groups, again it is apparent that a liberal presidential candidate has limited appeal in Louisiana. Even white Democrats are more likely to say they are moderate than to say they are liberal, and white Independents are moderate and conservative.

	<b>ALL</b>	<b>WHITES</b>	<b>BLACKS</b>
<b>Liberal</b>	12%	12%	12%
<b>Moderate</b>	31	33	26
<b>Conservative</b>	32	37	20
	<b>WHITE DEMOCRATS</b>	<b>WHITE INDEPENDENTS</b>	<b>WHITE REPUBLICANS</b>
<b>Liberal</b>	27%	9%	3%
<b>Moderate</b>	32	46	27
<b>Conservative</b>	15	30	62

### **President Bush's Approval Rating**

President Bush's approval is strikingly polarized. Three-quarters of Louisiana voters express intense feelings about the President, with slightly more respondents strongly approving than strongly disapproving. This level of intensity is quite unusual, and it may be part of the reason interest is so high in this election.

	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Strongly Approve</b>	41%
<b>Approve</b>	10
<b>Disapprove</b>	9
<b>Strongly Disapprove</b>	36
<b>Don't Know</b>	4

## Presidential Vote Among 2004 Registrants

We know that Louisiana has a large number of new registrants and we isolated those voters in our sample who had registered in 2004. With only 38 new voters in the sample, we have to be very cautious about conclusions, but over half say they strongly disapprove of Bush, and 60% are non-Bush voters. Kerry may slightly benefit from these new voters.

	NEW REGISTRANTS
<b>Bush</b>	40%
<b>Kerry</b>	50
<b>Nader</b>	5
<b>Undecided</b>	5
<b>N</b>	38

## President Bush's Approval Rating Among 2004 Registrants

	NEW REGISTRANTS
<b>Strongly Approve</b>	24%
<b>Approve</b>	16
<b>Disapprove</b>	3
<b>Strongly Disapprove</b>	53
<b>N</b>	38

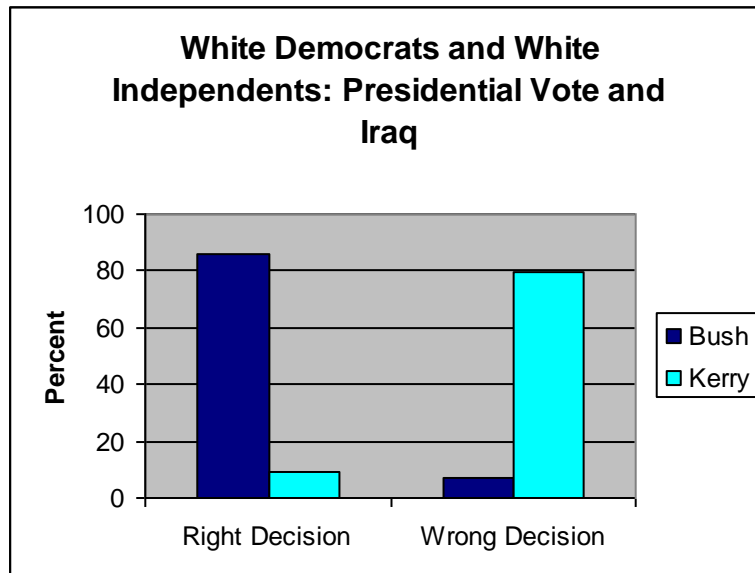
## Opinion on Iraq

Opinion on the war in Iraq is similar to the vote preferences of registered voters, whites, and blacks. That is, whites believe two to one that going to war was the right decision, blacks are five to one against the war, and a slight majority of the likely voters think the Iraq war was the right thing to do.

	ALL	WHITES	BLACKS	LIKE.LY VOTERS
<b>Right Decision</b>	50%	65%	15%	51%
<b>Wrong Decision</b>	45	30	79	43
<b>Don't Know</b>	5	5	6	6

The swing groups also express opinions on the war that are in line with their vote preferences. One-third of white Democrats go against their party and say that the war is the right thing, and white Independents are two to one in favor of the war.

The relationship of opinion on the war and vote is quite strong in the swing groups. White Democrats and white Independents who think the war was the right decision are 85% Bush supporters. Support for the war seems to be a reason some white Democrats are not voting for their party's candidate.



	WHITE DEMOCRATS	WHITE INDEPENDENTS	WHITE REPUBLICANS
<b>Right Decision</b>	35%	63%	91%
<b>Wrong Decision</b>	59	30	7
<b>Don't Know</b>	6	7	2

### The National Economy ("over past year")

Louisiana voters are more negative than positive about the direction of the national economy. But this does not translate into a majority vote for Kerry because of the significant proportion of white voters who say the national economy has "stayed the same." Voters who say the economy has "stayed the same" are probably basing their vote on something else. Among the swing group of white Democrats and white Independents, Bush is favored by those who say the national economy is "better" or "stayed the same."

	ALL	WHITES	BLACKS
<b>Gotten Better</b>	26%	33%	8%
<b>Stayed Same</b>	27	31	19
<b>Gotten Worse</b>	46	35	72
<b>Don't Know</b>	1	1	1

	<b>WHITE DEMOCRATS</b>	<b>WHITE INDEPENDENTS</b>	<b>WHITE REPUBLICANS</b>
<b>Gotten Better</b>	14%	34%	53%
<b>Stayed Same</b>	23	25	37
<b>Gotten Worse</b>	62	40	8
<b>Don't Know</b>	1	1	2

### **The Gender Gap and Presidential Vote?**

There is no gender gap among whites in Louisiana. In fact, there is amazing similarity between the voting preferences of white men and white women. This finding contrasts to a recent *New York Times* poll in which women nationwide support Kerry by a 49-41 margin, and men support Bush 53-40. It also contrasts to a UNO SRC Louisiana survey prior to the 2000 election in which white women were 12 percentage points less likely to support Bush than white men.

	<b>WHITE MALES</b>	<b>WHITE FEMALES</b>
<b>Bush</b>	66%	66%
<b>Kerry</b>	24	28
<b>Nader</b>	1	1
<b>Undecided</b>	8	3
<b>N</b>	226	265

### **The Gender Gap and Opinion on Iraq?**

One of the reasons for the lack of a gender gap may be that nearly the same percentage of white males and females think that military force against Iraq was the right decision. This is the most surprising finding in our study since women are typically less likely to sanction the use of force. In fact, a recent PEW Research Center poll confirms the existence of a nationwide gender gap on Iraq. According to their poll, 51 percent of men believe the “decision to use force in Iraq” was the right decision, compared to 40 percent of women who agree with that statement.

It appears that the general conservatism of white females in Louisiana, in combination with a liberal Democratic candidate and a national security threat effectively erase the gender gap seen at the national level.

	<b>WHITE MALES</b>	<b>WHITE FEMALES</b>
<b>Right Decision</b>	66%	65%
<b>Wrong Decision</b>	31	29
<b>Don't Know</b>	3	6

### **Social Issues**

The conservatism of Louisiana voters on social issues can be seen in their opinions on a gay marriage amendment and abortion. Over half of the respondents favor a U.S. constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, and pro-life responses outnumber pro-choice responses two to one. These are presented as an indication of why candidates defined as liberal by national standards cannot fare well in Louisiana.

<b>ALL</b>	
<b>US Constitutional Amendment Banning Gay Marriage</b>	
Against	38%
For	57
Don't Know	6
<b>Abortion</b>	
Always Legal	13%
Sometimes Legal	52
Never Legal	31
Don't Know	4

### **Abortion Attitudes over Time in Louisiana**

Opinion on abortion has become slightly more conservative in Louisiana since Bush became President. We suspect this is due to the dominance of the conservative message which is received by conservative voters.



	1992	1995	1996	1999	2002	2003	2004
<b>Always Legal</b>	21%	21%	21%	18%	13%	14%	13%
<b>Sometimes Legal</b>	52	52	49	52	47	52	52
<b>Never Legal</b>	23	21	26	27	33	30	31
<b>Don't Know</b>	4	6	4	3	7	4	4
<b>N</b>	725	701	711	946	700	731	700

### **Best Predictors of 2004 Presidential Vote Choice Among White Democrats and White Independents\***

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| <b>1.</b> | Opinion on Iraq                           |
| <b>2.</b> | Political Ideology                        |
| <b>3.</b> | Party Identification and National Economy |

\* Based on multivariate analysis.

In order to get a clearer picture of why some white Democrats and most white Independents are voting for Bush, we conducted a type of statistical analysis that allows us to estimate the impact of various factors on vote preferences. The most important factor predicting voting for Bush in these two swing groups is opinion on Iraq, followed by political ideology, then party identification and the national economy.

The war in Iraq and its perceived connection to terrorism are more important issues in the presidential election in Louisiana than the national economy.

### **Governor Blanco's Approval Rating**

Governor Blanco enjoys a high approval rating of 66%. What is unusual about her approval rating is that it is not very racially polarized. Racial polarization has characterized approval of Louisiana governors for at least thirty years, so Governor Blanco can take satisfaction from her biracial support.

	ALL	WHITES	BLACKS
<b>Strongly Approve</b>	41%	36%	51%
<b>Approve</b>	25	28	18
<b>Disapprove</b>	8	9	7
<b>Strongly Disapprove</b>	11	11	10
<b>Don't Know</b>	15	16	14

### Perceptions of Louisiana's Economy

When asked about the direction of the state's economy, voters are lukewarm, with most responding that Louisiana's economy has "stayed the same" over the past year. Perceptions of the state economy have improved slightly over last year when fewer people answered "stayed the same" and more answered "gotten worse".

	ALL	WHITES	BLACKS
<b>Gotten Better</b>	15%	16%	15%
<b>Stayed Same</b>	50	52	42
<b>Gotten Worse</b>	32	28	41
<b>Don't Know</b>	3	4	2

### Perceptions of State Economy over Time in Louisiana

Over the last twelve years Louisiana voters have typically been more negative than positive about the direction of the state's economy. This pattern is probably a reflection of the sluggish nature of economic development in this state. So far, perceptions of the economy of the state have not affected the Governor's high approval rating.

	1992	1995	1999	2003	2004
<b>Gotten Better</b>	9%	20%	44%	14%	15%
<b>Stayed Same</b>	33	42	39	43	50
<b>Gotten Worse</b>	57	33	15	40	32
<b>Don't Know</b>	1	5	2	3	3
<b>N</b>	725	701	946	731	700