

Updated Late Afternoon Numbers

Mucho flattering to Kerry; plus Nader makes an appearance.

By Jack Shafer

Updated Tuesday, Nov. 2, 2004, at 4:28 PM PT

Florida

Kerry 51

Bush 49

Ohio

Kerry 51

Bush 49

Michigan

Kerry 52

Bush 46

Nader 1

Pennsylvania

Kerry 53

Bush 46

Iowa

Kerry 50

Bush 49

Wisconsin

Kerry 51

Bush 48

Nader 1

Minnesota

Kerry 52

Bush 46

Nader 2

New Hampshire

Kerry 54

Bush 44

Nader 1

New Mexico

Kerry 50

Bush 48

Nader 1

Colorado
Kerry 49
Bush 50
Nader 1

Arkansas
Kerry 45
Bush 54
Nader 1

Missouri
Kerry 47
Bush 52

New York
Kerry 62
Bush 36
Nader 2

Nevada
Kerry 49
Bush 48
Nader 1

New Jersey
Kerry 54
Bush 44
Nader 1

West Virginia
Kerry 45
Bush 54
Nader 1

Why is Slate running these numbers? See this morning's piece. ... 4:20 p.m. PT

Late Afternoon Exit Polls: It's a tight squeeze: In the national exit poll, Kerry leads Bush 51-48. In Wisconsin he's up by three, and in Ohio and Florida he leads by one.

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Why is Slate running these numbers? See this morning's piece. ... 3:16 p.m. PT

Early Exit: A squeaker: The first wave of exit-poll data reaching my desk comes from a variety of sources. In some states the sources disagree about the specific margin by which a candidate leads, but never about which candidate is out in front. Some of the confusion may stem from the mixing of morning dexit-poll numbers with early afternoon numbers. With those provisos and the understanding that the early numbers are predictive of nothing without their accompanying computer model, here's what I've heard:

Florida
Kerry 50
Bush 49

Ohio
Kerry 50
Bush 49

Pennsylvania
Kerry 54
Bush 45

Wisconsin
Kerry 51
Bush 46

Michigan
Kerry 51
Bush 47

Minnesota
Kerry 58
Bush 40

Nevada
Kerry 48
Bush 50

New Mexico
Kerry 50
Bush 48

North Carolina

Kerry 49

Bush 51

Colorado

Kerry 46

Bush 53

Other exit-poll results have arrived in more vague form, with Kerry leading Bush in New Hampshire but trailing him in Arizona and Louisiana.

For an explanation of why Slate is posting exit-poll numbers, see the previous post, below. ... 12:15 p.m. PT

Exit Poll Charade: Why Slate is posting the exit-poll numbers: As this item posts, the first raw exit-poll data are streaming from the National Election Pool consortium owned by the Associated Press and the five television networks (CBS, ABC, NBC, Fox, and CNN) to their news divisions and to the newsrooms of NEP subscribers—big city newspapers and other broadcasters.

These early exit-poll numbers do not divine the name of the winner. Instead, regard these numbers as a sportswriter does the line scores from the fourth inning of a baseball game. The leading team might win the game, but then again it might not. But having the early data in front of him helps the sportswriter plot the story he thinks he'll need to write at game's end.

As you read this posting, the political reporters at the networks, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, NPR, Newsweek, and about two dozen other news outlets are cracking their knuckles over their keyboards, contemplating the story, while statisticians and political analysts at the networks prepare to run the numbers through their computer models to generate a prediction.

The paid users of exit-poll data have signed a blood oath not to divulge it to unauthorized eyes, and the networks have promised not to call any states before their polls close. But the numbers always leak out to other journalists—such as the writers at Slate—and starting at about 5 p.m. ET or so, the news anchors start giving clues about what they've learned from the exit-poll results. As John Tierney writes in today's New York Times, the result on television is sometimes like a "version of the Dance of the Seven Veils, in which anchors or

correspondents will pretend not to know what's happening in a state but give enough clues for the discerning viewer. They might allude to the high spirits at one campaign headquarters, or start speculating about what effect the loss of this state would have on the other candidate."

In the 2003 gubernatorial election in California, the networks kept their solemn oath not to call the winner until polls closed at 11 p.m. ET. Just the same, CBS News' Dan Rather telegraphed his findings in this 6:30 p.m. ET broadcast.

With voting still under way in the California governor recall election, CBS News exit polls, for whatever, if anything, they may be worth, now indicate many voters made up their minds weeks ago. ... If [Gov. Gray Davis] is recalled, there are widespread expectations—again, for whatever they may be worth—that Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger would replace Davis.

On CNBC, John Seigenthaler maintained a straight face in the 7 p.m. ET time slot as he divulged these exit-poll results: "Nearly three-quarters of California voters, 73 percent, say they disapprove of [Gov. Gray Davis'] job performance."

Need he have drawn a picture? Meanwhile, MSNBC and Fox indulged in similar mugging. Watch the airwaves for such giveaways this evening.

Slate believes its readers should know as much about the unfolding election as the anchors and other journalists, so given the proviso that the early numbers are no more conclusive than the midpoint score of a baseball game, we're publishing the exit-poll numbers as we receive them. Some people say it's irresponsible to publish the numbers—or broadcast early projections of winners—because it may disturb voter turnout. As Slate Editor Jacob Weisberg put it in today's Times, he doesn't want to put the Web site "in the paternalistic position of deciding that our readers aren't mature enough to react in the proper way to truthful information we possess."

Watch this space. ... 11:50 a.m. PT

Jack Shafer is Slate's editor at large.

Photo by Brian Snyder/Reuters.