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# **The Internet and Campaign 2004**

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**The internet was a key force in politics last year as 75 million Americans used it to get news, discuss candidates in emails, and participate directly in the political process**

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# Summary of Findings

## The internet became an essential part of American politics in 2004.

Last year was a breakout year for the role of the internet in politics. Fully 75 million Americans – 37% of the adult population and 61% of online Americans – used the internet to get political news and information, discuss candidates and debate issues in emails, or participate directly in the political process by volunteering or giving contributions to candidates. The online political news consumer population grew dramatically from previous election years (up from 18% of the U.S. population in 2000 to 29% in 2004), and there was an increase of more than 50% between 2000 and 2004 in the number of registered voters who cited the internet as one of their *primary* sources of news about the presidential campaign.

### The audience for politics online grows...

*Asked of internet users: Did you ever go online to get news or information about the elections?*

	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004
General public	4%	6%	18%	13%	29%
Internet users	22%	15%	33%	22%	52%

Source: Pew Research Center for The People & The Press and Pew Internet & American Life Project surveys.

### ... and more cite the internet as a primary news source

*Responses from registered voters to the question: How have you been getting most of your news about the presidential election campaign? \**

	1992	1996	2000	2004
Television **	82%	72%	70%	78%
<b>Network</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Local</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Cable</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>47%</b>
Newspapers	57%	60%	39%	39%
Radio	12%	19%	15%	17%
Internet	NA	3%	11%	18%
Magazines	11%	11%	4%	3%

\* Respondents were allowed to give two responses.

\*\* Numbers do not add to 100% because of rounding and multiple answers.

Source: Pew Research Center for The People & The Press and Pew Internet & American Life Project surveys.

This report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on how Americans' used the internet during the campaign of 2004. All numerical data was gathered through telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International between November 4 and November 22, 2004, among a sample of 2,200 adults, aged 18 and older. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is +/- 2%. For results based Internet users (n=1,324), the margin of sampling error is +/- 3%.

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## Summary of Findings

For online Americans, the internet is now a more important source of campaign news and information than radio: 28% of internet users cited the internet as a prime source of campaign news compared to 17% of them who cited radio. For those with broadband at home (a group comprising 27% of the overall U.S. population) the internet rivals newspapers as a major source of campaign news and information: 38% of those with broadband at home cited the internet as a major source of political news, compared to 36% of them who cited newspapers.

For campaign 2004, the overall figures related to uses of the internet for politics were:

- 52% of internet users, or about 63 million people, said they went online to get news or information about the 2004 elections. Throughout this report, we will call this group of people online political news consumers and we will compare them to those who in previous elections said they used the internet to get political news and information about that election.
- 35% of internet users, or about 43 million people, said they used email to discuss politics.
- 11% of internet users, or more than 13 million people, went online to engage directly in campaign activities such as donating money, volunteering, or learning about political events to attend.

Any internet user who said “yes” to one of those three questions is considered part of the online politics user community in our calculations. That came to 61% of internet users, or 75 million people. In fact, many people said “yes” to two or all three of the questions.

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### **Many online political news consumers say the internet was important in giving them information that helped them decide their vote and that it made a difference in their voting decision.**

- 52% of political news consumers said the internet was important in giving them information that helped them decide how to vote.
- 27% of them said the political information they got online made them decide to vote for or against a particular candidate.
- 23% said their use of the internet for political news and activities encouraged them to vote.

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### **Online Americans render a positive verdict about the overall impact of the internet on the campaign.**

- 49% of all internet users (and 56% of those who get political news online) said “the internet has raised the overall quality of public debate” during the campaign and only 5% said the internet lowered the quality of debate. Some 36% said the internet did not make much of a difference.

**The online political news audience is becoming more mainstream.**

As the internet has become a popular technology adopted by a majority of American adults, its demographic character has changed and that has led to changes in people’s motives for getting political news online and their preferences in the Web sites they access for political news. At election time in 1996, internet adoption stood at 23% of the U.S. population and the online political news audience was disproportionately male, white, and relatively well-to-do. By 2004, the internet population had grown to 61% of the adult population and that changed the profile of the online political news consumer population to include higher proportions of women, older Americans, and rural residents.

<b>The shifting composition of those who are online political news consumers</b>			
<i>The share of online political news consumers coming from each group. For example, reading the first line of the table: 66% of the online political news consumers in 1996 were men and 34% were women.</i>			
	<b>1996</b> <i>(7 million got political news this year)</i>	<b>2000</b> <i>(34.5 million got political news this year)</i>	<b>2004</b> <i>(63 million got political news this year)</i>
Men	66%	56%	53%
Women	34%	44%	47%
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
Whites	82%	86%	77%
Blacks (Non-Hispanics)	8%	7%	5%
Hispanics*	3%	6%	9%
Other	7%	4%	9%
<b>Age</b>			
18-29	38%	29%	28%
30-49	52%	51%	50%
50-64	8%	17%	19%
65+	2%	3%	3%
<b>Household income</b>			
Less than \$30,000	26%	18%	27%
\$30,000-\$49,999	30%	28%	33%
\$50,000-\$74,999	23%	23%	25%
\$75,000+	22%	31%	25%
<b>Educational attainment</b>			
Not high school graduate	3%	4%	4%
High school grad	23%	20%	22%
Some college	28%	31%	30%
College or graduate school degree	46%	44%	46%
<b>Community type</b>			
Rural	n/a	17%	21%
Suburban	n/a	52%	51%
Urban	n/a	31%	28%

Source: Pew Research Center for The People & The Press and Pew Internet & American Life Project surveys.  
 \*Interviews are conducted in English. These numbers represent the proportion of English-speaking Hispanic internet users.

**People used the internet in many ways to gather information, interact with the candidates, and chatter with fellow citizens.**

Over time, the number of people using the Web and email related to politics has grown. At the same time, we have asked more questions during each election cycle about online political activities because it was clear that the number of things people were doing online related to politics was growing. The table below shows 42% growth from 2000 to 2004 in the number of people using the internet to research candidates' issues positions; 82% growth in the number researching candidates' voting records; 50% growth in the number taking online polls; a doubling of the number discussing politics in chat rooms and other online forums; and a doubling of those making campaign contributions online.

<b>Trends in online politics</b>					
<i>Asked of those who went online for election news during that campaign: What do you do when going online for election news? In parentheses, the total number of online political news consumers in that year's campaign.</i>					
	<b>1996</b> (7 million)	<b>1998</b> (9 million)	<b>2000</b> (34.5 million)	<b>2002</b> (26 million)	<b>2004</b> (63 million)
Research candidate positions on issues	--	--	24 million	21 million	34 million
Get or send email with jokes about the election	--	--	--	8 million	32 million
Research candidate voting records	--	3 million	11 million	12 million	20 million
Take online polls	2 million	2 million	12 million	10 million	18 million
Find out about the endorsements or ratings of candidates by organizations	--	--	--	10 million	16 million
Get information about when or where to vote	--	1 million	5 million	6 million	14 million
Join political discussions and chat groups	2 million	1 million	3 million	3 million	6 million
Contribute money to a candidate online	--	--	2 million	1 million	4 million

Source: Pew Research Center for The People & The Press and Pew Internet & American Life Project surveys.

In addition, in 2004:

- 31 million went online to find out how candidates were doing in opinion polls.
- 25 million used the internet to check the accuracy of claims made by or about the candidates.
- 19 million watched video clips about the candidates or the election.
- 17 million sent emails about the campaign to groups of family members or friends as part of listservs or discussion groups.
- 14 million signed up for email newsletters or other online alerts to get the latest news about politics.

## Summary of Findings

- 7 million signed up to receive email from the presidential campaigns.
- 4 million signed up online for campaign volunteer activities such as helping to organize a rally, register voters, or get people to the polls on Election Day.

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### **Kerry voters among online political news consumers were more active online than Bush supporters, and Kerry backers claim they got more out of online politics than did Bush supporters.**

More online political news consumers voted for Republican George W. Bush (53%) than voted for Democrat John Kerry (47%). However, in noteworthy ways, Kerry supporters in the internet population were more active in online politics than Bush supporters.

<b>Kerry voters were more likely than Bush voters to engage in online politics</b>		
<i>Asked of those who get political news online</i>	<i>Kerry voters</i>	<i>Bush voters</i>
Get or send email with jokes about the campaigns and elections	56%	49%
Find out how the candidates were doing in the public opinion polls	55%	47%
Look for more information about a candidate's positions on issues	49%	44%
Check the accuracy of claims made by or about the candidates	44%	41%
Find out about endorsements or ratings of candidates by organizations and groups	32%	22%
Watch video clips about the candidates or election online	31%	30%
Register opinions in an online survey	31%	18%
Get information about a candidate's voting record	27%	29%
Get information about where to vote	25%	17%
Participate in online discussions or chat groups about the elections	10%	4%
Contribute money online to a candidate	9%	2%

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey. N for political news consumers=937 internet users. Margin of error is ±4%.*

In addition, Kerry voters were more likely to use issue-oriented and political organization Web sites.

Kerry voters were more likely to say that the internet was important to them in giving them information that helped them decide their vote. Almost half of the Kerry voters (48%) who got political information online said the internet was important in providing material that helped them decide their votes, compared to 34% of Bush supporters.

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### **The Web sites of mainstream news sources dominated the online political news environment. At the same time, alternative news sources mattered to one in four political news gatherers.**

Asked where they went online most often to get news and information about the campaign, the majority of internet users reported they went to sites of traditional news organizations or online services that syndicate news from traditional sources, such a wire

## Summary of Findings

services. These figures have hardly changed from those reported after the 2000 presidential campaign.

- 43% of online political news consumers (those 63 million people who got campaign news and information online) said they went most often to the news sites of major news organizations such as CNN and the New York Times.
- 28% said they went most often to the news pages of online services such as AOL and Yahoo.
- 11% said they went most often to the site of a local news organization.
- 24% say they went most often to get campaign news to candidate Web sites, sites that specialize in politics, issue-oriented Web sites, government Web sites, and a smattering of other sources such as blogs or non-mainstream news sites.

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**People cite convenience as the main reason they get political news online. However, more than half like the internet because they say they can get information online that is not available elsewhere and because they do not get all the information they need from traditional news sources.**

As the online political news consumer population has grown and come to more closely reflect the entire internet-using population, the preferences and needs of this audience have changed. In the early days of online politics, when the online audience was quite elite and highly politically engaged, online news consumers liked the internet most because it provided information from non-traditional sources. As the audience has become bigger and more mainstream, internet users' tastes have shifted towards a preference for using the internet because it is convenient. It is still the case, though, that more than half of online political news consumers say they like getting news online because it enhances or goes beyond what they feel they get from television and newspapers.

<b>Some use the internet because it is convenient and others use it to get extra news</b>				
<i>Asked of online political news consumers: Which comes closest to describing why you go online to get news and information about the election?*</i>				
	<b>1996</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2004</b>
Because getting information online is convenient	45%	56%	57%	58%
Because you don't get all the news and information you want from traditional news sources such as the daily newspaper or the network TV news	53%	29%	43%	33%
Because you can get information on the Web that is not available elsewhere	26%	12%	10%	11%
Because the Web offers news sources that reflect your own interests or values	24%	6%	8%	7%
Other reason	5%	11%	3%	5%

*\*People were allowed to give multiple answers. Source: Pew Research Center for The People & The Press and Pew Internet & American Life Project surveys.*

## Summary of Findings

<b>The internet and campaign 2004: Summary of Findings at a Glance</b>
The internet became an essential part of American politics in 2004.
Many online political news consumers say the internet was important in giving them information that helped them decide their vote and that it made a difference in their voting decision.
Online Americans render a positive verdict about the overall impact of the internet on the campaign.
The online political news audience is becoming more mainstream.
People used the internet in many ways to gather information, interact with candidates, and chatter with fellow citizens.
Kerry voters among online political news consumer audience were more active online than Bush supporters and Kerry backers claim they got more out of online politics than Bush supporters.
The Web sites of mainstream news sources dominated the online political news environment. At the same time, alternative news sources mattered to one in four political news gatherers.
People cite convenience first as the main reason they get political news online. However, more than half like the internet because they say they can get information online that is not available elsewhere and because they do not get all the information they need from traditional news sources.
<i>Source: The Internet and Campaign 2004. Rainie, Lee, Mike Cornfield, and John Horrigan. Washington, DC: Pew Internet &amp; American Life Project and Pew Research Center for The People &amp; The Press, March 6, 2005.</i>

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# Acknowledgements

**About the Pew Internet & American Life Project:** The Pew Internet Project is a nonprofit, non-partisan initiative of the Pew Research Center. The Project is a think tank that explores the impact of the internet on children, families, communities, the work place, schools, health care, and civic/political life. The Project aims to be an authoritative source for timely information on the Internet's growth and societal impact. Support for the project is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The project's Web site is: [www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org).

**About The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press:** The Center is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics, and public policy issues. The Center is best known for regular national surveys that measure public attentiveness to major news stories and for polling that charts trends in values and fundamental political and social attitudes. The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. Its Web site is: <http://people-press.org/>.

**About Princeton Survey Research Associates International:** PSRAI conducted the survey that is covered in this report. It is an independent research company specializing in social and policy work. The firm designs, conducts, and analyzes surveys worldwide. Its expertise also includes qualitative research and content analysis. With offices in Princeton, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., PSRAI serves the needs of clients around the nation and the world. The firm can be reached at 911 Commons Way, Princeton, NJ 08540, by telephone at 609-924-9204, by fax at 609-924-7499, or by email at [ResearchNJ@PSRA.com](mailto:ResearchNJ@PSRA.com)

# Part 1.

## The political and media landscape in 2004

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### The internet became an important factor during the 2004 campaign.

The internet's distinctive role in politics has arisen because it can be used in multiple ways. Part deliberative town square, part raucous debating society, part research library, part instant news source, and part political comedy club, the internet connects voters to a wealth of content and commentary about politics.

As recently as early 2003, when the Pew Internet & American Life Project reported on the use of the internet by citizens and campaigners in the 2002 midterm election campaigns, it was still not very clear whether there would be major roles for internet users to play in politics. Today, just two years later, at least three such roles have emerged:

- **Absorbing, sharing, and talking about politically significant pieces of content.** The internet became a medium for circulating all kinds of information about the 2004 campaign, including a lot of off-beat and non-traditional information that found its way into the mainstream media coverage and the ongoing campaign debate after first gaining traction online. For example, online photographs of a mysterious bulge under the President Bush's suit coat during one of the debates and online audio remixes of Howard Dean's "scream" on the night of the Iowa caucuses gave these two campaign episodes more attention than they might otherwise have had. The internet was also the venue for voluminous reports and commentary about President Bush's National Guard service and John Kerry's Vietnam service. Bloggers were especially prominent distributors and interpreters of this sort of political content, but email and message boards contributed to the buzz factor as well.
- **Soliciting and donating money for campaigns.** The internet proved an effective medium to raise large amounts of money in small donations from many people on a recurring basis. The Howard Dean campaign collected over \$20 million through the internet, a remarkable 40% of its total receipts. The Kerry campaign amassed \$82 million of its \$249 million online (33%), while the Bush campaign, which did not go at internet fundraising with the same intensity or success as did the Democrats, collected \$14 million of its \$273 million online (5%).<sup>1</sup> Much of this online money came in donations under \$200, an important development with implications for the perennial debate over the influence of big

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<sup>1</sup> Glen Justice, "Kerry Kept Money Coming With Internet as His A.T.M.," *The New York Times*, November 6, 2004, p.A10.

## Part 1. The political and media landscape in 2004

money on American politics, as well as for the attainment by the Democratic national party of financial parity with the Republicans.

- **Fine-tuning, coordinating, and executing the “ground war” of voter contact.** The internet facilitated greater precision in campaign targeting at each stage of the get-out-the-vote (GOTV) process: locating likely supporters, establishing communication lines with them, delivering messages to them, affording them opportunities to help the campaign, and making sure that they registered and cast their ballots. The Dean campaign discovered that Meetups, physical meetings arranged through the online services of a private company, were excellent venues for supporters to coalesce into local campaign teams. Then the campaign deployed its own “Get Local” software to enable and encourage supporters to set up house parties, a grassroots organizing device the Kerry and Bush campaigns emulated and refined. The nominees, along with the parties and numerous advocacy groups, relied on databases to identify voters and on local volunteers to update the data. Home visits, phone calls, email, and even advertisements were delivered to individuals, not just to precinct blocks.

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### Where the mediascape stands.

The internet entered the political media and communications world at a time when it was already in great ferment. The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press has documented how news audiences have become increasingly politicized, as trust in the mainstream media has declined and public perceptions of the credibility of mainstream news sources has fallen.<sup>2</sup> Audiences have been fracturing and the internet is playing an ever-more-important role.<sup>3</sup>

The table below shows the contours of the general media universe at the end of the 2004:

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<sup>2</sup> See “News Audiences Increasingly Politicized” available at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=215>

<sup>3</sup> See “\*Internet Sapping Broadcast News Audience” available at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=36>

## Part 1. The political and media landscape in 2004

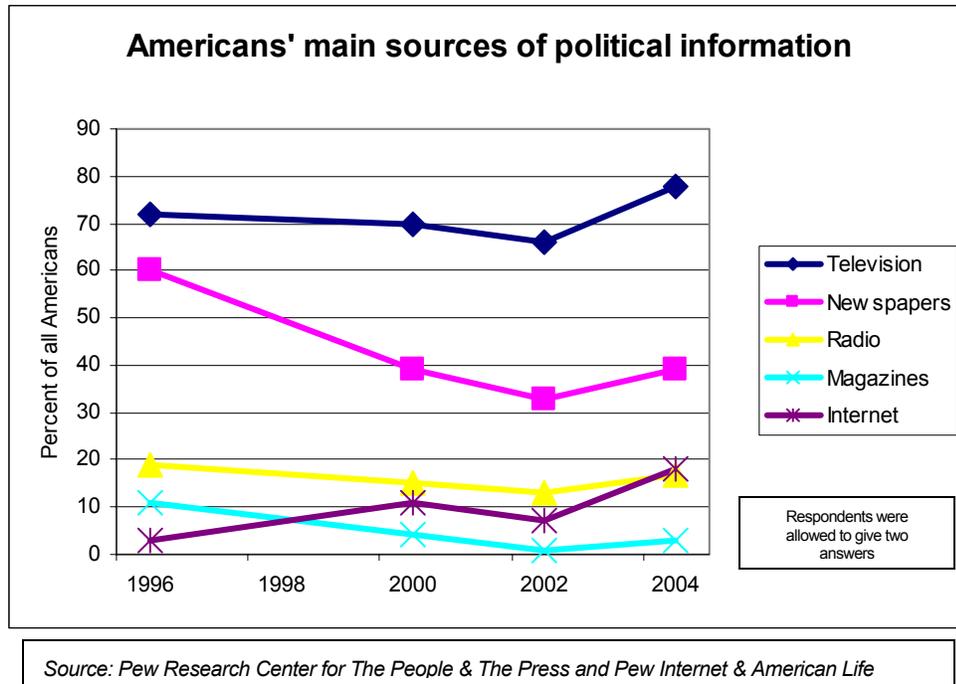
The news media Americans use regularly....			
(Internet sources are shaded)	Regularly	Sometimes	Hardly ever
Local television news	66%	18%	16%
A local daily newspaper	51	20	29
National nightly network news on CBS, ABC, or NBC	45	25	28
Cable news channels such as CNN, MSNBC, or the Fox News Cable Channel	38	28	33
Morning TV shows such as <i>Today</i> , <i>Good Morning America</i> , or <i>The Early Show</i>	20	25	54
Network TV news Web sites such as CNN.com, ABCnews.com, or MSNBC.com	16	19	65
Sunday morning news shows -- <i>Meet the Press</i> , <i>This Week</i> , or <i>Face the Nation</i>	14	21	65
National Public Radio (NPR)	15	18	66
The news pages of Internet services such as AOL News or Yahoo News	13	15	72
News magazines such as <i>Time</i> , <i>U.S. News</i> , or <i>Newsweek</i>	12	25	63
The Web sites of your local newspaper or TV stations	11	17	72
Late night TV shows such as David Letterman and Jay Leno	10	23	67
Print edition of a national newspaper – e.g. <i>New York Times</i> or <i>USA Today</i>	10	14	76
C-SPAN	6	18	76
<i>NewsHour</i> with Jim Lehrer	5	14	80
The Web sites of major national newspapers such as the USA Today.com, New York Times.com, or the Wall Street Journal online	5	12	83
Rush Limbaugh's radio show	5	11	83
<i>The Daily Show</i> with Jon Stewart	5	10	84
Business magazines such as <i>Fortune</i> and <i>Forbes</i>	4	11	85
Magazines such as <i>The Atlantic</i> , <i>Harper's</i> , or <i>The New Yorker</i>	3	6	91
Other online news magazine and opinion sites such as Slate.com or National Review	3	5	92
Online columns or blogs – e.g., Talking Points Memo, the Daily Kos, or Instapundit	2	3	95
Political magazines such as <i>The Nation</i> or <i>The New Republic</i>	1	5	93

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey. N=2200. The sample was split in two to ask media-used questions. N is about 1100 per split sample.

### Nearly one in five Americans now say the internet is a main source of their political news and information.

And most significant has been a six-fold increase in the percentage of Americans citing the internet as their prime news source since 1996, from 3% of the population then to 18% now.

## Part 1. The political and media landscape in 2004



### The daily audience for general online news grows and the appetite for political news from internet sources leaps.

This pattern in getting political news online emerges from a broader trend: more and more internet users go online to get all kinds of news. On a typical day during the final weeks of the campaign, there was a general increase in the number of internet users who get news online – not just political news, but all kinds of news. Nearly a third (31%) of internet users, or 37 million Americans, were getting news online. That is about 15% higher than the general online news audience from the middle of the year. And it represents growth of nearly 75% in the daily online news audience from the middle of 2000.

Some 17% of internet users, or about 20 million people, were online getting political news each day as the campaign drew to a close. That is an increase of 54% from the number of people who were getting political news on average days during the final stages of the 2000 presidential contest. All told, 58% of internet users said that at one time or another they get political news online, a 29% increase over the number who said they got such news in 2000.

## Part 1. The political and media landscape in 2004

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### Almost two-thirds of all Americans were contacted by the campaigns and political activists in the race's home stretch.

Candidates, political groups, and activists were particularly aggressive in their mobilization and get-out-the-vote efforts in 2004. Nearly two-thirds of all Americans (64%) were contacted directly by political actors in the final two months of the campaign.

About half the entire adult population (49%) got politically related mailings during the period between Labor Day and Election Day; 40% received phone calls; 14% received emails; and 9% were visited at their homes. Interestingly, there were no partisan differences in these contacts. The Kerry and Bush campaigns were equally likely to have made contact with voters using each of those methods. And many people heard from representatives of both camps by mail, phone, or email, or on their doorsteps.

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### Millions were directly involved in political activity.

More than a quarter of Americans (26%) were themselves involved with campaigns, campaign events, or direct political mobilization efforts. And 81% of all American adults were contacted by others during the last two months of the campaign by those connected to the candidates – either by mail, email, phone, or house visits.

Some 11% of Americans gave money to a political candidate; 7% attended campaign rallies; 7% sent emails urging people to vote; another 7% urged others through email to vote for a particular candidate; 6% made phone calls on a candidate's behalf; and 4% did door-to-door canvassing. Kerry supporters were more likely than Bush supporters to have done each of those campaign activities.

Activism among Kerry and Bush voters		
<i>Asked of all Americans</i>	<i>Kerry voters</i>	<i>Bush voters</i>
Donate money to a candidate	18%	13%
Made telephone calls urging people to vote for a particular candidate	12%	4%
Attend a campaign rally	11%	6%
Sent emails urging a vote for a particular candidate	11%	6%
Send emails urging people to vote without reference to a candidate	10%	6%
Visited people at their homes to urge them to vote for a particular candidate	6%	2%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey. N=2200. Margin of error is ±2%.

## Part 1. The political and media landscape in 2004

On the receiving end, 49% of all Americans received mail urging their vote for a particular candidate, 40% received candidate-supporting phone calls, 14% received emails, and 10% were visited in their homes.

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### Different voters made up their minds at different times.

One of the factors that probably influenced people's interest in getting political information relates to the timing of their voting decision. Those who make up their minds early probably have less of a need to gather news and information about politics than those who are in the throes of making up their minds.

There was a clear partisan pattern in the timing of voting decisions: Bush voters were more likely than Kerry voters to say they made up their minds early. Kerry voters said they knew later in the cycle and support for him came in several identifiable waves.

<b>When voters made up their minds</b>			
<i>When voters made up their minds</i>	<i>All voters</i>	<i>Bush voters</i>	<i>Kerry voters</i>
Before 2004 began	44%	50%	39%
January 2004-late July (during the caucuses/primaries and up to the conventions)	22	19	25
During convention period – late July through August	5	5	4
September 2004 – after the political conventions	4	5	4
During the debate period (most of October 2004)	10	7	12
Final week of the campaign	12	11	11

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey. N=2200. Margin of error is ±2%.*

## Part 2.

### The role of the internet in 2004

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#### **The internet's role in campaigns has grown dramatically since 2000.**

There are several forces driving people's increased use of the internet for getting general news and for getting political news in particular:

- There is a growing number of broadband users. The figure has jumped more than ten-fold since June of 2000, when the Pew Internet Project began to ask whether online Americans had a high-speed connection in their homes. Always-on broadband connections make it easier for people to get news online because they don't have to take the extra step of connecting first and because they can move more quickly around the internet while they are browsing for news.
- Online experience often leads people to discover they can do more and more online, including accessing news. More than 80% of U.S. internet users now have at least three years of internet experience, and more than half have more than six years experience.
- Many people now expect they can get up-to-date news online and they have become more likely to "check" the headlines every so often while online, just as they tune in to news-radio at the top of the hour.
- Many Web sites offer news and headline services, even sites that are not primarily news sites. Moreover, many news organizations now offer email headline alerts or RSS feeds of their material. It is hard to be online very long without bumping into news.
- The internet has woven itself into political discourse because people are increasingly likely to use email to "discuss" politics, or joke about candidates, or forward news tidbits or funny clips about politics.
- There were other factors related to greater interest in this race that had nothing to do with the internet, but perhaps made the internet a more valuable means of gathering political information. Many people believed this was a close and very important political election and that brought a great deal of interest to the race, including interest in online sources of news and information as politics.

With all that as background, this section of the report will cover the new contours of the online political landscape.

**For online Americans, the internet has drawn even with radio as a source of campaign news.**

Television is substantially ahead of other media as a primary source for campaign news for Americans. Fully 79% of all Americans – internet and non-internet users alike – said that television was the place where they got most of their news about the campaign. At the same time, the internet has gained a major footing in the media-plex. One in six Americans (18%) said the internet was a main source of campaign news for them, a nearly six-fold increase from the proportion of population who said that in 1996.

Moreover, the internet has caught up to radio and is closing in on newspapers as a primary political news source among those who go online. Fully 28% of internet users said the internet was a primary source of news for them, compared to 17% who said radio was a main source of campaign news for them. The figures in the table below show something the Pew Internet Project has seen in survey work in other contexts of news gathering. Many internet users go online for news and information that supplements or expands the information they are getting from other sources.

<b>The main sources of campaign news for Internet users and non-users</b>			
<i>The proportion of each group who say these channels are main sources of political news for them*</i>			
	<b>Non-internet users</b>	<b>All internet users</b>	<b>Those with broadband at home</b>
Television	85%	75%	70%
Fox News Cable Channel	15%	21%	21%
CNN	18%	20%	22%
Local	24%	15%	12%
NBC	14%	13%	12%
ABC	14%	12%	9%
CBS	14%	8%	6%
MSNBC	4%	8%	8%
CNBC	2%	3%	2%
Newspapers	40%	38%	36%
Internet	NA	28%	38%
Radio	15%	17%	17%
Magazines	3%	3%	3%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey. N=2200. Margin of error is ±2%.

\*Numbers do not add to 100% because of multiple answers

For those with broadband connections at home, the internet has become a source of political news that is equally important as newspapers. And for those who are surrounded by broadband connections – those with high-speed links at home *and* at work, or about 14% of the overall U.S. population -- the internet is far more important for political news than are newspapers. Fully 51% of those with broadband at home and work say the internet is the main source of news, compared to 33% of them who say newspapers are their primary source and 66% who say television is their primary source.

**75 million Americans used the internet in campaign 2004 for political purposes.**

We calculate the overall online political population by asking about three separate dimensions of political life. First, we ask whether internet users got news or information online about the campaign. More than half of internet users (52%) said they had gotten political news and information via the internet and that represents more than 63 million people. This is an 83% spike in political information gathering online from the 2000 race, when about 34.5 million people used the internet that way.

Second, we asked about people’s email use. Did they send or receive emails about candidates or campaigns? More than a third of internet users (35%), or about 42 million people, said they had used email this way. This is the first campaign during which we asked that question, so there are no comparative earlier data on it. Moreover, 14% of internet users told us they had sent emails discussing politics via listservs or group lists of family members, friends, or associates.

Third, we asked, “Have you participated in any other campaign-related activities using the internet, such as reading discussion groups, signing petitions, or donating money online?” Some 11% of internet users, or 13 million people, engaged in campaign-related activities of this type.

61% of internet users said they had either gotten campaign information or news online, exchanged email about the campaign, or participated in campaign-related activities such as making an online donation.

Any internet user who said “yes” to one of those three questions is considered part of the online politics user community in our calculations. That came to 61% of internet users or 75 million people. In fact, many people said “yes” to two or all three of the questions.

<b>Internet users and online campaign activities</b>	
<i>Distribution of answers on use of internet for political purposes</i>	<i>% of Internet Users</i>
Answered “no” to all three questions	39%
Answered “yes” to one of three questions	32%
Answered “yes” to two of three questions	20%
Answered “yes” to all three questions	9%
<i>Source: Pew Internet &amp; American Life Project November 2004 Survey. N=1,324 for internet users. Margin of error is ±3%.</i>	

**The pool of online political news consumers has grown and become more mainstream in some ways since the early days of the internet.**

As the internet has become a popular technology adopted by a majority of American adults, its demographic character has changed and that has led to changes in users' motives for getting political news online and their preferences in the Web sites they access for political news. At election time in 1996, internet adoption stood at 22% of the U.S. population and the online political news audience was disproportionately male, white, and relatively well-to-do.

<b>The growth in the size of the population who are online political news consumers</b>			
<i>The percentage of online political news consumers in each group who got election news that year. For example, reading from the first line: in 1996, 24% of online American men got political news; in 2000 37% of online men got political news, and in 2004 54% of male web users got political news online.</i>			
	<b>1996</b> <i>(22% of Amer. used internet)</i>	<b>2000</b> <i>(53% of Amer. used internet)</i>	<b>2004</b> <i>(61% of Amer. used internet)</i>
Men	24%	37%	54%
Women	18%	29%	49%
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
Whites	21%	34%	52%
Blacks (Non-Hispanics)	**	29%	33%
Hispanics*	**	32%	55%
<b>Age</b>			
18-29	22%	34%	57%
30-49	22%	35%	55%
50-64	16%	32%	45%
65+	n/a	21%	32%
<b>Household income</b>			
Less than \$30,000	26%	28%	43%
\$30,000-\$49,999	21%	34%	50%
\$50,000-\$74,999	20%	36%	47%
\$75,000+	22%	41%	67%
<b>Educational attainment</b>			
Not high school graduate	**	23%	40%
High school grad	22%	24%	35%
Some college	19%	34%	53%
College or graduate school degree	24%	42%	65%
<b>Community type</b>			
Rural	n/a	29%	47%
Suburban	n/a	34%	52%
Urban	n/a	35%	54%

Source: Pew Research Center for The People & The Press and Pew Internet & American Life Project survey.

\*Interviews are conducted in English. These numbers represent the proportion of English-speaking Hispanic internet users.

\*\* indicates insufficient sample size.

n/a indicates measure was not included on survey or that the number of respondents is too small

## Part 2. The role of the internet in 2004

By 2004, 61% of American adults were online and the population was evenly split between women and men and contained far higher proportions of minorities, older Americans, less well-educated and less financially well-off Americans.

These changes were also reflected in the online political news audience. For instance, over time, the number of women grew and their proportion in the online political news audience grew to 47% in 2004, from 34% in 1996. Similarly, the proportion of non-whites grew from 18% of the online political news audience in 1996 to 23% in 2004; the proportion of those over 50 in that audience doubled from 10% in 1996 to 22% in 2004; and the proportion of rural residents grew from 17% to 21% over that time span.

Among other things, this shift in population composition made the online political news consumer population a bit more casual as a group about political news, more likely to cite convenience as a primary reason to get political news online and more likely to visit the sites of traditional news organizations.

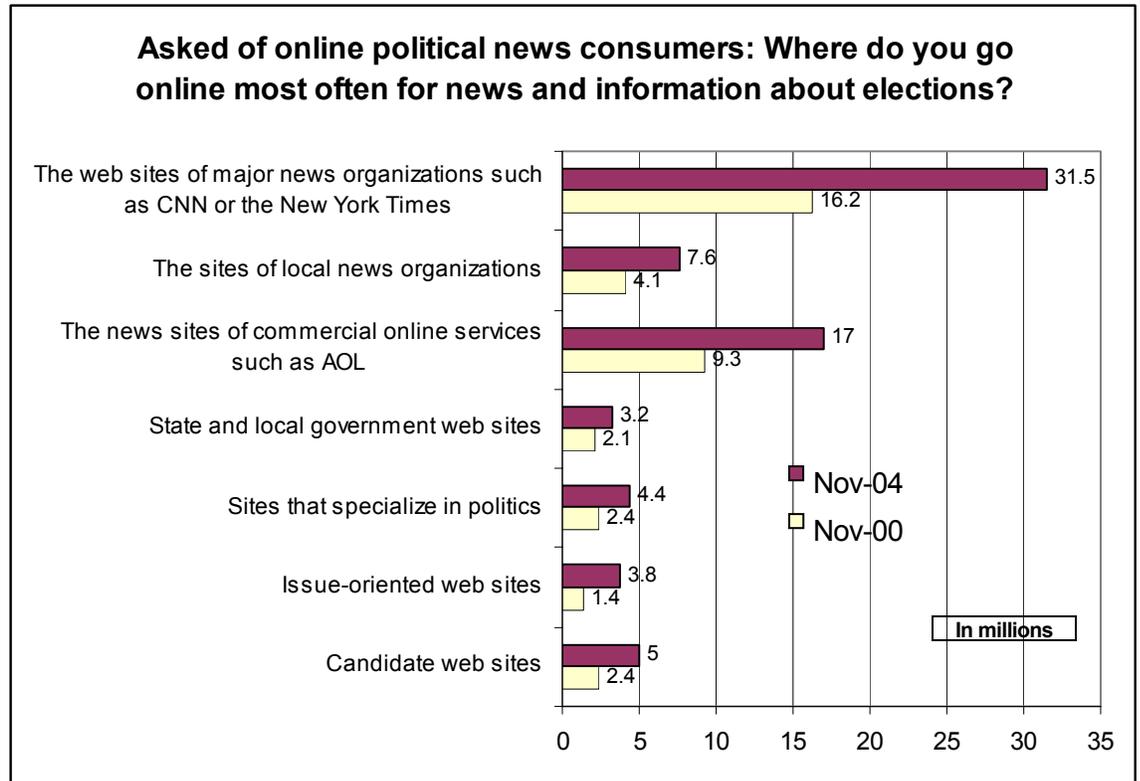
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### **Mainstream sources dominated the online news and information gathering by online Americans. At the same time, alternative news sources mattered to one in four political news gatherers.**

Asked where they went online most often to get news and information about the campaign, the majority of internet users reported they went to sites of traditional news organizations or online services that syndicate news from traditional sources, such as wire services. It is important to stress, though, that the absolute number of online Americans using *each* kind of Web site grew dramatically from 2000 to 2004. As we noted above, the number of those who got political news online grew from 34.5 million to 63 million in that four-year span.

One in five of those who used the internet to get campaign news (20%) in 2004 identified CNN.com as the single source they used the most. Some 10% said they relied most on AOL; 10% said MSN; 8% said Yahoo; 5% said MSNBC's Web site; 5% said Fox News's Web site; 4% said local media; 3% said the New York Times; 3% said Google news; and 1% said Drudge Report.

## Part 2. The role of the internet in 2004



### Online citizen action increased across all six categories tracked.

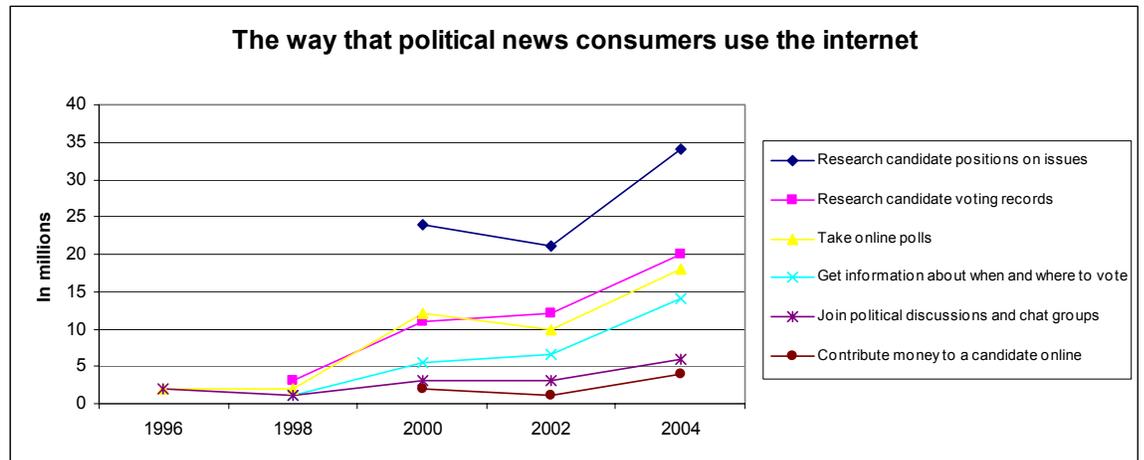
The internet has made it easy for political audiences to take citizen action, both in response to prompts from campaigns and on their own initiative. It also has become a valuable resource for many as a fact-checking mechanism, a tool to find out what a variety of political actors (such as interest groups) are doing, and a way to get “insider” information that used to be the province of small numbers of political junkies. Finally, there were extensive get-out-the-vote operations by both partisan and non-partisan organizations, and many of these operations had a powerful online presence. All of this translated into more online political activity in 2004 than in 2000.

Given an expanded internet population, the rise in broadband connections, advances in online campaigning, and the excitement of the Bush-Kerry race, one would expect gains in citizen activity levels between 2000 and 2004. In raw numbers, this was indeed the case for each of the six types of participation we surveyed in both campaign cycles:

- Voting information: The number who got information on where to vote grew more than 150% to nearly 14 million people.
- Donations: The number who gave campaign contributions online grew 80% to about 4 million people.
- Discussion and chat: The number who participated in online political discussions or chat groups grew 57% to about 4.5 million people.

## Part 2. The role of the internet in 2004

- Candidates' voting records: The number who got information about candidates' voting records grew 38% to nearly 16 million people.
- Surveys: The number who participated in online surveys about politics grew 15% to just under 14 million people.
- Candidates' positions: The number who researched candidates' positions online grew 14% to more than 27 million people.



In addition, we asked about several new types of online political activities in this presidential election cycle. We found that —

- 32 million people traded emails with jokes in them about the candidates.
- 31 million went online to find out how candidates were doing in opinion polls.
- 25 million used the internet to check the accuracy of claims made by or about the candidates.
- 19 million watched video clips about the candidates or the election.
- 17 million sent emails about the campaign to groups of family members or friends as part of listservs or discussion groups.
- 16 million people checked out endorsements or candidate ratings on the Web sites of political organizations.
- 14 million signed up for email newsletters or other online alerts to get the latest news about politics.
- 7 million signed up to receive email from the presidential campaigns.
- 4 million signed up online for campaign volunteer activities such as helping to organize a rally, register voters, or get people to the polls on Election Day.

**Those who get political information online split into two distinct camps: those who find it a convenient way to get information, and those who don't think they get all the information they need from newspapers or TV news.**

One of the continuing stories of the campaign involved the news media itself. The 2004 campaign saw a dramatic rise in the number of political bloggers and other online activists who critiqued, challenged, and cajoled reporters from traditional news organizations. Some 33% of those who used the internet for political purposes said they did so because they did not get all they wanted from their newspapers and television news. Another 11% said they most liked getting political news on the internet because they can get information on the Web that is not available elsewhere. At the same time, 58% said they went online for political information because it was convenient.

Those who cited convenience as the main reason they got political news online were more likely than others to get news from the news section of their internet service provider, such as AOL and MSN, or mainstream news organization sites, especially those run by cable news stations or a local newspaper or TV station. At the same time, those who cited the extra advantages of getting news online (more depth or different sources) were more likely than others to go to political sites, issue-oriented sites, alternative news sites such as the Drudge Report, and blogs.

<b>Those with different motives for getting online campaign news go to different kinds of Web sites</b>				
<i>Asked of those who get political news online: Where do you go online most often for news and information about the 2004 elections?</i>				
<b>Reason they get news online</b>				
<b>Main online political news source</b>	<b>Get news that's not available elsewhere</b>	<b>More convenient</b>	<b>Reflects my values*</b>	<b>Get more information than in traditional news sources</b>
News sites of commercial online services such as AOL	29%	33%	29%	24%
Web sites of major news organizations	49%	50%	51%	44%
Web sites of local news organizations	18%	14%	12%	11%
Sites that specialize in politics	23%	8%	18%	8%
Issue oriented sites	16%	5%	18%	7%
Web sites of state and local government	4%	5%	2%	6%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Pew Research Center for The People & The Press and Pew Internet & American Life Project surveys.

\*This is a very small number of respondents. N=65

## Part 2. The role of the internet in 2004

Those citing the particular advantages of getting news online were especially interested in getting information about candidates' positions, their voting records, and the endorsements or candidate ratings of political organizations. They were also more likely than others to use the internet as a reference to fact check the accuracy of claims made by or about the candidates.

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### **Internet users often bumped into political news when they were doing other things online.**

One of the realities of life online is that an internet user can encounter material through links or through general browsing that is often not related to the subject that inspired them to go online in the first place. For instance, they might go online to check the weather or find out when a movie is playing at a local theater and encounter political information that is also displayed on the site they are using.

Fully half of internet users (50%) said they encountered political news by happenstance browsing during 2004. This was most likely to happen to broadband users, who tend to spend the most time online, and to younger internet users.

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### **Voters aren't always looking just for information that supports their point of view. There are many active contrarians in the online population.**

One of the major concerns about people's use of the internet is that they might use the powerful filtering mechanisms available online and begin to shun information that does not agree with their beliefs. The Pew Internet Project studies the phenomenon of "selective exposure" in a recent report, which found that it does not appear to be a typical pattern of internet users.<sup>4</sup> This new survey provides additional support for the idea that internet users are likely to encounter contrary information.

Asked about the Web sites they regularly visit, a plurality of internet users said they prefer neutral sources; the remainder divided evenly between preferences for sites that agreed with their political views and sites that challenged their political views. Some 31% said they get most of their information from sites that do not have a particular point of view. However, 26% report they go to sites that share their point of view, and 21% say they go to sites that challenge their point of view. A fifth of those who got political information this past year did not answer the question about the point of view they get from the Web sites they use most. Interestingly, there are no significant partisan differences on this question. Bush and Kerry backers are equally likely to say "yes" to each of the alternatives.

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<sup>4</sup> For more details, please see "The Internet and Democratic Debate" available at [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/141/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/141/report_display.asp)

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### **Online Americans give a positive verdict about the overall role of the internet in the campaign.**

To many Americans 2004 seemed to be a rough-and-tumble election, and we wondered if internet users had an overarching view of the role the internet played in the conduct of the campaign. Half of online Americans (49%) and 56% of those who got political news online said, “The internet has raised the overall quality of public debate,” and only 5% said the internet lowered the quality of the debate. Some 36% said the internet did not make much of a difference.

The positive views were spread equally across the partisan landscape. Kerry partisans, Bush backers, liberals, conservatives, Republicans, and Democrats pretty much shared the same judgments. The most active internet users were the most likely to have upbeat views about the role of the internet. Fully 65% of those with broadband at home and work shared the view that the internet helped the debate. And those with lots of experience online were twice as likely as relative newcomers to express positive views about the role of the internet.

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### **40% of internet users say the internet was important in giving them information that helped them decide their vote. And 20% say internet information made a difference in their voting decision.**

Four out of ten internet users said the internet was very important (14%) or somewhat important (26%) in providing information that helped them decide their vote. Among those who actually got political news and information online, fully 52% said the internet was important: 19% said it was very important and 33% said it was somewhat important.

Some 18% of internet users said the political information they got online encouraged them to vote and only 1% said it discouraged them from voting. Among those who got political news and information online, 23% said the information they got encouraged them to vote.

When it came to their own voting decision, 20% of all internet users and 27% of those who got political news online said the information they encountered online helped them decide which way to vote.

## Part 3.

### Kerry voters, activists, and the internet

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#### The internet users who voted for Kerry were more engaged in online activities than Bush supporters.

It is important to start an analysis of the partisanship of the internet population by noting that George Bush won the votes of more internet users than John Kerry did. Bush got 54% of the votes of internet users, and Kerry got 46%.

However, in many noteworthy ways, Kerry supporters in the internet population were more active online than Bush supporters. At the most basic level, online Kerry supporters were slightly more likely than those backing Bush to use the internet to get political news and information: 59% of Kerry supporters did that, compared to 53% of Bush partisans. Online Kerry supporters were considerably more likely to use email to discuss campaign events with acquaintances, groups, or political organizations: 47% of wired Kerry supporters did that, compared to 36% of Bush supporters. And 17% of Kerry's online supporters used the internet to participate directly in the campaign, compared to 10% of those supporting Bush.

The differences between the camps became even more evident when particular online campaign activities were probed, as the next table shows.

<b>Kerry voters were more likely than Bush voters to engage in online politics</b>		
<i>Asked of those who get political news online</i>	<i>Kerry voters</i>	<i>Bush voters</i>
Get or send email with jokes about the campaigns and elections	56%	49%
Find out how the candidates were doing in the public opinion polls	55%	47%
Look for more information about a candidate's positions on issues	49%	44%
Check the accuracy of claims made by or about the candidates	44%	41%
Find out about endorsements or ratings of candidates by organizations and groups	32%	22%
Watch video clips about the candidates or election online	31%	30%
Register opinions in an online survey	31%	18%
Get information about a candidate's voting record	27%	29%
Get information about where to vote	25%	17%
Participate in online discussions or chat groups about the elections	10%	4%
Contribute money online to a candidate	9%	2%

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey. N for political news consumers=937.*

### Part 3. Kerry voters, activists, and the internet

In addition to being the most active political emailers, Kerry voters were more likely than Bush voters to sign up for campaign email alerts: 12% online Kerry supporters signed up for such emails, compared with 4% of Bush voters who asked for Bush-campaign alerts.

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#### **Kerry voters outnumbered Bush voters in their use of candidate and political party sites, and they were more likely than Bush voters to use issue-oriented sites.**

Just under a quarter of internet users (23%) visited at least one of the presidential candidates' sites or the national party sites. Broken down by site, 18% of internet users visited the Kerry/Edwards site; 14% visited the Bush/Cheney site; and 14% visited the sites of either the Republican National Committee or its Democratic counterpart. When partisan preferences are taken into account, it was considerably more likely that Kerry supporters went to the Web sites of political institutions than Bush voters. Indeed, Kerry voters were almost as likely as Bush partisans to have visited the Bush Web site.

<b>Kerry voters were more likely to visit formal campaign sites</b>		
<i>Asked of those who get political news online</i>	<i>Kerry voters</i>	<i>Bush voters</i>
Visited Web sites that provide information about specific issues such as gun control or health policy	42%	35%
Visited the Kerry/Edwards Web site	31%	12%
Visited the sites of the Republican National Committee or Democratic National Committee	20%	10%
Visited the Bush/Cheney Web site	14%	16%

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey. N for political news consumers=937 internet users.*

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#### **Kerry voters were more likely to get online information that helped them make up their mind how to vote. And they were more likely to say the internet was a helpful force in the campaign.**

Online Kerry voters were more likely than Bush backers to cite benefits from the internet, perhaps because Bush voters were most likely to decide their votes early. Those who were undecided until later in the process were more likely to benefit from such information.

<b>Kerry voters were more likely to cite an impact from their internet use</b>		
<i>Asked of those who get political news online</i>	<i>Kerry voters</i>	<i>Bush voters</i>
The internet was important in providing information that helped me decide how to vote	48%	34%
<b>Very important</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>24%</b>
Online information encouraged me to vote	26%	14%
Online information made me decide to vote for or against a candidate	27%	18%

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey. N for political news consumers=937 internet users.*

### Part 3. Kerry voters, activists, and the internet

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#### Campaign activists used the internet more frequently in campaign 2004 than the general internet population.

We asked survey respondents several questions about basic kinds of political activity in our survey and found that 26% of all Americans said they had participated directly in at least one campaign activity, including online activities such as donating to a candidate online. Using a more traditional definition of activism – those who did something offline to participate in a campaign – some 20% of Americans could be considered activists.

We defined **campaign activist** as someone who had either attended a campaign rally or donated to a political candidate or made telephone calls on behalf of a candidate or visited people's homes to canvass for a candidate or used the internet to do campaign volunteer work. Some 20% of Americans said they had done at least one of those things.

Activists of all partisan stripes were more active online than non-activists. That's not a tautology: the higher incidence of activists on most indicators of political internet use in our survey indicates a positive embrace of the medium for campaign learning and participation. If activists did not find the internet rewarding to use, they would have stayed with older media.

Since the emergence of the public internet a decade ago, political activists have harbored high hopes for the medium. It enables campaigners to communicate in real-time, with multiple constituencies, customizable messages, and the capacity to track responses, all at a comparatively low cost per contact and "acquisition" (i.e., a successful contact resulting in a campaign recruit, donation, or other desired response).

In 2004, presidential campaign activists found more people online available to their outreach than ever before, with the closeness of the 2000 election and the intensity of a wartime presidency providing extra motivation to them and their potential supporters.

So it is no surprise that campaign activists were more likely than non-activists to go online, get online news, create online content, create and read a blog, issue an online invitation, send and receive political email, subscribe to political e-newsletters, and visit Web sites maintained by candidates, issue groups, and political news and comment organizations.

They were also more likely to say that what they found on the internet helped them decide who to vote for (a mild surprise, since activists tend to have their minds made up well in advance), and encouraged them to vote.

Campaign activists were *less* likely to get most of their campaign news from television than was the general population. They were also less likely to cite convenience, and more

### Part 3. Kerry voters, activists, and the internet

likely to cite the desire for additional information, as their top reason for relying on the internet. Activists were less likely to get their online news from the major internet portals (AOL, Yahoo), and more likely to get it from major news organizations, political Web sites, and campaign Web sites.

<b>Activists did more online and got more out of it</b>		
<i>The percentage of online political news consumers in each group who did activities online or had these opinions about the role of the internet...</i>		
	<b>Activists</b>	<b>Non-activists</b>
Look for more information about a candidate's positions on issues	64%	49%
Find out how the candidates were doing in the public opinion polls	64	56
Check the accuracy of claims made by or about the candidates	62	44
Get or send email with jokes about the campaigns and elections	62	51
Watch video clips about the candidates or election online	45	33
Get information about a candidate's voting record	45	26
Find out about endorsements or ratings of candidates by organizations and groups	38	25
Register opinions in an online survey	36	24
Get information about where to vote	24	24
Contribute money online to a candidate	17	1
Participate in online discussions or chat groups about the elections	14	6
<b>Use of political Web sites</b>		
Visited Web sites that provide information about specific issues such as gun control or health policy	60	44
Visited the Kerry/Edwards Web site	42	28
Visited the sites of the Republican National Committee or Democratic National Committee	31	21
Visited the Bush/Cheney Web site	30	24
<b>Judgments about the role of the internet in the election</b>		
The internet was important in providing information that helped me decide how to vote	60	58
<b>Very important</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38</b>
Online information made me decide to vote for or against a candidate	32	30
Online information encouraged me to vote	26	26

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey. N for political news consumers=937 internet users. Margin of error is ±4%.*

Campaign activists voted for Kerry over Bush, 51%–39%. Non-activists preferred Bush, 49%–37%. The survey sample went for Bush, 44%–41%.

# Methodology

The November 2004 Internet Tracking Survey, sponsored by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, obtained telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 2,200 adults living in continental United States telephone households. The interviews were conducted in English by Princeton Data Source, LLC from November 4 to November 22, 2004. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is  $\pm 2.2\%$ . Details on the design, execution and analysis of the survey are discussed below.

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## Design and Data Collection Procedures

### Sample Design

The sample was designed to represent all continental U.S. telephone households. The telephone sample was provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC, (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications. The sample was drawn using standard *list-assisted random digit dialing* (RDD) methodology. *Active blocks* of telephone numbers (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings were selected with probabilities in proportion to their share of listed telephone households; after selection two more digits were added randomly to complete the number. This method guarantees coverage of every assigned phone number regardless of whether that number is directory listed, purposely unlisted, or too new to be listed. After selection, the numbers were compared against business directories and matching numbers purged.

### Contact Procedures

Interviews were conducted from November 4 to November 22, 2004. As many as 10 attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. Sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of sample ensures that complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample. Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents. Each household received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone at home. In each contacted household, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult male currently at home. If no male was available, interviewers asked to speak with the oldest female at home. This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender. The final response rate for this survey was 30.6%.

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## Weighting and analysis

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for patterns of nonresponse that might bias results. The interviewed sample of all adults was weighted by form to

## Methodology

match national parameters for sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region (U.S. Census definitions). These parameters came from a special analysis of the Census Bureau's 2003 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) that included all households in the continental United States that had a telephone. Weighting was accomplished using Sample Balancing, a special iterative sample weighting program that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables using a statistical technique called the *Deming Algorithm*. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the national population. Table 1 compares weighted and unweighted sample distributions to population parameters.

<b>Table 1: Sample Demographics</b>			
	<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Unweighted</i>	<i>Weighted</i>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	47.9	46.9	48.3
Female	52.1	53.1	51.7
<b>Age</b>			
18-24	12.6	8.6	11.6
25-34	18.2	14.9	17.7
35-44	20.7	17.0	20.3
45-54	19.1	19.0	18.8
55-64	13.1	15.8	13.0
65+	16.4	22.4	16.6
<b>Education</b>			
Less than HS Graduate	15.6	8.4	13.6
HS Graduate	35.8	34.5	36.0
Some College	23.3	22.6	23.4
College Graduate	25.3	33.4	26.1
<b>Region</b>			
Northeast	19.4	17.8	19.4
Midwest	23.1	26.1	23.5
South	35.8	36.7	35.9
West	21.6	19.4	21.2
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
White/not Hispanic	71.9	77.0	72.0
Black/not Hispanic	10.7	10.9	10.7
Hispanic	11.8	6.2	10.1
Other/not Hispanic	5.5	4.0	5.3

### Effects of Sample Design on Statistical Inference

Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. PSRAI calculates the effects of these design

## Methodology

features so that an appropriate adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using these data. The so-called "design effect" or *deff* represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from systematic non-response. The total sample design effect for this survey is 1.15.

PSRAI calculates the composite design effect for a sample of size  $n$ , with each case having a weight,  $w_i$  as:

$$deff = \frac{n \sum_{i=1}^n w_i^2}{\left( \sum_{i=1}^n w_i \right)^2} \quad f$$

In a wide range of situations, the adjusted *standard error* of a statistic should be calculated by multiplying the usual formula by the square root of the design effect ( $\sqrt{deff}$ ). Thus, the formula for computing the 95% confidence interval around a percentage is:

$$\hat{p} \pm \left( \sqrt{deff} \times 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n}} \right) \quad f$$

where  $\hat{p}$  is the sample estimate and  $n$  is the unweighted number of sample cases in the group being considered.

The survey's *margin of error* is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample—the one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample is  $\pm 2.2\%$ . This means that in 95 out every 100 samples drawn using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 2.2 percentage points away from their true values in the population. The margin of error for estimates based on the sample of 1,324 internet users is  $\pm 2.9\%$ . It is important to remember that sampling fluctuations are only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Other sources, such as respondent selection bias, questionnaire wording and reporting inaccuracy, may contribute additional error of greater or lesser magnitude.