

2004 New Hampshire Primary Tracking Poll

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Durham, NH – After finishing a disappointing third in Iowa, Howard Dean’s once commanding lead in New Hampshire is quickly disappearing. John Kerry is now only two points behind Dean in the Democratic Primary in New Hampshire.

These findings are based on the 2004 New Hampshire Primary Tracking Poll, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. This survey is sponsored by FOX News, WCVB-TV Boston, and WMUR-TV Manchester. Four hundred fifty-two (452) likely New Hampshire primary voters were interviewed between January 18 and January 20, 2004. The potential sampling error for the survey is $\pm 4.6\%$. (For more information about the NH Primary Tracking Poll, go to www.unh.edu/survey-center and click on “Press Releases and Publications”.)

As recently as December, Howard Dean held a 29 percentage point lead over John Kerry in New Hampshire. After Kerry’s remarkable win, and Dean’s dismal third place finish in Iowa, Dean’s lead has dwindled to only 2 percentage points over Kerry. John Edwards has not yet been able to capitalize on his second place finish in Iowa while support for Wesley Clark is unchanged. Currently, 29% of likely Democratic primary voters prefer Dean, 27% favor Kerry, 18% support Clark, 8% prefer Edwards, 5% support Joe Lieberman, 3% favor Dennis Kucinich, and 3% percent support other candidates. Six percent of likely Democratic voters remain undecided.

Dean has been criticized by his opponents and the press for statements he has made and later clarified or retracted and the voters in New Hampshire have picked up on this. When asked to name the candidate who is most inconsistent, that is, who has said things they later had to retract or flip-flopped on the issues, 37% of likely Democratic primary voters name Dean, 8% name Clark, 8% name Kerry, 4% name Joe Lieberman, 4% name some other candidate, 6% say all the candidates are the same, and 33% say they don’t know.

Most Important Issue

Another reason for Dean’s decline is a drop in importance of the war in Iraq to New Hampshire voters. Dean has campaigned strongly against the Bush Administration’s decision to go to war and this has been a very important issue to New Hampshire Democrats throughout the past year. But after the capture of Saddam Hussein, the war in Iraq is fading in importance to New Hampshire voters and Dean has lost one of his most effective rallying points. Currently, health care is the most important issue to likely Democratic primary voters – 24% say it is the most important issue in determining who they will vote for and 55% say it is one of the top three most important issues. The second most important issue is the economy – 19% say it is the most important issue and 45% say it is one of the top three most important. The war in Iraq is a distant third with only 10% saying it is the most important issue and only 25% saying it is one of the top three most important issues to them.

Subgroup Analysis

Kerry leads Dean among registered Democrats by a 33% to 26% margin while Dean leads among undeclared voters (independents) who will vote in the Democratic primary by 29% to 24% over Kerry. Dean is quickly losing support among undeclared voters – he led Kerry in yesterday’s tracking poll by 33% to 20%.

	NH Democratic Primary								
	<u>Clark</u>	<u>Dean</u>	<u>Edwards</u>	<u>Kerry</u>	<u>Kucinich</u>	<u>Lieberman</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>UND.</u>	<u>(N=)</u>
January 17-19	18%	33%	8%	24%	3%	5%	3%	6%	338
January 18-20 (Latest)	18%	29%	8%	27%	3%	5%	3%	6%	447

Registration Status

Registered Democrat	19	26	4	33	4	3	4	6	190
Undeclared	19	29	10	24	2	7	2	7	240
Not Registered, Will Vote	0	67	19	14	0	0	0	0	17

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