

The Harris Survey

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EARLY INDICATIONS SHOW CLOSE 1984 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

By Louis Harris

As the 1984 presidential race continues to unfold, it is becoming more and more likely that the basic pattern of that election will remain unchanged. If Ronald Reagan chooses to run again, as is increasingly likely, it seems certain that the 1984 presidential election will be close, with neither the President nor his most probable Democratic opponents assured of any solid lead.

If the 1984 election for the White House is a cliff-hanger, this could give the ultimate edge to candidate Reagan, who is a known and effective campaigner. A lot will depend on whether the economy continues to improve for the rest of 1983 and into 1984. But there are other underlying elements at work for 1984. Traditionally important factors such as a candidate's personality and the state of the economy could give way as a result of the new right's positions on abortion, affirmative action, environmental controls, and even busing. In addition, the stewardship of the Reagan administration in foreign policy, especially on the pivotal issue of war and peace, appears to be troublesome to the American people.

An important underlying factor in the upcoming 1984 election is the Republican conservatives' failure to convert their 1980 majorities into a new majority coalition in American politics. Instead, with the return of groups such as blacks, Hispanics, union members, white Catholics and big-city voters to the Democratic fold, plus significant defections to the Democrats of women, political moderates and elderly voters, the trend of 1984's politics now seems to be far more Democratic than Republican.

Thus, Ronald Reagan, who now holds slight margins over both Democratic front-runners -- former Vice President Walter Mondale and Senator John Glenn -- seems far less to be leading an ideological crusade that will reshape American politics than to be faced with a scrambling race for survival in 1984 where he'll need every break just to squeak into a second term. The 10 point margin by which Reagan won in 1980 seems to have completely disappeared, and he has been reduced to running what can best be called a dead-even race.

By 50-46 percent, voters now say they would prefer that President Reagan not run for re-election. This negative vote on his running is better than the wider 55-40 percent negative rating in January, when he was behind his leading Democratic opponents by roughly 10 points.

But the basic lack of enthusiasm for this President asking for a second term is quite apparent. Four key specifics were tested in the latest Harris Survey, taken by telephone between June 7th and 11th among 1,250 adults nationwide:

--When asked if he deserves to be re-elected next year on the basis of his record on defense spending, a 51-41 percent majority of the voters say he is not entitled to another four years.

--By 54-40 percent, a solid majority of voters does not think he deserves re-election on the basis of how he has handled the federal budget.

--By 47-45 percent, a plurality does not think the President deserves re-election based on the way he handled foreign affairs.

(over)

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--Voters are evenly divided, 48-48 percent, over whether or not President Reagan deserves to be re-elected based on his record on handling the economy.

Overall, this is not a convincing case for re-election for an incumbent president. It leaves him little room to take advantage of his incumbency, and in fact almost automatically puts him in the position of having to convincingly portray his opponent as a worse choice than he might be next year. This approach works far better for a candidate of the "out" party, such as Reagan himself was in 1980, than it does for an incumbent sitting in the Oval Office.

Nonetheless, on the record, based on an ample sampling of 1,864 voters surveyed between June 1st and 5th and June 7th and 11th, President Reagan still holds a 50-45 percent lead over Walter Mondale, and a 48-47 percent lead over John Glenn. That means that if the election were held now, 17 months before the fact, Ronald Reagan could win re-election by a close margin. Of course, if blacks turned out at the 60 percent plus level, as they did in this year's Chicago and Philadelphia elections, instead of at the 32 percent level, as in 1980, then Reagan would lead Mondale by only 48-47 percent, and Glenn would lead Reagan by only 48-47 percent.

The fact is that the run for the White House in 1984 is totally up for grabs and the basic set of the electorate is far more Democratic than Republican, as the wide 53-39 percent lead the Democrats have for the House seats indicates.

T A B L E S

Between June 1st and 5th and June 7th and 11th, the Harris Survey asked a cross section of 1,864 voters nationwide by telephone:

"Now suppose in 1984 the election for President were between Ronald Reagan for the Republicans and former Vice President Walter Mondale for the Democrats. If you had to choose today, would you vote for Reagan or Mondale?"

REAGAN VS. MONDALE IN 1984
(Base: 1,864 voters)

	<u>June 1-11</u>
	%
Reagan	50
Mondale	45
Not sure	5

"Now suppose for President in 1984, Ronald Reagan were running as the candidate of the Republicans and Senator John Glenn of Ohio were the Democratic candidate -- if you had to choose, would you vote for Reagan or Glenn?"

REAGAN VS. GLENN IN 1984
(Base: 1,864 voters)

	<u>June 1-11</u>
	%
Reagan	48
Glenn	47
Not sure	5

(continued)

Between June 7th and 11th, the Harris Survey asked a cross section of 1,250 adults nationwide by telephone:

"If you had to say now, do you think President Reagan should or should not run for re-election in 1984?"

SHOULD REAGAN RUN AGAIN IN 1984?

	TOTAL NATIONWIDE			VOTERS		
	Should run	Should not run	Not sure	Should run	Should not run	Not sure
	%	%	%	%	%	%
June	47	48	5	46	50	4
January	39	56	5	40	55	5

"On the basis of his record on (READ EACH ITEM), do you think President Reagan deserves to be re-elected in 1984, or not?"

REAGAN DESERVE TO BE RE-ELECTED
BASED ON HIS RECORD ON VARIOUS ISSUES?

	JUNE 1983					
	TOTAL NATIONWIDE			VOTERS		
	De- serves to be	Does not de- serve	Not sure	De- serves to be	Does not de- serve	Not sure
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Handling the economy	46	49	5	48	48	4
Foreign affairs	46	46	8	45	47	8
Defense spending	40	51	9	41	51	8
Balancing the federal budget	40	53	7	40	54	6

METHODOLOGY

This Harris Survey was conducted by telephone with a representative cross section of adults 18 and over at 1,250 different sampling points within the United States between June 7th and 11th and of voters at 1,864 different sampling points within the United States between June 1st and 5th and June 7th and 11th. Figures for age, sex and race were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

In a sample of this size, one can say with 95% certainty that the results are within plus or minus three percentage points and 2.3 percentage points respectively of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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