

The Harris Survey

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RACE WOULD BE CLOSE IF REAGAN FACED KENNEDY, MONDALE OR GLENN TODAY

By Louis Harris

President Reagan would be hard put to defeat former Vice President Walter Mondale, Sen. Edward Kennedy or Sen. John Glenn if the 1984 election were being held today and one of them were his opponent, according to early pairings tested among a nationwide cross section of voters.

Mondale leads Reagan by 49-48 percent, Kennedy trails Reagan by 50-47 percent, and Glenn is slightly behind by 49-46 percent. In the race for the 1984 Democratic nomination for president, Kennedy holds a wide lead over Mondale among Democrats, but the former vice president does better against Reagan among all the voters.

By any measure, these results demonstrate just how much President Reagan has slipped with the voters since his election in 1980. Reagan held a massive lead of 61-35 percent over Kennedy in August 1980 in Harris Surveys that had paired the two in a hypothetical race.

When the current pairings are analyzed regionally, it is clear where President Reagan has lost important ground, according to this Harris Survey, conducted by telephone in two waves taken March 12th to 16th and April 16th to 22nd, both among a national cross section of 1,863 voters:

--All three Democrats are now ahead of Reagan in the Midwest, a region he carried handily in 1980. Kennedy and Mondale also lead him in the East, which was his weakest region two years ago. In the South, Reagan holds a clear 55-42 percent lead over Kennedy, a closer 51-47 percent margin over Mondale, and a 49-45 percent lead over Glenn, indicating substantial Reagan slippage in that region. Only in the West is Reagan able to win by a majority, ahead of Mondale by 8 points, Kennedy by 10 points, and Glenn by 14 points. The most serious slippage for the President is in the Midwest and in the South, both harder hit by unemployment than other regions of the country.

--Reagan is now losing the vote of young people by a 55-44 percent margin against Kennedy and by 50-48 percent against Mondale. He carried this vote in 1980. Among the 50 to 64 age group, where he was strongest two years ago, the President is ahead of Kennedy by 7 points, but is running behind Mondale by 4 points and is tied with Glenn. This age group became disenchanted with the President when he proposed cutting early retirement benefits in the Social Security system.

--Among men, the President runs ahead against all three Democrats, by 11 points against Kennedy, by 10 points against Mondale, and by 12 points against Glenn. But among women, the President runs behind against all three Democrats: behind Kennedy by 51-46 percent, behind Mondale by 54-43 percent, and behind Glenn by 50-46 percent.

--President Reagan is still ahead among white voters, by 56-41 percent over Kennedy, by 54-44 percent over Mondale, and 54-42 percent over Glenn. But among blacks he is trailing by 92-4 percent against Kennedy, by 86-9 percent against Mondale, and by 75-17 percent against Glenn. Among Hispanics, Reagan does relatively better, losing to Kennedy by 57-36 percent, to Mondale by a closer 54-41 percent, and to Glenn by 48-45 percent.

--Reagan also loses the union vote. He ran only 10 points behind Jimmy Carter among this group in 1980; he now loses the union vote by 58-38 percent against Kennedy, by 60-37 percent against Mondale, and by 54-41 percent against Glenn.

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--By political philosophy, Reagan holds a substantial lead among conservatives: he beats Kennedy by 67-31 percent, Mondale by 63-34 percent, and Glenn by 66-30 percent. Among liberals, the President is well behind Kennedy by 76-21 percent, behind Mondale by 71-27 percent, and behind Glenn by 67-26 percent. Among the pivotal moderate group, Reagan is behind Kennedy by 49-48 percent, behind Mondale by 53-45 percent, and behind Glenn by 49-46 percent. This failure to win among non-conservative voters may be the most serious sign of Reagan's slippage.

It is apparent that Mondale, who does not have the same intensity of support within the Democratic Party that has been evident for Kennedy, polarizes the electorate less than Kennedy does.

But Kennedy's showing is impressive, for it is not merely a function of his name recognition, as has been widely suggested. Since the 1980 election, the Massachusetts Democrat is well known in his own right, not merely as the remaining brother of a famous political family. Glenn, who is still unknown to 29 percent of the voters despite his notoriety as the first American astronaut to orbit the earth, should do even better with further exposure.

The main thrust of these findings is that President Reagan is a far weaker prospective candidate today than he was when elected in 1980. More and more, he seems to be yet another occupant of the White House whose initial popularity has plunged during his second year in office. The recession, worries over war, and the charges of unfairness to the elderly, the poor and the unemployed, all are taking a toll on Ronald Reagan's popularity and vote-getting ability. The most perishable commodity appears to be the political margins by which modern presidents win their first election.

T A B L E S

In a two wave survey, conducted between March 12th and 16th and April 16th and 22nd, the Harris Survey asked a cross section of 1,863 voters nationwide by telephone:

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

REAGAN VS. KENNEDY IN 1984

	<u>Reagan</u> %	<u>Kennedy</u> %	<u>Not sure</u> %
Total voters	50	47	3
East	45	51	4
Midwest	45	51	4
South	55	42	3
West	54	44	2
Age 18-29	44	55	1
30-49	53	45	2
50-64	51	44	5
65 & over	50	45	5
Men	54	43	3
Women	46	51	3
White	56	41	3
Black	4	92	4
Hispanic	36	57	7
Union member	38	58	4
Conservative	67	31	2
Middle of the road	48	49	3
Liberal	21	76	3

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"Now suppose in 1984 the election for President were between Ronald Reagan for the Republicans and former Vice President Walter Mondale were the Democratic candidate -- if you had to choose, would you vote for Reagan or Mondale?"

REAGAN VS. MONDALE IN 1984

	<u>Reagan</u> %	<u>Mondale</u> %	<u>Not sure</u> %
Total voters	48	49	3
East	44	52	4
Midwest	46	51	3
South	51	47	2
West	53	45	2
Age 18-29	48	50	2
30-49	51	47	2
50-64	47	51	2
65 & over	47	48	5
Men	54	44	2
Women	43	54	3
White	54	44	2
Black	9	86	5
Hispanic	41	54	5
Union member	37	60	3
Conservative	63	34	3
Middle of the road	45	53	2
Liberal	27	71	2

"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: 912 VOTERS INTERVIEWED BETWEEN APRIL 16TH AND 22ND)

	<u>Reagan</u> %	<u>Glenn</u> %	<u>Not sure</u> %
Total voters	49	46	5
East	49	48	3
Midwest	46	47	7
South	49	45	6
West	54	40	6
Age 18-29	49	47	4
30-49	49	47	4
50-64	47	47	6
65 & over	51	42	7
Men	53	41	6
Women	46	50	4
White	54	42	4
Black	17	75	8
Hispanic	45	48	7
Union member	41	54	5
Conservative	66	30	4
Middle of the road	46	49	5
Liberal	26	67	7

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METHODOLOGY

This Harris Survey was conducted by telephone with a representative cross section of voters 18 and over at 1,863 different sampling points within the United States in two waves, between March 12th and 16th and April 16th and 22nd. 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 2.3 percentage points 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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