

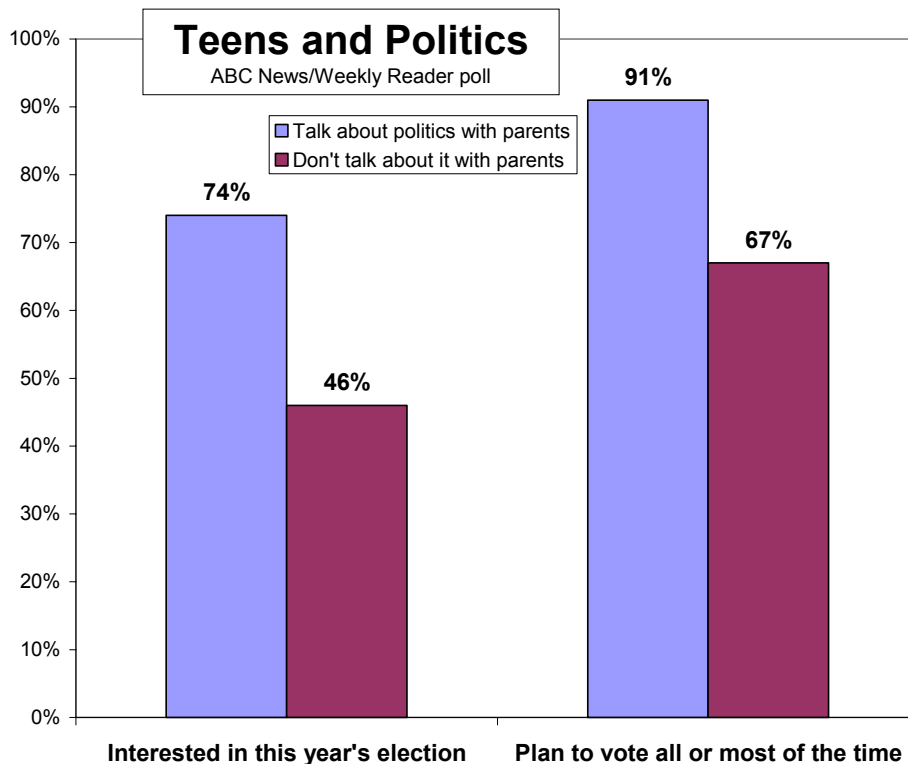
Building Better Voters: Just Talk About It

Memo to parents and teachers: If you want to turn today's kids into tomorrow's voters, just talk with them about politics.

Memo to George W. Bush: If you want to ease your way to re-election, cut the voting age to 12.

So says the latest ABC News/Weekly Reader poll measuring political views among 12- to 17-year-olds. First, it finds less political discussion than you might expect: Fewer than half of teens, 47 percent, say they've talked about politics and the 2004 election with their parents. Hardly more, 54 percent of teens, have covered it in class at school.

It makes a big difference. Among kids who've discussed the election with their parents, more than three-quarters are interested in it, and even more – nine in 10 – plan on voting all or most of the time when they're old enough. Kids who haven't discussed the election with their parents are much less interested in it (46 percent) and less likely to plan to vote.

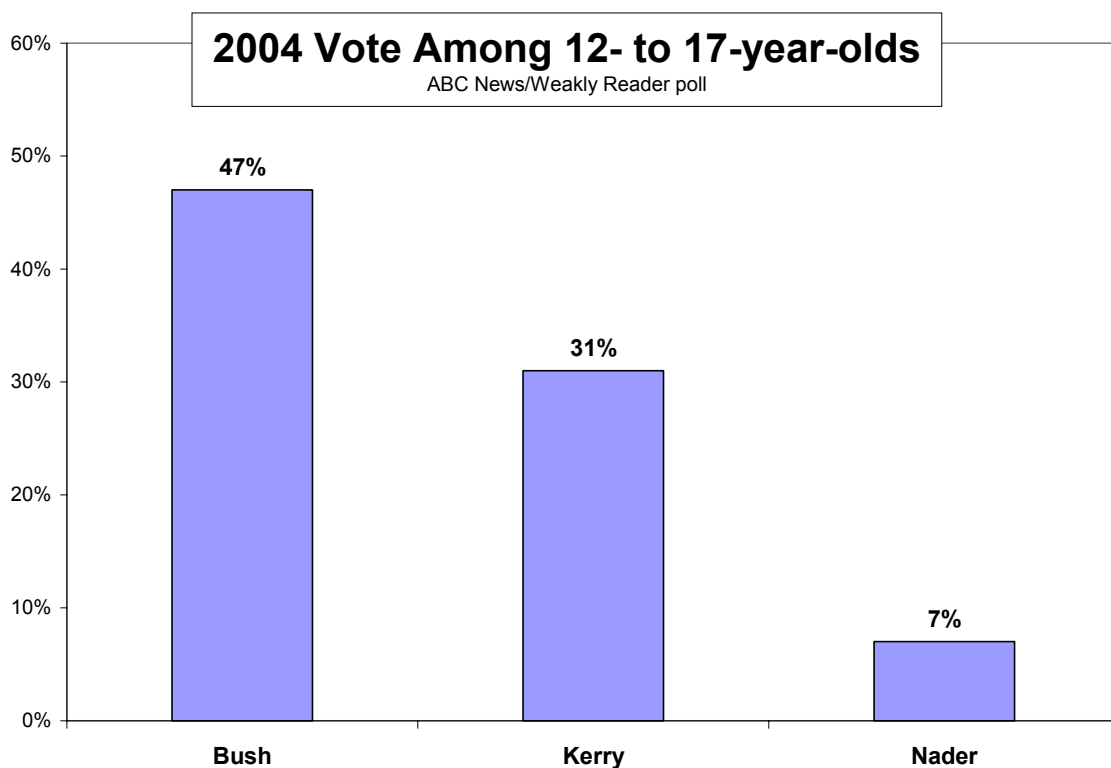


Having class discussions about politics boosts interest and anticipated participation in elections as well – but the effect is not quite as great as having discussed it at home.

VOTE – Then there’s the question of vote preferences – a more fanciful one, since the voting age is 18. In this poll 47 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds say they’d vote for George W. Bush if the election were today, 31 percent for John Kerry, and seven percent for Ralph Nader.

That's better for Bush and much worse for Kerry than in the most recent ABC News/Washington Post poll of adult registered voters: In a comparable three-way matchup, Bush had 44 percent support, Kerry 48 percent and Nader three percent. (Three percent of adults, compared with 14 percent of teens, had no preference.)

Bush does six points better with 12-, 13- and 14-year-olds than with older teens, but leads Kerry by significant margins in both groups. The president might want to consider lending his support to legislation currently before the California legislature: It proposes giving 14-year-olds one-quarter of a vote and 16-year-olds one-half a vote.



DISCUSSION and INTEREST – Older teens are more likely to discuss politics with their parents, and to express an interest in the subject. Among older teens, 54 percent have talked about the election with their parents, 66 percent are interested in it, and nearly half plan to vote in “every election” when they’re old enough. Among younger teens all these are considerably lower.

	All	Age 12-14	Age 15-17
Discussed politics with parents	47%	39	54
Discussed politics in class	54	49	59
Interested in the election	59	52	66
Plan to vote in all/most elections	78	75	81
Plan to vote in all elections	35	25	46

PARTY TIME – Teens' vote choices are influenced by their parent's party identification. Among kids from households with at least one Republican parent, 75 percent support Bush; among kids with at least one Democratic parent, 57 percent support Kerry. As in all general elections, the swing vote comes from independents – a 16-point Bush lead. (In the ABC/Post poll of adults, independents divide evenly.)

Like their adult counterparts, white teens are far more likely to support Bush than nonwhite teens. Fifty-three percent of white teens would vote to re-elect the president compared with 31 percent of teens of other races. And there are regional differences: Bush trounces in the West, and leads in the South and Midwest, while Kerry leads among teen-agers in his native Northeast.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Weekly Reader poll was conducted by telephone March 3-7, 2004, among a random national sample of 501 12- to 17-year-olds. The results have a 4.5-point error margin. Field work by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/Poll_Vault/Poll_Vault.html

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934 or Lisa Finkel, (212) 456-6190.

Results follow:

*= less than 0.5 percent

1. How interested are you in this year's presidential election: very interested, somewhat interested, not too interested or not interested at all?

	-----Interested-----			-----Uninterested-----			No opin.
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	Not at all	
3/7/04	59	17	42	40	23	17	1
1/11/04	57	17	41	42	22	20	*

2. Have you had any classes in school this year that talked about politics and the presidential election, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
3/7/04	54	46	*

3. Have you and your parents talked about politics and this year's presidential election, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
3/7/04	47	53	1

4. If the 2004 presidential election were being held today and you could vote, would you vote for (George W. Bush, the Republican), (John Kerry, the Democrat) or Ralph Nader, the independent?

	Bush	Kerry	Nader	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote	No op.
3/7/04	47	31	7	*	1	1	13

5. When you're older, do you think you'll vote in every election, most elections, some elections, or hardly any?

	----Every/Most----			-----Some/Hardly any-----				No
	NET	Every	Most	NET	Some	Hardly any	None (vol.)	opin.
3/7/04	78	35	43	21	16	4	1	1

END