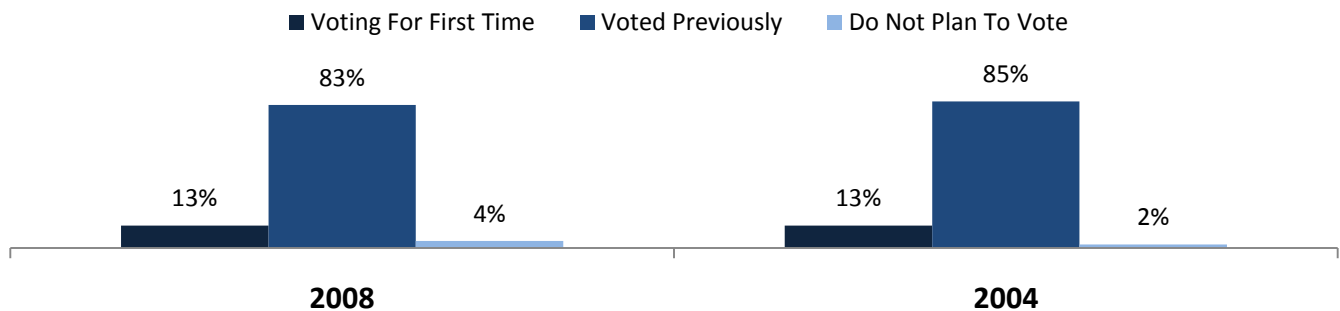


## Polling News & Notes

*Overlooked Recent Polling And Insights • October 25, 2008*

**Gallup: No Increase In Proportion Of First-Time Voters.** Despite media attention on the possibility of a flood of new voters, a Gallup analysis this week found the number of voters who say they will be voting for the first time this year - 13% - is identical to the number who said in 2004 they would be voting for the first time. Of course, high turnout in 2004 (when 16% more voters came to the polls than in 2000) diminished the pool of possible first-time voters for 2008. So increases in turnout in 2008 may come more from those who have voted at some point in the past than those who are entirely new to the process.



**Weekend Interviewing.** Traditionally, many pollsters avoid conducting surveys on weekends, when more voters are away from home and not around to answer the phone. Conventional wisdom says polls conducted over the weekend will skew more towards Democrats than those done during the week, because Republicans are more likely to be out on Friday and Saturdays. Is there any validity to this claim? In 2006, Gary Langer and Daniel Merkle of ABC News studied the ABC/*Washington Post* tracking data from the last three presidential races and found little difference between weekday and weekend interviewing. In 2004, data collected Sunday through Thursday came back 49% Bush, 46% Kerry, while Friday and Saturday was 48% Bush, 46% Kerry. The ABC study also found that [party identification remained essentially stable](#) during weekend interviewing.

Does that mean weekend interviewing is as reliable as polling done during the week? Not necessarily. Despite media pollsters' willingness to poll over the weekend, many campaigns avoid it because weekend interviewing generates lower response rates and may draw on different kinds of Democrats and Republicans—more elderly voters, more single voters, more families with children who don't engage in or attend athletic events, more people who do less socializing on Fridays and Saturdays than the average household.

In my experience, GOP candidates' numbers dip during Friday and Saturday interviewing, but tend to recover on Sunday afternoon and evening when voters are at home. The nature of who's at home on Fridays and Saturday also affects Democrats. Most of the now-infamous polls showing Obama leading before the New Hampshire Democratic primary, for instance, were conducted over the weekend before the primary. Polls conducted the weekend before this fall's election may be additionally suspect since many voters will be out of the home on Friday the 31<sup>st</sup> to take their children trick-or-treating or attend parties. Weekend polls sometimes end up forecasting the election outcome correctly, but a healthy dose of skepticism and wariness is warranted.

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