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NEW HAMPSHIRE POST ELECTION STUDY

Prepared for President Ford Committee

#6709

February, 1976



SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Movement of Voters During the Campaign

The President won the New Hampshire election by receiving a two-to-one split of the voters who waited until election day to make up their minds. Up until the last week of the campaign the trend was toward Ronald Reagan. Those who reported making up their minds in January and early February divided by a 53% to 47% margin for Reagan. This was enough to have placed Reagan in a small 1.4% lead as the final week approached. At this point, 14% of the eventual voters were still undecided. During the last week the President's campaign stopped the Reagan trend for the first time since Reagan announced his candidacy and divided equally with Reagan the 8% of the voters who made their decision the last week. On the dawn of the election the President still trailed Reagan and would have lost except for the remaining 7,000 undecided New Hampshire voters who finally decided in the President's favor by over a two-to-one margin.

This sequence in the campaign is what is indicated by the voters recall of when they finally made up their minds. Although the precise results at the different stages of the campaign are subject to the fallibility of accurate recall, the patterns in this data are very definite.

Reagan's announcement in November did bring a large number of



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voters to his support (an estimated 10%), and this would be the largest single swing to him for the remainder of the campaign. This initial gain brought him within a point of the President. After this initial jump, the remaining undecided voters divided very evenly as they made their decisions but always slightly in Reagan's favor. However, the trend to Reagan was never enough to build up an appreciable lead for him nor one that could withstand the dramatic break to the President on election day.

The recall data also confirms that a significant proportion of the President's "survey vote" was very soft. Forty-five percent (45%) of the voters located their voting decision after October, 1975, although our October survey measured only a 5% undecided vote. Clearly, many of the 45% were probably inclined toward supporting the President and reported so when asked. Reagan won more of these voters than the President did in the following months except for those last 6% on the day of the election.



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Timing of Voting Decision and Reported Vote

	<u>Total</u>	<u>How Voted</u>		<u>Decision Profile</u>
		<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	
Before Reagan announced/ Have always been for....	100%	60%	40%	39%
During the week immediately after Reagan's announce- ment	100%	23	77	12
Sometime in January	100%	46	54	9
A few weeks before the primary	100%	48	52	17
During the week before the primary	100%	54	46	10
On election day	100%	68	32	7
Don't know	100%	60	40	5
				<u>100%</u>



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Movement of Vote Over Time

	<u>Before Reagan Announced</u>				<u>After Reagan Announced</u>		
	<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Undec.</u>		<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Undec.</u>
Ford	31.7			→	30.9	.8	
Reagan		23.7		→	.8	22.9	
Undecided			44.7	→	2.3	9.5	32.8
					34.0	33.2	32.8

	<u>After Reagan Announced</u>				<u>Sometime in January</u>		
	<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Undec.</u>		<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Undec.</u>
Ford	34.0			→	32.5	1.5	
Reagan		33.2		→	1.1	32.1	
Undecided			32.8	→	3.4	4.2	25.2
					37.0	37.8	25.2

	<u>Sometime in January</u>				<u>A Few Weeks Before Primary</u>		
	<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Undec.</u>		<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Undec.</u>
Ford	37.0			→	33.6	3.4	
Reagan		37.8		→	3.1	34.7	
Undecided			25.2	→	5.3	6.1	13.8
					42.0	44.3	13.8

	<u>A Few Weeks Before Primary</u>				<u>During Week Before Primary</u>		
	<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Undec.</u>		<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Undec.</u>
Ford	42.0			→	40.9	1.1	
Reagan		44.3		→	1.9	42.4	
Undecided			13.7	→	3.8	3.8	6.1
					46.6	47.3	6.1

	<u>During Week Before Primary</u>				<u>On Election Day</u>		
	<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Undec.</u>		<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Undec.</u>
Ford	46.6			→	46.2	.4	
Reagan		47.3		→	.8	46.5	
Undecided			6.1	→	4.2	1.9	
					51.1	48.9	



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Primary Vote by Demographic Groups

The voter's age and level of education were very important factors influencing his or her voting decision. Younger voters, senior citizens, and college graduates voted for the President in landslide proportions (60% and over). Middle-aged voters and high school graduates, on the other hand, voted for Reagan by margins almost as large as the Ford sub-groups went for Ford. This very distinct cleavage in the vote confirms a pre-election pattern found not only in New Hampshire but in several other primary states as well.

One of the largest differences in the two pre-election surveys was between men and women. On election day, however, the women who voted did not vote for Ford by the 60%+ rate that existed previously. The relationship did persist with the President winning among women and losing among the men but, as stated, the difference was not as great as previously measured. In fact, all of the President's loss between the January survey and election day occurred either by women switching to Reagan or the Ford women staying home in disproportionate numbers, if the comparison to the post election results are taken as fully accurate.

In contrast to the President's loss of the women's advantage, which nearly cost him the election, his strength among senior citizens and the college graduates held firmly against the Reagan trend. Reagan did moderately cut into the President's large youth vote, but not enough to erase a clear margin for the President on primary day by the younger voters.



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The largest movements to Reagan came within the two groups which already showed signs of accepting his challenge in January and October -- the middle-aged Republicans and Republicans with high school educations.



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New Hampshire Election
Reported Vote by Demographic Sub-Groups

		<u>Reported Vote</u>		<u>Number of Cases</u>
		<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	
Total	100%	52%(- 4)	48%(+ 4)	(276)
<u>Age</u>				
18-34 years	100%	59 (- 5)	41 (+5)	(49)
35-44 years	100%	51 (- 7)	49 (+7)	(61)
45-54 years	100%	39 (- 6)	61 (+6)	(59)
55-64 years	100%	54 (- 1)	46 (+1)	(48)
65 years and over	100%	61 (+ 3)	39 (-3)	(57)
<u>Education</u>				
Less than High School	100%	54 (+16)	46 (-16)	(24)
High School	100%	42 (-13)	58 (+13)	(122)
Some College	100%	48 (-12)	52 (+12)	(48)
Graduated College & Post	100%	67 (- 3)	33 (+ 3)	(86)
<u>Income</u>				
Under \$10,000	100%	50 (- 3)	50 (+ 3)	(64)
\$10,000-\$15,000	100%	48 (- 9)	52 (+ 9)	(61)
Over \$15,000	100%	53 (- 9)	47 (+ 9)	(111)
<u>Sex</u>				
Male	100%	50 (+ 1)	50 (- 1)	(138)
Female	100%	54 (- 8)	46 (+ 8)	(138)



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Primary Vote and Republicanism

Reagan's vote came more from the softer Republican, the independents and ticket-splitters, than the harder or more committed Republicans. This was the pattern to Reagan's challenge noted in earlier surveys, and the post election survey confirms that this characteristic of Reagan's constituency remained true on election day.

Republicanism and Reported Vote

	Reported Vote		Number of Cases
	Ford	Reagan	
1. Solid	54% (+ 0)	46% (+ 0)	(85)
2.	57 (- 9)	43 (+ 9)	(58)
3.	69 (+15)	31 (-15)	(23)
4.	51 (- 4)	49 (+ 4)	(33)
5. Ind/T-S	39 (-10)	61 (+10)	(36)
6. No consistent past voting pattern	34 (a)	66 (a)	(23)

^aComparison not possible

Reasons for Voting for Ford and Reagan

The perception of President Ford's greater experience was the single most important candidate perception behind his New Hampshire vote. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of Ford's voters said this was the most important of six reasons presented to them. Surprisingly, negative perceptions of Reagan as being "too extreme and unrealistic" was the pre-selected reason that



MARKET OPINION RESEARCH

drew the next largest affirmative response by the Ford voters. It was followed closely by "President Ford is an honest man" (14%) and "President Ford has done a good job" (13%), as major reasons for the voters' choice of President Ford.

Reagan's record as governor of California was selected the most frequently by his voters as the most important reason for voting for him. It was cited by fully 37% of his voters making it the most significant candidate perception behind either candidate's vote. The strength of leadership perception placed second with 22% of Reagan's voters choosing it. Voting for Reagan because he was perceived as more conservative than the President was directly selected by 12% of his voters, although some of those who chose his record as governor probably had his conservative policies in mind.

Perceptions of who would have the best chance of winning the general election was a relatively unimportant consideration to the voters on either side.

The significant anti-Reagan vote was directed at his policies and not at him as a person. A 81% to 16% majority of all the voters said their general impression of Reagan was favorable which is as good as the President's 79% to 17% rating. In short, both men made very favorable impressions with the voters as individuals.

The preceding data and additional data consistently point to the two general factors which were expected to decide this election (1) the importance the



MARKET OPINION RESEARCH

voters' placed on the President's incumbency and (2) their reactions to Reagan's policy positions. In addition to more of his voters selecting the President's experience as the most important reason for voting for him, the study shows that the President was perceived by a 44% to 22% plurality of all voters as the "most qualified to be President". This perception was more important to the Ford voters as they almost unanimously agreed (77% to 1%) that Gerald Ford was the most qualified whereas only a 45% to 8% plurality of the Reagan voters rated him ahead of the President and 39% granted that the two men were equally qualified.

The high issue content of Reagan's campaign is very evident in what the voters said was the main message or theme of each candidate's campaign. First of all, many more voters thought there was a theme in Reagan's campaign (67%) than in the President's campaign (47%). This particular difference may be due to the fact that the President's campaign was partly a subliminal appeal to the voters' feelings of the importance of the office of the presidency and the safety in keeping a known person in that office. On the other side, Reagan was stressing easily grasped issue positions and the findings indicate that his positions were remembered by the voters. The voters most frequently said his theme was "doing away with big government/bring power to the states/localize government" (16%). Others said his campaign theme was "better control of federal spending/balance the budget" (10%), "conservatism" (7%), "keep taxes down" (4%), "welfare reform" (4%), "social security issue" (3%), and "strong defense" (3%). General, non-issue perceptions were mentioned as Reagan's theme such as "could do better job"



MARKET OPINION RESEARCH

(5%) and "more for the people" (5%). However, such general themes were the exception in the responses about Reagan's campaign whereas they were common in the responses about the President's campaign theme.

On the basis of hindsight, the judgment could be made that the President's campaign should have stressed the President's issue positions more than it did. Any of the "Reagan themes" easily could have been the President's; nevertheless, Reagan was more associated with them. This advantage could have been blunted by a greater focus on the issues than was done in the President's media advertising. If eight hundred Ford voters had voted differently, the preceding would have been a major critique.

This observation, however, is more appropriate for New Hampshire than for Florida. Ideology and issues were found to be more important to voting intentions in New Hampshire while the incumbency factor was found to be more important in Florida in the previous studies of the two states. Reagan's highly issue-oriented campaign should meet a less responsive audience in Florida, and the President's stress of his incumbency should tap the Florida voters' most important concern.



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Why did you vote for Gerald Ford/Ronald Reagan?

<u>FORD</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>REAGAN</u>	<u>Total</u>
Ford has done a good job/ Doing a good job/Doing his job well (unsp.)	19%	Better man/Best man I'm a Conservative/ He's a Conservative	9% 7
Ford a better man/Better of the two/Best man	15	More confidence/Faith in Reagan	7
Ford is honest/Sincere	12	**Don't like Ford/Anti- Ford	7
Ford's accomplishments/ Performance in office/ Proven himself	12	Give more power to states/More state control	6
*Ford more experienced/ Gained experience	11	Good job as Governor of California	5
Deserves a chance/Deserves a chance to prove himself/ Needs more time/Give him a chance	8	Need a change/Should be a change	5
Like him/Like Ford	7	Like Reagan's ideas/ Issues/His philosophy	5
Economy looks better under Ford/Economic policy is sound	7	Reagan--honest	5
Ford is doing a good job, should continue	6	Concern about excess spending	5
***Don't like Reagan	5	Like Reagan	5
Ford the incumbent President now	3	Reagan said he would get rid of Kissinger	4
**Reagan doesn't have the experience	2	Liked Reagan's record	3
***Reagan not strong enough	2	More concern about welfare/Stand on welfare	3
Ford knows what he is doing/ Handles things better	1	Reagan be a better leader/Good President	3
More confidence in Ford	1	Stand on foreign policies	2
***Reagan too conservative	1	Reagan could handle Congress better	2
Ford has a better chance of winning	1	*Don't like Nixon pardon	2
All other negative related responses toward Reagan	3	*Nixon's trip to China	2
All other positive related responses toward Ford	8	Stronger than Ford	2
Don't know	5	**Dissatisfied with Ford's policies/Ideas	2
Number of Cases	(144)	All other negative related Ford responses	8
*/**Ford more experience/ Reagan not	13	All other positive related Reagan responses	11
/Anti-Reagan responses	10	Don't know	7
		Number of Cases	(132)
		*Mention of Nixon responses	3
		**Anti-Ford responses	8



MARKET OPINION RESEARCH

What do you think was the main message or theme of Gerald Ford's campaign?

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Voted For</u>	
		<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>
Continue economic programs/ Economy improving	6%	8%	5%
Running on record/Stands on his record	5	5	6
Honesty/Honest	5	8	2
Try to do his best for the country/Get country on feet	4	7	2
Continuation -- don't change horses in mid-stream	4	3	6
Control inflation	4	3	5
Trying to get confidence of the people/Do his best for the public	4	5	2
Continue to follow his policies/Ideas	3	6	2
Run a common sense approach to government/Realistic approach to government/Keep cool and steady	3	6	1
To help unemployment/Generate jobs	3	3	3
His accomplishments	3	3	2
Balance budget/Cut spending/Control spending	2	3	2
Experience	2	3	1
Conservatism	2	--	4
Nice guy/Friendly	2	1	2
View on social security	1	1	1
All other responses	7	6	8
Don't know/None/Can't say	53	46	61
Number of Cases	(276)	(144)	(132)



MARKET OPINION RESEARCH

What do you think was the main message or theme of Ronald Reagan's campaign?

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Voted For</u>	
		<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>
Doing away with big government - too much government control/ Bring power to states/Anti- big government/Give government back to state/Less power to federal/Localize government	16%	13%	20%
Better control of federal spending/Balance the budget/ Ideas on budget/Stop unnecessary spending	10	4	17
Conservatism/Ultra conservative/ Very conservative	7	6	8
Could do better job/Could do things better/Better job than Ford	5	4	6
More for the people/Help the people	5	2	8
Tax proposal/Keep taxes down/Lower taxes	4	4	5
Someone new in Washington/Make a change	4	6	3
Welfare reform/Get people off welfare	4	2	5
Country back on feet/Pull the country together	3	2	4
Social security issue	3	2	2
Strong defense	3	1	5
Job he did in California/Government experience in California	2	1	3
Honesty	2	2	2
Economy - getting the economy rolling	1	1	2
Stand on abortion	1	--	3
All other responses	12	13	10
Don't know	33	42	23
Number of Cases	(276)	(144)	(132)



MARKET OPINION RESEARCH

Now, I'm going to mention several reasons other people have given us for why they voted for Gerald Ford/Ronald Reagan, and as I read each one, I would like you to tell me whether that particular reason was or was not important to you in making up your mind on how to vote.

Which one of the reasons we just mentioned was most important to you in deciding how to vote for . . .

<u>Ford Voters</u>		<u>Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Most Important</u>
Because President Ford is more experienced than Reagan	100%	74%	24%	3	27%
Because Reagan is too extreme and unrealistic	100%	35	56	10	19
Because President Ford is an honest man	100%	82	13	5	14
Because President Ford has done a good job	100%	83	10	7	13
Because President Ford has a better chance of winning the general election	100%	48	43	9	3
Because I know more about Ford and don't know much about Reagan	100%	48	51	1	3
None					6
Don't know					18
					<u>102%</u>

<u>Reagan Voters</u>		<u>Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Most Important</u>
Because of Reagan's record as Governor of California	100%	84%	14%	2%	37%
Because Reagan will provide stronger leadership than Ford	100%	77	14	9	22
Because Reagan is more conservative than Ford	100%	62	30	8	12
Because I think Ford has done a poor job as President	100%	42	52	7	5
Because Reagan is more competent	100%	57	33	11	4
Because Reagan has a better chance of winning the general election	100%	42	46	12	1
None					5
Don't know					14
					<u>100%</u>



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What do you think was the main issue in the campaign?

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Voted For</u>	
		<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>
*Economy/Economics	9%	11%	6%
Finances/Financial affairs/Government spending/Fiscal responsibility	5	4	7
*Unemployment	5	3	6
Named specific difference between them--Ford's capability vs. Reagan's inexperience/Reagan putting control back to state and Ford not/Ford's record and Reagan's conservatism/Ford has accomplishments and Reagan has feelings/Unifying candidate like Ford and a divided candidate like Reagan	4	3	5
Big government/Less big government/Power of national government over state government	3	1	6
Their background/Record/Experience	3	5	--
Who will do the best for the country?/Who is more capable of running the government?	3	1	4
*Inflation/Cost of living	2	1	3
Foreign policy/National defense/Detente/International issues	1	2	1
Welfare--get rid of welfare/Food stamp program	1	1	2
Looking for a change/Someone new in the White House	1	1	2
General issues/Ideas	1	2	1
Social security/Change social security system	1	1	1
Ford's energy stand/Oil issue	1	2	--
Honesty	1	1	2
Personalities	1	2	--
Fact Ford is still President/Incumbent - Ford	1	2	--
Nixon's trip to China	1	1	1



MARKET OPINION RESEARCH

What do you think was the main issue in the campaign? (Continued)

		<u>Voted For</u>	
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Ford</u>	<u>Reagan</u>
All other positive related responses toward Reagan	1	--	3
All other positive related responses toward Ford	2	3	1
All other negative related responses toward Reagan	1	2	--
All other negative related responses toward Ford	2	--	5
All other miscellaneous related responses	14	8	21
Don't know/Nothing	39	47	31
Number of Cases	(276)	(144)	(132)
*Economy responses	15	16	14

