

**The American Jewish Committee (AJC)¹
Research Institute for New Americans (RINA)**

Presidential Election 2004: Russian Voters

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1. Presidential Elections 2004 in Exit Poll.

First ever exit poll conducted November 2, 2004, in Brooklyn (459 interviewed in 4 locations), Queens (91 interviewed), New Jersey (Fair Lawn, 57 interviewed), and Philadelphia (195 interviewed) demonstrated that, on average, 77% of Russian Jews (depending on the location of the poll) voted for Bush, while 22% for Kerry, with about 1% for no one. The proportion of 3 to 1 that was registered in August survey (56% of the registered voters said they would vote for Bush and 18% for Kerry) seems to sustain in the exit poll.

Voted For:

Location:	Bush	Kerry	No one	
Brooklyn (459)	74	24	2	100
Queens (91)	87	13	0	100
New Jersey (57)	71	27	2	100
Philadelphia (195)	79	20	1	100
North East	79	20	1	
Bucks County	81	19	0	
All (802)	77	22	1	100

Comparison of registered voters with actual voters.

	Bush	Kerry	No one/other	Not sure	
Registered voters (August 2004 survey)	56	18	5	22	100
Actual voters (Exit Poll)	77	22	1	----	100

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Undecided voters. There were about 27% of registered voters who were undecided (or said they would vote for no one) in August 2004 survey for whom to vote. The exit poll matches this figure by indicating that 29% of all interviewed reported making their decision within a month or so before the Election Day.

When you decided for which candidate to vote?

In last 3 days	8%
In last week	5%
In last month	16%
Before	63%
Don't remember	8%

	100

Usually, the undecided voters split more in favor for the challenger than those who decided before. That is exactly what we observe in the exit poll. Those decided “last week” break in a rate 1.2 to 1 for Bush, while those decided “before” split 4.2 to 1 for the incumbent.

When you decided whom to vote for?	Voted for			
	Bush	Kerry	No one/other	
Last 3 days	59	33	8	100
Last week	54	44	2	100
Last month	79	20	1	100
Before	80	19	1	100

The data obtained in Exit poll suggest that August 2004 survey accurately predicted the Russian-Jewish voting preferences.

Gender and Age.

Gender distribution in exit poll resembles the distribution in August survey.

	August 2004 survey	Exit poll
Male	46	47.5
Female	54	52.5

Women and men voted similarly.

	Bush	Kerry	No one	
Men	76%	23%	1	100%
Women	77%	21%	2	100%

Age distribution:

	Brooklyn	Queens	NJ	Philadelphia	All
Less than 35 y.o.	12	6	26	11	12
35 to 65	41	42	65	37	42
More than 65 y.o.	47	52	9	52	46
	100	100	100	100	100

The youngest population is observed in Fair Lawn (New Jersey), the oldest voters population is in Queens.

While younger voters liked Bush in a lesser proportion, older population preferred Bush overwhelmingly. People who are younger than 35 years old are 3 times more likely to vote for Kerry than those over 65 years old.

Voted for:

Age Category:	New York		New Jersey		Philadelphia		All	
	Bush	Kerry	Bush	Kerry	Bush	Kerry	Bush	Kerry
Less than 35 y.o.	61	33	50	50	55	45	58	39
35 to 65 y.o.	69	29	83	14	77	21	73	26
More than 65 y.o.	86	13	n/a	n/a	85	14	82	14

Issues. Among those who voted for Bush in Brooklyn, the most important issues are:

Israel	53%
Terror	21%
Strong military	11%

Among those who voted for Kerry in Brooklyn, the most important issues are:

Economy	36%
Iraq war	17%
Israel	10%
Strong military	17%

In other locations the pattern is the same: Bush voters are concerned mostly with Israel and terror; Kerry voters are concerned mostly with the economy and Iraq war.

Candidate's qualities.

For Bush's voters, the most important qualities are:

Strong leader	40%
Effective leader	13%
Good judgment	12%
Understands issues	10%

For Kerry's voters, the most important qualities are:

Good judgment	31%
Strong leader	18%
Understands issues	11%
Cares about people	9%

For both Bush and Kerry voters, issues are more important than personal qualities, but in different proportion. For 76% of Bush's voters, issues are more important, while for 21% qualities are; for 88% of Kerry's voters issues are more important than qualities, while for only 8% qualities are more important than issues.

New Voters. A significant number of more than 36% of all voted in 2004 presidential elections were new voters. Among the new voters, 73% voted for Bush and 26% for Kerry.

Almost all (96%) of those who voted for Bush in 2000 voted for him again in 2004. However, 64% of those who voted for Gore in 2000, voted for Bush in 2004, and 35% of 2000 Gore's voters remained loyal to the Democratic candidate in 2004.

Russian Jews are mostly **registered as Democrats**, but voted for the Republican candidate.

	August 2004 Survey	Exit poll
Registered as:		
Republican	25	43
Democrat	51	40
Independent	24	13
Other	1	4
	100	100

The discrepancy between the prior survey and the exit poll is explainable: 1) apparently more registered Republicans turned out to voting places than registered Democrats; 2) people try to adjust their registration to their actual voting behavior, and therefore, voting Republican, they tend to say they are registered Republican; 3) both.

Voted for:

Registered as:	Bush	Kerry	No one	
Republican	94	6	0	100%
Democrat	58	40	2	100%
Independent	71	27	2	100%

Income.

	August 2004 survey	Exit poll
Below \$30,000	66	62
\$30,000 to less than \$60,000	15	15
\$60,000 to less than \$90,000	9	12
\$90,000 and more	10	11

It is interesting to notice that voting preferences are almost indifferent to income category. Yet, people with higher than \$60,000 annual income tended to vote for Kerry slightly more than those with low income category.

	Voted for:			
	Bush	Kerry	No one	
Income:				
Below \$30K	80	19	1	100
\$30K to less than \$60K	74	24	2	100
\$60K to less than \$90K	69	30	1	100
\$90K or more	74	24	2	100

Religion. By and large, religion does not play an important role in ex-Soviet immigrants' life. Only for 12% it is very important, and for 32% it is of some importance; for the rest majority of the population it is either not important (36%) or has no meaning at all (15%). Nevertheless, as in general American voting population, religion is the single best predictor of the voting preferences. This turned to be exactly true for the Russian voters. The proportion of Bush voters is significantly higher among those for whom religion plays a very important role, than among those with no religion. The proportion of Kerry voters grows with diminishing of the role of religion; for the non religious voters, it is 4 times higher (40%) than for very religious (10%).

It is also interesting to note that apparently more religious people went out to vote on Election Day (12%) than are among the registered voters (5%)

	Voted for:			
	Bush	Kerry	No one	
Role religion plays in your life:				
Very important	88	10	2	100
Important	84	15	1	100
Not very important	74	25	1	100
None	57	40	3	100

2. Russian Voters on Domestic and International Politics.

A separate opinion survey of 789 Russian Americans, who became U.S. citizens by the time of interview, was conducted in New York metro area during the period from July 20, 2004, to August 25, 2004. Below are some of the findings.

- ✚ A considerable segment of the surveyed population (37%) either does not understand of or is not sure about American common political continuum of liberal-conservative scale. Nevertheless, 18% position themselves on the “liberal” side of the spectrum, 24% place themselves at the “conservative” edge, with 22% seeing themselves as “moderate”.
- ✚ Overwhelming majority of **84% approve of the way that the United States government is handling the campaign against terrorism**, with only 9% disapprove. **The approval rate of the war in Iraq is also high – 55% approve**, 27% disapprove, and 18% are not sure.
- ✚ 73% of Russian American Jews in New York are **willing to give up some of their personal freedoms in order to make the country safe from possible terrorist attacks.**
- ✚ **On economy**, Russian Jews are split: 38% said they approve of the way the current administration is handling the economy, while 24% disapprove, and 38% are not sure.
- ✚ **On domestic issues:** 77% favor the death penalty for persons convicted of murder, 66% think that abortions should be legal under any circumstances, and 81% are in favor of an amendment to the United States Constitution that defines marriage as a union only between a man and a woman and makes same-sex marriages unconstitutional.

3. Opinions on Anti-Semitism and Religion.

- ✚ For great majority of Russian-Jewish immigrants anti-Semitism remains a very serious concern. They consider anti-Semitism to be a very serious problem in the Muslim world (85%) and in Europe (83%), whereas their concern of anti-Semitism on American college campuses and in America in general is much less.

Anti-Semitism is a very serious problem	Russian Jews In New York	American Jews
In the Muslim world	85%	72%
In Europe	83%	
In America	14%	27%
On American college campuses	9%	24%

- ✚ Among the various ethnic and religious groups, Russian Jews see **Muslims** to be the one with the proportion of most (67%) or many (18%) anti-Semitic views. The least anti-Semitic group to them is Evangelical Protestants.
- ✚ **Religion** does not play a very important role in life of Russian Jewish Americans. It is very important for only 6%, and is of some importance for 35%. Consequently, 16% expressed the view that U.S. President should (and 67% that he should not) allow his personal religious faith to guide him in making decisions as President.

4. Israel.

- ✚ Russian Jewish Americans have exceptionally close personal relations to Israel. For them, Israel is an integral part of their Jewish identity. **88% agree that caring about Israel is a very important part of a person being a Jew.** Almost half of the interviewed visited Israel at least once, and 18% visited two or more times; almost half (45%) have first-degree relatives in Israel.
- ✚ On Israeli politics and the situation in the Middle East, Russian Jewish Americans share views that in many aspects distinguish them from the American Jews. **83% agree with the statement that the goal of the Arabs is the destruction of Israel, not merely the return of occupied territories; 51% oppose (and only 26% favor) the establishment of a Palestinian state in current situation (23% are not sure); 80% are against (and only 7% are for) any compromise on the status of Jerusalem within the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians.**
- ✚ A dominant support of the **security fence building is expressed by 88% of respondents**, while only 5% are against the building of the fence.
- ✚ On the hottest issue of **the Israeli government's decision to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip** Russians are almost evenly split in three groups: 34% are supporting the withdrawal, 36% oppose it, and 30% are not sure.
- ✚ Regardless of their individual views, **Russian Americans respect the decisions made by duly elected government of Israel and mostly agree (79%) that they should support these decisions (only tiny 6% disagree).**

Some Socio-demographic Characteristics of the surveyed population

**1. Geography and Age
Borough**

Percentage

Brooklyn	55
Queens	21
Manhattan	6
Staten Island	6
New Jersey	6
Bronx	1
Other	4

Age:

35 years old and below	10
36 to 65 years old	48
More than 65 years old	42

2. Gender male **46%** female **54%**

3. How long have you lived in the US?

Category	Percentage
Arrived 1979 & prior	9
Arrived between 1980 & 1989	13
Arrived between 1990 & 1999	77

4. Household Annual Income:

All Employed

Below \$30,000	67	28
\$30,000 to less than \$60,000	15	30
\$60,000 to less than \$90,000	9	21
\$90,000 and more	10	22