

Election 2004 Make or Break: Iraq and Security

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Media draws voter attention to Security and Iraq

According to Media Tenor's content analysis of network news and Fox's Special Report with Brit Hume, coverage in the last week prior to Election Day focused greatly on security and Iraq, bringing those issues to the forefront of the voting public's minds. Health care, which had been another prominent policy issue since the debates, was almost completely cut off the news agenda.

In the last three days prior to Election Day, CBS and FOX overall were clearly more critical on Kerry than on Bush while NBC rated Kerry more positive than Bush. ABC was largely balanced in covering the candidates. Overall, TV news coverage on Bush was particularly positive when presenting opinion poll results.

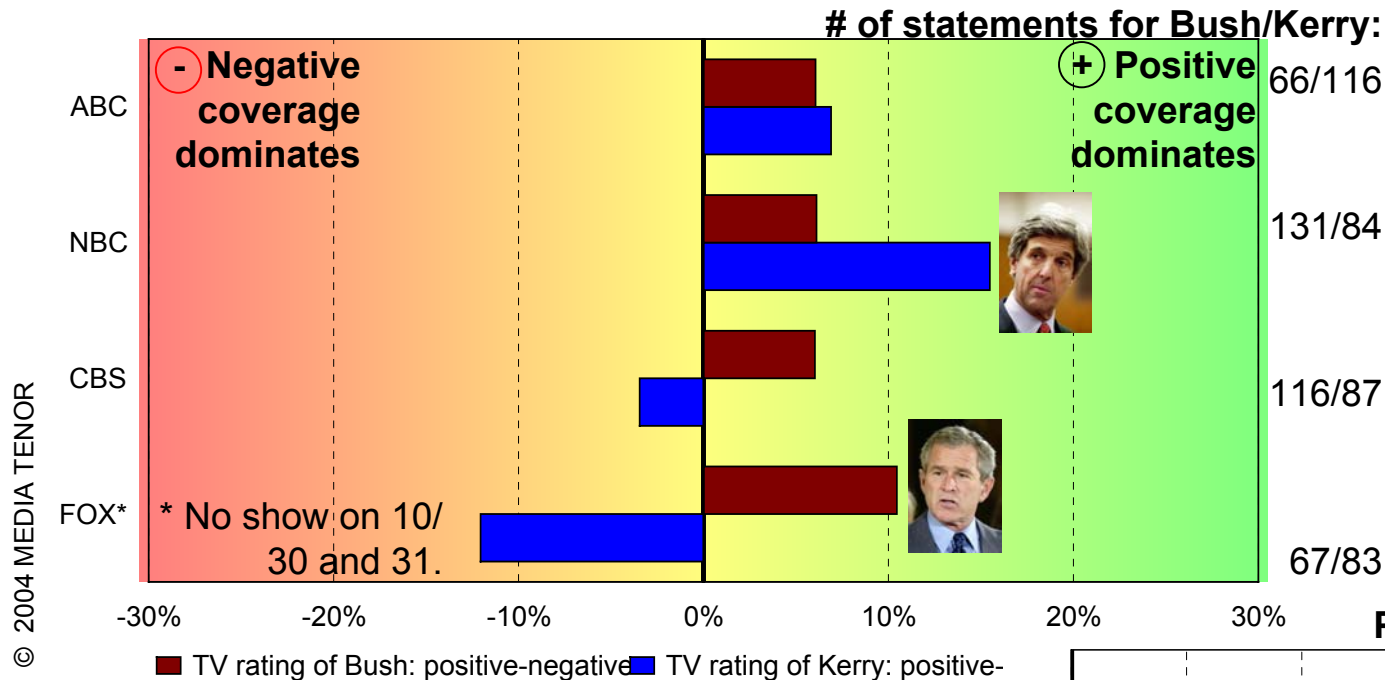
For the first time since August, recent network news coverage of the state of the economy was more positive than negative. This was largely due to last Friday's economic growth numbers for the last quarter. However, despite generally positive coverage, economic topics only made up a small share of news coverage last week.

The media's emphasis on election topics in the last weeks can explain the latest Newsweek poll results identifying voter priorities for this election (poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Oct. 27-29, 2004. N=1,005 registered voters nationwide. MoE \pm 4). The poll had security issues first, followed by Iraq, the economy, and health care. The economy had been the voters' top concern through almost the whole of the election year, but as the emphasis on economic issues has decreased in TV news reporting, so too has it in opinion polls.

The election outcome will depend largely on whom the voters trust most on each of the candidates' most important topics. TV news presented Bush positively in relation to national security issues, while Kerry was seen most positively in terms of health care and economic issues (although coverage volume for both these issues was not very high). The coverage was equally critical of both candidates' stances on foreign policy.

CBS critical of Kerry in final three days before Election

Ratings – ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX news, 10/30 – 11/01/04

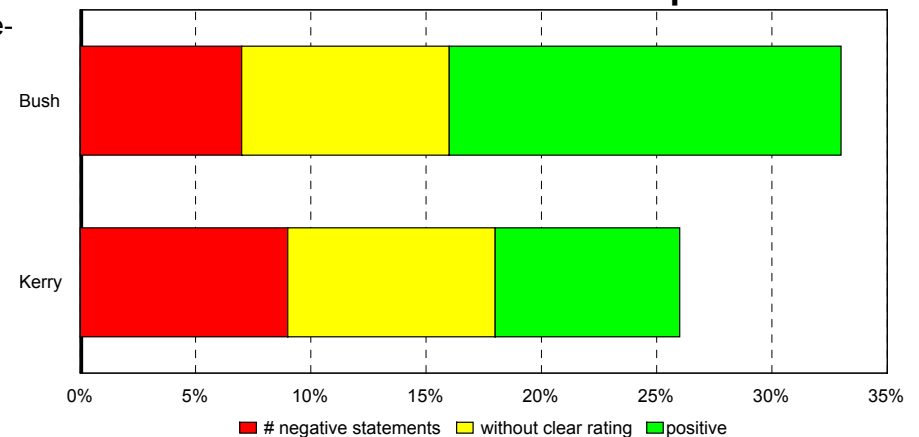


During the final three days before Election Day, CBS and Fox were clearly more critical of Kerry than President Bush. NBC, in contrast, rated Kerry in a more positive fashion than President Bush, while ABC was largely balanced in covering the candidates.

Difference between share of positive and negative TV rating of John F. Kerry

Bush's TV coverage on poll results and predictions exceeded that of Kerry and was clearly more positive in rating. Quite often voters, especially undecided voters, are receptive of this kind of information and tend to opt for the "winner" in their choice for President.

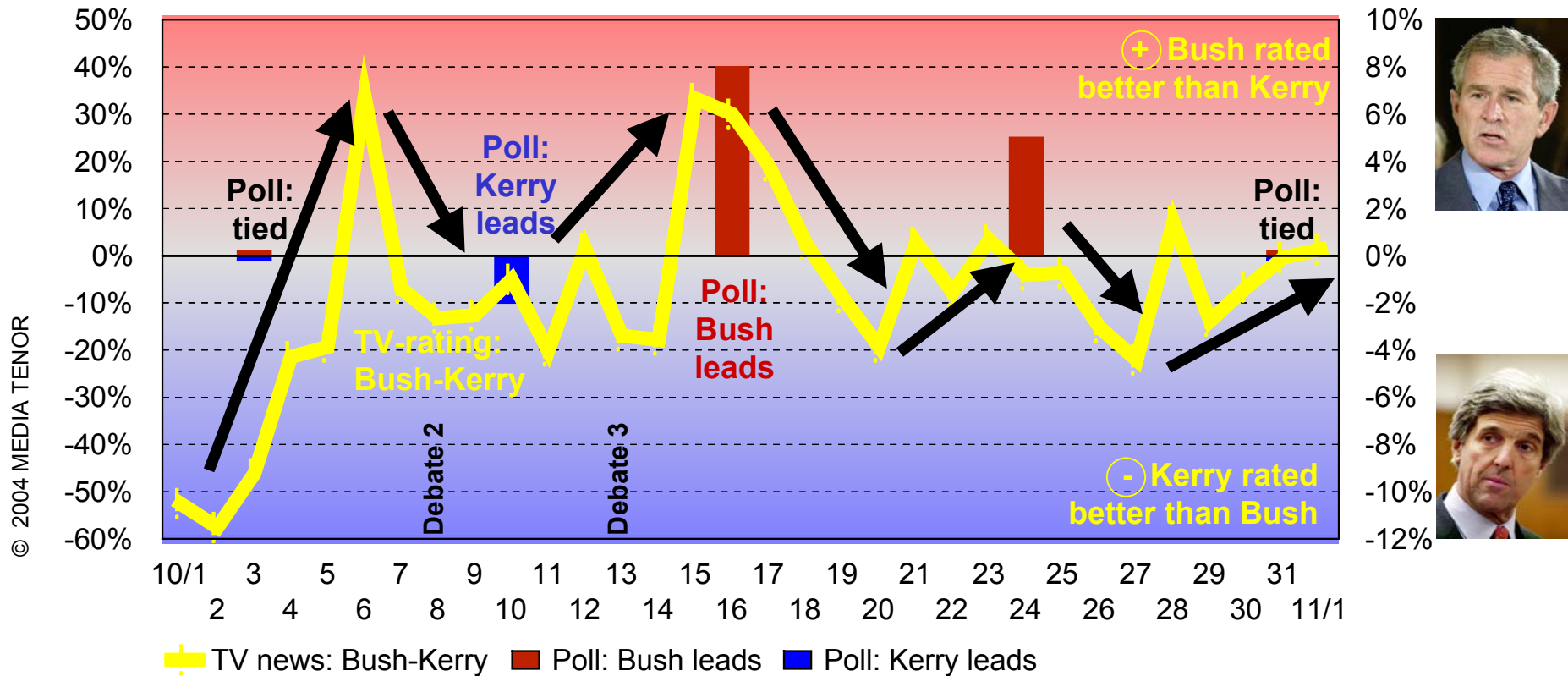
Poll results and predictions



Basis: A total of 750/59 statements by or about John Kerry and George W. Bush in network news and on Fox News, 10/30-10/01/2004

TV trend moving away from Kerry just before Election Day

Rating of candidates – ABC, CBS, NBC news, 10/1 – 11/1/04



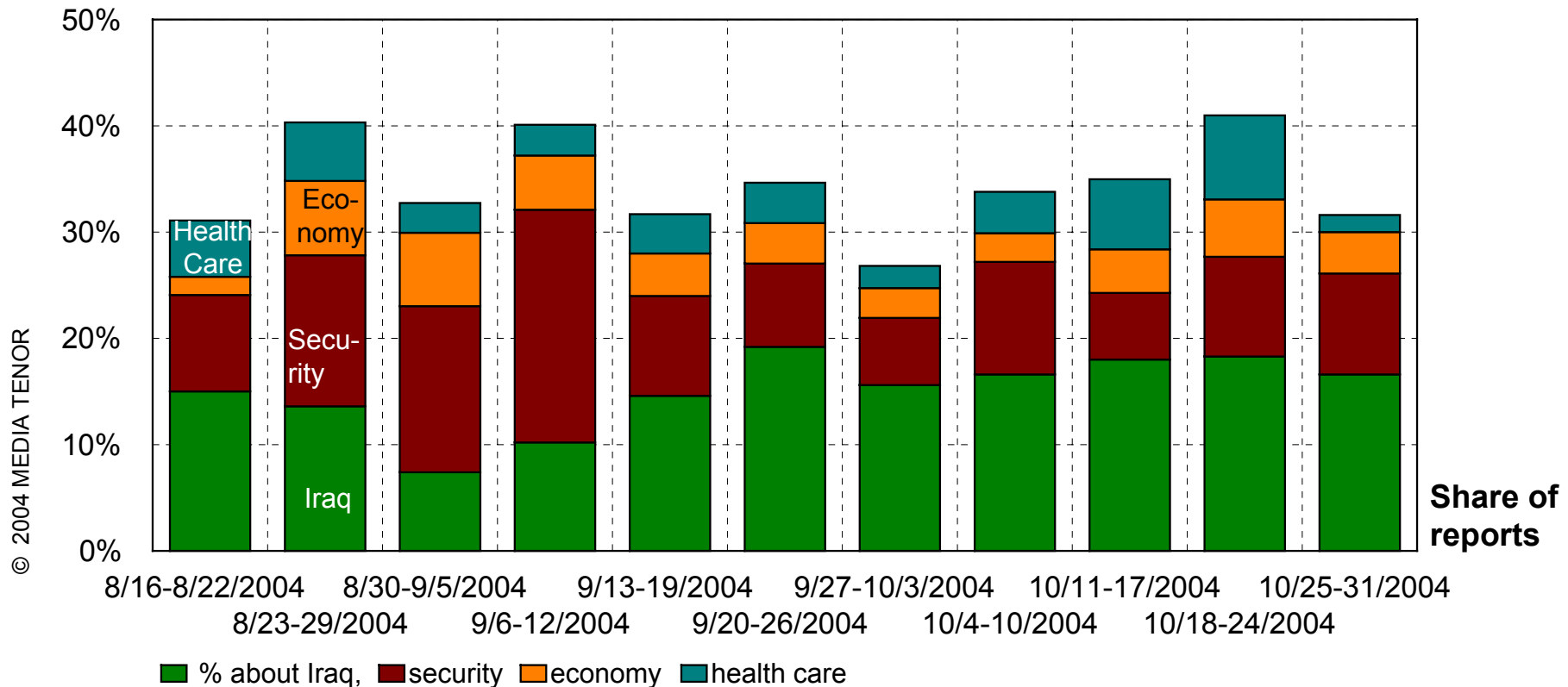
Difference between share of positive and negative evaluation of both Bush and Kerry (daily)
Poll: Trend in the Presidential Contest among likely voters (source: Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll)

During the last month prior to the election, national voter opinions, based in Gallup polls, followed the TV trend as measured by Media Tenor. As Election Day approached the networks moved away from Kerry.

Basis: A total of 5.984 statements about Bush and Kerry in ABC, CBS, NBC evening news, 10/1-11/1/2004

Focus on Iraq and security – health care no longer important

Topics – networks, FOX, Time, Newsweek, 8/16 – 10/31/04



100%: All reports in ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox evening news, Time and Newsweek

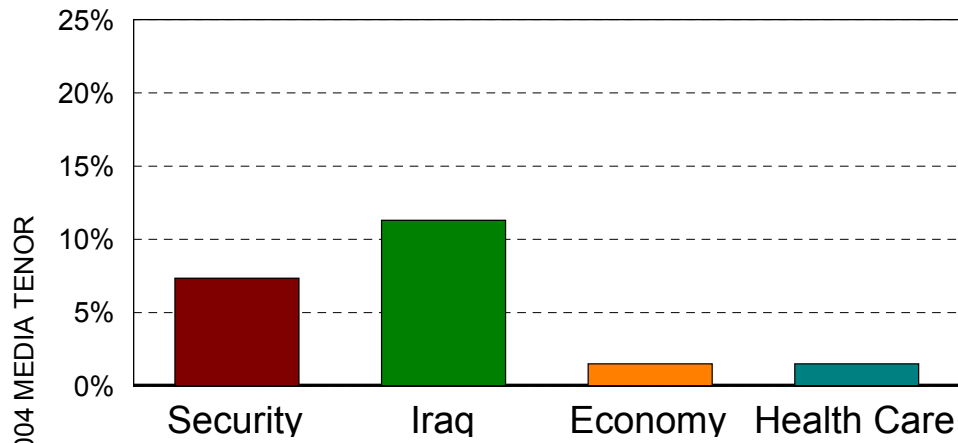
Coming out of the debates, health care received significant coverage in TV news. Recent coverage, especially after Bin Laden’s video tape was found, has shifted away from health care, with security issues being more strongly highlighted.

Basis: A total of 5,941 reports on these topics in ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox News, Time and Newsweek, 8/16-10/31/2004

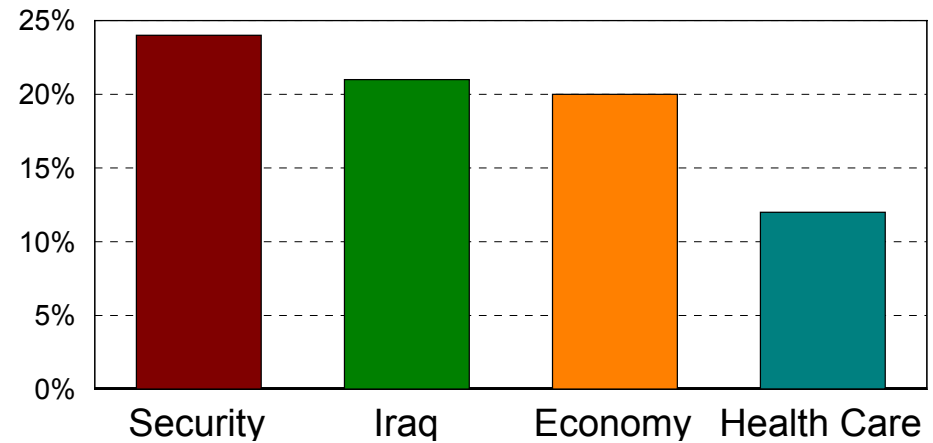
Iraq dominated TV news final days before election

Topics – ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX news, 11/01/2004

TV news coverage 10/30 - 11/01/2004



Voters' top 4 priorities: Newsweek poll, 10/27-29/04, N=1,005

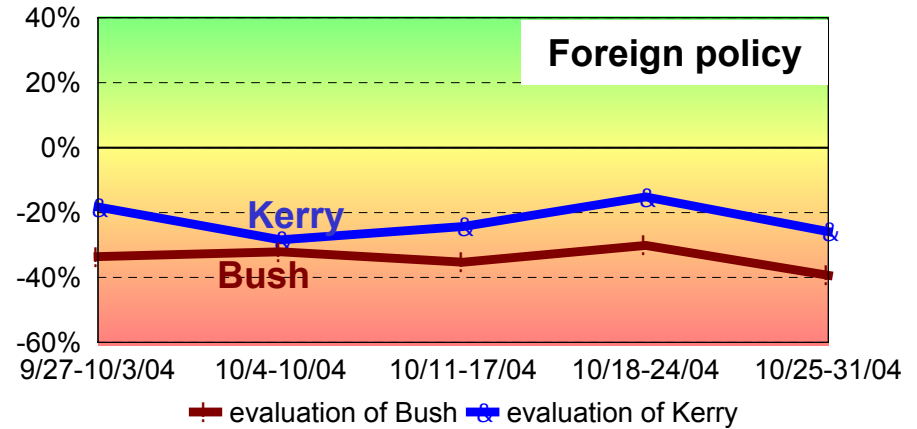
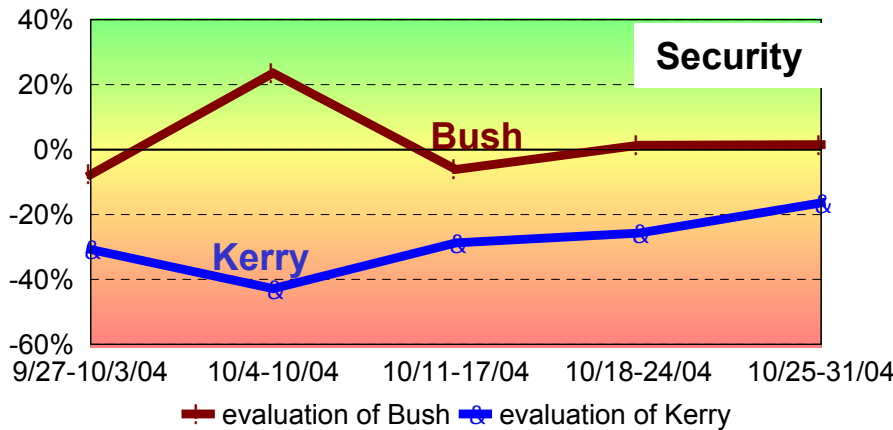


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100%: All reports on ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX news

While TV news, during the final three days prior to Election Day, has concentrated largely on Iraq, the voters' priority, according to a recent Newsweek poll, is national security. The media's emphasis on election issues during the last weeks of the campaign can help explain a recent Newsweek poll's results on voters' priorities (poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Oct. 27-29, 2004. N=1,005 registered voters nationwide. MoE ± 4). The poll had security issues first, followed by Iraq, the economy, and health care.

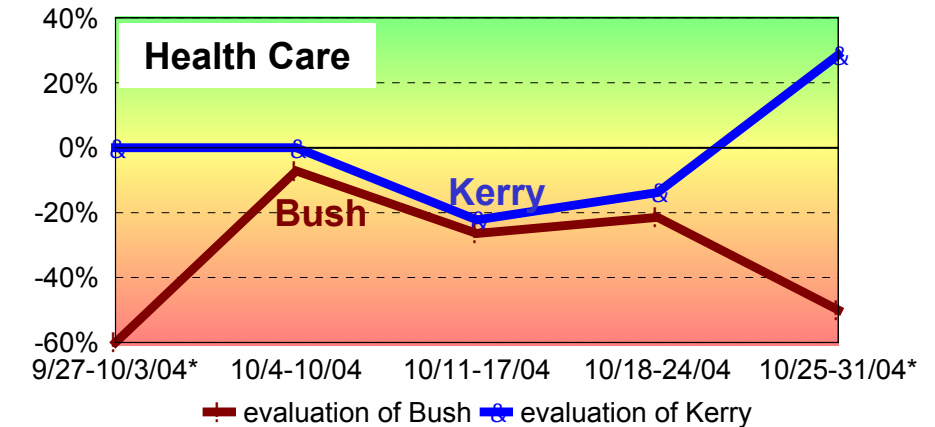
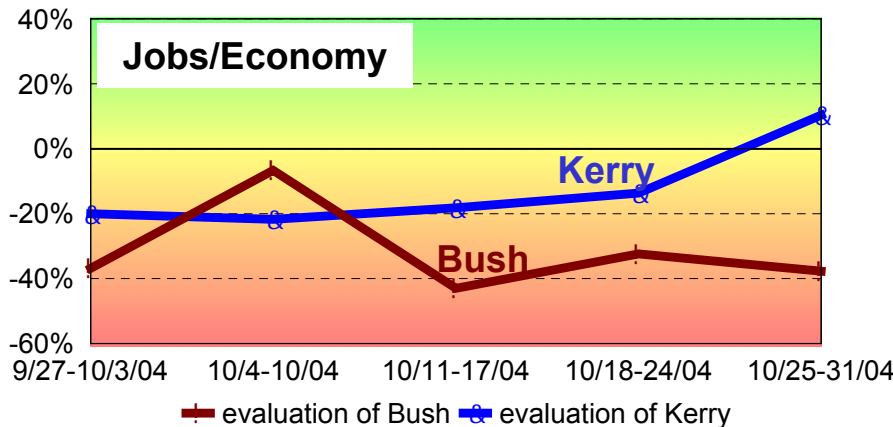
TV presented Bush favorably on security

Topic ratings – ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX news, 9/27 – 10/31/04



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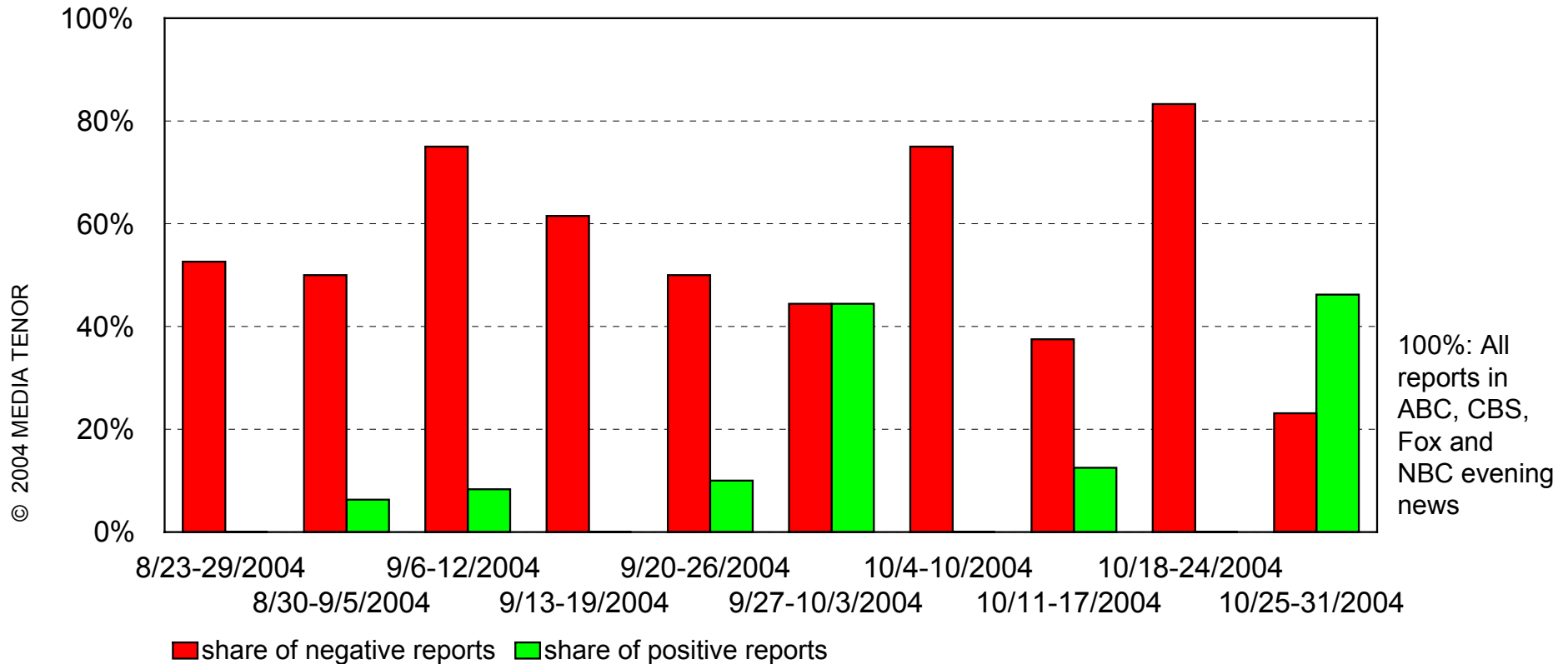
Balance between positive and negative statements (green: positive, red: negative evaluation), 100%: all statements about each Bush or Kerry in each ABC, CBS, NBS, FOX news, Time, Newsweek



Basis: A total of 1,681/956/282/668 statements about Bush and Kerry on ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox News, 9/27-31/2004 (* very little coverage)

National economy: Riding high on last Friday's figures

Economy – ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX news, 8/23 – 10/31/04



Last Friday's economic growth numbers caused a predominantly positive tone of economic coverage on TV news - for the first time since last August. The economy had been the top priority of voters throughout most of the election campaign, although it has received a small share of coverage during the whole of this election year.

Basis: A total of 130 reports on the economy in ABC, CBS, and CBS news, 8/23 -10/31/2004

10/1 - 11/01/2004

ANALYZED MEDIA:

ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS

CBS EVENING NEWS

FOX NEWS SPECIAL REPORT WITH BRIT HUME