



Questions and answers about the exit poll operation

October 30, 2004, 9:02 AM EDT

The opinions and choices of voters around the country will be surveyed on Tuesday as they leaving polling places. This exit poll is being conducted for the National Election Pool, a consortium composed of ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox News Channel and The Associated Press. The news organizations hired **Edison Media Research** of Somerville, N.J., and another veteran polling company, Mitofsky International of New York, to conduct the exit polls. Here's a look at how it works:

Q: What is the NEP exit poll?

A: A scientific survey of the choices and opinions of voters.

Q: How is it done?

A: Professional poll takers will survey tens of thousands of voters at over 1,000 polling places nationwide throughout the day Tuesday. Voters will be asked to fill out a confidential paper questionnaire prepared by NEP representatives. The interviewers select voters at a set interval _ such as every fifth person _ so that each participant had an equal chance of being picked.

Q: What about people who voted early or by absentee ballot?

A: In a number of states, those voters will be polled by phone to get their information.

Q: How are exit polls used to project the winner of a race?

A: It is just one of the ingredients. Each of the news organizations will use actual vote counts and the exit poll data, as well as information on past elections, to make their own determination on when to declare a winner. Edison/Mitofsky will provide guidance to the networks and The Associated Press.

Q: Will the news agencies again be projecting whether a presidential candidate has carried a state before the polls close?

A: No. The organizations also have promised, for the first time in a presidential election, not to call



states that span two time zones until all the polling places in that state are scheduled to have closed.

Q: What about calling races in states where a governor or U.S. senator is being elected?

A: Same answer. The news organizations participating in the National Election Pool have agreed not to characterize the outcome of any races covered by the exit poll in a particular state until all the polls in that state are scheduled to have closed.

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