

**NEWSMAKERS**

# How To Look At A Poll



John Zogby, author of the new book *The Way We'll Be*, has run a national polling firm for two decades. He tells PARADE how people should evaluate the numbers they read.

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**How accurate are polls?**

We can't state anything with certainty, because anything can happen. What we can do is measure a moment in time and then keep measuring moments and project what may happen.

**Do you think the media misuses polls or takes them out of context?**

Sometimes they do, or they make the same mistakes that consumers do. Like, you can't mix and match different pollsters. So if Company A has McCain up by seven points and Company B has him down by three, you can't say that he's up by four. Another mistake is not accounting for a margin of error. If Company A has Obama up by two and Company B has McCain up by one, they're actually saying the same thing, because a margin of error exists. In general, consumers should look at many different polls and observe the overall trends.

**On Election Day 2004, you said that John Kerry would win. Can we trust you?**

That was a bit of hubris on my part. A couple of states such as Ohio were too close to call, so I made an assessment based on pre-election polls and exit polls. But that experience led me to drop the prediction part of the business and stick to polling.

—Patricia Greco

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