



Campaigns Consider Singles in 2004 Race

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By Catherine Donaldson-Evans

FOX NEWS

NEW YORK —

You could call it the politics of singlehood — the Bridget Joneses among America's voters might prove as important as a swing state in the upcoming presidential election.

Though she is, of course, fictitious, the protagonist of "Bridget Jones' Diary" has come to represent singles everywhere. With 80 million of them living in this country and recent findings that they're less likely to vote than "Smug Marrieds," the candidates would be wise to go after the unwed to help win the White House.

"We actually think they could be the soccer moms of this election," said Trish McDermott, "vice president of romance" for [Match.com](#), which recently released the results of a Gallup survey about singles and politics. "If they were to show up at the polls in large numbers, they can influence the election."

The Gallup survey commissioned by Match.com found that 49 percent of singles polled favor Sen. **John Kerry** ([search](#)) for president, compared to 35 percent who want **President Bush** ([search](#)) re-elected.

But additional research by the online dating company found that only 61 percent of singles are registered to vote versus 77 percent of married couples.

The results have prompted Match.com to launch the "Every Single Vote Counts" campaign this year to encourage single citizens — 42 percent of the U.S. adult population, according to the advocacy group **Unmarried America** ([search](#)) — to get out and vote.

"Thirty-nine million singles did not vote in the last presidential election," said McDermott. "They may not feel addressed by any of the campaigns. ... The message may not be getting through to them that their vote matters."

Neither the Bush-Cheney nor the Kerry-Edwards campaigns are specifically trying to appeal to singles, though spokesmen from both said this year's election issues are important to everyone.

"Like most people, singles would have to be concerned about the economy and national security," said Bush campaign spokesman Terry Holt. "Because everybody is concerned about the same basic things, we try very hard to get our message out to different groups and yet not tailor a specific set of issues to those groups."

A spokesman from the Kerry campaign said that because singles fall under a variety of voting bloc umbrellas, members of some of the groups — unmarried women, for example — are already targeted in its outreach efforts.

Still, the executive director of Unmarried America — also called the **American Association for Single People** ([search](#)) — said he hears from many singles who feel forgotten by political candidates.

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"I don't think singles should be written off by either candidate or either party," said Thomas F. Coleman. "A lot of single people are telling us they're sick of everything in the presidential campaign revolving around marriage and family and parenting. There has been absolutely no mention of single people as a class. ... They're considerably underrepresented."

That said, not all of the unmarried will stay home on Election Day.

"It's definitely not true for me," said Kelli Cook, 26, a Duluth, Ga., marketing assistant and a member of the online dating site RepublicanSingles.com. "I try to make an effort to vote in all the elections that come up."

Los Angeles financial adviser Steve Buxbaum also hits the polls for nearly every election — and said he doesn't feel ignored by the presidential candidates.

"I do vote," said the 35-year-old left-leaning single. "Life as a single in this country is pretty good. You have fewer concerns, fewer complaints and issues that you have to bring to an elected official."

Even though a number of singles aren't registered to vote, it's not for lack of interest in politics.

Some of the Match.com research found that 63 percent of singles are open to discussing politics on a first date, and 91 percent think they're more likely to fall in love with a registered voter than with someone who isn't registered.

"They're as likely to hold an opinion on the key election issues — the war, homeland security and the economy — as their married counterparts," said McDermott. "Single people are not single-minded."

They also don't seem to be too judgmental about potential mates' political leanings, according to the Match.com/Gallup survey — in which 57 percent said they'd be open to marrying someone who held "significantly different" political views than their own.

In fact, the most famous happily-married-but-politically-divided couple — **James Carville** ([search](#)) and **Mary Matalin** ([search](#)) — appeared with McDermott at a recent event in Washington to talk about the Gallup poll and their spicy differences of opinion that are part of their marriage.

"A little disagreement about political issues can be a catalyst for interesting discussions," McDermott said. "You have to date someone who shares your passion."

One recently-married Republican said he was looking for love amid the politically like-minded — but the woman he wed in March is anything but.

"I got married to someone who does have different political views," Jason Shepherd, 28, said of his German wife. "Her views on Bush are not exactly mine — she has the European standpoint of Bush being a cowboy."

Initially, said Shepherd, a vice-chairman of the Georgia Republican Party, having similar politics was at the top of the list of qualities he sought in a lifelong mate.

"I didn't think I would marry a foreigner or someone who doesn't have the same political views," he said. "It's funny how sometimes the heart cancels the brain on that." When he met his wife, he said, it was "love at first sight."

The politics of dating is still largely a mystery. But the recent findings indicate that maybe Cupid, the elephant and the donkey aren't really at odds after all, despite what everyone says.

If anything, it's looking more and more like they might be accomplices in matters of the heart.

"Some people say love and politics don't really mix," McDermott said. "We think they do."

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