

THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE HEADING INTO THE FIRST DEBATE

September 21-24, 2008

There has been no change in the race for President since last week, with Democrat Barack Obama leading Republican John McCain by five points among registered voters. Interest in the presidential debate - still scheduled for Friday -- is high, with more than six in ten voters say they are very likely to watch the presidential debate tomorrow night.

CHOICE FOR PRESIDENT

(Among registered voters)

	Now	9/17/08	9/8/08
Obama	47%	48%	44%
McCain	42	43	46
Undecided	8	7	9

The state of the race is similar among likely voters.

CHOICE FOR PRESIDENT

	Registered voters	Likely voters
Obama	47%	48%
McCain	42	43
Undecided	8	6

With 40 days until the election, 30% of the electorate remains uncommitted, saying they could still change their minds about their candidate, or they are undecided entirely. This is up slightly from last week when 26% were uncommitted. In this poll, 44% of these uncommitted voters are Independents. Most of this poll was conducted before John McCain's announcement that he was suspending his campaign and heading back to Washington.

UNCOMMITTED VOTERS

(Among registered voters)

Now	30%
Last week	26%

While Obama continues to lead McCain in the enthusiasm of his supporters, enthusiasm is down among both candidates' supporters.

DESCRIBE YOUR SUPPORT

(Among registered voters)

	Obama Voters		McCain Voters	
	Now	9/17	Now	9/17
Enthusiastic	53%	61%	36%	47%
With reservations	33	23	49	37
Party nominee	8	8	6	6
Dislike other candidate	4	5	7	10

Obama leads McCain with women, moderates, Democrats, and younger voters. He is also getting the support of 61% of those who voted for Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primary.

McCain has the edge with men, conservatives, and whites, including white men.

The race is even among white women, and McCain has a 7-point lead with white Catholics. George W. Bush beat John Kerry by double-digits among both these groups in 2004.

Independents break 43% for McCain and 39% for Obama in this poll. This swing group has lived up to its name. Obama had the edge with Independents last week, and earlier in the month, after the Republican convention, McCain was winning their support.

VOTE FOR PRESIDENT: DEMOGRAPHICS

(Among registered voters)

	-- NOW --		-- 9/17 --	
	Obama	McCain	Obama	McCain
All	47%	42	48%	43
Men	45%	49	42%	48
Women	49%	36	54%	38
Republicans	9%	82	6%	86
Democrats	83%	9	83%	10
Independents	39%	43	46%	41
Liberal	74%	19	79%	13
Moderate	56%	32	56%	33
Conservative	20%	69	18%	76
Age < 45	51%	41	55%	39
Age 45 +	44%	43	43%	46
Clinton supporters	61%	24	65%	25
Whites	41%	49	42%	50
White men	38%	55	36%	54
White women	43%	43	47%	45
White Catholics	41%	48	37%	54

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE DEBATE

Over six in 10 registered voters say it is very likely that they will watch the first presidential debate between Barack Obama and John McCain tomorrow night, larger than the interest expressed before the first 2000 debate between Al Gore and George W. Bush - the last time two candidates were vying for their first term as president. 26% say it is at least somewhat likely they will watch.

WILL YOU WATCH THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE?

(Among registered voters)

	Now	9/2000
Very likely	64%	51%
Somewhat likely	26	31
Not likely	9	18

Most voters say they will tune in to get a better understanding of the candidates' positions on the issues, especially the economy - not foreign policy, the scheduled subject of debate one. Uncommitted voters - those who have yet to choose a candidate or might still change their minds - are similar to voters overall in what they want to learn, though they are more likely to focus particularly on learning the differences between the two candidates.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN FROM THE DEBATE?

(Among registered voters)

	Total Voters	Uncommitted Voters
Positions on the issues	29%	27%
Plans for the economy	18	21
Differences between the candidates	9	15
How they present themselves	5	2
Plans for Iraq	4	7
Foreign policy	3	4
Character	3	2
Who will win the debate	3	2

Nearly half of uncommitted voters say the debates will have a great deal of influence in deciding how they will vote for in November. Less than a third of voters overall agree.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE DEBATES IN DECIDING YOUR VOTE?

(Among registered voters)

	Total Voters	Uncommitted Voters
A great deal of influence	30%	48%
Will vote on other things	65	47

THE TALE OF THE TAPE: OBAMA VS. MCCAIN ON QUALITIES, POLICIES

This poll compares John McCain and Barack Obama on a range of qualities - and each goes into the debate with distinct advantages.

- **Obama inspires more confidence on handling the economy**, the nation's number-one issue.
 - Obama holds a 12-point edge over McCain on making voters very confident about his ability.
- **McCain has the edge on dealing with terrorism**. 40% of voters are very confident in McCain's ability to protect the country from it, as opposed to 28% who say that of Obama.

- However it is essential to note: a majority of voters are at least somewhat confident in *either* Obama or McCain's abilities to deal with either the economy or terrorism.
- The candidates are about even in perceptions of handling Iraq, and foreign policy generally.

CONFIDENT...WOULD MAKE RIGHT DECISIONS ON...

(Among registered voters)

	Obama	McCain
The Economy		
Very confident	29%	17%
Somewhat confident	35	38
Not confident	34	45
Terrorism		
Very confident	28%	40%
Somewhat confident	32	35
Not confident	37	23
Iraq		
Very confident	26%	30%
Somewhat confident	30	28
Not confident	42	41
Foreign policy		
Very confident	24%	23%
Somewhat confident	38	44
Not confident	35	32

Voters see stark differences in the likely policies of the two candidates.

- Voters worry McCain would be too quick to use military force in dealing with other countries, and not use diplomacy enough. Voters worry Obama might be too slow to use force, even if diplomacy wasn't working.
- Voters think McCain cares more about large corporations than ordinary people. They think Obama would favor people over corporations.

POLICY DIFFERENCES: OBAMA VS. MCCAIN

(Among registered voters)

	Obama	McCain
Concern that he would be...		
Too <u>quick</u> to use military force	10%	63%
Too <u>slow</u> to use military force	67	17
Cares more about protecting...		
Ordinary people	70%	32%
Large corporations	16	52

CANDIDATE QUALITIES

Obama and McCain each have challenges to meet.

- Obama has the edge on empathy: Most voters say Obama understands their needs and problems; fewer think McCain does.
- McCain has the edge on leading the military: far more think he is likely to be an effective commander in chief, as has been the case throughout this campaign.

On foreign policy matters (the scheduled topic of the debate) each candidate has advantages as well as weaknesses.

Both have work to do shoring up voters' confidence that they could handle an international crisis - neither Obama nor McCain elicits confidence from a majority of voters.

Both are seen as being knowledgeable about world affairs, but McCain is seen as better-informed than Obama.

Obama is seen as able to improve the U.S. image in the world - something most American say is important to do.

OBAMA AND MCCAIN QUALITIES

(Among registered voters)

	Obama	McCain
<u>Personal qualities</u>		
Is he prepared to be president?		
Yes	46%	62%
No	45	30
Does he understand your needs and problems?		
Yes	66%	49%
No	27	45
<u>Foreign policy matters</u>		
Effective Commander-in-chief?		
Very likely	27%	48%
Somewhat likely	35	29
Not likely	36	19

	Obama	McCain
Confident he can deal with an international crisis?		
Yes, confident	41%	49%
No, uneasy	53	47
Would make U.S. image in world:		
Better	53%	23%
Worse	12	26
No effect	29	43
Knowledgeable about World affairs		
Very	22%	45%
Somewhat	51	42
Not knowledgeable	22	10

OVERALL VIEWS OF THE CANDIDATES

Overall opinions of the two candidates have not changed too much since last week, but McCain's favorable rating is down slightly.

OPINION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

(Among registered voters)

	Obama		McCain	
	Now	9/17/08	Now	9/17/08
Favorable	43%	45%	38%	44%
Unfavorable	30	35	35	37
No opinion/Don't know	26	19	27	19

As for the Vice Presidential candidates, both continue to receive net overall positive ratings from voters. Sarah Palin remains more familiar to voters than Joe Biden.

OPINIONS OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

(Among registered voters)

	<u>Biden</u>		<u>Palin</u>	
	Now	9/17	Now	9/17
Favorable	33%	38%	37%	40%
Unfavorable	17	17	29	30
Undecided/Don't know	50	45	32	30

Women's views of Sarah Palin are more divided now than they have been in recent weeks, with her unfavorable rating rising. In this poll, 34% of women view her favorably, while 33% view her unfavorably. Last week, 36% of women held a positive opinion of Palin, with 32% viewing her negatively; and after the Republican convention, just 19% of women voters had an unfavorable opinion of the Alaska Governor; 47% had a favorable view of her.

WOMEN'S VIEWS OF SARAH PALIN

(Among registered voters)

	Now	9/17	9/8
Favorable	34%	36%	47%
Unfavorable	33	32	19
Undecided/Don't know	32	32	33

Still, 38% of white women have a favorable opinion of the Republican Vice Presidential nominee. Those with a college degree are twice as likely as those without a college education to view Palin negatively. White women without a college degree are more likely to be undecided, but those with an opinion are favorable.

WOMEN'S VIEWS OF SARAH PALIN

(Among registered voters)

	Favorable	Not favorable	Undecided/ Don't know
Women	34%	33	32
White women	38%	30	31
White women - no coll. degree	39%	23	36
White women - coll. degree	35%	45	21

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 936 adults nationwide, including 844 registered voters, interviewed by telephone September 21-24, 2008. Phone numbers were dialed from RDD samples of both standard land-lines and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points, plus or minus four points for the sample of registered voters. The error for subgroups is higher.

CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
The Presidential Race Heading into the First Debate
September 21-24, 2008

q1 How much attention have you been able to pay to the 2008 presidential campaign -- a lot, some, not much, or no attention so far?

	**** REGISTERED VOTERS ****				Sep08b
	Total	*** Party ID ***			
	%	Rep	Dem	Ind	%
A lot	63	64	68	58	63
Some	28	30	28	27	30
Not much	7	5	5	13	6
None at all	2	1	0	2	1

q2 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q3 Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion?

Favorable	43	11	76	34	45
Not favorable	30	62	7	27	35
Undecided	22	25	14	30	16
Haven't heard enough	4	2	2	8	3
Refused	1	0	1	1	1

q4 Is your opinion of John McCain favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about John McCain yet to have an opinion?

Favorable	38	73	10	37	44
Not favorable	35	7	65	25	37
Undecided	23	19	19	31	16
Haven't heard enough	4	1	5	6	3
Refused	1	0	1	1	0

q5 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

q6 If the 2008 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were Barack Obama for President and Joe Biden for Vice President, the Democrats, and John McCain for President and Sarah Palin for Vice President, the Republicans, would you vote for Barack Obama and Joe Biden or John McCain and Sarah Palin?

					Likely Voters	
					%	
Obama/Biden	47	9	83	39	48	48
McCain/Palin	42	82	9	43	43	43
Other (Vol.)	1	0	1	3	1	1
Won't vote (Vol.)	1	1	1	1	0	1
Depends (Vol.)/Undecided	8	7	4	12	6	7
Refused	1	1	2	2	2	0

q7 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

q8 Is your mind made up or is it still too early to say for sure?

***** DECIDED VOTERS *****				
	Total	Obama	McCain	Sep08b
	%	Voters	Voters	%
	%	%	%	%
Mind made up	75	77	74	80
Too early to say for sure	25	23	26	19
DK/NA	0	0	0	1

q9 How would you describe your feelings about (Obama/McCain) as the (Democratic/Republican) nominee -- would you say you enthusiastically support him; support him but have reservations about him; support him only because he is the party nominee; or support him because you dislike (McCain/Obama)?

Enthusiastic	45	53	36	54
With reservations	41	33	49	30
Party nominee	7	8	6	7
Dislike other candidate	6	4	7	7
DK/NA	1	2	2	2

q10-21 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q22 Is your opinion of Joe Biden favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Joe Biden yet to have an opinion?

**** REGISTERED VOTERS ****					
*** Party ID ***					
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep08b
	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	33	14	56	24	38
Not favorable	17	38	2	13	17
Undecided	18	15	14	26	17
Haven't heard enough	32	33	28	36	28
Refused	0	0	0	1	0

q23 Is your opinion of Sarah Palin favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Sarah Palin yet to have an opinion?

Favorable	37	64	12	41	40
Not favorable	29	5	55	22	30
Undecided	14	14	16	11	15
Haven't heard enough	18	16	15	24	15
Refused	2	1	2	2	0

q24 Do you think Barack Obama does or does not understand the needs and problems of people like yourself?

Yes, does	66	40	88	64	60*
No, does not	27	51	8	27	33
DK/NA	7	9	4	9	7

* Wording change: Do you think Barack Obama **understands** the needs and problems...

q25 BLANK

q26 Do you think Barack Obama has prepared himself well enough for the job of President, or hasn't he?

**** REGISTERED VOTERS ****

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep08b
	%	%	%	%	%
Has prepared	46	16	69	51	48
Has not prepared	45	73	23	43	46
DK/NA	9	11	8	6	6

q27 Do you have confidence in Barack Obama's ability to deal wisely with an international crisis or are you uneasy about his approach?

					Feb08a
Confidence	41	11	68	37	47
Uneasy	53	84	26	55	47
Don't know/No answer	6	5	6	8	6

q28 Regardless of how you intend to vote, how likely do you think it is that Barack Obama would be an effective commander-in-chief of the nation's military -- would you say it is very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

					Sep08b
Very likely	27	8	45	23	26
Somewhat likely	35	26	43	33	35
Not very likely	20	37	7	20	20
Not at all likely	16	27	3	20	17
DK/NA	2	2	2	4	2

q29 BLANK

q30 If Barack Obama is elected president, do you think that will make the United States' image in the world better, make it worse, or will it have no effect on the United States' image in the world?

Better	53	30	80	43	55
Worse	12	21	3	13	15
No effect	29	42	13	34	26
DK/NA	6	7	4	10	4

q31 Do you think Barack Obama is the kind of person who is able to admit it when he makes a mistake, or isn't he that kind of person?

Is that kind of person	60	40	83	54
Isn't that kind of person	27	41	11	33
Don't know/No answer	13	19	6	13

q32 How knowledgeable do you think Barack Obama is about world affairs -- very knowledgeable, somewhat knowledgeable, not too knowledgeable, or not at all knowledgeable?

Very knowledgeable	22	13	32	18
Somewhat knowledgeable	51	43	58	50
Not too knowledgeable	17	29	5	20
Not at all knowledgeable	5	10	2	5
DK/NA	5	5	3	7

q34 If Barack Obama is elected president, what would concern you more about his handling of problems with other countries: That he might move too quickly to take military action and not spend enough time on diplomacy OR that he might spend too much time on diplomacy and not move quickly enough to take military action?

	**** REGISTERED VOTERS ****			
	Total	*** Party ID ***		
	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%
Too quick to take action	10	10	11	10
Too much time on diplomacy	67	82	57	65
Neither (vol.)	11	1	19	12
DK/NA	12	7	13	13

q35 Do you think Barack Obama cares more about protecting the interests of ordinary working people or cares more about protecting the interests of large corporations?

Ordinary people	70	51	93	59
Large corporations	16	27	5	19
Both (Vol.)	3	4	0	4
Neither (Vol.)	3	4	0	4
DK/NA	8	14	2	14

q38 Do you think John McCain does or does not understand the needs and problems of people like yourself?

					Sep08b*
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	%
Yes, does	49	79	21	52	48
No, does not	45	16	74	39	47
DK/NA	6	5	5	9	5

* Wording change: Do you think John McCain **understands** the needs and problems...

q39 BLANK

q40 Do you think John McCain has prepared himself well enough for the job of President, or hasn't he?

Has prepared	62	86	44	58	71
Has not prepared	30	11	43	35	24
DK/NA	8	3	13	7	5

q41 Do you have confidence in John McCain's ability to deal wisely with an international crisis or are you uneasy about his approach?

					Apr08b
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	%
Confidence	49	80	22	53	53
Uneasy	47	18	75	40	43
Don't know/No answer	4	2	3	7	4

q42 Regardless of how you intend to vote, how likely do you think it is that John McCain would be an effective commander-in-chief of the nation's military -- would you say it is very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

**** REGISTERED VOTERS ****

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep08b
	%	%	%	%	%
Very likely	48	78	23	51	52
Somewhat likely	29	17	37	29	27
Not very likely	11	2	19	11	10
Not at all likely	8	2	18	3	10
DK/NA	4	1	3	6	1

q43 BLANK

q44 If John McCain is elected president, do you think that will make the United States' image in the world better, make it worse, or will it have no effect on the United States' image in the world?

Better	23	36	10	26	26
Worse	26	9	50	16	25
No effect	43	49	34	47	46
DK/NA	8	6	6	11	3

q45 Do you think John McCain is the kind of person who is able to admit it when he makes a mistake, or isn't he that kind of person?

Is that kind of person	49	74	28	51
Isn't that kind of person	38	14	63	30
Don't know/No answer	13	12	9	19

q46 How knowledgeable do you think John McCain is about world affairs -- very knowledgeable, somewhat knowledgeable, not too knowledgeable, or not at all knowledgeable?

Very knowledgeable	45	67	29	44
Somewhat knowledgeable	42	30	50	44
Not too knowledgeable	7	1	13	6
Not at all knowledgeable	3	0	6	2
DK/NA	3	2	2	4

q47 BLANK

q48 If John McCain is elected president, what would concern you more about his handling of problems with other countries: That he might move too quickly to take military action and not spend enough time on diplomacy OR that he might spend too much time on diplomacy and not move quickly enough to take military action?

Too quick to take military	63	41	80	62
Too much time on diplomacy	17	27	13	15
Neither (vol.)	9	15	1	11
Don't know/No answer	11	17	6	12

q49 Do you think John McCain cares more about protecting the interests of ordinary working people or cares more about protecting the interests of large corporations?

**** REGISTERED VOTERS ****

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Ordinary people	32	62	5	39
Large corporations	52	19	86	40
Both (Vol.)	5	8	1	7
Neither (Vol.)	1	2	0	0
DK/NA	10	9	8	14

q50-51 BLANK

q52 How confident are you in Barack Obama's ability to make the right decisions about the economy -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

					Sep08b
					%
Very confident	29	5	55	21	23
Somewhat confident	35	33	34	39	37
Not too confident	20	35	8	21	22
Not at all confident	14	26	2	17	17
DK/NA	2	1	1	2	1

q53 How confident are you in Barack Obama's ability to make the right decisions about the war in Iraq -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Very confident	26	5	48	21	26
Somewhat confident	30	15	39	33	26
Not too confident	24	45	10	21	19
Not at all confident	18	33	3	22	27
DK/NA	2	2	0	3	2

q54 How confident are you in Barack Obama's ability to make the right decisions about foreign policy issues -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

					Aug08a
Very confident	24	5	43	21	18
Somewhat confident	38	28	45	41	37
Not too confident	23	40	10	22	21
Not at all confident	12	24	1	14	23
DK/NA	3	3	1	2	1

q55 How confident are you in Barack Obama's ability to make the right decisions when it comes to protecting the country from a terrorist attack -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Very confident	28	6	50	23
Somewhat confident	32	26	36	33
Not too confident	20	33	9	21
Not at all confident	17	34	4	17
DK/NA	3	1	1	6

q56 How confident are you in John McCain 's ability to make the right decisions about the economy -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

**** REGISTERED VOTERS ****

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep08b
	%	%	%	%	%
Very confident	17	33	7	14	18
Somewhat confident	38	52	19	47	35
Not too confident	25	11	36	24	22
Not at all confident	20	4	37	14	24
DK/NA	0	0	1	1	1

q57 How confident are you in John McCain's ability to make the right decisions about the war in Iraq -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Very confident	30	60	7	29	36
Somewhat confident	28	33	19	34	20
Not too confident	20	5	31	21	17
Not at all confident	21	2	41	15	26
DK/NA	1	0	2	1	1

q58 How confident are you in John McCain's ability to make the right decisions about foreign policy issues -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

					Aug08a
Very confident	23	44	6	23	23
Somewhat confident	44	48	35	51	43
Not too confident	19	7	29	17	18
Not at all confident	13	1	28	6	15
DK/NA	1	0	2	3	1

q59 How confident are you in John McCain's ability to make the right decisions when it comes to protecting the country from a terrorist attack -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Very confident	40	67	18	40
Somewhat confident	35	26	44	34
Not too confident	13	5	18	15
Not at all confident	10	0	19	9
DK/NA	2	2	1	2

q60 BLANK

q61-63 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q64 Which of these statements comes closer to your opinion? 1. The Presidential candidates' choices for Vice President will have a great deal of influence on my vote. OR 2. I will vote based mostly on the presidential candidates, not on whom they choose for Vice President.

VP choices have influence	30	26	31	31	32
Vote on pres. candidates	67	72	67	62	67
Don't know/No answer	3	2	2	7	1

q65-67 BLANK

q68 How likely is it that you will watch the presidential debate on television on Friday September 26th -- very likely, somewhat likely, or not very likely?

	**** REGISTERED VOTERS ****			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Very likely	64	67	68	57
Somewhat likely	26	21	26	29
Not very likely	9	10	4	13
Won't watch debates (Vol.)	1	2	1	0
DK/NA	0	0	1	1

q69 What do you most hope to learn about by watching the debate?
 IF JUST SAY CANDIDATE NAME: What SPECIFICALLY about him?

	**** REGISTERED VOTERS ****				Uncommitted Voters
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Issue positions	29	32	30	25	27
Economic plans	18	16	20	17	21
Differences between candid	9	11	6	13	15
Personal presentation	5	4	5	5	2
Plans for Iraq	4	3	2	7	7
Foreign policy	3	3	2	5	4
Character	3	3	4	2	2
See who wins debate	3	1	1	6	2
Plans for Immigration	2	4	1	1	2
More about Obama	2	0	2	3	1
Other	14	16	15	10	9
DK/NA	8	7	12	6	8

q70 Which of these statements comes closer to your opinion? The presidential debates will have a great deal of influence on my vote, or I will vote mostly on other things, not on how the candidates perform in a debate?

Debates matter	30	26	27	36	48
Mostly other things	65	69	70	56	47
DK/NA	5	5	3	8	5

	UNWEIGHTED	WEIGHTED
Total Respondents	936	
Total Republicans	276	260
Total Democrats	347	318
Total Independents	313	358
Registered Voters	844	774
Registered Republicans	255	228
Registered Democrats	328	287
Registered Independents	261	259