

FRANKLIN & MARSHALL

October 2008

**Franklin & Marshall
College Poll**

**NATIONAL SURVEY
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**Prepared By:
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Center for Politics & Public Affairs
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**In Partnership With:
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Table of Contents

METHODOLOGY	3
KEY FINDINGS	4
TABLE A-1. PRESIDENTIAL VOTE CHOICE BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS (ALL VOTERS)	8
TABLE A-2. PRESIDENTIAL VOTE CHOICE BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS (LIKELY VOTERS)	9
MARGINAL FREQUENCY REPORT	10

Methodology

The survey findings presented in this release are based on the results of interviews conducted October 13-19, 2008. The interviews were conducted at the Center for Opinion Research at Franklin and Marshall College under the direction of the poll's Director Dr. G. Terry Madonna, Head Methodologist Berwood Yost, and Project Manager Brad Nankerville. The data included in this release represent the responses of 1,365 adult residents of the United States who are currently registered to vote. Telephone numbers for the survey were generated using random digit dialing, and respondents were randomly selected from within each household. Survey results were weighted using an iterative weighting algorithm.

The sample error for registered adults is +/- 2.7 percent. Among likely voters the sample error is +/- 3.5 percent. In addition to sampling error, this poll is also subject to other sources of non-sampling error. Generally speaking, two sources of error concern researchers most. Non-response bias is created when selected participants either choose not to participate in the survey or are unavailable for interviewing. Response errors are the product of the question and answer process. Surveys that rely on self-reported behaviors and attitudes are susceptible to biases related to the way respondents process and respond to survey questions.

Key Findings

The Presidential Election

The October 2008 Franklin and Marshall College Poll finds Democrat Barack Obama leading Republican John McCain by five points, 50 percent to 45 percent, among likely voters. Obama leads by 11 points among all registered voters. Among likely voters, Obama has an advantage among independents, voters outside the South, women, those under 35 years of age, college graduates, non-Hispanic blacks, and Catholics. McCain's advantage is among Southern voters, those over 55 years of age, Protestants, fundamentalist Christians, and military veterans (see Table A-2). These patterns of demographic support are roughly the same among all registered voters as they are among likely voters (see Table A-1). The pattern evident within our data suggests increased voter turnout will produce an increased electoral margin for the Democratic candidate.

The Election Context

The Franklin and Marshall College Poll reveals substantial changes among the electorate since our September survey, which occurred prior to both the first debate and the major decline in the stock market (the Dow was at 11,388 on Friday, September 19, the weekend interviewing ended for our September survey). Since September, Barack Obama's favorability ratings have risen, up from 43 percent favorable to 51 percent favorable. McCain's favorable ratings have declined slightly during the same time period, down from 49 percent favorable to 45 percent favorable. Perhaps more importantly, the proportion of registered voters who would be concerned if John McCain was elected president

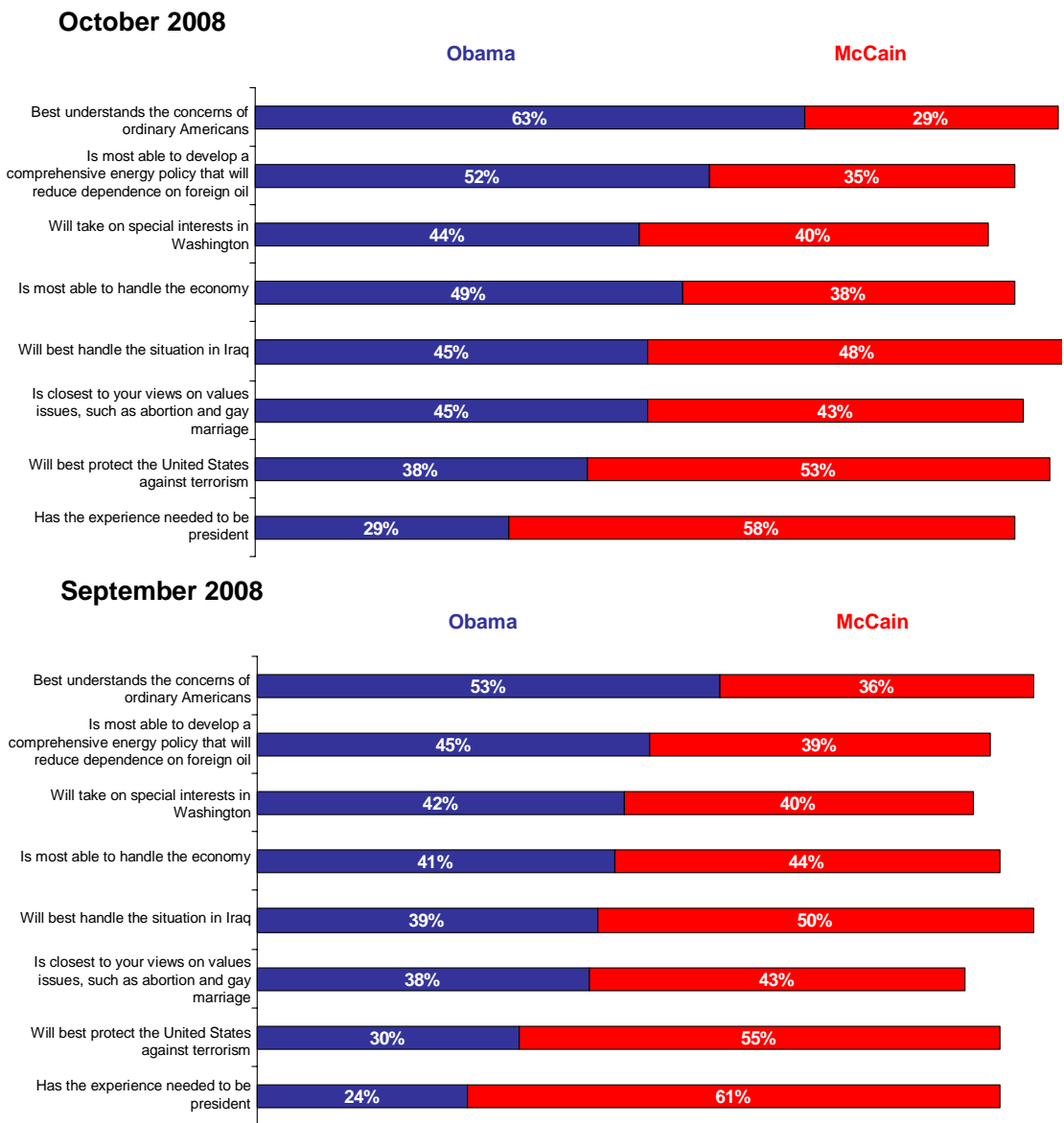
increased from 44 percent to 51 percent, while those who would be concerned if Obama was elected president declined from 56 percent to 49 percent. What has not changed is that more Democrats are concerned about Obama than Republicans are concerned about McCain (see Table 1). The main concerns voters have about McCain are his policy views (44%) and his similarity to the current administration (33%). The main concerns about Obama are his policy views (36%) and his lack of experience (28%). Half (50%) of registered adults believe John McCain will mostly continue the economic policies of George Bush and two in three (63%) believe he will continue the foreign policies put into place by the President. Respondents who believe McCain will follow Bush policies are more likely to plan to vote for Obama.

Table 1. Perceptions of Presidential Candidates by Party, Registered Voters

	Republican	Democrat	Independent/ Other
McCain Economic Policy			
Like Bush's	21%	72%	51%
Much different than Bush's	70%	23%	41%
Don't know	9%	5%	8%
McCain Foreign Policy			
Like Bush's	49%	73%	66%
Much different than Bush's	40%	21%	31%
Don't know	11%	6%	3%
Concerned if McCain Elected President			
Yes	19%	76%	51%
No	80%	22%	48%
Concerned if Obama Elected President			
Yes	77%	31%	42%
No	22%	66%	55%

Another significant change in attitudes has appeared in how voters describe the candidates. Most notably, Obama now has a clear advantage as the candidate best able to handle the economy. McCain is still perceived as better able to protect the US against terrorism. Although Obama has gained some ground since September as having the experience to be President, McCain still has an advantage on experience.

Figure 1. Descriptions of Presidential Candidates, September and October



Question: Which candidate, (rotated) Barack Obama or John McCain, do you think is best DESCRIBED by each of the following statements?

Attitudinal variables are also associated with voter choice and these key indicators have changed favorably for Obama since September. Four in five (82%) registered adults believe the country is “off on the wrong track,” and two in five (40%) say they are worse off financially this year than last. Obama is currently leading among both of these groups (Table 2). The economy (47%) is most often mentioned as the issue that will influence presidential vote choice in the fall, and Obama leads McCain among registered adults who are concerned primarily with this issue.

Table 2. Presidential Preference by Selected Attitudinal Items

	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden	Other	DK
Direction of Country				
Right direction	73%	21%	2%	4%
Wrong track	30%	55%	4%	10%
Personal Finances Compared to Previous Year				
Better	61%	32%	1%	6%
Worse	26%	60%	4%	10%
About the same	40%	45%	5%	10%
Most Important Issue in Presidential Election				
Moral and family values	76%	13%	3%	8%
Foreign policy	62%	36%	0%	2%
Taxes	65%	27%	2%	5%
Energy policy	57%	30%	0%	12%
The economy	24%	61%	4%	11%
The Iraq War	31%	54%	7%	8%
Healthcare	15%	69%	6%	10%
Illegal immigration	57%	15%	14%	14%
Something else	53%	37%	5%	5%

Table A-1. Presidential Vote Choice by Selected Demographics (All Voters)

	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden	Other	DK
Gender*				
Male	41%	46%	5%	8%
Female	35%	52%	3%	11%
Age*				
18-34	25%	62%	7%	6%
35-54	40%	46%	3%	11%
55 and over	45%	42%	3%	10%
Education*				
High School or Less	38%	47%	4%	11%
Some College	38%	50%	2%	10%
College Degree	37%	51%	7%	6%
Household Income*				
Less than \$25,000	26%	53%	3%	19%
\$25-35,000	36%	55%	3%	6%
\$35-50,000	38%	45%	7%	10%
\$50-75,000	42%	46%	5%	7%
\$75-100,000	38%	48%	5%	10%
Over \$100,000	45%	46%	2%	7%
Race*				
White, non-Hispanic	47%	40%	5%	8%
Black, non-Hispanic	2%	88%	2%	7%
Other, non-Hispanic	38%	48%	6%	8%
Hispanic	19%	60%	2%	19%
Marital Status*				
Married	46%	42%	3%	9%
Not currently married	33%	48%	6%	14%
Single, never married	17%	73%	5%	5%
Religious Affiliation*				
Catholic	33%	53%	3%	11%
Protestant	51%	38%	3%	8%
Other	32%	51%	4%	13%
Unaffiliated	24%	63%	8%	5%
Born Again Christian or Fundamentalist*				
Yes	52%	36%	4%	8%
No	31%	56%	4%	8%
Household Union Member				
Yes	34%	55%	6%	4%
No	38%	48%	4%	11%
Military Veteran*				
Yes	59%	35%	3%	3%
No	35%	51%	4%	10%
Region*				
West	32%	50%	4%	14%
Midwest	37%	48%	6%	10%
Northeast	32%	54%	6%	7%
South	45%	46%	2%	8%
Party Registration*				
Republican	76%	12%	4%	8%
Democrat	9%	78%	3%	9%
Independent/Other	34%	50%	5%	11%

* Significant differences ($p < .05$)

Table A-2. Presidential Vote Choice by Selected Demographics (Likely Voters)

	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden	Other	DK
Gender*				
Male	45%	44%	5%	6%
Female	41%	51%	2%	6%
Age*				
18-34	28%	58%	10%	3%
35-54	45%	47%	1%	6%
55 and over	50%	41%	2%	7%
Education*				
High School or Less	45%	46%	3%	7%
Some College	49%	44%	2%	6%
College Degree	37%	52%	6%	5%
Household Income*				
Less than \$25,000	22%	59%	2%	16%
\$25-35,000	44%	50%	4%	2%
\$35-50,000	46%	37%	11%	6%
\$50-75,000	47%	46%	3%	4%
\$75-100,000	43%	49%	2%	7%
Over \$100,000	47%	47%	2%	4%
Race*				
White, non-Hispanic	52%	40%	3%	5%
Black, non-Hispanic	3%	89%	3%	5%
Other, non-Hispanic	40%	50%	10%	0%
Hispanic	32%	47%	6%	15%
Marital Status*				
Married	51%	42%	2%	5%
Not currently married	36%	52%	3%	8%
Single, never married	21%	63%	8%	8%
Religious Affiliation*				
Catholic	41%	48%	4%	8%
Protestant	54%	37%	3%	5%
Other	36%	54%	3%	7%
Unaffiliated	26%	66%	5%	4%
Born Again Christian or Fundamentalist*				
Yes	56%	34%	4%	7%
No	37%	55%	4%	5%
Household Union Member				
Yes	42%	50%	6%	2%
No	43%	47%	3%	7%
Military Veteran*				
Yes	67%	30%	2%	1%
No	39%	50%	4%	7%
Region				
West	39%	49%	4%	8%
Midwest	41%	50%	4%	6%
Northeast	40%	50%	5%	5%
South	48%	44%	2%	6%
Party Registration*				
Republican	85%	8%	3%	4%
Democrat	10%	81%	3%	6%
Independent/Other	38%	47%	5%	9%

* Significant differences ($p < .05$)

Marginal Frequency Report

[Reg AND RegParty were not asked of North Dakota residents.]

REG. Some people are registered to vote, and many others are not. Are you CURRENTLY REGISTERED to vote at your present address?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
84%	83%	85%	Yes
15%	17%	15%	No
1%	0%	1%	Don't know

RegPARTY. Are you currently registered as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or as something else?

n= 1363

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
44%	41%	43%	Democrat
30%	35%	33%	Republican
22%	21%	22%	Independent/Other
4%	3%	3%	Don't know

Vote_Nov. Many people will vote in the election for president in November, however, many other people will not. What would you say are the chances you will vote in the November presidential election? Are you certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances fifty-fifty you will vote, OR don't you think that you will vote in the November election for president?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
71%	76%	81%	Certain to vote
11%	7%	4%	Will probably vote
8%	6%	5%	Chances 50-50
9%	10%	10%	Don't think will vote
1%	0%	1%	Don't know

Pol_Int. Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you are...in the 2008 presidential campaign?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
57%	64%	69%	Very much interested
34%	27%	24%	Somewhat interested
9%	9%	7%	Not very interested

Gen. When it comes to presidential elections, do you always vote, do you usually vote, do you only sometimes vote, or do you rarely vote?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
64%	66%	69%	Always
14%	13%	11%	Usually
8%	6%	5%	Only sometimes
13%	14%	13%	Rarely
1%	2%	2%	Don't know

Vot04. Did you vote in the last presidential election in 2004 or not?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
76%	77%	77%	Yes
23%	22%	23%	No
1%	0%	0%	Don't know

[Questions IntFav through IntHard were asked of registered adults and North Dakota residents only, n = 1365.]

IntFav. Please let me know your opinion of some people involved in politics today...Is your opinion of ___ favorable, unfavorable, undecided, or haven't heard enough about ___ to have an opinion? (*rotated*)

	Strongly favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Strongly unfavorable	Undecided	Don't know
Barack Obama						
Oct 2008	37%	14%	8%	26%	13%	3%
Sep 2008	29%	14%	9%	29%	17%	3%
Jun 2008	27%	15%	9%	24%	20%	5%
John McCain						
Oct 2008	24%	21%	13%	27%	14%	2%
Sep 2008	25%	24%	10%	22%	16%	4%
Jun 2008	13%	21%	11%	22%	24%	9%
Sarah Palin						
Oct 2008	24%	12%	8%	30%	15%	12%
Sep 2008	28%	13%	6%	20%	14%	20%
Joe Biden						
Oct 2008	24%	19%	9%	13%	15%	20%
Sep 2008	16%	15%	11%	15%	18%	25%

Pres08. If the November general election for president were being held today and the candidates were (*rotated*) John McCain and Sarah Palin, the Republicans, and Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the Democrats, would you vote for John McCain and Sarah Palin, Barack Obama and Joe Biden, some other candidate, or aren't you sure how you would vote? (NOTE: Jun08 did not include vice presidential running mates.)

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
42%	43%	49%	Barack Obama/Joe Biden
36%	45%	38%	John McCain/Sarah Palin
7%	3%	4%	Other
15%	10%	9%	Don't know

Cert. Are you absolutely CERTAIN you will vote FOR [fill Pres08] in the election, or are you still making up your mind?

Sep 08	Oct 08	
1138	1174	Subsample size
83%	88%	Certain
17%	11%	Still making up mind

Lean. As of today, do you lean more to (*rotated*) John McCain and Sarah Palin, the Republicans, Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the Democrats, or are you leaning toward some other candidate?

Sep 08	Oct 08	
148	137	Subsample size
25%	29%	John McCain/Sarah Palin
25%	32%	Barack Obama/Joe Biden
3%	6%	Other
47%	34%	Don't know

IssPrim. What will be the single most important issue in your vote for president this year? (*rotated*) Foreign policy, the Iraq war, the economy, illegal immigration, healthcare, energy policy, taxes, moral and family values, or something else?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
38%	44%	47%	The economy
8%	10%	10%	Moral and family values
18%	9%	10%	The Iraq War
9%	7%	9%	Healthcare
3%	6%	7%	Taxes
5%	7%	5%	Foreign policy
6%	6%	5%	Something else
5%	5%	3%	Energy policy
5%	3%	2%	Illegal immigration
3%	3%	2%	Don't know

McC1. If John McCain is elected president, do you think he will mostly continue the ECONOMIC POLICIES put into place by President Bush or do you think he will develop ECONOMIC POLICIES that are much different than President Bush's?

Sep 08	Oct 08	
49%	50%	Mostly continue the economic policies put into place by President Bush
40%	43%	Develop economic policies that are much different than President Bush's
11%	7%	Don't know

McC2. If John McCain is elected president, do you think he will mostly continue the FOREIGN POLICY put into place by President Bush or do you think he will develop a FOREIGN POLICY that is much different than President Bush's?

Sep 08	Oct 08	
57%	63%	Mostly continue the foreign policy put into place by President Bush
31%	30%	Develop a foreign policy that is much different than President Bush's
12%	7%	Don't know

(Questions McC3 through Ob3y are rotated.)

McC3. Regardless of how you plan to vote in November, would you be concerned if John McCain was elected president?

Sep 08	Oct 08	
44%	51%	Yes
52%	48%	No
4%	2%	Don't know

Mc3y. What would concern you about him?

Sep 08	Oct 08	
579	688	Subsample size
43%	44%	Views on policy issues
41%	33%	Too similar to Bush, current administration, no real change
12%	16%	Physical attributes, including age, health, race
8%	10%	Vice Presidential running mate
7%	9%	Personality, morality, untrustworthy
4%	3%	Political party, ideology
4%	3%	Tries to please everyone, wishy-washy, wouldn't follow through with promises
3%	3%	Lack of experience, knowledge, ability
1%	3%	Everything
1%	0%	Religious background, affiliation
4%	4%	Other
2%	2%	Don't know

* Responses total more than 100% because multiple answers were accepted.

Ob3. Regardless of how you plan to vote in November, would you be concerned if Barack Obama was elected president?

Sep 08	Oct 08	
56%	49%	Yes
40%	48%	No
4%	2%	Don't know

Ob3y. What would concern you about him?

Sep 08	Oct 08	
740	672	Subsample size
32%	36%	Views on policy issues
37%	28%	Lack of experience, knowledge, ability
13%	22%	Personality, morality, untrustworthy
10%	10%	Political party, ideology
10%	7%	Tries to please everyone, wishy-washy, wouldn't follow through with promises
7%	6%	Religious background, affiliation
0%	5%	Terrorist links, how his name sounds
4%	4%	Physical attributes, including age, health, race
3%	4%	Don't know enough about him
2%	4%	Assassination attempts
3%	1%	Everything
1%	1%	Vice Presidential running mate
7%	0%	Too similar to Bush, current administration, no real change
4%	7%	Other
2%	1%	Don't know

* Responses total more than 100% because multiple answers were accepted.

IntD1. Which candidate, (rotated) Barack Obama or John McCain, do you think is best DESCRIBED by each of the following statements?

Sep 08			Oct 08			
Obama	McCain	DK	Obama	McCain	DK	
53%	36%	11%	63%	29%	8%	Best understands the concerns of ordinary Americans
45%	39%	16%	52%	35%	13%	Is most able to develop a comprehensive energy policy that will reduce dependence on foreign oil
42%	40%	18%	44%	40%	15%	Will take on special interests in Washington
41%	44%	15%	49%	38%	13%	Is most able to handle the economy
38%	43%	19%	45%	43%	12%	Is closest to your views on values issues, such as abortion and gay marriage
39%	50%	12%	45%	48%	6%	Will best handle the situation in Iraq
30%	55%	15%	38%	53%	9%	Will best protect the United States against terrorism
24%	61%	16%	29%	58%	13%	Has the experience needed to be president

EV1. Some states have allowed their residents to vote before election day. Have you voted for president yet, or not?

7% Yes
93% No

EV2. Did you vote in-person or by using an absentee ballot?

89 Subsample size
26% In-person
74% Absentee ballot

RatePres. How would you rate the way that George Bush is handling his job as president? Would you say he is doing an...

Sep 08	Oct 08	
5%	4%	Excellent
19%	15%	Good
29%	27%	Fair
47%	55%	Poor
1%	0%	Don't know

UStrk. All in all, do you think things in the United States are generally headed in the RIGHT DIRECTION, or do you feel that things are off on the WRONG TRACK?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
17%	21%	14%	Right direction
78%	73%	82%	Wrong track
5%	6%	4%	Don't know

MIP_YF. What do you think is the MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM facing YOU and YOUR FAMILY TODAY?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
45%	57%	65%	Economy, personal finances, cost of living
8%	8%	9%	Healthcare, insurance
3%	4%	5%	Taxes
22%	11%	4%	Gasoline/oil prices, energy
3%	2%	2%	Iraq War
0%	2%	2%	Terrorism, national security, foreign policy
3%	2%	2%	Values, morality, religion
0%	1%	2%	Retirement, social security
0%	1%	1%	Education, schools
0%	1%	1%	Environment, climate change
3%	1%	1%	Government, politicians
0%	1%	1%	Personal illness, health problems
0%	1%	1%	Housing, real estate
0%	2%	1%	Nothing
0%	1%	0%	Crime, drugs, violence
2%	0%	0%	Immigration, illegal immigrants
7%	2%	2%	Other
4%	4%	3%	Don't know

Gov. Do you think that the problems facing you and your family can be solved with the help of the government, or are these problems beyond what you think the government can do?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct08	
66%	67%	68%	With help of government
27%	24%	24%	Beyond what government can do
7%	9%	8%	Don't know

FinToday. We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that YOU and YOUR FAMILY are better off, worse off, or about the same financially as you were a year ago?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
15%	16%	15%	Better off
42%	38%	40%	Worse off
43%	45%	44%	About the same
0%	1%	1%	Don't know

FinFut. Now looking AHEAD, do you think that A YEAR FROM NOW, YOU and YOUR FAMILY will be better off financially than you are now, worse off, or about the same as you are now?

Jun 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	
26%	34%	35%	Better off
20%	13%	11%	Worse off
45%	41%	43%	About the same
9%	11%	12%	Don't know

IntHard. Now I'm going to ask you about various events that happen to people. I'm interested in those that happened to you at any point during the last 12 months, that is since [fill one year ago's date]. Did any of the following hardships happen to you in the last 12 months? (*rotated*)

Sep 08			Oct 08			
Yes	No	DK	Yes	No	DK	
16%	84%	0%	22%	78%	0%	Did you lack health insurance coverage?
21%	79%	0%	21%	78%	1%	Did you experience a reduction in pay for any reason?
15%	84%	0%	19%	81%	0%	Were you unable to get needed medical care because you couldn't afford it?
17%	83%	0%	18%	82%	0%	Were you unable to purchase gasoline because you couldn't afford it?
15%	85%	0%	16%	85%	0%	Were you unemployed and looking for work for as long as a month?
12%	88%	0%	11%	88%	0%	Were you unable to purchase needed food because you couldn't afford it?
14%	86%	1%	13%	87%	0%	Did you fall behind in paying your rent or mortgage?
9%	91%	0%	11%	89%	0%	Were you let go or permanently laid off from your job?
7%	93%	0%	5%	95%	0%	Did you have any utilities, such as water, heat, or electricity, shut off because you couldn't afford the bill?
6%	94%	0%	6%	94%	0%	For financial reasons, did you have to temporarily live with others or in a shelter or on the street?
2%	98%	0%	2%	98%	0%	Were you evicted from your apartment or house?

I now have a final few questions for statistical purposes only.

Resd. How many years have you lived at your current address?

11.1 Mean

AGE. What was your age on your last birthday?

10%	18-24
21%	25-34
16%	35-44
23%	45-54
12%	55-64
18%	65 and older

EDUC. What was the last grade level of schooling you have completed?

9%	Non high school graduate
38%	High school graduate or GED
18%	Some college
10%	Two-year or tech degree
15%	Four year college degree
10%	Post graduate degree

MAR. What is your CURRENT marital status, are you single, married, separated, divorced, or a widower?

22%	Single, Never Married
57%	Married
22%	Separated/divorced/widower

PRTY1. Regardless of how you are registered, in politics, as of today, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

15%	Strong Republican
10%	Republican
13%	Lean Republican
10%	Pure Independent
15%	Lean Democrat
10%	Democrat
26%	Strong Democrat
1%	Don't know

LABR. Are you or is any member of your household a member of a LABOR UNION?

16%	Yes
83%	No
1%	Don't know

VET. Are you a military veteran?

13%	Yes
87%	No

Hispanic. Are you Hispanic or Latino, or not?

13% Yes
87% No

RACE. Which of the following categories best describes your racial background?

75% White
12% Black or African American
2% Asian
2% American Indian, Alaska Native
8% Other
1% Don't know

REL. Do you consider yourself to be Protestant, Catholic, some other religion, or not affiliated with any religion?

34% Protestant
24% Catholic
24% Some other religion
18% Not affiliated with any religion

BAC. Do you consider yourself to be a born-again Christian or fundamentalist, or not?

40% Yes
57% No
3% Don't know

NumA. Including yourself, how many adults 18 years of age or OLDER CURRENTLY live in this household?

28% One
54% Two
13% Three
6% Four or more

WORK. Are you currently working FULL-time, PART-time, going to school, keeping house or something else?

48% Full-time
11% Part-time
5% Going to school
10% Keeping house
4% Unemployed
3% Disabled
18% Retired
1% Don't know

INC1. And, just for statistical purposes, we need to know if your total family income is above or below \$50,000 per year?

18%	Under \$25,000
13%	\$25-\$35,000
15%	\$35-50,000
21%	\$50-75,000
11%	\$75-100,000
18%	Over \$100,000
5%	Don't know

DONE. Sex of respondent:

52%	Female
48%	Male

Region. Region of the country

36%	South
23%	West
22%	Midwest
18%	Northeast