



CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
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AFTER THE DEBATES: BARACK OBAMA GAINS
October 17-19, 2008

The last few weeks of the presidential campaign - and the three presidential debates in particular - have been very good for the Democratic ticket of Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

Among these same voters, Obama has picked up more formerly undecideds than has McCain. Obama has retained nearly all of his own supporters over the last month, while one in ten of McCain's pre-debates voters have drifted away.

CBS News and the New York Times re-interviewed 476 registered voters first interviewed September 21-24, before the first debate. This poll measures the change among these individuals. Then, likely voters gave the Democrats a five-point lead. Now, those same voters put their lead in double digits.

More good news for the Democrats: their opponents, Republicans John McCain and Sarah Palin, have dropped in the public's opinion, with many blaming their campaign tactics. And the faltering economy is even more of a concern to these voters.

CHOICE FOR PRESIDENT

(Among re-interviewed likely voters)

Table with 3 columns: Choice, Now, 9/25 (Before 1st Debate). Rows: Obama-Biden (54%, 48%), McCain-Palin (41, 43), Undecided (3, 7)

Nearly all of those voters supporting Obama in September - 98% - still do. McCain has held on to fewer -- 88% -- of his supporters. And 52% of originally undecided voters now say they favor Obama.

SEPTEMBER CHOICE FOR PRESIDENT

(Among re-interviewed likely voters)

Table with 4 columns: Choice Now, Obama, McCain, Undecided. Rows: Obama (98%, 5%, 52%), McCain (1, 88, 36), Undecided (0, 3, 12)

About one in five of McCain's September supporters who said their minds could still change have now moved to Obama.

Voters' overall favorable opinions of Obama have improved, while McCain's unfavorable percentage has risen by 10 points.

OPINION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES
(Among re-interviewed registered voters)

	-- Obama --		-- McCain --	
	Now	9/25	Now	9/25
Favorable	53%	43%	36%	36%
Unfavorable	33	26	45	35
Undecided/Don't know	14	30	19	28

One in five of who had a favorable opinion of McCain in September are now unfavorable or undecided about him.

Many of these voters recognize their opinions of the candidates have changed in the last few weeks. One in five says their view of Obama has improved. One in five says their opinion of McCain has gotten worse.

HOW HAS YOUR OPINION OF ...CHANGED?
(Among re-interviewed registered voters)

	Obama	McCain
Gotten better	21%	12%
Gotten worse	14	23
Stayed same	65	64

Debate performance is mentioned as a reason for changing opinions of both candidates. About three in 10 voters say the presidential debates have had a great deal of influence on their vote choice, with Obama's voters a bit more likely than McCain voters to say that. Debate performance is the top reason cited for an improved image of Obama. It is also the reason most often given by formerly undecided voters now choosing a candidate.

WHY HAS YOUR VIEW OF OBAMA GOTTEN BETTER?
(Among those saying view has gotten better)

Debate performance	30%
Just like him	16
Seems calm/steady	12
Handling of attacks	7
Can trust him	5
Can relate to common person	4
Health Care	4

McCain's perceived attacks on Obama, and his naming of Sarah Palin as his running mate, appear to be negatively impacting views of McCain.

WHY HAS YOUR VIEW OF MCCAIN GOTTEN WORSE?

(Among those saying view has worsened)

His attacks on Obama	32%
Choice of Sarah Palin	14
Debate performance	12
He seems erratic/unsteady	11
Don't like him	7

Opinions of Palin among these voters have drastically changed for the worse in the last three weeks, while favorable impressions of Joe Biden have improved among the same voters.

Half of these voters now have a favorable impression of Biden, up from 36% three weeks ago. Palin's image has gone from a 35%-29% positive assessment to a 41%-30% negative one.

OPINION OF VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

(Among re-interviewed registered voters)

	-- Biden --		-- Palin --	
	Now	9/25	Now	9/25
Favorable	50%	36%	30%	35%
Unfavorable	14	14	41	29
Undecided/ Don't know	36	50	29	34

One in three voters with a favorable opinion of Sarah Palin in September are now unfavorable or undecided.

28% say the vice presidential choices will have a great deal of influence on their vote.

Enthusiasm remains strong among Obama voters who were re-interviewed, and he still holds a substantial advantage over McCain. Two-thirds of re-interviewed Obama voters are still enthusiastic about their candidate, compared to only one-third of McCain voters who are enthusiastic about McCain. Enthusiasm for McCain is down a bit.

DESCRIBE YOUR SUPPORT

(Among re-interviewed likely voters)

	<u>Obama Voters</u>		<u>McCain Voters</u>	
	Now	9/25	Now	9/25
Enthusiastic	67%	66%	31%	37%
With reservations	25	25	50	45
Party nominee	3	6	5	6
Dislike other candidate	4	2	13	10

Obama's campaign is seen as more positive in its tone overall than McCain's. Two in three voters say McCain is spending more time on the attack.

WHAT ARE THE CANDIDATES SPENDING MORE TIME DOING?

(Among re-interviewed registered voters)

	Obama	McCain
Explaining what he would do	65%	23%
Attacking the other candidate	28	69

The uncommitted portion of the electorate, while still sizable, is shrinking. About one in five registered voters are uncommitted. In September one in three was.

IS YOUR MIND MADE UP?

(Among re-interviewed likely voters)

	<u>Obama voters</u>		<u>McCain voters</u>	
	Now	9/25	Now	9/25
Yes	92%	85%	81%	74%
No, too soon	8	15	16	26

CANDIDATES ON THE ISSUES

Increase in support for Barack Obama coincides with growing concerns about the national economy. Nearly six in 10 Americans re-interviewed for this poll now say the condition of the national economy is very bad, up nine points from before the debates. Only 6% say the economy is even somewhat good, down from 17%.

CONDITION OF THE ECONOMY

(Among re-interviewed respondents)

	Now	9/25
Very Good	0%	1%
Fairly Good	6	17
Fairly Bad	35	32
Very Bad	57	48

On a personal note, the percentage of Americans who can save and buy extras is down, while the percentage of Americans that are just earning enough to meet their bills and obligations is up.

IS YOUR HOUSEHOLD INCOME...?

(Among re-interviewed respondents)

	Now	9/25
Enough to save and buy extras	27%	35%
Just enough pay bills	52	45
Not enough to pay bills	19	18

Although John McCain has been repeating the story of "Joe the Plumber" and his tax concerns as a way of trying to get voters to see Obama as a tax raiser, he hasn't made the case with these voters. In this poll, about half of voters think each candidate will raise their taxes.

WOULD ...RAISE YOUR TAXES?

(Among re-interviewed registered voters)

	Obama	McCain
Yes	51%	53%
No	43	37

These voters continue to think McCain cares more about large corporations than ordinary people, while Obama favors people over corporations.

CARES MORE ABOUT PROTECTING

(Among re-interviewed registered voters)

	-- Obama --		-- McCain --	
	Now	9/25	Now	9/25
Ordinary people	73%	74%	30%	35%
Large corporations	10	14	59	53

Obama has widened his lead over McCain on what he would do about the economy overall. 34% are now very confident that Obama would make the right decisions on the economy, compared to just 9% who say that about McCain. Confidence in McCain on the economy has declined since September.

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

(Among re-interviewed registered voters)

	-- Obama --		-- McCain --	
	Now	9/25	Now	9/25
The Economy				
Very confident	34%	32%	9%	16%
Somewhat confident	29	35	39	38
Not confident	36	31	50	45
Iraq				
Very confident	24%	26%	31%	30%
Somewhat confident	30	29	27	28
Not confident	45	43	40	41

However, McCain holds his edge on dealing with the war in Iraq. Voters express about the same amount of confidence in each candidate on this issue as they did before the first presidential debate.

But it is Obama who more voters see as better overall in handling a crisis. More than half of voters express confidence Obama could deal wisely with a crisis, while the same number are uneasy about McCain's approach.

DEAL WISELY WITH A CRISIS?

(Among re-interviewed registered voters)

	Obama	McCain
Confident	52%	44%
Uneasy	45	53

The Obama campaign has been trying to label a McCain administration as four more years of George W. Bush. Many voters agree: Six in 10 think McCain would generally continue Bush's policies. Most Democrats think McCain will continue Bush's policies; Republicans do not think he will.

WOULD MCCAIN GENERALLY CONTINUE PRES. BUSH'S POLICES?

(Among re-interviewed registered voters)

Yes	60%
No	32

Views on other candidate qualities have changed little for these registered voters over the past three weeks. Obama continues to have the advantage on empathy: voters say he understand their needs and problems. McCain is still seen as more likely to be an effective commander-in-chief.

OBAMA AND MCCAIN QUALITIES

(Among re-interviewed registered voters)

	-- Obama --		-- McCain --	
	Now	9/25	Now	9/25
Does he understand your needs and problems?				
Yes	70%	66%	47%	48%
No	25	27	48	47
Effective Commander-in-chief?				
Very likely	27%	26%	48%	50%
Somewhat likely	38	38	29	30
Not likely	34	32	19	18

INDEPENDENTS AND MODERATES

Barack Obama has captured the vote of the political center -- both in party affiliation and political philosophy -- at least among voters re-interviewed for this poll. Among re-interviewed likely voters, his support has risen among both independents and moderates. Obama now has a clear lead among independent likely voters (this group was marginally for McCain before the debates) and Obama now wins the support of almost seven in 10 likely voters who think of themselves as moderates.

CHOICE FOR PRESIDENT AMONG INDEPENDENTS AND MODERATES

(Among re-interviewed likely voters)

	Independents		Moderates	
	Now	9/25	Now	9/25
Obama-Biden	50%	40%	66%	58%
McCain-Palin	43	46	30	32
Undecided	3	10	2	7

VOTE CHOICE: OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS

VOTE FOR PRESIDENT: DEMOGRAPHICS
(Among re-interviewed likely voters)

	-- NOW --		-- 9/25 --	
	Obama	McCain	Obama	McCain
All	54%	41	48%	43
Men	55%	40	50%	42
Women	53%	43	46%	44
Under age 45	58%	40	49%	40
Over age 45	50%	43	47%	45
Republicans	14%	78	7%	82
Democrats	85%	13	86%	11
Independents	50%	43	40%	46
Liberal	77%	21	74%	22
Moderate	66%	30	58%	32
Conservative	23%	70	18%	71
Whites	48%	47	43%	48

This poll was conducted by telephone October 17-19, 2008 among 518 adults first interviewed by CBS News and the New York Times September 21-24, 2008. CBS News re-interviewed 476 registered voters for this poll. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus four percentage points. The error on measures of individual change is much smaller.

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rq1 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 **				Sep08c
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
A lot	59	57	68	49	65
Some	32	40	29	29	23
Not much	9	3	3	21	10
None at all	0	0	0	1	2

rq2 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	53	17	84	48	43
Not favorable	33	59	9	38	26
Undecided	13	22	6	13	25
Haven't heard enough	1	2	0	1	5
Refused	0	0	1	0	1

rq3 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	36	69	9	40	36
Not favorable	45	8	74	41	35
Undecided	16	22	13	15	25
Haven't heard enough	3	1	4	3	3
Refused	0	0	0	1	1

rq4 FOR FUTURE RELEASE

rq5 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	54	14	85	50	48
McCain/Palin	41	78	13	43	43
Other (Vol.)	1	0	0	2	1
Won't vote (Vol.)	0	0	0	0	0
Depends (Vol.)	3	5	1	3	7
Refused	1	3	1	2	1

rq6-8 FOR FUTURE RELEASE

rq9 Is your mind made up or is it still too early to say for sure?

	LIKELY VOTERS WHO MADE A CHOICE			Sep08c
	Total Voters	Obama Voters	McCain Voters	
	%	%	%	%
Mind made up	87	92	81	79
Too early to say for sure	11	8	16	21
DK/NA	2	0	3	0

rq10 FOR FUTURE RELEASE

rq11 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	51	67	31	52
With reservations	36	25	50	34
Party nominee	5	3	5	6
Dislike other candidate	8	4	13	6
DK/NA	0	1	1	2

rq12 How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Very good	0	0	1	0
Fairly good	6	11	0	8
Fairly bad	35	51	17	39
Very bad	57	37	81	50
DK/NA	2	1	1	3

rq13 Do you think the economy is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

Better	5	10	2	3	2
Worse	54	33	68	56	74
Same	38	49	29	38	22
DK/NA	3	8	1	3	2

rq14 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 ***				
Favorable	50	25	73	43	36
Not favorable	14	27	5	14	14
Undecided	9	12	8	9	15
Haven't heard enough	27	35	14	34	35
Refused	0	1	0	0	0

rq15 Is your opinion of Sarah Palin favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Sarah Palin yet to have an opinion?

*** REGISTERED VOTERS ***

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep08c
	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	30	53	9	34	35
Not favorable	41	12	67	35	29
Undecided	14	21	12	12	11
Haven't heard enough	15	14	12	19	23
Refused	0	0	0	0	2

rq16 Do you think Barack Obama understands the needs and problems of people like yourself?

Does	70	51	89	62	66
Does not	25	39	7	34	27
DK/NA	5	10	4	4	7

rq17 Do you have confidence in Barack Obama's ability to deal wisely with a crisis or are you uneasy about his approach?

Confidence	52	17	83	46
Uneasy	45	77	17	51
Don't know/No answer	3	6	0	3

rq18 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?

Very likely	27	4	51	18	26
Somewhat likely	38	42	37	35	38
Not too likely	18	33	9	18	22
Not at all likely	16	18	3	28	10
DK/NA	1	3	0	1	4

rq19 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	73	55	92	67	74
Large corporations	10	18	4	12	14
Both (vol.)	1	0	1	2	1
Neither (vol.)	4	7	0	7	2
DK/NA	12	20	3	12	9

rq20 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?

Very confident	34	8	50	36	32
Somewhat confident	29	32	37	19	35
Not too confident	23	37	9	27	20
Not at all confident	13	21	4	17	11
DK/NA	1	2	0	1	2

rq21 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?

** REGISTERED VOTERS **

	*** Party ID ***				Sep08c
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Very confident	24	3	48	15	26
Somewhat confident	30	15	35	36	29
Not too confident	26	46	11	26	29
Not at all confident	19	35	4	21	14
DK/NA	1	1	2	2	2

rq22 If he were elected President, do you think Barack Obama would raise taxes on people like yourself, or wouldn't he do that?

Would	51	69	33	57
Would not	43	24	61	37
DK/NA	6	7	6	6

rq23 Do you think John McCain understands the needs and problems of people like yourself?

Does	47	76	21	53	48
Does not	48	20	72	43	47
DK/NA	5	4	7	4	5

rq24 Do you have confidence in John McCain's ability to deal wisely with a crisis or are you uneasy about his approach?

Confidence	44	70	26	43
Uneasy	53	27	73	51
Don't know/No answer	3	3	1	6

rq25 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?

Very likely	48	77	26	50	50
Somewhat likely	29	20	31	34	30
Not too likely	10	1	22	5	9
Not at all likely	9	0	19	4	9
Don't know/No answer	4	2	2	7	2

rq26 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?

Ordinary people	30	51	10	34	35
Large corporations	59	29	86	53	53
Both (vol.)	4	6	1	5	3
Neither (vol.)	1	2	0	2	0
DK/NA	6	12	3	6	9

rq27 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 ***				Sep08c
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Very confident	9	22	4	6	16
Somewhat confident	39	54	20	48	38
Not too confident	29	20	38	27	22
Not at all confident	21	2	37	18	23
DK/NA	2	2	1	1	1

rq28 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	31	61	12	29	30
Somewhat confident	27	25	17	39	28
Not too confident	21	10	34	17	19
Not at all confident	19	2	36	13	22
DK/NA	2	2	1	2	1

rq29 If he were elected President, do you think John McCain would raise taxes on people like yourself, or wouldn't he do that?

Would	53	39	69	46
Would not	37	47	22	47
DK/NA	10	14	9	7

rq30 If John McCain were elected President, do you think he would generally continue George W. Bush's policies, or not?

Would	60	33	86	53
Would not	32	52	11	38
Some, not others (Vol.)	3	5	2	3
DK/NA	5	10	1	6

rq31 Has your opinion of Barack Obama changed over the past couple of weeks, or hasn't it changed?

IF CHANGED, Has it changed for the better or for the worse?

Changed for the better	21	22	22	20
Changed for the worse	14	22	5	18
Not changed	65	56	73	62
DK/NA	0	0	0	0

rq32 What is the main reason your opinion of Barack Obama has changed over the past couple of weeks?

* AMONG THOSE WHOSE OPINION OF OBAMA CHANGED *

	Total	Those who said better opinion
	%	%
Debate performance	21	30
Like him - general	10	16
Economy	9	2
Calm/Steady	7	12
Not prepared to be president	6	0
Don't like him - general	5	0
Handling attacks from oppo	4	7
Trust him	4	5
Can relate to common person	3	4
Don't trust him	3	0
Bill Ayers/Weathermen	2	0
Taxes	2	2
Health care	2	4
Attacks on opponent	2	0
Other	11	15
DK/NA	9	3

rq33 Has your opinion of John McCain changed over the past couple of weeks, or hasn't it changed? IF CHANGED, Has it changed for the better or for the worse?

** REGISTERED VOTERS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Changed for the better	12	23	7	9
Changed for the worse	23	11	32	23
Not changed	64	66	60	67
DK/NA	1	0	1	1

rq34 What is the main reason your opinion of John McCain has changed over the past couple of weeks?

* AMONG THOSE WHOSE OPINION OF McCAIN CHANGED *

	Total	Those who said worse opinion
	%	%
Attacks on opponent	21	32
Debate performance	19	12
Sarah Palin	11	14
Economy	8	5
Erratic/Unsteady	7	11
Like him - general	7	1
Don't like him - general	4	7
Prepared to be president	2	0
Not prepared to be preside	2	3
Other	18	13
DK/NA	1	2

rq35 What do you think Barack Obama has been spending more time doing in his campaign -- explaining what he would do as president or attacking John McCain?

	** REGISTERED VOTERS **			
	*** Party ID ***			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Explaining	65	36	86	64
Attacking	28	51	11	27
Don't know/No answer	7	13	3	9

rq36 What do you think John McCain has been spending more time doing in his campaign -- explaining what he would do as president or attacking Barack Obama?

Explaining	23	38	12	25
Attacking	69	51	81	69
Don't know/No answer	8	11	7	6

rq37 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.

					Sep08c
					%
VP choices have influence	28	28	37	18	34
Vote on pres. Candidates	69	71	58	79	64
Don't know/No answer	3	1	5	3	2

rq38 Which of these statements comes closer to your opinion? The presidential debates HAVE HAD a great deal of influence on my vote, or I will vote mostly on other things, not on how the candidates performed in the debates?

Debates matter	29	27	33	27
Mostly other things	67	71	63	68
DK/NA	4	2	4	5

rq39 Do you think the federal government should provide financial help to home owners who are having trouble repaying their mortgages because their rates went up or shouldn't the federal government do this?

	*** TOTAL RESPONDENTS ***				
Can save and buy extras	27	34	23	26	35
Just enough to pay bills a	52	47	48	58	45
Not enough	19	15	28	15	18
Don't know/No answer	2	4	1	1	2

	UNWEIGHTED	WEIGHTED
Total Respondents	518	
Registered Voters	476	435
Reg. Voters - Republicans	133	119
Reg. Voters - Democrats	199	166
Reg Voters - Independents	144	151
*Effective Likely Voters		327

*Every registered voter is included in the likely voter model, and is assigned a probability of voting, which is used to calculate the likely voter results. The sum of these probabilities is the effective number of likely voters.