



NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll: Obama Still Leads Romney in Ohio

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Contact: Lee M. Miringoff
Barbara L. Carvalho
Mary E. Azzoli
Marist College
845.575.5050

This NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll Reports:

Following last week's first presidential debate, President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden lead Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan by a margin of six points, 51% to 45%, among Ohio likely voters, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted by absentee ballot. One percent supports another candidate, and 4% are undecided.

"It's all about early voting for Obama in Ohio," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "Among those who will vote on Election Day, there is only a two point Obama-Romney difference."

In an NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll released last week, on the day of the debate, the margin between the candidates was eight points. Obama received the support of 51% of likely voters including those who were undecided yet leaning toward a candidate compared with 43% for Romney. One percent backed another candidate, and 4% were undecided.

Key points:

- **Party ID.** There is a wide partisan divide. 92% of Democrats who are likely to vote are for the president. 92% of Republican likely voters back Romney. Among independent voters who are likely to cast a ballot, 49% support Romney compared with 41% for Obama. In last week's pre-debate poll, Obama had 47% among likely independent voters compared with 43% for Romney.
- **Enthusiasm.** 60% of likely voters in Ohio are very enthusiastic about voting in November. When it comes to each candidate's supporters, 65% of Romney's backers express a high degree of enthusiasm compared with 59% of Obama's supporters who say the same.
- **Intensity of support.** Most Ohio likely voters -- 88% -- strongly support their choice of candidate. 10% are somewhat committed to their selection while 2% might vote

differently. One percent is unsure. Among likely voters who support Romney, 86% are firmly committed to him while 84% of those who back the president share the same level of support.

- **Gender.** 54% of women who are likely to vote support the president while 42% are behind Romney. Among men who are likely to go to the polls, 47% are behind Obama while the same proportion -- 47% -- backs Romney.
- **Age.** Likely voters under the age of 30 -- 57% -- favor Obama compared with 37% for Romney. Among those 30 to 44, Obama has the support of 53% compared with 42% for Romney. 48% of likely voters 45 to 59 are for the president while 46% back Romney. Likely voters 60 and older divide. 49% support Obama compared with 48% who are for Romney.
- **Already voted.** Among voters who indicate they have already cast their ballot, Obama leads Romney, 63% to 37%. If absentee voters are not included, the contest in Ohio is very competitive. Obama receives 48% to 46% for Romney.

Looking at registered voters in Ohio including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted by absentee ballot, Obama has the backing of 50% while 44% are behind Romney. One percent favors another candidate, and 5% are undecided.

Did the Debate Make a Difference?

92% of Ohio likely voters say they chose a candidate before last Wednesday's debate. Seven percent selected a candidate after the debate, and 1% is unsure.

Among the president's backers, 94% of likely voters made up their minds before the debate while 5% made their choice following it. 91% of Romney's backers made their selection pre-debate while 8% did so post-debate.

While more than eight in ten likely voters in Ohio who are independents -- 84% -- say they made their candidate selection prior to the debate, a notable 15% report they did so following the meeting.

How did registered voters follow the debate? 59% mostly watched the debate. 22% mostly watched news coverage about it while 19% did not watch the debate nor follow the news about it.

Looking at party, 65% of Republicans and 60% of Democrats watched the debate firsthand. A majority of registered voters who are independent -- 53% -- say the same.

Young voters in Ohio were far less likely to watch the debate than their older counterparts. While 60% of those 30 to 44, 60% of those 45 to 59, and 68% of those 60 and older tuned in to see Obama and Romney face off, just 37% of registered voters under the age of 30 did so. 32% of these voters viewed news coverage about the debate, and 30% say they neither watched the debate nor followed news coverage about it.

Obama and Romney Favorability Ratings Remain Steady

51% of likely voters in Ohio have a positive impression of the president compared with 44% who have an unfavorable opinion of him. Five percent are unsure.

In last week's NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll, 52% thought well of Obama. 44% had a less than stellar impression of him, and 3% were unsure.

Romney's image is still upside down. 44% of Ohio likely voters have a favorable view of him while 50% do not. Six percent are unsure.

In last week's survey, 51% had an *unfavorable* impression of Romney while 42% had a positive opinion of him. Eight percent were unsure.

Pre-Debate Impressions of the Vice Presidential Candidates

When it comes to Vice President Joe Biden's image, likely voters in Ohio divide. 46% have a favorable opinion of him while 44% have an unfavorable impression of the candidate. 11% are unsure.

In NBC News/WSJ/Marist's previous survey, 46% had an *unfavorable* opinion of Biden. 44% had a positive view of him. 10% were unsure.

For Paul Ryan, 43% of likely voters statewide have an unfavorable view of him while 41% have a positive one. 16% are unsure.

Last week, similar proportions held these views. 44% of likely voters perceived Ryan *unfavorably* while 40% had a favorable opinion of him. 16% were unsure.

Obama, Romney Vie for Top Spot on Economy...Obama Viewed Stronger on Foreign Policy

47% of registered voters in Ohio believe Obama will better handle the U.S. economy while 45% think Romney is better suited for the job. Eight percent are unsure. Among likely voters, 49% say Obama is the candidate who will turn the economy around while 45% have this view of Romney. Seven percent are unsure.

In NBC News/WSJ/Marist's survey last week, 48% of registered voters thought Obama was the better candidate on the economy while 44% believed Romney was better prepared to tackle the issue. Eight percent were unsure.

President Obama, however, pulls in front of Romney on the issue of foreign policy. 50% of registered voters in Ohio believe the president is more capable to deal with this area

compared with 40% who have this view of Romney. 10% are unsure. Among likely voters, Obama -- 52% -- tops Romney -- 40% -- on foreign policy. Eight percent of these voters are unsure.

In last week's survey, 51% of registered voters said Obama was the stronger candidate on foreign policy compared with 39% who said the same about Romney. Nine percent were unsure.

Ohio Voters Divide about President's Job Performance

Do Ohio registered voters approve of how the president is doing his job? 47% do while 46% do not. Six percent are unsure.

In NBC News/WSJ/Marist's previous poll, Ohio registered voters also divided. 48% of gave Obama a thumbs-up while 46% thought he missed the mark. Six percent, at the time, were unsure.

Majority Believes Nation Has Fallen Off Course

51% of Ohio registered voters say the nation is moving in the wrong direction. 44%, however, say it is traveling along the right road. Five percent are unsure.

When NBC News/WSJ/Marist last reported this question, 52% said the country had fallen off track while 42% believed it was on course. Five percent were unsure.

Brown Maintains Lead Over Mandel in U.S. Senate Race

52% of likely voters statewide, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted by absentee ballot, support Sherrod Brown in the contest for U.S. Senate in Ohio. 41% are behind Josh Mandel, and 1% backs another candidate. Six percent are undecided.

In NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll's previous survey, Brown -- 50% -- led Mandel -- 41% -- among likely voters, including those who were undecided yet leaning toward a candidate. One percent supported another candidate, and 7% were undecided.

Among registered voters, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted by absentee ballot, Brown has the support of 51% to 41% for Mandel. One percent is for another candidate, and 7% are undecided.