



**NBC News/Marist Poll:
Obama and Romney Locked in Tight Contest in Virginia**

*** Complete Tables for Poll Appended ***

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This NBC News/Marist Poll Reports:

In the battle for the White House in Virginia, President Barack Obama edges Republican Mitt Romney by four percentage points among registered voters statewide including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate. Obama receives 48% of the vote to 44% for Romney. One percent backs another candidate, and 7% are undecided.

“Already targeted by both the Obama and Romney campaigns, Virginia could become the ultimate battleground state,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Obama carried the state by six percentage points in 2008, it is likely to go down to the wire this time.”

Key points:

- There is a partisan divide. 90% of **Democrats** support President Obama while 89% of **Republicans** back Romney.
- Among independent voters, Obama -- 47% -- has a slight edge over Romney -- 41%.
- Looking at voters with an excellent or good **chance of voting** in the fall election, Obama -- 48% -- and Romney -- 45% -- are competitive.
- When it comes to **enthusiasm**, a majority of those with a high level of enthusiasm about the presidential election -- 52% -- are for Obama compared with 45% for Romney. Among those who are moderately enthusiastic, 47% back Obama while 45% support Romney. Both Obama and Romney receive 41% among those who express a low level of enthusiasm.
- The president -- 47% -- and Romney -- 47% -- are in a dead heat among those who express a **high level of interest in the presidential election**. Obama -- 48% -- opens up a lead against Romney -- 43% -- among those who have a moderate level of interest in the contest. A majority of those who express a low interest -- 53% -- back Mr. Obama while 31% are behind Mr. Romney.

- Almost six in ten of those who **strongly support their choice of candidate** -- 58% -- back President Obama while 42% are for Romney.
- There is a **gender** gap. Romney -- 47% -- and Obama -- 45% -- are neck and neck among men. Obama -- 51% -- leads Romney -- 41% -- among women.
- Looking at **age**, Obama -- 60% -- leads Romney -- 33% -- among registered voters including leaners who are under 30 years of age. The president -- 50% -- also outpaces Romney -- 42% -- among voters who are 30 to 44 years old. However, the race tightens among those 45 to 59. Here, Obama -- 46% -- and Romney -- 43% -- are competitive. Romney has 52% among those 60 and older compared with Obama who receives 43%.

More than Seven in Ten Firmly Behind Candidate

71% of registered voters in Virginia report they strongly support their choice of candidate while 22% are somewhat committed to their pick. Six percent might vote differently, and 1% is unsure.

Key points:

- Nearly eight in ten registered **voters who back President Obama** -- 79% -- say they strongly support him. This compares with 62% of **Romney's backers** who have a similar intensity of support.

45% Very Enthusiastic About November's Election

A plurality of registered voters in Virginia -- 45% -- say they are very enthusiastic about voting in this fall's presidential election. 37% are somewhat enthusiastic while 13% are not too enthusiastic. Six percent are not enthusiastic at all.

Key points:

- Nearly half of registered **voters who back President Obama** -- 49% -- have a high degree of enthusiasm about voting in November. This compares with 46% of **Romney's supporters** who share this level of enthusiasm.

Veepstakes...McDonnell Does Little to Buoy Romney's Chances

What if Mitt Romney were to select Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell as his running mate? There is little change. President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden receive 46% of registered voters' support while Romney and McDonnell garner 44%. One percent says they will vote for someone else, and 9% are undecided.

Among registered voters in Virginia not including those who are leaning toward a candidate, Obama leads Romney, 46% to 42%. One percent is behind another candidate, and 11% are undecided.

Obama Approval Rating at 49% in Virginia

Almost half of registered voters in Virginia -- 49% -- approve of the job President Obama is doing in office. 45%, however, disapprove, and 6% are unsure.

There has been a slight increase in the proportion of voters who disapprove of the president's job performance. When NBC News/Marist last reported this question among Virginia registered voters in March, 51% gave the president high marks while 39% disapproved of how he was performing in office. 10%, at the time, were unsure.

A Tale of Two Favorability Ratings

While a majority of registered voters in Virginia have a positive impression of President Obama, fewer have a favorable view of Governor Romney. 52% of voters think well of the president while 44% have a less than favorable opinion of him. Four percent are unsure.

Looking at Romney, 44% have an *unfavorable* impression of him while 41% have a favorable one. 15% are unsure.

Position on Same-Sex Marriage Has Little Impact on Vote, Says Plurality

Nearly one in three registered voters in Virginia -- 32% -- say they are more likely to vote for Mitt Romney because he opposes same-sex marriage while one in four -- 25% -- reports they are more likely to support President Obama because he supports same-sex marriage. However, a notable 41% think a candidate's stance on the issue does not make much difference to their vote. Only 2% are undecided.

Economy Trumps Social Issues

When it comes to the factor that is more important in deciding their vote, 72% of registered voters in Virginia choose the economy. 22%, however, believe social issues are more important, and 6% are undecided.

Virginia voters divide about whether President Obama -- 46% -- or Governor Romney -- 45% -- is better equipped to handle the economy. Nine percent are unsure.

Nearly half of registered voters in the state -- 48% -- believe Mr. Obama comes closer to their views on social issues. 43%, though, think Mr. Romney better reflects their positions on these issues while 9% are unsure.

On other issues:

- President Obama is viewed by a majority of registered voters -- 52% -- as the candidate who will do a better job **handling foreign policy**. 37% have this opinion of Mr. Romney, and 10% are unsure.
- Half of registered voters in Virginia -- 50% -- think Romney will do a better job **reducing the national debt** while 40% have this view of President Obama. 10% are unsure.
- 53% of registered voters perceive President Obama to be the candidate who **best understands voters' problems**. 36%, however, say Romney is the more relatable candidate, and 11% are unsure.

Nearly Six in Ten Say Prez Inherited Economic Conditions, Majority Says Worst is Over

57% of registered voters in Virginia believe President Obama mostly inherited the nation's current economic conditions while 36% say they are mostly a result of his own policies. Seven percent are unsure.

When thinking about the U.S. economy, overall, 55% think the worst of the country's economic woes are over while 37% say the worst is yet to come. Eight percent are unsure. There has been little change on this question since March when 53% said the worst was behind us, 39% thought there was more bad economic news on the horizon, and 8% were unsure.

A plurality of voters expect the nation's economy to remain steady in the next 12 months. While 34% say the economy will improve and 16% report it will get worse, 45% think it will stay about the same. Five percent are unsure. In March, 38% believed the economy would get better, 19% thought it would deteriorate, and 40% said it would remain about the same. Three percent, at the time, were unsure.

Looking at their family finances, 34% of registered voters in Virginia say they expect their personal financial situation to get better in the next year. 10%, however, believe it will get worse while a majority -- 55% -- thinks it will be status quo.

Almost Six in Ten Think Nation Needs a Course Correction

58% of registered voters in Virginia think things in the nation are off on the wrong track. 38% believe they are headed in the right direction, and 4% are unsure.

There has been an increase in the proportion of Virginia voters who say things are off course. When NBC News/Marist last reported this question in March, 49% reported the nation needed to get back on track while 44% thought things were copasetic. Seven percent, then, were unsure.

Kaine-Allen Senate Race Competitive

In the race for U.S. Senate in Virginia, Democrat Tim Kaine leads Republican George Allen, 49% to 43%, among registered voters statewide. Nine percent are undecided.

In March, 48% backed Kaine, 39% were for Allen, and 14% were undecided.