



NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll: Obama and Romney Neck and Neck in Virginia

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This NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll Reports:

With the presidential candidates about to face off in the first debate, 48% of likely voters in Virginia, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted by absentee ballot, support President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden while 46% back Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan. Only 1% is for another candidate, and 5% are undecided.

“Not only do Obama and Romney have similar support among likely voters in the state, their backers are equally enthusiastic and committed to their choice,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion.

In NBC News/WSJ/Marist's September survey in Virginia, Obama and Biden received the support of 49% of likely voters, including those who were undecided yet leaning toward a candidate, compared with 44% for Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan. Two percent supported another candidate, and 5%, at the time, were undecided.

Key points:

- **Party ID.** There is a wide partisan divide. Most Democrats who are likely to vote -- 94% -- support the president. This compares with 92% of Republicans likely to cast a ballot who are behind Romney. Looking at independent voters, 45% back Romney compared with 44% for Obama.
- **Enthusiasm.** 62% of likely voters in Virginia are very enthusiastic about voting. When it comes to each candidate's supporters, 66% of Romney's backers are very enthusiastic about going to the polls while the same proportion of Obama's supporters -- 66% -- expresses a similar level of enthusiasm.
- **Intensity of support.** 85% of likely voters firmly support their candidate of choice. 13% are somewhat committed to their pick while 1% might change their mind before Election Day. One percent is unsure. Among Obama's supporters, 84% of his

backers who are likely to cast a ballot are strongly committed to him while 85% of Romney's supporters say they will not waver in their commitment.

- **Gender.** Among women who are likely to vote, Obama -- 52% -- leads Romney -- 44%. Among men who are likely to cast a ballot, Romney has 48% to 45% for Obama.
- **Age.** Among likely voters under 30, Obama has the support of 65% compared with 28% for Romney. The president -- 55% -- also outpaces Romney -- 39% -- among those 30 to 44. Among those 45 to 59, 54% are for Romney compared with 41% for Obama. Looking at likely voters 60 and older, 49% are behind Romney compared with 45% for Obama.

Among registered voters in Virginia, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted by absentee ballot, 48% support the president while 45% back Romney. Just 1% is for another candidate, and 6% are undecided.

52% View Obama Favorably...Divide Over Romney

A majority of likely voters in Virginia -- 52% -- have a positive impression of Obama. This compares with 44% who do not. Four percent are unsure.

Little has changed on this question. Last month, 53% of likely voters statewide had a favorable view of Obama. 43%, however, had an unfavorable one. Four percent, at the time, were unsure.

Romney has made few inroads in Virginia. Likely voters still divide about his image. While 45% think well of him, 47% have an *unfavorable* opinion of the candidate. Eight percent are unsure.

In September, similar proportions held these views. 46% of likely voters in Virginia perceived Romney favorably while 45% did not. Nine percent were unsure.

What Do Voters Think of the Running Mates?

Among likely voters, 44% have a favorable view of Vice President Joe Biden while 45% have an unfavorable perception of him. 11% are unsure.

In the September NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll in Virginia, 47% thought well of Biden. 43%, however, did not. 10% were unsure.

When it comes to Paul Ryan's favorability, 45% perceive him positively while 41% have an unfavorable opinion of him. 14% have either never heard of him or are unsure how to rate him.

In September, 44% of likely voters had a favorable impression of Ryan. 39% had an unfavorable one, and a notable 18% had either never heard of him or were unsure how to rate him.

Obama and Romney Close on Economy...Obama with Advantage on Foreign Policy

46% of registered voters in Virginia say Romney will better handle the issue of the economy while 45% think Obama will. Nine percent are unsure. Likely voters also divide. 47% have more confidence in Romney's ability to fix the nation's economy compared with 46% who believe Obama is the better candidate to do so. Seven percent are unsure.

Last month, registered voters also divided. 45% of these voters said Obama was the better candidate on the economy compared with 44% who had the same impression of Romney. 11%, then, were unsure.

When it comes to foreign policy, 50% of registered voters think Obama is the candidate who is better prepared to deal with these issues. However, 41% believe Romney is. Nine percent are unsure. Again, likely voters have similar opinions. Among these voters, Obama -- 51% -- outpaces Romney -- 41%. Eight percent are unsure.

Little has changed since September when 51% of registered voters thought Obama was stronger on foreign policy issues, and 38% perceived Romney to be. 11% were unsure.

Obama Approval Rating at 48% in Virginia

Among registered voters in Virginia, 48% approve of how President Obama is doing his job. This compares with 45% who disapprove. Six percent are unsure.

Last month, 49% of registered voters applauded Mr. Obama's job performance. 44% thought it was subpar, and 6% were unsure.

Majority Believes Nation's Compass is Broken

53% of registered voters in Virginia think the nation is on the wrong course. This compares with 42% who say it is on the proper path. Five percent are unsure.

This is unchanged from a similar NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll conducted last month. In September, 52% said the country was off track. 42% thought its trajectory was on the mark, and 6% were unsure.

Kaine Edges Allen by 5 Percentage Points in U.S. Senate Race

In Virginia's U.S. Senate race, Democrat Tim Kaine has the support of 49% of likely voters in the state, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those

who voted by absentee ballot. This compares with 44% for Republican George Allen. Seven percent are undecided.

When NBC News/WSJ/Marist last reported this question in September, likely voters divided. 46% backed Kaine while the same proportion -- 46% -- supported Allen. Eight percent, then, were undecided.

Among registered voters in Virginia, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted by absentee ballot, 48% are for Kaine compared with 44% for Allen. Eight percent are undecided.