



The Battleground: The Presidential Race in Michigan

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This Marist Poll reports:

Presidential Race in Michigan

- **Democrat Barack Obama Leads Republican John McCain by 9 Percentage Points in the Wake of Nation's Economic Crisis:** In a survey conducted entirely after this week's economic crisis hit, Senator Barack Obama leads Senator John McCain -- 50% to 41% -- among Michigan's registered voters. Obama maintains his lead among the state's likely voters including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a specific candidate. 52% of likely voters say they favor Obama compared with 43% who back McCain. Most likely Republican voters -- 93% -- support John McCain. A similar proportion of likely Democrats -- 92% -- support their party's candidate. 57% of likely Independent voters back Barack Obama compared with 35% who support McCain.

Question Wording: If November's presidential election were held today, whom would you support if the candidates are:

	John McCain/ Sarah Palin the Republicans	Barack Obama/ Joe Biden the Democrats	Other	Undecided
Registered voters	41%	50%	1%	8%
Likely voters w/ leaners	43%	52%	1%	4%
Democrats	4%	92%	1%	3%
Republicans	93%	4%	1%	2%
Independents	35%	57%	<1%	8%

- Voters Are Strongly Committed to their Choice of Candidate:** 77% of registered voters in Michigan say they strongly support their choice for president. 76% of voters who back John McCain say they will not waiver in their support. 78% of Barack Obama's supporters share that level of commitment for their candidate. Only a small percentage of each candidate's supporters say they might vote differently on Election Day -- 4% for McCain and 3% for Obama.

Question Wording: Would you say that you strongly support [ticket], somewhat support them, or do you think you might vote differently on Election Day?

Registered voters	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Might Vote Differently	Unsure
September 2008	77%	19%	4%	<1%
McCain/Palin supporters	76%	20%	4%	<1%
Obama/Biden supporters	78%	18%	3%	1%

- Eye on the Economy:** In a state hard hit by the nation's faltering economy, Michigan voters target the economy as the most important issue in the presidential race. Overall, a majority -- 51% -- of the state's registered voters believe the economy should be the deciding factor when choosing the next president. Security against terrorism and the war in Iraq tie for a distant second each receiving 9%. Social issues and health care are also among voters' priorities. There's no question, though, supporters on both sides see the economy as the focus of the race. But, more of Barack Obama's backers view the economy as their top concern. 57% of Obama's supporters consider the economy most important compared to 43% of McCain's supporters.

Question Wording: When deciding your vote for president, which one of the following issues is most important to you:

Registered voters	Sept. 2008	McCain/Palin Supporters	Obama/Biden Supporters
Economy	51%	43%	57%
Security against terrorism	9%	20%	2%
War in Iraq	9%	4%	15%
Social issues like abortion or same sex marriage	8%	13%	4%
Health care	7%	5%	8%

	Sept. 2008	McCain/ Palin Supporters	Obama/ Biden Supporters
Registered voters			
Taxes	5%	8%	3%
Education	4%	2%	6%
Environment	2%	<1%	3%
Illegal immigration	2%	2%	1%
Unsure	3%	3%	1%

- Three-Way Split:** A president who is closer to voters on the issues is important to the Michigan electorate when choosing a candidate. However, they also say a president who is honest and trustworthy or one who will bring about change is equally important. These qualities each receive 20%. In the minds of McCain’s supporters, 22% feel a president who is closer to them on the issues deserves their vote. The same proportion rank having shared values as the most important quality in a candidate. “Change,” however, is the word for Obama’s supporters. 33% of his backers want a president who will bring about change. A president who is closer to them on the issues is also important with 21%.

Question Wording: When deciding your vote for president, which one of the following qualities is most important to you? A presidential candidate who:

	Sept. 2008	McCain/ Palin Supporters	Obama/ Biden Supporters
Registered voters			
Is closer to you on the issues	20%	22%	21%
Is honest and trustworthy	20%	20%	18%
Will bring about change	20%	4%	33%
Is a strong leader	16%	21%	15%
Shares your values	15%	22%	10%
Has experience	6%	10%	2%
Unsure	3%	1%	1%

- Talking Change:** While both candidates consider themselves the agent of change, Michigan voters say Barack Obama has the better *plan* for change. 53% believe Obama has a better vision compared with 37% for McCain. 88% of Democrats think their candidate can take the country in a different direction while 79% of Republicans believe their nominee is the better architect of change.

Question Wording: Which presidential candidate do you think has a better *plan* to bring about change for the country?

Registered voters	McCain	Obama	Unsure
September 2008	37%	53%	10%
Democrats	5%	88%	7%
Republicans	79%	12%	9%
Independents	29%	57%	14%

- **Record of Change:** There's a divide among voters as to which candidate has the better *record* to foster change. 46% think McCain has the stronger record while 43% say Obama has the record to charter a new course to fix the nation's problems.

Question Wording: Which presidential candidate do you think has a better *record* for bringing about change?

Registered voters	McCain	Obama	Unsure
September 2008	46%	43%	11%
Democrats	11%	77%	12%
Republicans	83%	10%	7%
Independents	48%	38%	14%

- **Barack Obama Has Higher Favorability Rating:** More registered voters in Michigan have a favorable impression of Barack Obama than John McCain. Six out of ten voters say they view Barack Obama positively. 50% say the same about John McCain.

Question Wording: Overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of [candidate]?

Registered voters	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
John McCain	50%	44%	6%
Barack Obama	60%	36%	4%

- **Positive Perception of V.P. Picks:** A majority of Michigan voters view Sarah Palin and Joe Biden favorably. 53% think highly of Joe Biden while 52% have a positive perception of Sarah Palin. But, there is a wide partisan divide. 71% of Democrats rate Joe Biden favorably compared with 28% of Republicans. Across the aisle, 88% of

Republicans think well of Sarah Palin. But, just 22% of Democrats see her in a positive light.

Question Wording: Overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of [candidate]?

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
Registered voters			
Sarah Palin	52%	35%	13%
Democrats	22%	60%	18%
Republicans	88%	8%	4%
Independents	50%	35%	15%
Men	52%	35%	13%
Women	52%	35%	13%
Joe Biden	53%	32%	15%
Democrats	71%	18%	11%
Republicans	28%	55%	17%
Independents	58%	24%	18%
Men	52%	40%	8%
Women	53%	25%	22%

- **Choices of Candidates Energize Voters:** A majority of Michigan voters are excited about the choices they have for president. 53% of registered voters, overall, are energized. More Obama supporters -- 69% -- are revved up compared with 45% of voters for McCain.

Question Wording: Are you excited or not excited about the choices you have for president?

	Excited	Not Excited	Unsure
Registered voters			
September 2008	53%	45%	2%
McCain/Palin supporters	45%	55%	<1%
Obama/Biden supporters	69%	29%	2%

Nature of the Sample: 806 Michigan Registered Voters

This survey of registered voters in Michigan was conducted on September 16th and 17th, 2008. Registered voters were interviewed by telephone in proportion to the voter registration in each county in Michigan and adjusted for turnout in statewide elections. Results are statistically significant at $\pm 3.5\%$. There are 599 likely voters. The results for this sub-sample are statistically significant at $\pm 4\%$. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.