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The Battleground: The Presidential Race in Ohio

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This Marist Poll reports:

Presidential Race in Ohio:

- **It's a Tossup:** The race for the White House is a dead heat among registered voters in Ohio. 44% of the state's registered voters say they support Senator Barack Obama -- the same proportion who backs Senator John McCain. When likely Ohio voters, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate, are factored into the equation, Obama has 47% to McCain's 45%. 90% of likely Democratic voters in the state say they support Obama. A similar proportion of likely Republican voters -- 89% -- report that they are behind their party's candidate. Support among likely Independent voters is evenly split between the two candidates with each receiving 42%.

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	44%	44%	2%	10%
Likely voters w/ leaners	45%	47%	1%	7%
Democrats	7%	90%	<1%	3%
Republicans	89%	7%	<1%	4%
Independents	42%	42%	2%	14%

- Most Ohio Voters Strongly Support Their Choice for President:** Regardless of whom they support, 81% of registered Ohio voters say they are strongly committed to their candidate. 82% of voters who are McCain supporters strongly support the GOP candidate while 79% of Obama backers are firmly behind him. Only a small percentage of both McCain's and Obama's supporters report they might change their vote by Election Day -- 3% for McCain compared with 6% 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	81%	14%	4%	1%
McCain/Palin supporters	82%	15%	3%	<1%
Obama/Biden supporters	79%	13%	6%	2%

- Economy Takes Center Stage in Campaign:** With many of the nation's financial institutions in a tailspin, Ohio voters are worried about the economy. More than four in ten registered voters say the economy is the most important issue for them when picking a candidate. Security against terrorism and social issues tie for a distant second with 11%. Health care follows closely behind with 9%. There is at least one thing that both McCain and Obama supporters agree on -- the economy is the central issue in this presidential race. 35% of McCain's backers and 49% of Obama's report that the economy is the issue that matters most to them when choosing a candidate. However, more Republicans -- 22% -- say security against terrorism is the key issue in the race compared with just 2% of voters for Obama. Health care is a greater priority for Obama supporters. 15% of registered voters in the Democrat's camp have it at the top of their list compared with only 3% of McCain's backers.

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

	Sept. 2008	McCain/ Palin Supporters	Obama/ Biden Supporters
Registered voters			
Economy	43%	35%	49%
Security against terrorism	11%	22%	2%
Social issues like abortion or same sex marriage	11%	18%	7%
Health care	9%	3%	15%
War in Iraq	7%	4%	10%
Education	5%	2%	7%
Taxes	5%	9%	3%
Environment	3%	3%	3%
Illegal immigration	2%	2%	1%
Unsure	4%	2%	3%

- What Voters Want:** Which quality do Ohio voters want most in their next president? 22% say it's important for a candidate to be honest and trustworthy while 21% want a candidate who is closer to them on the issues. 17% want a president who shares their values, and 16% want someone who is a strong leader. Although, "change," has been the buzzword in this campaign, it ranks fifth with Ohio voters. 14% say the nation's next president should have the ability to bring about change. However, while a quarter of Obama's supporters thinks it's important to have a person who is closer to them on the issues in the White House, change is still important among his backers. A similar number -- 24% -- say it's at the top of their priority list while just 3% of McCain's supporters believe it to be important. As for what voters backing McCain want in a president, one-fourth say it's someone who shares their values. A candidate who is honest and trustworthy is a close second at 23%.

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 honest and trustworthy	22%	23%	21%
Is closer to you on the issues	21%	18%	25%
Shares your values	17%	25%	12%
Is a strong leader	16%	19%	13%

Registered voters	Sept. 2008	McCain/ Palin Supporters	Obama/ Biden Supporters
Will bring about change	14%	3%	24%
Has experience	6%	9%	2%
Unsure	4%	3%	3%

- Winds of Change:** Ohio's registered voters split over which candidate has the better *plan* to bring about change. 45% believe Obama is the better architect of change while 42% think McCain is the candidate to move the nation in a different direction. Looking at how the parties break down, there is a wide partisan divide. 83% of registered Republicans think McCain has the better plan while 83% of Democrats think Obama has a better vision. 44% of Independents favor Obama's plan compared with 37% who favor McCain's.

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	42%	45%	13%
Democrats	10%	83%	7%
Republicans	83%	8%	9%
Independents	37%	44%	19%

- Better Record for Change:** Overall, 48% of registered voters in Ohio think McCain has the record to change the direction of the country. That's compared with 36% who say Obama does.

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

Registered voters	McCain	Obama	Unsure
September 2008	48%	36%	16%
Democrats	15%	70%	15%
Republicans	86%	5%	9%
Independents	45%	33%	22%

- **A Majority of Voters View McCain and Obama Favorably:** 56% of registered voters in Ohio say they have a positive perception of John McCain, and 54% have a favorable view of Barack Obama.

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

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
Registered voters			
John McCain	56%	38%	6%
Barack Obama	54%	38%	8%

- **More Voters Have a Positive Perception of Sarah Palin than Joe Biden:** A majority of registered voters in Ohio -- 54% -- view Sarah Palin favorably. Only 45% think highly of Joe Biden. However, more than one in five says they haven't heard enough about him to make a decision.

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

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
Registered voters			
Sarah Palin	54%	32%	14%
Democrats	21%	59%	20%
Republicans	87%	6%	7%
Independents	58%	30%	12%
Men	58%	30%	12%
Women	50%	34%	16%
Joe Biden	45%	33%	22%
Democrats	68%	13%	19%
Republicans	18%	61%	21%
Independents	50%	29%	21%
Men	44%	38%	18%
Women	46%	29%	25%

- **Ohio Electorate Excited About Candidates:** Overall, 55% of Ohio's registered voters are enthusiastic about the choices they have for president. However, more Obama

supporters -- 69% -- are excited about their candidate compared with 52% of McCain's supporters.

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

Registered voters	Excited	Not Excited	Unsure
September 2008	55%	42%	3%
McCain/Palin supporters	52%	47%	1%
Obama/Biden supporters	69%	27%	4%

Nature of the Sample: 769 Ohio Registered Voters

This survey of registered voters in Ohio was conducted from September 11th through September 15th, 2008. Registered voters were interviewed by telephone in proportion to the voter registration in each county in Ohio and adjusted for turnout in statewide elections. Results are statistically significant at $\pm 3.5\%$. There are 565 likely voters. The results for this sub-sample are statistically significant at $\pm 4.5\%$. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.