



The Battleground: The Presidential Race in Pennsylvania

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This Marist Poll reports:

Presidential Race in Pennsylvania

- **Tight Race in Pennsylvania...Edge to Obama:** 45% of Pennsylvania's registered voters support Senator Barack Obama for president while 42% are behind Senator John McCain. Likely voters in the state, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate, give Barack Obama the advantage over McCain -- 49% to 44%. 87% of likely Democratic voters are behind their party's candidate compared with 92% of likely Republican voters who support their choice. 49% of Independent voters likely to vote on Election Day support Obama compared with 40% who are for 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	42%	45%	2%	11%
Likely voters w/ leaners	44%	49%	<1%	7%
Democrats	6%	87%	<1%	7%
Republicans	92%	5%	<1%	3%
Independents	40%	49%	<1%	11%

- **Candidates Enjoy Strong Support Among Backers:** Most registered voters in Pennsylvania are firmly behind their choice for president. Regardless of whom they support, 81% of voters within the state strongly support their candidate. John McCain

and Barack Obama share similar support among voters in their individual camps. 80% of McCain's backers say they are firmly behind him. 82% of Obama's supporters report they are strongly committed to the Democratic candidate. What about voters who say they might vote differently come Election Day? Only a small percentage of both McCain's and Obama's supporters report that they might switch their vote -- 6% for McCain and 4% 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%	5%	<1%
McCain/Palin supporters	80%	13%	6%	1%
Obama/Biden supporters	82%	14%	4%	<1%

- The Economy is Key:** With many of the country's financial institutions in crisis and Wall Street in turmoil, more than four in ten registered voters in Pennsylvania believe the economy is the issue that matters most when it comes to choosing the next president. 12% say health care will be their priority when casting their ballots while the war in Iraq ranks as the number one issue for 10%. Supporters of both McCain and Obama agree that the economy is the central issue in the presidential race. 35% of voters for McCain say it's the issue most important to them compared with 48% of Obama's supporters. Health care ranks highly in the minds of Obama's backers. 20% think the issue is a top priority when choosing the next president compared with only 3% of McCain's supporters. Security against terrorism and social issues like abortion and same sex marriage are top concerns for McCain supporters at 18% and 17%, respectively.

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	41%	35%	48%
Health care	12%	3%	20%
War in Iraq	10%	7%	15%
Security against terrorism	9%	18%	3%
Social issues like abortion or same sex marriage	8%	17%	2%
Taxes	6%	8%	1%
Education	5%	3%	6%
Environment	3%	1%	4%
Illegal immigration	3%	6%	<1%
Unsure	3%	2%	1%

- Honesty is the Best Policy:** A president who is honest and trustworthy ranks among the most important qualities Pennsylvania voters are looking for in their next president. 21% believe this characteristic is most important followed by 20% who want a president who is closer to them on the issues, 17% who report they want a president who will bring about change, or who shares their values. Do these priorities shift between the candidates' supporters? The answer is, "Yes." 27% of voters who favor McCain say they are looking for a candidate who shares their values while 29% of Obama's backers say they want to elect a candidate who will bring about change.

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	21%	22%	20%
Is closer to you on the issues	20%	19%	22%
Will bring about change	17%	5%	29%
Shares your values	17%	27%	10%
Is a strong leader	15%	16%	13%
Has experience	6%	8%	3%
Unsure	4%	3%	3%

- Architect of Change:** A majority of Pennsylvania's registered voters -- 52% -- think Barack Obama has the better *plan* for bringing about change in this country while only 37% feel John McCain would be the better architect. 86% of Democrats say their candidate has the better vision for bringing about change while 79% of Republicans say that McCain's plan is preferred. Among the state's Independent voters, 53% believe Barack Obama is the candidate with the better plan.

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%	52%	11%
Democrats	5%	86%	9%
Republicans	79%	12%	9%
Independents	31%	53%	16%

- Change -- Standing on Their Records:** When it comes to the candidate who has the better *record* for bringing about change, a plurality -- 47% -- thinks McCain has the experience to change the direction of the country. That's compared with 40% who say Obama has the stronger record.

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

Registered voters	McCain	Obama	Unsure
September 2008	47%	40%	13%
Democrats	18%	66%	16%
Republicans	83%	10%	7%
Independents	46%	41%	13%

- Barack Obama Has Higher Favorability Rating than John McCain:** More registered voters in Pennsylvania have a favorable impression of Barack Obama than John McCain. Six out of ten voters say they view Barack Obama positively while 53% say the same about John McCain.

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

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
Registered voters			
John McCain	53%	37%	10%
Barack Obama	60%	32%	8%

- On Palin and Biden:** When it comes to the number two spot on the tickets, voters in Pennsylvania give Sarah Palin and Joe Biden similar favorability ratings. A majority -- 52% -- thinks highly of Joe Biden. Just less than half -- 49% -- has a positive perception of Sarah Palin.

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

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
Registered voters			
Sarah Palin	49%	34%	17%
Democrats	21%	56%	23%
Republicans	87%	8%	5%
Independents	41%	35%	24%
Men	58%	22%	20%
Women	41%	44%	15%
Joe Biden	52%	29%	19%
Democrats	70%	10%	20%
Republicans	30%	52%	18%
Independents	50%	31%	19%
Men	46%	36%	18%
Women	57%	22%	21%

- Most Obama Supporters Are Excited About the Choice They Have for President...McCain Backers Divide:** While a majority of Pennsylvania's registered voters -- 54% -- say they are excited about their choices for president, more supporters of the Democratic ticket are enthusiastic than are voters who are behind the Republican ticket. 69% of Obama/Biden backers are energized about the candidates this election season compared with 50% of McCain/Palin supporters.

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

Registered voters	Excited	Not Excited	Unsure
September 2008	54%	43%	3%
McCain/Palin supporters	50%	47%	3%
Obama/Biden supporters	69%	27%	4%

Nature of the Sample: 766 Pennsylvania Registered Voters

This survey of registered voters in Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania and adjusted for turnout in statewide elections. Results are statistically significant at $\pm 3.5\%$. There are 535 likely voters. The results for this sub-sample are statistically significant at $\pm 4.5\%$. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.