



NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll: Obama Leads Romney in Iowa

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Contact: Lee M. Miringoff
Barbara L. Carvalho
Mary E. Azzoli
Marist College
845.575.5050

This NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll Reports:

In the presidential contest in Iowa, 51% of likely voters, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted absentee, support President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden. 43% are for Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan. Two percent back another candidate, and 4% are undecided.

“When likely voters intend to cast their ballot tells us a lot about what is happening in Iowa,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Those who have already voted are breaking for Obama by more than two to one. In contrast, Romney leads by double digits with those who will vote on Election Day.”

In NBC News/WSJ/Marist’s September survey in Iowa, 50% of likely voters in Iowa, including those who were undecided yet leaning toward a candidate, were behind Obama and Biden while 42% supported Romney and Ryan. Only 1% was behind another candidate, and 7%, at that time, were undecided.

Key points:

- **Debate difference?** The presidential debate on Tuesday night has done little to change the landscape of the presidential election in Iowa. Only 3% of likely voters say they made up their mind after the debate. Prior to the debate, 52% of likely voters supported the president while 43% backed Romney. One percent was behind another candidate, and 4% were undecided. Following the debate, on Wednesday, 51% of likely voters are behind the president while 43% support Romney. Two percent are for another candidate, and 4% are undecided.
- **Party ID.** Most Democrats who are likely to vote -- 96% -- favor the president while most Republicans who are likely to cast a ballot -- 92% -- back Romney. Among independent likely voters, 49% rally for the president while 38% are for Romney.

- **Enthusiasm.** 55% of Iowa likely voters are very enthusiastic about voting next month. Romney's backers -- 64% -- are very enthusiastic about going to the polls compared with 53% of Obama's supporters. Compared with NBC News/WSJ/Marist's September survey, there has been an increase in the proportion of likely voters who back Romney who also express a high degree of enthusiasm. 55% felt this way in the previous poll. There has been little change among Obama's supporters. In September, 55% of the president's supporters had a similar level of enthusiasm.
- **Intensity of support.** 86% of Iowa likely voters are strongly committed to their choice of candidate. 13% somewhat support their pick while 1% may vote differently. Less than 1% is unsure. 86% of Romney's supporters are firmly in his camp while 85% of Obama's backers strongly support him. In September, 80% of likely voters behind Romney and 82% of Obama's supporters reported a high level of commitment to their candidate.
- **Gender.** A gender gap exists. 57% of likely voters who are women are behind Obama compared with 39% who back Romney. Among men who are likely to cast a ballot, Romney edges Obama -- 48% to 45%.
- **Age.** Young voters favor the president. 67% of likely voters under the age of thirty support the president. This compares with 23% who are for Romney. Among Iowa likely voters 30 to 44, 48% back Obama while 47% are for Romney. Among likely voters between 45 and 59, Obama has the support of 51% compared with 43% for Romney. Obama and Romney are in a close contest -- 49% to 47% -- among voters who are 60 and older and likely to cast a ballot.
- **Already voted.** 34% of likely voters in Iowa indicate they have already cast their ballot. Obama leads Romney -- 67% to 32% -- among these voters. Romney leads Obama -- 54% to 39% -- among likely voters who plan to cast their ballot on Election Day.

Looking at registered voters, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted absentee, Obama has the support of 50% compared with 43% who favor Romney. Two percent back another candidate, and 5% are undecided.

Impact of the Debate

95% of likely voters say they decided on a candidate before Tuesday night's debate. Three percent made their choice after the matchup. Two percent are unsure.

94% of Obama's supporters selected him as their candidate prior to the debate while 3% did so post-debate. Among Romney's backers, 96% decided prior to Tuesday night's debate while 4% made their selection following it.

How did registered voters get their information about the debate? 59% mostly watched it. This compares with 19% who saw its news coverage. 22% neither tuned in for the debate nor watched the news reports about it.

65% of Democrats and 64% of Republicans viewed the debate firsthand. This compares with 52% of independent voters. 22% of independents caught the news about the debate while 26% neither watched the debate nor followed its news coverage.

Looking at age, 66% of registered voters 45 years of age or older watched the debate. This compares with just 48% of those under the age of 45 who did the same.

Majority Views Obama Favorably... Romney's Image Still in Need of a Makeover

54% of likely voters in Iowa have a positive impression of President Obama while 43% do not. Three percent are unsure.

In NBC News/WSJ/Marist's September survey, 53% of Iowa likely voters had a favorable view of Obama while 42% had an unfavorable one. Five percent, at that time, were unsure.

Romney's favorability rating is still upside down. 51% of likely voters have an unfavorable opinion of him while 44% have a favorable one. Five percent are unsure.

In September, half of likely voters -- 50% -- had an *unfavorable* view of Romney while 42% had a favorable one. Eight percent were unsure.

A Look at the Vice Presidential Candidates

Likely voters in Iowa divide about Vice President Joe Biden. 47% have a favorable view of him while 46% have an unfavorable one. Eight percent are unsure.

When NBC News/WSJ/Marist reported this question last month, 44% of Iowa likely voters thought well of Biden. This compares with 43% who had an unfavorable impression of him. 13%, at that time, were unsure.

44% of likely voters have a favorable opinion of Paul Ryan. However, 45% have an unfavorable view of the candidate. 11% are unsure.

In September, 40% of Iowa likely voters had a positive view of Ryan. 43% did not, and 17% had either never heard of him or were unsure how to rate him.

Obama and Romney Battle Over Economy...Obama Bests Romney on Foreign Policy

Which candidate will do a better job handling the U.S. economy? 46% of registered voters statewide think Obama is the candidate for the job while the same proportion -- 46% -- has this opinion of Romney. Nine percent are unsure. Among Iowa likely voters, 47% perceive the president to be stronger on the issue compared with 46% who believe Romney will turn around the nation's economy. Seven percent are unsure.

In September, 46% of Iowa registered voters reported Obama would better handle the economy while 42% said Romney was more capable. 11%, at the time, were unsure.

When it comes to foreign policy, Obama -- 51% -- outperforms Romney -- 39% -- among registered voters. 11% are unsure. Likely voters share these views. 51% of this group believes Obama is better prepared to handle foreign policy issues while 40% think Romney is. Nine percent are unsure.

In NBC News/WSJ/Marist's previous survey in the state, 53% of registered voters said Obama was the stronger candidate in the foreign policy realm. 35%, however, thought Romney had the better plan. 12% were unsure.

Half Give Obama's Job Performance Stamp of Approval

Among Iowa registered voters, 50% approve of the job President Obama is doing in office. This compares with 43% who disapprove. Six percent are unsure.

Last month, 49% of registered voters statewide applauded the president's performance while 43% believed he fell short. Eight percent, then, were unsure.

A Nation Off Course?

When it comes to the direction of the country, 47% of registered voters in Iowa say the nation is moving in the wrong direction. The same proportion -- 47% -- also thinks it is moving in the right one. Six percent are unsure.

When NBC News/WSJ/Marist last reported this question in September, 49% believed the country needed a new compass. However, 43% said the country was on the correct path. Eight percent, at that time, were unsure.