



## **High Stakes: A Vice Presidential Debate Preview**

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This Marist Poll reports:

### **The Vice Presidential Debate:**

- **Wait and See... Nearly One in Five Voters Unsure Who Will Win Vice Presidential Debate:** A plurality of registered voters nationwide -- 45% -- think Senator Joe Biden will beat his Republican opponent, Governor Sarah Palin, during Thursday night's vice presidential debate while 36% think Palin will make the better showing. However, close to one in five voters, including nearly a quarter of Independents, say they just don't know which candidate will be victorious. Republican and Democratic voters stand along party lines. Regardless of whom they support, 71% of Democrats say Biden will win the debate while 66% of Republicans think Palin will. By a difference of 6 percentage points -- 41% to 35% -- Independents believe Biden will win.

**Question Wording:** Regardless of whom you support, who do you expect will win the vice presidential debate?

<b>Registered voters</b>	<b>Sarah Palin</b>	<b>Joe Biden</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
<b>Expect to win</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>19%</b>
Democrats	14%	71%	15%
Republicans	66%	20%	14%
Independents	35%	41%	24%

- **Voters Divide...Think Biden to Appear More Informed...Palin More Likeable:**  
Voters' expectations differ when it comes to the candidate who will come across as more

knowledgeable on the issues and the one who will leave a more likeable impression. 61% of registered voters nationally say Biden will have a greater understanding of the issues compared with just 28% for Palin. Looking at the parties, Democrats stand strong behind their candidate. 84% think Biden will have a better grasp of the campaign's key issues. Although a majority of Republicans -- 54% -- believe Governor Palin will appear better informed than her Democratic rival, about a third of voters in her own party report Senator Biden will be more knowledgeable. Independents agree with the Democrats. 61% of Independents believe Biden will show a greater depth of knowledge on the issues.

However, voters expect Palin to take top honors when it comes to likeability. 65% of registered voters believe she will come across as more likeable during Thursday's debate while just 23% think Biden will present a more pleasant demeanor. Even Democrats are divided on how likeable Biden will appear. Just slightly more voters in Biden's own party -- 46% -- are confident he will appear more likeable compared with 42% who think Palin will. When it comes to the GOP, there's no question where they stand. 89% of Republicans expect the Alaskan governor to appear more pleasant compared with 6% who anticipate Biden will. Here, Independents agree with the Republicans. Seven in ten Independents believe Palin will outshine her Democratic opponent in this way.

**Question Wording:** Do you think Sarah Palin or Joe Biden is more likely to do each of the following: Be better informed on the issues/Be more likeable?

Registered voters	Sarah Palin	Joe Biden	Unsure
<b>Be better informed</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Democrats	10%	84%	6%
Republicans	54%	34%	12%
Independents	27%	61%	12%
<b>Be more likeable</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Democrats	42%	46%	12%
Republicans	89%	6%	5%
Independents	70%	14%	16%

- **Still Time to Make a First Impression?** Neither Joe Biden nor Sarah Palin are viewed favorably by a majority of voters. 49% of the national electorate says they have a

favorable impression of Sarah Palin compared with 45% who have a positive image of Joe Biden. But, 13% are still unsure how to rate Palin while 21% have yet to form an opinion of Biden. 38% have a negative of impression of Palin, and 34% view Biden unfavorably.

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

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
<b>Registered voters</b>			
<b>Sarah Palin</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Democrats	18%	65%	17%
Republicans	86%	9%	5%
Independents	50%	35%	15%
<b>Joe Biden</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Democrats	68%	14%	18%
Republicans	18%	60%	22%
Independents	45%	34%	21%

### **Nature of the Sample: 801 Americans**

This survey was conducted on September 24th and 25th, 2008. 801 adults 18 years of age or older within the continental United States were interviewed by telephone. Telephone numbers were selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the nation. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each region was represented in proportion to its population. The results of the entire survey are statistically significant at  $\pm 3.5\%$ . There are 693 registered voters. The result for this sub-sample is statistically significant at  $\pm 4\%$ . The margin for error increases for cross-tabulations.