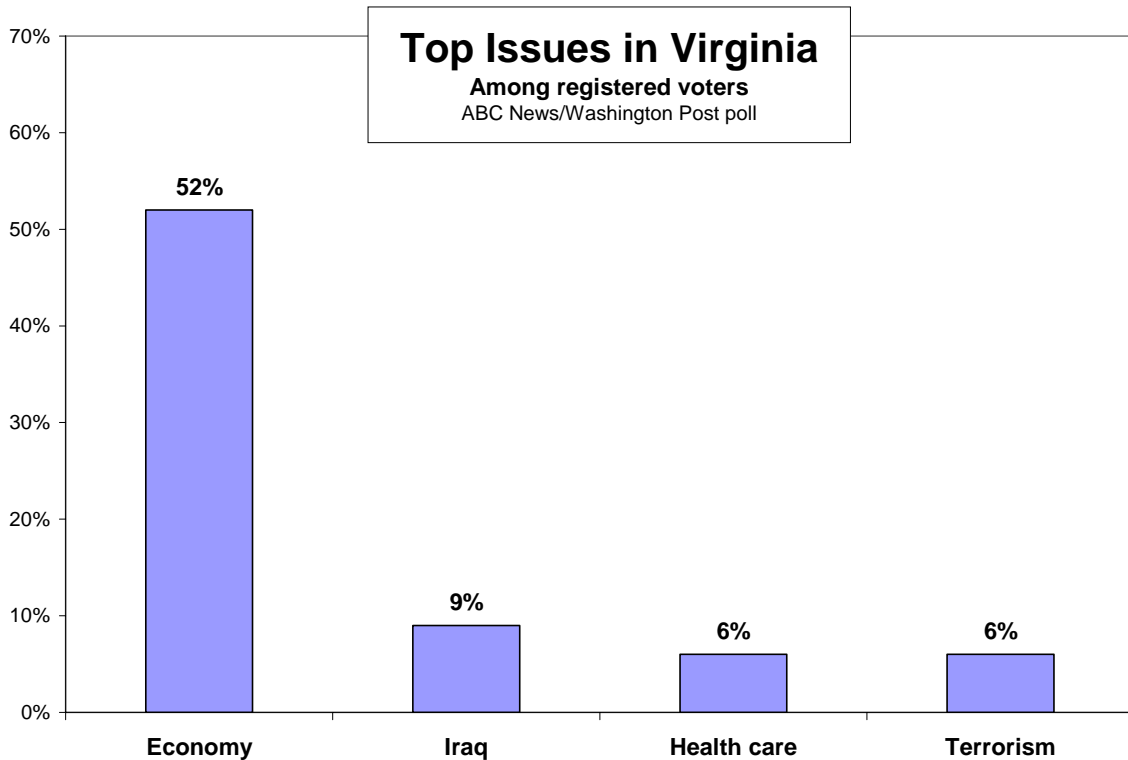


Voters' Economic Jitters Shake the Race in Virginia

Economic jitters and a favorable Democratic climate are contributing to a competitive presidential contest in Virginia, a traditionally Republican state in national elections but one where Democrats have won the last three races for governor or U.S. Senate.

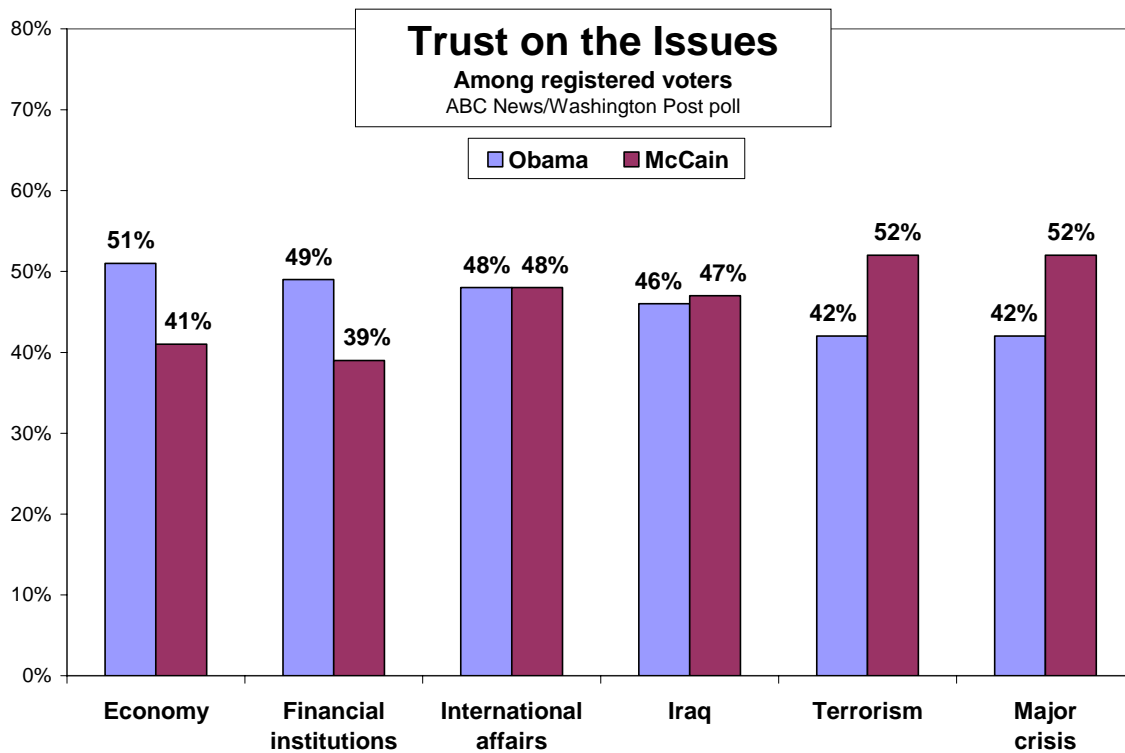
An ABC News/Washington Post poll in the commonwealth shows the powerful role of the economy in voters' views this year: Fifty-two percent call it the single most important issue in their vote, far and away No. 1. And eight in 10 are worried about the economy's direction in the next few years, with 45 percent very worried.

Those concerns, likely exacerbated by last week's market upheaval, work to Barack Obama's advantage. He holds a 10-point lead over John McCain among registered voters in trust to handle the economy; a bigger, 23-point advantage in understanding Americans' economic problems; and large head-to-head leads in vote preference among those who cite the economy as their top issue and who express worry about its direction.



McCain's also hurt by his perceived proximity to George W. Bush – 53 percent of registered voters in the state think McCain would lead in the same direction as Bush, hardly popular since 83 percent think the country's seriously off on the wrong track. And by a 20-point margin, more think Obama would bring needed change to Washington.

But McCain pushes back elsewhere. Nearly half the state's voters cite a wide range of other top concerns, and among them he leads by a 19-point margin. As is the case nationally, he prevails over Obama in trust to handle terrorism or an unexpected crisis. And he leads by nearly 20 points among veterans, a sizable group in Virginia.



In a head-to-head match-up 49 percent of Virginia likely voters support Obama, 46 percent McCain – a close race, with the difference within this poll's margin of sampling error. It moves decimally, to a rounded 50-45 percent, when third-party candidates Ralph Nader and Bob Barr are included.

White women, whose preference has been unsettled in national ABC/Post polls, may be key here as well. They favored George W. Bush over John Kerry by a vast 29-point margin in 2004, when Bush won Virginia. But in the state's 2006 U.S. Senate race, Republican George Allen won white women by just 6 points, close enough for the Democrat, Jim Webb, to capture the seat by less than a 10,000-vote margin.

In this poll McCain leads Obama among white women by a scant 5 points, much like the Webb-Allen result. Economic concerns may be a reason; they are higher among white

women than among white men, who overwhelmingly favor McCain. For example, among registered voters, 63 percent of white women are worried about their own family's financial situation; that declines to 51 percent of white men.

Republicans have won Virginia in every presidential election since 1968. But the state also has elected Democrats; in addition to Webb's victory in 2006, Democrats have won the last two elections for governor. And the climate is good for Democrats this year: Former Democratic Gov. Mark Warner holds a 2-1 lead in his race against Republican Jim Gilmore, another former governor. Democratic Gov. Tim Kaine has a powerful 66 percent job approval rating. And Webb's approval rating is 54 percent.

With more than 40 days to go, the contest is far from over: Nineteen percent of likely voters, nearly one in five, say they have not made up their minds for sure. Among those who say they have definitely decided, though, Obama has a slight lead, 54-46 percent. And, as nationally, he has more enthused voters: Sixty-four percent of Obama supporters are very enthusiastic about their candidate, compared with 45 percent of McCain's.

Indicating the Republican Party's difficulties, just 28 percent of likely voters in Virginia identify themselves as Republicans, vs. 33 percent Democrats and the rest independents. In 2006 and 2004 exit polls, Republican voters slightly outnumbered Democrats. Adjusting this poll to those partisan divisions gives McCain a little boost, but the race remains very close overall – still essentially a dead heat.

Rather than partisanship, a key reason for the closeness is the split among independents. They divide about evenly, 47-46 percent between McCain and Obama. In 2004 they went for Bush by 10 points. He won the state by 9.

Race is a critical factor as well. Bush won Virginia whites by a vast 68-32 percent in 2004. McCain's now ahead among whites by a closer (albeit not close) 57-37 percent. But Obama's also winning near-unanimous 96 percent support from blacks, compared with Kerry's 87 percent. And blacks account for one in six likely voters in the state, more than their numbers nationally, albeit a bit under their share in the 2004 Virginia exit poll.

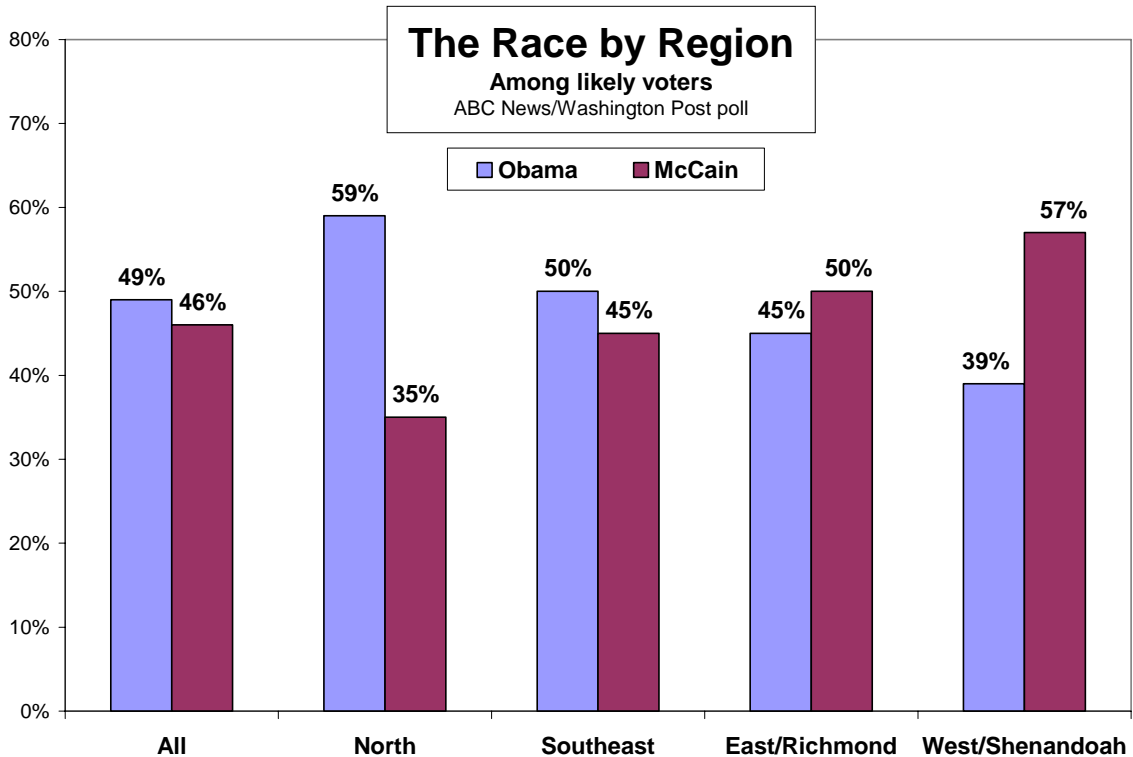
	Vote preference by groups	
	Among likely voters	
	Obama	McCain
All	49%	46
Men	40	55
Women	57	39
Whites	37	57
Blacks	96	4
White men	28	66
White women	45	50
Democrats	96	3
Independents	46	47
Republicans	5	92

Liberals	84	12
Moderates	54	41
Conservatives	17	79
Top issue:		
Economy	61	37
All others	37	56
Veteran		
Not a veteran	38	57
	52	43

REGIONS – Regional divisions are an essential element of Virginia politics. Obama is strongest by far in northern Virginia, the generally well-off Washington D.C. suburbs that Kerry won in 2004 and Webb won by a wider margin in 2006.

The race is close in the Southeast, a swing area of the state including the Democratic-tilting Norfolk and the Republican-tilting Virginia Beach, and it moves heavily to McCain in the state’s west.

Well worth watching is the east, where McCain currently has a scant 5-point edge. The region includes rural, Republican areas, but also Richmond, with a sizable black population. Bush won it by 15 points in 2004, Allen by 10 in 2006. Whites in the east go 2-1 for McCain in this poll, but African-Americans and other nonwhites pull it closer.



	ABC/Post		Exit Polls			
	Likely voters		2006		2004	
	Obama	McCain	Webb	Allen	Kerry	Bush
All	49%	46	50%	49	45%	54
North	59	35	60	40	53	46
Southeast	50	45	53	47	48	51
East/Richmond	45	50	45	55	42	57
West/Shenandoah	39	57	43	57	38	62

ECONOMY/WORRY – Obama’s 10-point advantage in trust to handle the economy is matched by his lead, 49 to 39 percent, in trust to fix the problems with major financial institutions that have transfixed world markets. And economic concerns are broad across a range of measures: As noted, 82 percent of registered voters in Virginia say they’re worried about the economy’s direction; 74 percent express concern about the stock market; and 59 percent are worried about their own family’s finances.

And it differentiates vote preferences. Looking just among whites, McCain’s advantage is much smaller among people who are worried economically than those who are more sanguine. His vast 57-point lead among white men who are not worried about their own finances shrinks to 15 points among those who are worried. And McCain leads by 20 points among white women who are unworried about their family finances – but among white women who are worried, the race stands at 49-45 percent, Obama-McCain.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone September 18-21, 2008, among a random sample of 1,001 adults in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The results from the full survey have a 3-point error margin. Results among the 857 registered voters and 698 likely voters surveyed have a 3.5-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) How closely are you following the presidential race: very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, or not closely at all?

	---- Closely -----			---- Not closely -----			No
	NET	Very	Smwt.	NET	Not too	At all	opinion
9/21/08 VA	93	58	35	7	6	1	*
10/8/07 VA	80	35	46	20	13	6	0

2. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) I'd like you to rate the chances that you will vote in the presidential election in November: Are you absolutely certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50, or less than that?

Don't think

	Certain to vote	Probably vote	Chances 50/50	Less than that	will vote (vol.)	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	88	6	5	2	*	*

3. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) If the 2008 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were (Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the Democrats) and (John McCain and Sarah Palin, the Republicans), for whom would you vote?

NET LEANED VOTE - REGISTERED VOTERS

	Obama	McCain	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	50	44	*	2	1	3
9/7/08 NAT	47	46	1	1	1	4

NET LEANED VOTE - LIKELY VOTERS

	Obama	McCain	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	49	46	*	2	0	3
9/7/08 NAT	47	49	1	1	0	3

3b. (IF NAMED CANDIDATE) Would you definitely vote for (CANDIDATE), or is there a chance you could change your mind and vote for someone else? (IF CHANCE CHANGE MIND) Is there a GOOD CHANCE you'll change your mind, or would you say it's PRETTY UNLIKELY?

	Definitely vote for	-Chance change mind - NET	Good	Unlikely	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	81	18	5	12	2
9/7/08 NAT	79	20	8	12	1

Barack Obama:

	Definitely vote for	-Chance change mind - NET	Good	Unlikely	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	82	17	5	12	1
9/7/08 NAT	78	21	9	12	1

John McCain:

	Definitely vote for	-Chance change mind - NET	Good	Unlikely	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	80	18	5	13	2
9/7/08 NAT	80	19	8	11	2

4. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) If the 2008 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were {(Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the Democrats), (John McCain and Sarah Palin, the Republicans)}, {(Bob Barr and Wayne Allen Root, the Libertarian Party candidates), and (Ralph Nader and Matt Gonzales, as independent candidates)}, for whom would you vote?

NET LEANED VOTE - REGISTERED VOTERS

	Obama	McCain	Barr	Nader	Other (vol.)	None (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No op.
9/21/08 VA	51	43	2	2	*	*	*	3

NET LEANED VOTE - LIKELY VOTERS

	Other	None	Would not	No
--	-------	------	-----------	----

	Obama	McCain	Barr	Nader	(vol.)	(vol.)	vote (vol.)	op.
9/21/08 VA	50	45	1	1	*	*	*	2

5. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Will this be the first time you've voted in a presidential election, or have you voted in previous presidential elections?

	First time	Have voted in previous	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	9	91	0

6. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Now, turning to the U.S. Senate election in Virginia, if the 2008 election for the U.S. Senate were being held today, would you vote for {(Mark Warner, the Democratic candidate), (Jim Gilmore, the Republican candidate)}, {(Gail Parker, the Independent Green candidate), or (William Redpath, the Libertarian candidate)}?

NET LEANED VOTE - REGISTERED VOTERS

	Warner	Gilmore	Parker	Redpath	Other (vol.)	None (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No op.
9/21/08 VA	61	29	2	1	*	1	1	5

Compare to:

And thinking about the November 2008 U.S. Senate race, if the election were being held today and the candidates were (Mark Warner, the Democrat), and (Jim Gilmore, the Republican), for whom would you vote? Which candidate are you leaning toward?

NET LEANED VOTE - REGISTERED VOTERS

	Mark Warner	Jim Gilmore	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
10/8/07 VA	61	32	*	2	4

NET LEANED VOTE - LIKELY VOTERS

	Warner	Gilmore	Parker	Redpath	Other (vol.)	None (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No op.
9/21/08 VA	61	31	1	1	*	1	1	5

7. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Do you think things in this country (are generally going in the right direction) or do you feel things (have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track)?

	Right direction	Wrong track	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	15	83	3

8. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Thinking ahead to the November presidential election, what is the single most important issue in your choice for president?

	9/21/08 VA	9/7/08 NAT
Economy/Jobs/Stock market/Credit problems/Gas/Energy*	52	41
Iraq/War in Iraq	9	10
Health care	6	9
Terrorism/National		

security	6	6
Ethics/Honesty/ Corruption in government	2	5
Education	1	2
Immigration/Illegal immigration	1	1
Morals/Family values	1	1
Taxes	3	4
Environment	*	*
Abortion	2	2
Foreign policy	1	1
Guns/Gun control	1	*
Federal budget deficit	1	*
Housing/Mortgages	*	0
Social Security	*	*
Iran/Situation in Iran	0	0
Global warming	0	*
Change	3	2
Experience	2	2
None/Nothing	*	1
Other	5	7
No opinion	3	5
*Separately:		
Economy/Jobs	50	37
Stock market/Wall Street	*	0
Banking/insurance/ credit problems	*	0
Gas/Oil prices/Energy	2	4

9. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of Sarah Palin? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
9/21/08 VA	53	33	20	38	13	25	9
9/7/08 NAT	58	35	23	28	11	17	15

10. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Do you approve or disapprove of the way Tim Kaine is handling his job as governor?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
9/21/08 VA RV	66	25	9
10/8/07 VA RV	65	26	9
10/8/07 VA All	63	25	12
10/12/06 VA LV	77	19	4

11. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Do you approve or disapprove of the way Jim Webb is handling his job as U.S. Senator?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
9/21/08 VA RV	54	24	21
10/8/07 VA RV	52	28	20
10/8/07 VA All	50	27	22

12. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Regardless of who you may support, who do you trust more to handle [ITEM] - (Obama) or (McCain)?

9/21/08 - Summary Table*

	Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
a. The economy	51	41	1	5	1
b. Fixing the problems with major financial institutions	49	39	1	8	3
c. The war in Iraq	46	47	0	4	3
d. International affairs	48	48	*	4	1
e. The U.S. campaign against terrorism	42	52	1	2	2
f. An unexpected major crisis	42	52	1	2	3

*Full sample asked items a-b, half sample asked items c-d, other half sample asked items e-f.

Trend where available:

a. The economy

	Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	51	41	1	5	1
9/7/08 NAT	47	42	1	4	6

b. No trend.

c. The war in Iraq

9/21/08 VA	46	47	0	4	3
9/7/08 NAT	41	51	1	2	4

d. International affairs

9/21/08 VA	48	48	*	4	1
9/7/08 NAT	39	51	2	3	6

e. The U.S. campaign against terrorism

9/21/08 VA	42	52	1	2	2
9/7/08 NAT	36	56	2	2	4

f. An unexpected major crisis

9/21/08 VA	42	52	1	2	3
9/7/08 NAT	37	54	2	3	3

13. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Regardless of who you may support, who do you think [ITEM] - (Obama) or (McCain)?

9/21/08 - Summary Table*

	Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
a. would do more to bring needed change to Washington	56	36	1	4	2
b. better understands the economic problems people in this country are having	56	33	2	8	2
c. is more honest and trustworthy	43	41	7	6	4

d. is the stronger leader 49 46 2 2 1
 *Full sample asked items a-b, half sample asked item c, other half sample asked item d.

Trend where available:

a. would do more to bring needed change to Washington

	Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	56	36	1	4	2
9/7/08 NAT	51	39	*	5	5

b. No trend.

c. is more honest and trustworthy

9/21/08 VA	43	41	7	6	4
9/7/08 NAT	38	44	5	7	6

d. is the stronger leader

9/21/08 VA	49	46	2	2	1
9/7/08 NAT	44	48	2	1	5

14. (ASKED OF REGISTERED OBAMA VOTERS) Thinking about his candidacy for president so far, how enthusiastic are you about Obama - very enthusiastic, fairly enthusiastic, not too enthusiastic, or not enthusiastic at all?

	--- Enthusiastic ---			---- Not enthusiastic ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	
9/21/08 VA	96	64	32	4	4	0	*
9/7/08 NAT	96	64	32	4	3	1	0

15. (ASKED OF REGISTERED MCCAIN VOTERS) Thinking about his candidacy for president so far, how enthusiastic are you about McCain - very enthusiastic, fairly enthusiastic, not too enthusiastic, or not enthusiastic at all?

	--- Enthusiastic ---			---- Not enthusiastic ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	
9/21/08 VA	91	45	46	9	8	1	0
9/7/08 NAT	92	46	46	8	6	2	0

16. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Please tell me whether the following statements apply to (Obama/McCain), or not?

9/21/08 - Summary Table

	----- Obama -----			----- McCain -----		
	Yes	No	No opin.	Yes	No	No opin.
a. He would be a good commander-in-chief of the military	51	45	4	73	25	3
b. He knows enough about world affairs to serve effectively as president	55	42	3	74	23	3

17. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) If McCain were elected president, do you think he'd (mainly lead the country in a new direction), or (mainly continue in George W. Bush's direction)?

	New direction	Same direction	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	44	53	3
9/7/08 NAT	46	50	4

18. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) In your choice for president, how important is the [ITEM] - very important, somewhat important, not so important or not important at all?

9/21/08 - Summary Table

	--- Important ---			--- Not Important ---			No opinion
	NET	Very	Smwt.	NET	Not so	At all	
a. Race of the candidate	18	14	4	82	12	70	*
b. Age of the candidate	43	13	30	57	22	35	*

19. On another subject, how do you feel about [READ ITEM] - very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried or not worried at all? How about [NEXT ITEM]?

9/21/08 - Summary Table

	----- Worried -----			----- Not worried -----			No opin.
	NET	Very	Smwt.	NET	Not too	At all	
a. The direction of the nation's economy over the next few years	82	45	38	17	11	6	1
b. Your own family's financial situation	59	23	35	41	26	15	*
c. The performance of the stock market	74	38	37	24	13	10	2

20. Do you approve or disapprove of the steps the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department have taken to try to deal with the current situation involving the stock market and major financial institutions? Do you approve/disapprove STRONGLY or SOMEWHAT?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
9/21/08 VA	46	10	36	42	21	21	12

21. Just your best guess - do you think the economy (is in a normal downturn that will correct itself before too long), or do you think the economy (has moved into a serious long-term decline)?

	Normal downturn	Serious decline	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
9/21/08 VA	45	50	2	2

22 held for release.

23. (ASKED OF REGISTERED LEANED DEMOCRATS) Who did you want to see win the Democratic nomination for president this year - (Hillary Clinton) or (Barack Obama)?

NET LEANED SUPPORT

Hillary Clinton	Barack Obama	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
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9/21/08 VA	31	66	1	2	1
9/7/08 NAT	42	53	*	3	2

24. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) On another subject, do you think abortion should be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases or illegal in all cases?

		----- Legal -----			----- Illegal -----			
		NET	All cases	Most cases	NET	Most cases	All cases	No opinion
9/21/08	RV	60	22	38	38	25	12	3
6/3/07	RV	56	19	38	39	25	14	5
9/9/05	RV	55	21	35	43	28	15	2
10/25/01	LV	57	21	36	39	11	28	4
8/23/01	RV	57	21	37	39	12	27	3
10/26/00	LV	58	18	40	38	12	27	4
8/27/00	LV	57	16	40	38	12	26	5
8/27/00	RV	57	18	39	38	12	26	5

END