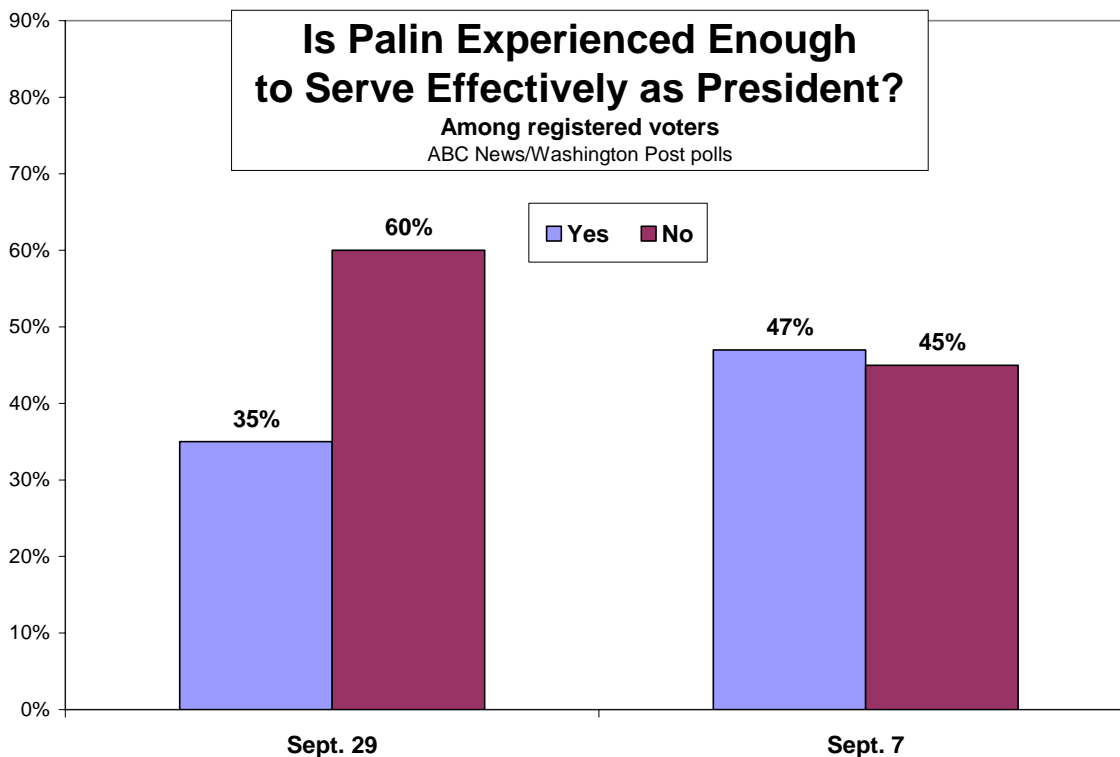


Views of Palin Sour Sharply; Six in 10 Doubt Her Readiness

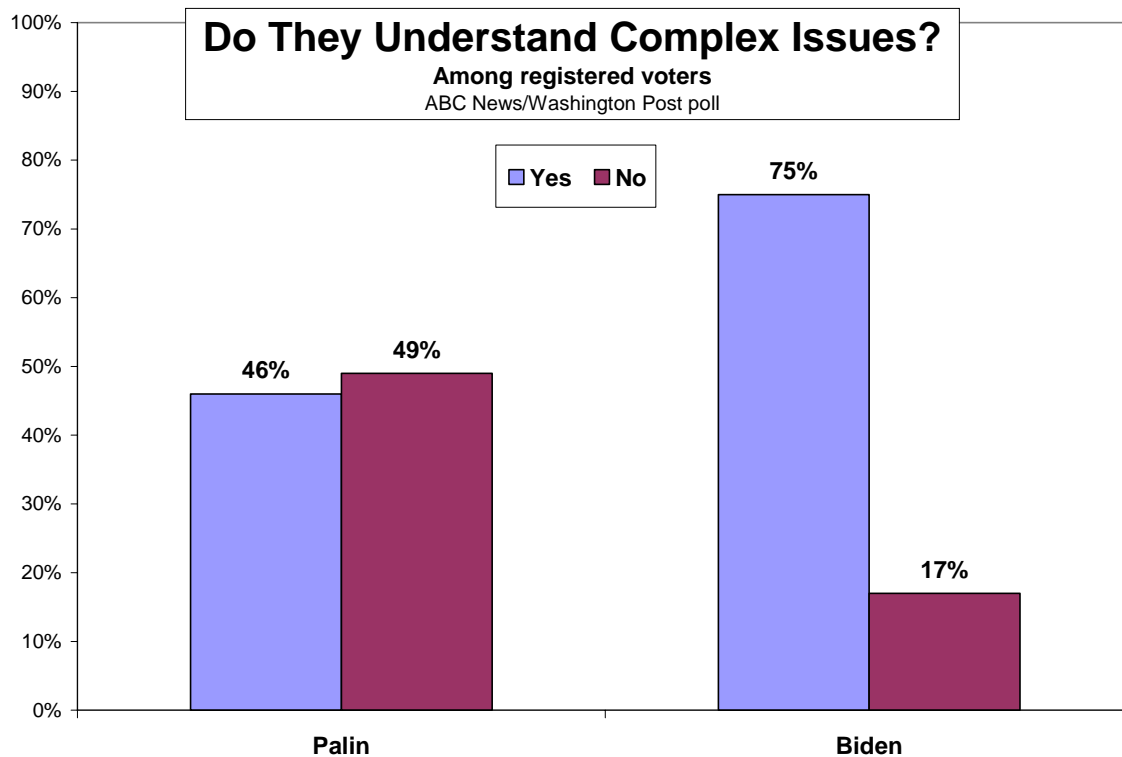
Skepticism about Sarah Palin has soared since she entered the national political stage, with six in 10 Americans now doubting her qualifications for office and fewer than half convinced of her grasp of complex issues.

In advance of her debate against Joe Biden tonight, Palin now looks more like a drag than a boost to the GOP ticket: Thirty-two percent of registered voters say her selection makes them less likely to support John McCain for president, up from 19 percent last month.

Her basic ratings are weaker still. Just 35 percent say Palin has the experience it takes to serve effectively as president, down a dozen points since early September; 60 percent think not, up 15. And just 46 percent think Palin “understands complex issues,” while 49 percent think she doesn’t – a poor assessment on this most basic qualification.



Biden’s ratings starkly contrast Palin’s: Seventy-five percent say he understands complex issues, 70 percent say he has suitable experience to take over as president if necessary and just 13 percent say his selection makes them less apt to support Barack Obama.



In the most fundamental measure of a public figure’s popularity, 51 percent now express an overall favorable opinion of Palin, down from 58 percent Sept. 7, just after the GOP convention. While she’s lost 7 points on this score, Biden’s moved the other way, gaining 6 points – 57 percent see him favorably, up from 51 percent.

Tonight’s debate marks an opportunity for Palin to address these concerns, but also carries the risk of cementing them in the public’s mind. The hazard she faces is that it’s generally easier to confirm preconceptions than to change them.

Palin does have one better rating, for her common touch: Fifty-eight percent of registered voters think she understands the problems of people like them. But as many, 57 percent, say the same of Biden.

SWING LOW – In conjunction with the Republican convention overall, Palin’s addition to the ticket seemed to help energize McCain’s base – enthusiasm among his supporters rose – and to improve his position among white women, a changeable group all year but one that shifted in McCain’s favor in early September.

Some of that’s clearly ebbed. White women by a 13-point margin initially said Palin’s addition made them more likely rather than less likely to support the GOP ticket. That’s subsided to a single point. Among independents, Palin’s presence on the ticket has gone from a 10-point net positive to an 11-point net negative. And her reception has turned

negative among another key swing group, white Catholics; they're now 19 points more apt to say Palin pushes them away from McCain than toward him.

Similarly, just 40 percent of white women now say Palin has the experience it takes to serve effectively as president, down 12 points; 56 percent think not. It's lower still among independents, 32 percent, down 17 points. And among white Catholics the sense that Palin is qualified has plummeted from 54 percent early last month to 27 percent now. It's dropped nearly as far among non-evangelical white Protestants as well.

There are related trends in favorability; favorable views of Palin have dropped, for instance, by 20 points among white Catholics (from 69 to 49 percent), by 15 points among Midwesterners (who gave her a particularly favorable initial reception) and by 18 points among non-evangelical white Protestants.

	Views of Sarah Palin				
	Experienced enough		Favorable opinion		Understands complex issues
	Now	9/7	Now	9/7	Now
All	35%	47%	51%	58%	46%
Men	35	50	52	58	45
Women	35	44	51	57	47
White women	40	52	59	67	52
Married women	41	45	58	60	52
Single women	26	42	41	51	40
Democrats	12	24	23	34	23
Independents	32	49	53	60	44
Republicans	67	75	84	88	75
Liberals	12	23	24	27	26
Moderates	26	44	44	58	38
Conservatives	59	67	77	77	67
White Catholics	27	54	49	69	42
White Protestants:					
Non-evangelical	35	58	54	72	47
Evangelical	55	65	75	77	61

PARTISANS – There is strong partisanship in these views. Sixty-seven percent of Republicans say Palin's experienced enough, compared with barely over one in 10 Democrats, and, as noted, a third of independents. Eighty-four percent of Republicans view her favorably, and 75 percent think she understands complex issues. Conservatives and white evangelicals, both core Republican groups, also remain by her side.

The public's sense of Palin's grasp of the issues also is marked by partisan and ideological gaps. But among white women, a natural affinity group for Palin, barely over half, 52 percent, think she understands complex issues.

Naturally there's also partisanship in Biden's favorability rating. But in terms of experience and grasp of the issues he holds majorities across the board; even among Republicans, 55 percent say he's experienced enough, and 66 percent think he grasps complex issues.

Results like these set up low expectations for Palin; it's possible she could advance simply by exceeding them. But another possible dynamic was expressed by McCain himself last spring, when he noted that his age – 72 – increased the importance of his vice-presidential pick.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Sept. 27-29, 2008, among a random sample of 1,271 adults, including an oversample of African Americans (weighted to their correct share of the national population), for a total of 165 black respondents. Results among the 1,070 registered voters surveyed have a 3-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/polling>.

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

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

1-8 previously released.

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

9/29/08 - Summary Table

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No opin.
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
a. Joe Biden	57	24	33	30	13	17	14
b. Sarah Palin	51	29	23	40	11	29	9

Trend:

a. Joe Biden

		----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No opinion
		NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
9/29/08	RV	57	24	33	30	13	17	14
9/7/08	RV	51	23	27	29	13	16	20
9/4/08*	RV	54	32	23	31	15	16	14

* "the Democratic nominee for vice president"

b. Sarah Palin

		----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No opinion
		NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
9/29/08	RV	51	29	23	40	11	29	9
9/22/08	RV	52	31	21	38	10	27	11
9/7/08	RV	58	35	23	28	11	17	15

9/4/08* RV 52 34 18 37 14 23 11
 * "the Republican nominee for vice president"

10-17 previously released.

18. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Do you think [NAME] does or does not have the kind of experience it takes to serve effectively as president, if that became necessary?

9/29/08 - Summary Table

	Does	Does not	No opinion
a. Joe Biden	70	23	7
b. Sarah Palin	35	60	5

Trend:

a. Joe Biden

	Does	Does not	No opinion
9/29/08 RV	70	23	7
9/4/08 RV	69	19	12

b. Sarah Palin

9/29/08 RV	35	60	5
9/7/08 RV	47	45	8
9/4/08 RV	43	51	6

19. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Please tell me whether the following statements apply to (Biden/Palin), or not?

9/29/08 - Summary Table

	----- Biden -----			----- Palin -----		
	Yes	No	No opin.	Yes	No	No opin.
a. S/he understands the problems of people like you	57	34	9	58	38	4
b. S/he understands complex issues	75	17	8	46	49	5

20. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Does Obama's choice of Biden for vice president make you more likely to vote for Obama, less likely, or won't it make any difference in your vote?

	More likely	Less likely	No difference	No opinion
9/29/08 RV	25	13	61	*
9/4/08 RV	22	11	66	1

21. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Does McCain's choice of Palin for vice president make you more likely to vote for McCain, less likely, or won't it make any difference in your vote?

	More likely	Less likely	No difference	No opinion
9/29/08 RV	23	32	45	*
9/4/08 RV	25	19	55	1

22-31 previously released.

END