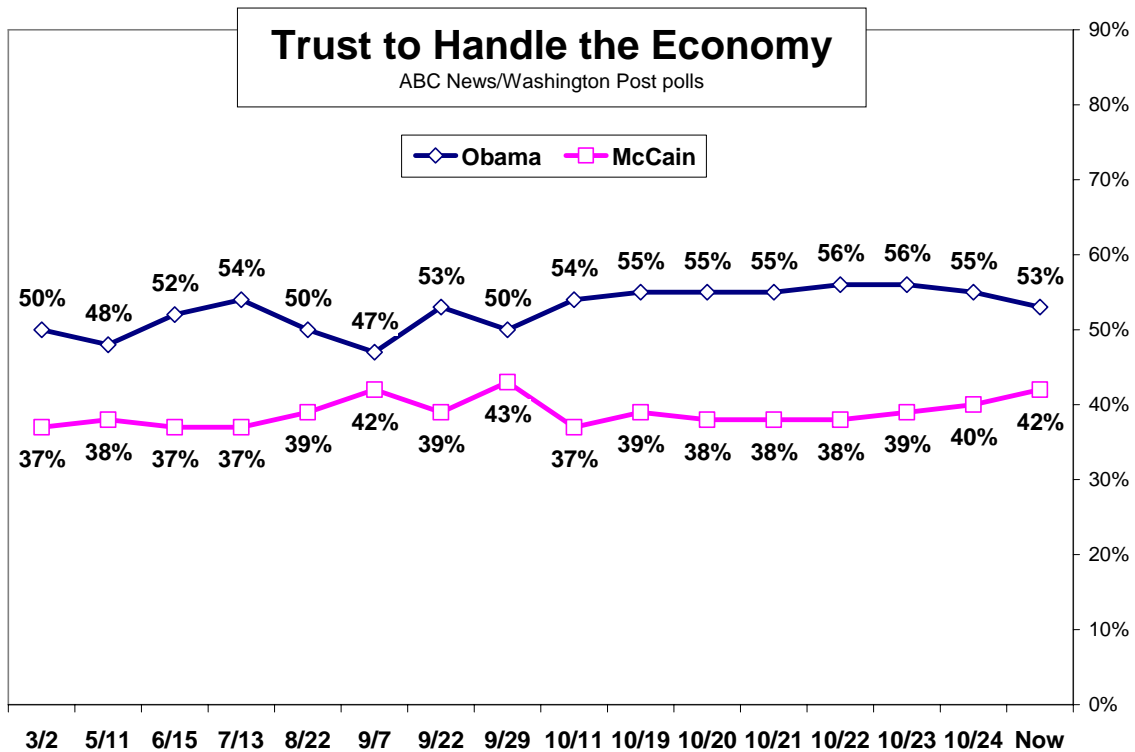


McCain Inches Up on Economy But Advantage is Still to Obama

With their closing arguments approaching, John McCain has inched a bit closer to Barack Obama in trust to handle the economy. But the advantage remains Obama's.

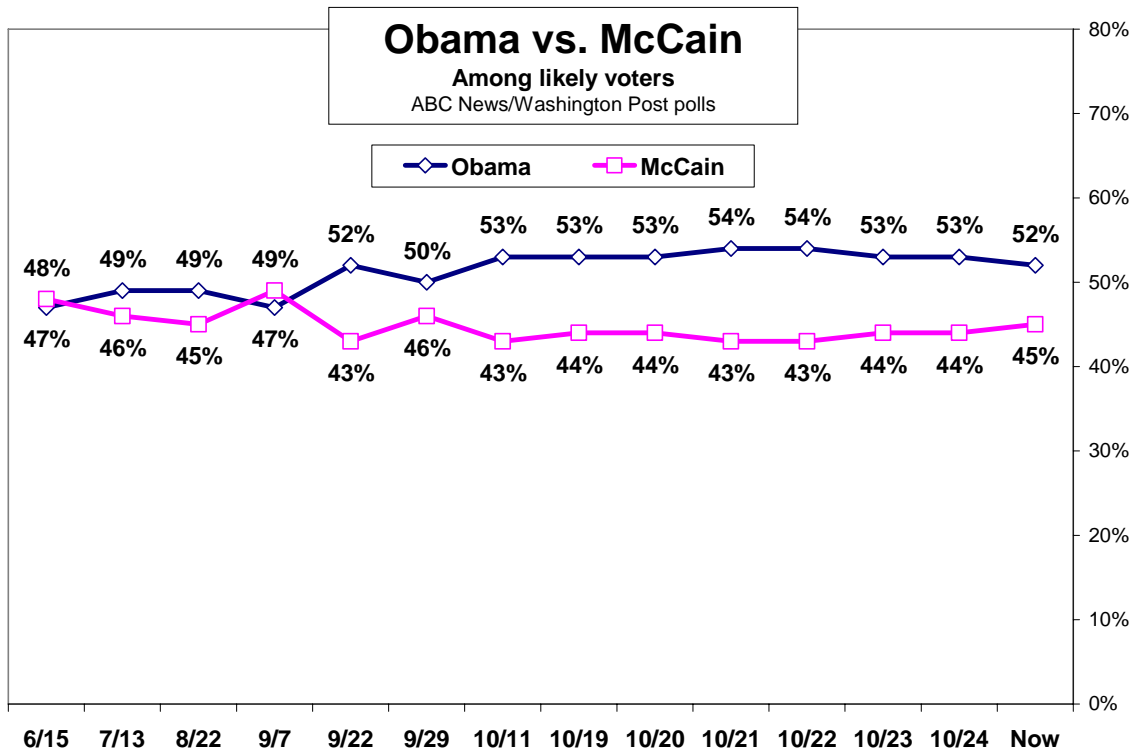
It's the metric that matters most in voter sentiment: With recession setting in, 85 percent of likely voters in this ABC News/Washington Post poll say the country's seriously off on the wrong track, and 52 percent call the economy the top issue, dwarfing all others.

Likely voters by 53-42 percent trust Obama over McCain to handle the economy, an Obama lead that's not quite as large as his biggest advantage on the issue last week, 56-38 percent. McCain's 42 percent is his best in a month, and up from a low of 37 percent Oct. 11.



Head-to-head in vote preference, Obama holds a 52-45 percent lead over McCain among likely voters in interviews the last four days. Obama hasn't slipped below 50 percent support, nor McCain above 46 percent, since early September in ABC/Post polls.

Obama's 7-point lead is not significantly different from his biggest advantage last week, 11 points, 54-43 percent, given the margin of sampling error in these estimates. McCain's 4-point gain in trust to handle the economy, while slight, is statistically significant.



If some tightening in the horse race occurs this week, it wouldn't be surprising; in 1996, amid prime conditions for an incumbent re-election, Bill Clinton led by 19 points in an Oct. 27 ABC/Post poll; that closed to 11 points in the final week. Clinton won by 8.5.

ECONOMY – McCain's slight gain on the economy is largest among movable voters, those who haven't definitely made up their minds. At his lowest last week 24 percent of movables preferred him on the economy; it's 38 percent now. After favoring Obama on the economy last week, movables now divide, with a sizable number not preferring either.

Among other groups, working-class whites have gone from a significant preference for Obama on the economy, 54-38 percent, to an even split, 49-45 percent. And McCain has shored up on the economy among married men, already one of his best support groups. Last week 45 percent of married men preferred him on the economy; it's 57 percent now.

McCain's moved up by 8 points among suburbanites in trust to handle the economy, from 40 percent to 48 percent. At the same time, Obama's advanced by 11 points on the economy among generally pro-Republican rural voters. And independents – customarily key swing voters – haven't moved significantly on the economy. Last week 54 percent preferred Obama; it's 51 percent now.

	Prefer McCain on the economy	
	Now	10/21
Movables	38%	24%
Married men	57	45
Suburban	48	40
Rural	44	53
Working class whites	45	38

Even with the slight change overall, Obama's advantage on the economy remains the same as George H.W. Bush's 11-point lead over Mike Dukakis in trust to handle the economy, 51-40 percent, at the end of the 1988 election campaign. In 1992, when the economy as now was the central issue, Clinton led Bush in trust to handle it by 17 points.

TRACK – The track/direction result shows the hill in front of McCain. He leads easily among the few likely voters who think the country is headed in the right direction. But among the more than eight in 10 who think it's headed seriously off on the wrong track, Obama has a nearly 20-point advantage, 58-39 percent.

The number of likely voters saying the country's off on the wrong track is a bit below its peak, 91 percent on Oct. 11 – a record since polls started asking the question in 1973.

METHODOLOGY – Interviews for this ABC News/Washington Post tracking poll were conducted by telephone Oct. 22-25, 2008, among a random national sample of 1,308 likely voters, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a 2.5-point error margin for the full sample. (Question 29 was asked Oct. 24-25 among 647 likely voters; that result has a 4-point error margin.) Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

For details on ABC News polls including full questionnaires, methodology and sampling error information, see <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
10/25/08 RV	89	59	30	11	6	5	*

Call for full trend.

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?

	Certain to vote	Probably vote	Chances 50/50	Less than that	Don't think will vote (vol.)	Already voted (vol.)	No op. *
10/25/08 RV	78	5	5	2	1	10	*

Call for full trend.

2a. (ASKED IF CERTAIN IN Q2) Do you think you'll (vote in person at your polling place on Election Day), or (vote before Election Day by early voting or mail-in ballot)?

	Vote in person	Early voting/ mail-in ballot	Already voted (vol.)	No opinion
10/25/08 RV	76	20	3	1

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? (ASKED IF ALREADY VOTED) For whom did you vote?

NET LEANED VOTE - LIKELY VOTERS

	Obama	McCain	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/25/08	52	45	*	1	2
10/24/08	53	44	1	1	2
10/23/08	53	44	*	1	2
10/22/08	54	43	1	1	2
10/21/08	54	43	1	1	1
10/20/08	53	44	1	1	1
10/19/08	53	44	1	1	2
10/11/08	53	43	1	1	2
9/29/08	50	46	*	2	2
9/22/08	52	43	*	1	3
9/7/08	47	49	1	1	3
8/22/08	49	45	*	2	4
7/13/08	49	46	1	2	2
6/15/08	47	48	1	2	2

NET LEANED VOTE - REGISTERED VOTERS

	Obama	McCain	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No opinion
10/25/08	51	44	*	1	*	3
10/24/08	52	42	1	2	*	3
10/23/08	52	42	1	1	1	3
10/22/08	54	41	1	2	1	3
10/21/08	53	41	1	1	1	3
10/20/08	52	42	1	1	1	3
10/19/08	52	42	1	1	1	3
10/11/08	54	41	1	2	*	2
9/29/08	49	45	1	2	*	3
9/22/08	52	42	1	1	*	4
9/7/08	47	46	1	1	1	4
8/22/08	49	43	*	3	2	3
7/13/08	50	42	1	3	1	2
6/15/08	49	45	1	3	1	3

5/11/08	51	44	*	2	1	1
4/13/08	49	44	*	3	3	2
3/2/08	53	40	*	2	1	3
2/1/08	47	48	1	1	1	2
1/19/07	47	45	*	3	1	4

3b. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS 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
10/25/08 LV	91	9	3	6	*
10/24/08 LV	91	9	4	5	1
10/23/08 LV	91	9	4	5	1
10/22/08 LV	90	9	4	5	1
10/21/08 LV	89	10	5	5	1
10/20/08 LV	89	10	4	6	1
10/19/08 LV	88	10	5	6	1
10/11/08 LV	88	11	4	7	1
9/29/08 RV	82	17	8	9	1
9/22/08 RV	83	16	8	8	1
9/7/08 RV	79	20	8	12	1
8/22/08 RV	73	24	11	13	3
7/13/08 RV	72	25	10	15	3
6/15/08 RV	72	26	11	16	2
5/11/08 RV	69	28	15	14	3
9/26/04 RV	82	16	4	12	2
9/8/04 RV	84	14	6	8	2
8/29/04 RV	81	18	7	11	1
8/1/04 RV	80	19	7	12	1
7/25/04 RV	78	20	7	13	2
7/11/04 RV	79	21	7	13	1
6/20/04 RV	73	26	12	14	*

Barack Obama:

	Definitely vote for	-Chance change mind - NET	Good	Unlikely	No opinion
10/25/08 LV	93	7	3	4	*
10/24/08 LV	92	7	3	4	*
10/23/08 LV	91	8	4	4	1
10/22/08 LV	90	8	3	5	1
10/21/08 LV	89	9	4	6	1
10/20/08 LV	90	9	3	6	1
10/19/08 LV	91	9	3	5	1
10/11/08 LV	90	9	3	6	1
9/29/08 RV	83	16	7	9	1
9/22/08 RV	85	14	8	7	1
9/7/08 RV	78	21	9	12	1
8/22/08 RV	74	23	7	15	4
7/13/08 RV	72	23	9	14	5
6/15/08 RV	71	26	7	19	3
5/11/08 RV	71	25	13	13	4

John McCain:

	Definitely vote for	-Chance change mind - NET	Good	Unlikely	No opinion
10/25/08 LV	88	11	3	8	1
10/24/08 LV	89	10	4	6	1

10/23/08	LV	90	10	4	5	1
10/22/08	LV	90	9	4	5	1
10/21/08	LV	89	11	5	5	1
10/20/08	LV	89	11	5	5	1
10/19/08	LV	86	12	6	6	1
10/11/08	LV	86	14	4	9	*
9/29/08	RV	81	18	9	9	1
9/22/08	RV	81	18	9	9	2
9/7/08	RV	80	19	8	11	2
8/22/08	RV	72	25	14	11	2
7/13/08	RV	71	28	12	17	1
6/15/08	RV	72	27	14	12	1
5/11/08	RV	66	32	17	15	2

4. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Have you voted for president in any year before this 2008 election, or is this the first year you'll be voting for president?

	Voted before	First time	No opinion	
10/25/08	LV	88	12	0
10/24/08	LV	88	12	0
10/23/08	LV	87	13	*
10/22/08	LV	87	13	*
10/21/08	LV	87	12	*
10/20/08	LV	88	11	*
10/19/08	LV	89	11	*
10/11/08	LV	90	10	0
9/29/08*	RV	92	8	*
9/22/08	RV	92	8	0
10/31/04	RV	90	10	*

*9/29/08 and previous: "(Was this/will this be) the first time you've voted in a presidential election, or have you voted in previous presidential elections?"

29. (ASKED OF LIKELY 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	
10/25/08	LV	13	85	2
10/11/08	LV	7	91	2
9/22/08	RV	14	83	3
8/22/08	RV	20	77	3

Call for full trend.

5. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) What [was/is] the SINGLE most important issue in your choice for president: (The economy), (the war in Iraq), (terrorism), (energy policy), (health care), or something else?

	Economy	Iraq	Terrorism	Energy policy	Health care	Something else	No op.	
10/25/08	LV	52	8	6	5	11	18	1
10/24/08	LV	51	8	5	4	11	19	1
10/23/08	LV	51	8	5	4	10	21	1
10/22/08	LV	51	8	5	4	10	20	1
10/21/08	LV	51	9	5	4	10	20	1
10/20/08	LV	52	8	6	5	9	19	1
10/19/08	LV	53	7	6	4	9	19	2

28. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Regardless of your local contest, which party would you like to see in control of Congress after the congressional elections in November, the (Democrats) or the (Republicans)?

	Democrats	Republicans	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
10/24/08 LV	50	42	5	3
10/8/06 LV	58	38	3	2
5/15/06	56	33	8	3
11/2/05	55	37	6	2

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

a. The economy

	Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/25/08 LV	53	42	*	3	2
10/24/08 LV	55	40	1	2	2
10/23/08 LV	56	39	1	2	2
10/22/08 LV	56	38	1	3	2
10/21/08 LV	55	38	1	4	2
10/20/08 LV	55	38	1	4	2
10/19/08 LV	55	39	1	4	1
10/11/08 LV	54	37	1	6	2
9/29/08 RV	50	43	1	3	2
9/22/08 RV	53	39	1	4	3
9/7/08 RV	47	42	1	4	6
8/22/08 RV	50	39	2	5	4
7/13/08 RV	54	37	2	6	3
6/15/08 RV	52	37	2	5	4
5/11/08 RV	48	38	2	8	4
3/2/08 RV	50	37	2	6	5

Compare to:

10/30/04 LV	Kerry	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion	
	48	45	1	3	3	
10/25/00 LV	Gore	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion	
	48	45	2	3	3	
9/4/96 RV	Clinton	Dole	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion	
	48	42	2	6	3	
10/4/92 LV	Clinton	Bush	Perot	All (vol.)	None (vol.)	No opinion
	43	26	20	1	5	5
11/1/88 LV	Dukakis	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion	
	40	51	NA	NA	9	

8. (ASKED OF LIKELY LEANED OBAMA/MCCAIN SUPPORTERS) Thinking about his candidacy for president so far, how enthusiastic are you about [NAME] - very

enthusiastic, fairly enthusiastic, not too enthusiastic, or not enthusiastic at all?

10/25/08 - Summary Table - Among Likely Leaned Obama/McCain Supporters

	--- Enthusiastic ---			---- Not enthusiastic ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	
a. Obama	97	68	29	3	3	1	*
b. McCain	86	38	48	14	11	3	*

Trend:

a. Obama

		--- Enthusiastic ---			---- Not enthusiastic ----			No opinion
		NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	
10/25/08	LV	97	68	29	3	3	1	*
10/24/08	LV	97	71	26	3	3	1	0
10/23/08	LV	95	70	25	5	4	1	0
10/22/08	LV	94	67	28	5	5	1	*
10/21/08	LV	95	64	31	5	4	1	*
10/20/08	LV	95	65	31	5	4	1	*
10/19/08	LV	96	64	32	4	3	1	*
10/11/08	LV	96	66	30	4	3	1	*
9/29/08	RV	95	61	34	4	4	*	1
9/22/08	RV	94	62	32	6	4	1	*
9/7/08	RV	96	64	32	4	3	1	0
8/22/08	RV	95	52	43	5	2	3	*
6/15/08	RV	91	52	39	9	7	2	*

b. McCain

10/25/08	LV	86	38	48	14	11	3	*
10/24/08	LV	88	39	49	11	9	2	1
10/23/08	LV	89	39	50	10	8	2	1
10/22/08	LV	88	40	48	12	10	2	1
10/21/08	LV	88	37	51	11	10	1	*
10/20/08	LV	88	38	50	12	11	2	*
10/19/08	LV	87	40	47	13	11	2	*
10/11/08	LV	87	31	57	13	10	2	0
9/29/08	RV	90	38	52	10	7	2	*
9/22/08	RV	89	34	55	10	8	2	1
9/7/08	RV	92	46	46	8	6	2	0
8/22/08	RV	86	28	58	13	11	2	1
6/15/08	RV	74	19	55	25	19	6	1

Compare to:

10/26/04 - Summary Table - Among Likely Voters, Leaned Bush/Kerry Supporters

	--- Enthusiastic ---			---- Not Enthusiastic ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	
a. Bush	91	55	36	9	8	1	*
b. Kerry	92	46	47	7	6	1	1

4/2/00 - Summary Table - Among Likely Voters, Leaned Bush/Gore Supporters

	--- Enthusiastic ---			---- Not Enthusiastic ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	
a. Gore	84	41	43	17	12	5	0
b. Bush	87	44	43	14	12	2	0

27. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Do you think it is better for the country to have a president (who comes from the same political party that controls Congress), or do you think it is better to have a president (from one political party and Congress controlled by another)?

	Same party	Different party	No difference/ no opinion
10/24/08 LV	50	30	21
1/26/06 RV	45	44	12
7/15/02	41	45	14
4/7/02*	43	42	15
9/10/01*	43	45	12
10/9/00*	48	40	12
11/22/81	47	34	19

*Gallup.

END