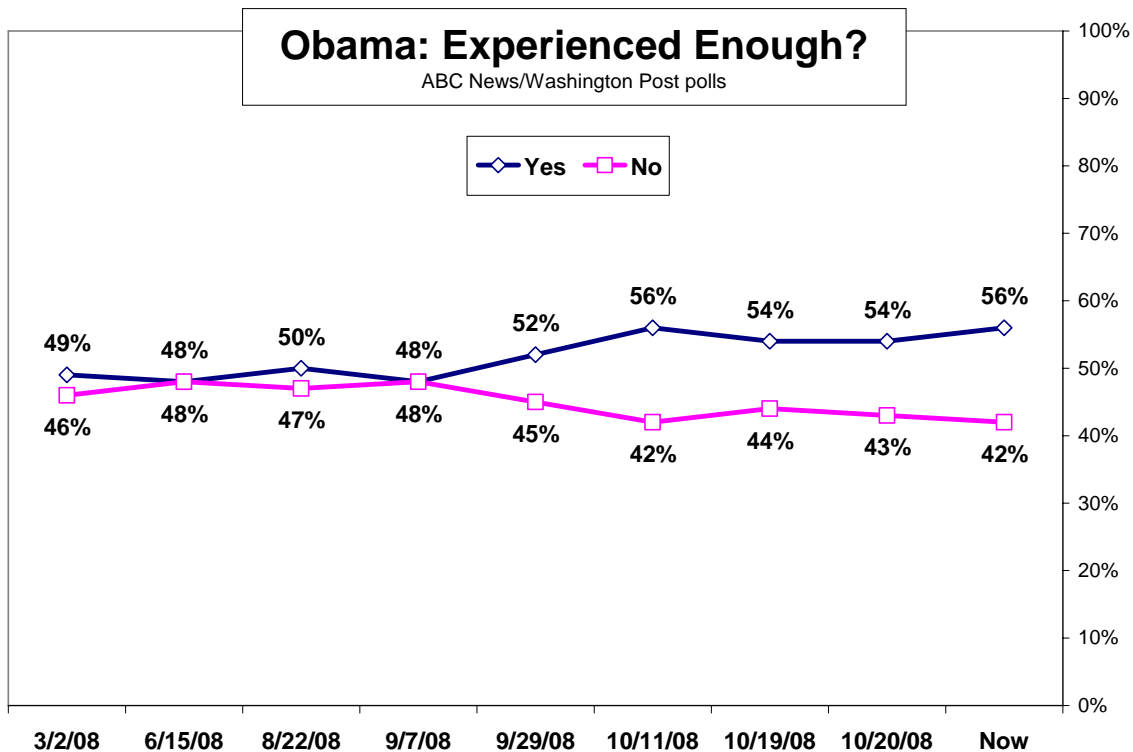


Obama Answers on Experience, Improves on Commander-in-Chief

Barack Obama has shored up his experience rating to the point where it now surpasses George W. Bush's in 2000 and matches Bill Clinton's in 1992, addressing what has been Obama's greatest vulnerability in the presidential election.

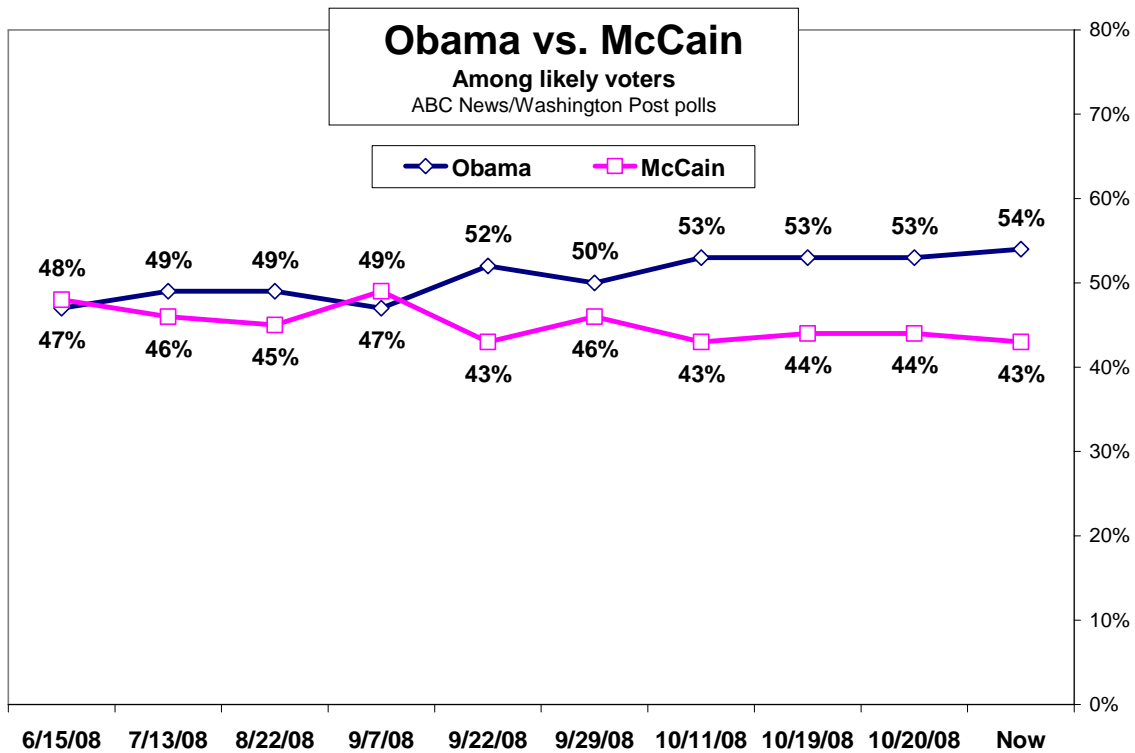
Obama, perhaps with help from his endorsement by Colin Powell, also appears to have stemmed some underlying advances by John McCain after their final debate last week. In the battle of who'd best help the middle class Obama holds a 2-1 lead. And he's moved closer to McCain on who'd be the better commander-in-chief, cutting a 43-point McCain lead to 19 points.

Fifty-six percent of likely voters now say Obama has the experience it takes to serve effectively as president, up from 48 percent after the Republican convention. That's now better than George W. Bush's rating just in advance of the 2000 election, when 52 percent said he was experienced enough. Obama's advance on experience resembles Bill Clinton's 16 years ago, from 49 percent in June 1992 to 57 percent that October.



Obama's running evenly with McCain in trust to handle international affairs (as he has before), as well as by 2-1 in trust to deal with another key issue, health care. And likely voters by 19 percent to 4 percent say the Powell endorsement makes them more likely rather than less likely to vote for Obama, a 15-point net positive.

All told Obama leads McCain by 54-43 percent among likely voters in this latest ABC News/Washington Post tracking poll. Obama now has 50 percent support among men – a first for likely voters in ABC/Post polling – and an 8-point advantage among swing-voting independents.

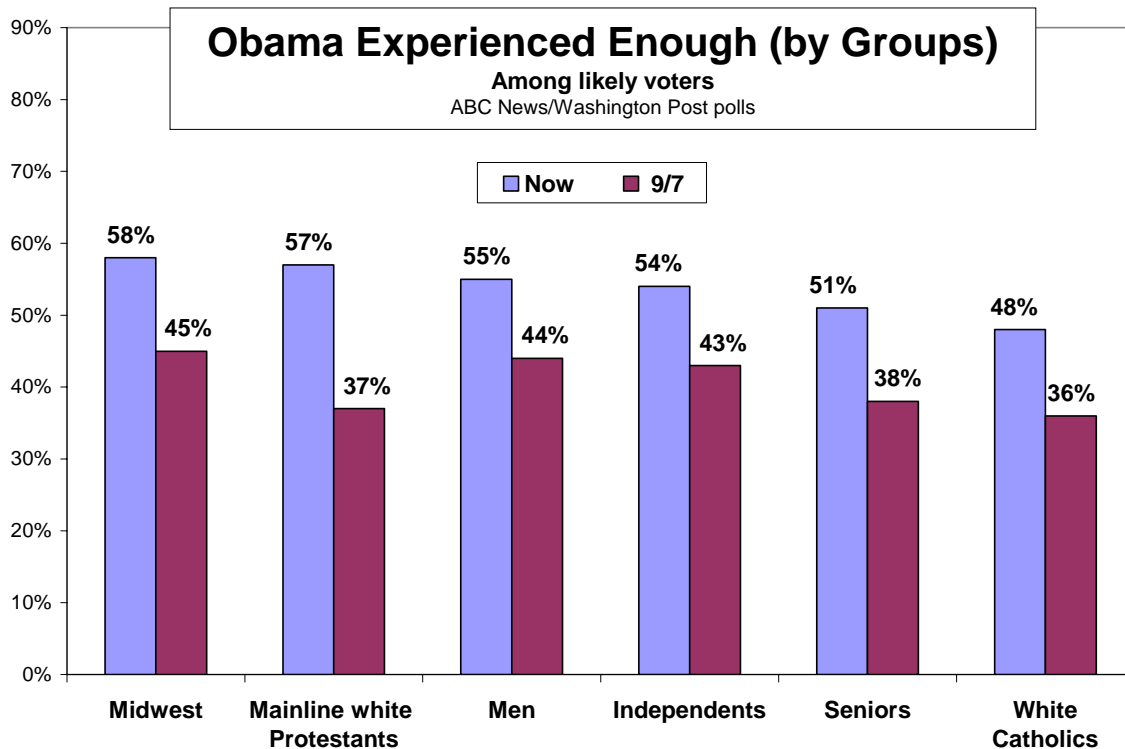


A separate ABC News polling analysis Wednesday morning noted that Obama has an 11-point lead in the 16 states designated by the ABC News Political Unit as battleground states this year, and a 7-point advantage in the eight rated as toss-ups (Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia). Further, in 30 “red” states George W. Bush won by a 14-point margin overall in 2004, Obama and McCain are now even, 49-49 percent. And in the 2004 “blue” states, which John Kerry won by 9 points, Obama’s now ahead by 18. (Tracking poll data exclude Alaska and Hawaii.)

EXPERIENCE – Obama’s improvement on experience is telling. It’s biggest – a 20-point increase since early September – among so-called mainline or non-evangelical white Protestants, a typically more Republican group that’s moved in Obama’s direction.

On Sept. 7 just 37 percent in this group called Obama qualified; now it's 57 percent. And head-to-head Obama now leads McCain among non-evangelical white Protestants, 53-45 percent – compensating for Obama's shortfall among white Catholics, a more usual swing voter group (now dividing 53-44 percent in McCain's favor). In 2004, mainline white Protestants voted by 55-44 percent for Bush over Kerry.

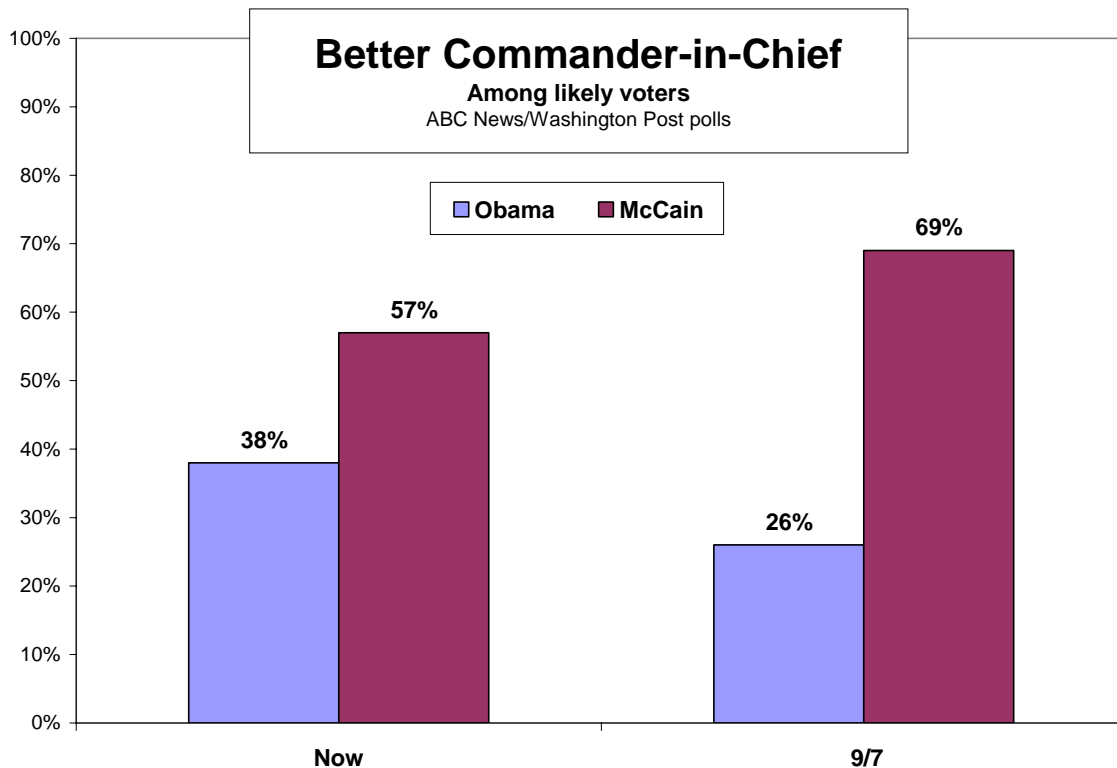
Among other groups, the view that Obama has sufficient experience to serve effectively as president is up by 13 points among seniors, to 51 percent; up 13 points in the Midwest, to 58 percent; up 11 points among men, to 55 percent; up 11 points among independents, to 54 percent; and up 12 points among white Catholics, albeit just to 48 percent.



Similarly, Obama's advanced by 18 points among men in the sense that he'd be a better commander-in-chief – from 18 percent after the GOP convention to 36 percent now. That's still far behind McCain, albeit less so.

POWELL EFFECT – The results indicate some positive impact of Obama's endorsement by Powell, Bush's first-term secretary of state. As noted, 19 percent of likely voters say it makes them more apt to support Obama, 4 percent less so. Those most apt to respond favorably were largely with Obama already: African-Americans, Democrats and first-time voters. However, it's a 16-point net positive among independents, those sought after center-spectrum voters.

Moreover, among people who say the endorsement makes them more apt to support Obama, a majority prefers him over McCain as commander-in-chief. Most of this very likely reflects their predispositions, but Powell can't have hurt.



More subtly, the Powell endorsement might have taken some of the wind out of underlying advances for McCain noted in Monday's tracking analysis. He'd improved on economic empathy, for example. But in this poll, on who's better trusted to help the middle class – the Joe-the-Plumber debate – Obama leads by 62-31 percent. And Obama's maintained his smaller advantage in trust to handle taxes, now 8 points.

GROUPS – Men divide by 50-46 percent, Obama-McCain – as noted, his best to date among men. Women favor Obama by a broader 57-41 percent.

Obama trails McCain by 7 points among whites, less than the 13-point average for a Democratic presidential candidate since 1976. Obama and McCain are even among white women; the eight-election average is +8 Republican. And while Obama trails by 13 points among white men, that average is 20 points – including a 25-point deficit for Kerry in 2004 and 24 points for Al Gore in 2000.

Meanwhile, among Hispanics, Obama has a better than 3-1 advantage. And among blacks his support has hit a new high in ABC News/Washington Post polls: Ninety-nine percent.

METHODOLOGY – Interviews for this ABC News/Washington Post tracking poll were conducted by telephone Oct. 18-21, 2008, among a random national sample of 1,330

likely voters, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a 2.5-point error margin for the full sample. Results on questions 6d-f, 7j and 19 were conducted Oct. 20-21 among 660 likely voters; those results have 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
10/21/08	RV	90	58	32	10	6	4	*
10/20/08	RV	90	57	34	10	6	4	*
10/19/08	RV	90	57	33	10	6	3	*
10/11/08	RV	92	59	33	8	4	4	*
9/29/08	RV	89	58	31	11	7	5	*
9/22/08	RV	91	55	36	9	5	4	0
9/7/08	RV	89	51	38	10	6	5	*
8/22/08	RV	84	42	42	16	11	5	*
7/13/08	RV	79	36	42	21	12	9	1
6/15/08		75	34	41	25	12	13	*
5/11/08		83	39	44	17	13	5	0
4/13/08		84	37	47	16	11	5	*
3/2/08		84	42	42	15	11	4	*
2/1/08		81	35	46	19	12	7	*
1/12/08		79	32	47	21	15	6	*
12/9/07		72	21	51	28	19	8	*
11/1/07		67	21	46	33	22	12	0
9/30/07		69	21	48	30	21	10	*
7/21/07		70	22	48	30	20	10	*
6/1/07		66	18	48	34	22	13	*
4/15/07		66	20	45	34	20	14	*
2/25/07		65	20	44	35	25	10	*
10/20/04	RV	89	55	34	10	7	3	*
10/20/00	LV	86	46	40	15	11	4	*

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	Probably	Chances	Less than	Don't think	Already	No
		to vote	vote	50/50	that	will vote	voted	op.
						(vol.)	(vol.)	*
10/21/08	RV	82	6	5	2	1	4	*
10/20/08	RV	81	6	5	3	1	4	*

10/19/08	RV	83	6	5	3	1	4	*
10/11/08	RV	87	5	4	1	*	2	0
9/29/08	RV	87	6	5	1	1		*
9/22/08	RV	89	6	4	1	*		*
9/7/08	RV	85	7	5	1	1		*
8/22/08	RV	84	10	4	2	*		*
7/13/08	RV	79	10	7	3	2		0
6/15/08		71	9	8	7	4		*
3/2/08		78	9	7	4	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? (ASKED IF ALREADY VOTED) For whom did you vote?

NET LEANED VOTE - LIKELY VOTERS

	Obama	McCain	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
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
10/21/08	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	
10/21/08	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 NET	change Good	mind - Unlikely	No opinion
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 NET	change Good	mind - Unlikely	No opinion
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
10/21/08	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?"

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.
10/21/08 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

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

10/21/08 - Summary Table*

	Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
a. The economy	55	38	1	4	2
c. Taxes	51	43	1	3	2
d. Helping the middle class	62	31	1	4	2
e. Health care	60	33	1	3	3
f. International affairs	46	49	1	1	2

*Full sample asked item a and f, half sample asked item d and e, other half sample asked item c.

Trend:

a. The economy

	Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
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

d. Helping the middle class

10/21/08 LV	62	31	1	4	2
10/11/08 LV	60	32	1	5	2

e. Health care

10/21/08 LV	60	33	1	3	3
10/11/08 LV	61	32	1	3	3
6/15/08 RV	52	35	1	6	6
5/11/08 RV	55	31	2	7	5
3/2/08 RV	58	28	1	8	5

c. Taxes

10/21/08 LV	51	43	1	3	2
10/20/08 LV	50	43	1	4	2

10/19/08	LV	52	42	1	4	2
10/11/08	LV	52	42	1	5	1
9/29/08	RV	48	46	*	3	3
9/7/08	RV	45	44	*	4	7
8/22/08	RV	44	45	1	5	5
6/15/08	RV	47	42	1	6	5

f. International affairs

10/21/08	LV	46	49	1	1	2
9/29/08	LV	45	51	1	1	2
9/22/08	RV	48	46	0	3	3
9/7/08	RV	39	51	2	3	6
8/22/08	RV	43	51	1	2	3
7/13/08	RV	45	47	2	2	4
6/15/08	RV	41	50	3	3	3

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

j. would be a better commander-in-chief of the military

		Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/21/08	LV	38	57	1	1	3
9/7/08	LV	26	69	1	2	2
8/22/08	RV	29	61	2	3	4

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?

10/21/08 - Summary Table - Among Likely Leaned Obama/McCain Supporters

	--- Enthusiastic ---			---- Not enthusiastic ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	
a. Obama	95	64	31	5	4	1	*
b. McCain	88	37	51	11	10	1	*

Trend:

a. Obama

		--- Enthusiastic ---			---- Not enthusiastic ----			No opinion
		NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	
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

10/21/08	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
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	opinion
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
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	opinion
a. Gore	84	41	43	17	12	5	0
b. Bush	87	44	43	14	12	2	0

9. (ASKED OF LIKELY 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	Same	No	
	direction	direction	opinion	
10/21/08	LV	46	51	3
10/20/08	LV	47	50	3
10/19/08	LV	48	49	4
10/11/08	LV	45	52	3
9/29/08	RV	46	53	2
9/7/08	RV	46	50	4
8/22/08	RV	40	57	4
6/15/08	RV	41	55	5

10. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Regardless of who you may support, do you think Obama does or does not have the kind of experience it takes to serve effectively as president?

	Does	Does not	No opinion	
10/21/08	LV	56	42	2
10/20/08	LV	54	43	2
10/19/08	LV	54	44	2
10/11/08	LV	56	42	2
9/29/08	RV	52	45	2
9/7/08	RV	48	48	4
8/22/08	RV	50	47	3
6/15/08	RV	48	48	4
3/2/08	RV	49	46	5

18 held for release.

19. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Does Colin Powell's endorsement of Barack Obama make you (more) likely to support Obama, (less) likely to support him, or won't it make any difference in your vote?

	More likely	Less likely	No difference	No opinion
10/21/08 LV	19	4	77	1

Compare to:

If Powell endorsed one of the candidates running for president, would that make you more inclined or less inclined to support that candidate? IF MORE/LESS inclined: Would Powell's endorsement mean you definitely would vote for/against that candidate?

	-- More inclined --			-- Less inclined --			No diff.	No
	NET	Def.	Not def.	NET	Def.	Not def.	(vol).	opinion
11/8/95	39	15	23	16	9	7	40	7

20 held for release.

END