

Economy continues to dominate list of issues voters want candidates to address; Iraq, health care, and gas prices still matter to many

For the first time since the Foundation began this latest series of tracking polls in March 2007, one issue is volunteered by more than half of voters as the main thing they want to hear the presidential candidates discuss: With Wall Street in chaos and Congress working on financial bailout legislation, 56 percent of registered voters – including majorities of Republicans, Democrats and political independents – rank the economy at the top of their lists. The war in Iraq has fallen in priority since early summer to a distant second, mentioned by one in four voters, followed by health care (21 percent) and gas prices/energy issues (19 percent), named by roughly two in ten voters. The September survey suggests that concern over gas prices may have peaked for the moment, with the issue dropping slightly on the priority list since June.

Thinking about the campaign for the presidential election in 2008, what two issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (open-ended, among registered voters)

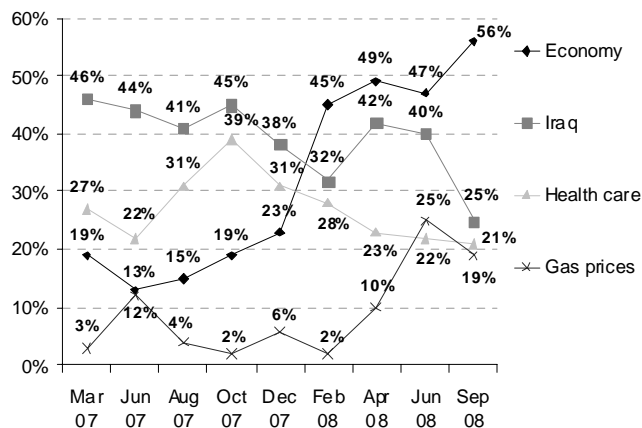
Issue Rank	Total registered voters	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
1	Economy (56%)	Economy (55%)	Economy (59%)	Economy (54%)
2	Iraq (25)	Gas prices (27)	Iraq (31)	Health care (26)
3	Health care (21)	Iraq (19)	Health care (25)	Iraq (23)
4	Gas prices (19)	Terrorism (19)†	Gas prices (15)	Gas prices (19)
5	Terrorism (8)	Taxes (12)	Education (6)	Terrorism (8)
6	Taxes (6)	Health care (11)	Taxes (4)	Education (5)
			Immigration (4)†	Immigration (5)†
			Foreign affairs/not Iraq (4)†	Morality issues (5)†

† Indicates a tie with item directly above it

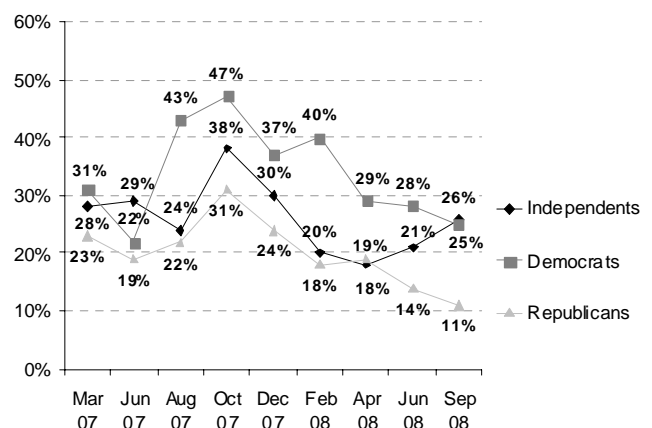
Health tilts up for independents

Meanwhile, though health care has fallen from its high point in October of last year, it has remained a top election issue for about two in ten voters since early spring. This stability masks changing views among different groups of partisan voters. Over the past five months, the issue has gained somewhat among independents, rising from 18 percent to 26 percent, and now ranks as the number two issue this important voting group wants to hear candidates talk about. At the same time, Republican voters are placing less of a priority on health care: the issue was at 19 percent in April and is at 11 percent now, ranking sixth on the GOP priority list. Democratic voters have been roughly stable over the period, with one in four saying health care is a top issue.

Thinking about the campaign for the presidential election in 2008, what two issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (open-ended, top 4 responses shown among registered voters)



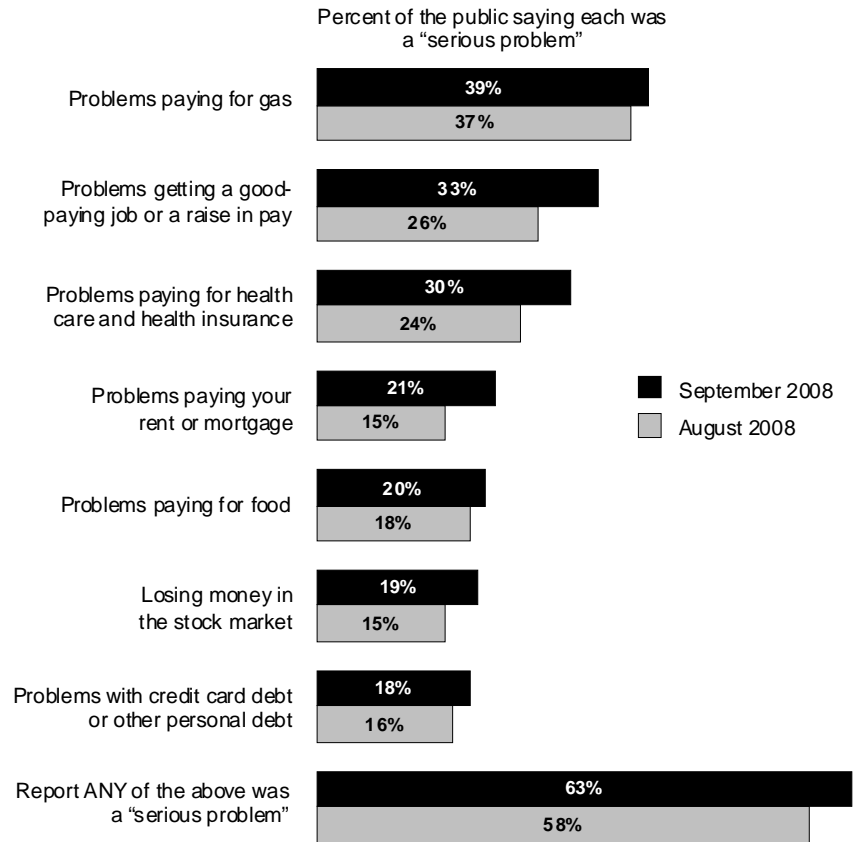
Percent naming HEALTH CARE as one of the top two issues they'd most like to hear presidential candidates talk about, by political party self-identification (among registered voters)



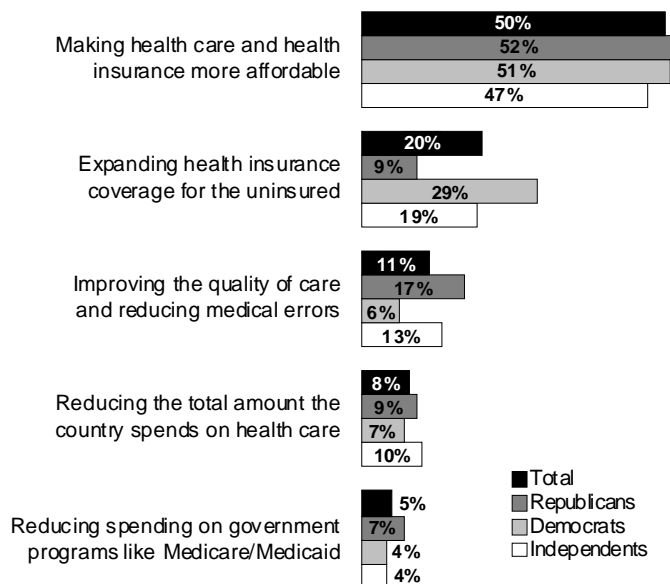
Health care costs an important facet of pocketbook problems

The economic issues occupying Wall Street and Washington this week are playing out as real pocketbook problems for large numbers of Americans. Over six in ten (63 percent) report a “serious” problem with at least one of seven financial hurdles, up slightly from August (58 percent). The bump is caused by an uptick in the proportion reporting “serious problems” getting a good-paying job or a raise (up from 26 percent last month to 33 percent now), paying for health care and insurance (up from 24 percent to 30 percent), and paying for housing (up from 15 percent to 21 percent). The most commonly reported issue remains paying for gas, with about four in ten (39 percent) saying they are having a serious problem on this front. Smaller but still significant proportions of Americans also say paying for food (20 percent), losing money in the stock market (19 percent), and credit card or other personal debt (18 percent) are serious problems for them and their families.

As a result of recent changes in the economy, have you and your family experienced any of the following problems, or not? Was this a serious problem, or not?



Which ONE of the following health care issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (among registered voters in September 2008)



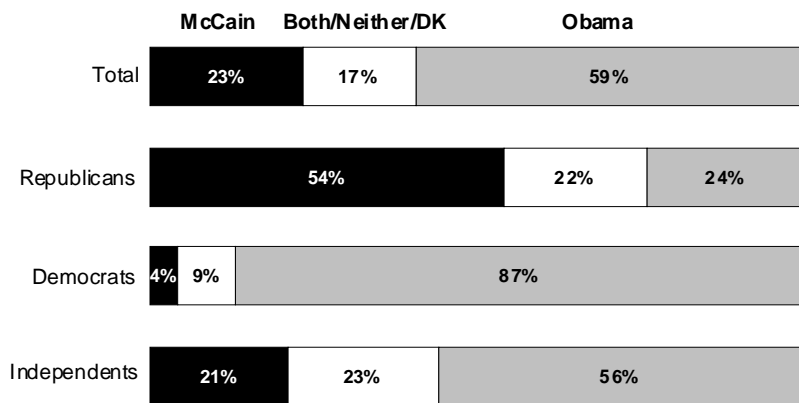
Voters’ interest in affordability and coverage

When asked about specific health care issues they want to hear the candidates discuss, half of voters overall (50 percent) name affordability. Two in ten (20 percent) say they would most like to hear a discussion of expanding coverage for the uninsured, and about one in ten choose improvement of the quality of care (11 percent) or reducing national health expenditures (8 percent). Few (5 percent) say that reducing government spending on programs like Medicare and Medicaid is a top health care issue.

While affordability tops the list across party lines, for Democratic (29 percent) and independent (19 percent) voters, expanding coverage for the uninsured is the next most important issue, while Republican voters are more interested in improving quality of care and reducing medical errors (17 percent).

Perceptions of the candidates' stances on health care and health reform

Which presidential candidate do you think would be more likely to make health care reform a top priority in his administration, John McCain or Barack Obama? (names rotated)
(among registered voters in September 2008)

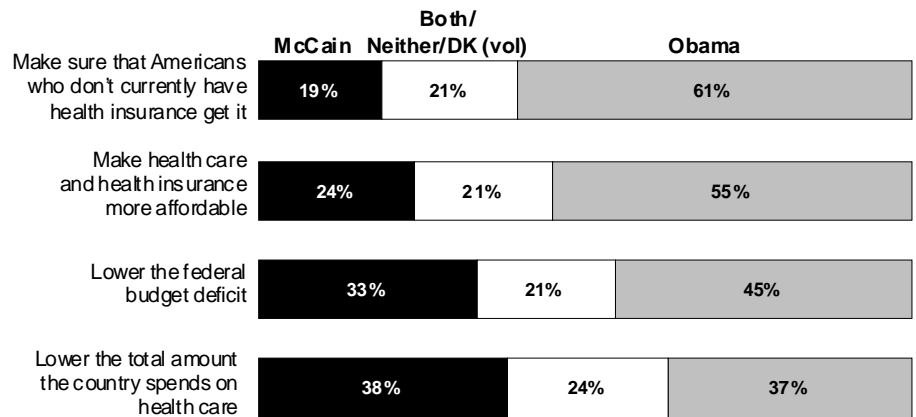


As was true last month, the Democratic candidate continues to reflect that party's historical advantage in being seen as more health care focused. When asked which candidate is more likely to make health reform a top priority, more than twice as many voters name Senator Barack Obama (59 percent) as name Senator John McCain (23 percent). Though the share of independent voters naming Senator McCain has risen from 13 percent in August to 21 percent now, a majority (56 percent) still say Senator Obama would do more to prioritize health care reform. Asked who better represents their own views on health care, 45 percent choose Senator Obama compared to 29 percent who choose Senator McCain. More than seven in ten Republican and Democratic voters name their own party's candidate, while four in ten independent voters – a plurality – choose Senator Obama.

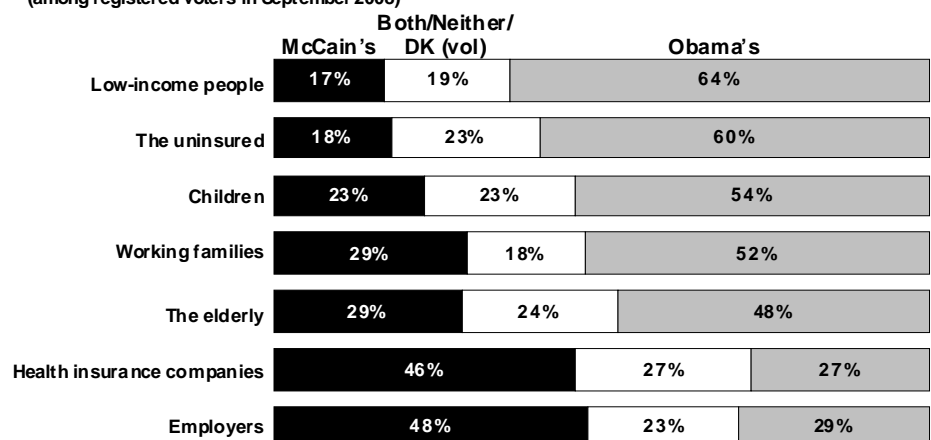
The survey also asked voters their perspective on which candidate could best address a variety of health-related challenges currently facing the nation. Although the proportion of voters who say Senator McCain would do more to expand coverage and address affordability has risen slightly since August (each are up four percentage points to 19 percent and 24 percent respectively), Senator Obama is still chosen by a majority of voters on these two key issues. A plurality of voters also say Senator Obama would lower the federal budget deficit, a proportion that has grown somewhat since August. Voters are split on who would do more to lower overall national health expenditures, with one-quarter (24 percent) undecided.

When asked about how different groups would be helped by the candidates' plans, majorities say Senator Obama's plan would be better for low-income Americans, the uninsured, children and working families. Senator Obama's plan is also viewed by a plurality as better for the elderly, while Senator McCain's plan is viewed by pluralities as better for health insurance companies and employers.

And which presidential candidate – John McCain or Barack Obama – would do more to...? (names rotated) (among registered voters in September 2008)



Based on what you know or have heard, whose health reform plan - John McCain's or Barack Obama's - would better for...? (names rotated)
(among registered voters in September 2008)



Methodology

This *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008*, the tenth in a series, was designed and analyzed by public opinion researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation led by Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., and including Claudia Deane and Carolina Gutiérrez. A nationally representative random sample of 1,207 adults ages 18 and older, including 1,081 adults who say they are registered to vote, was interviewed by telephone between September 8 and 13, 2008. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is plus or minus 3 percentage points and plus or minus 4 percentage points for the sample of registered voters. For results based on subgroups, the sampling error is somewhat higher.

For full question wording and results, see the Toplines at http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/h08_posr100108pkg.cfm.

Information on previous Kaiser Health Tracking Polls shown as part of trend data:

Previous surveys referenced in trend	Number of registered voters interviewed	Field dates	Margin of sampling error
Aug08	1,362	July 29-August 6	3
Jun08	1,066	June 3-8	4
Apr08	1,759	April 3-13	3
Feb08	1,770	February 7-16	3
Dec07	1,063	November 28-December 9	4
Oct07	1,058	October 1-10	3
Aug07	1,303	August 2-8	3
Jun07	1,050	May 31-June 5	4
Mar07	1,013	March 8-13	3

Trends

1. Thinking about the campaign for the presidential election in 2008, what two issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? IF R GIVES ONE ISSUE PROBE FOR SECOND: Is there another issue you'd like to hear about? (OPEN-END)

Note: mentions less than 6 percent not shown.

For full question wording and results, see http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/h08_posr100108pkg.cfm.

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Economy				
Sep08	56	55	59	54
Jun08	47	42	50	49
Apr08	49	49	53	47
Feb08	45	42	47	48
Dec07	23	19	25	26
Oct07	19	16	22	20
Aug07	15	15	13	16
Jun07	13	13	20	7
Mar07	19	18	20	20
Iraq				
Sep08	25	19	31	23
Jun08	40	35	46	40
Apr08	42	33	50	40
Feb08	32	28	36	32
Dec07	38	31	39	42
Oct07	45	44	49	44
Aug07	41	32	45	46
Jun07	44	39	54	39
Mar07	46	44	54	43
Health care				
Sep08	21	11	25	26
Jun08	22	14	28	21
Apr08	23	19	29	18
Feb08	28	18	40	20
Dec07	31	24	37	30
Oct07	39	31	47	38
Aug07	31	22	43	24
Jun07	22	19	22	29
Mar07	27	23	31	28
Gas prices				
Sep08	19	27	15	19
Jun08	25	30	22	22
Apr08	10	11	11	8
Feb08	2	2	3	1
Dec07	6	8	3	8
Oct07	2	2	4	2
Aug07	4	8	2	4
Jun07	12	12	12	12
Mar07	3	1	5	3
Terrorism/nat'l security				
Sep08	8	19	2	8
Jun08	6	10	2	9
Apr08	4	9	1	4
Feb08	6	14	1	7
Dec07	7	13	3	7
Oct07	7	13	1	9
Aug07	9	18	3	9
Jun07	8	17	3	6
Mar07	7	13	3	6

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	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Taxes				
Sep08	6	12	4	4
Jun08	5	7	3	4
Apr08	4	9	3	2
Feb08	5	6	4	6
Dec07	8	10	5	10
Oct07	6	10	4	7
Aug07	8	11	8	8
Jun07	4	5	2	3
Mar07	4	3	2	7

2. Now thinking specifically about HEALTH CARE, which ONE of the following health care issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (READ AND RANDOMIZE 1-5)

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Making health care and health insurance more affordable				
Sep08	50	52	51	47
Jun08	51	51	54	47
Expanding health insurance coverage for the uninsured				
Sep08	20	9	29	19
Jun08	22	11	31	22
Improving the quality of care and reducing medical errors				
Sep08	11	17	6	13
Jun08	10	13	7	8
Reducing the total amount the country spends on health care				
Sep08	8	9	7	10
Jun08	7	9	4	10
Reducing spending on gov't health programs like Medicare/Medicaid				
Sep08	5	7	4	4
Jun08	4	8	*	4
None of these (VOL)				
Sep08	3	2	1	4
Jun08	3	3	1	5
Other issue (VOL)				
Sep08	2	3	1	1
Jun08	2	3	2	2
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	2	1	1	2
Jun08	2	3	1	1

3. As a result of recent changes in the economy, have you or your family experienced any of the following problems, or not? First (INSERT AND RANDOMIZE)? IF YES, ASK: Was this a serious problem, or not? Next (INSERT NEXT ITEM)?

For full question wording and results, see http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/h08_posr100108pkg.cfm.

	Percent of total sample saying each was a "serious problem"
a. Problems paying for health care or health insurance	
Sep08	30
Aug08	24
Jun08	25
Apr08	28
b. Problems paying for gas	
Sep08	39
Aug08	37
Jun08	43
Apr08	44
c. Problems getting a good-paying job or a raise in pay	
Sep08	33
Aug08	26
Jun08	27
Apr08	29
d. Problems paying your rent/mortgage	
Sep08	21
Aug08	15
Jun08	14
Apr08	19
e. Losing money in the stock market	
Sep08	19
Aug08	15
Jun08	15
Apr08	16
f. Problems with credit card or other personal debt	
Sep08	18
Aug08	16
Jun08	16
Apr08	18
g. Problems paying for food	
Sep08	20
Aug08	18
Jun08	19
Apr08	18

4. Thinking about all of the candidates for president in 2008, regardless of political party or who you intend to vote for, which candidate BEST represents your own views on health care?
(OPEN-END)

Note: only remaining candidates shown

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Named any candidate (NET)				
Sep08	76	78	87	69
Aug08	71	72	81	64
Jun08	71	70	80	62
Apr08	70	67	84	60
Feb08	68	60	80	63
Dec07	48	42	63	41
Oct07	51	43	61	49
Aug07	43	33	59	40
Jun07	43	35	58	33
Mar07	36	29	48	31
Barack Obama				
Sep08	45	5	80	40
Aug08	42	9	73	37
Jun08	28	6	45	27
Apr08	20	6	33	19
Feb08	19	8	28	19
Dec07	6	2	12	3
Oct07	8	2	14	5
Aug07	6	3	9	7
Jun07	9	4	14	8
Mar07	6	3	9	5
John McCain				
Sep08	29	72	4	25
Aug08	24	61	5	21
Jun08	20	53	3	16
Apr08	19	51	3	16
Feb08	11	24	2	11
Dec07	1	2	1	1
Oct07	1	1	1	2
Aug07	1	2	*	1
Jun07	2	6	*	2
Mar07	3	4	2	3
Don't know/No candidate				
Sep08	24	22	13	31
Aug08	29	28	19	36
Jun08	29	30	20	38
Apr08	30	33	16	40
Feb08	32	40	20	37
Dec07	52	58	37	59
Oct07	49	57	39	51
Aug07	57	67	41	60
Jun07	57	65	42	67
Mar07	64	71	52	69

5. Which presidential candidate do you think would be more likely to make health care reform a top priority in his administration - John McCain (or) Barack Obama? (Names rotated)

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS:				
	TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama				
Sep08	59	24	87	56
Aug08	58	29	82	56
John McCain				
Sep08	23	54	4	21
Aug08	20	47	7	13
Both equally (VOL.)				
Sep08	3	4	1	3
Aug08	2	2	2	4
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	6	8	4	10
Aug08	9	10	5	13
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	8	10	4	10
Aug08	10	12	4	14

6. And which presidential candidate would do more to (READ AND RANDOMIZE) - John McCain (or) Barack Obama? (Names rotated)

a. Make health care and health insurance more affordable

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS:				
	TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama				
Sep08	55	19	85	48
Aug08	54	22	82	49
John McCain				
Sep08	24	57	4	22
Aug08	20	46	5	18
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	2	2	2	2
Aug08	2	1	1	3
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	6	8	2	10
Aug08	10	14	5	14
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	13	13	6	19
Aug08	13	17	7	16

b. Make sure that Americans who don't currently have health insurance get it

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS:				
	TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama				
Sep08	61	32	86	57
Aug08	63	38	83	60
John McCain				
Sep08	19	42	4	17
Aug08	15	34	4	12
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	3	4	2	3
Aug08	2	2	2	2
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	7	7	3	11
Aug08	9	11	5	12
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	11	15	5	12
Aug08	11	15	6	13

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c. Lower the total amount the country spends on health care

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS:				
	TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama				
Sep08	37	8	65	29
Aug08	34	12	56	25
John McCain				
Sep08	38	69	16	39
Aug08	36	60	22	38
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	1	1	1	3
Aug08	1	1	1	1
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	7	6	5	11
Aug08	13	11	9	17
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	16	16	13	18
Aug08	16	15	12	19

d. Lower the federal budget deficit

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS:				
	TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama				
Sep08	45	11	76	37
Aug08	40	9	72	31
John McCain				
Sep08	33	69	7	37
Aug08	34	68	11	37
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	2	2	1	3
Aug08	1	1	2	1
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	9	10	7	11
Aug08	13	12	8	17
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	10	9	9	12
Aug08	11	10	7	14

7. Based on what you know or have heard, whose health reform plan - John McCain's (or) Barack Obama's - would be better for... (READ AND RANDOMIZE)? And whose plan would be better for... (READ NEXT ITEM) - John McCain's (or) Barack Obama's? (Names rotated)

a. Low-income people

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS:				
	TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama's				
Sep08	64	39	84	61
Aug08	62	39	84	56
John McCain's				
Sep08	17	37	6	16
Aug08	15	34	4	13
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	1	2	1	1
Aug08	1	1	1	1
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	4	4	2	6
Aug08	6	7	3	8
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	14	19	8	15
Aug08	16	19	8	22

b. Working families

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS:				
	TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama's				
Sep08	52	15	82	49
Aug08	51	18	80	46
John McCain's				
Sep08	29	62	9	27
Aug08	23	55	6	21
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	1	3	1	1
Aug08	1	1	2	*
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	4	4	1	8
Aug08	7	6	3	8
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	13	16	7	16
Aug08	18	21	9	24

c. The uninsured

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS:				
	TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama's				
Sep08	60	34	81	56
Aug08	60	37	82	55
John McCain's				
Sep08	18	38	6	15
Aug08	14	32	4	11
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	2	2	1	1
Aug08	1	*	1	1
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	5	6	2	9
Aug08	7	7	3	10
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	16	20	10	19
Aug08	19	23	10	23

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d. Children

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama's				
Sep08	54	18	82	50
Aug08	52	23	78	47
John McCain's				
Sep08	23	51	6	22
Aug08	16	40	5	12
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	2	2	1	2
Aug08	3	3	3	2
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	5	8	1	7
Aug08	7	7	2	9
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	16	21	9	19
Aug08	22	27	12	29

e. The elderly

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama's				
Sep08	48	14	76	44
Aug08	43	18	70	35
John McCain's				
Sep08	29	57	9	29
Aug08	26	52	11	26
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	2	3	2	2
Aug08	1	1	2	1
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	5	6	2	6
Aug08	7	2	4	9
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	17	21	10	19
Aug08	23	1	12	30

f. Employers

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama's				
Sep08	29	10	50	20
Aug08	27	12	46	26
John McCain's				
Sep08	48	64	33	53
Aug08	40	57	28	43
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	1	2	1	2
Aug08	1	*	2	1
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	5	4	3	8
Aug08	6	6	4	7
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	17	19	14	17
Aug08	26	25	20	33

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g. Health insurance companies

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Barack Obama's				
Sep08	27	14	41	22
Aug08	25	15	37	19
John McCain's				
Sep08	46	56	42	43
Aug08	41	47	41	39
Both (VOL.)				
Sep08	1	1	1	1
Aug08	2	1	2	3
Neither (VOL.)				
Sep08	5	6	3	8
Aug08	7	9	4	8
Don't know/Refused				
Sep08	21	23	13	26
Aug08	24	28	15	31

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