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School of Public Health

Toplines

Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health

Pre-Election Poll: Voters, Health Care and the 2008 Election

October 2008

Methodology

The Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health *Pre-election Poll: Voters, Health Care and the 2008 Election* was designed and analyzed by researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard School of Public Health. The study's findings are featured in an article published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* on November 6, 2008. The Kaiser/Harvard survey research team included Drew E. Altman, Ph.D., Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., Claudia Deane, M.A., Sasha Buscho, and Pamela Murnane M.P.H., from the Kaiser Family Foundation; and Professor Robert Blendon, Sc.D., John Benson, M.A. and Tami Buhr, A.M. of the Harvard School of Public Health.

The survey was conducted September 10 through September 21, 2008, among a nationally representative random sample of 1,622 registered voters age 18 and older. Of these registered voters, 680 self-identified as "McCain voters" by saying if the election were held today, they would vote or lean toward voting for McCain-Palin. A total of 765 self-identified as "Obama voters" by saying if the election were held today, they would vote or lean toward voting for Obama-Biden. Telephone interviews were conducted by ICR/International Communications Research, an independent research company.

The margin of error for all registered voters is plus or minus three percentage points and plus or minus four percentage points for McCain and Obama voters. For results based on smaller subsets of respondents the margin of sampling error is somewhat higher. Note that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

Values less than 0.5% are indicated by an asterisk (*). "Vol." indicates that a response was volunteered by respondent, not an explicitly offered choice. Percentages may not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

S1. Some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you currently registered to vote at your present address, or not?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
100	100	100	Yes, registered to vote
--	--	--	No, not registered to vote
--	--	--	Don't know
--	--	--	Refused

(ROTATE CANDIDATES IN PARENS)

1. If the 2008 presidential election were being held today, would you vote for (John McCain and Sarah Palin [PAY-lin] the Republican candidates) or (Barack Obama and Joe Biden [BUY-din], the Democratic candidates)?

(ROTATE CANDIDATES IN SAME ORDER AS Q1)

1a. Which candidates are you leaning toward (John McCain and Sarah Palin [PAY-lin] the Republican candidates) or (Barack Obama and Joe Biden [BUY-din], the Democratic candidates)?

1/1a. Combo Table based on total registered voters

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
42	100	--	Would vote for/lean toward John McCain and Sarah Palin
47	--	100	Would vote for/lean toward Barack Obama and Joe Biden
*	--	--	(vol.) Would vote for other candidate
*	--	--	(vol.) Would not vote
10	--	--	Undecided/dk/refuse

(ROTATE VERBIAGE IN PARENS)

2. Overall, which of the following will be MOST important when you decide who to vote for? Will it be (the candidates' stands on the issues) or (your perception of the candidates' leadership abilities, character, values, and experience)?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
53	39	67	The candidates' stands on the issues
41	57	29	Perceptions of the candidates' leadership abilities, character, values, and experience
4	3	4	Don't know
1	1	1	Refused

(SCRAMBLE 1-6)

3. Thinking ahead to the November 2008 election, which of the following issues will be most important to you when you decide how to vote for president?

(SCRAMBLE IN SAME ORDER AS Q.3)

4. And which of these issues will be the second most important to you when you decide how to vote for president?

3/4. Most/Second Most Important Issue Table based on total registered voters

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
68	62	74	The economy
29	21	37	The war in Iraq
32	20	40	Health care
11	16	6	Illegal immigration
18	33	6	Terrorism
34	38	31	Energy, including gas prices
1	1	1	(vol.) Other
1	1	1	(vol.) None of these
1	2	1	Don't know
1	1	*	Refused

(SCRAMBLE 1-6; CODES 4 AND 6 SHOULD ALWAYS BE KEPT SEPARATE)

5. Now thinking specifically about HEALTH CARE, which ONE of the following health care issues would you most like to see the next president take action on?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
45	44	46	Making health care and health insurance more affordable
22	10	33	Expanding health insurance coverage for the uninsured
11	15	8	Improving the quality of care and reducing medical errors
7	13	2	Reducing spending on government health programs like Medicare and Medicaid
11	14	9	Improving Medicare and the Medicare prescription drug program
1	1	1	(vol.) Other
1	2	*	(vol.) None of these
1	1	1	Don't know
*	*	*	Refused

(ROTATE 1-4/4-1)

6. Which one of the following comes closest to your view about the health care system in America today?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
24	16	28	There is so much wrong with our health care system that it needs to be completely overhauled
46	40	55	There are some good things about our health care system, but major changes are needed
26	39	15	The health care system works pretty well, but minor changes are needed
3	4	1	The health care system works well and does not need to be changed
1	1	1	Don't know
*	*	--	Refused

(SCRAMBLE 1-3)

7. Which one of the following do you think should have the most responsibility for helping ensure that Americans receive health insurance coverage?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
38	20	54	The federal government
25	30	23	Employers and businesses
31	47	18	Individuals themselves
2	1	3	(vol.) All of these
*	*	*	(vol.) None of these
2	1	2	Don't know
*	*	*	Refused

8. When it comes to health insurance coverage, which of the following would you like the next president to propose:

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
47	26	65	A new health plan that would make a major effort to provide health insurance for all or nearly all of the uninsured BUT would involve a substantial increase in spending
30	36	26	A new health plan that is more limited and would cover only some of the uninsured BUT would involve less new spending
17	31	5	Keeping things basically as they are
5	6	4	Don't know
1	1	*	Refused

(SCRAMBLE 1-4)

9. Which of the following should be the next president's top priority when it comes to addressing rising health care costs?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
50	44	57	Reducing the amount people pay for their health care and health insurance
22	24	21	Reducing what the nation as a whole spends on health care
9	12	6	Reducing future spending on government health insurance programs like Medicare and Medicaid
10	11	9	Reducing the amount employers pay to provide health insurance to their workers
*	*	*	(vol.) All of these
4	4	3	(vol.) None of these
4	4	3	Don't know
1	*	*	Refused

(SCRAMBLE 1-5)

10. Which one of the following do you think should have the most responsibility for slowing the rise in health care costs?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
23	15	30	The federal government
4	5	4	Employers and businesses
33	31	36	Health insurance companies
24	27	20	Doctors and hospitals
11	16	6	Individuals themselves
2	1	3	(vol.) All of these
1	2	*	(vol.) None of these
2	3	1	Don't know
*	1	*	Refused

11. Do you think that the cost of health care is something the president and Congress can do a lot about, do a little about, or is that mostly beyond their control?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
58	41	73	A lot
25	34	19	A little
15	22	7	Mostly beyond their control
2	2	1	Don't know
*	1	*	Refused

(ROTATE VERBIAGE IN PARENS)

12. Do you think the federal government should become (more) directly involved in trying to control health care costs, (less) directly involved, or should their involvement stay about the same?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
66	46	85	More
15	27	5	Less
16	23	9	Stay about the same
2	3	2	Don't know
*	1	*	Refused

(ASK ITEMS a, b, c, and e OF ONE-HALF OF RESPONDENTS; ASK ITEMS d, f, AND g OF OTHER HALF OF RESPONDENTS
(SCRAMBLE ITEMS a-g)

13. Following are some elements that are being discussed as the presidential candidates debate over health care. For each, please tell me if you find this element favorable or unfavorable. How about (INSERT ITEM)? Do you find this favorable or unfavorable? (GET ANSWER THEN ASK: Is that somewhat or very [FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE])?

Total registered voters	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	Don't know	Refused
a. Financial assistance from the government to help low and middle-income people purchase insurance	44	31	12	11	2	*
b. Requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies, even if they have a prior illness	56	27	10	6	1	*
c. Requiring employers to either offer health insurance to their workers or pay money into a government pool that provides coverage for those who aren't covered	39	32	11	15	3	*
d. Requiring parents whose children are not currently covered to buy health insurance for their children, with financial help from the government for those who can't afford it	42	35	9	12	2	*
e. Changing the tax system so that everyone who buys health insurance would get the same tax break whether they get coverage at work or on their own	48	32	10	6	3	*
f. Expanding high risk insurance pools to cover people who have an illness that makes it hard to buy insurance in the regular market	45	31	10	10	3	*
g. Using tax incentives to encourage more people to sign up for health savings accounts	34	37	11	14	4	*

McCain voters	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	Don't know	Refused
a. Financial assistance from the government to help low and middle-income people purchase insurance	28	34	16	19	2	*
b. Requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies, even if they have a prior illness	46	30	14	8	2	*
c. Requiring employers to either offer health insurance to their workers or pay money into a government pool that provides coverage for those who aren't covered	26	31	17	21	4	--
d. Requiring parents whose children are not currently covered to buy health insurance for their children, with financial help from the government for those who can't afford it	29	37	13	18	2	*
e. Changing the tax system so that everyone who buys health insurance would get the same tax break whether they get coverage at work or on their own	49	33	7	7	3	--
f. Expanding high risk insurance pools to cover people who have an illness that makes it hard to buy insurance in the regular market	36	39	11	11	3	*
g. Using tax incentives to encourage more people to sign up for health savings accounts	38	37	9	12	4	*

Obama voters	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	Don't know	Refused
a. Financial assistance from the government to help low and middle-income people purchase insurance	57	31	8	4	1	--
b. Requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies, even if they have a prior illness	64	26	6	3	1	1
c. Requiring employers to either offer health insurance to their workers or pay money into a government pool that provides coverage for those who aren't covered	50	32	7	8	3	*
d. Requiring parents whose children are not currently covered to buy health insurance for their children, with financial help from the government for those who can't afford it	54	33	5	7	*	1
e. Changing the tax system so that everyone who buys health insurance would get the same tax break whether they get coverage at work or on their own	48	32	12	6	3	--
f. Expanding high risk insurance pools to cover people who have an illness that makes it hard to buy insurance in the regular market	57	24	9	8	2	--
g. Using tax incentives to encourage more people to sign up for health savings accounts	31	37	13	15	3	--

- 13a. When considering health care proposals, how important is it to you that the proposal NOT raise taxes: Is that...?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
17	23	12	The most important consideration for you
40	47	33	A very important consideration for you
35	26	42	Somewhat important
8	3	13	Not important at all
1	1	*	Don't know
*	*	*	Refused

14. Do you favor or oppose changing federal law to allow Americans to buy prescription drugs imported from Canada?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
68	66	71	Favor
26	29	24	Oppose
5	5	5	Don't know
1	*	1	Refused

15. Do you favor or oppose changing the law to allow the federal government to use its buying power to negotiate with drug companies to try to get a lower price for prescription drugs for people on Medicare?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
89	85	92	Favor
10	14	7	Oppose
1	1	1	Don't know
*	--	*	Refused

(SCRAMBLE ITEMS a-f)

16. As you know, the federal government has a substantial budget deficit and there are many competing spending priorities facing the next president. Thinking about the federal budget, do you want to see the next president increase spending on (INSERT 1ST ITEM), decrease spending, or keep it about the same? How about (INSERT NEXT ITEM)?

Total registered voters	Increase spending	Decrease spending	Keep it about the same	Don't know	Refused
a. Medicare	41	8	48	3	--
b. Medicaid	33	12	51	4	*
c. Biomedical research	34	11	48	7	*
d. Programs to prevent disease and improve health	53	5	39	2	*
e. Medical care for veterans	72	2	24	2	*
f. Programs to protect against bioterrorism	38	11	47	4	*

McCain voters	Increase spending	Decrease spending	Keep it about the same	Don't know	Refused
a. Medicare	31	11	54	3	--
b. Medicaid	22	18	56	4	*
c. Biomedical research	24	15	54	6	1
d. Programs to prevent disease and improve health	39	7	52	2	--
e. Medical care for veterans	70	2	26	2	*
f. Programs to protect against bioterrorism	41	6	49	3	*

Obama voters	Increase spending	Decrease spending	Keep it about the same	Don't know	Refused
a. Medicare	49	6	43	2	--
b. Medicaid	42	7	48	4	*
c. Biomedical research	45	6	43	6	--
d. Programs to prevent disease and improve health	67	3	28	2	*
e. Medical care for veterans	73	3	23	1	--
f. Programs to protect against bioterrorism	35	15	45	4	*

(ROTATE RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-4/4-1)

17. Do you think abortion should be (legal in all cases), (legal in most cases), (illegal in most cases), or (illegal in all cases)?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
22	12	33	Legal in all cases
31	23	40	Legal in most cases
26	38	16	Illegal in most cases
15	21	8	Illegal in all cases
4	4	2	Don't know
2	1	1	Refused

18. Are you, yourself, now covered by any form of health insurance or health plan, or do you not have health insurance at this time? A health plan would include any private insurance plan through your employer or a plan that you purchased yourself, as well as a government program like Medicare or (Medicaid/Medi-Cal)?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
90	95	87	Yes, covered
10	5	13	No, not covered
--	--	--	Don't know
*	*	*	Refused

DEMOGRAPHICS

D01. RECORD RESPONDENT GENDER

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
48	54	44	Male
52	46	56	Female

(ROTATE ITEMS IN PARENS)

D02. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as: (a Democrat), (a Republican), an independent or what?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
38	6	69	Democrat
29	60	5	Republican
29	30	24	Independent
1	1	1	Something else
2	2	1	Don't know
1	1	--	Refused

(ROTATE ITEMS IN PARENS IN SAME ORDER AS Q.D02)

D02a. Do you lean more towards the: (Democratic) or (Republican) Party?

Based on total registered voters who are independent, DK, or refused

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
34	7	70	Democrat
37	72	10	Republican
20	16	13	Neither
7	4	6	Don't know
3	1	1	Refused
N=512	N=221	N=188	

D02/D02a. Combo Table based on total registered voters

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
48	9	87	Democrat/lean Democrat
41	84	7	Republican/lean Republican
7	5	4	Independent
1	1	1	Something else
2	1	1	Don't know
1	1	--	Refused

D03. 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?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
87	89	90	Absolutely certain
7	7	6	Probably will
4	2	3	Chances are 50-50
1	1	*	Less than that
*	*	*	Don't know
*	*	--	Refused

(ROTATE SCALE 1-3/ 3-1)

D04. Would you say your views on most political matters are...?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
22	6	38	Liberal
38	30	45	Moderate
36	63	13	Conservative
1	1	1	(vol.) Don't think in those terms
2	1	3	Don't know
*	*	--	Refused

D05. In general, would you say your health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
24	25	24	Excellent
34	36	33	Very good
25	24	25	Good
12	11	13	Fair
5	3	6	Poor
*	--	--	Don't know
*	*	--	Refused

D06. What is your religious preference? Are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
38	48	30	Protestant
23	21	23	Roman Catholic
2	2	3	Jewish
22	21	24	Some other religion
12	6	17	No religion
*	*	1	Don't know
2	1	2	Refused

D06a. Do you consider yourself a Christian or not?

Based on total registered voters whose religious preference is some other religion

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
88	92	84	Yes
12	8	15	No
*	--	*	Don't know
--	--	--	Refused
N=299	N=115	N=151	

D07. Do you consider yourself a born-again or Evangelical Christian, or not?

Based on total registered voters whose religious preference is Christian

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
43	51	36	Yes
54	45	63	No
3	3	1	Don't know
*	*	*	Refused
N=1327	N=611	N=574	

D06/D06a Combo Table based on total registered voters

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
81	89	74	Protestant/Catholic/Other Christian
38	48	30	Protestant
23	21	23	Catholic
19	19	20	Other Christian
2	2	3	Jewish
3	2	4	Some other religion/not Christian
12	6	17	No religion
*	*	1	Don't know
2	1	2	Refused

D06/D06a/D07 Combo Table based on total registered voters

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
81	89	74	Protestant/Catholic/Other Christian
35	45	27	Born-again/evangelical
44	40	46	Not born-again/evangelical
2	2	3	Jewish
3	2	4	Some other religion/not Christian
12	6	17	No religion
*	*	1	Don't know
2	1	2	Refused

D08. What is your age?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
14	11	19	18-29
27	29	24	30-44
39	39	39	45-64
18	19	16	65+
2	2	2	Refused

D09. What is the last grade of school you completed?

D10. (Ask of those who say they graduated college) Was that an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, or what?

Education Summary Table based on total registered voters

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
2	1	3	8 th grade or less
6	7	5	Some high school
28	26	27	Graduated high school
36	39	34	Some college
15	15	15	College graduate
13	11	16	Post graduate training
*	--	*	Don't know
*	--	*	Refused

D11. Are you of Hispanic origin or background?

D12. Are you White Hispanic or Black Hispanic?

D13. Are you white, black, or some other race?

Race Summary Table based on total registered voters

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
74	90	58	White (non-Hispanic)
11	1	21	Black (non-Hispanic)
2	*	4	Asian (non-Hispanic)
9	5	11	Hispanic (NET)
6	4	6	White Hispanic
1	*	1	Black Hispanic
2	1	4	Hispanic unspecified
3	3	4	Some other race
*	*	*	Don't know
1	1	1	Refused

D14. Last year, that is in 2007, what was your total family income from all sources, BEFORE taxes?

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
30	22	35	Less than \$40K (NET)
7	5	9	Less than \$15K
5	4	6	\$15K but less than \$20K
5	2	6	\$20K but less than \$25K
4	4	5	\$25K but less than \$30K
8	7	8	\$30K but less than \$40K
1	1	1	Less than \$40K (unspecified)
61	70	59	\$40K+ (NET)
10	9	12	\$40K but less than \$50K
9	12	7	\$50K but less than \$60K
9	11	9	\$60K but less than \$75K
12	14	11	\$75K but less than \$100K
17	20	17	\$100K+
3	4	3	\$40K+ (unspecified)
3	2	2	Don't know
6	6	5	Refused

D15. LANGUAGE OF INTERVIEW

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
3	2	4	Predominately Spanish (NET)
3	2	3	All Spanish
*	--	*	Mostly Spanish
--	--	--	Both Spanish and English equally
97	98	96	Predominately English (NET)
*	*	--	Mostly English
97	98	96	All English

D16. REGION

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
17	16	19	Northeast
24	22	24	North Central
35	43	29	South
23	19	27	West

D17. METRO STATUS

Total registered voters	McCain voters	Obama voters	
31	24	38	Urban
45	47	43	Suburban
24	28	19	Rural



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