

November 3, 2008

Obama's Support Built on Change, McCain's on Experience

Reasons given for support echo findings from earlier this year

- [USA](#)
- [Election 2008](#)
- [Elections](#)
- [Party Affiliation](#)
- [Americas](#)
- [Northern America](#)

by Frank Newport

PRINCETON, NJ -- As voters prepare to go to the polls on Nov. 4, a new Gallup Poll panel survey shows that Barack Obama voters say they are motivated to vote for their candidate because he would bring about change and provide a fresh approach to governing, while John McCain voters are supporting their candidate both because of his experience, and because they agree with his views on issues.

Please tell me in your own words why you are supporting Barack Obama or John McCain?

	National adults	Obama voters	McCain voters
Want change/Fresh approach	20	35	2
Agree with his values/views (non-specific)	17	17	18
Best man for the job	14	16	11
Experienced/Qualified	10	2	20
Dislike opponent	8	6	10
Economy/His economic plan	7	8	6
Always support that party	7	7	7
Honest/Has integrity/Good character	5	4	6
Taxes/His tax plan	5	4	7
Conservative/More conservative candidate	4	1	8
Like his choice of running mate	3	3	3
For the working/middle class	3	5	1
Health care reform	3	4	1
Smart/Intelligent/Knowledgeable	3	4	1
Abortion issue	3	1	5
Lesser of two evils	2	1	4
Opponent too liberal/A socialist	2	*	5
Trustworthy/Trust him	2	1	4
Iraq War/Plans for handling it	2	3	1
Military background/Service to country	2	*	4
International affairs/Foreign policy	2	2	2
National security/	1	*	2

These results are based on 1,942 interviews conducted with members of the Gallup Panel during Oct. 27-30 who have a candidate preference. Gallup Panel members are recruited using the same random sampling techniques used for all Gallup national polls.

Previous polls asking a similar question found that Obama voters are consistently likely to mention their desire for change as the rationale for their vote choice, a finding which either precedes or echoes the major theme of the Obama campaign. Over a third of his supporters spontaneously mentioned change in this survey.

Other key points derived from an examination of the volunteered reasons given by Obama voters for supporting their candidate include:

- After the change dimension, Obama voters are most likely to give generic reasons for their support: they agree with his views, or have the perception that he is the best man for the job.
- Obama voters also mention a number of specific dimensions as reasons why they support him, including his plans for dealing with the economy, the fact that he would work for the working/middle class, and his approach to health care.
- Six percent of Obama voters say they are supporting him because they dislike his opponent (McCain).

McCain's supporters don't coalesce around any one rationale for their support the way Obama supporters do. As noted, the most frequently given responses by McCain supporters are that he is experienced (which has been an often given response by McCain supporters in previous research), and that they agree with his views.

Other key points:

- McCain supporters are slightly more likely than Obama supporters to say they are voting for McCain because they dislike his opponent. An additional 5% specifically mention that they are voting for McCain because his opponent is too liberal or a socialist. These responses almost certainly reflect the McCain campaign's focus in recent weeks on reinforcing negative perceptions of Obama.
- Other specifics given by McCain supporters include the fact that he is conservative, his approach to taxes, and his honesty and integrity.
- McCain's pro-life stance on abortion is, apparently, a significant draw to his candidacy, as 5% of his supporters say they are voting for him because of the abortion issue.

Survey Methods

Results for this panel study are based on telephone interviews with 2,021 national adults, aged 18+, conducted Oct. 27-30, 2008. Respondents were drawn from Gallup's household panel, which was originally recruited through random selection methods. The final sample is weighted so it is representative of U.S. adults nationwide. For results based on the total sample of National Adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points.

For results based on the 1,942 registered voters who have a candidate preference, the maximum margins of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.