

Election 2008: Kentucky Presidential Election

Kentucky: McCain Leads 49% to 39%, But Gap Is Narrowing
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John McCain still holds a double-digit – but narrowing – lead over Barack Obama in Kentucky, a state that went overwhelmingly for President Bush in 2004, according to the latest Rasmussen Reports telephone survey in the state.

McCain leads Obama 49% to 39%, but it's the first time the Republican candidate has fallen below 50%. In June he led the Democrat 51% to 35%, and a month earlier, before Obama had secured his party's nomination, McCain was ahead 57% to 32%.

Nationally, Obama has been enjoying a modest but steady lead in the Rasmussen Reports daily Presidential Tracking Poll ever since he clinched the Democratic nomination on June 3.

McCain continues to enjoy the support of 79% of the state's Republicans, the same as last month, but his support among Democrats has fallen to 28% from 33% in June. Fifty-six percent (56%) of Democrats, up 6% in a month, and 15% of GOP voters, roughly the same for the second month in a row, now back Obama.

Among unaffiliated voters, Obama also has gained ground: McCain still leads 45% to 38%, but in June he was ahead 44% to 30%.

The Republican is still ahead with both men and women voters, but again his leads are narrowing. He continues to hold a sizable 54% to 36% margin among men, but that's down from 57% to 28% a month ago. His four-point lead among women is down to three points.

A similar pattern is evident in the favorability ratings of the two candidates. McCain is viewed favorably by 60% of Kentucky voters, compared to 63% in June, and unfavorably by 35%, up an insignificant 1% in the past month. Obama was looked upon favorably by 41% in June, but now that number is up to 48%. While his unfavorables are at 50%, a daunting number for any candidate, that's down from 57% a month ago.

Kentucky's eight Electoral College votes have gone to Republicans in five of the last seven presidential elections. The state went for Democrat Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996. George W. Bush carried Kentucky by 20 percentage points in 2004.

Economic issues remain the top concern this election cycle for 42% of Kentucky voters, while 26% rate national security higher. These numbers parallel voter concerns nationwide. National security was not the number one issue in 2004.

Sixty-three percent (63%) say reducing the price and gas and oil is more important than protecting the environment, but 29% believe the latter should come first. Nearly half (46%) do not believe the United States has the world's best economy, but virtually the same number (45%) also think the media portrays the economy worse than it really is.

Like voters nationwide, a substantial number – in Kentucky, it's 72% -- believe that reporters try to help the political candidate they want to win, and 58% say that this year they are trying to help Obama. Only 10% think reporters are trying to help McCain.

But 49% of Kentucky voters agree with Obama that Afghanistan is the central front in the war on terror, while only 29% believe it is Iraq. Over half (52%) also think Afghanistan is a greater threat to U.S. national security than Iraq, but 28% believe Iraq is the bigger concern.