



University of Iowa News Release

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Iowans favor Obama in new University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll



Democrat Barack Obama is leading Republican John McCain in the battleground state of Iowa among both registered and likely voters, according to a new University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll released today.

Among registered voters, Obama holds a 48 percent to 42.9 percent lead when "leaners" are factored in. Among those judged as "likely registered voters," Obama's lead is 49.5 percent to 43.1 percent, with 7.4 percent undecided.

Obama's lead is thus somewhat comfortable in Iowa compared to recent national polls showing the race tightening to as few as 3 percentage points. (See August Pew poll at <http://people-press.org/report/443/presidential-race-draws-even>.)

In this month's Hawkeye Poll, only 38.6 percent of McCain voters say they strongly support him, while 64.3 percent of Obama voters are strong supporters. Obama leads or is tied in nearly every demographic group examined, except Evangelical Christians, where McCain is up 65.2 percent to 31.6 percent.



"The race in Iowa, while relatively close, appears to be moving in Obama's direction," said Hawkeye Poll Director David Redlawsk, associate professor of political science at the UI. "Most importantly for Obama, his supporters are much more likely to say they 'strongly support' him, which makes them much more likely to turn out on Election Day and much more likely to talk to friends and neighbors, volunteer in the campaign, and do the kinds of things that win elections. Typically, those who are less supportive are also less motivated to vote, no matter how much they say ahead of time that they'll turn out to vote."

The Hawkeye Poll was conducted by phone Aug. 4-13. The sample size is 709 registered voters, (margin of error 3.7 percent) and 617 likely voters (margin of error 3.9 percent). Likely voters are defined as registered voters who say they are "absolutely certain" to vote. Reported results are weighted to match the sex, age and race of the registered Iowa voter population.

Topline results are available at <http://news-releases.uiowa.edu/2008/august/081908hawkeyepolltopline.pdf>

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The Horserace: Obama leads all age groups except senior citizens

The Hawkeye Poll shows that Obama's base is particularly strong among likely voters under 30, where he leads 61.8 percent to 34.8 percent. Obama also leads among voters in the 30-44 age range, 51 percent to 44.3 percent, and among those ages 45-59, 47.2 percent to 44.6 percent. McCain leads among those 60 and over, 46.7 percent to 45.2 percent.

Obama leads among both married respondents, 47.5 percent to 45.6 percent and among those who are unmarried, 57.1 percent to 42.9 percent.

The Hawkeye Poll finds Obama strong among women, leading 52.2 percent to 39.6 percent. McCain and Obama are virtually tied among men, with McCain at 46.9 percent and Obama at 46.2 percent.

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McCain leads among Iowa independents: some Clinton supporters up for grabs

Both candidates have nailed down their own party supporters, with 90 percent of Democrats supporting Obama and 87.9 percent of Republicans supporting McCain. Because Democratic registration in Iowa outnumbers Republicans 34.2 percent to 29.6 percent, this provides a significant edge for Obama, Redlawsk said.

But the poll revealed some positive news for McCain: he is leading among Iowa independents, 46.3 percent to 41.8 percent. And Obama has not managed to convince all former Clinton supporters in Iowa to join him: Only 76.1 percent of Clinton caucus supporters say they will vote for Obama, while 15.2 percent pick McCain and 8.7

percent are undecided.

"While both candidates have secured their party bases, the battle over independents continues in Iowa," Redlawsk said. "While independents are leaning more toward McCain at this time, the substantial lead in Democratic registration over Republican in Iowa means Obama does not have to win independents to win Iowa, as long as he is winning 90 percent or more of Democrats. He does, however, have to keep things close."

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Majority of Iowans believe Obama will win

Iowa voters -- regardless of who they support -- believe Obama will win the election. Across all likely voters, 54.4 percent believe Obama will be the winner, while only 28.8 percent pick McCain.

Even among McCain supporters, there is significant doubt. Only half say McCain will win, while 32.5 percent believe Obama will. Obama supporters are much more confident. Nearly 77 percent say he will win the election and only 9.5 percent believe McCain will.

"Confidence in your candidate is another motivator to actually get out and vote," Redlawsk said. "When you believe you will win, it's all the more reason to show up at the polls. When you think you will lose, it's easier to not bother. So again, Obama voters appear likely to be more motivated in November."

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'Substantial minority' of voters concerned about impact of race on election

The Hawkeye Poll attempted to probe the role of race and religion in the election in Iowa. Respondents were asked whether they think the fact that "Barack Obama is a black man will make it more difficult for friends and neighbors to vote for him."

Just over one-third -- 35.6 percent -- of likely voters agreed it would be more difficult for people to vote for Obama. Among voters under 30, 41.4 percent agreed with the statement, as did 44.8 percent of Obama voters but only 24.9 percent of McCain voters. Women were slightly more likely to agree: 38.5 percent compared to 32.5 percent of men.

"There's a substantial minority of voters concerned about the effects of race on the election," Redlawsk said. "We can't directly ask voters if they are unwilling to vote for someone because of race, but we can ask what they think others will do. The fact that Obama voters are much more concerned than McCain voters shows there is a fear among those who support Obama that others will be less likely to support him because of his race. McCain voters can safely say it's not a worry because if it's an issue, their candidate will benefit."

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Nearly a quarter of Iowa voters consider race a significant hurdle for Obama

The poll probed further, asking those who agreed that others would have difficulty voting for a black man how much difficulty they thought others would have: much more, somewhat more, or just a little more.

A significant minority of Iowa voters believes Obama's race will make it somewhat or much more difficult, with 22.5 percent of registered voters expressing this belief. Among Obama voters, 28 percent believe it will be somewhat or much more difficult, compared to only 16.9 percent of McCain voters.

"While many of those who express belief that race will make an Obama vote more difficult think it will only be a 'little more difficult' for their friends and neighbors to vote for him, nearly a quarter of Iowa voters see Obama's race as a more significant stumbling block," Redlawsk said.

"Of course we don't completely know their thoughts -- Obama supporters are probably worried that their candidate will be hurt by his race, and are projecting that worry on others," he said. "While many McCain supporters may agree it will be difficult for Obama, they would prefer to see their candidate win. So if race does hurt Obama, it's not as much a concern to them personally. It seems clear, though, that race is a factor, even if it's hard to quantify."

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Eight percent of Iowans think Obama is a Muslim; many unsure of his religion

The Hawkeye Poll attempted to gauge the extent to which Iowa voters believe Barack Obama is a Muslim, an erroneous belief that has existed to some degree nationally. A July Pew Research Center survey found that about 12 percent of voters nationwide think Obama is Muslim (<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/898/belief-that-obama-is-muslim-is-bipartisan-but-most-likely-to-sway-democrats>).

The Hawkeye Poll asked respondents to name both McCain and Obama's religion. An open-ended question was used, and responses were coded into general categories, such as Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, or "don't know."

Across the full sample, 8 percent of respondents identified Obama as Muslim (13.4 percent of respondents who named a religion). Nearly 38 percent of likely voters did not know Obama's religion, somewhat higher than Pew's 25 percent. The difference likely stems from Pew's use of a closed-ended question in which the options were given to the respondent, Redlawsk said.

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McCain supporters much more likely to believe Obama is Muslim

McCain supporters were much more likely to believe Obama is Muslim: 13.9 percent, compared to 3.2 percent of Obama supporters. Among Evangelical Christians, 10.8 percent identified Obama as Muslim.

Of the 8 percent of respondents who think Obama is Muslim, about three-quarters say they will vote for McCain, while just under 20 percent support Obama.

Hawkeye Poll Co-Director Caroline Tolbert (photo, *top*), associate professor of political science at the UI, noted that the question of religion may be nearly as important as race in the fall 2008 elections.

"Perceptions of Obama's religion may turn out to be equally or more important than his race in the 2008 election, especially among those who perceive him to be a Muslim," Tolbert said. "Iowa voters are similar to those in other states in terms of their likelihood of believing Obama is Muslim. While McCain supporters are more likely to believe this, we cannot necessarily draw the conclusion that they support McCain because of this belief. McCain supporters may simply have no reason to learn Obama's religion. At the same time, it's certainly possible some of these voters support McCain because of their belief that Obama is Muslim."

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Nearly 80 percent of Iowans think country has 'gone off in the wrong direction'

Like the rest of the country, Iowa voters are unhappy with their perceived direction the country is taking and unhappy with George W. Bush as president.

Only 14.7 percent of Iowans believe the country is "on the right track," while 79.7 percent who believe it has "gone off in the wrong direction." While 26.8 percent of McCain voters believe things are on the right track, only 4.7 percent of Obama supporters agree.

Bush fares a little better with McCain supporters. Just over 65 percent approve of the way he is "handling his job as president," while 26.9 percent disapprove. A miniscule 3.6 percent of Obama supporters approve of Bush's performance, while 96.4 percent disapprove.

Among independent voters, those who approve of Bush's performance (30.6 percent) are far more likely to support McCain. Nearly 85 percent of this group says they will vote for McCain, compared to only 13.5 percent who support Obama. Among independents who disapprove of Bush (66.5 percent), 24.8 percent support McCain, while 59.3 percent support Obama.

"It's very clear that voters who continue to support George Bush will vote for John McCain," Redlawsk said. "Not only is this a simple continuation of partisan support, but McCain is clearly associated with supporting much of the Bush agenda, and voters recognize the connection."

"The challenge for Obama lies with independents who disapprove of Bush. While McCain has the support of more than 8 in 10 Bush supporters, Obama is only picking up 6 in 10 of those who disapprove of Bush. This gap is allowing McCain to claim a plurality of all independent voters at this time."

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About the University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll

The University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll is directed by David Redlawsk and co-directed by Caroline Tolbert, both associate professors of political science in the UI College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Hawkeye Poll is a teaching, research and service project of the Department of Political Science and is housed at the UI's Social Science Research Center, directed by UI Sociology Professor Kevin Leicht. The university's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Office of the Provost provided funding for the poll.

For results of past Hawkeye Polls, a list of UI political experts, and trading prices for Election 2008 contracts on the Tippie College of Business' Iowa Electronic Markets, visit <http://www.uiowa.edu/election>.

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