

FRANKLIN & MARSHALL

**September 2008**

**Franklin & Marshall  
College Poll**

**NATIONAL SURVEY  
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**Prepared By:  
Center for Opinion Research  
Center for Politics & Public Affairs  
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Franklin & Marshall College**

**In Partnership With:  
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## Methodology

The survey findings presented in this release are based on the results of interviews conducted September 15 – 21, 2008. The interviews were conducted at the Center for Opinion Research at Franklin and Marshall College under the direction of the poll's director, Dr. G. Terry Madonna, Head Methodologist Berwood Yost, Project Manager Jennifer Harding, and Project Manager Brad Nankerville. The data included in this release represent the responses of 1,320 adult residents of the United States who are currently registered to vote. Telephone numbers for the survey were generated using random digit dialing, and respondents were randomly selected from within each household. Survey results were weighted using an iterative weighting algorithm.

The sample error for registered adults is +/- 2.7 percent. In addition to sampling error, this poll is also subject to other sources of non-sampling error. Generally speaking, two sources of error concern researchers most. Non-response bias is created when selected participants either choose not to participate in the survey or are unavailable for interviewing. Response errors are the product of the question and answer process. Surveys that rely on self-reported behaviors and attitudes are susceptible to biases related to the way respondents process and respond to survey questions.

## Key Findings

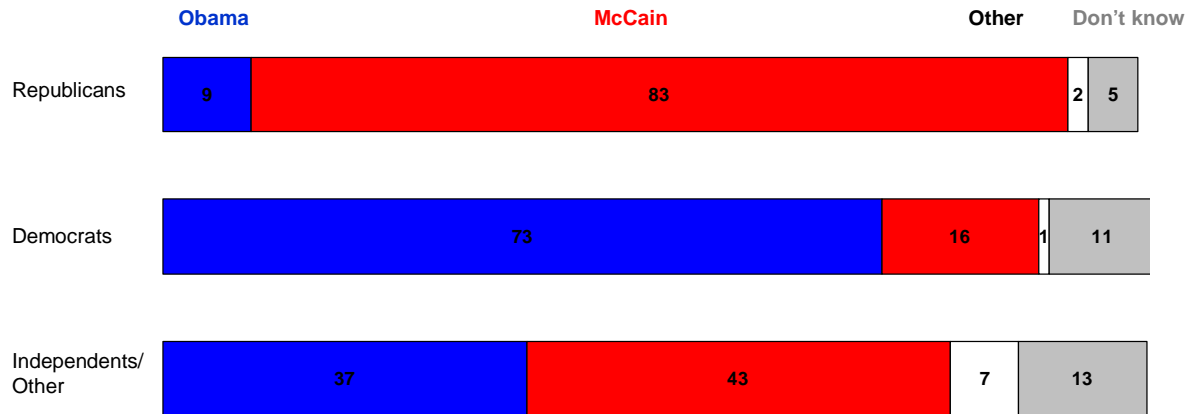
### *The Presidential Election*

The September 2008 Franklin and Marshall College Poll of registered adults finds Democrat Barack Obama trailing Republican John McCain by two points, 45% to 43%. McCain's advantage is the same when undecided but leaning voters are included, 47% to 45%. McCain has an advantage among men, those over 55 years of age, non-Hispanic whites, fundamentalist Christians, Southerners, and military veterans (see Table A-1). Obama leads among women, those under 35, non-Hispanic blacks, and residents of the Northeast.

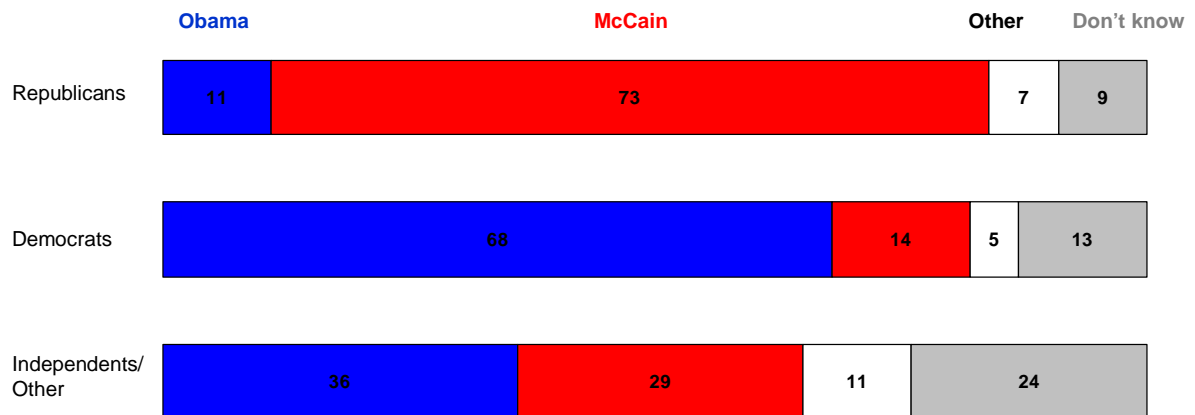
The largest changes in candidate preference since our June survey are among fundamentalist Christians, white men, and white women. McCain's advantage over Obama among fundamentalist Christians has increased from 8 points to 30 points; his advantage among white men has increased from 7 points to 28 points; and his advantage among white women has increased from 5 points to 17 points. Candidate preference among partisans has also changed since June. McCain has more support among Republicans than Obama has among Democrats; McCain also has an advantage among Independent voters that he did not have in June (Figure 1). The survey also found that McCain's favorability ratings increased from 34% in June to 49%, while Obama's favorable ratings have remained mostly unchanged.

**Figure 1. Presidential Preference by Party Registration, June and September 2008**

**September 2008**

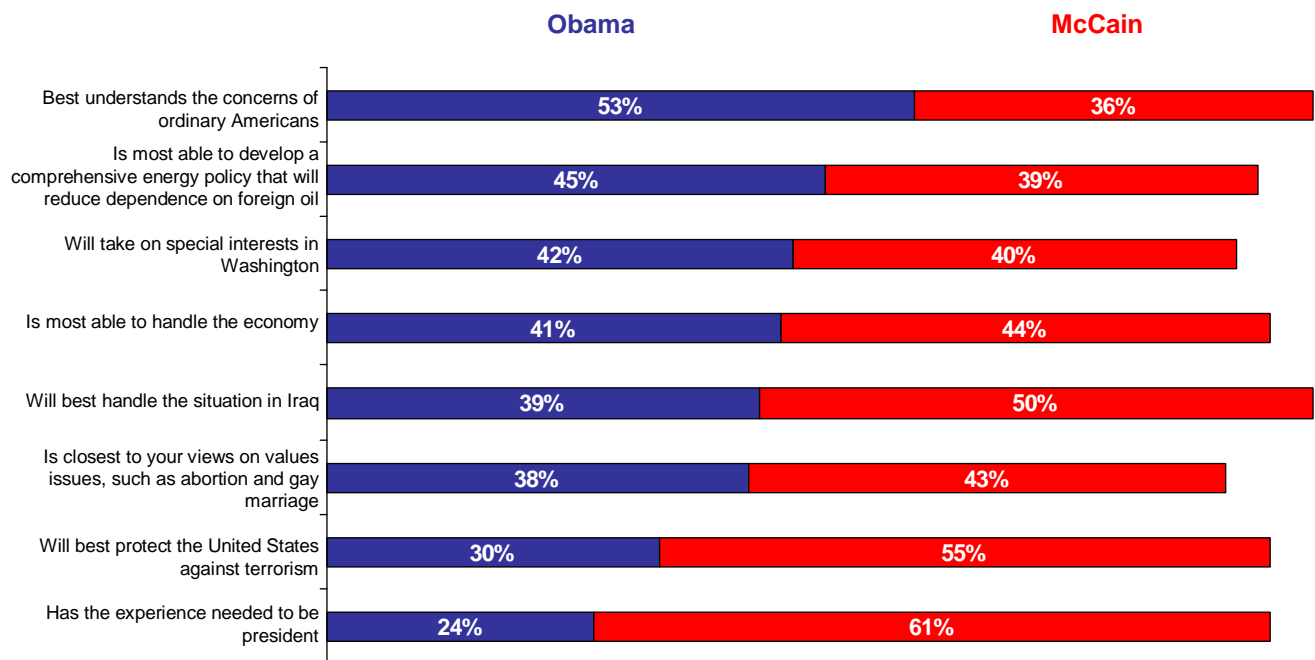


**June 2008**



Perceptions about the candidates' skills and abilities tend to provide an advantage for John McCain. First, far more respondents believe McCain has the experience needed to be president (Figure 2). He also has a clear advantage in protecting the United States against terrorism and handling the war in Iraq. Obama's only sizable advantage is in understanding the concerns of ordinary Americans.

**Figure 2. Perceptions of Presidential Candidates**



Question: Which candidate, (*rotated*) Barack Obama or John McCain, do you think is best DESCRIBED by each of the following statements?

Half of registered adults believe that John McCain will mostly continue economic (49%) and foreign policies (57%) put into place by President Bush, although more Democrats and Independents than Republicans believe this is true (Table 1). Respondents who believe McCain will follow Bush policies are more likely to plan to vote for Obama. More registered voters would be concerned if Obama were elected President (56%) than if McCain were elected President (44%). More Democrats are concerned about Obama (39%) than are Republicans concerned about McCain (16%). About one quarter of registered voters in each party who have concerns about Obama cite his lack of experience as their main concern.

**Table 1. Perceptions of Presidential Candidates by Party**

	Republican	Democrat	Independent/ Other
<b>McCain Economic Policy</b>			
Like Bush's	29%	70%	43%
Much different than Bush's	59%	22%	42%
Don't know	11%	8%	16%
<b>McCain Foreign Policy</b>			
Like Bush's	47%	67%	55%
Much different than Bush's	42%	22%	33%
Don't know	10%	11%	12%
<b>Concerned if McCain Elected President</b>			
Yes	16%	72%	47%
<b>Concerned if Obama Elected President</b>			
Yes	82%	39%	60%

Attitudinal variables are also associated with vote choice. Three in four (73%) registered adults believe the country is “off on the wrong track,” and two in five (38%) say they are worse off financially this year than last. Obama is currently leading among both of these groups (Table 2). The economy (44%) is most often mentioned as the issue that will influence presidential vote choice in the fall, and Obama leads McCain among registered adults who are concerned primarily with this issue.

**Table 2. Presidential Preference by Selected Attitudinal Items**

	McCain	Obama	Other	DK
<b>Direction of Country</b>				
Right direction	82%	12%	1%	4%
Wrong track	33%	53%	3%	11%
<b>Personal Finances Compared to Previous Year</b>				
Better	63%	28%	1%	8%
Worse	28%	55%	5%	12%
About the same	52%	38%	1%	9%
<b>Most Important Issue in Presidential Election</b>				
Moral and family values	73%	18%	1%	9%
Foreign policy	58%	32%	6%	4%
Taxes	63%	31%	2%	4%
Energy policy	58%	38%	1%	3%
The economy	31%	55%	3%	11%
The Iraq War	39%	51%	1%	9%
Healthcare	37%	47%	2%	14%
Illegal immigration	66%	12%	6%	16%



**Table A-1. Presidential Vote Choice by Selected Demographics**

	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden	Other	DK
<b>Gender*</b>				
Male	52%	37%	3%	8%
Female	38%	48%	2%	11%
<b>Age*</b>				
18-34	39%	49%	3%	9%
35-54	46%	43%	2%	10%
55 and over	48%	37%	3%	11%
<b>Education*</b>				
High School or Less	42%	43%	2%	13%
Some College	50%	37%	4%	8%
College Degree	44%	47%	2%	7%
<b>Household Income*</b>				
Less than \$25,000	27%	55%	4%	15%
\$25-35,000	44%	47%	5%	5%
\$35-50,000	48%	36%	6%	10%
\$50-75,000	51%	38%	1%	10%
\$75-100,000	48%	44%	0%	8%
Over \$100,000	51%	40%	2%	7%
<b>Race*</b>				
White, non-Hispanic	53%	35%	2%	10%
Black, non-Hispanic	2%	85%	0%	13%
Other, non-Hispanic	39%	44%	3%	14%
Hispanic	40%	46%	6%	7%
<b>Marital Status*</b>				
Married	52%	37%	2%	9%
Not currently married	38%	44%	4%	14%
Single, never married	30%	58%	2%	9%
<b>Religious Affiliation*</b>				
Catholic	41%	45%	1%	13%
Protestant	55%	33%	3%	8%
Other	42%	45%	1%	12%
Unaffiliated	30%	57%	6%	7%
<b>Born Again Christian or Fundamentalist*</b>				
Yes	60%	30%	3%	7%
No	40%	47%	3%	10%
<b>Household Union Member</b>				
Yes	39%	49%	2%	10%
No	46%	41%	3%	10%
<b>Military Veteran*</b>				
Yes	58%	29%	5%	9%
No	42%	45%	2%	10%
<b>Region*</b>				
South	50%	36%	2%	11%
West	46%	43%	3%	8%
Midwest	44%	43%	3%	10%
Northeast	35%	53%	2%	9%
<b>Party Registration*</b>				
Republican	83%	9%	2%	5%
Democrat	16%	73%	1%	11%
Independent/Other	43%	37%	7%	13%

## Marginal Frequency Report

*[Reg AND RegParty were not asked of North Dakota residents.]*

REG. Some people are registered to vote, and many others are not. Are you CURRENTLY REGISTERED to vote at your present address?

83% Yes  
17% No

RegPARTY. Are you currently registered as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or as something else?

n=1314

Jun 08	Sep 08	
44%	<b>41%</b>	Democrat
30%	<b>35%</b>	Republican
22%	<b>21%</b>	Independent/Other
4%	<b>3%</b>	Don't know

Vote\_Nov. Many people will vote in the election for president in November, however, many other people will not. What would you say are the chances you will vote in the November presidential election? Are you certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances fifty-fifty you will vote, OR don't you think that you will vote in the November election for president?

Jun 08	Sep 08	
71%	<b>76%</b>	Certain to vote
11%	<b>7%</b>	Will probably vote
8%	<b>6%</b>	Chances 50-50
9%	<b>10%</b>	Don't think will vote
1%	<b>0%</b>	Don't know

Pol\_Int. Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you are...in the 2008 presidential campaign?

Jun 08	Sep 08	
57%	<b>64%</b>	Very much interested
34%	<b>27%</b>	Somewhat interested
9%	<b>9%</b>	Not very interested

Gen. When it comes to presidential elections, do you always vote, do you usually vote, do you only sometimes vote, or do you rarely vote?

Jun 08	Sep 08	
64%	<b>66%</b>	Always
14%	<b>13%</b>	Usually
8%	<b>6%</b>	Only sometimes
13%	<b>14%</b>	Rarely
1%	<b>2%</b>	Don't know

Vot04. Did you vote in the last presidential election in 2004 or not?

Jun 08	Sep 08	
76%	<b>77%</b>	Yes
23%	<b>22%</b>	No
1%	<b>0%</b>	Don't know

[Questions IntFav through IntHard were asked of registered adults and North Dakota residents only, n = 1321.]

IntFav. Please let me know your opinion of some people involved in politics today...Is your opinion of \_\_\_ favorable, unfavorable, undecided, or haven't heard enough about \_\_\_ to have an opinion? (*rotated*)

	Strongly favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Strongly unfavorable	Undecided	Don't know
<b>Barack Obama</b>						
<b>Sep 2008</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Jun 2008	27%	15%	9%	24%	20%	5%
<b>John McCain</b>						
<b>Sep 2008</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>4%</b>
Jun 2008	13%	21%	11%	22%	24%	9%
<b>Sarah Palin</b>						
<b>Sep 2008</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Joe Biden</b>						
<b>Sep 2008</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>25%</b>

Pres08. If the November general election for president were being held today and the candidates were (*rotated*) John McCain and Sarah Palin, the Republicans, and Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the Democrats, would you vote for John McCain and Sarah Palin, the Republicans, Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the Democrats, some other candidate, or aren't you sure how you would vote? (*NOTE: Jun08 did not include vice presidential running mates.*)

Jun 08	Sep 08	
36%	<b>45%</b>	John McCain/Sarah Palin
42%	<b>43%</b>	Barack Obama/Joe Biden
15%	<b>10%</b>	Don't know
7%	<b>3%</b>	Other

Cert. Are you absolutely CERTAIN you will vote FOR [fill Pres08] in the election, or are you still making up your mind?

1138 Subsample size  
 83% Certain  
 17% Still making up mind

Lean. As of today, do you lean more to (*rotated*) John McCain and Sarah Palin, the Republicans, Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the Democrats, or are you leaning toward some other candidate?

148      Subsample size

25%      John McCain/Sarah Palin

25%      Barack Obama/Joe Biden

3%        Other

47%      Don't know

IssPrim. What will be the single most important issue in your vote for president this year? (*rotated*)

Jun 08	Sep 08	
38%	<b>44%</b>	The economy
8%	<b>10%</b>	Moral and family values
18%	<b>9%</b>	The Iraq War
9%	<b>7%</b>	Healthcare
5%	<b>7%</b>	Foreign policy
3%	<b>6%</b>	Taxes
5%	<b>5%</b>	Energy policy
5%	<b>3%</b>	Illegal immigration
6%	<b>6%</b>	Something else
3%	<b>3%</b>	Don't know

McC1. If John McCain is elected president, do you think he will mostly continue the ECONOMIC POLICIES put into place by President Bush or do you think he will develop ECONOMIC POLICIES that are much different than President Bush's?

49%      Mostly continue the economic policies put into place by President Bush

40%      Develop economic policies that are much different than President Bush's

11%      Don't know

McC2. If John McCain is elected president, do you think he will mostly continue the FOREIGN POLICY put into place by President Bush or do you think he will develop a FOREIGN POLICY that is much different than President Bush's?

57%      Mostly continue the foreign policy put into place by President Bush

31%      Develop a foreign policy that is much different than President Bush's

12%      Don't know

(Questions McC3 through Ob3y are rotated.)

McC3. Regardless of how you plan to vote in November, would you be concerned if John McCain was elected president?

44%      Yes

52%      No

4%        Don't know

Mc3y. What would concern you about him?

579	Subsample size
43%	Views on policy issues
36%	Too similar to Bush, current administration
12%	Physical attributes, including age, health, race
8%	Vice Presidential running mate
7%	Personality, morality
5%	Would be no real change
4%	Political party, ideology
4%	Tries to please everyone, wishy-washy, wouldn't follow through with promises
3%	Lack of experience, knowledge, ability
1%	Religious background, affiliation
1%	Everything
4%	Other
2%	Don't know

*\* Responses total more than 100% because multiple answers were accepted.*

Ob3. Regardless of how you plan to vote in November, would you be concerned if Barack Obama was elected president?

56%	Yes
40%	No
4%	Don't know

Ob3y. What would concern you about him?

740	Subsample size
37%	Lack of experience, knowledge, ability
32%	Views on policy issues
13%	Personality, morality
10%	Political party, ideology
10%	Tries to please everyone, wishy-washy, wouldn't follow through with promises
7%	Religious background, affiliation
6%	Would be no real change
4%	Physical attributes, including age, health, race
3%	Don't know enough about him
3%	Everything
2%	Assassination attempts
1%	Too similar to Bush, current administration
1%	Vice Presidential running mate
4%	Other
2%	Don't know

*\* Responses total more than 100% because multiple answers were accepted.*

IntD1. Which candidate, (*rotated*) Barack Obama or John McCain, do you think is best DESCRIBED by each of the following statements?

Barack Obama	John McCain	Don't know	
53%	36%	11%	Best understands the concerns of ordinary Americans
45%	39%	16%	Is most able to develop a comprehensive energy policy that will reduce dependence on foreign oil
42%	40%	18%	Will take on special interests in Washington
41%	44%	15%	Is most able to handle the economy
38%	43%	19%	Is closest to your views on values issues, such as abortion and gay marriage
39%	50%	12%	Will best handle the situation in Iraq
30%	55%	15%	Will best protect the United States against terrorism
24%	61%	16%	Has the experience needed to be president

DN1: Did you watch any television coverage of the Democratic National Convention, or not?

76% Yes  
24% No

DN2: How many different days did you watch the convention on TV?

1004 Subsample size

23% One  
26% Two  
16% Three  
33% Four  
3% Don't know

DN3: How closely did you follow the Democratic National Convention on TV? Would you say...

1004 Subsample size

33% Very closely  
45% Somewhat closely  
17% Not too closely  
5% Not closely at all

DN4: Did watching the convention make you more likely or less likely to vote for Barack Obama?

1004 Subsample size

22% Much more likely  
21% Somewhat more likely  
14% Somewhat less likely  
21% Much less likely  
22% Made no difference  
1% Don't know

RN1: Did you watch any television coverage of the Republican National Convention, or not?

73% Yes  
27% No

RN2: How many different days did you watch the convention on TV?

969 Subsample size

27% One  
31% Two  
16% Three  
23% Four  
3% Don't know

RN3: How closely did you follow the Republican National Convention on TV? Would you say...

969 Subsample size

29% Very closely  
48% Somewhat closely  
17% Not too closely  
5% Not closely at all

RN4: Did watching the convention make you more likely or less likely to vote for John McCain?

969 Subsample size

23% Much more likely  
20% Somewhat more likely  
12% Somewhat less likely  
23% Much less likely  
20% Made no difference  
2% Don't know

RatePres. How would you rate the way that George Bush is handling his job as president? Would you say he is doing an...

5% Excellent  
19% Good  
29% Fair  
47% Poor  
1% Don't know

UStrk. All in all, do you think things in the United States are generally headed in the RIGHT DIRECTION, or do you feel that things are off on the WRONG TRACK?

Jun 08	Sep 08	
17%	<b>21%</b>	Right direction
78%	<b>73%</b>	Wrong track
5%	<b>6%</b>	Don't know

MIP\_YF. What do you think is the MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM facing YOU and YOUR FAMILY TODAY?

Jun 08	Sep 08	
24%	<b>45%</b>	Economy, in general
21%	<b>12%</b>	Personal finances, cost of living, unemployment
22%	<b>11%</b>	Gasoline/oil prices, energy
8%	<b>8%</b>	Healthcare, insurance
3%	<b>4%</b>	Taxes
3%	<b>2%</b>	Iraq War
0%	<b>2%</b>	Terrorism, national security, foreign policy
3%	<b>2%</b>	Values, morality, religion
0%	<b>1%</b>	Crime, drugs, violence
0%	<b>1%</b>	Education, schools
0%	<b>1%</b>	Environment, climate change
3%	<b>1%</b>	Government, politicians
0%	<b>1%</b>	Personal illness, health problems
0%	<b>1%</b>	Retirement, social security
0%	<b>1%</b>	Housing, real estate
2%	<b>0%</b>	Immigration, illegal immigrants
7%	<b>2%</b>	Other
0%	<b>2%</b>	Nothing
4%	<b>4%</b>	Don't know

Gov. Do you think that the problems facing you and your family can be solved with the help of the government, or are these problems beyond what you think the government can do?

Jun 08	Sep 08	
66%	<b>67%</b>	With help of government
27%	<b>24%</b>	Beyond what government can do
7%	<b>9%</b>	Don't know

FinToday. We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that YOU and YOUR FAMILY are better off, worse off, or about the same financially as you were a year ago?

Jun 08	Sep 08	
15%	<b>16%</b>	Better off
42%	<b>38%</b>	Worse off
43%	<b>45%</b>	About the same
0%	<b>1%</b>	Don't know

FinFut. Now looking AHEAD, do you think that A YEAR FROM NOW, YOU and YOUR FAMILY will be better off financially than you are now, worse off, or about the same as you are now?

Jun 08	Sep 08	
26%	<b>34%</b>	Better off
20%	<b>13%</b>	Worse off
45%	<b>41%</b>	About the same
9%	<b>11%</b>	Don't know



IntHard. Now I'm going to ask you about various events that happen to people. I'm interested in those that happened to you at any point during the last 12 months, that is since [fill one year ago's date]. Did any of the following hardships happen to you in the last 12 months? (*rotated*)

Jun 08			Sep 08			
Yes	No	DK	Yes	No	DK	
24%	76%	0%	16%	84%	0%	Did you lack health insurance coverage?
21%	79%	0%	21%	79%	0%	Did you experience a reduction in pay for any reason?
19%	81%	0%	15%	84%	0%	Were you unable to get needed medical care because you couldn't afford it?
18%	81%	1%	17%	83%	0%	Were you unable to purchase gasoline because you couldn't afford it?
17%	83%	0%	15%	85%	0%	Were you unemployed and looking for work for as long as a month?
16%	84%	0%	12%	88%	0%	Were you unable to purchase needed food because you couldn't afford it?
13%	87%	0%	14%	86%	1%	Did you fall behind in paying your rent or mortgage?
11%	89%	1%	9%	91%	0%	Were you let go or permanently laid off from your job?
8%	92%	0%	7%	93%	0%	Did you have any utilities, such as water, heat, or electricity, shut off because you couldn't afford the bill?
7%	93%	0%	6%	94%	0%	For financial reasons, did you have to temporarily live with others or in a shelter or on the street?
2%	98%	0%	2%	98%	0%	Were you evicted from your apartment or house?

I now have a final few questions for statistical purposes only.

Resd. How many years have you lived at your current address?

11.6 Mean

AGE. What was your age on your last birthday?

10% 18-24  
 21% 25-34  
 16% 35-44  
 23% 45-54  
 11% 55-64  
 19% 65 and older

EDUC. What was the last grade level of schooling you have completed?

10% Non high school graduate  
 37% High school graduate or GED  
 19% Some college  
 10% Two-year or tech degree  
 15% Four year college degree  
 9% Post graduate degree

MAR. What is your CURRENT marital status, are you single, married, separated, divorced, or a widower?

24%	Single, Never Married
56%	Married
21%	Separated/divorced/widower

PRTY1. Regardless of how you are registered, in politics, as of today, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

17%	Strong Republican
10%	Republican
14%	Lean Republican
11%	Pure Independent
13%	Lean Democrat
11%	Democrat
20%	Strong Democrat
2%	Don't know

LABR. Are you or is any member of your household a member of a LABOR UNION?

14%	Yes
85%	No
2%	Don't know

VET. Are you a military veteran?

15%	Yes
85%	No

Hisp. Are you Hispanic or Latino, or not?

13%	Yes
87%	No

RACE. Which of the following categories best describes your racial background?

76%	White
12%	Black or African American
2%	Asian
1%	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander
3%	American Indian, Alaska Native
6%	Other
1%	Don't know

REL. Do you consider yourself to be Protestant, Catholic, some other religion, or not affiliated with any religion?

35%	Protestant
26%	Catholic
22%	Some other religion
18%	Not affiliated with any religion

BAC. Do you consider yourself to be a born-again Christian or fundamentalist, or not?

40%	Yes
58%	No
2%	Don't know

NumA. Including yourself, how many adults 18 years of age or OLDER CURRENTLY live in this household?

26%	One
56%	Two
12%	Three
6%	Four or more

WORK. Are you currently working FULL-time, PART-time, going to school, keeping house or something else?

48%	Full-time
9%	Part-time
6%	Going to school
9%	Keeping house
3%	Unemployed
6%	Disabled
17%	Retired

INC1. And, just for statistical purposes, we need to know if your total family income is above or below \$50,000 per year?

19%	Under \$25,000
13%	\$25-\$35,000
14%	\$35-50,000
20%	\$50-75,000
13%	\$75-100,000
15%	Over \$100,000
6%	Don't know

DONE. Sex of respondent:

52%	Female
49%	Male

Region. Region of the country

36%	South
23%	West
22%	Midwest
19%	Northeast