

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

Field Research Corporation

601 California Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94108-2814
(415) 392-5763 FAX: (415) 434-2541
EMAIL: fieldpoll@field.com
www.field.com/fieldpollonline

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OBAMA HOLDS 22-POINT LEAD IN CALIFORNIA. WOULD REPRESENT BIGGEST VICTORY MARGIN BY A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN THIS STATE SINCE WORLD WAR II.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Over the twenty-one months since he announced his candidacy for President, Illinois Senator Barack Obama has consistently led Arizona Senator John McCain in nine successive presidential preference measures conducted by *The Field Poll*.

The final pre-election *Field Poll* shows Obama, when paired with Delaware Senator Joe Biden as his Democratic running mate, holding a formidable twenty-two-point lead in California (55% to 33%) over McCain and his Republican running mate, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin.

If Obama's lead holds, it would represent the biggest winning margin of any presidential candidate in this state since World War II. It would exceed not only Democrat Lyndon Johnson's lopsided victory over Republican Barry Goldwater in 1964, but also Republican Ronald Reagan's landslide victories in his home state in the 1980 and 1984 elections.

The results come from the latest *Field Poll*, completed one week before the election among a random sample of 966 California likely voters.

Trend of California voter preferences

Throughout the primary election season, Obama ran ahead of McCain by seven to seventeen points in general election trial heats. However, after becoming the presumptive Democratic nominee in May and winning his party's nomination in late August, Obama expanded his advantage, polling consistent leads of between sixteen and twenty-four points, and ending at twenty-two points (55% to 33%). Another 4% of voters are supporting other candidates and 8% are undecided.

Table 1
Trend of voter preferences pairing the Democratic ticket of Obama-Biden
against the Republican ticket of McCain-Palin for President
(among likely voters in California)

	Obama – Biden	McCain - Palin	Other	No opinion
Late-October 2008	55%	33	4	8
September 2008	52%	36	3	9
July 2008	54%	30	4	12
May 2008	52%	35	5	8
January 2008	47%	40	--	13
December 2007	50%	36	--	14
October 2007	50%	33	--	17
August 2007	49%	36	--	15
March 2007	51%	39	--	10

Note: Measures prior to September 2008 posed only the names of the presidential candidates

** Preferences for other candidates in Late October 2008 include: Nader 1%, Barr 1%, Keyes 1% and other unspecified (1%).*

Voting preferences across subgroups

The poll finds that 53% of this state’s likely voters intend to vote at their local voting precinct, while 47% say they will be voting early or by mail. While Obama is preferred among both groups, Obama holds a larger advantage (58% to 31%) among precinct voters than among those intending to vote early or by mail (51% to 37%). He also holds a fourteen point lead (50% to 36%) among the 22% of voters who had already voted by the time the survey was conducted.

There are big differences in presidential preferences between voters living in coastal counties, which account for 71% of likely voters, and the 29% of voters who live in inland counties. On the coast Obama holds a greater than two-to-one lead over McCain (60% to 28%). By contrast, inland county voters favor McCain by three points (47% to 44%).

The two regions showing the strongest support for Obama are Los Angeles County and the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. Both regions, which collectively account for 45% of all likely voters, are backing Obama by two and one-half to one or greater. Preferences are closely divided between the two candidates in the Central Valley and in the Southern California region outside Los Angeles County.

Rank-and file Democrats are lining up behind their party’s standard-bearer by a nine to one margin (81% to 9%). The solidarity that Republicans have for McCain is slightly less (77% to 14%). Voters registered as non-partisans or with another party are breaking heavily for Obama (66% to 16%).

Pluralities of men and women are backing the Obama-Biden slate. Women favor the Democratic ticket by a large margin (59% to 31%). Obama wins the support of men 51% to 35%.

Voters in the 18-34 age group prefer Obama-Biden nearly three to one (67% to 23%). By contrast, voters age sixty-five or older are supporting McCain by four points (45% to 41%).

White non-Hispanics, who are expected to comprise two-thirds (67%) of this state's voting electorate, prefer Obama by ten points (49% to 39%). On the other hand, the state's large and growing ethnic population are heavily backing Obama: Latinos, 65% to 24%; Black/African Americans, 90% to 3%; and Asians/others, 54% to 31%.

Obama is favored by voters across all income subgroups, but holds his largest lead among those with household incomes of less than \$20,000 (71% to 14%).

Protestants, who represent 43% of the likely electorate, prefer the McCain-Palin ticket 51% to 38%. By contrast, Catholics, voters affiliated with religions or those with no religious preference support Obama overwhelmingly.

The one in four likely voters who identify themselves as evangelical Christians favor McCain 56% to 34%. However, the seventy-five percent of voters who are not evangelical are backing Obama 62% to 26%.

Voters who regularly attend religious service prefer McCain by a 50% to 36% margin. Obama is favored among those who occasionally attend religious services five to three (56% to 36%) and by voters who rarely or never attend greater than three to one (68% to 20%).

Table 2
Preferences for President across subgroups of the California
likely voter population

	Obama - Biden	McCain - Palin	Other	Undecided
Total statewide	55%	33	4	8
<u>Voting method</u>				
(.53) Precinct voter	58%	31	4	8
(.47) Mail/early voter	51%	37	5	7
(.22) Already voted	50%	36	7	7
<u>Area</u>				
(.71) Coastal counties	60%	28	4	8
(.29) Inland counties	44%	47	4	5
<u>Region</u>				
(.23) Los Angeles County	63%	25	3	9
(.33) Other Southern California	44%	41	7	8
(.17) Central Valley	47%	46	2	5
(.22) San Francisco Bay Area	69%	23	3	5
(.05) Other Northern California*	57%	30	3	10
<u>Party registration</u>				
(.43) Democrats	81%	9	2	8
(.34) Republicans	14%	77	4	5
(.23) Non-partisans/others	66%	16	9	9
<u>Gender</u>				
(.47) Men	51%	35	6	8
(.53) Women	59%	31	4	6
<u>Age</u>				
(.25) 18 – 34	67%	23	4	6
(.27) 35 – 49	55%	35	4	6
(.29) 50 – 64	54%	32	5	9
(.19) 65 or older	41%	45	5	9
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
(.67) White non-Hispanic	49%	39	4	8
(.19) Latino	65%	24	7	4
(.06) Black/African-American*	90%	3	3	4
(.08) Asian/other*	54%	31	3	12
<u>Household income</u>				
(.10) Less than \$20,000*	71%	14	7	8
(.16) \$20,000 - \$39,999	57%	29	7	7
(.28) \$40,000 - \$79,999	52%	34	4	10
(.13) \$80,000 - \$99,999	49%	42	3	6
(.33) \$100,000 or more	58%	34	3	5
<u>Religion</u>				
(.43) Protestant	38%	51	2	9
(.24) Catholic	62%	27	5	6
(.18) Other religions	69%	20	6	5
(.15) No preference	75%	11	8	6
<u>Evangelical Christian</u>				
(.25) Yes	34%	56	2	8
(.75) No	62%	26	5	7
<u>Religious service attendance</u>				
(.32) Regular	36%	50	3	11
(.25) Occasional	56%	36	3	5
(.43) Rarely/never	68%	20	6	6

* Small sample size

** Less than 1/2 of 1%.

Voter motivations

By a nearly seven to one margin (83% to 13%) Californians favoring Obama say their preference is more a vote in support of the Illinois Senator than a vote against McCain. By comparison, three in ten (31%) of those supporting McCain say their preference is more a vote against Obama than an endorsement of McCain.

Table 3		
Is your preference more a vote for your candidate or a vote against his opponent (among likely voters of each candidate in California)		
	Obama voters	McCain voters
<u>Preference is more a vote...</u>		
For my candidate	83%	61%
Against his opponent	13	31
No opinion	4	8

More than twice as many Californians also say that the candidates' positions on the issues (57%) is more important to their vote choice than the candidates' personal qualities, like experience and leadership (24%). Obama is the clear choice of voters basing their decision primarily on issues, winning nearly three times as much of their support as McCain (65% to 23%). By contrast, McCain is preferred over Obama (54% to 34%) among the much smaller proportion of voters basing their decision mostly on personal characteristics.

Table 4			
Do voters attach greater importance to personal qualities like experience and leadership or the candidate's positions on the issues and how this relates to 2008 presidential preferences (among likely voters in California)			
	Position on the issues	Personal qualities	Both/not sure (volunteered)*
Statewide	57%	25%	18%
<u>Presidential preferences</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
Obama	65%	34%	46%
McCain	23	54	39
Other/undecided	12	12	15

* Small sample base

Candidate images

Obama continues to be viewed very positively by Californians, with 61% holding a favorable impression and 30% unfavorable. These results are similar to four previous measures taken by *The Field Poll* since January.

On the other hand, McCain's standing among this state's voters has declined. In January more Californians viewed McCain positively than negatively by a 50% to 28% margin. Now, a slightly larger proportion of voters views him unfavorably (47%) as favorably (43%).

Registered Democrats are nearly uniform in their positive regard for Obama (85% favorable and 7% unfavorable). By comparison, Republican voter impressions of McCain are slightly less one-sided (80% favorable vs. 12% unfavorable).

Non-partisan voters or those affiliated with other parties hold starkly different impressions of the two presidential candidates. Among these voters Obama is viewed favorably by a nearly three to one margin (69% to 26%), while McCain is viewed more negatively than positively by a 57% to 38% ratio.

Californians also hold differing views of the two vice presidential nominees. Biden is viewed much more positively than negatively by a 57% to 24% margin. On the other hand, more statewide voters have an unfavorable (53%) than favorable (37%) view of Palin.

Palin's image in this state is extremely partisan. Republicans view her positively by a 74% to 19% margin. However, Democrats and non-partisans have a very negative image of the Alaska Governor, with Democrats rating her unfavorably 75% to 15% and non partisans giving a 65% to 20% negative assessment.

Table 5
Voter impressions of the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates
(among likely voters in California)

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
<u>Barack Obama</u>			
Late October 2008	<u>61%</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>9</u>
September 2008	62%	32	6
July 2008	63%	26	11
May 2008	62%	29	9
January 2008	59%	23	15
<i>Party (Late October)</i>			
Democrats	85%	7	8
Republicans	22%	66	12
Non-partisans/others*	69%	26	5
<u>John McCain</u>			
Late October 2008	<u>43%</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>10</u>
September 2008	50%	42	8
July 2008	48%	38	14
May 2008	46%	45	9
January 2008	50%	28	22
<i>Party (Late October)</i>			
Democrats	21%	68	11
Republicans	80%	12	8
Non-partisans/others*	38%	57	5
<u>Joe Biden</u>			
Late October 2008	<u>57%</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>19</u>
September 2008	50%	29	21
<i>Party (Late October)</i>			
Democrats	78%	5	17
Republicans	24%	53	23
Non-partisans/others*	68%	15	17
<u>Sarah Palin</u>			
Late October 2008	<u>37%</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>10</u>
September 2008	43%	43	14
<i>Party (Late October)</i>			
Democrats	15%	75	10
Republicans	74%	19	7
Non-partisans/others*	20%	65	15

* Small sample base.

Possible historical precedent

If Obama’s twenty-two-point lead is reflected in next Tuesday’s election, it will represent the biggest winning margin that any Democratic presidential candidate has achieved in California since World War II.

The largest previous presidential victory margin in California in the post-World War II era was Democrat Lyndon Johnson’s lopsided 18.3 percentage point win over Republican Barry Goldwater in 1964. The next largest were by Republican Ronald Reagan in his 1980 and 1984 election runs. In those contests Reagan carried his home state by 16.8 and 16.2 points, respectively.

Table 6
A review of voting in presidential elections in California
(1948 – present)

	Democratic candidate	Republican candidate	California victory margin
2004	Kerry (55.4%)	G.W. Bush (44.4%)	11.0
2000	Gore (53.5%)	G.W. Bush (41.7%)	11.8
1996	Clinton (51.1%)	Dole (38.2%)	12.9
1992	Clinton (46.0%)	G.H.W Bush (32.6%)	13.4
1988	Dukakis (47.6%)	G.H.W. Bush (51.1%)	3.5
1984	Mondale (41.3%)	Reagan (57.5%)	16.2
1980	Carter (35.9%)	Reagan (52.7%)	16.8
1976	Carter (48.0%)	Ford (49.7%)	1.7
1972	McGovern (41.5%)	Nixon (55.0%)	13.5
1968	Humphrey (44.7%)	Nixon (47.8%)	3.1
1964	Johnson (59.1%)	Goldwater (40.8%)	18.3
1960	Kennedy (49.6%)	Nixon (50.1%)	0.5
1956	Stevenson (44.3%)	Eisenhower (55.4%)	11.1
1952	Stevenson (42.7%)	Eisenhower (56.3%)	13.6
1948	Truman (47.6%)	Dewey (47.1%)	0.5

Candidates in bold carried California.

Big Democratic lead in generic Congressional vote preferences

Likely voters in this survey were also asked their generic party preferences for the election for U.S. House of Representatives in their district.

The results indicate that 50% of voters say they are inclined to vote for the Democratic candidate in their district, while 29% favor the Republican candidate – a twenty-one point Democratic advantage.

Generic vote preferences like these cannot determine how the elections in each of California’s fifty-three congressional districts will turn out. However, the generic vote results frequently provide clues as to the relative statewide strength of the two major parties in the upcoming election.

The last few election cycles have shown increasing support for Democratic congressional candidates across California. For example, in the November 2002 election the total votes cast for Democratic congressional candidates statewide outnumbered those cast for GOP candidates by 7.2 percentage points. The Democratic advantage increased to 10.7 points in the November 2004 election and to 17.4 percentage points in November 2006.

The results of the current poll indicate that Californians’ growing preference for Democratic congressional candidates is likely to continue this year.

Table 7
Trend of statewide generic party preferences for the U.S. House of Representatives in California (among likely voters)

	Democratic candidate	Republican candidate	Other/ no opinion	Democratic candidate vote plurality statewide
Late October 2008	50%	29	21	+21
July 2008	48%	28	24	+20
<i>November 2006 vote*</i>	<i>58.7%</i>	<i>41.3</i>		<i>+17.4</i>
July 2006	44%	36	20	+8
<i>November 2004 vote*</i>	<i>55.3%</i>	<i>44.6</i>		<i>+10.7</i>
September 2004	46%	35	19	+11
August 2004	42%	35	23	+7
<i>November 2002 vote*</i>	<i>53.6%</i>	<i>46.4</i>		<i>+7.2</i>
September 2002	43%	39	18	+4
January 2002	43%	40	17	+3
<i>November 2000 vote*</i>	<i>54.9%</i>	<i>45.1</i>		<i>+9.8</i>
August 2000	43%	34	23	+9
June 2000	47%	35	18	+12

* Aggregate percentages of the actual major party vote across all of California’s congressional districts. Source: Hotline.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 966 likely voters in California. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between the period October 18-28, 2008. Up to six attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize voter fatigue, the overall voter sample was divided into two random subsamples on some of the questions.

The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. Once a voter's name and telephone number has been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews can be conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing or the voter's preference. After the completion of interviewing, the results are weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depends on the sample size. The maximum sampling error for results based on the overall sample of likely voters is +/- 3.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings from the random subsamples have a maximum sampling error of +/- 4.6 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on percentages in the middle of the sampling distribution (percentages around 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (percentages around 10% or around 90%) have a smaller margin of error. While there are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error, the overall design and execution of the survey minimized the potential for these other sources of error. The maximum sampling error will be larger for analyses based on subgroups of the overall sample.

Questions Asked

ASKED OF ALL VOTERS

(IF NOT VOTED YET: If the presidential election were being held today, for whom would you vote) (IF ALREADY VOTED: In the presidential election, for whom did you vote) -- the Republican Party ticket of John McCain and Sarah Palin, the Democratic Party ticket of Barack Obama and Joe Biden, or a candidate from another party?

IF OTHER CANDIDATE: Which of four other presidential candidates on the California ballot would you vote for -- Bob Barr, Libertarian party; Ralph Nader, Peace and Freedom Party; Alan Keyes, American Independent Party; or Cynthia McKinney, Green Party?

IF OBAMA OR MCCAIN: Is your preference more a vote for (Obama) (the Obama-Biden ticket) (McCain) (the McCain-Palin ticket) or more a vote against (McCain) (the McCain-Palin ticket) (Obama) (the Obama-Biden ticket)?

ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS

Which is more important to you in choosing a candidate for president -- their personal qualities such as experience and leadership ability, or the positions they take on specific issues?

Generally speaking, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of... (SEE RELEASE FOR PERSONS READ)? (NAMES READ IN RANDOM ORDER) (ASKED OF RANDOM SUBSAMPLES OF VOTERS)

ASKED OF ALL VOTERS

In the November election for House of Representatives in your district, (do you plan to) (did you) vote for the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate?