

Global Warming and the 2008 Presidential Election

Global Warming an Important Issue for Undecided Voters

Executive Summary

Nearly two out of three undecided voters say that the presidential candidates' positions on global warming will influence their vote in the upcoming election, according to a new national survey released jointly today by researchers at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and George Mason University.

Consistent with other recent polls, the survey found that 48 percent of registered voters said they will vote or are leaning toward voting for Barack Obama, while 39 percent say they will vote or are leaning toward voting for John McCain. Nine percent of registered voters were still undecided as of Oct. 14.

While few undecided voters rated global warming as the single most important issue that will determine their vote, 62 percent of undecided voters, 64 percent of voters leaning toward McCain and 75 percent of voters leaning toward Obama indicated that global warming is one of several important issues that will influence their vote. "Even in the midst of the nation's financial turmoil, global warming remains an important issue for large numbers of voters," said Anthony Leiserowitz, Director of the Project on Climate Change at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies.

In the race to earn undecided voters' trust on the issue of global warming, the two candidates are in a dead heat. Fifty percent of undecided voters trust John McCain as a source of information about global warming and 51 percent trust Barack Obama. "In the closing days of this election, each of these candidates still has an opportunity to make their best case on global warming to these critical voters," said Edward Maibach of George Mason University.

Surprisingly, however, 45 percent of McCain supporters *distrust* John McCain as a source of information about global warming, while only 15 percent of Obama supporters distrust their candidate on the issue.

The results come from a nationally representative survey of 2,189 American adults, aged 18 and older. The sample was weighted to correspond with US Census Bureau parameters for the United States. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 percent, with 95 percent confidence. The survey was designed by Dr. Leiserowitz of Yale University and Dr. Maibach of George Mason University and fielded October 8 through October 14 by Knowledge Networks, using an online research panel of American adults.

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Table 1	
If the 2008 presidential election were being held today, who would you vote for?*	
John McCain	36%
Leaning toward McCain	3%
Leaning toward Obama	2%
Barack Obama	46%
Other Candidates	3%
Undecided	9%

*registered voters only

Table 2			
How important will a candidate's views on global warming be in determining your vote for President this year? Will it be the single most important issue, one of several important issues, or not important in determining your vote?*			
	Not an important issue	One of several important issues	The single most important issue
McCain Voters	56%	43%	1%
Lean McCain Voters	36%	64%	0%
Lean Obama Voters	25%	75%	0%
Obama Voters	22%	76%	2%
Other Candidate Voters	45%	55%	0%
Undecided Voters	37%	62%	1%

*registered voters only

Table 3				
How much do you trust or distrust <i>Barack Obama</i> as a source of information about global warming?*				
	Strongly distrust Obama	Somewhat distrust Obama	Somewhat trust Obama	Strongly trust Obama
McCain Voters	58%	27%	15%	0%
Lean McCain Voters	50%	24%	26%	0%
Lean Obama Voters	7%	29%	60%	4%
Obama Voters	3%	12%	57%	28%
Other Candidate Voters	59%	23%	14%	4%
Undecided Voters	21%	28%	47%	4%
How much do you trust or distrust <i>John McCain</i> as a source of information about global warming?*				
	Strongly distrust McCain	Somewhat distrust McCain	Somewhat trust McCain	Strongly trust McCain
McCain Voters	13%	32%	45%	10%
Lean McCain Voters	35%	29%	36%	0%
Lean Obama Voters	12%	35%	54%	0%
Obama Voters	33%	39%	26%	2%
Other Voters	46%	32%	21%	2%
Undecided Voters	20%	31%	49%	1%

*registered voters only

Table 4**Who are the undecided voters?***

Party Identification	Republican 23%	Democrat 33%	Independent 23%	Other 2%	No party 20%
Political Ideology	Very Conservative 6%	Somewhat Conservative 23%	Moderate 64%	Somewhat Liberal 7%	Very Liberal 0%
Age	13-29 years old 12%	30-44 years old 28%	45-59 years old 29%	60+ years old 31%	
Education	Less than High School 11%	High School 35%	Some College 28%	Bachelor's Degree or Higher 27%	
Race / Ethnicity	White, Non-Hispanic 71%	Black, Non-Hispanic 14%	Other, Non-Hispanic 4%	Hispanic 10%	2+ Races, Non-Hispanic 1%
Gender	Male 39%	Female 61%			
Marital Status	Married 49%	Widowed 7%	Divorced 18%	Separated 3%	Never Married 18%
Current Employment Status	Working as a Paid Employee 46%	Working, Self-Employed 5%	Not Working, On Temporary Lay-Off from Work 1%	Not Working, Looking for Work 10%	Not Working, Retired 20%

*registered voters only

Methodology

The results come from a nationally representative survey of 2,189 American adults, age 18 and older. The sample was weighted to correspond with US Census Bureau parameters for the United States. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 percent, with 95 percent confidence. The survey was designed by researchers at Yale and George Mason Universities and fielded October 8 through October 14 by Knowledge Networks, using an online research panel of American adults. For more information, please contact:

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