

Should Women Worry Obama?

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Whether female voters, who largely favored Hillary Clinton for the Democratic nomination, will give broad support to Barack Obama this fall remains a key to the outcome of the election. The latest survey from the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press finds that Obama is, in fact, performing quite well among this key voting bloc, largely as the result of his substantial lead among politically independent and younger women. However, a significant numbers of older women, especially those who backed Clinton for the Democratic nomination, are not yet ready to throw their support behind Obama.

The presumptive Democratic nominee currently holds a double-digit advantage over John McCain among women voters (51% to 37%), a considerable improvement from May, when Obama held a much narrower 47% to 42% margin. And his lead among this group is wider than those held by John Kerry (47% to 46%) and Al Gore (50% to 41%) over George W. Bush at this stage in 2004 and 2000, respectively.

General Election Matchup among Women								
	June 2000		June 2004		June 2008		'00-'08	
	Gore	Bush	Kerry	Bush	Obama	McCain	Dem	2008
	%	%	%	%	%	%	change	N
All women voters	50	41	47	46	51	37	+14	798
Republicans	12	82	8	91	11	81	-1	239
Democrats	37	12	83	11	79	9	-3	336
Obama backers	--	--	--	--	95	3	--	141
Clinton backers	--	--	--	--	69	14	--	172
Independents	39	52	45	45	47	36	+11	204
White	45	46	40	54	43	43	-2	632
Non-white	75	18	79	9	79	11	+4	158
Married	42	50	35	58	46	42	+4	431
Not married	50	31	59	34	56	30	-4	367
18-29	51	41	61	39	58	37	+7	126
30-49	48	45	43	49	58	32	+10	225
50-64	50	42	43	51	48	37	-2	246
65+	53	36	48	43	35	42	-18	190
College grad+	55	37	48	48	50	39	-5	325
Some college	44	48	44	51	49	40	+5	224
HS or less	51	41	47	43	52	33	+1	249
\$75,000+	46	52	41	57	48	41	+2	228
\$50-\$74,999	48	48	47	48	56	34	+8	107
\$30-\$49,999	50	42	41	53	48	43	-2	152
Under \$30,000	58	32	56	36	55	30	-3	185

Based on women who are registered to vote. Figures read horizontally

In particular, Obama is running better among politically independent women than did either Gore or Kerry at this point in their campaigns. Independent women now favor Obama over McCain by a 47%-to-36% margin; four years ago Kerry and Bush were tied among independent women (45% each) and, eight years ago, Bush held a 13-point lead over Gore among this group (52% vs. 39%).

Younger women also express significantly more support for Obama than they did for Kerry or Gore. Obama leads McCain by 24 points among women ages 18-49. By comparison, women in this age group were about evenly split in June 2004 -- 47% preferred Kerry while 46% chose Bush -- and they preferred Gore by a slim 49%-to-44% margin in June 2000..

Still, Obama is falling short with some segments of the women vote. In particular, he currently polls considerably worse than his predecessors among all women age 65 or older. About one-third (35%) in this group support Obama, while 42% support McCain. In June 2000, Gore enjoyed a 53%-to-36% lead among women over 65, while in June 2004, Kerry held a more modest 48%-to-43% lead. Currently, nearly one-quarter of women 65 and older (23%) remain undecided about whom to support or say they will vote for another candidate, more than double the share that said that was the case at this point in 2004 (9%) and 2000 (11%).

Even among older women voters who identify themselves as Democrats, significant numbers have yet to declare their support for their party's presumptive nominee. While Obama has a solid 69%-to-12% advantage over McCain among Democratic women over 50, nearly one-in-five (19%) remain undecided or would vote for another candidate. By comparison, just 4% of older Democratic men are undecided. Among younger Democratic women, fully 88% support Obama

Obama Lags among Older Democratic Women								
	<i>June 2000</i>		<i>June 2004</i>		<i>June 2008</i>		<i>'00-'08</i>	
	<i>Gore</i>	<i>Bush</i>	<i>Kerry</i>	<i>Bush</i>	<i>Obama</i>	<i>McCain</i>	<i>Democrat</i>	<i>2008</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>change</i>	<i>N</i>
All Democrats	81	13	85	10	82	9	+1	574
Men	78	15	89	8	85	9	+7	238
Women	82	12	83	11	79	9	-3	336
Men 18-49	77	17	87	7	87	5	+12	115
Women 18-49	75	14	85	11	88	6	+9	160
Men 50+	75	11	89	9	81	15	+2	118
Women 50+	85	11	80	12	69	12	-15	174
Based on Democratic registered voters. Figures read horizontally.								

The reluctance of some older Democratic women to throw their support behind their party's candidate reflects, at least in part, the fallout from the drawn-out Democratic nomination contest. By nearly two-to-one, Democratic women over age 50 say they would have preferred Hillary Clinton (59%) over Barack Obama (32%) as the party's nominee. By contrast, Democratic men in the same age group supported Obama over Clinton by a 51%-to-37% margin.

Among all Democratic voters who preferred Clinton in the primary, Obama leads McCain by 70% to 15%, with another 15% saying they are undecided or volunteering another candidate. Within this larger group of

Clinton backers, there are no significant differences between men and women; 69% of women and 72% of men who supported Clinton say they will vote for Obama over John McCain.