

OBAMA MAINTAINS LEAD OVER CLINTON IN PRIMARY RACE BOTH CLINTON AND OBAMA SOLIDIFY STANDING AGAINST MCCAIN

Democratic Primary Voters Significantly More Enthusiastic about Their Candidates than Republican Primary Voters are about McCain

New York, May 9, 2008 – Barack Obama has maintained more than a 10 point lead over Hillary Clinton among a national sample of Democratic primary voters since last month, with a statistically insignificant narrowing of the gap by Clinton (March: Obama, 50%; Clinton, 38%; May: Obama, 48%; Clinton, 37%). The Diageo/Hotline Poll of 803 registered voters conducted by FD from April 30 – May 3, 2008, shows that while Democratic primary voters say they would be equally as satisfied with either nominee (Obama, 76%; Clinton, 75%), they are more “enthusiastic” about Obama than Clinton by a 6-point margin. Republican primary voters express significantly less enthusiasm in voting for John McCain, with only 34% saying they will vote for him enthusiastically, with another 42% saying they will vote for him mainly as a vote against the Democratic candidate. Overall, 55% of GOP primary voters report that they would have preferred someone other than McCain.

***Table 1: Enthusiasm of Vote
(n=374/278)***

	Barack Obama	Hillary Clinton	John McCain
Vote for him/her enthusiastically in November	56%	50%	34%
Vote for him/her, but mainly as a vote against the opposing party's candidate	21%	27%	42%
Vote for the opposing party's candidate	12%	9%	11%
Stay home on Election Day and not vote	6%	8%	2%

For those voters who did not say they would vote enthusiastically for their respective candidates, they were asked to offer their open-ended reasons for why they said so. The impression that he is “too liberal/not conservative enough” was offered as the top reason for not voting enthusiastically for McCain by 12% of Republican primary voters who were asked. Among Democratic primary voters, the top reason cited among those not voting enthusiastically for Obama is “inexperienced/not qualified” (16%) and for those who say they will not vote enthusiastically for Clinton, “no particular reason” tops the list at 14%, (followed by “disagree with her views” at 11%).

General Election and Match-Ups

Looking ahead to the general election, voters continue to say that a Democratic candidate has a better chance of winning in 2008. Ending a downward trend since January, there has been a slight increase in this sentiment since last month (see Table 2).

Table 2: Best Chance of Winning General Election

	Jan 2008 (n=803)	Feb 2008 (n=803)	Mar 2008 (n=799)	May 2008 (n=803)
Democratic candidate	62%	56%	50%	53%
Republican candidate	23%	25%	33%	32%

“Despite the perception that the long Democratic primary process is hurting the Democratic Party, it seems clear that Democratic primary voters remain as enthusiastic as ever about the race,” says Amy Walter, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hotline*. “Even in the face of the heated back and forth among the two Democratic contenders, both Obama and Clinton are seen almost identically by Democratic primary voters when matched up against John McCain, with both Obama and Clinton viewed as growing in their standing against the Republican nominee.”

This month, both Clinton and Obama have inched ahead of McCain, albeit in a statistical tie (see *Table 3*). And, in a three-way contest including Independent candidate Ralph Nader, little shift is seen in the results. When Nader is included in a McCain-Clinton race, Clinton is at a statistical tie with McCain (44% - 42%). When Nader is added into the McCain-Obama mix, Obama’s lead over McCain increases to a 5 point margin (45% - 40%).

Table 3: Vote Results among Top Presidential Candidates

	McCain vs. Clinton	McCain vs. Obama
March 2008	50% - 41%	46% - 44%
May 2008	46% - 43%	47% - 43%

The State of the Country and Top Issues

The perception that the direction of the country is on the wrong track is at an all-time high for the poll, with 75% of voters saying this. The economy continues to be seen as the top issue facing the country at 36%, which is virtually unchanged since last month (37%). In addition, voters’ view that gas/fuel/oil prices are a top issue has jumped 6 points from last month’s poll, from 4% in March to 10% in May.

When asked which party would do the best job handling the nation’s economy, registered voters say Democrats over Republicans, 49% to 36%, reflecting a 3 point jump for Republicans since last month. While all three candidates are tied on voters’ perceptions that they could best handle the economy, voters’ view that Clinton would best handle the economy has jumped 8 points since March from 20% to 28% this month. Obama has dropped slightly on this measure from 31% in March to 28% this month. In addition, Democrats are seen as best equipped to handle the nation’s healthcare (52% to 27%), and Clinton dominates the presidential field on her perceived ability to handle healthcare. 36% say Clinton would best handle healthcare, compared to 24% each for Obama and McCain. (see *Table 4*).

Table 4: Best at Handling Top Issues
(n=404/400)

	The Economy	Healthcare		The Economy	Healthcare
Democrats	49%	52%	John McCain	29%	24%
Republicans	36%	27%	Hillary Clinton	28%	36%
			Barack Obama	28%	24%

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To obtain complete poll results, please see www.diageohotlinepoll.com.

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Methodology: The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll was conducted by telephone from April 30 through May 3, 2008, among a random, representative sample of 803 registered voters, age 18 and older (margin of error +/- 3.5%). The sample included a sub-sample of both 374 Democratic primary voters (margin of error +/- 5.1%) and 278 Republican primary voters (margin of error +/- 5.9%).

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