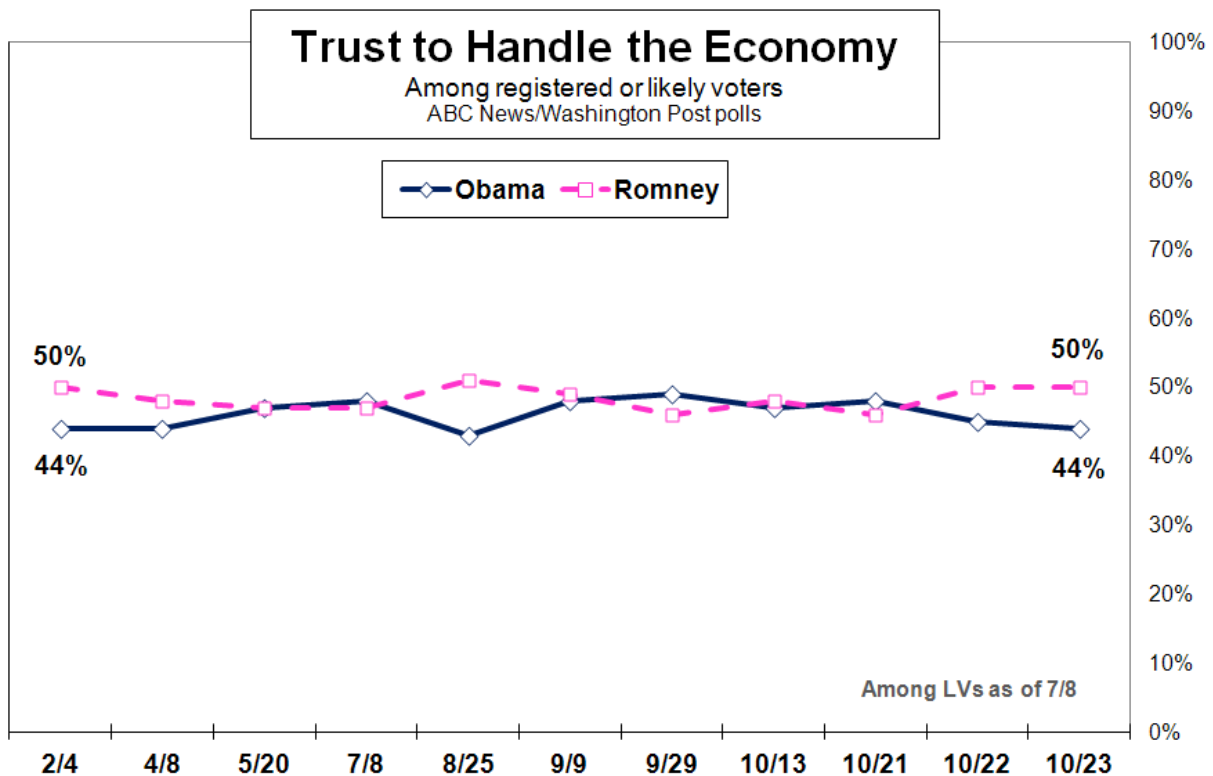


Romney Takes Lead on Economy; White Men are the Movers

Mitt Romney has advanced to a slight lead over Barack Obama in trust to handle the economy, and Obama has slipped beneath a clear majority in who better understands the public's economic problems – two key metrics of the 2012 presidential race.

These trends in the latest ABC News/Washington Post daily tracking poll aren't strong enough to change current preferences, nor is the 2-1 view that Obama won Monday night's final debate. But they're among the underlying dynamics making the race seem closer now than a month ago.



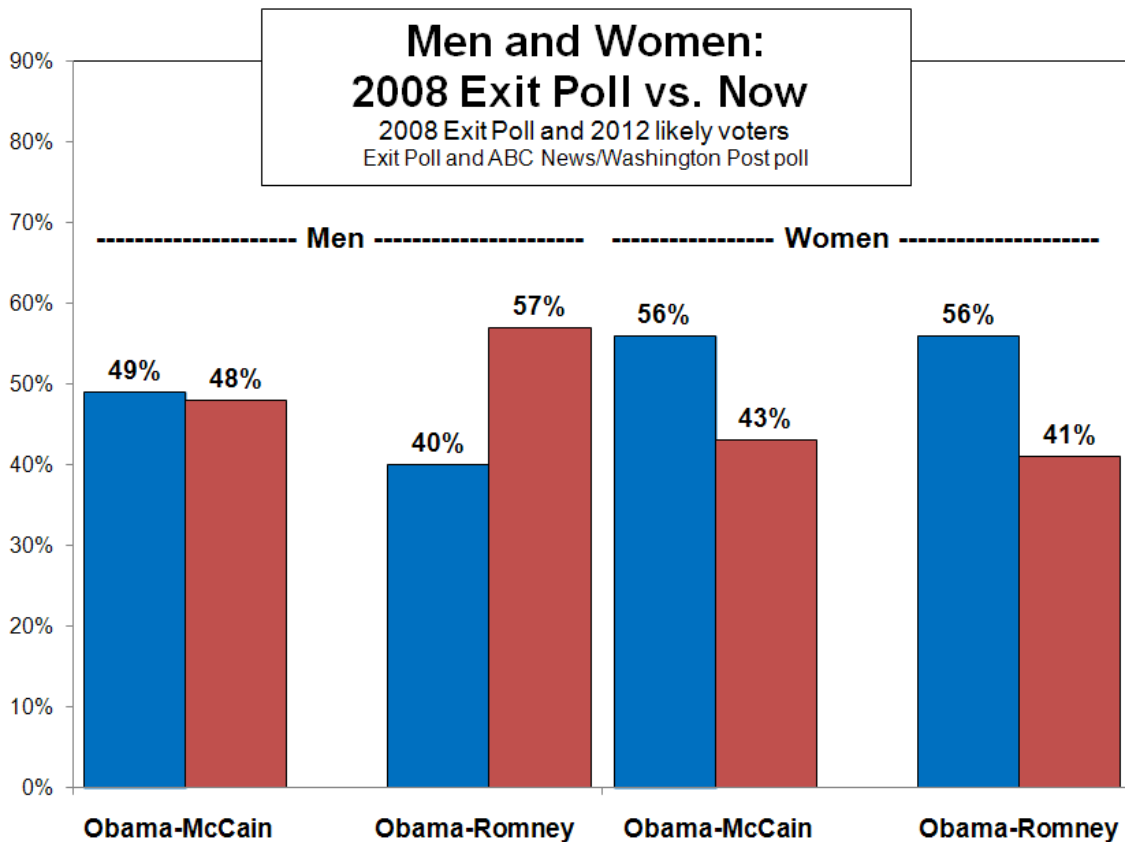
The candidates remain essentially tied, with 49 percent of likely voters for Romney, 48 percent for Obama in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#). That includes vast and sharpening gaps among some groups, with highs for both candidates among core supporters.

One example is white men, in particular those who lack a college degree; almost all of the recent shifts in trust on the economy and perceived economic empathy have occurred in this group.

Romney's support among white men is its highest of the campaign, a 2-1 margin, 65-32 percent. That compares with 57-41 percent, McCain-Obama, in the 2008 exit poll.

While it's closer among white women, 53-44 percent, Romney-Obama, that very broad support among white men lifts Romney to a new high among whites overall, 59 percent. And it expands the gender gap to a new high as well: A 17-point lead for Romney among men, 57-40 percent, compared with a 15-point advantage for Obama among women, 56-41 percent.

And it's men, compared to four years ago, who are making it close. Obama beat John McCain among women in 2008 by 13 points, similar to his margin over Romney today. But McCain only tied Obama among men, a far cry from Romney's large advantage in this group now.

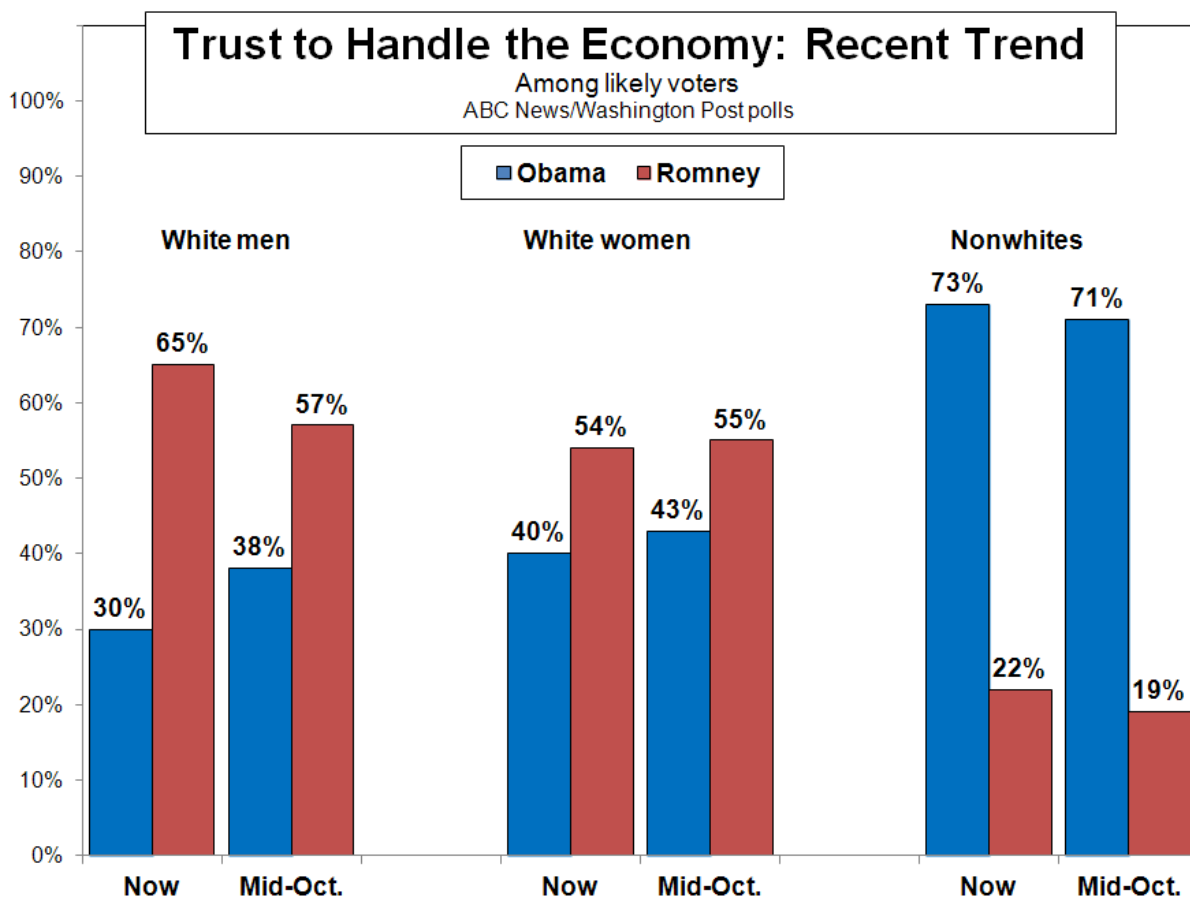


Obama pushes back among other groups. One example is Hispanics, whom Obama described as crucial to his re-election in a Des Moines Register interview released today. While they make up a small share of the national electorate in this survey, 8 percent (about the same as in 2008), Obama is supported by 75 percent of Hispanics – a new high this season, and more than his 67 percent in the 2008 exit poll. They indeed could be critical in close states, or in those with larger concentrations of Hispanic voters.

Obama, additionally, is winning a near-unanimous 95 percent support from blacks, and 79 percent of nonwhites overall, matching his high of the 2012 campaign. Nonwhites account for 24 percent of likely voters in this survey – very close to their 2008 turnout, 26 percent.

THE ECONOMY – While preferences among groups – and their turnout – will determine the outcome, concerns about the economy are driving this contest, and there Romney has made gradual progress. Likely voters now pick him over Obama by 50-44 percent as the candidate they trust to do a better job handling the economy, a slight but marginally significant lead for Romney for the first time since late August.

As noted, that shift has occurred almost entirely among white men: They favor Romney over Obama on the economy by a 35-point margin now (65-30 percent), compared with 19 points in mid-October (57-38 percent). There’s been essentially no change in the same period among white women (+14 points for Romney in trust to handle the economy) or among all nonwhites (+51 points for Obama).



While Obama never has had a clear lead overall in trust to handle the economy, he’s usually prevailed in another measure, which candidate better understands the economic problems of ordinary Americans. On this, however, he’s gone from a 9-point advantage (51-42 percent) in mid-October to 50-45 percent now – a 5-point differential that is not statistically significant given this survey’s margin of sampling error. As with trust to handle the economy, Obama hasn’t scored this weakly relative to Romney on economic empathy since late August, just before the party conventions.

The shift on empathy, as with trust on the economy, has occurred almost exclusively among white men, moving from a non-significant 8-point tilt to Romney on this question in mid-October to a 26-point margin now. Views among white women and nonwhites on economic empathy, again, are essentially unchanged.

Drilling further, these shifts, in both cases, have occurred disproportionately among a specific group of white men – those who lack a college degree. They expressed greater trust in Romney to handle the economy by 24 points in mid-October, but do so by a 47-point margin now. And on economic empathy the margin for Romney among less-educated white men has moved from 13 points in mid-October to 40 points now.

DEBATE THIS – These trends may mitigate whatever benefit Obama sought to take from the third and final presidential debate – given, especially, the apparent lasting benefit to Romney of his performance in the first debate.

Using single-night survey results from last night, likely voters by 48-24 percent say Obama won the third debate. Nonetheless, they also say by a 21-point margin, 37-16 percent, that as a result of all three debates together, their opinion of Romney has gotten better rather than worse. Obama gets just a split decision on the same better/worse question, 16 percent vs. 18 percent. (The rest say their opinions didn't change.)

PERFORMANCE and ENTHUSIASM – Obama's overall job approval rating among likely voters stands at 50 percent, a challenging number albeit not one that precludes re-election. Another result, though, indicates his difficulties compared with four years ago: At his apex in 2008, 71 percent of his supporters said they were "very" enthusiastic about his candidacy. It's 60 percent now, essentially the same as Romney's strong enthusiasm (which, as noted yesterday, well surpasses John McCain's in '08.)

These measures return the discussion to turnout, and that's not just a question for Election Day. Seven percent of likely voters say in fact they've already voted, and they divide almost precisely evenly between Obama and Romney; an additional 28 percent say they're going to vote early, but haven't yet. The race among early voters and Election Day voters alike is close – within the margin of sampling error in both cases – raising the question of whether Obama, who far outpaced McCain among early voters in 2008, can replicate the feat this time.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 20-23, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,394 likely voters, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of sampling error of 3 points, including design effect. (Questions 19-20 were asked Oct. 23 among 357 likely voters; those results have a 6.5-point error margin.) The survey was produced for ABC News by Langer Research Associates of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

Partisan divisions in this survey, Democrats-Republicans-independents, are 34-30-32 percent among likely voters. Partisan divisions in the 2008 exit poll were 39-32-29 percent.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

*= less than 0.5 percent

1. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) How closely are you following the 2012 presidential race: very closely, somewhat closely, not so closely, or not closely at all?

		---- Closely -----			---- Not closely -----			No
	NET	Very	Smwt	NET	Not so	At all	opinion	
10/23/12 LV	93	63	31	6	4	2	*	
10/22/12 LV	92	64	28	8	5	3	*	
10/21/12 LV	92	64	28	8	5	3	*	
10/13/12 LV	93	60	33	6	4	2	*	
9/29/12 LV	92	54	38	8	6	2	0	
9/9/12 LV	87	51	36	13	8	5	1	
5/20/12 RV	82	38	44	18	9	8	*	
2/4/12* RV	79	37	43	20	12	8	*	
1/15/12 RV	76	33	43	24	14	10	*	

*2/4/12 and previous not "too" closely
Call for full trend.

2. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) I'd like you to rate the chances that you will vote in the presidential election in November: Are you absolutely certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50, or less than that?

	Certain to vote	Probably vote	Chances 50/50	Less than that	Don't think will vote (vol.)	Already voted (vol.)	No op.
10/23/12 RV	80	6	6	2	1	5	*
10/22/12 RV	82	5	6	2	1	4	*
10/21/12 RV	84	6	4	2	*	4	*
10/13/12 RV	85	7	4	1	1	1	1
9/29/12 RV	84	7	7	2	*	0	*
9/9/12 RV	83	7	6	4	*	NA	0
8/25/12 RV	81	8	6	3	1		*
7/8/12 RV	81	9	8	2	*	"	*

Call for full trend.

2x. (IF CERTAIN TO VOTE) Do you think you'll (vote in person at your polling place on Election Day), or (vote before Election Day by early voting or mail-in ballot)?

	Vote in person	Early voting/ mail-in ballot	Already voted (vol.)	No opinion
10/23/12 RV	62	28	7	2
10/22/12 RV	64	27	6	2
10/21/12 RV	66	27	5	2
10/13/12 RV	67	30	2	1

Call for full trend.

3. (IF CERTAIN TO VOTE) If the presidential election were being held today and the candidates were (Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the Democrats) and (Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan, the Republicans), for whom would you vote? Which candidates are you leaning

toward, (Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the Democrats) or (Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan, the Republicans)? (ASKED IF ALREADY VOTED) For whom did you vote?

NET LEANED VOTE PREFERENCE - among likely voters

	Obama	Romney	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/23/12 LV	48	49	*	1	1
10/22/12 LV	48	49	*	2	1
10/21/12 LV	49	48	*	2	1
10/13/12 LV	49	46	1	1	2
9/29/12 LV	49	47	*	2	1
9/9/12 LV	49	48	*	1	2
8/25/12 LV	47	49	1	1	1
7/8/12* LV	50	47	*	2	2
*7/18/12: VPs not included					

5. (IF SUPPORT OBAMA OR ROMNEY) Will you definitely vote for (NAMED CANDIDATE - OBAMA/ROMNEY), or just probably?

	Definitely vote for	Probably vote for	No opinion
Obama			
10/23/12 LV	91	9	*
10/22/12 LV	91	8	*
10/21/12 LV	91	8	*
Romney			
10/23/12 LV	92	7	1
10/22/12 LV	92	8	1
10/21/12 LV	90	9	*

6. (IF SUPPORT/VOTED OBAMA OR ROMNEY) Would you say you are very enthusiastic about supporting (Obama/Romney), somewhat enthusiastic, not so enthusiastic, or not enthusiastic at all?

	NET	Enthusiastic Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	No opinion
Obama							
10/23/12 LV	95	60	35	4	3	1	*
10/22/12 LV	96	62	34	4	3	1	*
10/21/12 LV	96	64	32	4	3	1	*
10/13/12 LV	95	60	35	4	4	1	*
10/13/12 RV	94	55	40	5	4	1	1
9/29/12 RV	91	51	40	9	7	2	0
9/9/12 RV	93	56	38	7	3	3	0
8/25/12 RV	88	48	39	11	7	4	1
7/8/12 RV	91	51	40	8	5	3	1
5/20/12 RV	93	51	41	7	4	4	0
Romney							
10/23/12 LV	93	62	31	6	5	1	1
10/22/12 LV	93	62	32	6	4	2	1
10/21/12 LV	93	58	35	6	5	1	1
10/13/12 LV	93	62	31	7	4	2	1
10/13/12 RV	92	59	33	8	5	2	1
9/29/12 RV	87	48	39	13	6	7	*
9/9/12 RV	87	46	40	13	7	6	1
8/25/12 RV	83	42	41	17	12	4	*
7/8/12 RV	85	38	47	15	11	4	*
5/20/12 RV	75	26	48	25	15	9	1

Call for full trend.

7. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling his job as president? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

		----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
		NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
10/23/12	LV	50	30	19	49	9	40	2
10/22/12	LV	49	31	18	49	9	40	2
10/21/12	LV	50	31	19	48	8	40	2
10/13/12	LV	50	32	18	48	9	40	2
10/13/12	RV	51	30	21	47	10	37	2
9/29/12	RV	49	25	24	49	12	37	2
9/9/12	RV	48	27	21	50	10	39	2
8/25/12	RV	47	26	21	50	13	37	3
8/25/12		50	27	23	46	13	33	4
7/8/12		47	24	24	49	15	34	4
5/20/12		47	26	21	49	13	36	3
4/8/12		50	30	20	45	10	35	6
3/10/12		46	28	18	50	11	39	4
2/4/12		50	29	22	46	11	36	3
1/15/12		48	25	23	48	11	37	4

Call for full trend.

12. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Regardless of who you support, which candidate do you trust to do a better job handling the economy - (Obama) or (Romney)?

		Obama	Romney	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/23/12	LV	44	50	1	3	2
10/22/12	LV	45	50	1	2	2
10/21/12	LV	46	48	1	3	2
10/13/12	LV	48	47	*	2	3
10/13/12	RV	48	44	*	4	4
9/29/12	RV	47	47	*	4	2
9/9/12	RV	47	45	*	3	4
8/25/12	RV	43	50	*	4	3
7/8/12	RV	45	48	1	3	3
5/20/12	RV	47	47	*	3	3
4/8/12	RV	44	48	1	4	3
2/4/12	RV	44	50	1	3	2

13. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Regardless of who you may support, who do you think better understands the economic problems people in this country are having - (Obama) or (Romney)?

		Obama	Romney	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/23/12	LV	50	45	2	2	1
10/22/12	LV	51	44	2	2	1
10/21/12	LV	51	44	2	3	1
10/13/12	LV	51	42	2	4	1
10/13/12	RV	51	40	2	5	2
9/29/12	RV	52	39	2	6	1
9/9/12	RV	50	40	3	4	3
8/25/12	RV	47	40	1	9	2
7/8/12	RV	51	40	2	5	2
5/20/12	RV	48	40	2	8	2
4/8/12	RV	49	38	2	8	2
2/4/12	RV	52	37	2	7	2

19. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) I have a question about the presidential debate between (Obama) and (Romney) Monday night. From what you've seen, heard or read about it - who, in your opinion, won the debate?

	Obama	Romney	Neither/a draw a tie (vol.)	No opinion
10/23/12 LV	48	24	18	10
10/21/12 LV*	48	29	16	8
10/13/12 LV*	17	71	7	4

*10/13 and 10/21 results refer to the first and second debates, respectively

20. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) As a result of the three presidential debates that have been held, do you have a better opinion of (Obama/Romney), a worse opinion of him, or haven't the debates changed your opinion of (Obama/Romney) one way or the other?

10/23/12 - Summary Table (among likely voters)

	Better	Worse	Has not changed	No opinion
a. Obama	16	18	63	3
b. Romney	37	16	44	3

Trend:

a. Obama

	Better	Worse	Has not changed	No opinion
10/23/12 LV	16	18	63	3
10/21/12 LV*	15	18	65	1
10/13/12 LV*	8	19	72	1

b. Romney

	Better	Worse	Has not changed	No opinion
10/23/12 LV	37	16	44	3
10/21/12 LV*	37	19	43	1
10/13/12 LV*	37	14	47	2

*10/21 "As a result of the two presidential debates..."; 10/13 "As a result of the debate..."

*** END ***