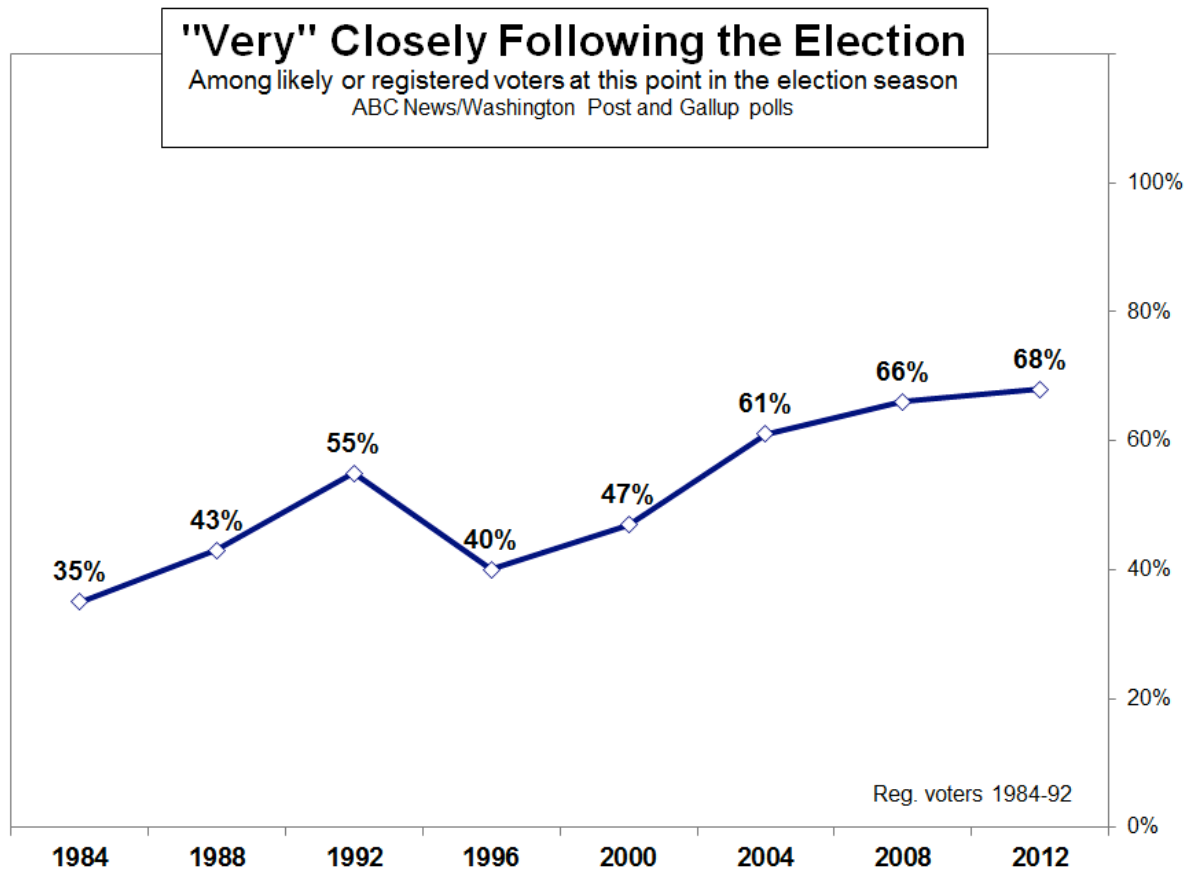


## 2012 Presidential Race Is its Own Perfect Storm

As it enters its frenetic final week the presidential race is drawing more close attention than any such contest in 28 years, a testament to a campaign that has been the closest by some measures in pre-election polls dating back even further – to 1960, or even to the early days of polling in 1936.

Support for Barack Obama and Mitt Romney has averaged 48-48 percent since September, the closest in ABC/Post polls, or Gallup polls before them, in comparable periods dating back 76 years. It's also the first contest since 1960 in which neither candidate, in this period, has exceeded 50 percent support (adjusting for third-party vote where applicable).

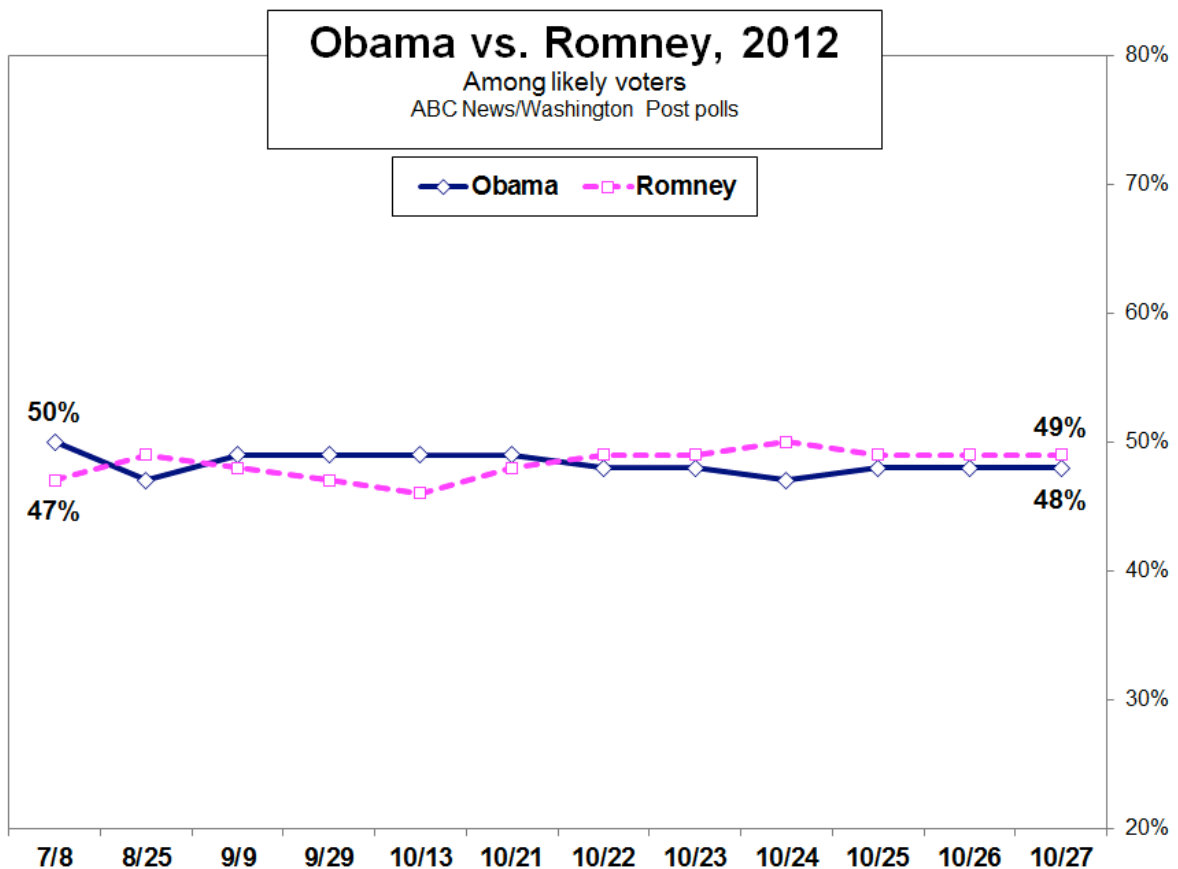


Steady the past three days, the gap is now a single point, with 49 percent support for Romney among likely voters, 48 percent for Obama in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#). At this stage in 2008, Obama had held majority support since Oct. 11.

The comparison of the average gap between the leading candidates was done using results from September through this point before the election in ABC/Post polls since 1984 and available Gallup polls before them dating to 1936. The data are thin in some years – just one poll from this period in 1944, and just three in 1940, 1948, 1956, 1960, 1964, 1972 and 1980.

Average difference between candidates											
in ABC/Post vote preference results - September to October											
2012	2008	2004	2000	1996	1992	1988	1984				
0 pts.	8	4	2	13	13	6	16				
...and in Gallup polls previously											
1980	1976	1972	1968	1964	1960	1956	1952	1948	1944	1940	1936
4	6	26	12	34	2	11	11	7	2	9	6

The tight race is making it a closely followed one: Sixty-eight percent of likely voters say they're following the election "very" closely – a non-significant 2 points more than at this time four years ago, and the most in ABC/Post or Gallup polls dating to the second Reagan election.

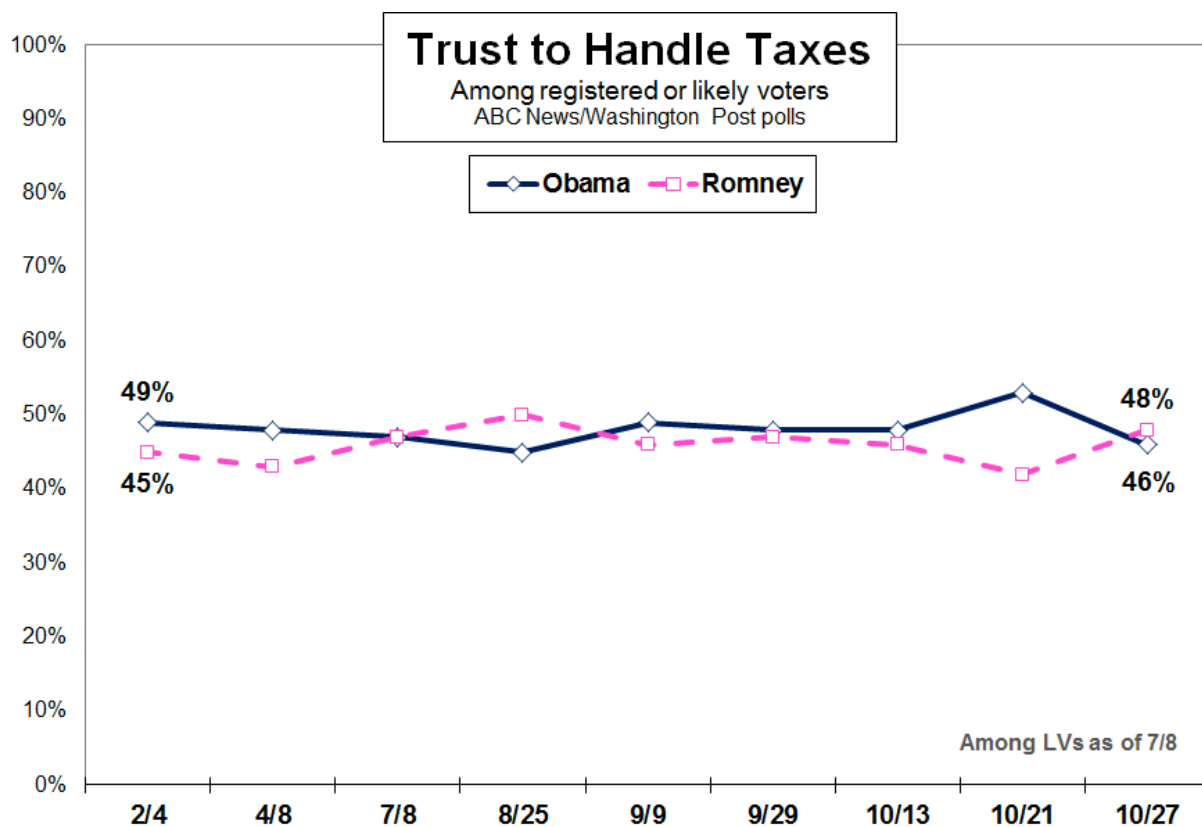


Possible effects of Hurricane Sandy, bearing down on the Northeast, are unclear. But high attention to the election could presage high voter turnout. And marking Romney's competitiveness

compared with John McCain's in 2008, close attention is up especially among conservatives and Republicans, two of his strongest support groups.

**TWO ISSUES** – Two particular findings also indicate the unusual dynamics of this year's election. One is taxes: Republicans customarily prevail on the issue, but Obama and Romney instead run essentially evenly in trust to handle it, 46-48 percent.

That result – possibly indicating continued suspicion of Romney's economic priorities – is useful for Obama. At the same time, it's been better for him; trust on taxes has tightened from an unusual 11-point advantage for the Democrat nearly a week ago – a change that occurred almost entirely among political independents, the most moveable voters in national elections.



The other issue is health care, usually a strong point for Democrats, but now one on which preferences again divide very closely, 49-46 percent Obama-Romney, likely reflecting doubts about elements of Obama's health care reform law.

**APPROVAL and ECONOMY** – These are hardly the only tight measures. In another fundamental gauge in an incumbent election, Obama's job approval rating stands at 50 percent among likely voters; it's been 48 to 50 percent since before the conventions.

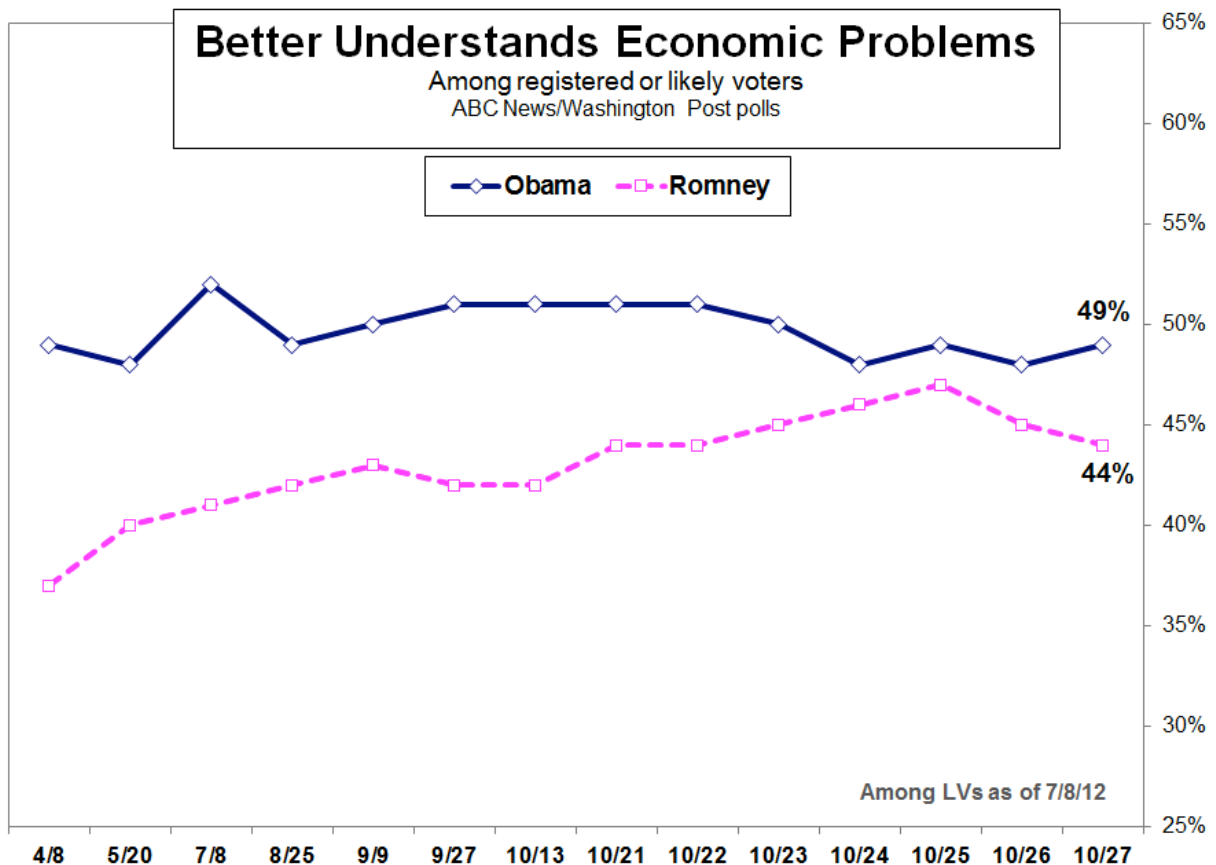
George W. Bush saw 50 percent approval among likely voters in an ABC/Post poll on Oct. 20, 2004, and he was at 48 percent among all adults in a Gallup poll Oct. 31 that year. The only other incumbent to win re-election with approval this low was, possibly, Harry S. Truman, with 40 percent approval in a Gallup poll in June 1948. No result closer to that election is available.

A continued challenge for Obama is the intensity of sentiment about his work in office to date – a 10-point difference in the number who “strongly” disapprove, 40 percent, vs. strongly approve, 30 percent.

The economy has been Obama’s millstone; it could be asked why he’s competitive at all, given the length and depth of the downturn. Poor economic conditions usually doom a president, as with the first President Bush in 1992. One answer is that politics are comparative, and Romney’s not sealed the deal in persuading voters he could do better.

Likely voters now divide 50-45 percent between Romney and Obama on who would better handle the economy, back to within the margin of sampling error after a foray by Romney beyond it, 52-43 percent, last week.

It’s also a non-significant 5-point gap on another important measure, economic empathy, defined as who better understands people’s economic problems – on this 49 percent pick Obama, 44 percent Romney. Last week Romney had closed to within 2 points on empathy.



VOTING and GROUPS – Another key dynamic in the age of early voting is who casts their ballot, and when. Twelve percent of likely voters say in fact they’ve already voted, a number that’s more than doubled in the past week and likely will rise very steeply this week.

Early voters report having supported Obama over Romney by 57-40 percent, almost exactly Obama’s advantage among early voters against McCain in 2008. The difference this year is that Romney leads Obama by 10 points among likely voters who plan to cast their ballots on Election Day – a group in which Obama and McCain were essentially even in 2008 polling.

It’s a result that suggests the outcome of this contest will be hard to anticipate; it likely will come down to Election-Day turnout. And – again unlike in 2008 – the campaigns’ outreach to their potential voters is evenly matched this year, as detailed in Friday’s analysis.

Finally, divisions among groups match their recent patterns – a wide lead for Romney among whites (now 17 points, 57-40 percent), especially white men (61-36 percent); and a wider lead for Obama among nonwhites (75-23 percent). Independents divide by 55-40 percent in Romney’s favor, moderates by 57-39 percent in Obama’s. And while Obama holds a nearly 2-1 advantage among likely voters younger than 30, the contest has tightened among those in their 30s – potentially a new battleground group, among the many in the 2012 contest.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 24-27, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,278 likely voters, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of sampling error of 3.5 points, including design effect. 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 35-28-34 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>.

Media contacts: David Ford, (212) 456-7243, and Julie Townsend, (212) 456-4934.

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
10/27/12 LV	99	68	31	1	1	*	*
10/26/12 LV	99	66	33	1	1	*	0
10/25/12 LV	95	62	33	5	3	2	*
10/24/12 LV	94	63	32	5	3	2	*

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.
10/27/12	RV	79	5	5	2	*	9	*
10/26/12	RV	79	6	5	2	*	8	*
10/25/12	RV	79	6	6	2	1	6	*
10/24/12	RV	79	7	6	2	1	6	*
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
10/27/12	LV	62	24	12	2
10/26/12	LV	62	25	11	2
10/25/12	LV	61	29	8	1
10/24/12	LV	62	29	8	1
10/23/12	LV	62	28	7	2
10/22/12	LV	64	27	6	2
10/21/12	LV	66	27	5	2
10/13/12	LV	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
10/27/12	LV	48	49	1	1	1
10/26/12	LV	48	49	1	1	1

10/25/12 LV	48	49	1	1	1
10/24/12 LV	47	50	1	1	1
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

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?

	---- Enthusiastic ---			--- Not enthusiastic ----			No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	opinion
Obama:							
10/27/12 LV	95	64	31	4	3	1	1
10/26/12 LV	94	61	33	4	3	1	1
10/25/12 LV	94	59	35	5	3	2	1
10/24/12 LV	96	60	35	4	3	1	*
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	*
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:							
10/27/12 LV	95	59	36	5	3	2	*
10/26/12 LV	93	59	35	6	5	2	*
10/25/12 LV	93	58	35	7	5	2	1
10/24/12 LV	93	60	33	7	5	2	1
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
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.

6x. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Have you voted for president in any year before this 2012 election, or is this the first year you'll be voting for president?

	Voted before	First time	No opinion
10/27/12 LV	93	7	0
10/26/12 LV	92	8	0

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 opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
10/27/12 LV	50	30	20	48	8	40	2
10/26/12 LV	50	30	19	48	8	41	2
10/25/12 LV	49	30	19	49	8	41	2
10/24/12 LV	49	30	18	50	9	41	1
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
9/29/12 LV	48	27	21	51	10	41	1
9/9/12 LV	49	30	19	50	9	41	1
8/25/12 LV	48	27	21	50	11	39	2
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 [ITEM] - (Obama) or (Romney)?

10/27/12 - Summary Table (among likely voters)

	Obama	Romney	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
a. Handling the economy	45	50	1	3	2
b. Handling taxes	46	48	1	3	2
i. Handling health care policy	49	46	1	2	2

Trend:

a. Handling the economy

	Obama	Romney	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/27/12 LV	45	50	1	3	2
10/26/12 LV	44	51	1	3	2
10/25/12 LV	44	51	1	3	1
10/24/12 LV	43	52	1	3	2
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
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

b. Handling taxes

	Obama	Romney	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/27/12 LV	46	48	1	3	2
10/21/12 LV	53	42	*	2	2
10/13/12 LV	48	46	*	3	3
9/29/12 LV	48	47	1	3	2



9/9/12	LV	49	46	1	2	2
8/25/12	LV	45	50	*	3	2
7/8/12	LV	47	47	*	3	3
4/8/12	RV	48	43	1	4	4
2/4/12	RV	49	45	*	2	4

i. Handling health care policy

		Obama	Romney	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/27/12	LV	49	46	1	2	2
10/13/12	LV	47	46	*	4	4
9/29/12	LV	48	45	*	5	1
9/9/12	LV	48	46	1	3	2
8/25/12	LV	49	47	*	2	2
7/8/12	LV	50	43	1	4	2
4/8/12	RV	49	40	*	5	6

13a. (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
10/27/12	LV	49	44	2	4	1
10/26/12	LV	48	45	2	4	1
10/25/12	LV	49	47	1	3	1
10/24/12	LV	48	46	2	3	1
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
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

18. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Have you personally been contacted by a representative of the [CANDIDATE] campaign, either by phone, in-person, or online asking you for your support, or not?

10/27/12 - Summary Table (among likely voters)

	Yes	No	No opinion
a. Obama	23	75	2
b. Romney	23	75	2

Trend:

		Yes	No	No opinion
a. Obama				
10/27/12	LV	23	75	2
10/26/12	LV	23	75	2
10/25/12	LV	22	76	2
10/13/12	LV	27	71	2
9/29/12	RV	23	76	1
8/25/12	RV	20	79	1

b. Romney

	Yes	No	No opinion
10/27/12 LV	23	75	2
10/26/12 LV	23	75	2
10/25/12 LV	23	75	2
10/13/12 LV	22	75	3
9/29/12 RV	20	79	1
8/25/12 RV	13	86	*

18o. (IF CONTACTED BY OBAMA CAMPAIGN) When was the last time you were contacted, within the last week, within the last month or longer ago than that?

	Within last week	Within last month	Longer ago	No opinion
10/27/12 LV	62	28	8	2
10/26/12 LV	62	27	9	2
10/25/12 LV	61	29	6	4
10/13/12 LV	54	37	9	*
9/29/12 RV	53	34	10	3

18/18o NET:

	NET	Yes	Not contacted	No op.			
	Last week	Last month	Longer	Don't know			
10/27/12 LV	23	14	6	2	1	75	2
10/26/12 LV	23	14	6	2	1	75	2
10/25/12 LV	22	13	6	1	1	76	2
10/13/12 LV	27	15	10	2	*	71	2
9/29/12 RV	23	12	8	2	NA	76	1

18r. (IF CONTACTED BY ROMNEY CAMPAIGN) When was the last time you were contacted, within the last week, within the last month or longer ago than that?

	Within last week	Within last month	Longer ago	No opinion
10/27/12 LV	63	25	8	4
10/26/12 LV	58	32	8	2
10/25/12 LV	57	33	8	2
10/13/12 LV	57	35	7	1
9/29/12 RV	55	34	9	1

18/18r NET:

	NET	Yes	Not contacted	No op.			
	Last week	Last month	Longer	Don't know			
10/27/12 LV	23	14	6	2	1	75	2
10/26/12 LV	23	13	7	2	*	75	2
10/25/12 LV	23	13	8	2	*	75	2
10/13/12 LV	22	13	8	2	*	75	3
9/29/12 RV	20	11	7	2	NA	79	1

\*\*\* END \*\*\*