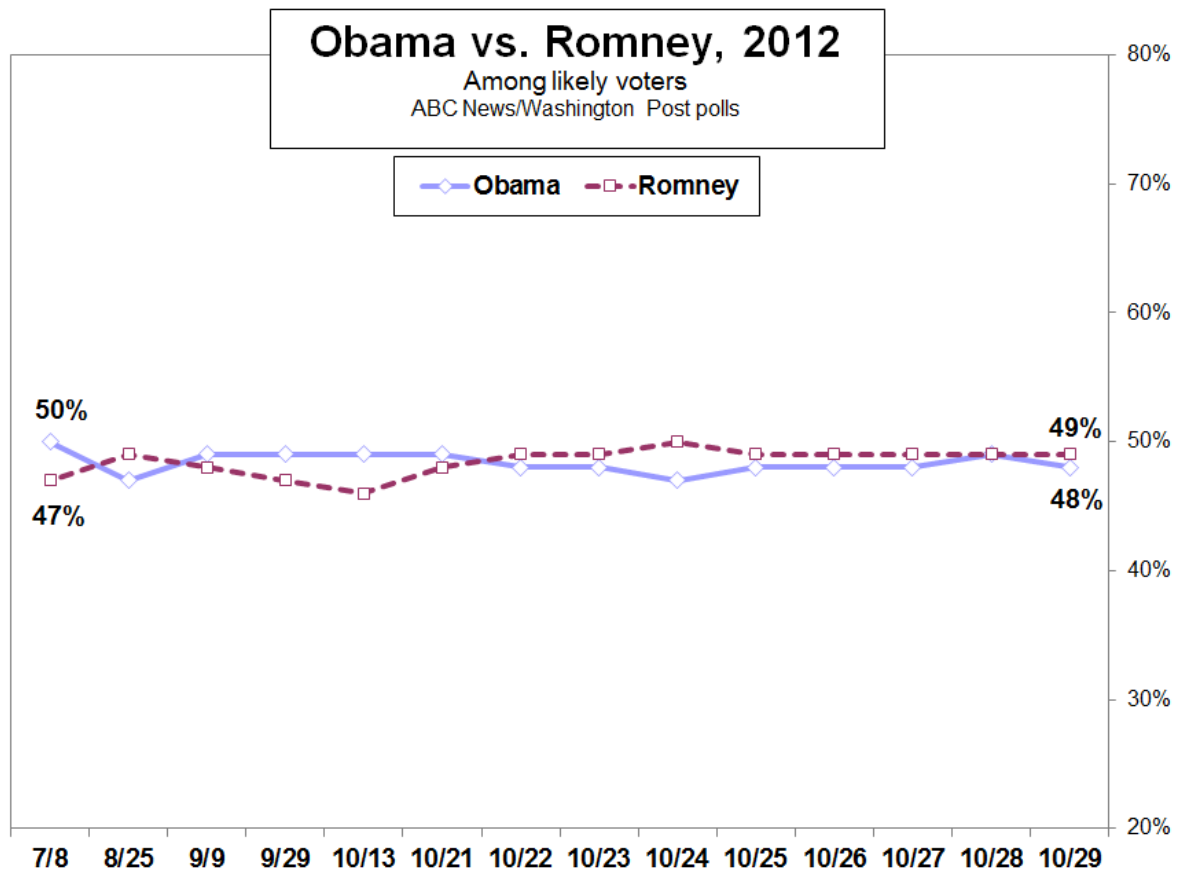


## **Tighter Gender Gap, Sharper Partisanship – But No Change in the Bottom Line**

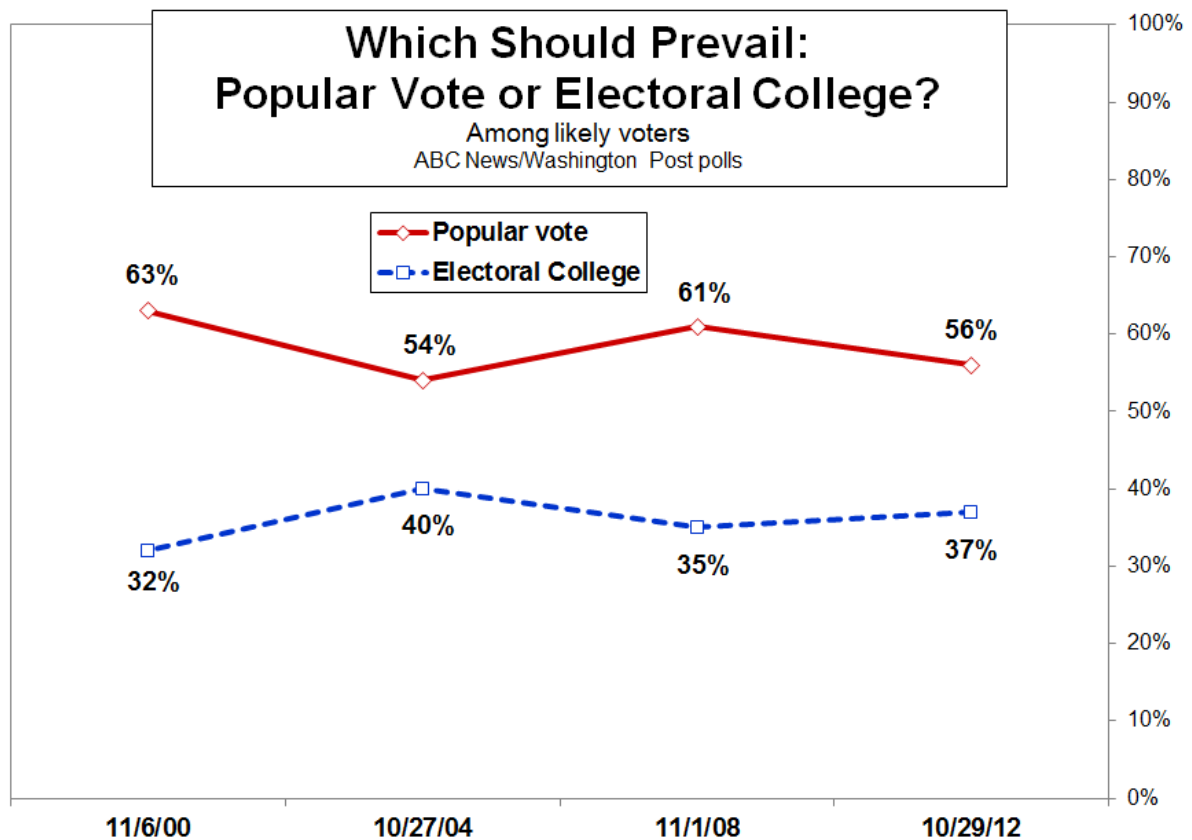
A tightening of the gender gap and a closer race among political independents mark trends among likely voters the past several days, but with no meaningful change to the bottom line in the evenly matched 2012 presidential race.

Nationally, likely voters divide by 49-48 percent between Mitt Romney and Barack Obama in the latest ABC News/Washington Post daily tracking poll. That's exactly where it's been in seven of the nine ABC/Post tracking poll releases since the start of last week, albeit with movement in some underlying measures – toward Romney in the middle of last week, then easing back since.

In the 11 states designated as battlegrounds by the ABC News Political Unit, moreover, it's 49-48 percent, Obama-Romney, in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), when all 12 nights of this daily tracking poll are combined.



Such close overall results raise the possibility that one candidate could win the popular vote, another the electoral college, as in 2000. Were that to happen, likely voters by 56-37 percent say the winner of the popular vote should prevail. Sadly for them, the Constitution says otherwise.



The latest results are based on interviews through a four-day period including Monday evening, when Hurricane Sandy struck the Northeast. Out of a national sample of 1,271 likely voters, 51 were interviewed Monday in the Northeast, the typical number in a single night. Eighty-six percent of those interviews were completed by 6:30 p.m., and all by 7:30 p.m. The storm, preceded by heavy winds and rain, made landfall at about 8 p.m. Data from the Monday night interviews in the Northeast are in accord with those from previous nights.

**GROUPS** – One notable shift is in the gender gap, which widened to its largest of the campaign last week but has narrowed since. Today women divide by 50-48 percent between Obama and Romney, compared with 56-41 percent at the largest gap last week; and preferences among men, similarly, have narrowed, to 46-51 percent now, from 40-57 percent last week.

Those changes have come in some particular groups. Gains for Romney last week among white men who lack a college degree have subsided slightly; he's also lost some ground with men who are political moderates or independents. Obama meanwhile has slipped among women who are under age 50, or who hold college degrees; and his support from Republican women has gone from slight to sligher.

Whatever the vote preferences, underpinnings of the gender gap remain: As is customary, women are 9 percentage points more likely than men to identify themselves as Democrats.

Preferences also have shifted a bit among independents, from a campaign peak of 58-38 percent in Romney's favor last week to 52-45 percent now. Reflecting sharper partisanship, Obama's doing better with independents who lean toward the Democratic Party, and, as noted above, with independent men. A competitive result for Romney among unmarried independents has faded; that's a return to the norm, in that unmarried people generally are a more Democratic group.

VALUES – As if there weren't enough results to illustrate the continued closeness of the race, a new question in this tracking poll asks likely voters which candidate better represents their personal values. The result: another nearly even split, 49-47 percent between Obama and Romney.

Group differences on the question are predictably vast; 90 percent of liberals pick Obama as better reflecting their values, and 80 percent of conservatives pick Romney. More moderates say Obama rather than Romney better represents their values, 54-40 percent; the numbers overall even out because conservatives outnumber liberals by 13 points.

While Obama does better than Romney on values among moderates, it's numerically in Romney's favor among independents, 48-43 percent (although not a statistically significant difference, given the sample size). Among other groups, 54 percent of whites prefer Romney on values, while 77 percent of nonwhites select Obama.

COLLEGE – On the electoral college question mentioned above, majorities across the political spectrum (albeit just slightly among Republicans) favor the popular vote winner – 59 percent of independents, 56 percent of Democrats and 51 percent of Republicans. That's a change from 2004, when, perhaps recalling the outcome of the 2000 election, a much larger majority of Democrats said the popular vote should prevail – and most Republicans plumped for the electoral college.

The real answer, probably, is that it depends. In a similar question in 2000, just before the election most Republicans favored the popular vote, but after it, a majority said the electoral college should win the day – as it did, for the Republican candidate.

THE STORM – A more immediate question, if not yet answerable, is the impact on the election, if any, of Monday's devastating hurricane. It's a prognosticator's paradise, with little probative experience. Credit or blame for the response likely will be based on how smoothly or shakily it proceeds; the public's patience is bounded by the magnitude of the disruption and the strength of the recovery effort. The answer, then, may take time – and with the election a week away, there's precious little of that available.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 26-29, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,271 likely voters, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of sampling error of 3.5 points, including design

effect. (Questions 13e and 24 were asked Oct. 28-29 among 637 likely voters; those results have a 4.5-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 33-28-35 percent among likely voters. Partisan divisions in the 2008 exit poll were 39-32-29 percent. "Battleground states" as designated by the ABC News Political Unit are Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin.

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
10/29/12	LV	99	69	30	1	1	*	0
10/28/12	LV	99	69	30	1	1	*	*
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	Probably	Chances	Less than	Don't think	Already	No
		to vote	vote	50/50	that	will vote	voted	op.
						(vol.)	(vol.)	
10/29/12	RV	76	5	4	2	*	12	*
10/28/12	RV	77	5	4	2	1	11	*
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
10/29/12	LV	61	21	17	1
10/28/12	LV	60	22	15	2
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
10/29/12	LV	48	49	1	*	1
10/28/12	LV	49	49	1	1	1
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:								
10/29/12	LV	97	65	32	3	2	1	*
10/28/12	LV	95	66	30	4	2	1	1
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:								
10/29/12	LV	95	61	34	4	3	2	*
10/28/12	LV	94	61	33	5	4	1	*
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
10/29/12	LV	96	4	0
10/28/12	LV	96	4	0
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
		NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
10/29/12	LV	50	30	20	49	10	39	1
10/28/12	LV	51	31	20	47	9	39	1
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	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.

12a. (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
10/29/12	LV	46	49	1	2	2
10/28/12	LV	47	49	1	2	2
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

13. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Regardless of who you may support, who do you think [ITEM] - (Obama) or (Romney)?

10/29/12 - Summary Table (among likely voters)

	Obama	Romney	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
a. Better understands the economic problems people in this country are having	49	45	2	3	1
e. Better represents your own personal values	49	47	1	3	*

Trend:

a. Better understands the economic problems people in this country are having

	Obama	Romney	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion	
10/29/12	LV	49	45	2	3	1
10/28/12	LV	50	44	2	3	1
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

e. Better represents your own personal values

	Obama	Romney	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/29/12 LV	49	47	1	3	*
5/20/12	47	43	1	7	3

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?

10/29/12 - Summary Table (among likely voters)

	Yes	No	No opinion
a. Obama	28	70	2
b. Romney	25	72	3

Trend:

a. Obama

	Yes	No	No opinion
10/29/12 LV	28	70	2
10/28/12 LV	26	72	2
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
10/29/12 LV	25	72	3
10/28/12 LV	24	74	2
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
10/29/12 LV	64	24	10	2
10/28/12 LV	63	25	9	3
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	Last week	Last month	Longer	Don't know	Not contacted	No op.
10/29/12 LV	28	18	7	3	1	70	2
10/28/12 LV	26	16	7	2	1	72	2
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
10/29/12 LV	63	26	7	5
10/28/12 LV	64	26	7	4
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	Last week	Last month	Longer	Don't know	Not contacted	No op.
10/29/12 LV	25	16	6	2	1	72	3
10/28/12 LV	24	15	6	2	1	74	2
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

24. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Imagine that in the presidential election one candidate wins the popular vote, but another wins the majority of votes in the electoral college. If that were to happen who do you think should become president - the winner of the (popular vote) or the winner of the (electoral college)?

	Popular vote	Electoral college	No opin.
10/29/12 LV	56	37	7
11/1/08 LV	61	35	5
10/27/04 LV	54	40	6
11/6/00 LV	63	32	6

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