

A decorative graphic is present on the page. It features a solid green rectangle in the top-left corner. A thin yellow square is positioned at the bottom-right corner of this green rectangle. A thin grey line extends horizontally from the right side of this yellow square. Another thin yellow square is located at the bottom-right corner of a larger, thin grey rectangle that spans across the middle of the page. A thin grey line extends vertically from the top side of this second yellow square. A large, thin, light-yellow arc curves from the top-right towards the bottom-right, passing behind the text.

**2008 Vice Presidential  
Running Mate Survey**

*a survey of likely voters*



# **2008 Vice Presidential Running Mate Survey**

*a survey of likely voters*

**Report prepared by Gerard Rainville  
Data collected by Woelfel Research, Inc.**

**Copyright© by AARP, 2008  
AARP  
Knowledge Management  
601 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
Reprinting with Permission  
October 1, 2008**

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP neither endorses candidates for public office nor makes political contributions. We produce *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, our bimonthly magazine in Spanish and English; *NRTA Live & Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our website, [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org). AARP Foundation is our affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

For more information, contact Gerard Rainville at (202) 434-6295.

## Survey Findings

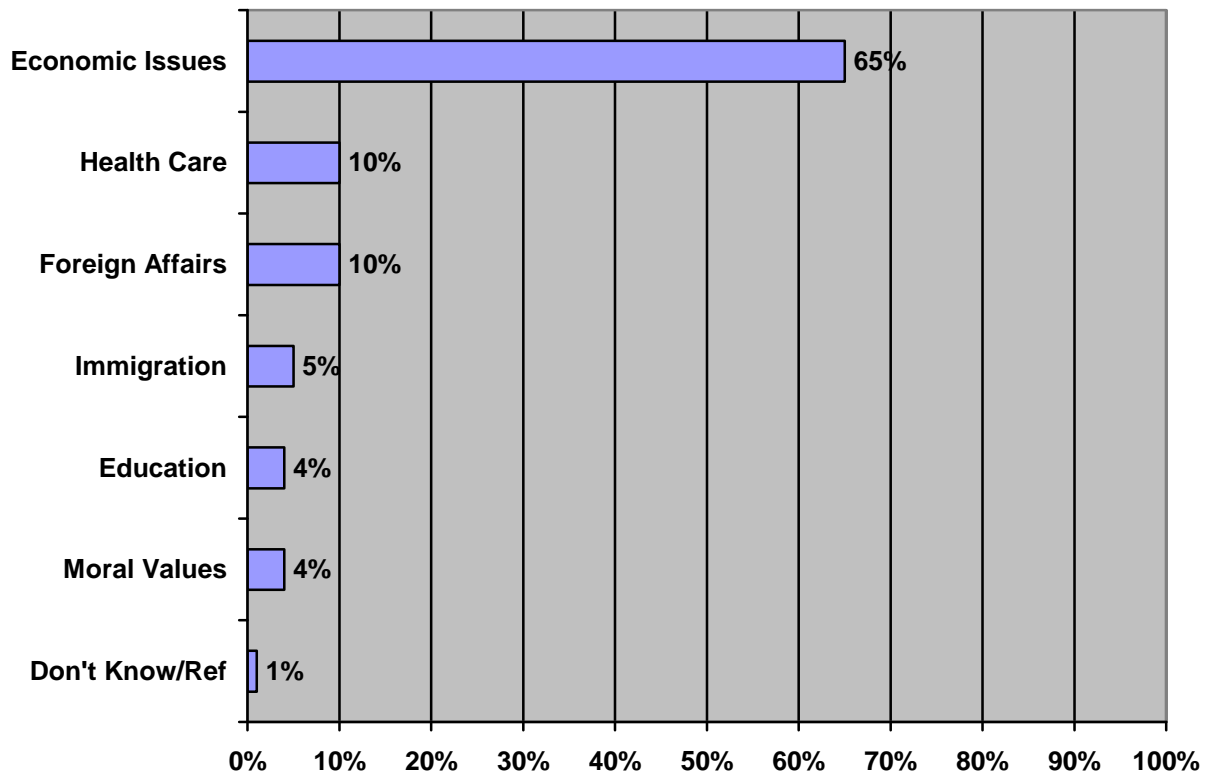
**The Presidential election has entered its last month and the two major party candidates have chosen their running mates. Has the vice presidential choice changed anyone's vote?**

The vice presidential choices do not seem to have changed the minds of many likely voters in terms of deciding who to vote for in the 2008 Presidential election. Seven percent of likely voters said they changed their minds about who to vote for; 31 percent said the vice presidential choice confirmed who they would vote for and 61 percent said it didn't affect their choice at all (see Table 1).

**As evidenced by almost every other public survey conducted in the last year, the economy is the overriding concern among likely voters.**

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of likely voters say that regardless of who wins the election, economic issues like jobs, the budget, rising prices, and taxes should be addressed by the new president in the first 100 days of his administration. 10 percent see health care issues as an immediate priority (Chart 1). Well into the debate season, the focus of likely voters is clear. They want answers to pressing questions about health care and a declining economy.

**Chart 1: Priorities for the New President**



More women than men say education and health care should be immediate priorities. More likely voters over 50 (12%) report that health care issues are an immediate priority than do those age 18-49 (7%) (see Table 2).

**The upcoming vice presidential debates are important for likely voters in determining which Presidential candidate to support.**

Although only seven percent of likely voters reported their Presidential choice was affected by the selection of a running mate, more than two thirds of likely voters say the upcoming vice presidential debates will be very or somewhat important in deciding for whom they plan to vote. This is due to a relative unfamiliarity with the running mates compared to the presidential candidates who have been campaigning for a longer period of time. Most likely voters have not yet fully consolidated their impressions of the running mates and will watch the debates to assess the relative merits of the Republican and Democratic ticket.

**The two vice presidential candidates have nearly equal favorability ratings among likely voters (58% for Biden and 57% for Palin have at least a “somewhat favorable” impression).**

Women have higher favorability ratings of Joe Biden than men do (60% for women versus 56% for men); whereas women have lower favorability ratings of Sarah Palin than do men (55% for women versus 60% for men) (see Table 3).

**Many surveys indicate that the public believes gridlock prevents progress on important issues.**

When asked which president/vice-president team would break through special interests and partisan gridlock to make real progress on the economy and health care, 39% said the Obama-Biden ticket would and 33% said McCain-Palin would. Twenty percent of likely voters did not know enough to judge.

More women and likely voters over age 50 say they don't yet know enough to judge which candidates would have more success at breaking through gridlock to make real progress on healthcare and the economy.

Among those likely voters that say the vice presidential debate is important in determining their vote, forty three percent say they do not yet know enough to judge which candidates would have more success at breaking through gridlock. These likely voters may turn to the debates to assess the candidates' plans and willingness to work across the aisle to make real progress on healthcare and the economy (see Table 4).

**More voters see Sarah Palin as a candidate who wants to make big changes and Joe Biden as a candidate with proven leadership.**

Men drive the finding that Sarah Palin is a change candidate (30% of men say she'll bring changes compared to 19% of men who say Biden will bring change).

Twenty six percent of women say both Biden and Palin will be change agents (Tables 5 and 6).

## Tables

Table 1. Would you say that the pick of a vice presidential running mate:?

	Total	Men	Women	18-49	50+	VP debate is <b>not</b> important for their vote	VP debate is important for their vote	Independents
Changed who you would vote for	7	8	7	5	9	3	9	9
Confirmed who you would vote for	31	32	30	30	31	30	31	31
Didn't affect your choice at all	61	59	62	64	57	67	58	59

Table 2. Which one of the following six issues would you most like the new President to address in his first 100 days in office?

	Total	Men	Women	18-49	50+	VP debate is <b>not</b> important for their vote	VP debate is important for their vote	Independents
Economic Issues	65	68	63	68	63	63	66	69
Foreign Affairs Issues	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Health care Issues	10	7	13	7	12	10	10	9
Education	4	2	6	6	2	3	5	3
Moral values Issues	4	6	3	6	3	5	4	4
Immigration	5	7	3	3	7	7	4	5

Table 3. Favorability Measures

	Total	Men	Women	18-49	50+	VP debate is <b>not</b> important for their vote	VP debate is important for their vote	Independents
At least “somewhat favorable”-- <b>Joe Biden</b>	58	56	60	59	58	56	59	57
At least “somewhat favorable”— <b>Sarah Palin</b>	57	60	55	57	58	53	60	57

Table 4. Who do you feel could break through special interest and partisan gridlock to make real progress on healthcare and the economy?

	Total	Men	Women	18-49	50+	VP debate is <b>not</b> important for their vote	VP debate is important for their vote	Independents
Barack Obama/Joe Biden (Democrat)	39	37	41	44	35	44	36	34
John McCain/Sarah Palin (Republican)	33	37	30	34	33	36	32	31
Neither/No candidate	7	9	5	5	8	7	3	11
Don’t know enough to judge	20	16	23	18	22	25	43	22

Table 5. Which would you say Sarah Palin represents *most* to you?

	Total	Men	Women	18-49	50+	VP debate is <b>not</b> important for their vote	VP debate is important for their vote	Independents
A candidate that I relate to personally	17	20	15	24	10	14	19	21
A candidate who has proven leadership	10	11	10	9	12	10	11	9
A candidate whose policies will benefit us most	6	6	5	4	7	6	6	4

A candidate who wants to make big changes and I think big changes are needed	28	30	26	26	30	23	30	27
Don't Know	21	16	25	18	23	21	20	20
Refused	19	17	20	19	18	27	14	19

Table 6. Which would you say Joe Biden represents *most* to you?

	Total	Men	Women	18-49	50+	VP debate is not important for their vote	VP debate is important for their vote	Independents
A candidate that I relate to personally	5	6	4	3	6	6	4	4
A candidate who has proven leadership	24	27	20	27	20	23	24	25
A candidate whose policies will benefit us most	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
A candidate who wants to make big changes and I think big changes are needed	23	19	26	24	22	18	25	23
Don't Know	25	22	28	25	25	22	26	28
Refused	16	19	14	12	20	23	12	14



**ANNOTATED SURVEY**  
**N=1002; Sampling error = ±3.1%**

S1. People are very busy, but if your schedule allowed you to, how likely are you to vote in the November Election for President?

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>		
94	1.	Very likely	
6	2.	Somewhat likely	
	3.	Very unlikely	<b>TERMINATE</b>
	4.	Don't know (VOL)	<b>TERMINATE</b>
	5.	Refused	<b>TERMINATE</b>
	6.	Not Registered	<b>TERMINATE</b>
	7.	Definitely not voting	<b>TERMINATE</b>

S2. Have you heard of the vice presidential candidates, Sarah Palin and Joe Biden?

1.	Yes	
2.	No	<b>TERMINATE</b>
3.	Don't Know	<b>TERMINATE</b>
4.	Refused	<b>TERMINATE</b>

***Main Questionnaire***

Q1. Regardless of who wins the election, which one of the following six issues would you most like the new President to address in his first 100 days in office? Is it.....

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>	
65	1.	Economic Issues- like jobs, the budget, rising prices, and taxes
10	2.	Foreign Affairs Issues- like national defense, the war in Iraq, Terrorism
10	3.	Health care Issues
4	4.	Education
4	5.	Moral values Issues
5	6.	Immigration
1	7.	Don't know (VOL)
1	8.	Refused (VOL)

Q2. To what degree would you say you have made up your mind about who to vote for in November?

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>	
69	Truly certain of my vote	
17	Somewhat certain of my vote	
14	Truly Undecided	
0	Don't know (VOL)	
<0.5	Refused (VOL)	

Q3. Recently, the two major party candidates for President picked their vice presidential running mates. Would you say that the pick of a vice presidential running mate:

% Base: Total respondents N=1002  
7 Changed who you would vote for  
31 Confirmed who you would vote for  
61 Didn't affect your choice at all  
2 D/K (VOL)  
<0.5 Refused

Q4. As you may know, the two Vice Presidential candidates will debate each other on October 2nd. How important is the vice presidential debate to your decision about for whom to vote?

% Base: Total respondents N=1002  
33 Not important at all  
45 Somewhat Important  
22 Very Important  
1 Don't know (VOL)  
<0.5 Refused (VOL)

[PROGRAMMING NOTE: RANDOMIZE ORDER OF Q5/Q6]

Q5. How favorable of an impression do you have of Joe Biden?

% Base: Total respondents N=1002  
24 Very favorable  
34 Somewhat favorable  
16 Somewhat unfavorable  
14 Very unfavorable  
11 Don't know (VOL)  
2 Refused (VOL)

Q6. How favorable of an impression do you have of Sarah Palin?

% Base: Total respondents N=1002  
30 Very favorable  
27 Somewhat favorable  
15 Somewhat unfavorable  
19 Very unfavorable  
7 Don't know (VOL)  
2 Refused (VOL)

Q7. Which vice presidential candidate do you feel could better fix the health care system in the US, or do you not know enough about their positions on health care to make a judgment?

% Base: Total respondents N=1002  
23 Joe Biden (Democrat)  
17 Sarah Palin (Republican)  
<0.5 Another candidate

7	No candidate / Neither
51	Don't know enough to judge (VOL)
1	Refused (VOL)

Q8. Which vice presidential candidate do you feel could better strengthen the economy, or do you not know enough about their positions on financial security issues to make a judgment?

% Base: Total respondents N=1002  
31 Joe Biden (Democrat)  
26 Sarah Palin (Republican)  
<0.5 Another candidate  
4 No candidate / Neither  
37 Don't know enough to judge (VOL)  
1 Refused (VOL)

Q9. Who do you feel could break through special interest and partisan gridlock to make real progress on healthcare and the economy: the Democratic ticket or the Republican ticket, or do you not know enough about them to make a judgement?

% Base: Total respondents N=1002  
39 Barack Obama/Joe Biden (Democrat)  
33 John McCain/Sarah Palin (Republican)  
<0.5 Another candidate  
7 No candidate / Neither  
20 Don't know enough to judge (VOL)  
1 Refused (VOL)

[PROGRAMMING NOTE: RANDOMIZE ORDER OF Q10/Q11]

Q10. Which would you say Sarah Palin represents *most* to you?

% *Base: Total respondents N=1002*  
17 A candidate that I relate to personally  
10 A candidate who has proven leadership  
6 A candidate whose policies will benefit us most  
28 A candidate who wants to make big changes  
and I think big changes are needed  
21 Don't Know  
19 Refused

Q11. Which would you say Joe Biden represents most to you?

% *Base: Total respondents N=1002*  
5 A candidate that I relate to personally  
24 A candidate who has proven leadership  
8 A candidate whose policies will benefit us most  
23 A candidate who wants to make big changes  
and I think big changes are needed  
25 Don't Know  
16 Refused

## Demographics

D1. What is your age as of your last birthday? [RECORD IN YEARS]

---

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>
49	18-49
30	50-64
20	65+
2	Refused

D2. What is the highest level of education you have completed? [READ LIST]

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>
4	Less than high school
21	High school graduate or equivalent
26	Some college or technical training beyond high school
30	College graduate
18	Or, Post-graduate or professional degree
0	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
<0.5	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D3. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? Are you currently....[READ LIST]

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>
45	Employed full-time
12	Employed part-time
26	Retired and not working
4	Unemployed and looking for work
6	Homemaker
4	Disabled
2	Student
1	Self Employed
<0.5	Or something else [Specify: _____]
0	Don't Know [DO NOT READ]
<0.5	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D4. For statistical purposes only, please stop me when I get to the category  
That includes your household's income before taxes. Was it... [READ LIST]

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>
4	Less than \$10,000
8	\$10,000 but less than \$20,000
6	\$20,000 but less than \$30,000
9	\$30,000 but less than \$40,000
9	\$40,000 but less than \$50,000
17	\$50,000 but less than \$75,000
11	\$75,000 but less than \$100,000
21	\$100,000 or more
5	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
11	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D5. Which of the following groups best describes your race/ethnicity? [READ LIST]

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>
84	White, non Hispanic
7	Black or African-American, non-hispanic
1	Asian, non-hispanic
<0.5	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, non-hispanic
2	American Indian or Alaska Native, non-hispanic
2	Hispanic, Any
2	Mixed
1	Other
0	Don't know
2	Refused

D9. [RECORD STATE]

D10. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as...?  
(READ LIST. ENTER ONE ONLY)

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>
30	A Republican
32	A Democrat
30	An Independent
1	Libertarian
1	None/Vote for person
4	Other
1	Don't know
1	Refused

(SCRAMBLE CODES 1-3)

D11. Generally speaking, would you characterize your political views as being...?

(READ LIST. ENTER ONE ONLY)

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>
40	Conservative
40	Moderate
15	Liberal
1	None of the Above
2	Don't know
2	Refused

D12. Record gender?

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>
46	Male
54	Female

D13. Finally, what is your 5-digit zip code?

\_\_\_\_\_

D14. Are you or your spouse a member of AARP...?

%	<i>Base: Total respondents N=1002</i>
25	Yes
25	No
<0.5	Don't know
1	Refused