

Majority of voters say election outcome will make a great deal of difference on key issues

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As part of the ongoing poll series, Debating Health: Election 2008, the Harvard Public Opinion Research Program at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) and Harris Interactive conducted a new survey focused on whether voters believe the results of this presidential election will make "a great deal of difference" in the state of the nation's health care and other key policy areas. Although much has been made of voter cynicism in recent times, a majority of registered voters believe the outcome of this election will make a great deal of difference on key issues including the war in Iraq (63%), the economy (52%), the war in Afghanistan (50%), and national security (50%). This survey was conducted between October 16-19, 2008, by telephone among a national cross section of 957 registered voters in the United States.

"Although much attention has been paid to the presidential candidates' characters, many voters see this election as making a great deal of difference to a number of critical issues facing the country," says Robert J. Blendon, Professor of Health Policy and Political Analysis at the Harvard School of Public Health.

For most Obama voters, the outcome of this election is seen as making a great deal of difference for health care (59%). However, only a minority of McCain voters share this view (40%).

"These findings confirm that Democrats care more than Republicans about health care policies," says Humphrey Taylor, Chairman of The Harris Poll. "During the primary season, Professor Blendon showed us

that health care was much more important in Democratic than in Republican primaries. Now Obama voters are more likely than McCain voters to think that the result of the election will make a big difference to the health care system."

By contrast, McCain voters are much more likely than Obama voters to believe the election results will make a great deal of difference in terms of national security (66% vs. 42%). The difference between McCain and Obama voters' views of the impact of this election is not as great when it comes to other major issues, including the war in Iraq (67% vs. 62%), the economy (52% vs. 59%), and the war in Afghanistan (56% vs. 49%).

There are two key campaign issues that most voters do not believe will be impacted by the outcome of the election in a major way. Relatively few voters believe the election outcome will make a great deal of difference when it comes to education (33%) or the price of gas (26%).

Source: Harvard School of Public Health

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