



CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
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LOOKING AHEAD TO THE GENERAL ELECTION
February 20-24, 2008

An unprecedented number of American voters -- 51% -- are paying a lot of attention to this campaign and right now, they see many things to like about John McCain - more see him as being prepared to be president and an effective commander in chief.

Still, as of now, it's Barack Obama who most say could unite the country and improve foreign relations. More voters say they'd support him over John McCain if November's election were being held today.

CANDIDATE QUALITIES: OBAMA, CLINTON AND MCCAIN

John McCain and Hillary Clinton are perceived as candidates who are prepared for the job of president, with more saying this about McCain. Most registered voters think Barack Obama needs a few more years to prepare.

Obama, however, is viewed as the candidate most likely to unite the country. About half say this about McCain but fewer - only about a third - think Clinton would be the kind of president that would unite the country.

CANDIDATE CHARACTERISTICS
(Among registered voters)

Table with 4 columns: Characteristic, Obama, Clinton, McCain. Rows include: Prepared to be president, Needs more time, Would unite the country, Would not.

Turning to foreign affairs, 56% of voters express confidence in McCain's ability to handle an international crisis - the only candidate for which a majority says that. Voters are divided about Obama on this measure, while more than half are uneasy about Clinton's approach.

**ABILITY TO HANDLE AN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS**

(Among registered voters)

	Obama	Clinton	McCain
Confident	47%	39%	56%
Uneasy	47	56	39

In addition, John McCain, a veteran and former prisoner of war, is by far seen as the one most likely to be an effective commander in chief. More than twice as many voters think he is "very likely" to be an effective head of the nation's military than say that about Obama or Clinton.

**EFFECTIVE COMMANDER IN CHIEF**

(Among registered voters)

	Obama	Clinton	McCain
Very likely	23%	20%	48%
Somewhat	46	34	32
Not likely	28	45	18

However, when it comes to improving U.S. relations with foreign countries, Obama has the edge.

**IMPROVE FOREIGN RELATIONS**

(Among registered voters)

	Obama	Clinton	McCain
Very likely	32%	23%	16%
Somewhat	45	41	52
Not likely	20	32	29

**THE CANDIDATES ON THE ECONOMY AND IRAQ**

For Americans, the economy and the war in Iraq remain the top two problems facing the country. Voters nationwide express at least some confidence in all three candidates to make the right decisions on these issues.

Voters' perceptions of the economy impact how they think the candidates would handle the issue. Those who think the economy is in good shape express more confidence in McCain to handle the issue, while those who think the economy is in bad shape give higher marks to Obama and Clinton.

**CONFIDENT WILL MAKE RIGHT DECISIONS ON THE ECONOMY**

(Among registered voters)

	Obama	Clinton	McCain
Very	20%	19%	11%
Somewhat	46	37	47
Not confident	31	41	38

Voters give McCain a slight edge over Obama on the ability to make the right decisions about Iraq. But here too, views on the war have an impact: voters who think U.S. action in Iraq was the right thing are more likely to express confidence in McCain, but those who think we

should have stayed out are more apt to express confidence in Clinton and Obama.

**CONFIDENT WILL MAKE RIGHT DECISIONS ON IRAQ**

(Among registered voters)

	Obama	Clinton	McCain
Very	20%	16%	27%
Somewhat	37	34	31
Not confident	40	48	40

**OVERALL VIEWS OF THE CANDIDATES**

Among registered voters overall, views of Clinton are more negative than positive. 43% have an unfavorable opinion of Senator Clinton, while 35% are favorable. Registered voters' opinions of Senator Obama are much more positive: 45% are favorable, and 23% are unfavorable. 32% don't have an opinion of him, compared to 21% for Clinton.

On the Republican side, 36% have a positive view of John McCain. Mike Huckabee is the least known, with four in 10 having no opinion of him.

**OPINIONS OF THE CANDIDATES**

(Among registered voters)

	Favorable	Not Favorable	Undecided/ Haven't heard
Obama	45%	23	32
Clinton	35%	43	21
McCain	36%	32	31
Huckabee	24%	34	42

**LOOKING AHEAD TO NOVEMBER**

Poll results provide a snapshot of public opinion at the time, and polls conducted in February will not necessarily reflect the outcome of an election more than eight months away. For example, a CBS News Poll conducted in February 2004 showed John Kerry with a five point lead over George W. Bush, and a February 2000 poll showed George W. Bush with a four point lead over Al Gore.

That said, in a hypothetical matchup among registered voters between McCain and the two remaining Democratic candidates for the nomination, if the election were held today McCain ties Senator Hillary Clinton but loses by twelve points to Senator Barack Obama.

**IF THE CANDIDATES WERE..., WHO WOULD YOU VOTE FOR?**

(Among registered voters)

Obama	50%	Clinton	46%
McCain	38	McCain	46
Undecided/DK	9	Undecided/DK	5

McCain has appealed to independents in the past, and their support in this year's primaries has helped propel him to a lead in Republican delegates. But Barack Obama's appeal with this swing voting group may outweigh McCain's; Obama beats McCain among independents by 10 points. McCain holds the support of this group against Hillary Clinton, who loses to him by 17 points among independents.

**IF THE CANDIDATES WERE..., WHO WOULD YOU VOTE FOR?**

(Among independent registered voters)

Obama	46%	McCain	52%
McCain	36	Clinton	35
Undecided/DK	14	Undecided/DK	10

**THE REPUBLICANS**

Although Mike Huckabee remains in the race for the Republican Presidential nomination, Senator John McCain now has a large lead among Republican delegates. Most Republican primary voters would be satisfied should McCain win the nomination.

But the results of the primaries held so far have shown divisions among Republican support; conservatives have favored candidates other than McCain in most states. In this poll, more than half of them express concern that McCain is not conservative enough.

Overall, 83% of Republican primary voters would be satisfied with McCain as their nominee, as would 81% of conservatives. But few would be very satisfied; just 29%, and 25% among conservatives. That is a far lower level of enthusiasm than exists among Democratic primary voters: roughly four in 10 would be very satisfied with Clinton or Obama as their nominee.

**SATISFIED WITH MCCAIN AS NOMINEE?**

(Among Republican primary voters)

	All	Conservatives
Very satisfied	29%	25%
Somewhat satisfied	54	57
Somewhat/very dissatisfied	15	18

Among Republican primary voters overall, a third sees McCain as not conservative enough, while far more - 53% -- think he is about right on the issues. But there are serious concerns among conservative voters about McCain's conservative credentials: more than half think he is not conservative enough.

**ON THE ISSUES, MCCAIN IS:**

(Among Republican primary voters)

	All	Conservatives
Too conservative	6%	2%
Not conservative enough	33	52
About right	53	39

## **A LESS HARD-LINE APPROACH?**

This poll shows a widespread desire among Republican primary voters for a more conciliatory approach to dealing with Democrats. 72% would favor having a Republican president who would compromise with Democrats in order to get things done, and just 14% want to see a Republican president stick to Republican positions even if it means getting less accomplished. Even 60% of conservatives would like to see more compromise.

### **WANT REPUBLICAN PRESIDENT TO:**

(Among Republican primary voters)

	All	Conservatives
Compromise with Democrats	72%	60%
Stick to Republican positions	14	23
It depends (vol.)	9	13

Although he has often been criticized in the past for reaching across the aisle to support or propose bipartisan legislation in Congress, this trend may work to McCain's advantage. 55% think McCain would try and compromise with Democrats about the right amount, while only 16% think he would do so too often.

### **IF ELECTED, WOULD MCCAIN COMPROMISE WITH DEMOCRATS:**

(Among Republican primary voters)

	All	Conservatives
Too often	16%	26%
Not enough	18	10
Right amount	55	53

Even half of conservative Republican voters think McCain would compromise the right amount. Only a quarter thinks he would do so too often.

## **ATTENTION TO THE CAMPAIGN**

With most states having already held primaries or caucuses, more than eight in 10 voters are paying attention to this presidential campaign, including 51% who are paying "a lot" of attention, up from 39% just last month - before the Super Tuesday contests.

### **ATTENTION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN**

(Among Registered Voters)

	Now	1/2008
A lot	51%	39%
Some	33	44
Not much/none	16	16

In February 2000, the last year for which there was competition in both parties for the nomination, just 27% of voters were paying "a lot" of attention.

## A PRESIDENT'S AGE

Voters think the best age for a president of the United States is in their 50s. Mike Huckabee is the only candidate remaining in the race that falls into that age group.

At 46 years old, Democrat Barack Obama is the youngest candidate in the presidential race; Republican John McCain, at 71, is the oldest. Hillary Clinton is 60 years old.

Primary voters - both Democrats and Republicans - agree that the 50s is the best age for a president; however, Democratic primary voters are more likely than Republicans to pick the 40s as the best age - a third choose that age. More Republican primary voters than Democrats choose the 60s as the best age, but hardly any pick the 70s - the age group in which the likely Republican nominee - John McCain - belongs.

	<b>BEST AGE FOR U.S. PRESIDENT</b>		
	Reg. Voters	Dem Primary Voters	Rep Primary Voters
30s	2%	4%	1%
40s	20	33	8
50s	48	47	45
60s	18	10	31
70s	2	1	3

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This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1,266 adults nationwide, including 1,115 registered voters, interviewed by telephone February 20-24, 2008. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample, and the sample of registered voters, could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

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**Looking Ahead to the General Election**  
**February 20-24, 2008**

q1-7 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q8 How much attention have you been able to pay to the 2008 presidential campaign--a lot, some, not much, or no attention so far?

**\*\* REGISTERED VOTERS \*\***

**\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan08e
	%	%	%	%	%
A lot	51	43	56	51	39
Some	33	41	32	28	44
Not much	14	16	10	18	12
None at all	2	1	2	3	4
Don't know/No answer	0	0	0	0	1

q9-15 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q16 Is your opinion of Hillary Clinton favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Hillary Clinton yet to have an opinion?

					Oct07a
Favorable	35	7	64	26	43
Not favorable	43	73	20	43	41
Undecided	18	16	13	26	15
Haven't heard enough	3	4	2	4	1
Refused	1	0	1	1	0

q17 Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion?

Favorable	45	21	65	42	38
Not favorable	23	42	9	21	24
Undecided	23	26	18	26	26
Haven't heard enough	9	10	9	8	11
Refused	0	1	0	3	1

q18 Is your opinion of Mike Huckabee favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Mike Huckabee yet to have an opinion?

Favorable	24	39	14	21	7
Not favorable	34	20	42	37	10
Undecided	16	20	13	16	11
Haven't heard enough	26	20	32	24	71
Refused	0	1	0	2	1

q19 Is your opinion of John McCain favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about John McCain yet to have an opinion?

\*\* REGISTERED VOTERS \*\*

	*** Party ID ***				Oct07a
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	36	54	21	39	27
Not favorable	32	13	49	27	28
Undecided	22	24	18	24	28
Haven't heard enough	9	8	10	9	16
Refused	1	1	2	1	1

q20 If the 2008 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were Barack Obama, the Democrat, and John McCain, the Republican, would you vote for Barack Obama or John McCain?

Obama	50	14	80	46
McCain	38	76	11	36
Other (Vol.)	1	1	1	1
Won't vote (Vol.)	2	1	2	3
Depends (Vol.)	2	3	1	2
Don't know/No answer	7	5	5	12

q21 If the 2008 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were Hillary Clinton, the Democrat, and John McCain, the Republican, would you vote for Hillary Clinton or John McCain?

Clinton	46	6	85	35
McCain	46	88	11	52
Other (Vol.)	1	1	0	1
Won't vote (Vol.)	2	2	1	2
Depends (Vol.)	1	2	0	2
Don't know/No answer	4	1	3	8

q22-42 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q43 If the next President is a Republican, do you want him to compromise with Democrats in order to get more things done, or stick to the Republican party's positions even if it means not getting as much done?

\*REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS\*

	Total	Conservatives
	%	%
Compromise	72	60
Stick to positions	14	23
Depends (vol.)	9	13
Don't know/no answer	5	4

q44 How would you feel if John McCain wins the Republican nomination for president -- would you feel very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

Very satisfied	29	25
Somewhat satisfied	54	57
Somewhat dissatisfied	11	13
Very dissatisfied	4	5
DK/NA	2	0



q45 If elected President, do you think John McCain would try to compromise with Democrats too often, not often enough, or would he try to compromise with Democrats about the right amount?

	*REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS*	
	Total	Conservatives
	%	%
Too often	16	26
Not often enough	18	10
Right amount	55	53
DK/NA	11	11

q46 When it comes to his positions on the issues, do you think John McCain is too conservative, not conservative enough, or are his positions on issues about right?

Too conservative	6	2
Not conservative enough	33	52
About right	53	39
DK/NA	8	7

q47 BLANK

q48 From what you know so far, do you think Hillary Clinton has prepared herself well enough for the job of President and all the issues a President has to face, or do you think she needs a few more years to prepare?

	** REGISTERED VOTERS **			
	Total	*** Party ID ***		
		Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Prepared	57	30	79	54
Needs a few more years	37	61	18	38
DK/NA	6	9	3	8

q49 Regardless of how you intend to vote, do you think Hillary Clinton would be the kind of president who would be able to unite the country or wouldn't she be that kind of president?

Would unite the country	34	12	58	24	62
Not that kind of president	56	80	35	58	27
DK/NA	10	8	7	18	11

q50 How confident are you in Hillary Clinton's ability to make the right decisions about the economy -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident or not at all confident?

Very confident	19	3	38	10
Somewhat confident	37	22	45	42
Not too confident	20	30	13	20
Not at all confident	21	43	2	24
DK/NA	3	2	2	4

q51 How confident are you in Hillary Clinton's ability to make the right decisions about the war in Iraq -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident or not at all confident?

\*\* REGISTERED VOTERS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Very confident	16	1	32	9
Somewhat confident	34	15	42	43
Not too confident	22	31	18	19
Not at all confident	26	52	7	25
DK/NA	2	1	1	4

q52 How likely is it that Hillary Clinton would be able to improve U.S. relations with other countries -- very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

Very likely	23	4	39	22
Somewhat likely	41	36	45	43
Not too likely	20	32	13	18
Not at all likely	12	25	3	11
DK/NA	4	3	0	6

q53 Do you have confidence in Hillary Clinton's ability to deal wisely with an international crisis or are you uneasy about her approach?

					Aug07a
					%
Confidence	39	13	65	32	44
Uneasy	56	85	33	58	49
DK/NA	5	2	2	10	7

q54 Regardless of how you intend to vote for president in 2008, how likely do you think it is that Hillary Clinton would be an effective commander-in-chief of the nation's military -- would you say it is very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not likely at all?

					Jul07a
Very likely	20	2	38	15	25
Somewhat likely	34	20	43	36	33
Not very likely	21	33	13	19	17
Not at all likely	24	45	5	27	24
DK/NA	1	0	1	3	1

q55 From what you know so far, do you think Barack Obama has prepared himself well enough for the job of President and all the issues a President has to face, or do you think he needs a few more years to prepare?

Prepared	39	25	50	40
Needs a few more years	56	71	48	53
DK/NA	5	4	2	7

q56 Regardless of how you intend to vote, do you think Barack Obama would be the kind of president who would be able to unite the country or wouldn't he be that kind of president?

\*\* REGISTERED VOTERS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Would unite the country	67	57	75	68
Not that kind of president	25	33	20	24
DK/NA	8	10	5	8

q57 How confident are you in Barack Obama's ability to make the right decisions about the economy -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Very confident	20	6	34	16
Somewhat confident	46	39	50	49
Not too confident	19	30	12	17
Not at all confident	12	20	4	14
DK/NA	3	5	0	4

q58 How confident are you in Barack Obama's ability to make the right decisions about the war in Iraq -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Very confident	20	5	36	12
Somewhat confident	37	26	41	42
Not too confident	21	32	14	20
Not at all confident	19	32	7	22
DK/NA	3	5	2	4

q59 How likely is it that Barack Obama would be able to improve U.S. relations with other countries -- very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

Very likely	32	12	47	32
Somewhat likely	45	53	40	42
Not too likely	11	16	8	12
Not at all likely	9	15	4	10
DK/NA	3	4	1	4

q60 Do you have confidence in Barack Obama's ability to deal wisely with an international crisis or are you uneasy about his approach?

Confidence	47	30	61	45	Aug07a
Uneasy	47	64	34	47	33
DK/NA	6	6	5	8	49
					18

q61 Regardless of how you intend to vote for president in 2008, how likely do you think it is that Barack Obama would be an effective commander-in-chief of the nation's military -- would you say it is very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not likely at all?

\*\* REGISTERED VOTERS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Very likely	23	6	39	19
Somewhat likely	46	43	46	48
Not very likely	15	26	8	13
Not at all likely	13	21	5	17
DK/NA	3	4	2	3

q62 From what you know so far, do you think John McCain has prepared himself well enough for the job of President and all the issues a President has to face, or do you think he needs a few more years to prepare?

Prepared	73	87	63	74
Needs a few more years	20	11	29	16
DK/NA	7	2	8	10

q63 Regardless of how you intend to vote, do you think John McCain would be the kind of president who would be able to unite the country or wouldn't he be that kind of president?

Would unite the country	51	73	31	56
Not that kind of president	39	20	59	32
DK/NA	10	7	10	12

q64 How confident are you in John McCain's ability to make the right decisions about the economy-- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Very confident	11	20	4	13
Somewhat confident	47	66	27	52
Not too confident	24	10	38	21
Not at all confident	14	1	27	9
DK/NA	4	3	4	5

q65 How confident are you in John McCain's ability to make the right decisions about the war in Iraq -- are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Very confident	27	48	12	26
Somewhat confident	31	39	20	36
Not too confident	18	8	23	20
Not at all confident	22	5	41	15
DK/NA	2	0	4	3

q66 How likely is it that John McCain would be able to improve U.S. relations with other countries -- very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

Very likely	16	27	10	12
Somewhat likely	52	59	40	61
Not too likely	20	11	30	16
Not at all likely	9	1	17	6
DK/NA	3	2	3	5

q67 Do you have confidence in John McCain's ability to deal wisely with an international crisis or are you uneasy about his approach?

\*\* REGISTERED VOTERS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Confidence	56	80	33	62
Uneasy	39	16	63	31
DK/NA	5	4	4	7

q68 Regardless of how you intend to vote for president in 2008, how likely do you think it is that John McCain would be an effective commander-in-chief of the nation's military -- would you say it is very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not likely at all?

Very likely	48	69	32	48
Somewhat likely	32	27	32	35
Not very likely	9	2	16	6
Not at all likely	9	1	17	5
DK/NA	2	1	3	6

q69-72 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q73 In general, what is the best age for a president of the United States--in their 30s, in their 40s, in their 50s, in their 60s, or in their 70s?

					Mar07a
30s	2	1	4	0	5
40s	20	9	30	19	26
50s	48	48	46	49	55
60s	18	28	10	20	9
70s	2	3	1	3	0
DK/NA	10	11	9	9	5

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1266	
Total Registered Respondents	1115	1062
Total Registered Republicans	358	318
Total Registered Democrats	420	419
Total Registered Independents	337	325
Total Republican Primary Voters	327	284