



CBS NEWS/KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS POLL
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UNCOMMITTED VOTERS: THE VICE-PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE
October 2, 2008

Voters' interest in this year's vice presidential debate was high before the debate - just about as high as interest in last week's presidential debate. Afterwards, the uncommitted voters who watched the debate thought Biden did the best job by a margin of more than two to one.

Palin's debate performance improved uncommitted voters' perceptions of her overall and on a number of specific measures, but uncommitted voters still have doubts about her ability to assume the presidency if necessary and she lags behind Joe Biden on her knowledge and preparedness for the job. Few of the pre-debate uncommitted voters committed to a candidate immediately afterwards - about seven in 10 remain uncommitted.

WHO WON THE DEBATE?

(Uncommitted Voters Who Watched Debate)

Biden	46%
Palin	21
Tie	33

Immediately after the debate, CBS News interviewed a nationally representative sample of nearly 500 debate watchers assembled by Knowledge Networks who were "uncommitted voters" - voters who are either undecided about who to vote for or who have a preference but say they could still change their minds. 46% of these uncommitted debate watchers said Biden won the debate tonight, while 21% said Palin won. 33% thought it was a tie.

Even a quarter of Republican uncommitted voters thought Biden won the debate.

Among these voters, there was improvement in views of both Sarah Palin and Joe Biden. 55% of these uncommitted voters said their opinion of Palin has changed for the better as a result of the debate; just 14% said they have a lower opinion of her after tonight, and 30% said their views of her did not change.

As for Joe Biden, the Democratic nominee, 53% of uncommitted viewers said that their image of Biden improved, while 5% said their opinion of Biden got worse. 42% said their opinion did not change.

OPINIONS OF THE CANDIDATES AFTER TONIGHT'S DEBATE

(Uncommitted Voters Who Watched Debate)

	Biden	Palin
Changed for the better	53%	55%
Changed for the worse	5	14
No change	42	30

Palin improved after the debate on being knowledgeable on important issues -- from 43% to 66% -- but Biden still far outpaces her. After the debate, 98% thought he was knowledgeable.

IS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT IMPORTANT ISSUES

(Among uncommitted voters who watched debate)

	Biden		Palin	
	Pre-debate	Post-debate	Pre-debate	Post-debate
Yes	79%	98%	43%	66%
No	17	2	54	32

Uncommitted voters' views of Palin's preparedness for the job of vice president also improved as a result of her debate performance -- but are still nowhere near the percentage that thinks Biden is prepared.

IS PREPARED FOR THE JOB OF V.P.

(Among uncommitted voters who watched debate)

	Biden		Palin	
	Pre-debate	Post-debate	Pre-debate	Post-debate
Yes	81%	97%	39%	55%
No	17	3	59	45

Men were more likely than women to think Sarah Palin is prepared for the job, but that's not surprising, as men tend to be more Republican than women.

Although Palin made some gains on perceptions that she could serve as president if needed, she rose just 9 points on that measure after the debate, to 44%. In contrast, almost all uncommitted voters think Biden would be an effective president.

CAN ... BE AN EFFECTIVE PRESIDENT IF NECESSARY?

(Among uncommitted voters who watched debate)

	Biden		Palin	
	Pre-debate	Post-debate	Pre-debate	Post-debate
Yes	66%	91%	35%	44%
No	30	8	62	56

One of Palin's strengths has been her ability to connect with voters. Before the debate, 58% of uncommitted voters felt she shares their values; that rose to 73% after the debate. Fewer uncommitted voters say the same about Joe Biden either before or after the debate.

VIEWS OF THE CANDIDATES

(Uncommitted Voters Who Watched Debate)

	Biden		Palin	
	Pre- Debate	Post- debate	Pre- debate	Post- debate
Shares your values	41%	63%	58%	73%
Shares your issue positions	40%	59%	42%	61%

Debate watchers who thought Biden won the debate cited his knowledge and experience - especially on foreign policy - using words like "knowledgeable", "experienced", and "articulate". Others mentioned his sincerity and compassion, and mentioned finding out about his family life - particularly that he was a single parent. In contrast, they felt that Palin was overly rehearsed and dodged answering questions.

Debate watchers who thought Palin won the debate praised her style. They saw her as "outspoken", "determined" and "on the ball". They also said she was more intelligent and accomplished than they expected, echoing the finding that 66% thought she was knowledgeable in the post-debate poll.

Uncommitted voters include those who say they have a preference, but also say they could still change their minds. 71% of these voters remained uncommitted after the debate.

PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE AMONG DEBATE WATCHERS

(Among uncommitted voters who watched debate)

Committed to Obama	18%
Committed to McCain	10
Still uncommitted	71

This CBS News poll was conducted online by Knowledge Networks among a nationwide random sample of 473 uncommitted voters - voters who don't yet know who they will vote for, or who have chosen a candidate but may still change their minds - who have agreed to watch the debate. Knowledge Networks, a market and public policy research firm based in Menlo Park, CA, conducted the web poll among a sample of adult members of its panel, who are provided web access if they don't already have it. More technical information is available at <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/reviewer-info.html>.

This is a scientifically representative poll of uncommitted voters' reaction to the presidential debate. The margin of sampling error could be plus or minus 5 percentage points for results based on the entire sample.

CBS News/Knowledge Networks Poll
Vice Presidential Debate
October 2, 2008

PostQ1. Which candidate do you think did the best job - or won - tonight's debate?

UNCOMMITTED VOTERS WHO WATCHED THE DEBATE

Joe Biden	46
Sarah Palin	21
Tie	33

PostQ3. After tonight's debate, has your opinion of Joe Biden:

Changed for the better	53
Changed for the worse	5
Not changed	42

PostQ4. After tonight's debate, has your opinion of Sarah Palin:

Changed for the better	55
Changed for the worse	14
Not changed	30

PostQ6. Now that the debate is over, do you think **Joe Biden...**

Is prepared for the job of Vice President?

UNCOMMITTED VOTERS WHO WATCHED THE DEBATE

	After Debate	Before Debate
Yes	97	81
No	3	17

Shares your positions on most issues?

Yes	59	40
No	40	55

Shares your values?

Yes	63	41
No	37	54

Is knowledgeable about important issues facing the country?

Yes	98	79
No	2	17

Has the ability to be an effective President, if necessary?

Yes	91	66
No	8	30

PostQ7. Now that the debate is over, do you think **Sarah Palin**..

Is prepared for the job of Vice President?

	UNCOMMITTED VOTERS WHO WATCHED THE DEBATE	
	After Debate	Before Debate
Yes	55	39
No	45	59

Shares your positions on most issues?

Yes	61	42
No	39	53

Shares your values?

Yes	73	58
No	26	38

Is knowledgeable about important issues facing the country?

Yes	66	43
No	32	54

Has the ability to be an effective President, if necessary?

Yes	44	35
No	56	62

PostQ8. If the 2008 presidential election were being held today would you vote for...?

Committed to McCain	10
Committed to Obama	18
Still uncommitted	71

Total Respondents: 473