

# A Look Back and a Look Ahead: The Election of 2008 and What's Next

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# Fundamentals

## Pro-Obama

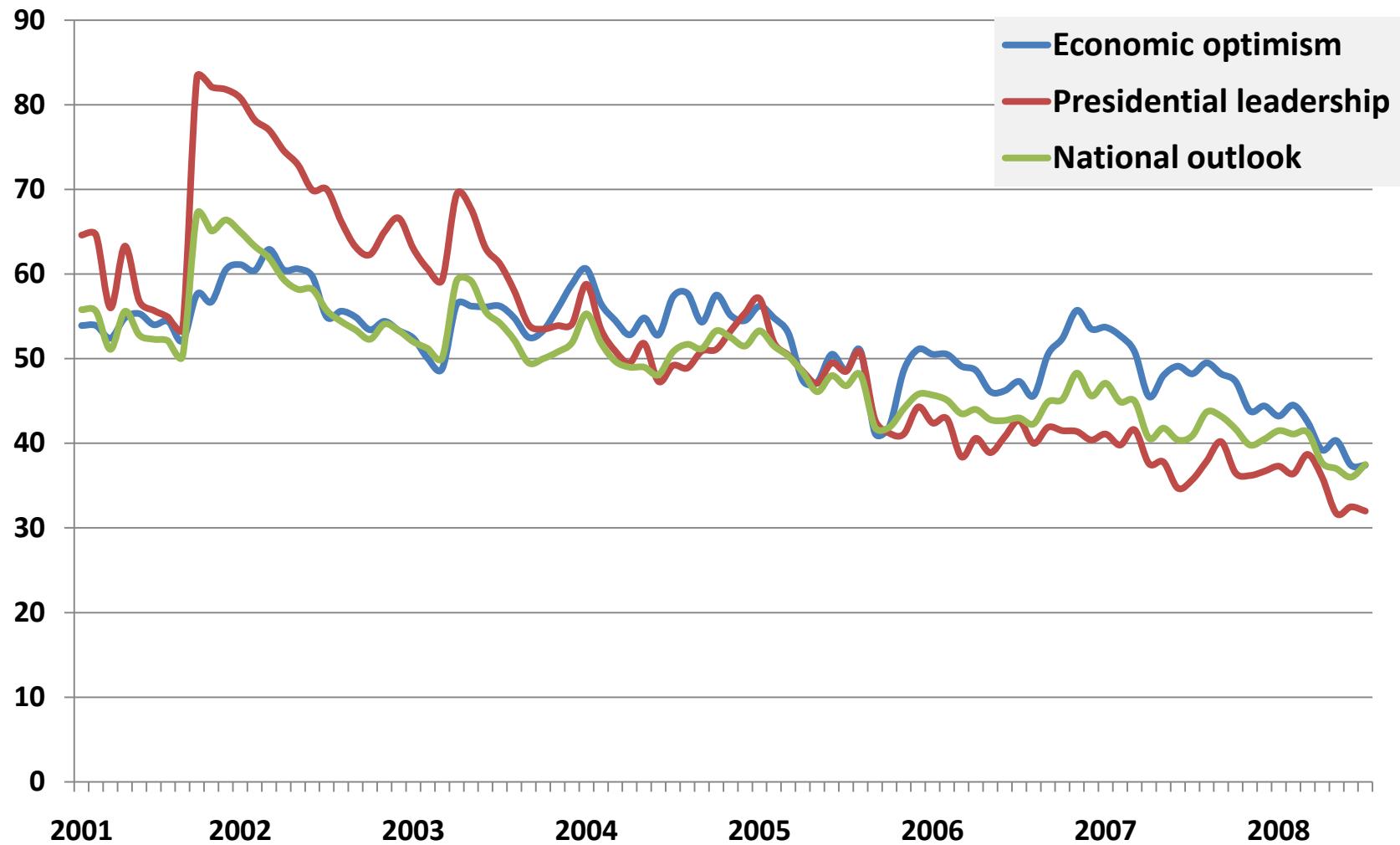
- The economy / consumer confidence
- Right direction / wrong track
- Unpopular Republican president
- Dissatisfaction with the situation in Iraq
- A shift away from Iraq and toward domestic issues
- Lots of mobilization, high voter turnout during the nomination
- Party identification and registration trending Democratic
- Hard for a party to win three consecutive elections: Repubs 1980-1988 are the only example since FDR

## Pro-McCain

- US is in two wars, and he has foreign policy credibility
  - Ike '52, Johnson '64, Nixon '72, Bush '04
- Three third-term losses were close: 1960, 1976, 2000
- Population shifts to Republican areas
- Dem difficulties getting over 50%
  - Only Johnson '64 and Carter '76
- Obama relatively unknown
- Race?

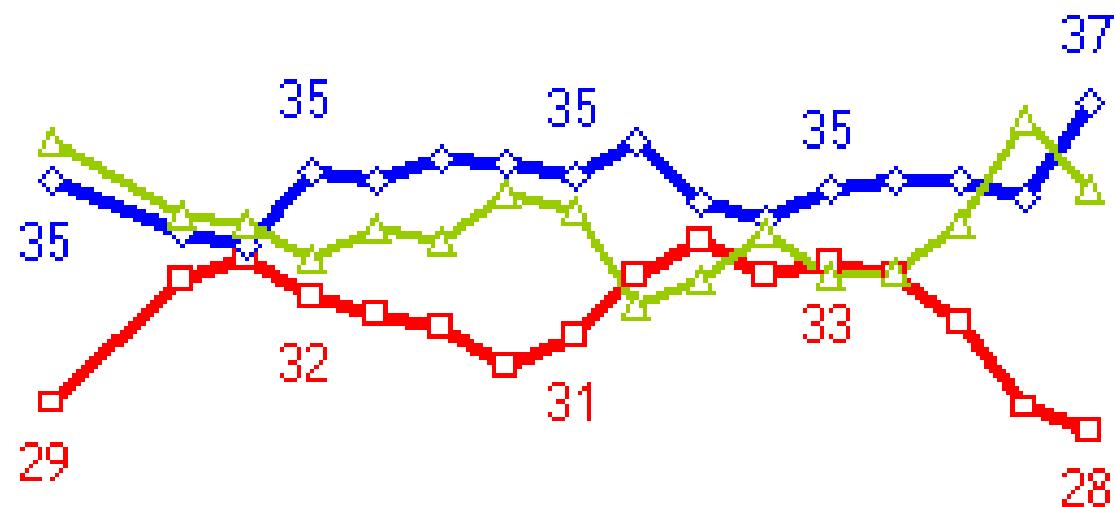
# National Mood

(Investors Business Daily/Christian Science Monitor)



## Trend in Party Identification

Republican      Democrat



Percent Independent:

36      33      34      32      35

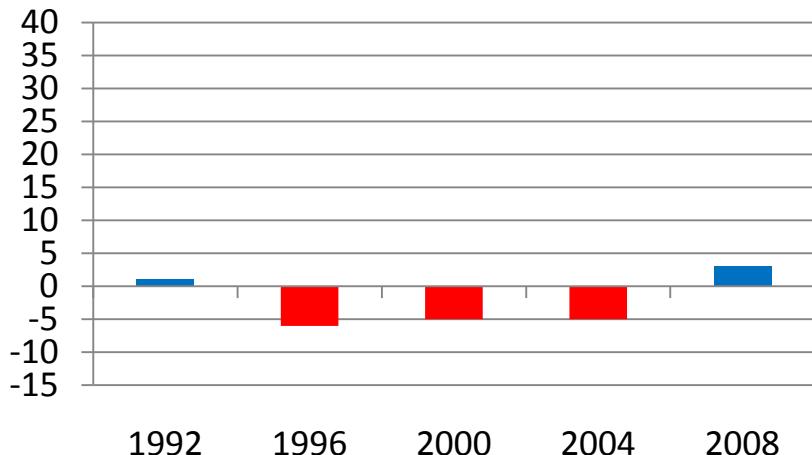
1992      1996      2000      2004      2008

Based on registered voters.

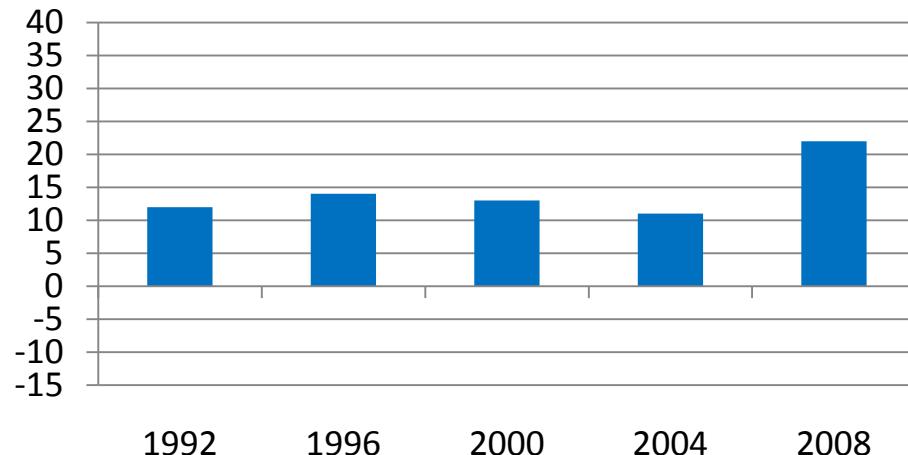
Data from Pew  
Research Center

# A Closer Look at Party Identification

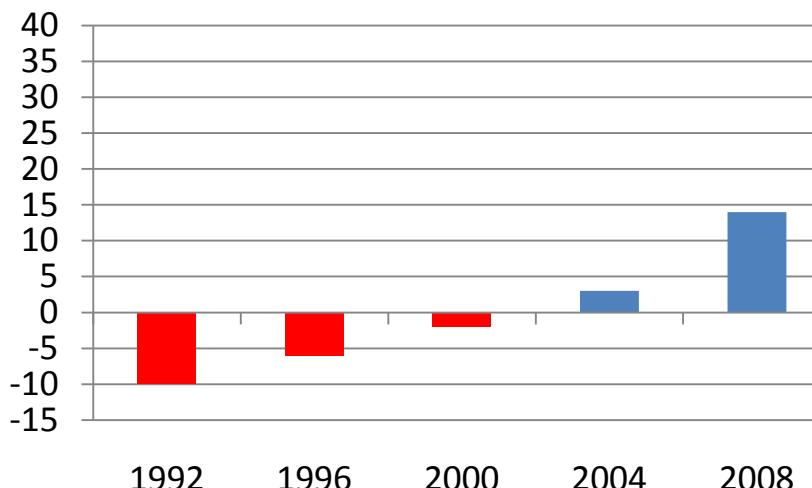
## Men



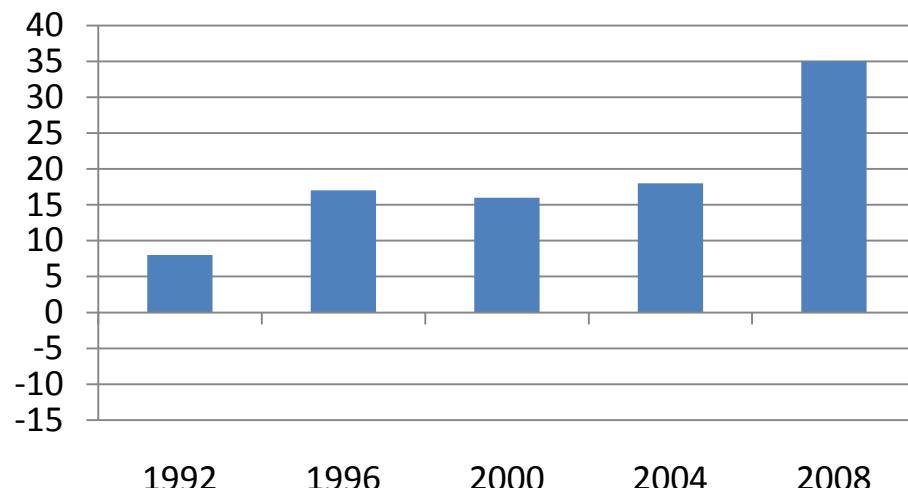
## Women



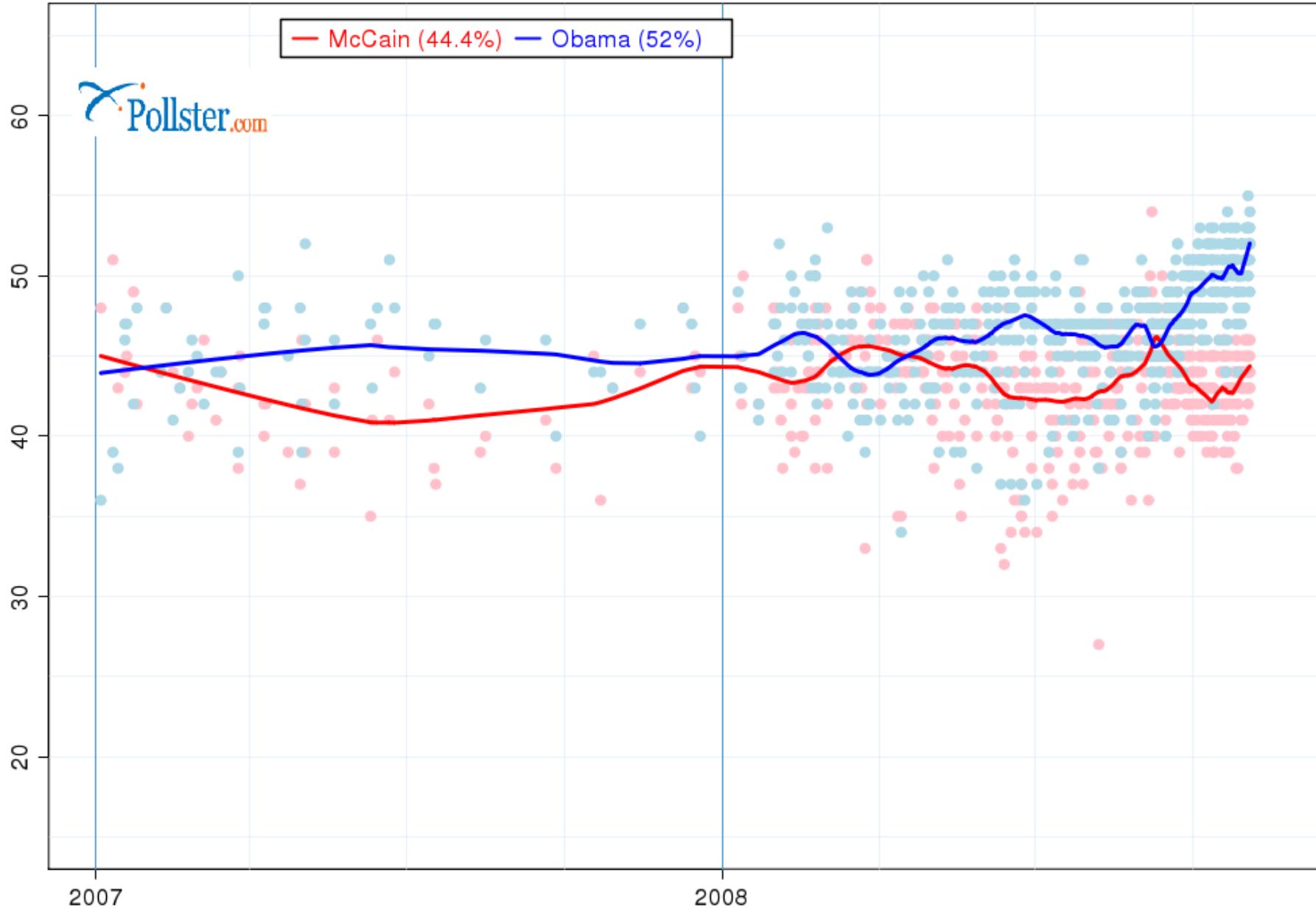
## Men 18-29



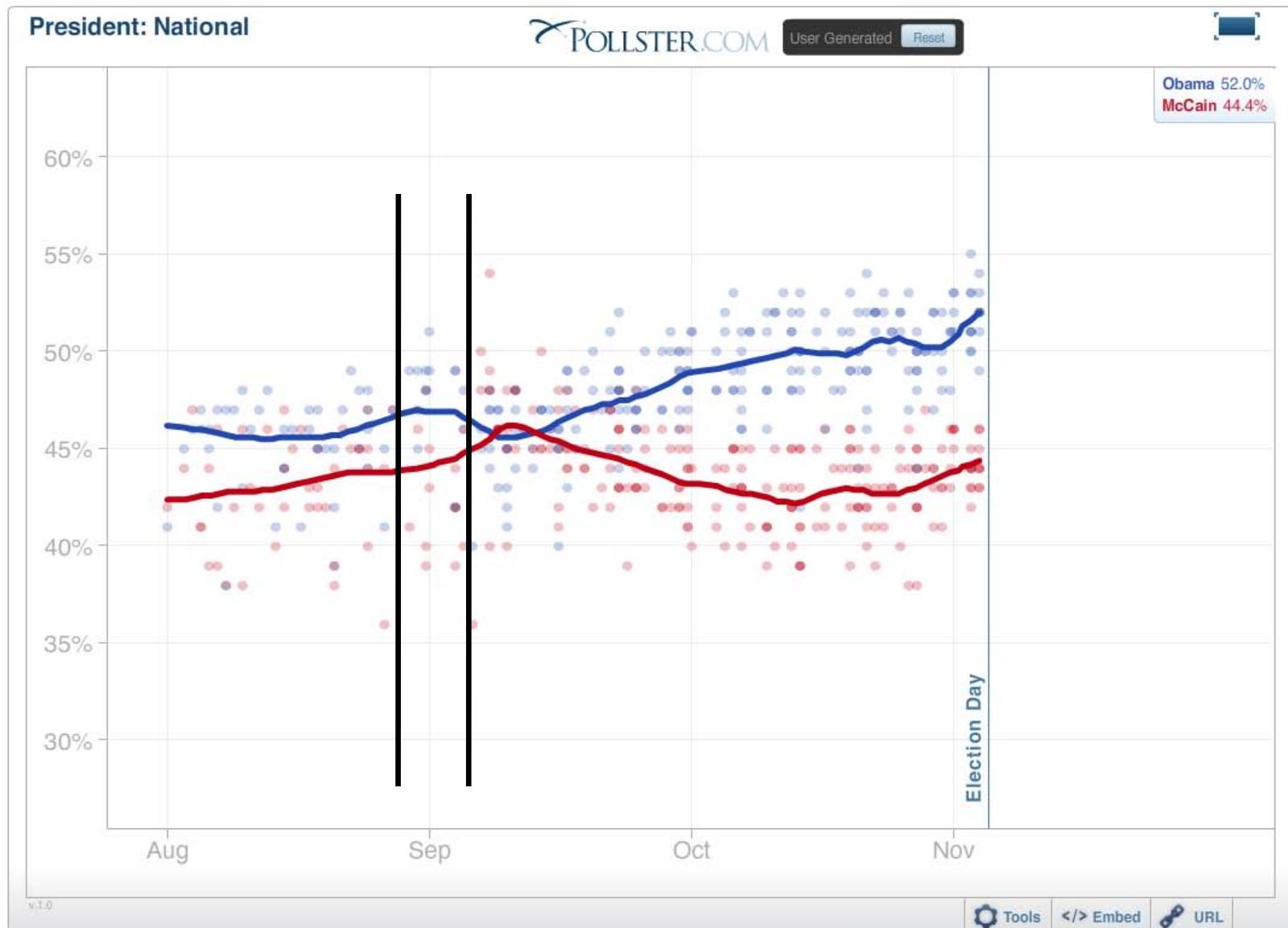
## Women 18-29



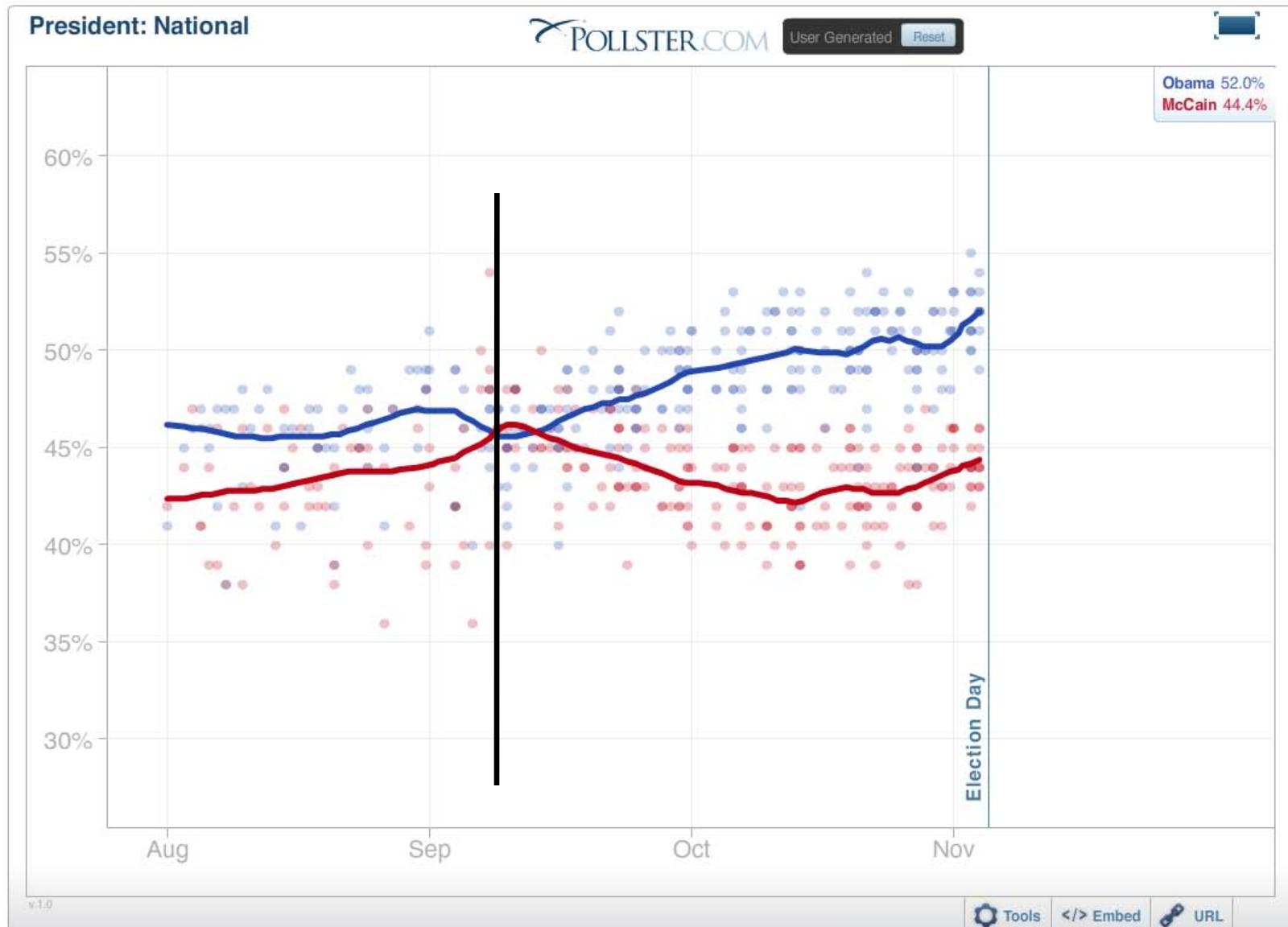
National: McCain vs. Obama  
Latest Poll: 11/03/2008



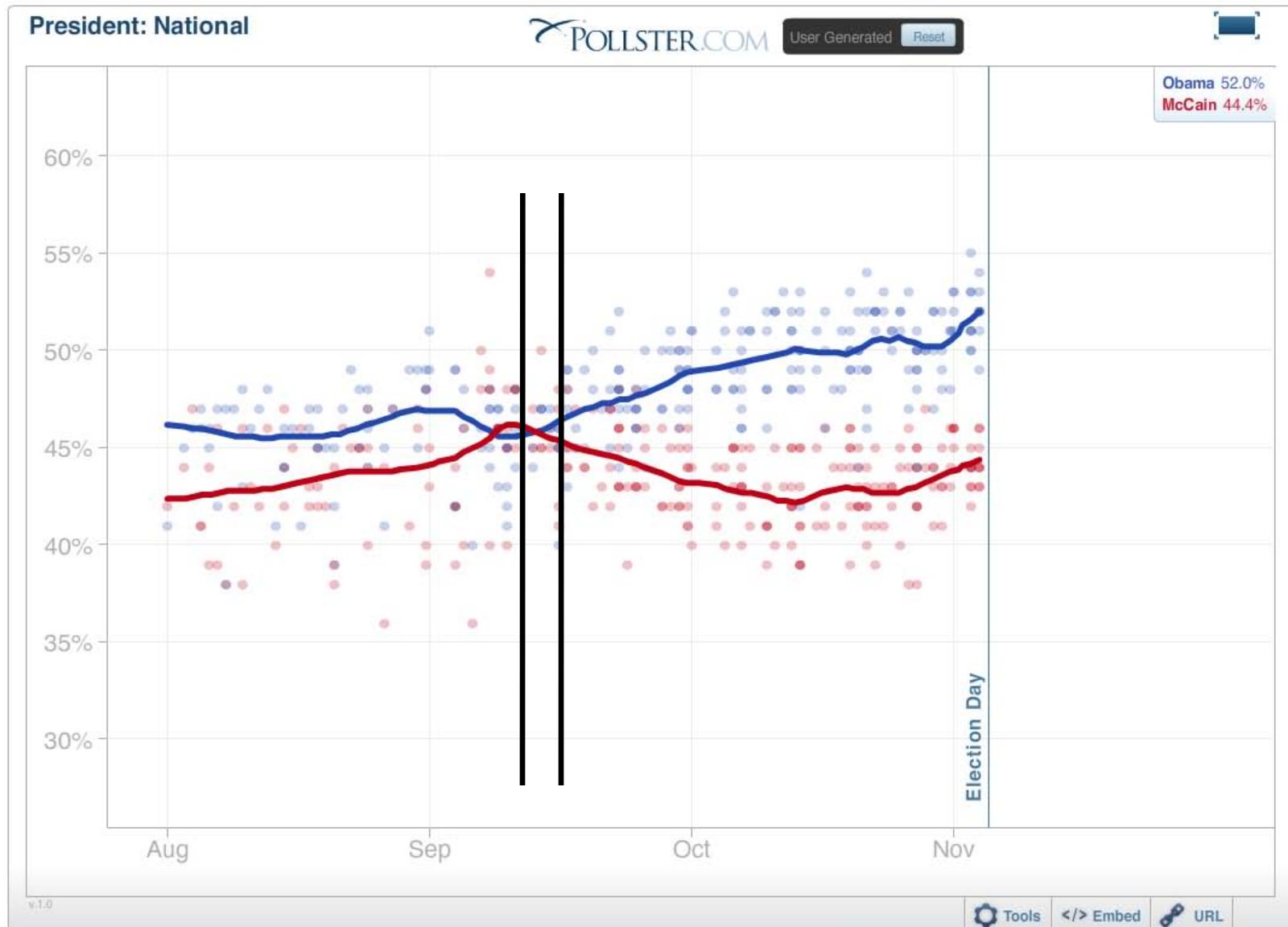
# End of Democratic (8/28) and Republican Conventions (9/4)



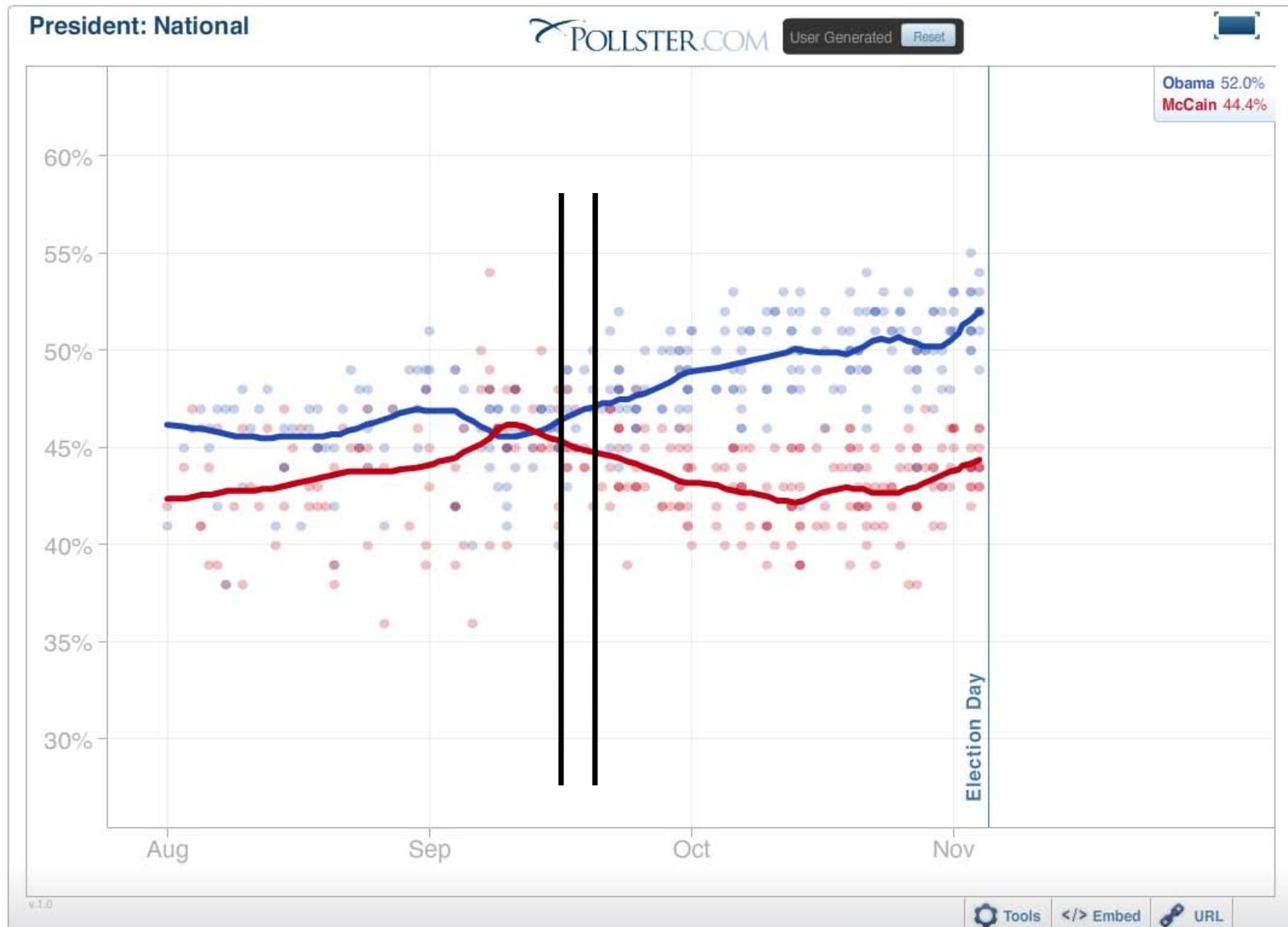
# Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Seized by US Government (9/7)



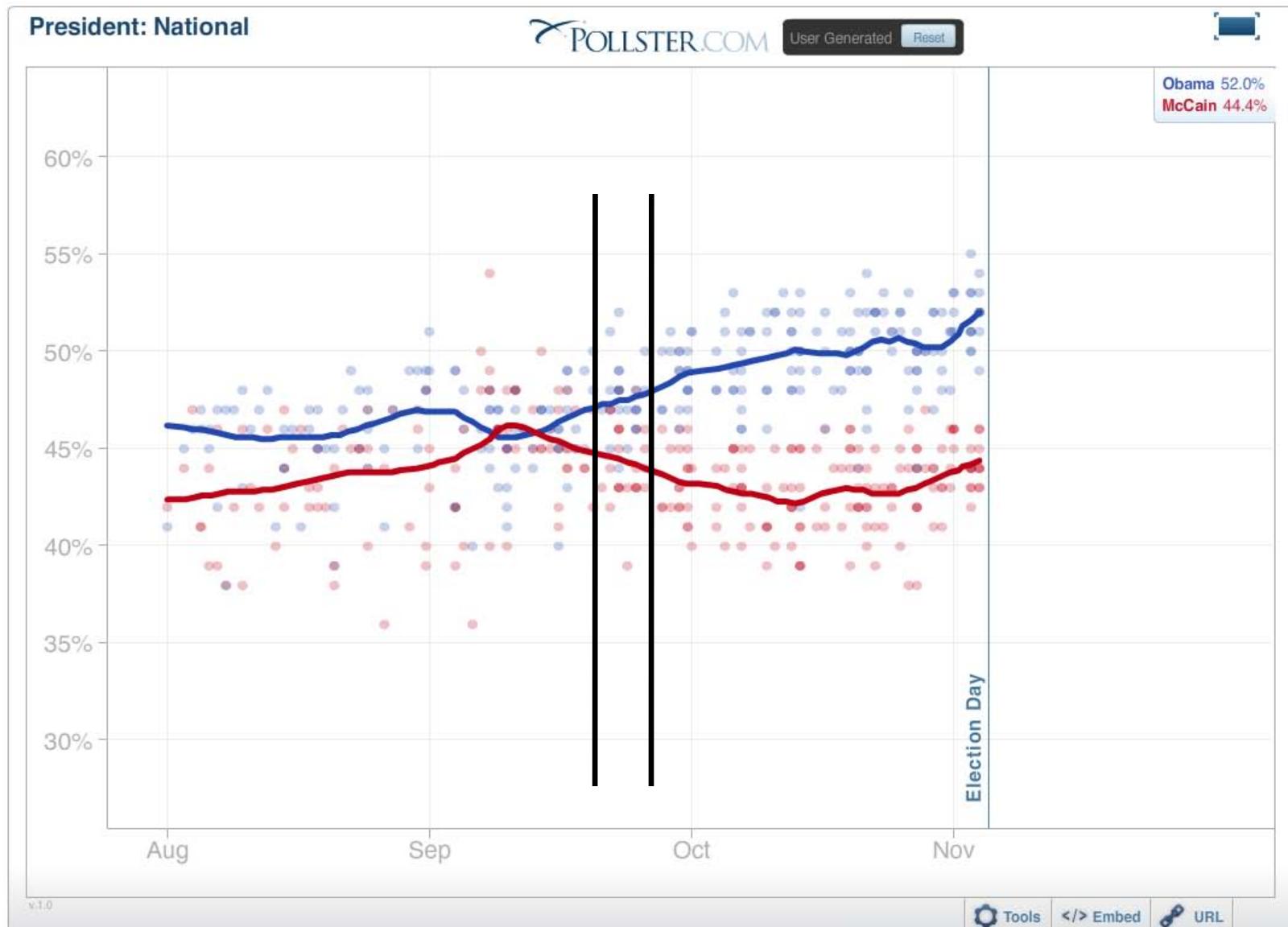
Lehman Bros. looking for buyer (9/11), Merrill Lynch sold (9/14), LB files for bankruptcy filing (9/15)



AIG rescue (9/16), LB purchased by Barclays (9/17),  
Administration announces bailout/rescue (9/19)



# Administration announces bailout/rescue plan (9/19); first presidential debate (9/26)



# Wisconsin Opinion

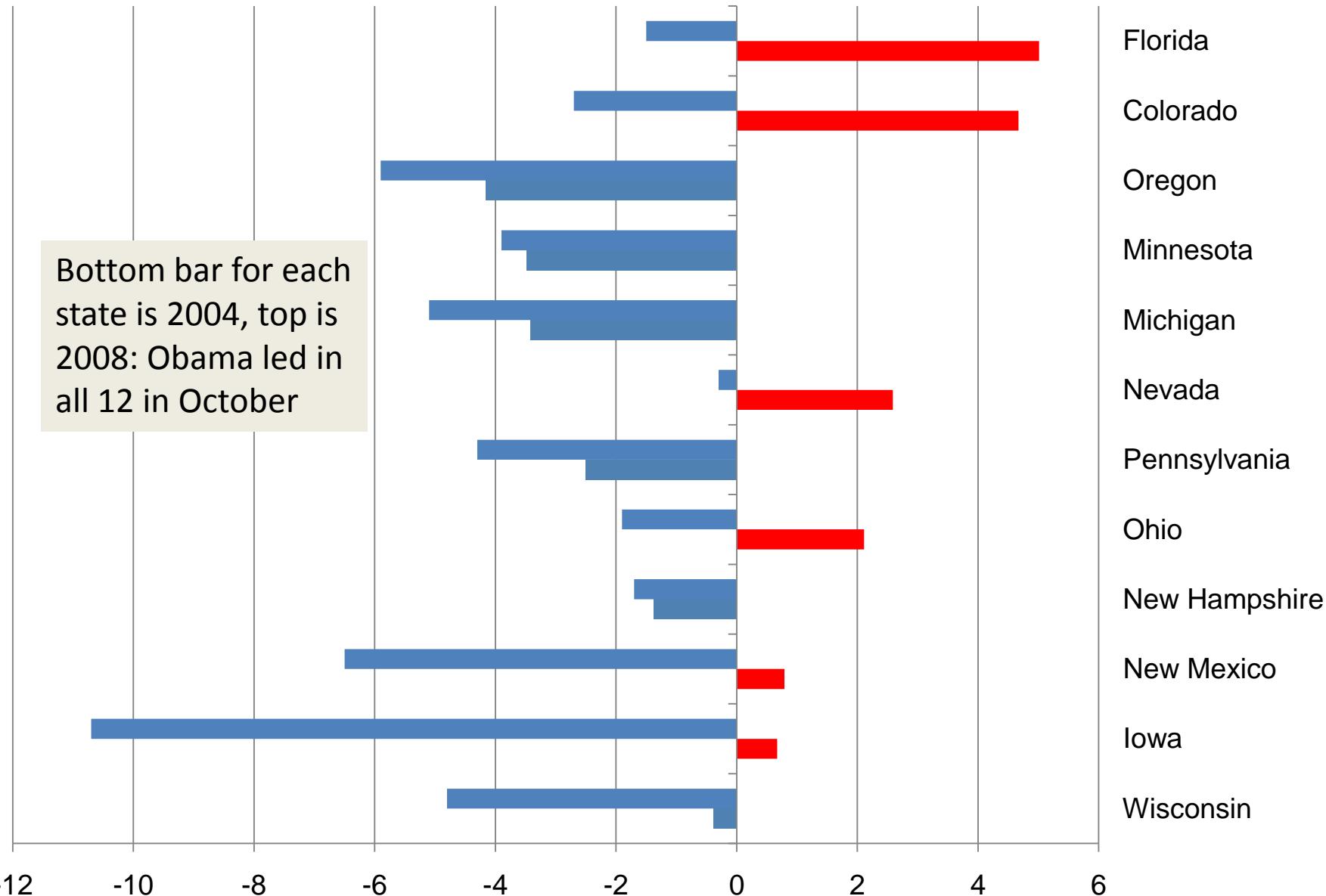
|   | <b>Advantage</b> |
|---|------------------|
| <i>Top Priority for U.S.</i>              |                  |
| Improving economy: 37% - June 2008        | Obama 8 pts      |
| <i>Most Important Problem Facing U.S.</i> |                  |
| Economy and Jobs: 64% - October 2008      | Obama 31 pts     |

Source: UW Dept. of Political Science/Wispolitics.com Poll, June; UW Big Ten Battleground Poll, Sept-Nov. polls.

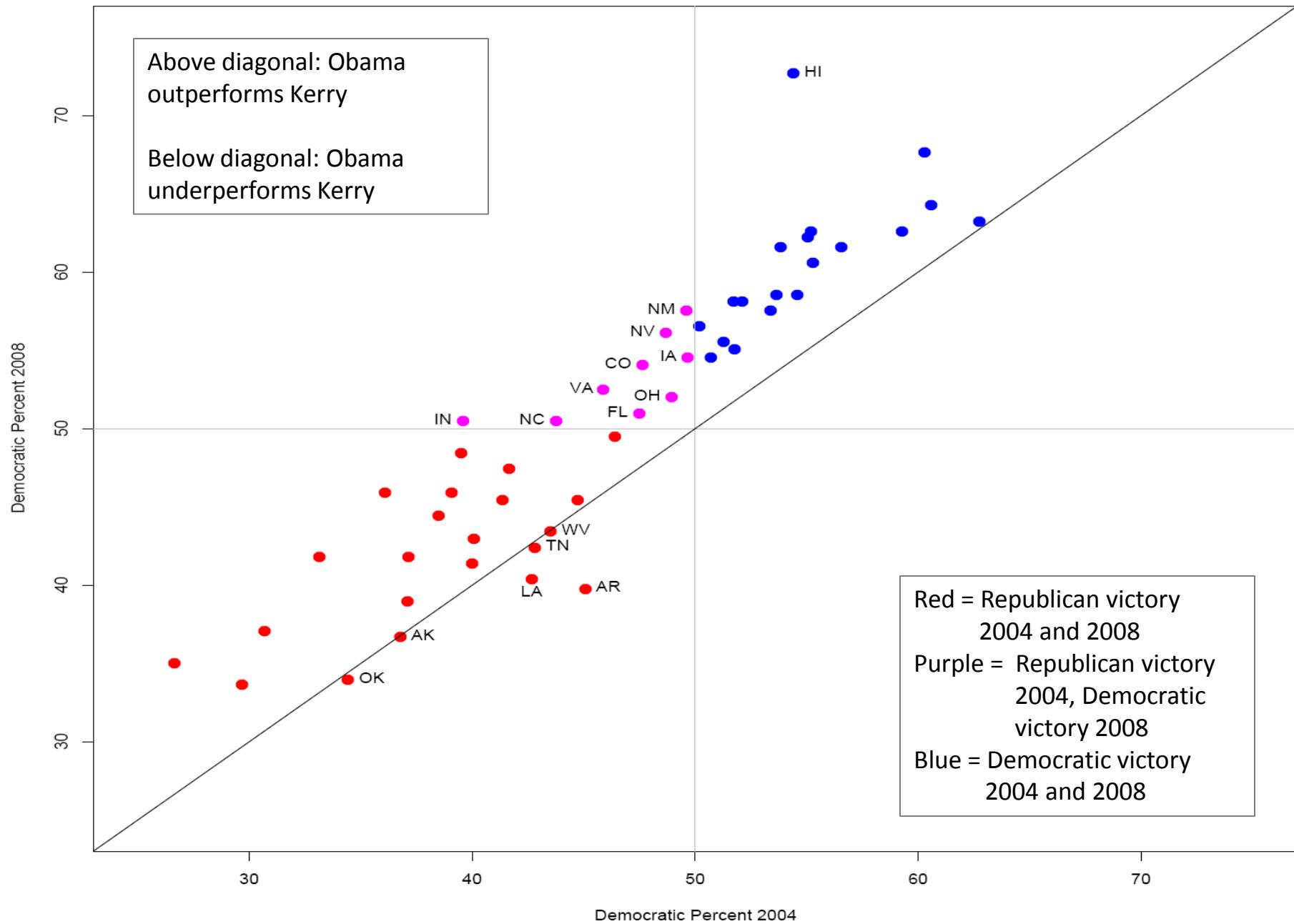
# Wisconsin Opinion

| <b>U.S. is on wrong track</b>                       | <b>Percent of Public</b> |
|---|--------------------------|
| September   | 76%                      |
| October   | 85%                      |
| November  | 85%                      |
| <b>U.S. economy has gotten worse over past year</b> |                          |
| September   | 84%                      |
| October   | 92%                      |
| November  | 95%                      |

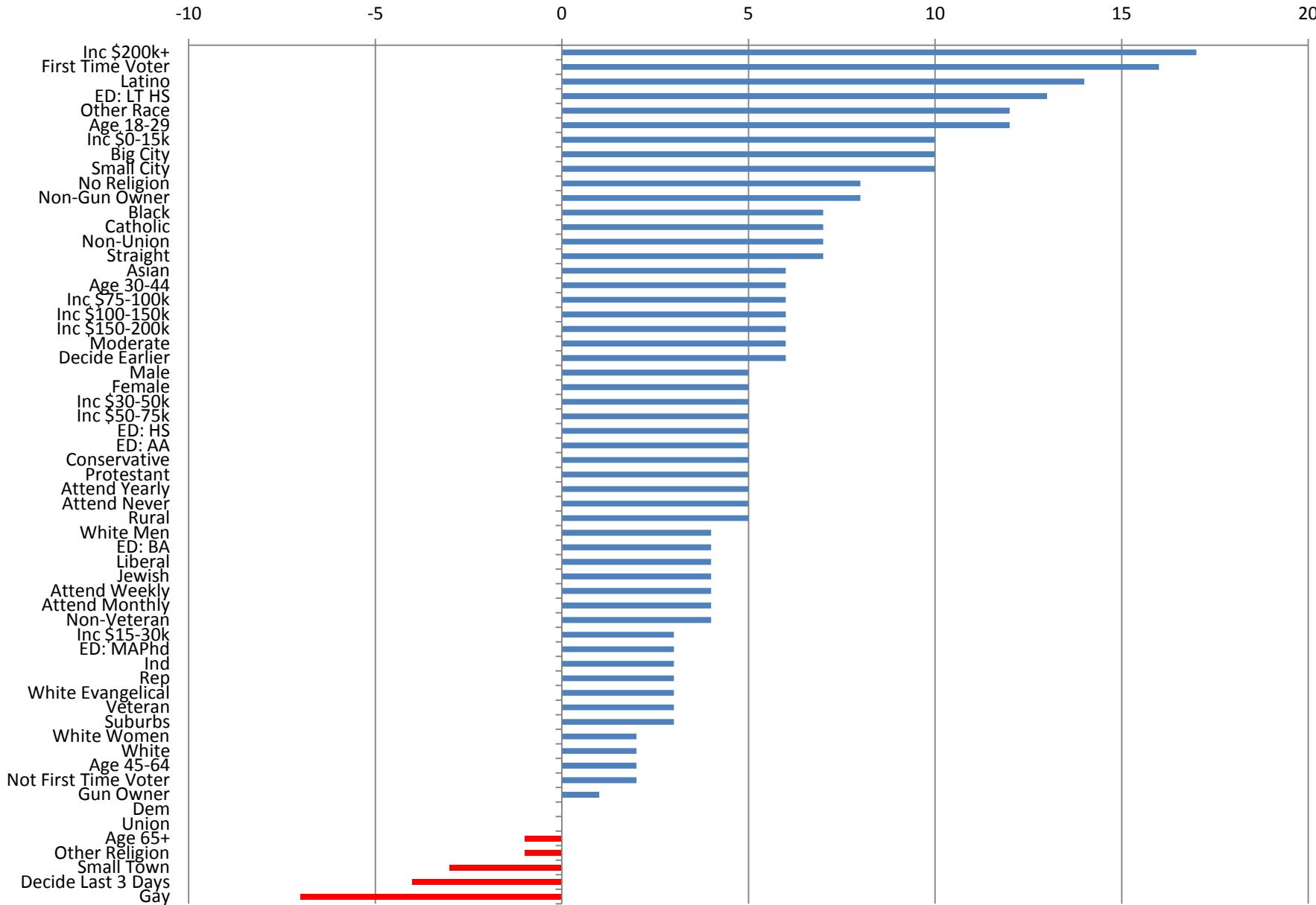
## Closest States 2004 vs. October 5, 2008 Poll Standing



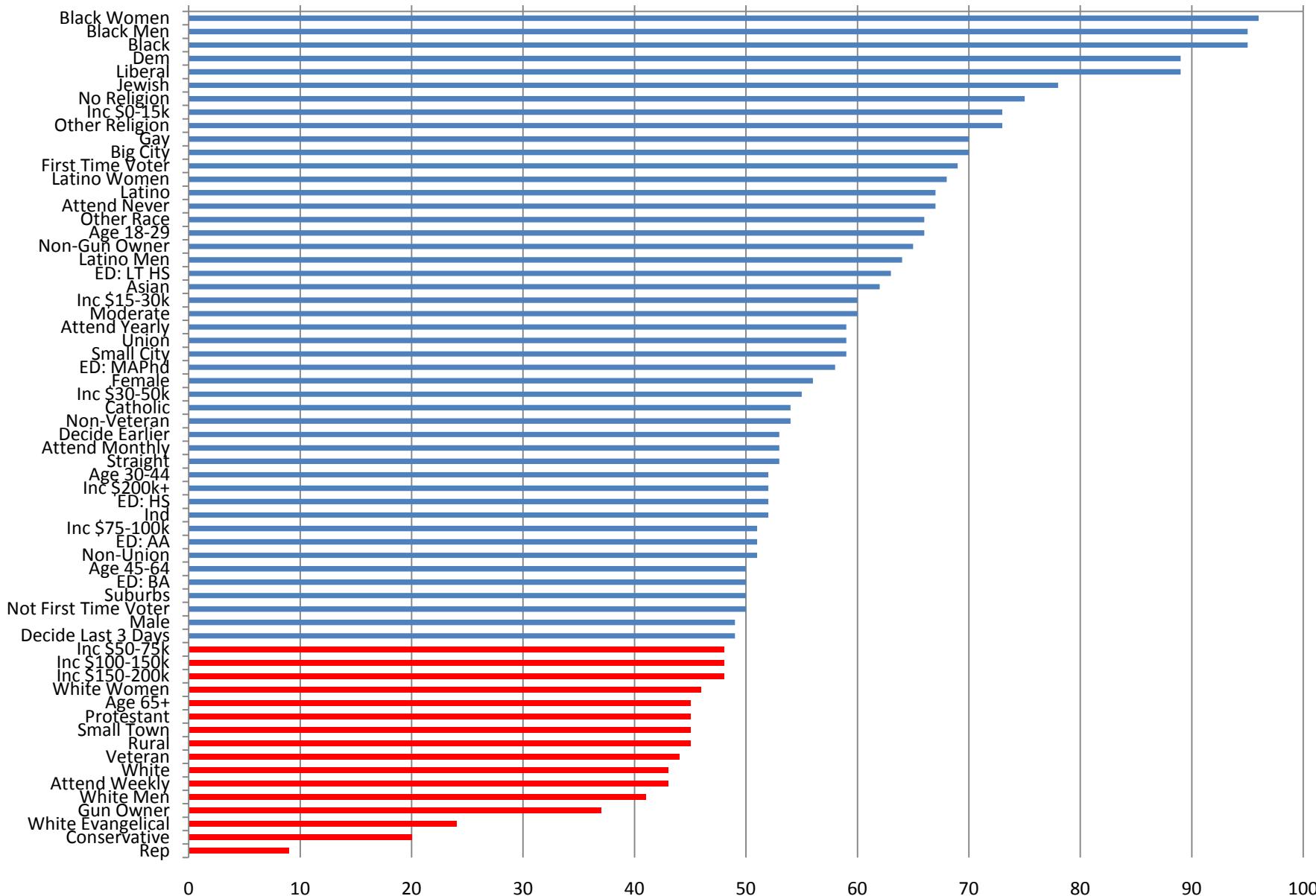
# Obama Vote 2008 vs. Kerry Vote 2004



# Obama 2008 Vote Compared to Kerry 2004 (in %)



# Obama Support Among Social Groups (in %)





## State Government Post-Election 2008

Dems +25  
seats in  
West

Dems +41  
seats in  
Midwest

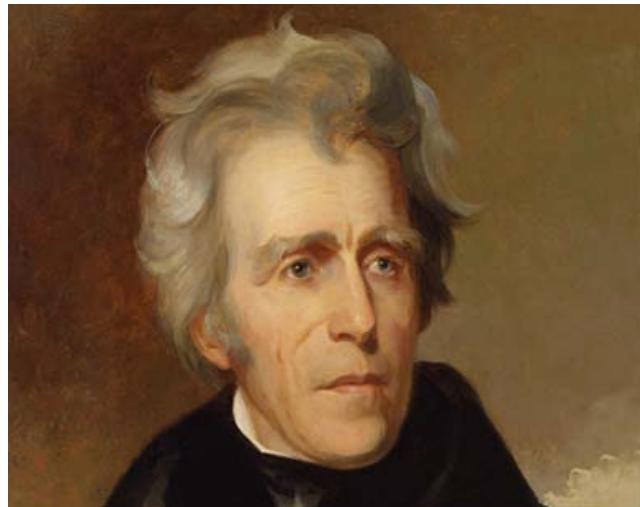
Dems +38  
seats in  
East

- Republican-8
- Democrat-17
- Split-24
- Nonpartisan

Repubs  
+6 seats  
in South

# Will Obama be a transformational president?

- Very unusual in American politics: Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, and FDR are the only three typically cited by political scientists. Each changed the fundamental nature of American politics



# A transformational president?

- The transformational potential:
  - Generational divide
  - Racial politics
  - A new kind of non-partisan, or at least bipartisan, politics
- Importance of historical context.



# Obama and Congress: historical context

- This is not 1933, despite the arguments of both liberals and conservatives.
  - Huge differences in the nature of the economic problems.
  - Republicans did not provide any alternative policies.
  - FDR was in a much stronger position politically in Congress.



Closer to 1993 in terms of the partisan split in Congress.

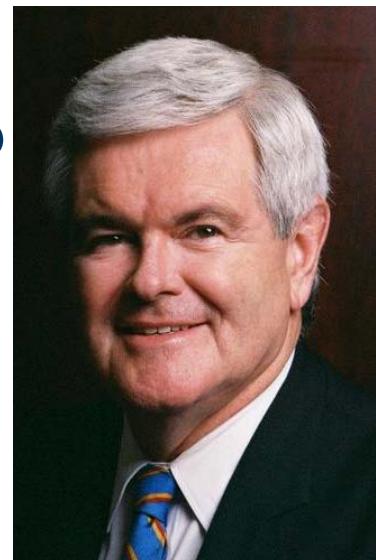
# Partisan splits in Congress

|      | Senate |        |      | House |        |             |
|------|--------|--------|------|-------|--------|-------------|
|      | Dem    | Repub. | Ind. | Dem   | Repub. | Ind.        |
| 1933 | 59     | 36     | 1    | 313   | 117    | 5           |
| 1935 | 69     | 25     | 2    | 322   | 103    | 10          |
| 1937 | 75     | 17     | 4    | 333   | 89     | 13          |
| 1993 | 57     | 43     | 0    | 258   | 176    | 1           |
| 2001 | 50     | 50     | 0    | 212   | 221    | 2           |
| 2009 | 57*    | 41     | 2    | 256   | 178    | (1 vacancy) |

\*(assuming Franken is seated)

# Internal partisan politics

- Good news for Obama: largest Democratic majorities since 1993. Bad news: expanding the number of Democrats means bringing in more moderates. Role of the Blue Dogs – already grumbling about the deficits.
- Republican response: compromise and bipartisanship or repeat of the late 1980s and early 1990s? Can Senate moderates contain the more partisan House?



# How will Obama govern?

- Many have talked about uniting the country and moving beyond partisan politics, but few have succeeded.
- Temptation to govern from inside your own party: 1993-1994 and 2001-2006.
- Early signs are that Obama will govern from the center.
  - Cabinet appointments: not quite a “team of rivals” but very centrist.
  - Stimulus package and business tax cuts.
  - Recent comments on not investigating Bush officials.

# The legislative agenda

- Top priorities: economic stimulus (infrastructure, state aid, alternative energy, tax cuts, education) and national security (start to bring troops home).
- Short term, easy fixes: women's pay issues, embryonic stem cell research, "global gag rule" on abortion funding. More controversial – labor "card check" rather than secret ballots.
- Will wait a bit: health care, climate change, energy, immigration, trade (NAFTA revisions), gays in the military, and repeal of Bush's tax cuts.