

If Kids Could Vote, Half Would Support Obama

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Three in Five Youth Believe This Presidential Election is More Important Than Previous Ones

American youth have a clear favorite for the next president: Barack Obama. While the presidential candidates are running a close race among adult Americans, the country's youth would vote decisively. Half (50%) of American youth ages 8-17 would vote for Barack Obama, the Democratic candidate, while three in ten (29%) would support John McCain, the Republican candidate. Nearly one in five (18%) say they are not sure which candidate they would support.

These are some of the results from a Harris Interactive Youth Center of Excellence YouthQuery survey conducted online in the United States among 1,064 youth ages 8-17 between September 17 - 22, 2008.

By a margin of over 20 points, young Americans say Obama holds greater promise for bringing positive change to the country. Over half (56%) of youth say Obama would bring a "great deal" or "some" positive change if elected versus just one-third of youth (35%) who say the same about McCain. Obama's message of change appears to resonate much stronger than McCain's: three times as many 8-17 year olds say an Obama presidency would bring a "great deal of positive change" as a McCain presidency (Obama: 35% vs. McCain: 12%).

The importance of the presidential election is not lost on youth as just over three in five of them (63%) say that this presidential election is more important than elections in the recent past. Only two percent say it is less important than other recent presidential elections. Teens (13-17 year olds) are more likely to recognize the unique character of this election than younger youth. Nearly three-quarters of teens (72%) state that the election is more important versus half of tweens (8-12 year olds: 52%). Overall, one in five of all youth (19%) say it is about as important, while another 17% percent say they don't know.

"Youth have likely been exposed to a sundry of evidence that this election is one of change and high stakes. There's the first African-American presidential candidate and media frenzy surrounding the woman on the vice presidential ticket. The continuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the looming shadows of terrorist threats. Take the housing and financial crisis and recent "bail out". There's enough subject matter here to understand why American youth believe in the historic nature of this presidential election", stated Peter Shafer, Vice President for the Youth Center of Excellence. "Interestingly, while we traditionally see youth echoing the sentiments of their parents when it comes to elections, this is not the case this election year. Instead they are closer in sentiment to their older co-horts, the Millennials (those aged 18-31) who, a recent Harris Poll found, support Obama by 23 points (58% to 35%)."