

GfK Identifies Three Things To Watch For In First 2012 Presidential Debate

Contributed by GfK
Wednesday, 03 October 2012

Research firm drawing on best-in-class methods, panels to provide election insights

With recent polls showing a tight presidential contest, the upcoming debates between President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney are taking on added significance.

Leveraging gold-standard telephone and online research methods, GfK is providing in-depth data and analysis on many aspects of the 2012 Presidential race.

"The debate Wednesday night will be crucial to convincing voters that the candidates "get it" and share the voters' vision of how to steer the country forward," said Annie Weber, Executive Vice President and General Manager of GfK Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications. "Finding the right balance in words and tone on key issues could make the difference between winning over uncertain voters or losing them to the other side."

The ongoing AP-GfK Poll series has been capturing Americans' opinions about key issues since 2008. Based on analysis of recent AP-GfK survey results, GfK has identified three key things to watch for in tomorrow night's first debate:

1. Will the candidates play to Americans' optimism or pessimism?

AP-GfK data suggest that the American public is divided over the state of the economy and the direction of the country. A strong majority (61%) of likely voters believe that the economy is faring poorly right now "but the proportion of Americans (41%) who believe the country is heading in the "right direction" has been trending upwards of late. How will the candidates manage the risk of appearing either too positive or negative?

2. Will Romney put a stake in the ground on health care reform?

Governor Romney recently qualified his stated desire to repeal President Obama's healthcare reform law, saying he would let some parts of the legislation stand. An August AP-GfK telephone survey found that 73% of Americans oppose the so-called individual mandate to purchase health insurance; but in a September survey, President Obama enjoyed a 53%-36% edge over Romney when it comes to the public's trust for handling the healthcare issue. Moreover, an August AP-GfK poll using GfK KnowledgePanel found that just 12 percent say they expect the Affordable Care Act to be repealed completely. Will Romney return to his earlier, unqualified rejection of the Obama healthcare law to differentiate himself, or will he continue to moderate his stance to show he will be looking for a middle path?

3. Will the candidates use the debate as an opportunity to discuss policy details?

While 82% of likely voters said they have a good idea of what policies President Obama would pursue if elected to a second term as president, the figure for Romney is 68%. Obama also enjoys a 69%-to-50% edge among one crucial group of likely voters: those who indicate they have yet to make a final decision. While either candidate could be hurt by introducing ideas that are unpopular, Romney seemingly has more to lose by not using the debate to provide additional policy details. How will the candidates balance the safety of sticking with broad themes, with the need to enhance voters' sense that they know where each candidate is planning to take the country?

About the AP-GfK Poll

The most recent Associated Press-GfK Poll was conducted September 13-17, 2012, by GfK Roper Public Affairs and Corporate Communications. It involved landline and cellphone interviews with 1,512 adults nationwide, including 807 likely voters. The GfK KnowledgePanel® poll was conducted August 3-13, 2012, and involved interviews with 1,334 randomly chosen adults nationwide. Topline results and more details are available at <http://www.ap-gfkpoll.com>.

About GfK Roper

For more information please visit http://www.gfkamerica.com/practice_areas/roper_consulting/index.en.html

New York, NY; - 2 October 2012