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Unmarried Women Anchor Obama Gains Tracking Survey Results

To: Interested Parties

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research
Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund

Both nationally and in the battleground states, Obama is gaining ground.¹ This movement doubtless reflects the on-going crisis of confidence in the American economic system and the anger over Republican governance, as well as missteps on the part of the McCain campaign. This crisis creates Obama gains in some previously difficult groups, such as older white men and white seniors, though there is more work to be done here and time will tell whether these gains hold.

One very large group of voters (26 percent of the voting age population) remains steady. Unmarried women have proven an anchor of progressive support, from the beginning of the primary process to now, just 31 days from the end. In battleground states, they drive Obama's overall margin among women (now 53 – 42 percent) and deliver a 29-point cushion for the Democratic nominee. In contrast, married women divide evenly, a notable improvement compared to a few weeks ago, but still not a group of voters who will deliver convincing margins to the Democrats come election day.

This has been a good week for Obama and progressives in general, but there is still a month to go and the conservatives will certainly target some of Obama's gains. We anticipate some of these swing voters swinging back and forth over the next 30 days; we also, however, fully expect unmarried women's support to remain consistent. The bigger question here is the degree to which they participate in the 2008 elections.

As a group, unmarried women have not voted in the same numbers as married women. In 2004, 20 million eligible unmarried women did not make it to the polls. Yet this survey shows the same level of interest in this election among unmarried women as among married women. The question remains, will progressives be able to harness this energy and help unmarried women fully participate in this presidential election.

This memorandum reflects data drawn from a September 29-30 tracking survey commissioned by Women's Voices. Women Vote Action fund of likely women voters in battleground states.²

¹ Democracy corps release <http://www.gqrr.com/articles/2253/4726_obamaemergeswithlead2.pdf>

² These states include: CO, FL, IN, IA, MI, MN, MO, MT, NV, NH, NM, MN, OH, PA, VA, and WI.

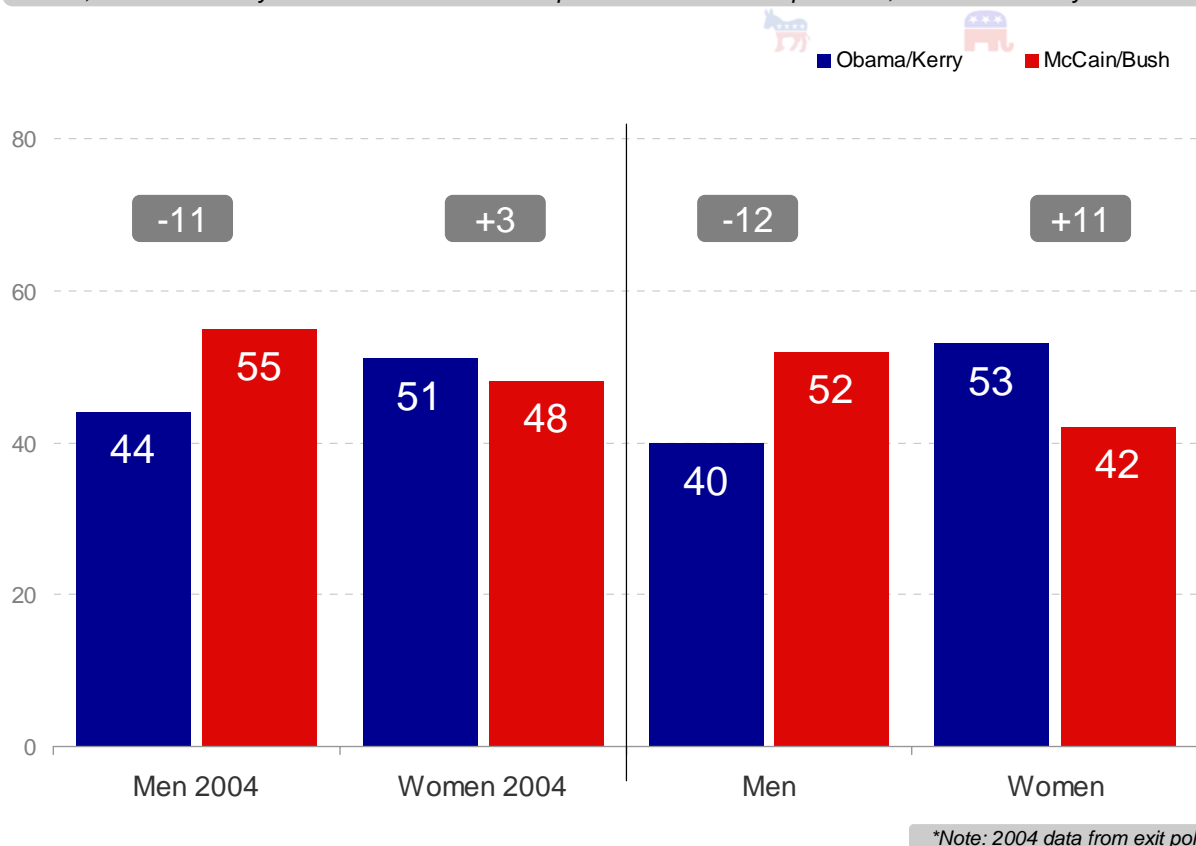
It also reflects data drawn from a concurrent Democracy Corps survey added to the WVWVAF survey to a total sample size of 1,045 cases with the overall margin of error for this survey at +/- 3 points.

Unmarried Women Anchor Progressive Support

Unmarried women in the battleground delivered a 23 point margin to John Kerry in 2004. Unmarried women have anchored Obama’s support among women since the Democratic nomination was settled and currently deliver a 29-point margin to Barack Obama in the battleground. While most of the movement we have seen in the last week has come among married women, the Democrat’s support among women overall is driven by unmarried women. The result is a 30-point marriage gap among women in the battleground.

Figure 1: Gender Gap

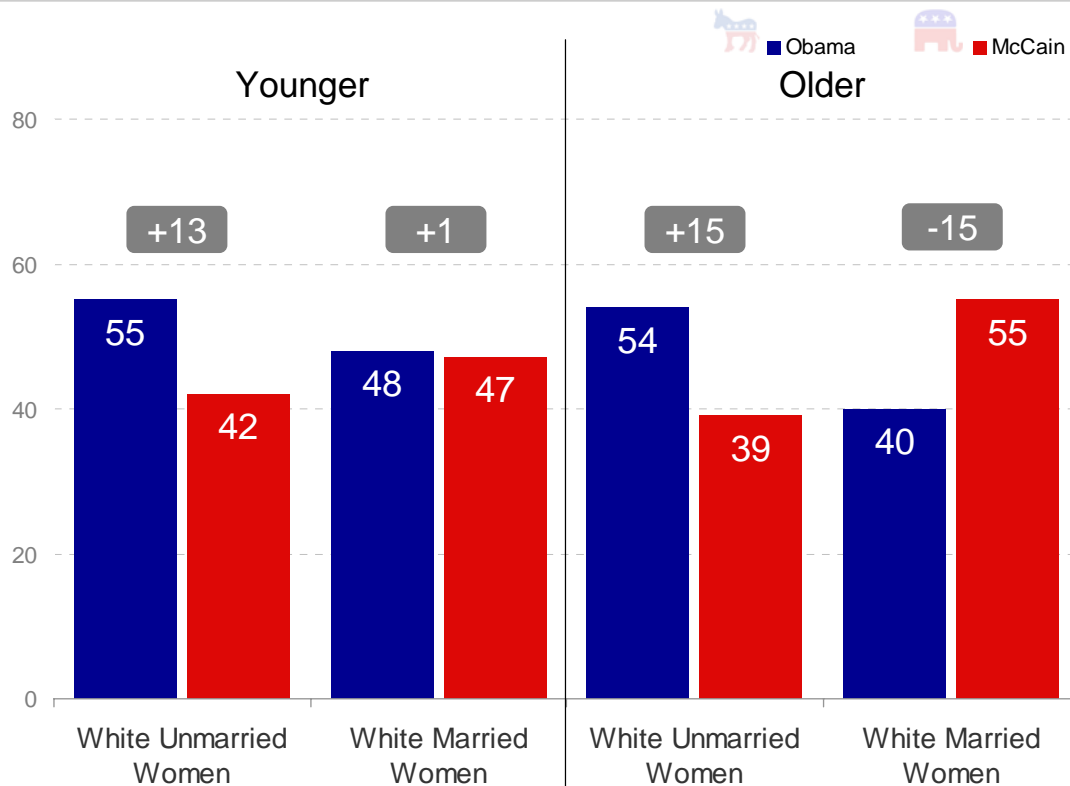
If the election for president were held today and the candidates were – Democrat Barack Obama, Republican John McCain, Libertarian Party candidate Bob Barr or Independent candidate Ralph Nader, for whom would you vote?



Obama is strongest among younger unmarried women, while posting no margin among younger married women. Older married women comfortably support McCain, while Obama posts a strong lead among older unmarried women.

Figure 2: High Support Among Unmarried

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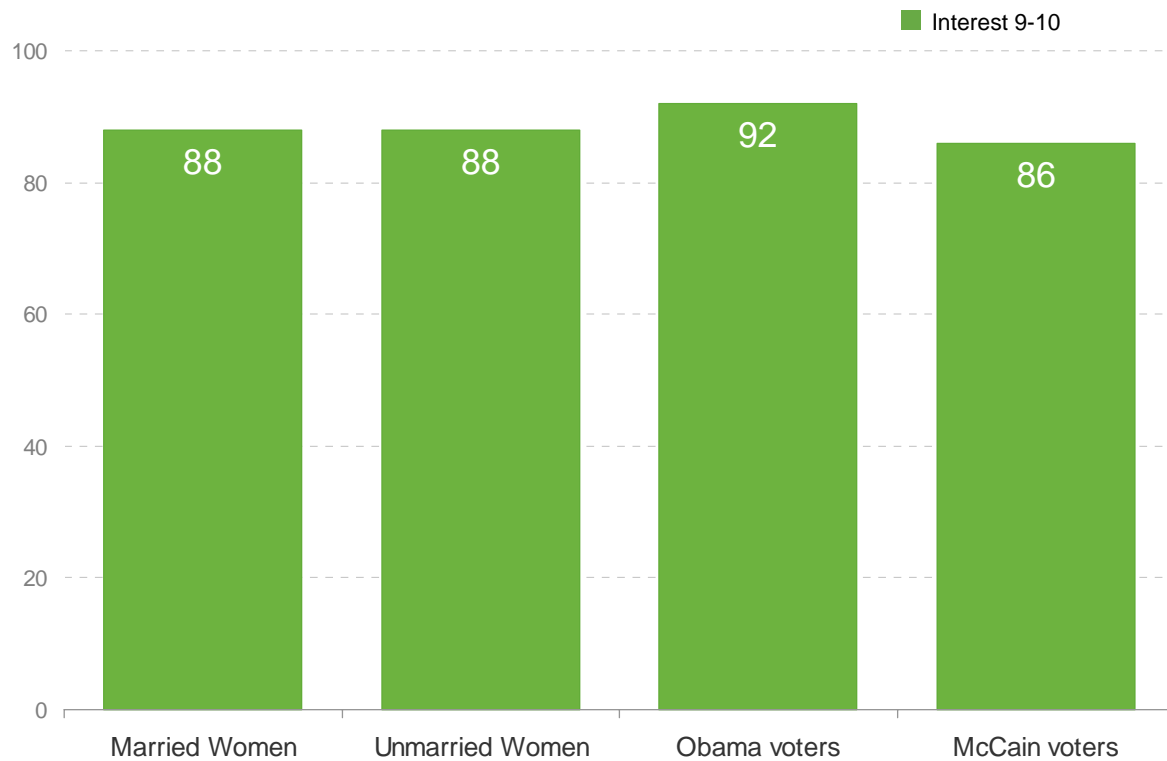
Though improving, there remains a number of areas where Obama is underperforming, at least relative to these voters’ partisanship. Even among some (older) unmarried groups, Obama is not hitting his ceiling of support. In fact, among white unmarried women, there is more room to grow his vote share than among white married women. These groups include white seniors (including married white seniors) and non-college white voters.

Interest High Among Unmarried Women

Unmarried women, a group that historically have not turned out to vote in sufficient numbers, match the energy and enthusiasm of married women. Moreover, at least among women, Obama has regained his advantage in terms of enthusiasm. Overall, 88 percent of women in the battleground describe themselves as very interested in the election (describe their interest as a 9 or a 10 on a ten point scale), a striking outcome in its own right. There is no difference between married and unmarried women on this measure.

Figure 3: Interest in election high

As you know, there will be elections in November for president and other offices. On a scale of one to ten, with one meaning NOT AT ALL interested and ten meaning VERY INTERESTED, please tell me how interested you are in this year's elections?



Unmarried women participated fully in the Democratic primary, often exceeding their percentage of the population in early primary states. These results suggest an record turnout for unmarried women in the general election as well.

Nice Guys Sometimes Finish First

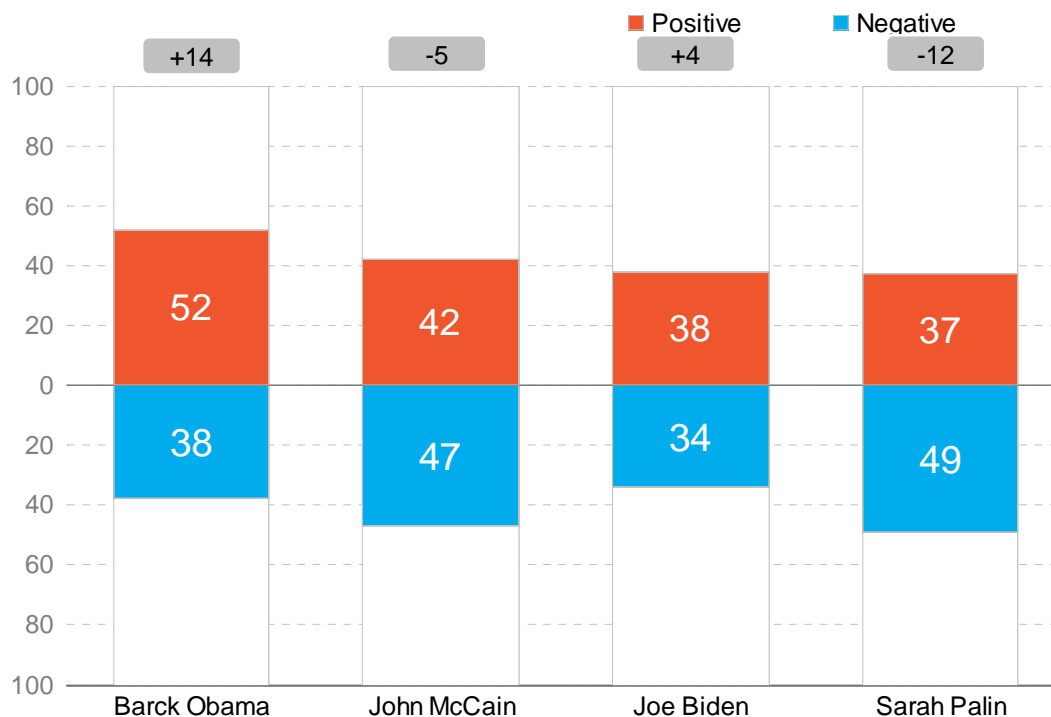
Pundits pinged Barack Obama for failing to be more forceful with John McCain. Voters disagreed and most polling not only suggests Obama won the debate, but scored points for his civility at a time when our country needs sober, serious leaders. At the same time, women in the battleground register significant erosion in McCain's profile. Sarah Palin was the candidate with the worst favorability ratings and may represent a significant drag on the GOP ticket.

Barack Obama records a 52 percent positive, 38 percent negative favorability rating among women in the battleground, a strong number, but not much changed since our previous survey. John McCain falls from 44 positive, 46 percent negative to 42 percent positive, 47 percent negative with most of this decline recorded among married women. Unmarried women simply never warmed to this candidate.

Sarah Palin crashed from 42 percent positive, 37 negative just after the Republican convention to 37 percent positive, 49 percent negative, currently. In fact, her marks mirror those of John McCain. For all her blue collar appeal, she only manages a 42 percent positive, 42 percent negative score among non-college women and sinks to 55 percent negative among unmarried women.

Figure 4: Candidate Thermometer Ratings

Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold.



Obama's biggest personal advantage over McCain is in being "likeable." However, it is a mistake to assume this election, particularly for unmarried women, is about charisma. It is about the economy and Obama rolls up a 17-point advantage over McCain on the economy, as well as solid advantages on being your side and in touch.

■ **Figure 5:** Higher trait and job ratings among Unmarried women.

I'd like to ask you which presidential candidate you associate more with these terms, Barack Obama or McCain. Overall, you think Barack Obama or John McCain would do a better job with this issue

	Married			Unmarried		
	Barack Obama More/Better	John McCain More/Better	Diff	Barack Obama More/Better	John McCain More/Better	Diff
Bringing the right kind of change	48	44	+4	64	30	+34
Being on your side	48	44	+4	63	32	+31
Shares your values	46	48	-2	62	32	+30
The Economy	48	42	+6	63	28	+35
The situation in Iraq	40	54	-14	58	36	+22
The financial crisis in the country	44	42	+2	57	29	+28

Conclusion

Obama does well among women in the battleground. His base support among unmarried women remains strong and consistent and he improved this week among married women. For Obama there remains a lot of work to be done, however. Unmarried women need a maximum turnout effort. They are poised to deliver an even larger margin than they did for Kerry and potentially match or exceed the Democratic margin in the 2006 congressional election (+34 nationally). It is this margin that helps turn the Congress. Moreover, for Obama there needs to be persuasive efforts aimed at those groups of women, married and unmarried, that are underperforming his campaign. Obama had a good week. He needs a good month.