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Contact: Kelly Rossman-McKinney

Office: 517-487-9320

Cell: 517-749-0529

Dennis Denno

517-402-2453

John T. Reurink

517-482-2125

Obama Edges McCain in Battle of First Ladies

Poll also indicates candidate age matters; race and gender don't

LANSING, Mich. — With the presidential election looming, a recent poll finds that a small margin of Michigan voters believe Michelle Obama would make a better first lady than Cindy McCain. The latest poll from Denno Noor Research, The Rossman Group and MIRS shows that 36 percent of Michigan's likely voters favor Michelle Obama, while 33 percent of likely voters favor Cindy McCain. Twenty-seven percent indicated they were undecided while those remaining refused to answer.

"The visibility of the candidates' wives has never been so prominent. Voters are thinking and talking about the women who are competing to be our country's next first lady," said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, CEO of The Rossman Group. "They both have an important role to play – and in a close election, their public perception can influence votes."

Denno Noor Research conducted the survey in partnership with The Rossman Group and Michigan Information & Research Services (MIRS). The Rossman Group was recently named Lansing's Most Effective Public Relations Firm by a survey of political insiders, and MIRS is Michigan's leading daily legislative and state government newsletter.

The question was worded as follows:

"Who would make a better first lady, Michelle Obama or Cindy McCain?"

The results among female voters closely mirrored Denno Noor Research's recent presidential race polling, with the Obama camp capturing a 12 percentage-point lead in both the presidential and first lady polls. The McCain camp similarly swept male voters, with Cindy registering a 6 percentage-point lead over Michelle Obama and John registering a 3 percentage-point lead over Barack.

"Michelle and Cindy each add a lot to their husband's tickets," said Denno Noor Research President Dennis Denno. "It is very interesting that women seem to be able to relate better to Michelle while men appear to be drawn more to Cindy."

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The regional data for the first lady favorability poll is as follows:

Region	Obama	McCain	Undecided/Refused
Central Michigan	45%	20%	38%
Detroit	66%	6%	29%
Macomb	32%	40%	28%
Oakland	26%	40%	34%
Balance of SE Michigan	37%	25%	39%
Tri-Cities/Thumb	42%	30%	27%
Upper Lower Peninsula	43%	40%	17%
Upper Peninsula	44%	28%	38%
Wayne	35%	37%	28%
West Michigan	26%	39%	35%

Shifting gears, a separate question in the poll indicates that the age of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates could be having a significant impact on the election, while gender preferences are giving the McCain/Palin ticket a boost. Of those likely voters polled, 24 percent reported that age would influence their presidential vote, while just seven percent indicated that gender would influence their vote and a mere 2 percent reported that race would affect their vote. Sixty-two percent reported that neither race, nor age, nor gender would affect their vote. Those remaining were either undecided or reported that all three factors would affect their vote.

The question was worded as follows:

“Much has been made about the characteristics of the Republican and Democratic candidates running for president and vice president—characteristics such as gender, age and race. In the 2008 election, which of these characteristics will have the greatest influence on your voting decision, gender, race or age?”

Of those who responded that age would have the greatest influence on their vote, 55 percent favored Obama/Biden, while 32 percent favored McCain/Palin; while among those who responded that gender would have the greatest influence on their vote, 49 percent favored McCain/Palin, while 39 percent favored Obama/Biden.

“It would appear that either McCain’s age is working against him or Obama’s age is working for him,” said MIRS President John T. Reurink. “Either way, it seems clear that Palin’s gender may be playing a role in keeping McCain in the race for Michigan.”

Methodology:

This survey was part of the Rossman Group/MIRS/Denno Noor Research Quarterly Survey of the Michigan electorate. 600 respondents were surveyed between October 1 and October 4, and the participation was stratified based on census data and past voter behavior. A screen was employed to include only those participants who said they intended on voting, either at the polls or by absentee ballot, in the November 2008 Election. The margin of error is plus/minus four percent.

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