

October 16, 2008

## Marriage Gap Drives Obama Margin Tracking Survey Results

**To:**  
Interested Parties

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

As we move into the last phase of this campaign, when both conventions and debates are done and the parties seek to build on what progress they have made—or, alternatively recover from missteps and miscalculations—it is important to consider what accounts for Obama's current margin and what both sides need to do to affect the political return of that margin up and down the ballot.

Without question, the Democrat's massive support among people of color. In recent weeks, Obama has put some distance between himself and McCain among Independents, and other swing groups like married women, and improved among non-college whites and older whites, as well. But the largest base group in this country—nearly 26 percent of the voting age population—are unmarried women and their stable support anchors Obama's margin.

Younger voters, of course, also make up a powerful and energetic part of the Obama base, but the marriage gap drives the vote here as well. In a recent multi-modal Democracy Corps survey of people under the age of 30, Barack Obama rolled up a 60 to 30 percent lead among white unmarried young women, but only managed a 45-46 percent split among white married women under 30.

Obama still has work to be done. While Obama holds a significant lead among unmarried women, there may be opportunities to expand the margin further. Unmarried women can be reached effectively through the mail, but there are some unmarried women—particularly targeted unmarried women—waking up with empty mailboxes.

This memorandum reflects data drawn from a October 12-14 tracking survey commissioned by Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund of likely women voters in battleground states. It also reflects data drawn from a concurrent Democracy Corps survey added to the WVVAF survey to a total sample size of 1,028 cases with the overall margin of error for this survey at +/- 3 points.

## Unmarried Women Deliver a Big and Stable Margin Up and Down the Ballot

Unmarried women in the battleground supported John Kerry with a 23-point margin in 2004; in 2008, unmarried women support Barack Obama by 27 points. This margin is comparable to the results of a WVWVAF survey taken two weeks ago in September (54 – 33 percent Obama) and has remained stable from the beginning to the end of this campaign. In national surveys, Gallup reported a 62 – 30 percent Obama lead among unmarried women in polls taken October 6th – 12th. Married women, however, remain very competitive. Obama holds McCain to a statistical dead-heat among these voters, a marked improvement from 2004 when Kerry lost married women by 11 points, but still benefitted from a 28-point marriage gap.

**Figure 1:** The Marriage Gap -- Presidential  
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If present trends continue, the drama on election night will not be who wins the presidency, but the breadth of the progressive mandate at the congressional level. Here, too, unmarried women will play a key role in strengthening the Democratic majority in Congress. Indeed, the marriage gap at the congressional level is even larger than the marriage gap at the presidential level.

**Figure 2:** The Marriage Gap -- Congressional  
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## Reasons for Obama's Lead

Conservatives never truly understood the appeal of Barack Obama. They still don't. For most voters, it was not his "eloquence" (to quote McCain from the last debate), but his ability to connect with the issues they care most about. For unmarried women—who earn, on average 52 percent of what married men earn—that means he connected with them on the economy. We see this dynamic in this survey when asking voters to compare Barack Obama and John McCain on a series of traits and job aspects. Unmarried women give Obama an advantage throughout, but his biggest numbers emerge when these voters compare the candidates on the economy, bringing the right kind of change and offering a vision that addresses the big problems facing this country.

**Figure 3:** Unmarried Women Point to Obama on Change, the Future, and the Economy  
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## Reaching Unmarried Women

As noted, for Obama forces there is still work to do among unmarried women. Currently, we see great enthusiasm among unmarried women and there is no difference in interest in the election among married women and unmarried women. However, historically, these voters have not turned out in the same numbers as other voters; in 2004, 20 million unmarried women sat out the election. In addition, not all the progressive instincts of these voters are being fully captured by the Obama campaign. There is a 8-point gap between the percentage of unmarried women who describe themselves as Democratic or Independents who lean Democratic and the percent of voters who are supporting Obama. In contrast, Obama is over-performing among married women. As other WVWVAF research among unmarried women have revealed, the primary problem for Obama lies among older unmarried women.

Notably, unmarried women can be reached effectively through the mail. In an exercise designed to see which campaign was doing a better job communicating with voters, we see more Obama penetration among unmarried women with mail than any other medium besides broadcast television. Phones also ranked high.

**Figure 4:** Reaching Unmarried Women  
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Importantly, among white unmarried women and particularly older white unmarried women, Obama has not been nearly as successful. Older voters in particular tend to read their mail and there seems to be a significant missed opportunity here in maximizing progressive support.

**Figure 5:** Obama mail, Missing Important Subgroups  
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## Conclusion

This is an election about change. Because of the significant economic stress of going through life with a single income—unmarried women need change more than most voting blocs. Their support for Barack Obama, exceeding the 2004 margins, is no accident. However, progressives still have some room to further maximize the political advantages that this group will bring on November 4th. At this point, this mostly means working to turn out these voters, but there are also opportunities to expand the progressive margin among older married women.

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

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October, 2008

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