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## **With Palin Effect Fading, Polls Find Women Sticking With Obama in Swing States** **Women account for a majority of Obama's supporters in nationwide surveys**

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Throughout September, as the "Sarah Palin effect" seemed to buoy John McCain's campaign, Democrats worried about how Barack Obama could woo women voters in a race without Hillary Clinton. Yet recent [polling data](#) shows that women appear to be sticking more closely to their [traditional Democratic leanings](#) than many pundits had speculated.

A review of polls compiled weekly by Rutgers University's Center for American Women finds that, in 14 key battleground states, more women favor Obama than McCain.

Women also make up a larger percentage of Obama's supporters. In Colorado, for example, one recent poll showed that 54 percent of voters for Obama were women, while only 42 percent were men, a gender gap of 12 points. [National polls](#) from the past two weeks echo the same trend, showing gender gaps of anywhere from 4 to 11 percentage points. Historically, this fits: A gender gap, where women vote differently than men, has existed in [every election](#) since 1980. In 2004, women were 7 percentage points less likely than their male counterparts to vote for Bush.

Even white women, the bloc that some expected to shift most toward the McCain-Palin camp, have settled into their traditional pattern. Recent [Gallup polls](#) show 48 percent of white women planning to cast ballots for McCain, compared to 44 percent for Obama--hardly a dramatic split considering President Bush carried white women by 11 points against John Kerry in 2004. One recent [poll](#) suggests that the trend is moving even further, concluding that white women prefer Obama to McCain by 3 percentage points.

Despite the high-profile addition of a woman to the general election, several trends are shaping the female vote along historical lines, experts say. First, any gender-based bounce Sarah Palin may have given the Republican campaign largely has faded.

"What we saw when Sarah Palin was first put on the ticket was a real interest in the story, in the narrative of Sarah Palin," said Debbie Walsh, director of the Center of American Women and Politics. Instead, there has been more scrutiny of her readiness to lead, even as most voters appear to be turning their focus back to the candidate at the top of the ticket.

Another factor is that economic issues have moved to the front of most voters' minds, a trend that tends to push both male and female voters toward the Democratic candidate. On top of that, women are "more economically vulnerable" than men, says Susan Carroll, a senior scholar at the Rutgers center. Almost two thirds of minimum wage earners are female, and a disproportionate number of women rank near the bottom of America's wage earners, she said.

In a tight race like this one, women will have a strong influence. After all, nearly [9 million more women](#) voted than their male counterparts in 2004.

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