

Released:

**Monday, September 17, 2012**

Contact:

**PATRICK MURRAY**

732-263-5858 (office)

732-979-6769 (cell)

[pdmurray@monmouth.edu](mailto:pdmurray@monmouth.edu)

## **NATIONAL: OBAMA GAINS OVER ROMNEY**

### ***Incumbent has edge on handling foreign policy in wake of Middle East violence***

Pres. Barack Obama has opened a slight lead over Gov. Mitt Romney in the latest *Monmouth University Poll* of American voters. In a week when the news cycle has been dominated by violence against Americans overseas, voters say that the Democratic incumbent has done a better job than the Republican challenger responding to the situation and is better able to handle the nation's foreign policy in general.

Currently, Obama holds a 7 point lead over Romney (48% to 41%) among all registered voters and a 3 point lead (48% to 45%) among likely voters. That compares to slimmer margins of 4 points and one point, respectively, in mid-August before both parties' nominating conventions.

Fully 9-in-10 likely voters have heard about the recent violence and protests at U.S. embassies in Africa and the Middle East, including 61% who have heard a lot about this and 29% who have heard a little. When asked about the two presidential contenders' public response to the situation, 39% of likely voters approve of how Obama has handled the situation to 27% who disapprove, with the remainder being unaware of the president's response. Opinion is more divided on how Mitt Romney has dealt with the situation – just 25% of likely voters approve of the GOP nominee's response to 29% who disapprove. The poll also found that a majority (51%) of likely voters trust Obama more than Romney (42%) to handle the nation's foreign policy.

“If the past week was Mitt Romney's opportunity to show how he would handle a foreign crisis, the GOP nominee did not put his best foot forward as far as voters are concerned,” said Patrick Murray, director of the New Jersey-based Monmouth University Polling Institute.

While foreign affairs have driven the recent campaign debate, the *Monmouth University Poll* also found that Obama has gained an advantage on domestic issues, particularly Social Security and Medicare. Half (50%) of likely voters now trust Obama to handle this issue compared to 42% who prefer Romney.

Just one month ago, the two candidates were virtually tied among likely voters on this issue – 46% for Obama to 43% for Romney.

“These results suggest that Democratic attacks on the Ryan budget plan, and by association Mitt Romney, are gaining a small toehold among voters,” said Murray.

The poll also found Obama with a very slight edge on handling the economy and jobs. Nearly half (48%) of likely voters trust the incumbent on this issue compared to 45% who prefer Romney. One month ago this issue was tied at 45% for each candidate.

One area where the electorate remains evenly divided is the federal budget deficit and debt. The same number of likely voters trust Obama (47%) as Romney (47%) on this issue. One month ago, Gov. Romney had a slight 46% to 44% edge on this issue.

The *Monmouth University Poll* also asked registered voters about prospects for economic recovery regardless of the victor this November. About 3-in-10 (31%) say that it is very likely that the economy can actually be turned around in the next few years compared to 19% who say it is not likely. Another 43% say it is somewhat likely the economy can be turned around. Both Democrats (35%) and Republicans (34%) are more optimistic than independents (27%) about the economy’s eventual recovery.

To the extent that this year’s election is a referendum on the economy, 24% of registered voters say their family is better off now than when the economy hit bottom in early 2009 compared to 28% who are worse off. Nearly half (47%) say their family’s financial situation is unchanged. Obama voters (40%) are the most likely to say they are now better off, while Romney voters (51%) are the most likely to say they are now worse off. Undecided voters, though, are the most likely to say their family’s financial situation is about the same (60%). Among the remainder, 23% of undecided voters say they are now worse off and 12% say they are better off.

There has been little change in the personal ratings of the candidates over the past month. For the Democratic ticket, Barack Obama is viewed favorably by 46% of likely voters and unfavorably by 43%. Vice President Joe Biden gets a 34% favorable to 39% unfavorable rating. For the GOP team, Mitt Romney has a 41% favorable to 40% unfavorable rating among likely voters and Congressman Paul Ryan earns a 38% favorable to 33% unfavorable rating.

The latest *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone with 1,571 registered voters in the United States from September 13 to 16, 2012. This sample has a margin of error of  $\pm 2.5$  percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, New Jersey.

**DATA TABLES**

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(\* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. If the election for President were today, would you vote for Mitt Romney the Republican, or Barack Obama the Democrat, or some other candidate? [IF UNDECIDED: At this moment, do you lean towards Mitt Romney or do you lean towards Barack Obama?] [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

(with leaners)	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Romney	<b>41%</b>	<b>45%</b>	86%	41%	6%	45%	39%	32%	45%	44%	52%	4%	22%
Obama	<b>48%</b>	<b>48%</b>	9%	41%	90%	43%	53%	53%	44%	49%	39%	91%	61%
Other candidate	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	3%	8%	1%	5%	3%	7%	4%	1%	4%	0%	9%
(VOL) Undecided	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>	2%	10%	3%	7%	6%	8%	6%	5%	6%	5%	9%

TREND: Reg. Voters	September 2012	August 2012	June 2012
Romney	41%	41%	42%
Obama	48%	45%	46%
Other candidate	4%	6%	5%
(VOL) Undecided	6%	8%	7%
Unwtd N	1571	1375	1395

TREND: Likely Voters	September 2012	August 2012	June 2012
Romney	45%	45%	46%
Obama	48%	46%	47%
Other candidate	3%	4%	3%
(VOL) Undecided	4%	6%	4%
Unwtd N	1344	1149	1152

[QUESTIONS 2 AND 3 WERE ROTATED]

2. Is your general opinion of Mitt Romney favorable or unfavorable, or do you have no opinion?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Favorable	<b>37%</b>	<b>41%</b>	81%	33%	7%	39%	36%	24%	42%	42%	46%	7%	18%
Unfavorable	<b>39%</b>	<b>40%</b>	8%	34%	70%	34%	43%	42%	33%	42%	34%	56%	49%
No opinion	<b>24%</b>	<b>19%</b>	11%	33%	23%	27%	21%	34%	26%	16%	19%	38%	33%

TREND: Reg. Voters	September 2012	August 2012	June 2012
Favorable	37%	35%	34%
Unfavorable	39%	38%	34%
No opinion	24%	27%	32%
Unwtd N	1571	1375	1395

TREND: Likely Voters	September 2012	August 2012	June 2012
Favorable	41%	40%	38%
Unfavorable	40%	39%	37%
No opinion	19%	21%	25%
Unwtd N	1344	1149	1152

3. Is your general opinion of Barack Obama favorable or unfavorable, or do you have no opinion?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Favorable	<b>46%</b>	<b>46%</b>	11%	36%	86%	42%	50%	45%	43%	49%	39%	82%	55%
Unfavorable	<b>39%</b>	<b>43%</b>	78%	40%	7%	42%	37%	30%	43%	41%	49%	5%	23%
No opinion	<b>15%</b>	<b>11%</b>	10%	24%	7%	16%	13%	24%	13%	10%	12%	13%	23%

TREND: <i>Reg. Voters</i>	September 2012	August 2012	June 2012
Favorable	46%	42%	43%
Unfavorable	39%	40%	40%
No opinion	15%	18%	17%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	1571	1375	1395

TREND: <i>Likely Voters</i>	September 2012	August 2012	June 2012
Favorable	46%	45%	45%
Unfavorable	43%	43%	43%
No opinion	11%	12%	11%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	1344	1149	1152

[QUESTIONS 4 AND 5 WERE ROTATED]

4. Is your general opinion of Paul Ryan favorable or unfavorable, or do you have no opinion?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Favorable	<b>33%</b>	<b>38%</b>	66%	34%	6%	36%	30%	21%	37%	38%	40%	7%	21%
Unfavorable	<b>30%</b>	<b>33%</b>	7%	27%	54%	28%	33%	28%	27%	35%	29%	43%	29%
No opinion	<b>37%</b>	<b>29%</b>	27%	39%	40%	36%	37%	52%	36%	27%	31%	51%	50%

TREND: <i>Reg. Voters</i>	September 2012	August 2012
Favorable	33%	31%
Unfavorable	30%	27%
No opinion	37%	42%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	1571	1375

TREND: <i>Likely Voters</i>	September 2012	August 2012
Favorable	38%	35%
Unfavorable	33%	30%
No opinion	29%	34%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	1344	1149

5. Is your general opinion of Joe Biden favorable or unfavorable, or do you have no opinion?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Favorable	<b>32%</b>	<b>34%</b>	6%	24%	62%	29%	35%	26%	29%	39%	30%	59%	27%
Unfavorable	<b>35%</b>	<b>39%</b>	69%	35%	8%	40%	31%	24%	40%	38%	42%	10%	20%
No opinion	<b>33%</b>	<b>27%</b>	25%	40%	30%	31%	34%	49%	32%	23%	28%	31%	53%

TREND: <i>Reg. Voters</i>	September 2012	August 2012
Favorable	32%	30%
Unfavorable	35%	35%
No opinion	33%	35%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	1571	1375

TREND: <i>Likely Voters</i>	September 2012	August 2012
Favorable	34%	32%
Unfavorable	39%	39%
No opinion	27%	28%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	1344	1149

[QUESTIONS 6 TO 8 WERE ROTATED]

6. Who do you trust more to handle the economy and jobs – Mitt Romney or Barack Obama?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Romney	<b>43%</b>	<b>45%</b>	85%	45%	6%	46%	39%	35%	46%	45%	52%	5%	27%
Obama	<b>48%</b>	<b>48%</b>	10%	39%	90%	43%	52%	53%	45%	48%	38%	91%	63%
Not sure/Don't know	<b>9%</b>	<b>6%</b>	5%	16%	4%	11%	8%	12%	10%	7%	10%	5%	10%

TREND: Reg. Voters	September 2012	August 2012
Romney	43%	42%
Obama	48%	44%
Not sure/Don't know	9%	14%
Unwtd N	1571	1375

TREND: Likely Voters	September 2012	August 2012
Romney	45%	45%
Obama	48%	45%
Not sure/Don't know	6%	10%
Unwtd N	1344	1149

7. Who do you trust more to handle Social Security and Medicare – Mitt Romney or Barack Obama?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Romney	<b>39%</b>	<b>42%</b>	80%	39%	6%	42%	37%	30%	42%	43%	48%	5%	23%
Obama	<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>	11%	44%	89%	45%	54%	57%	46%	49%	40%	88%	66%
Not sure/Don't know	<b>11%</b>	<b>8%</b>	9%	17%	5%	13%	10%	13%	12%	9%	12%	8%	11%

TREND: Reg. Voters	September 2012	August 2012
Romney	39%	39%
Obama	50%	46%
Not sure/Don't know	11%	15%
Unwtd N	1571	1375

TREND: Likely Voters	September 2012	August 2012
Romney	42%	43%
Obama	50%	46%
Not sure/Don't know	8%	11%
Unwtd N	1344	1149

8. Who do you trust more to handle the federal budget and national debt – Mitt Romney or Barack Obama?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Romney	<b>44%</b>	<b>47%</b>	86%	47%	6%	49%	39%	37%	46%	46%	54%	7%	25%
Obama	<b>47%</b>	<b>47%</b>	9%	38%	89%	42%	52%	53%	44%	46%	37%	86%	66%
Not sure/Don't know	<b>9%</b>	<b>7%</b>	5%	16%	4%	9%	9%	10%	10%	8%	10%	7%	8%

TREND: Reg. Voters	September 2012	August 2012
Romney	44%	43%
Obama	47%	43%
Not sure/Don't know	9%	14%
Unwtd N	1571	1375

TREND: Likely Voters	September 2012	August 2012
Romney	47%	46%
Obama	47%	44%
Not sure/Don't know	7%	10%
Unwtd N	1344	1149

9. Who do you trust more to handle foreign policy – Mitt Romney or Barack Obama?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Romney	39%	42%	81%	37%	6%	41%	37%	30%	41%	42%	48%	5%	21%
Obama	52%	51%	12%	48%	90%	48%	55%	61%	48%	49%	41%	89%	68%
Not sure/Don't know	10%	7%	6%	15%	5%	11%	9%	9%	11%	9%	10%	6%	10%

10. Regardless of who is elected president, is it very likely, somewhat likely, or not really likely that the economy can actually be turned around in the next few years?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Very likely	31%	34%	34%	27%	35%	33%	29%	28%	31%	34%	29%	42%	35%
Somewhat likely	43%	44%	45%	41%	45%	39%	47%	41%	44%	44%	46%	39%	37%
Not really likely	19%	16%	16%	25%	15%	22%	17%	25%	19%	15%	20%	13%	18%
Don't know	6%	6%	6%	7%	5%	6%	7%	6%	6%	7%	6%	6%	10%

11. Compared to when the economy was at its worst in early 2009, is your family now better off, worse off, or about the same?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Better off	24%	25%	12%	21%	37%	24%	23%	30%	22%	21%	20%	42%	32%
Worse off	28%	29%	44%	33%	9%	29%	27%	19%	31%	31%	33%	4%	17%
About the same	47%	46%	44%	46%	52%	46%	49%	50%	46%	47%	46%	52%	49%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%

[QUESTIONS 12 TO 14 WERE ASKED OF HALF THE SAMPLE: moe= ± 3.4%]

12. How much have you read or heard about recent violence and protests at U.S. embassies in Africa and the Middle East – a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
A lot	54%	61%	63%	56%	49%	58%	50%	33%	53%	71%	59%	42%	41%
A little	32%	29%	28%	32%	36%	32%	31%	42%	35%	20%	30%	38%	38%
Nothing	14%	10%	10%	13%	15%	10%	18%	25%	12%	8%	11%	18%	21%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%

[QUESTIONS 13 AND 14 WERE ROTATED]

13. Do you approve or disapprove of how Barack Obama has publicly responded to the situation, or haven't you heard his response? [PROBE: Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?]

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Strongly approve	23%	27%	6%	17%	47%	22%	24%	20%	18%	31%	19%	42%	31%
Somewhat approve	14%	12%	10%	16%	12%	15%	12%	13%	14%	13%	14%	12%	11%
Somewhat disapprove	7%	7%	14%	7%	1%	7%	7%	3%	6%	11%	8%	1%	5%
Strongly disapprove	18%	20%	37%	20%	2%	22%	13%	10%	21%	20%	23%	2%	6%
Haven't heard response	21%	20%	20%	25%	19%	20%	22%	27%	24%	13%	21%	20%	23%
Don't know	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%
Not aware of situation	14%	10%	10%	13%	16%	10%	18%	25%	12%	9%	11%	19%	21%

14. Do you approve or disapprove of how Mitt Romney has publicly responded to the situation, or haven't you heard his response? [*PROBE*: Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?]

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Strongly approve	15%	17%	32%	15%	2%	18%	12%	8%	15%	19%	19%	2%	10%
Somewhat approve	7%	8%	14%	8%	2%	8%	6%	6%	7%	9%	9%	4%	2%
Somewhat disapprove	6%	5%	3%	7%	6%	6%	5%	4%	7%	5%	6%	5%	5%
Strongly disapprove	21%	24%	4%	19%	39%	21%	22%	13%	18%	31%	21%	34%	17%
Haven't heard response	34%	31%	35%	36%	30%	33%	34%	42%	37%	24%	33%	33%	41%
Don't know	3%	3%	2%	3%	5%	4%	3%	2%	4%	3%	2%	4%	5%
Not aware of situation	14%	10%	10%	13%	16%	10%	18%	25%	12%	9%	11%	19%	21%

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on September 13 to 16, 2012 with a national random sample of 1,571 registered voters, including 611 via live interview on a landline telephone, 598 via interactive voice response (IVR) on a landline telephone, and 362 via live interview on a cell phone. Interviewing services were provided by Braun Research, Inc. (live landline and cell) and Survey USA (IVR and live cell) and the telephone sample was obtained from Survey Sampling International. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted) REGISTERED VOTERS			
29% Rep	48% Male	26% 18-34	70% White
36% Ind	52% Female	37% 35-54	11% Black
35% Dem		37% 55+	14% Hispanic 5% Asian/Other

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted) LIKELY VOTERS			
31% Rep	46% Male	22% 18-34	74% White
34% Ind	54% Female	38% 35-54	11% Black
35% Dem		40% 55+	11% Hispanic 4% Asian/Other

	Registered Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE		
			Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black	Hispanic
Unweighted N	1571	1344	433	578	540	722	849	251	542	773	1220	166	107
moe	2.5%	2.7%	4.7%	4.1%	4.2%	3.7%	3.4%	6.2%	4.2%	3.5%	2.8%	7.6%	9.5%

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