

Unmarried women play critical role in historic election

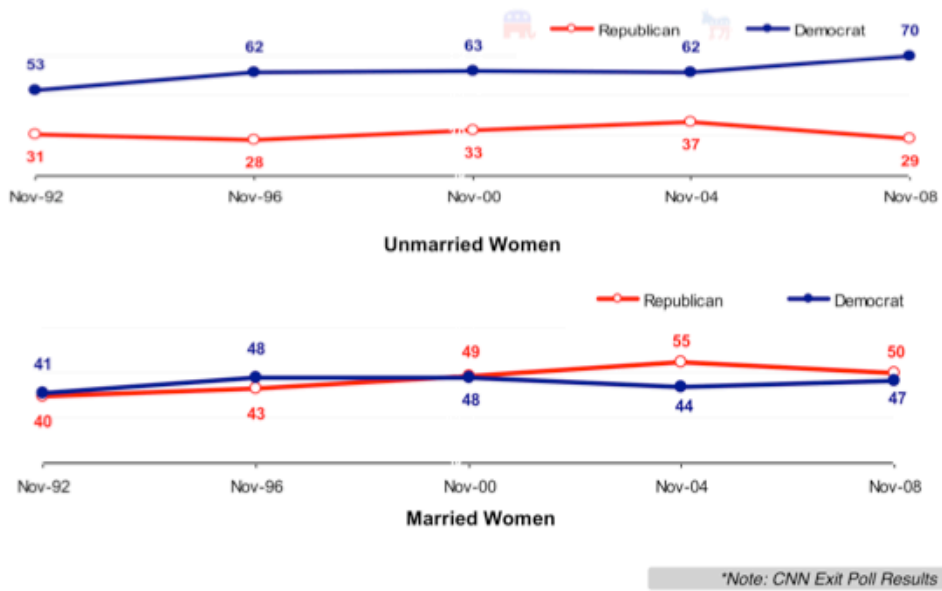
**From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research
Women's Voices. Women Vote**

On Tuesday, the nation made history. It made history in electing the first African American president; it made history in building a bigger margin for the first female Speaker of the House; it made history in delivering the biggest Democratic margin since 1964; it made history in sending a record number of people to the polls and the highest percentage turnout since the 1960 election. Analysts will spend the next few months sifting through the data, trying to figure out what happened and why. Historians will likely spend the next several years and decades studying this election, as well. But one thing is immediately clear. Unmarried women played a pivotal role in making this history and in changing this nation. They delivered a stunning 70 to 29 percent margin to Barack Obama and delivered similarly strong margins in races for Congress and the U.S. Senate. Although unmarried women have voted Democratic consistently since marital status has been tracked, this election represents the highest margin recorded and a 16-point net gain at the Presidential level from 2004. Unmarried women also staked a fair claim to being part of the emerging American electorate. Twenty percent of unmarried women voted for President for the first time in this election, compared to 11 percent overall and 4 percent among married women. Similarly, unmarried women are more likely to be recent registrants, 41 percent having registered to vote in the last four years. This is an election these voters took very seriously, and they emerge from this election with a sense of hope and purpose. Indeed, 75 percent of unmarried women believe “this election made me believe average people can help change the country.” What “change” means to these women is substantially different than what it means to other voters. While the whole country is concerned about the economy, unmarried women earn half of what married men make and nearly one-in-five does not have health insurance. They need change, and they earned a place at the table on Tuesday. This is an analysis report on results from a Women's Voices, Women Vote survey of 1,000 voters taken November 3rd – 5th. The margin of error is +/- 3.2. In addition, some analysis is drawn from the National Election Poll conducted by Edison/Mitofsky as reported by CNN.

Record Margin

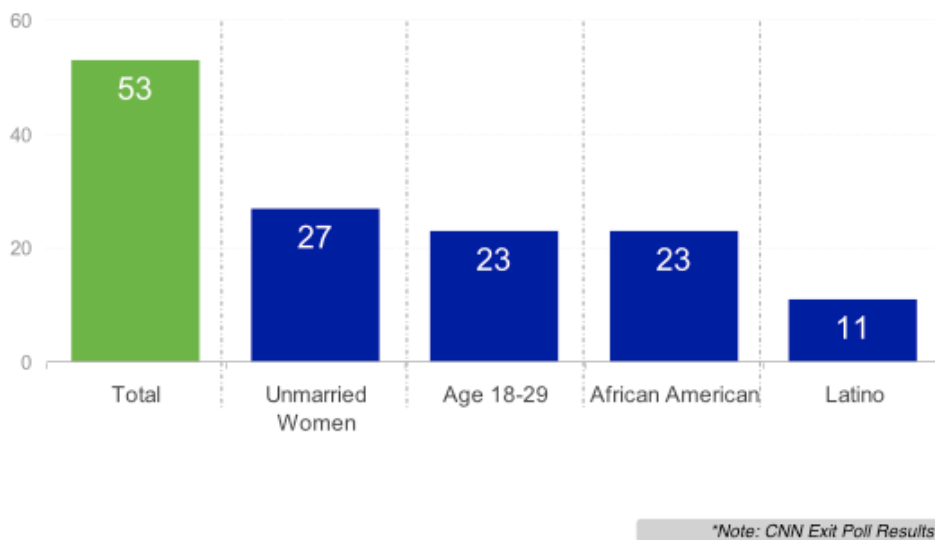
Barack Obama would have lost the women's vote and the 2008 election if it were not for the contribution of the unmarried woman. All told, he split men 49 – 48 percent, but lost married women 47 – 50 percent. Unmarried women, however, delivered 70 percent of their vote to the Democratic candidate, up from 62 percent in 2004. This represents the highest recorded margin we have seen among unmarried women and a higher Obama margin than seen among either younger voters or Latino voters (66 and 67 percent respectively).

Figure 1: Record Margin Among Unmarried



Many groups, of course, contributed to the Obama victory and the turnout in the African American community is particularly important. But simply because of their size – unmarried women comprise 26 percent of the voting age population – unmarried women made up the largest contribution to the Obama vote total.

Figure 2: Unmarried Women Contribution to Obama Vote

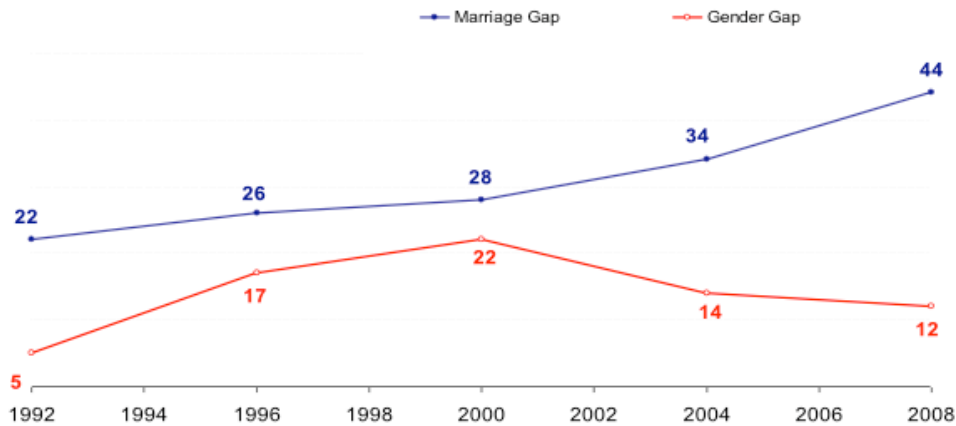


We see similar margins for Democrats running for every office; in congressional races, unmarried women voted 63 – 31 percent for the Democratic candidate and in senate races, unmarried women broke 64 – 34 percent for the Democratic candidate.

Record Marriage Gap

Many have credited Obama's win to his support among women and there is something to be said for that analysis. However, it is impossible to understand the women's vote without understanding the effect marital status has on how women vote. Obama improved among married women relative to Kerry, but he still lost these voters and among white married women voters, he lost this rather dramatically. He owes much of his margin to unmarried women. Obama improved Democratic support among married voters, but marital status still drove the vote, to the degree that this election saw a record 44-point "marriage gap," calculating the difference between how married and unmarried women voted. Conversely, the gender gap remained fairly static at 12 points.

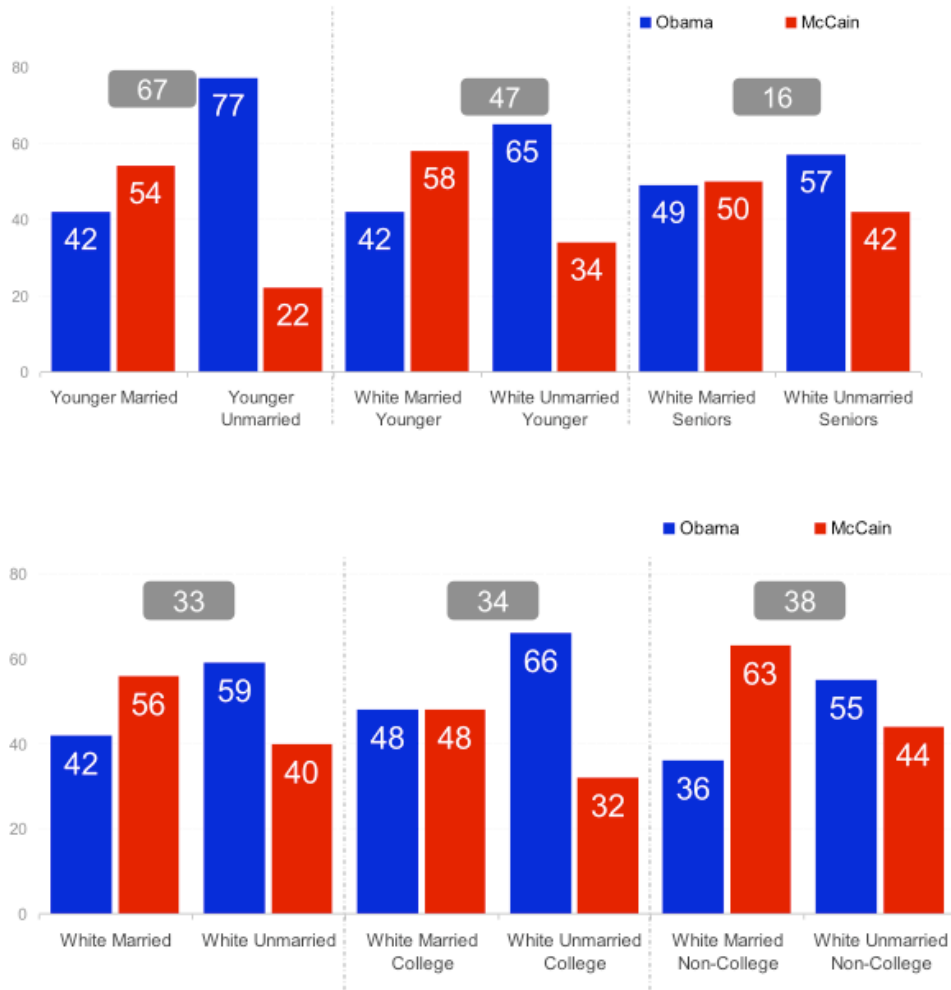
Figure 3: Record Marriage Gap in Vote



**Note: CNN Exit Poll Results*

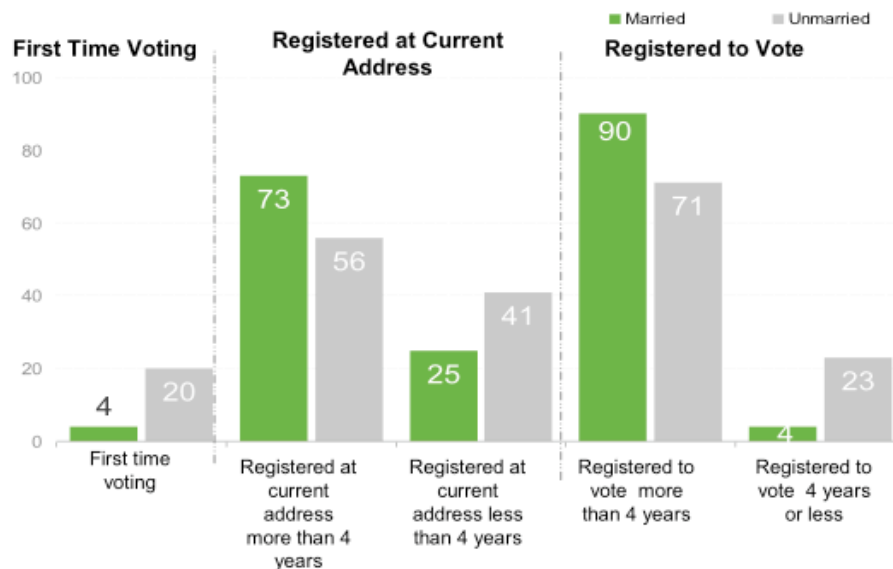
This marriage gap also extended throughout the electorate. There is a 33-point net difference in how white married women and white unmarried women voted; there is a 67-point marriage gap among younger married women (under 50) and younger unmarried women. Even education does not break the lock of marital status and voting behavior.

Figure 4: Marriage Gap Extends Through Electorate



Who Were the New Voters? Many were Unmarried Women

The electorate that changed America is an electorate that reflects a changing America. As a nation, we are growing younger, more diverse racially and less likely to be married. These voters comprised a disproportionate number of new voters in the 2008 electorate. Nationally, 11 percent of voters who voted this year, voted for the first time for President. This number remains the same among both women and men. But among unmarried women, fully 20 percent voted for the first time for President in this election, compared to just 4 percent among married women. Similarly, unmarried women make up a hugely disproportionate number of new registrants, not only in terms of “movers” (voters who need to re-register) after they move, but among voters who registered to vote for the first time.



First time voters voted 69 to 30 percent in favor of Barack Obama. However, there is no guarantee that the level of engagement and enthusiasm that defined the 2008 cycle will prevail, particularly into an off-year election. We would do well to remember that in the 2004 cycle, 20 million unmarried women did not vote. Sustaining their commitment – and delivering on the promises of the 2008 campaign – represents one of the most important progressive challenges of this post-election period. Importantly, mail can be a very effective tool in reaching unmarried women. While it does not have the firepower and reach of television, it can be better targeted and it proved to be instrumental in driving Obama’s vote in this election.

Figure 6: Mail Works Among Unmarried Women

Source	Value (6-10) ^[1]	Trust (6-10) ^[2]	Net Obama advantage ^[3]
National television news	82	65	+42
Television advertising	63	27	+37
Local television news	70	61	+32
Printed Newspapers	54	54	+30
Printed materials in mail from a political organization not directly connected to a candidate	22	22	+25
Printed materials in the mail from campaigns or candidates	40	28	+22
A live rally, speech or campaign event	26	NA	+21
News from online sources like MSN.com or Yahoo news	42	45	+14
E-mails about the campaign from friends or family	23	27	+1

[1] Respondents asked to rate how much information they received on 1 to 10 scale.

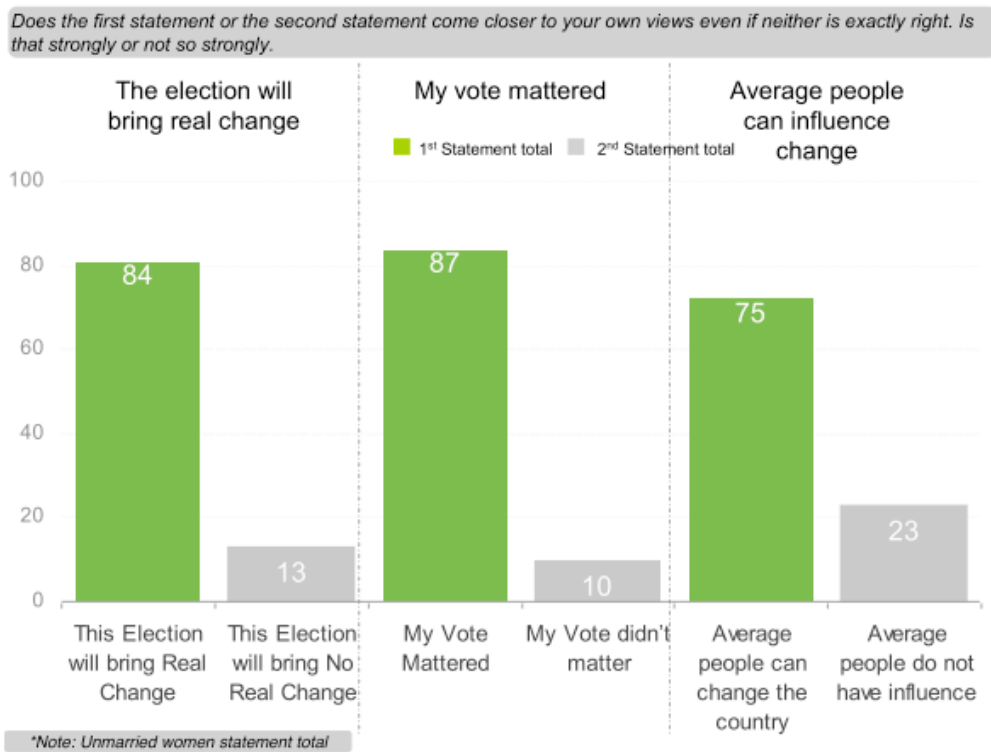
[2] Respondents asked to rate how much they trusted each source on 1 to 10 scale.

[3] Respondents asked to whether they learned more positive information about Obama or McCain

Democracy Affirmed

In most elections where incumbents or incumbent parties are thrown out of office, the defining mood is anger and bitterness. This was certainly the case in 1994. But not in 2008. What is remarkable about the 2008 cycle is that so many voters saw past two wars, a dysfunctional government and an economic crisis and found room for hope and optimism. This is particularly true among unmarried women. Four years ago in a post-election battleground survey, we asked unmarried women if they thought the campaigns and candidates were speaking directly to them and the issue they cared most about. Only 27 percent thought that was the case. This year, a 69 percent majority of unmarried women believe the candidates were addressing their issues. Perhaps the most striking finding, however, is the 75 percent of unmarried women who say this election made them believe average people can help change the country. For some of these voters, at least, this was not only about changing governments, but also a badly needed reaffirmation of our democracy.

Figure 7: Election About Hope, Not Anger



Conclusion

In all likelihood, many of us will never see another election like this one. This is not to say, of course, that other people of color or even women will not also assume the presidency. It is to say, rather, that we will not likely see another election where the scale of change is so profound. Unmarried women, along with other key groups in the Obama coalition, played a critical role in making this history.