

Christian Voters in Dead-Heat

A Barna survey released Thursday found that John McCain and Barack Obama are neck and neck among born-again Christian voters.



[] A Barna Group survey released Thursday found a statistical dead heat among born-again voters, with 45 percent planning to vote for John McCain and 43 percent supporting Barack Obama. Unless the statistics change within the next two weeks, the researchers say Obama is likely to win the presidential election by a significant margin.

“Anything can happen, but the election is clearly Obama’s to lose,” said Barna Group President David Kinnaman, who conducted the survey. “If Obama goes on to win, one of the significant stories will be the profile of the faith vote. People will wonder whether he won because of effective outreach by Democrats to the Christian community, ineffective efforts of Republicans, or shifts in the voting priorities of Christians, especially younger believers. Whatever the case, compared to when the names Kerry and Bush were on the ballot, the Democrats are poised to make up significant ground among born again and evangelical voters.”

The national telephone survey of 1,005 likely voters Oct. 11-15 found that even if McCain won all 10 percent of undecided voters, he is unlikely to reach the 62 percent who supported President Bush in 2004. The Barna researchers estimate that 48 percent of voters are born-again, which they define as those who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that remains important in their life and believe they will go to heaven when they die because they confessed their sins and accepted Christ as savior.

If the election were held among only born again voters, it would be a tight race. But Obama leads among likely voters 50 percent to 37 percent, which includes a majority of voters who identify themselves as Christian but are not classified as

born-again supporting Obama. The Illinois senator also leads among voters who do not identify themselves as Christians 74 percent to 14 percent. Atheists also prefer Obama 50 percent to 28 percent.

The Barna study also found born-again Christians divided along generational lines, with those in their 40s and 50s preferring McCain 48 percent to 43 percent and those 60 and older favoring McCain 47 percent to 37 percent. Born-again voters in their 20s and 30s, however, prefer Obama 51 percent to 39 percent.

“At the beginning of the summer, the Christian community was moderately engaged in the presidential campaigns, but they are now much more interested in and willing to vote in the election, Kinnaman said. “Yet the problem for the McCain campaign is that their increased enthusiasm for the election has not translated into support the way it did leading up to 2004. Even conservative evangelical voters—while still solidly in McCain’s column—are surprisingly willing to consider Obama’s candidacy.”