

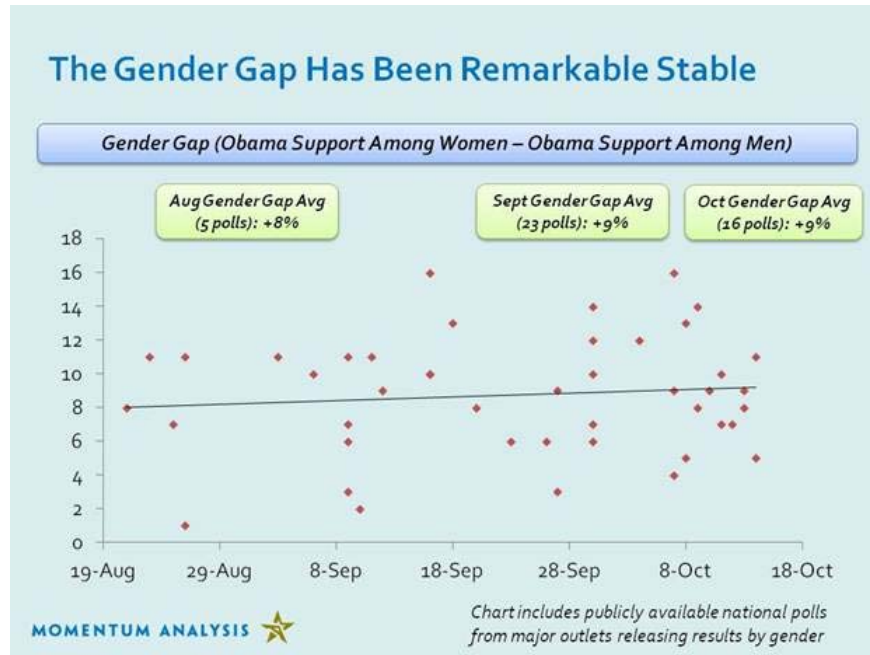
A Volatile Race, But a More Stable Gender Gap

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The presidential horserace has been bouncing around since Labor Day. A stronger Democratic convention, Romney's 47 percent calamity, Obama's lackluster debate, and Biden's strong performance have all contributed to a fluid race. But contrary to some coverage and Democratic handwringing, one thing that hasn't moved as much is the gender gap.

The gender gap is the difference between male and female support for a candidate. (It is **not** how much a candidate leads with women.) So using this definition, the gender gap has stabilized over the last few weeks. The woman-powered Obama surge I noted [here](#) leveled off. When Obama lost ground after Denver, he lost ground equally with both men and women. Even in the much-discussed [USA Today/Gallup poll](#), Obama benefits from an 8-point gender gap nationally. Below is a chart of the gender gap from just before the conventions until now, using publicly available national polls from major outlets that release results by gender. Of course, different polls show different gaps, but overall this trend is much more stable than the horserace, looking at Huffington Post's own [trendline](#).



Here's why the gender gap is important. In the current climate, with an 8-10 point gender gap, Obama could win even if he loses men. This hasn't happened since 1996, when official exit polls show Clinton won by 16 points among women, and Dole just barely eked out a 1-point advantage among men. (Gallup's [last](#) pre-election poll shows Clinton winning with both genders.) That was also the year with the largest gender gap.

So, tonight, it's crucial for both candidates to address women's concerns. I'll be in Milwaukee, watching the debate with swing-voting Walmart moms who will be dialing as they watch, and discussing the debate afterwards. (The session is part of ongoing bipartisan research conducted by my firm, Momentum Analysis, along with the Republican firm Public Opinion Strategies, and sponsored by Walmart. Read more about our work [here](#).)

In a similar group during the first debate, Walmart moms felt many of their most important issues weren't discussed. Whoever wins this election will need to win over women, and winning over women means talking to them. One thing we know for sure is women are listening.