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Rochester area voters look at presidential election from many views

JILL TERRERI • STAFF WRITER • OCTOBER 5, 2008

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A small business owner worries about taxes. A farmer is upset about the worker shortage and [energy](#) costs. A lacrosse mom is concerned about her daughter's future. An African-American senior citizen thinks this year could see a changing of the guard in American society. A mom wants her children to see a multicultural candidate win the White House.

The Rochester region is filled with diverse voters, from the staunch supporters of the major parties' presidential candidates to those who admit they'll vote for one candidate because they really don't like the other.

The [Democrat](#) and Chronicle found 10 voters who represent various demographic groups. Their stories do not necessarily represent those of

voters of similar age, residence and occupation, but they offer a close-up view of the issues driving the 2008 presidential election.

The economy tops the list of concerns for most of the American electorate, but that wasn't the case for these 10 voters.

Two opinion polls, conducted Sept. 21 to 24, show that Americans are worried most about the economy, with terrorism a distant second.

The CBS News/New York Times poll showed 52 percent of Americans rating the economy and jobs as the most important issue in deciding which candidate to vote for. The Fox News/Opinion Dynamics poll found 46 percent of Americans ranking the economy and jobs highest.

Terrorism and [national security](#) came in at 11 percent and 10 percent, respectively.

"Demographics are good predictors," said Iva Deutchman, a political science professor at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva. But she warns that exceptions are possible.

The younger generation that will vote this year for the first time, for example, are 65 percent Democratic, but using a student to represent all students is dangerous because 35 percent of them are likely to vote [Republican](#), said Deutchman, who studies voting behavior and gender and politics.

University of Rochester professor Richard Niemi, who researches voting behavior, doesn't believe that any one demographic will affect the election. "My attitude is all of them will make a difference," he said.

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For Colleen Spiegelhoff of Victor, seen here coaching Allee Tallman, 13, left, and Jobi Reibson, 12, the election might boil down to "the lesser of two evils." (CARLOS ORTIZ staff photographer)



Grace Tillinghast of Gates says she is more worried about national security than she is the economy. (MAX SCHULTE staff photographer)

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