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Australians favour Democrat four to one: poll

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AUSTRALIANS would be appalled if John McCain tips out Barack Obama in the race for the White House.

This clear verdict emerges from the latest opinion poll by the US Studies Centre in Sydney, showing Australians back the Democrat by a four-to-one margin.

Almost half of those surveyed think Senator Obama would make a better president in support of Australia's interests, with only 11% backing his Republican rival, Senator McCain.

Another third said the outcome of the November 4 election would make no difference in terms of the Australia-US alliance — but Australians

are more likely to think a win by Senator Obama would lift sagging world opinion about America after the tumult of the Bush years.

Simon Jackman, professor of politics at Stanford University in California, and visiting scholar at Sydney University, said the poll showed Australians held an overwhelming preference for Senator Obama.

“Part of the reason they are so enthusiastic about Obama is he represents a break from some of the things they don't like about the United States, not just in terms of policy, but also in style.”

Two-thirds of Australians regard a typical American as either violent, greedy or ignorant, according to the survey.

“It would be playing into traditional stereotypical views that many Australians have of

Americans if, for some reason, McCain was able to win this election,” Professor Jackman said.

The poll was conducted in Australia and the US, with 800 phone interviews and another 3000 people surveyed online.

Similar numbers of Australians and Americans said they felt anger or shame about US policy in recent times. Almost half said the US should leave Iraq within the next year.

Yet an ugly rupture over China policy appears possible. More than 55% of Australians saw Beijing as an ally, compared with barely 5% of Americans.

More than 80% of Australians supported the existing defence ties with the United States.



Heading for victory: The US election is a frightening prospect for some, and these carved Halloween pumpkins on show in New York will do little to allay voters' fears.

PICTURE: AP