

# Franklin Pierce University / WBZ Poll

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UNIVERSITY

January 2, 2008

POLLING

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## Republican Presidential Primary

**RINDGE, NH** – With the 2008 New Hampshire Presidential Primary less than one week away, Senator John McCain jumped from third place to first in the most recent poll, while former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney follows close behind. Former mayor Rudy Giuliani's support dropped significantly. In March, McCain and Giuliani were the early front-runners. Following the Republican debate on June 5th, Romney took the lead. In September, Romney maintained his lead with 30 percent of the vote, while Giuliani trailed him with 23 percent of vote and McCain registered third behind his Republican rivals (14%). Today, McCain leads with 37 percent of the vote, while Romney trails him with 31 percent of the vote. Giuliani has now dropped to a distant third behind both candidates (10%). Although McCain receives more of the vote, many Republican voters think that Romney will ultimately win the nomination. However, 28 percent of likely primary voters are still unsure who will win, suggesting that there is still an air of uncertainty surrounding the Republican primary in New Hampshire.

## **Overview**

The findings outlined in this report are based on the latest Franklin Pierce University / WBZ Poll, conducted by RKM Research and Communication in collaboration with faculty and student interviewers at Franklin Pierce University. The Franklin Pierce University / WBZ Poll is sponsored by Franklin Pierce University and WBZ. The project represents a collaboration that provides Franklin Pierce University students unique learning opportunities to participate in the polling process and gain real-world experience working with an independent marketing research firm.

## **Methodology**

The poll is based on interviews with 407 likely Republican Presidential Primary voters. All respondents interviewed in this study were part of a fully representative sample. The survey was administered by telephone, December 27 – December 31, 2007. The survey of 407 respondents has a maximum margin of sampling error of +/- 4.9%.

**McCain gained more than 20 points to take over the lead among Republican primary voters.**

If the Republican presidential primary were held today, McCain would receive 37 percent of the vote, compared to 31 percent for Romney and 10 percent for Giuliani. As shown in the table below, Romney's support increased from 22 percent in March and 27 percent in June to 30 percent in September and now holds steady at 31 percent. After a strong showing in September (23%), Giuliani's support in the current poll barely registers in the double digits. McCain (37%) has gained 23 points since September and now occupies the top spot. McCain's support in today's poll is his highest showing in any of the four polling periods.

Interestingly, while Mike Huckabee has garnered a relatively strong following in Iowa, the same has not occurred in New Hampshire. Only five percent of likely voters said that they would vote for Huckabee.

**If the Republican presidential primary election were held today, who would you vote for?**

	January 2, 2008	Sept. 17, 2007	June 6, 2007	March 14, 2007
John McCain	37%	14%	17%	29%
Mitt Romney	31%	30%	27%	22%
Rudy Giuliani	10%	23%	18%	28%
Ron Paul	6%	3%	1%*	1%
Mike Huckabee	5%	2%	3%	2%
Fred Thompson	2%	8%	9%	
Duncan Hunter	1%*	1%	1%*	1%
Undecided	9%	12%	19%	9%

\*=Less than 1%

According to R. Kelly Myers, "McCain's increased campaigning in New Hampshire and endorsements from area newspapers appear to have helped his standings among Republican voters. In contrast, Giuliani's expected poor showing in the Iowa caucus later this week could further erode his support in New Hampshire."

**Approximately two-thirds of McCain supporters said that their decision is firm, while only 38 percent of Giuliani supports expressed the same sentiment.**

After indicating their candidate choice, voters were then asked if their choice is firm, or if they could change their mind sometime between now and the primary election on January 8<sup>th</sup>. According to Myers, “the results clearly indicate that the Republican presidential primary remains highly fluid. With less than one week to go, 41 percent of Republican voters said that they could change their mind before the primary.” Among likely voters who support McCain, 64 percent indicated that it is a firm choice, while 36 percent indicated that they could change their mind. Among likely voters who support Romney, 54 percent indicated that it is a firm choice, while 44 percent indicated that they could change their mind. Among likely voters who support Giuliani, less than one-half (38%) indicated that their’s is a firm choice, and 62 percent indicated that they could change their mind.

**Is that a firm choice, or could you change your mind between now and the primary election?**

	McCain (37%)	Romney (31%)	Giuliani (10%)
Firm choice	64%	54%	38%
Could change mind	36%	44%	62%

**McCain's favorability rating has shot up in the current poll, while Romney's and Giuliani's favorability rating dropped significantly.**

It is interesting to track each candidate's favorability rating in order to better understand how the contest is shaping up over time. In March, Giuliani (66%) and McCain (63%) had the highest net favorability ratings, with Romney in third place (51%). Following the debate on June 5<sup>th</sup>, Romney rose to the top, assuming a five-point lead over Giuliani in this category. The September poll showed that Romney maintained his lead in net favorability (64%), with Giuliani (57%) and McCain (54%) following closely behind. The latest results show that Romney's (47%) and Giuliani's (35%) net favorability both fell around 20 points and now trail that of McCain (74%).

Fred Thompson's favorability rating also slipped substantially from June (32%) and September (29%) and he now receives a negative net favorability rating (-7%).

**Do you have a somewhat or very favorable opinion of ... ?**

	January 2, 2008			September 17, 2007	June 6, 2007	March 14, 2007
	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>
John McCain	85%	11%	74%	54%	37%	63%
Mitt Romney	71%	24%	47%	64%	65%	51%
Rudy Giuliani	65%	30%	35%	57%	60%	66%
Mike Huckabee	46%	35%	11%	17%	16%	6%
Duncan Hunter	13%	18%	-5%	2%	3%	2%
Fred Thompson	33%	40%	-7%	29%	32%	
Ron Paul	30%	47%	-17%	-20%	-12%	2%

## Support for Fred Thompson has dwindled in recent months.

Thompson entered the poll in June with a relatively strong showing in voter support and favorability, but his campaign has stalled in recent months. In the current poll, Thompson receives only two percent of the vote and has a negative net favorability rating (-7%). In addition, less than one percent of voters believe that Thompson will win the nomination, down from eight percent in September.

	January 2, 2008	September 17, 2007	June 6, 2007
Voter support	2%	8%	9%
Net favorability	-7%	29%	32%
Will win nomination	1%*	8%	7%

\*=Less than 1%

**Giuliani has improved perceptions of his experience, while Romney continues to appeal to voters based on his position on important issues.**

Respondents were asked the reasons why they would vote for their first-choice candidate. The results are shown below for the top three Republican candidates.

**Which of the following best describes why you would vote for ... ?**

	Giuliani				McCain			
	<i>January 2, 2008</i>	<i>Sep 17, 2007</i>	<i>June 6, 2007</i>	<i>March 14, 2007</i>	<i>January 2, 2008</i>	<i>Sep 17, 2007</i>	<i>June 6, 2007</i>	<i>March 14, 2007</i>
Electability	13%	10%	3%	5%	3%	4%	4%	6%
Position on issues	30%	34%	38%	17%	22%	29%	30%	29%
Best experience	25%	23%	10%	9%	26%	25%	22%	25%
Lead in new direction	20%	27%			15%	11%		
Character	10%	7%	5%	10%	31%	29%	26%	17%

	Romney			
	<i>January 2, 2008</i>	<i>Sep 17, 2007</i>	<i>June 6, 2007</i>	<i>March 14, 2007</i>
Electability	8%	5%	5%	6%
Position on issues	37%	42%	36%	41%
Best experience	19%	5%	11%	5%
Lead in new direction	23%	29%		
Character	8%	13%	18%	24%

Giuliani voters are drawn to his candidacy based on his position on issues important to them (30%), his experience (25%) and his ability to lead in a new direction (20%).

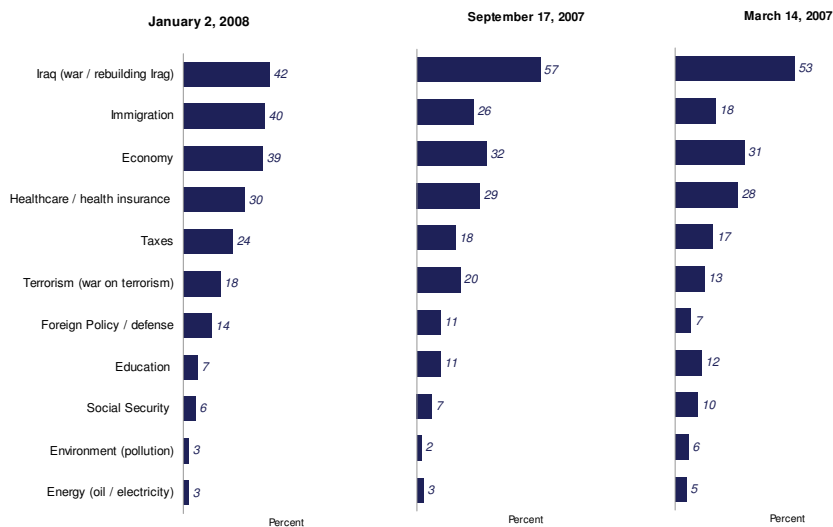
Romney voters are most likely to vote for the candidate because of his position on issues (37%), his ability to lead in a new direction (23%) and, increasingly, his experience (19%). In previous polls, Romney's experience was rarely mentioned as a reason to support his candidacy.

McCain voters are most likely to vote for the candidate because of his character (31%), his experience (26%) and his position on issues (22%). It is striking to see how McCain's increased standing shows up principally in the area of character, nearly doubling over the past year.

**Voters are most likely to mention the Iraq war as an issue that is important to them, followed closely by immigration, the economy, health care and taxes.**

Voters were asked which three policy issues will be most important to them in deciding who to vote for in the Republican primary. According to Myers, “the war in Iraq remains a top issue, but several other domestic issues, including immigration, the economy and health care have become more important to Republican voters.” Forty-two percent of voters mentioned the Iraq war or rebuilding Iraq. Forty percent mentioned immigration, 39 percent mentioned the economy, 30 percent mentioned health care or health insurance and 28 percent mentioned taxes.

**Which policy issues will be most important to you in deciding who to vote for in the NH primary?**



*Among: Republicans | compared over time | total mentioned*

## Variations in Support

The following table shows variations in support for the Republican candidates compared over time.

	McCain (37%)				Romney (31%)				Giuliani (10%)			
	Jan.	Sept.	June	March	Jan.	Sept.	June	March	Jan.	Sept.	June	March
<b>Party Registration</b>												
<i>Republican</i>	67	66	81	74	81	66	82	76	77	72	67	77
<i>Independents</i>	33	34	19	26	19	34	18	24	23	28	33	23
<b>Ideology</b>												
<i>Liberal</i>	4	13	3	4	3	2	1	2	13	8	3	2
<i>Moderate</i>	49	41	56	43	27	29	31	25	42	44	53	49
<i>Conservative</i>	46	46	41	53	67	67	68	73	45	45	44	49
<b>Gender</b>												
<i>Male</i>	58	49	54	54	51	52	55	50	60	63	53	54
<i>Female</i>	42	51	46	46	49	48	45	50	40	37	47	46
<b>Age</b>												
<i>18-34</i>	2	4	13	4	4	5	13	9	0	10	11	11
<i>35-54</i>	29	45	38	52	35	47	43	40	55	51	48	47
<i>55-64</i>	30	17	25	19	21	15	26	16	25	22	23	23
<i>65+</i>	39	34	24	25	40	33	18	35	20	16	18	19
<b>Annual Income</b>												
<\$35K	8	13	19	13	11	10	7	19	6	7	11	11
\$35-50K	16	9	9	12	16	18	17	16	9	21	2	11
\$50-75K	33	30	16	28	21	22	28	26	23	24	28	31
\$75-100K	18	19	30	20	22	18	17	18	24	18	25	14
>\$100K	25	29	26	27	30	32	31	21	38	30	34	33

These results indicate that Romney appeals most strongly to conservative voters. Two-thirds of Romney voters consider themselves “conservative.” Only 45 percent of Giuliani voters, and 46 percent of McCain voters, describe themselves as conservatives, while each candidate draws stronger support from moderates. Romney also appeals evenly to males (51%) and females (49%), while Giuliani voters (60%) and McCain voters (58%) are more likely to be male. Both Romney and McCain have a strong following among senior citizens. Forty percent of Romney voters, and 39 percent of McCain voters, are 65 or older, compared to 20 percent among Giuliani voters. In contrast, Giuliani voters are somewhat more likely to be under the age of 55 (55%) than Romney voters (39%) and McCain voters (31%).

**Although primary voters are more likely to vote for McCain, many think that Romney will win the nomination.**

When asked which candidate they think will ultimately win the Republican nomination, 34 percent identified Romney, up from 26 percent in September. Twenty-five percent identified McCain, up 21 points from four percent in September. Just nine percent of voters identified Giuliani, down 20 points from 29 percent in September.

**Which candidate do you think will end-up winning the Republican nomination?**

	Jan. 2, 2008	Sept. 17, 2007	June 6, 2007	March 14, 2007
Mitt Romney	34%	26%	23%	12%
John McCain	25%	4%	13%	26%
Rudy Giuliani	9%	29%	21%	28%
Mike Huckabee	3%	1%	1%*	1%*
Ron Paul	1%	1%*	0%	0%
Fred Thompson	1%*	8%	7%	
Duncan Hunter	0%	0%	0%	0%
Undecided	28%	31%	33%	32%

\*=Less than 1%

The results indicate that many voters think that Romney will win the Republican nomination. However, there remains a strong contingent of New Hampshire voters (28%) who are unsure about who will ultimately win the nomination. These results suggest that, although fewer primary voters are likely to vote for Romney than McCain, the former Massachusetts governor is perceived by many to be a favorite to win the Republican nomination.