

Franklin Pierce College / WBZ Poll



June 6, 2007

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Republican Presidential Primary

RINDGE, NH – With just over half a year before the much anticipated 2008 New Hampshire Presidential Primary, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney has overtaken Senator John McCain and former mayor Rudy Giuliani as the Republican favorite following Tuesday night's debate. In March, John McCain (29%) and Rudy Giuliani (28%) were early front-runners, but today Romney commands a nine-point lead over Giuliani (18%) and a 10-point lead over McCain (17%), attracting the support of 27 percent of Republican primary voters in New Hampshire. Giuliani and McCain have dropped 10 points and 12 points in the poll, respectively.

Overview

The findings outlined in this report are based on the latest Franklin Pierce College / WBZ Poll, conducted by RKM Research and Communication in collaboration with faculty and student interviewers at Franklin Pierce College. The Franklin Pierce College / WBZ Poll is sponsored by Franklin Pierce College and WBZ. The project represents a collaboration that provides Franklin Pierce College 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 409 likely Republican Presidential Primary voters. All respondents interviewed in this study were part of a fully representative sample. The survey was administered by telephone, June 6, 2007. The survey of 409 respondents has a maximum margin of sampling error +/- 4.9%.

Are Republican primary voters paying attention?

The answer to this question appears to be an unqualified “yes.” Although early in the primary process, New Hampshire’s Republican primary voters are paying attention to the race. When asked how closely they have followed the 2008 presidential race, 82 percent of Republican primary voters said that they are following the race *somewhat* (51%) or *very* (31%) *closely*. Only 18 percent of likely Republican primary voters said that they have *not followed the race that closely*.

Republican primary voters were also asked if they watched the debate among Republican presidential hopefuls held on Tuesday evening, June 5th—or if they have read, seen or heard any news stories about the debate.

How many voters watched the debate?

	Exposure to Debate
Watched debate ONLY	27%
BOTH—Watched debate and read, saw or heard news stories	19%
Read, saw or heard stories about the debate in the news	31%
Neither	22%

Overall, many Republican primary voters (46%) watched the debate (which includes those who watched the debate *only* and those who watched the debate *and* recall reading, hearing or seeing stories about the debate in the news). In addition, nearly one-third of Republican primary voters (31%) recall reading, hearing or seeing stories about the debate in the news (but did not watch the debate). Only 22 percent did not watch the debate nor read, see or hear any stories about the debate in the news.

Who won the debate?

Among Republican primary voters who watched the debate, or have read, seen or heard stories about the debate in the news, nearly one-fourth (22%) said that Romney won the debate, or performed better than the other candidates in the debate. Eighteen percent of Republican primary voters said that Giuliani won the debate, and 11 percent said that McCain won the debate. Few Republican primary voters felt that another candidate won the debate.

Which Republican candidate won the debate?

	<i>Overall</i>
Mitt Romney	22%
Rudy Giuliani	18%
John McCain	11%
Mike Huckabee	3%
Ron Paul	1%
Tom Tancredo	1%
Duncan Hunter	1%*
Jim Gilmore	1%*
Tommy Thompson	0%
Unsure	42%

*=Less than 1%

While Mitt Romney won the debate, McCain appears to have benefited from the combined effect of the debate and media coverage.

Among Republican primary voters who watched the debate, and were not exposed to any news coverage, Romney is perceived to have won the debate by 25 percent of viewers. Giuliani is perceived to have won the debate by 23 percent of viewers, followed by McCain (12%), Former Governor Mike Huckabee (5%) and Congressman Ron Paul (3%).

It is interesting to note that perceptions that McCain won the debate are stronger among Republican primary voters who watched the debate AND read, saw or heard news stories about the debate in the media. Among these voters, nearly one-fourth (23%) said that McCain outperformed his rivals. These results suggest that McCain benefited from positive news coverage about his performance among respondents who saw the debate.

Which Republican candidate won the debate?

	<i>Watched Debate Only</i>	<i>News Media Only</i>	<i>BOTH</i>
Mitt Romney	25%	15%	27%
Rudy Giuliani	23%	15%	15%
John McCain	12%	4%	23%
Mike Huckabee	5%	1%	4%
Ron Paul	3%	1%	0%
Undecided	27%	64%	28%

Significantly, this news coverage did little to improve perceptions of McCain's performance among respondents exposed to media coverage of the debate, but who did not watch the debate themselves. These more passive voters perceive either Romney (15%) or Giuliani (15%) as the winner of the debate.

Romney now enjoys strong support among Republican primary voters.

Romney's strong showing in the debate has helped widen his lead in the race for the New Hampshire Republican presidential nomination. If the Republican presidential primary were held today, Romney would receive 27 percent of the vote, compared to 18 for Giuliani and 17 percent for McCain. As shown in the table below, Romney's support has increased from 22 to 27 percent in the past three months, while Giuliani's support has dropped from 28 to 18 percent, and McCain's support has dropped from 29 to 17 percent.

In addition, Fred Thompson—who did not participate in the Tuesday debate but did establish an exploratory committee in preparation for a run—is now ranked fourth at nine percent. Other candidates have seen little-to-no positive movement in their support since March.

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

	June 6, 2007	March 13, 2007
Mitt Romney	27%	22%
Rudy Giuliani	18%	28%
John McCain	17%	29%
Fred Thompson	9%	
Newt Gingrich	3%	5%
Mike Huckabee	3%	2%
Chuck Hagel	1%	1%
Tom Tancredo	1%	1%
Sam Brownback	1%*	1%
Duncan Hunter	1%*	1%
Ron Paul	1%*	1%
Tommy Thompson	1%*	*
Jim Gilmore	0%	*
George Pataki	0%	*
Undecided	19%	9%

*=Less than 1%

With Fred Thompson in the race, the three leaders see a minor decline in their support.

As of today, Fred Thompson has established an exploratory committee, confirming his intention to run in the 2008 Republican Presidential Primary. With him now in the race, Romney loses some of his lead, receiving 27 percent of the vote. Giuliani loses two points of support, with 18 percent of the vote, and McCain loses one point of support, with 17 percent of the vote. These results suggest that Fred Thompson will find support across the board, and his impact on the primary could prove widespread as he pulls votes away from several competitors.

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

	Thompson in the race	Thompson NOT in the race
Mitt Romney	27%	30%
Rudy Giuliani	18%	20%
John McCain	17%	18%
Fred Thompson	9%	
Newt Gingrich	3%	5%
Undecided	19%	19%

The debate has affected the favorability ratings of certain candidates, but not others.

It is also interesting to track each candidate's favorability rating in order to better understand how the contest is shaping up over time. In March, Giuliani had the highest net favorability rating at 66 percent, and McCain had the second highest at 63 percent. Romney had a net favorability of 51 percent. Since that time, Romney's net favorability rating increased to 65 percent, while Giuliani's and McCain's fell to 60 percent and 37 percent respectively. Fred Thompson's net favorability (32%) now rivals McCain's. Huckabee also received a modest improvement in net favorability, up from six percent to 16 percent.

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

	June 6, 2007			March 17, 2007		
	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>
Mitt Romney	78%	13%	65%	68%	17%	51%
Rudy Giuliani	76%	16%	60%	79%	13%	66%
John McCain	65%	28%	37%	78%	15%	63%
Fred Thompson	43%	11%	32%			
Newt Gingrich	39%	39%	0%	44%	39%	5%
Mike Huckabee	31%	15%	16%	15%	9%	6%
Tommy Thompson	27%	22%	5%	16%	14%	2%
George Pataki	24%	24%	0%	30%	23%	7%
Sam Brownback	16%	13%	3%	13%	9%	4%
Tom Tancredo	16%	14%	2%	7%	7%	0%
Duncan Hunter	12%	9%	3%	7%	5%	2%
Ron Paul	9%	21%	-12%	5%	3%	2%
Chuck Hagel	7%	20%	-13%	11%	16%	-5%
Jim Gilmore	7%	8%	-1%	4%	2%	2%

The debate appears to have improved perceptions of Mike Huckabee, but the front runners Romney and Giuliani received the most benefits.

Romney and Giuliani, the perceived winners of the debate, both saw significant lifts in favorability among Republican primary voters who watched the debate. Romney's favorability among Republican primary voters is 11 points higher among those who watched the debate (81%) than among those who did not watch the debate (70%). Giuliani also received a similar boost, and Huckabee—the most competitive second-tier candidate—received a 26-point lift in favorability due to the debate. McCain did not receive a significant boost in favorability among respondents who watched the debate. In fact, his unfavorability rating is 13 points higher among those who watched the debate (31%) than among those who did not (18%).

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

	Watched the debate		Did not watch or hear news stories about the debate	
	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>
Mitt Romney	81%	14%	70%	11%
Rudy Giuliani	80%	15%	67%	14%
John McCain	66%	31%	64%	18%
Fred Thompson	46%	11%	36%	7%
Newt Gingrich	43%	35%	40%	30%
Mike Huckabee	45%	13%	19%	14%
Chuck Hagel	7%	25%	4%	16%
Tom Tancredo	23%	22%	11%	9%
Sam Brownback	24%	19%	7%	9%
Duncan Hunter	17%	10%	5%	7%
Ron Paul	11%	33%	7%	11%
Tommy Thompson	33%	30%	22%	13%
Jim Gilmore	12%	9%	2%	9%
George Pataki	23%	25%	28%	21%

Giuliani has improved perceptions of his positions on the issues and remains the leader in terms of leadership qualities.

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		Romney	
	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>
Electability	3%	5%	4%	6%	5%	6%
Position on issues	38%	17%	30%	29%	36%	41%
Best experience	10%	9%	22%	25%	11%	5%
Leadership qualities	42%	58%	16%	20%	24%	26%
Character	5%	10%	26%	17%	18%	24%

Giuliani voters are drawn to his candidacy based on his position on the issues (38%), and his leadership qualities (42%). Romney voters are drawn to his candidacy because of his position on the issues (36%) and his leadership qualities (24%).

McCain has lost ground in terms of his leadership qualities, although perceptions of his character have improved.

Overall, the results suggest that Romney's current success is due to his more well-rounded appeal across the board in terms of: 1) his positions on the issues; 2) his perceived leadership qualities; 3) his personal character; and 4) his past political experience.

Variations in Support

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

	Romney (27%)		Giuliani (18%)		McCain (17%)	
	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>
Party Registration						
<i>Republican</i>	82%	76%	67%	77%	81%	74%
<i>Independents</i>	18%	24%	33%	23%	19%	26%
Ideology						
<i>Liberal</i>	1%	2%	3%	2%	3%	4%
<i>Moderate</i>	31%	25%	53%	49%	56%	43%
<i>Conservative</i>	68%	73%	44%	49%	41%	53%
Gender						
<i>Male</i>	55%	50%	53%	54%	54%	54%
<i>Female</i>	45%	50%	47%	46%	46%	46%
Age						
<i>18-34</i>	13%	9%	11%	11%	13%	4%
<i>35-54</i>	43%	40%	48%	47%	38%	52%
<i>55-64</i>	26%	16%	23%	23%	25%	19%
<i>65+</i>	18%	35%	18%	19%	24%	25%
Annual Income						
<i><\$35K</i>	7%	19%	11%	11%	19%	13%
<i>\$35-50K</i>	17%	16%	2%	11%	9%	12%
<i>\$50-75K</i>	28%	26%	28%	31%	16%	28%
<i>\$75-100K</i>	17%	18%	25%	14%	30%	20%
<i>>\$100K</i>	31%	21%	34%	33%	26%	27%
Labor Union						
<i>Yes</i>	23%	19%	22%	11%	12%	15%
<i>No</i>	77%	81%	78%	89%	88%	85%

These results suggest that Romney has improved his position among registered Republican primary voters, attracting 82 percent today compared to 76 percent in March. Giuliani, on the other hand, has lost a little support among registered Republicans.

McCain’s position on immigration reform is hurting him with Republican primary voters.

Republican primary voters were asked if they support or oppose the current proposed immigration reform bill. Twenty percent support the bill, 55 percent oppose it and 25 percent are unsure. Among Republican primary voters who oppose the immigration reform bill, only 10 percent would vote for McCain in the primary, compared to 28 percent who support immigration reform. These results suggest that many Republican primary voters are punishing McCain for his position on this issue.

Favorability and primary vote choice for Giuliani, compared by position on immigration reform:

	<i>Support immigration reform</i>	<i>Oppose immigration reform</i>		<i>Support immigration reform</i>	<i>Oppose immigration reform</i>
Favorable	80%	77%	Vote for Giuliani	15%	18%
Unfavorable	16%	17%	Vote for other	67%	69%
No opinion	4%	6%	Undecided	18%	13%

Favorability and primary vote choice for McCain, compared by position on immigration reform:

	<i>Support immigration reform</i>	<i>Oppose immigration reform</i>		<i>Support immigration reform</i>	<i>Oppose immigration reform</i>
Favorable	85%	56%	Vote for McCain	28%	10%
Unfavorable	13%	38%	Vote for other	54%	77%
No opinion	3%	6%	Undecided	18%	13%

Favorability and primary vote choice for Romney, compared by position on immigration reform:

	<i>Support immigration reform</i>	<i>Oppose immigration reform</i>		<i>Support immigration reform</i>	<i>Oppose immigration reform</i>
Favorable	86%	81%	Vote for Romney	20%	33%
Unfavorable	8%	13%	Vote for other	62%	54%
No opinion	6%	6%	Undecided	18%	13%

Romney is the only candidate whose position on the troop surge is helping his campaign.

Favorability and primary vote choice for Giuliani, compared by position on Iraq troop surge:

	<i>Support troop surge</i>	<i>Oppose troop surge</i>		<i>Support troop surge</i>	<i>Oppose troop surge</i>
Favorable	84%	66%	Vote for Giuliani	17%	21%
Unfavorable	10%	25%	Vote for other	68%	56%
No opinion	6%	9%	Undecided	15%	24%

Favorability and primary vote choice for McCain, compared by position on Iraq troop surge:

	<i>Support troop surge</i>	<i>Oppose troop surge</i>		<i>Support troop surge</i>	<i>Oppose troop surge</i>
Favorable	67%	59%	Vote for McCain	17%	18%
Unfavorable	26%	33%	Vote for other	68%	58%
No opinion	7%	8%	Undecided	15%	24%

Favorability and primary vote choice for Romney, compared by position on Iraq troop surge:

	<i>Support troop surge</i>	<i>Oppose troop surge</i>		<i>Support troop surge</i>	<i>Oppose troop surge</i>
Favorable	85%	67%	Vote for Romney	29%	20%
Unfavorable	7%	22%	Vote for other	56%	56%
No opinion	8%	11%	Undecided	15%	24%

The underlying intangible momentum in this race is working to Romney's advantage, but could change quickly.

When asked which candidate they think will ultimately win the Republican nomination, 23 percent of identified Romney, up from 12 percent in March. Giuliani, on the other hand, has dropped among Republican primary voters from 28 percent in March to 21 percent today. McCain has dropped from 26 percent in March to 13 percent today. According to Myers, "this difference is an important indication about how Republican primary voters think the race will eventually turn out, and is a useful metric to track each candidate as the presidential primary approaches."

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

	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
Mitt Romney	23%	12%
Rudy Giuliani	21%	28%
John McCain	13%	26%
Fred Thompson	7%	
Newt Gingrich	1%	1%
Mike Huckabee	1%*	*
Chuck Hagel	0%	0%
Tom Tancredo	1%*	*
Sam Brownback	0%	0%
Duncan Hunter	0%	0%
Ron Paul	0%	0%
Tommy Thompson	1%*	0%
Jim Gilmore	0%	0%
George Pataki	0%	*
Undecided	33%	32%

*=Less than 1%