

Franklin Pierce University / WBZ Poll

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Republican Presidential Primary

RINDGE, NH – As the 2008 New Hampshire Presidential Primary approaches, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney maintains his lead over his Republican rivals. In March, Senator John McCain and former mayor Rudy Giuliani were the early front-runners. Following the Republican debate on June 5th, Romney took the lead. Today, Romney maintains his lead with 30 percent of the vote, while Giuliani trails him with 23 percent of the vote. John McCain has now dropped to a distant third behind both candidates (14%), while the latest candidate to enter the race, Senator Fred Thompson, is well-behind the front-runners with just eight percent of the vote. Although Romney has a modest lead, 31 percent of likely primary voters are still unsure who will win, suggesting that the Republican race remains wide open 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 400 likely Republican Presidential Primary voters. All respondents interviewed in this study were part of a fully representative sample. The survey was administered by telephone, September 11 – September 14, 2007. The survey of 400 respondents has a maximum margin of sampling error of +/- 4.9%.

Are Republican primary voters paying attention?

Interest in the 2008 presidential race is still strong among Republican primary voters. When asked how closely they have followed the 2008 presidential race, 37 percent of Republican primary voters said that they are following the race *very closely*, and an additional 49 percent said that they are following the race *somewhat closely*. Only 14 percent of likely Republican primary voters said that they have *not followed the race that closely*.

Most voters are only somewhat satisfied or not satisfied with the current selection of Republican candidates running for president.

When asked to gauge their satisfaction with the current selection of Republican candidates, 31 percent of Republican primary voters said that they *very* (25%) or *completely* (6%) *satisfied*. Approximately one-half of voters (52%) said that they are *somewhat satisfied*. Fourteen percent of likely Republican primary voters said that they are *not satisfied* with the current selection.

Romney maintains a modest lead among Republican primary voters.

If the Republican presidential primary were held today, Romney would receive 30 percent of the vote, compared to 23 percent for Giuliani and 14 percent for McCain. As shown in the table below, Romney's support has increased from 22 percent in March and 27 percent in June. Giuliani has regained support from June, but still trails his strong showing in March. Once locked with Giuliani for first place, McCain has lost 15 points since March and now occupies a distant third-place.

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

	Sept. 17, 2007	June 6, 2007	March 13, 2007
Mitt Romney	30%	27%	22%
Rudy Giuliani	23%	18%	28%
John McCain	14%	17%	29%
Fred Thompson	8%	9%	
Newt Gingrich	3%	3%	5%
Ron Paul	3%	1%*	1%
Mike Huckabee	2%	3%	2%
Tom Tancredo	1%	1%	1%
Sam Brownback	1%	1%*	1%
Duncan Hunter	1%	1%*	1%
Chuck Hagel	1%*	1%	1%
Undecided	12%	19%	9%

Despite significant support nationwide, Fred Thompson has yet to make a strong impact in New Hampshire.

After officially announcing his candidacy on September 5th, Fred Thompson is challenging for front-runner status according to several national polls. However, New Hampshire Republican primary voters have yet to demonstrate strong support for Thompson. With just eight percent of the vote, he occupies fourth place, well-behind Mitt Romney and Rudy Giuliani.

Why this lack of support? It may be due to a large proportion of primary voters who have yet to form an opinion of the candidate. When asked if they have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the candidate, over one-third (35%) said that they have either never heard of the candidate (8%) or have no opinion of him (27%). In contrast, few primary voters have no opinion or have never heard of Romney (8%), Giuliani (8%) or McCain (6%).

Romney has maintained the strong favorability rating that he gained following the June debate.

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 (66%) and McCain (63%) had the highest net favorability ratings, while Romney trailed in third place (51%). Following the debate on June 5th, Romney rose to the top, assuming a five-point lead over Giuliani in this category. The latest results show that Romney has maintained his lead in net favorability.

After a large drop in his net favorability rating following the June debate, John McCain has regained the favorable impression of many primary voters. He once again rivals Romney and Giuliani in favorability. Primary voters are more likely to hold an unfavorable opinion of Fred Thompson (18%) than in June (11%), while the candidate has yet to gain a favorable opinion from even one-half of primary voters.

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

	September 17, 2007			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>	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>
Mitt Romney	78%	14%	64%	78%	13%	65%	68%	17%	51%
Rudy Giuliani	75%	18%	57%	76%	16%	60%	79%	13%	66%
John McCain	74%	20%	54%	65%	28%	37%	78%	15%	63%
Fred Thompson	47%	18%	29%	43%	11%	32%			
Newt Gingrich	42%	36%	6%	39%	39%	0%	44%	39%	5%
Mike Huckabee	33%	16%	17%	31%	15%	16%	15%	9%	6%
Sam Brownback	19%	11%	8%	16%	13%	3%	13%	9%	4%
Tom Tancredo	16%	13%	3%	16%	14%	2%	7%	7%	0%
Duncan Hunter	13%	11%	2%	12%	9%	3%	7%	5%	2%
Ron Paul	12%	32%	-20%	9%	21%	-12%	5%	3%	2%
Chuck Hagel	8%	21%	-13%	7%	20%	-13%	11%	16%	-5%

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>Sep 17, 2007</i>	<i>June 6, 2007</i>	<i>March 17, 2007</i>	<i>Sep 17, 2007</i>	<i>June 6, 2007</i>	<i>March 17, 2007</i>
Electability	10%	3%	5%	4%	4%	6%
Position on issues	34%	38%	17%	29%	30%	29%
Best experience	23%	10%	9%	25%	22%	25%
Lead in new direction	27%			11%		
Character	7%	5%	10%	29%	26%	17%

	Romney			Thompson	
	<i>Sep 17, 2007</i>	<i>June 6, 2007</i>	<i>March 17, 2007</i>	<i>Sep 17, 2007</i>	<i>June 6, 2007</i>
Electability	5%	5%	6%	3%	14%
Position on issues	42%	36%	41%	60%	41%
Best experience	5%	11%	5%	0%	3%
Lead in new direction	29%			13%	
Character	13%	18%	24%	24%	19%

Giuliani voters are drawn to his candidacy based on his position on issues important to them (34%), his ability to lead in a new direction (27%) and, increasingly, his experience (23%).

Romney voters are most likely to vote for the candidate because of his position on issues (42%) as well as his ability to lead in a new direction (29%).

McCain voters are most likely to vote for the candidate because of his position on issues (29%), his character (29%) and his experience (25%). Fred Thompson voters, meanwhile, are drawn to the candidate largely because of his position on issues (60%).

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

Voters were asked which three policy issues will be most important to them in deciding who to vote for in the Republican primary. Over one-half of voters (57%) mentioned the Iraq war or rebuilding Iraq. Nearly one-third of voters mentioned the economy (32%). Over one-fourth of voters mentioned health care or health insurance (29%), while a similar percentage mentioned immigration (26%).

Variations in Support

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

	Romney (30%)			Giuliani (23%)			McCain (14%)		
	Sept 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007	Sept 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007	Sept 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
Party Registration									
<i>Republican</i>	66	82	76	72	67	77	66	81	74
<i>Independents</i>	34	18	24	28	33	23	34	19	26
Ideology									
<i>Liberal</i>	2	1	2	8	3	2	13	3	4
<i>Moderate</i>	29	31	25	44	53	49	41	56	43
<i>Conservative</i>	67	68	73	45	44	49	46	41	53
Gender									
<i>Male</i>	52	55	50	63	53	54	49	54	54
<i>Female</i>	48	45	50	37	47	46	51	46	46
Age									
<i>18-34</i>	5	13	9	10	11	11	4	13	4
<i>35-54</i>	47	43	40	51	48	47	45	38	52
<i>55-64</i>	15	26	16	22	23	23	17	25	19
<i>65+</i>	33	18	35	16	18	19	34	24	25
Annual Income									
<i><\$35K</i>	10	7	19	7	11	11	13	19	13
<i>\$35-50K</i>	18	17	16	21	2	11	9	9	12
<i>\$50-75K</i>	22	28	26	24	28	31	30	16	28
<i>\$75-100K</i>	18	17	18	18	25	14	19	30	20
<i>>\$100K</i>	32	31	21	30	34	33	29	26	27

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 and liberals. Romney also appeals evenly to males (52%) and females (48%), while Giuliani voters are more likely to be male (63%) than female (37%). Finally, Romney has a strong following among senior citizens. One-third of Romney voters are 65 or older, compared to 16 percent among Giuliani voters. In contrast, Giuliani voters are somewhat more likely to be under the age of 55 (61%) than Romney voters (52%).

Giuliani is more likely to appeal to voters who approve of the job George W. Bush is doing as president.

Voters were asked if they approve or disapprove of the job George W. Bush is doing as president. Among Giuliani voters, a relatively high percentage (72%) approve of the job Bush is doing as president. Thompson voters are also significantly more likely to approve (71%) of the job Bush is doing as president. Fewer Romney voters (58%) and McCain voters (53%) approve of the job Bush is doing as president.

Do you approve or disapprove of the job George W. Bush is doing as president?

	Giuliani	McCain	Romney	Thompson
Approve	72%	53%	58%	71%
Disapprove	27%	38%	37%	23%

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

The New Hampshire presidential primary is ultimately an expectations game, whereby candidates are judged not merely by how they fare in the primary election, but how they fare relative to how they were expected to fare.

When asked which candidate they think will ultimately win the Republican nomination, 29 percent identified Giuliani, up from 21 percent in June. Twenty-six percent identified Romney, up from 23 percent in June. Just four percent of voters identified McCain, down from 13 percent in June.

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

	Sept. 17, 2007	June 6, 2007	March 13, 2007
Rudy Giuliani	29%	21%	28%
Mitt Romney	26%	23%	12%
Fred Thompson	8%	7%	
John McCain	4%	13%	26%
Newt Gingrich	1%	1%	1%
Mike Huckabee	1%	1%*	1%*
Ron Paul	1%*	0%	0%
Tom Tancredo	1%*	1%*	1%*
Sam Brownback	1%*	0%	0%
Duncan Hunter	0%	0%	0%
Chuck Hagel	0%	0%	0%
Undecided	31%	33%	32%

*=Less than 1%

The results indicate that a similar proportion of voters think that Romney and Giuliani are going to win the Republican nomination. There remains a strong contingent of New Hampshire primary voters (31%) who are unsure about who will win the nomination. These results suggest that, although fewer voters are likely to vote for Giuliani than for Romney, the former mayor is perceived by many to be a favorite to win. With a virtual tie between Giuliani and Romney, and many voters still unsure about who will win, the race for the Republican nomination remains wide open in New Hampshire.