



Gingrich is New Fave, Voters Approve of Iraq Withdrawal, President Beats All Comers

While 70% of voters say the country is “on the wrong track,” and the president’s disapprovals (46%) edge out his approvals (45%), Obama still outpaces every potential Republican nominee for president in trial heats, according to a new national poll of registered voters by Fairleigh Dickinson University’s PublicMind™.

“Any Republican challenger will have to unite a fractured base,” said Peter Woolley, a political scientist and director of the poll. “That’s a problem the incumbent president doesn’t have right now.”

In head to head trials, Obama bests former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney by 46%-42% and former House speaker Newt Gingrich by 48%-42%. Other hopeful Republican nominees trail the president badly. Obama beats Gov. Rick Perry by 53%-35% and Rep. Michele Bachmann by 57%-30%. The trial heats break out largely along party lines, with independents making the margins larger or smaller.

One thing voters of both political parties can agree on, though not the candidates, is the US military withdrawal from Iraq scheduled to be completed by the end of the month: 71% of all voters approve, with Democrats approving 89%-5%, independents by 71%-15%, and Republicans grudgingly positive by 48%-31%, but with one in five (20%) unsure or mixed.

“The election of 2012 will contrast greatly to that of 2008 and 2004 because Iraq will be a side issue, if not completely ignored,” said Woolley. “While foreign policy and economic policy are barely distinguishable these days, voters still draw a hard, straight line between the two.”

Meanwhile, Republicans are flirting with Gingrich as their new favorite. Gingrich takes 36% of the Republican preferences, a 13-point advantage over Romney’s 23%. All the other major candidates are far behind in a second tier, with Herman Cain’s collapsing candidacy garnering just 8% and Gov. Rick Perry with just 6%.

“Every candidate but perhaps Romney has seriously damaged his or her own campaign at least once so far,” said Woolley. “At this point, it’s a campaign for survival.” Romney and Gingrich also dominate the field as “second choices.” If they can’t have their first pick, 22% of voters prefer to have Romney and another 22% prefer Gingrich.

Heading up the least favorite list, i.e. “which candidate... is your least favorite,” are Cain and libertarian Ron Paul, each with 17%. Bachman and Perry each get 13%, while Jon Huntsman breaks into this wrong second tier with a double-digit performance of 10%, suggesting all have limitations beyond their anemic support.

The FDU poll of 855 registered voters nationwide was conducted by both landlines and cell phones from Nov. 29 through Dec. 5, 2011, and has a margin of error of +/-3.5 percentage points. Republican preferences are based on 545 Republican and lean Republican voters and has a margin of error of +/- 4 percentage points.

Methodology, Questions, and Tables

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from Nov. 29 through Dec. 5, 2011, using a randomly selected national sample of 855 registered voters contacted on both landlines and cell phones to comprise all voters. The margin of error for a sample of 855 randomly selected respondents is +/- 3.5 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers. PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected. Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone-only-households, interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender among the voting population. The Republican sample of 545 is comprised of 325 registered Republican voters contacted through RDD combined with an oversample of 200 Republicans randomly selected from registered voter lists. The margin of error for a randomly drawn sample of 545 is +/-4.

I know it's early, but let me ask.... In a race for president between ... and Who would you vote for? [ROTATE ORDER, ROATE NAMES] IF "DK" ASK: "which way do you lean?"								
N= 285	All	Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	wom	June <i>N=295</i>	March <i>N=379</i>
Barack Obama, the Democrat	46	75	45	7	46	46	45%	44%
Mitt Romney , the Republican	42	15	42	87	45	40	39%	43%
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	11	10	13	5	9	14	16%	12%
N= 298							<i>N=305</i>	<i>N=371</i>
Barack Obama, the Democrat	48	86	42	5	46	51	50%	52%
Newt Gingrich , the Republican	42	8	42	91	45	39	30%	37%
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	10	6	16	4	10	10	20%	10%
N= 284								
Barack Obama, the Democrat	50	88	43	13	54	47	n/a	n/a
Jon Huntsman , the Republican	32	4	34	68	35	29		
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	18	8	24	19	11	24		
N= 292								
Barack Obama, the Democrat	53	87	49	10	47	58	n/a	n/a
Rick Perry , the Republican	35	5	38	80	42	30		
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	12	8	14	10	11	13		
N= 288							<i>N=298</i>	
Barack Obama, the Democrat	56	88	55	14	51	60	47%	n/a
Herman Cain , the Republican	30	2	33	64	35	25	33%	
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	15	10	13	22	14	15	20%	
N= 295							<i>N=304</i>	
Barack Obama, the Democrat	54	84	51	10	56	52	48%	n/a
Ron Paul , the Republican	35	6	41	76	37	34	35%	
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	11	9	8	14	8	14	17%	
N= 278							<i>N=826</i>	
Barack Obama, the Democrat	57	90	51	21	55	59	51%	n/a
Michele Bachmann , the Republican	30	3	37	61	36	26	32%	
unsure/neither/other	12	6	12	18	9	15	17%	
N= 298							<i>N=308</i>	
Barack Obama, the Democrat	55	90	53	8	57	53	52%	n/a
Rick Santorum , the Republican	34	5	33	77	35	32	33%	
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	12	5	14	15	8	15	16%	

In your opinion, is the country moving in the right direction or has it gotten off on the wrong track?							
	All	Men	Wom	Dem	Ind	Rep	6 months ago
Right direction	20%	18	22	32	19	7	28%
Wrong track	70%	72	67	55	67	89	61%
Unsure/ref.	10%	9	10	12	14	4	11%

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?

	All	Men	Wom	Dem	Ind	Rep	6 months ago
Approve	45%	43	47	74	36	10	47%
Disapprove	46%	49	44	16	48	84	45%
Unsure/ref.	9%	8	9	9	16	6	8%

Do you approve or disapprove of the US military withdrawal from Iraq that will be completed by the New Year?

	All	Men	Wom	Dem	Ind	Rep
Approve	71%	69	73	89	71	48
Disapprove	16%	20	13	5	15	31
Unsure/ref.	12%	11	14	5	14	20

Republican Nomination, Republicans (N=407), + lean Republicans (Total N=545)

To run as the Republican candidate for President, who would you prefer...READ AS NECESSARY, ROTATE LIST? Don't know (vol): ASK "Which way do you lean?"

	Republicans	Republican + Republican leaners
Gingrich	37%	36%
Romney	25%	23%
Cain	8%	8%
Perry	6%	6%
Paul	3%	4%
Bachmann	4%	4%
Santorum	4%	3%
Huntsman	1%	2%
Unsure/ref.	12%	14%

IF PREFERENCE IN USP1a, ASK] And who would be your second choice...READ AS NECESSARY, ROTATE? Don't know (vol): ASK "Which way do you lean?"

	Republicans	Republican + Republican leaners
Romney	22%	24%
Gingrich	22%	21%
Perry	10%	9%
Paul	6%	6%
Bachmann	11%	10%
Cain	9%	8%
Santorum	4%	5%
Huntsman	2%	2%
Unsure/ref.	13%	16%

Now asking the question the other way around... which candidate for president is your <u>least</u> favorite?		
	Republicans	Republicans + Republican leaners
Cain	18%	17%
Paul	17%	17%
Bachmann	13%	13%
Perry	12%	13%
Huntsman	10%	10%
Romney	7%	6%
Gingrich	5%	6%
Santorum	4%	4%
Unsure	15%	14%

Question Wording and Order

US1. In your opinion, is the country is moving in the right direction or has it gotten off on the wrong track?

- Right direction
- Wrong track
- DK/Unsure [DON'T READ]
- Ref. [DON'T READ]

US2. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

- Approve
- Disapprove
- DK/Unsure [DON'T READ]
- Ref. [DON'T READ]

US3. Do you approve or disapprove of the US military withdrawal from Iraq that will be completed by the New Year?

- Approve
- Disapprove
- DK/Unsure [DON'T READ]
- Ref. [DON'T READ]

USP4A-G. Next year, there will be an election for President of the United States. I know it's early, but let me ask....

In a race for president between ... and Who would you vote for?

ROTATE ORDER WITHIN QUESTION

Barack Obama, the Democrat

[CHOOSE ANY FOUR MATCHED AGAINST BARACK OBAMA]

- Mitt Romney, the Republican
- Michele Bachmann, the Republican
- Ron Paul, the Republican
- Newt Gingrich, the Republican
- Herman Cain, the Republican

Rick Santorum, the Republican
Rick Perry, the Republican
Jon Huntsman, the Republican
DK (vol. ASK: "which way to you lean?")

D1. Regardless of who you might vote for, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, or an independent?

Democrat
Republican
Independent [ASK: which way do you lean?]
Other [DON'T READ]
Don't Know/Ref [DON'T READ]

[ASK Republicans, independents,....]

USP1a. To run as the Republican candidate for President, who would you prefer....READ AS NECESSARY, ROTATE LIST?

*Michele Bachmann
Mitt Romney
Newt Gingrich
Herman Cain
Ron Paul
Rick Santorum
Rick Perry
Jon Huntsman
Don't know (vol): ASK "Which way do you lean?"
Don't know (vol): SKIP SECOND CHOICE*

USP1b. And who would be your second choice...READ AS NECESSARY, ROTATE, ELIMINATE CHOICE FROM ABOVE?

*Michele Bachmann
Mitt Romney
Newt Gingrich
Herman Cain
Ron Paul
Rick Santorum
Rick Perry
Jon Huntsman
Don't know (vol): ASK "Which way do you lean?"
Don't know (vol)*

USP2. (not included in this release)... And, no matter who is the Republican nominee for President, if you could pick the Vice Presidential nominee who would it be.... OPEN END, PRECODE?

USP3. Now asking the question the other way around... which candidate for president is your least favorite?

READ AS NECESSARY, ROTATE LIST

*Michele Bachmann
Mitt Romney
Newt Gingrich
Herman Cain*

*Ron Paul**Rick Perry**Rick Santorum**Jon Huntsman**Don't know (vol): ASK "Which way do you lean?"***Sample Characteristics %****Gender**

Male	48
Female	52

Party ID

Democrat	34
Ind. Lean Dem.	14
Independent	12
Ind. Lean Rep.	13
Republican	23
Other/ref.	3

Age

18-29	12
30-44	26
45-59	32
60+	28
ref.	2

**In addition to being American,
would you say you are...?**

White	67
Black	13
Hispanic or Latino	11
Asian	5
Other/ref.	4

Census regions

Northeast	19
North central	21
South	34
West	25