

Franklin Pierce University / WBZ Poll

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POLLING



Democratic Presidential Primary

RINDGE, NH – As the 2008 New Hampshire Presidential Primary approaches, Senator Hillary Clinton has maintained a strong lead over her Democratic rivals. In March, Clinton (32%) held a 7-point lead over her closest challenger, Senator Barack Obama (25%). In June, following the Democratic debate, Clinton commanded a much larger number (38%) of Democratic primary voters than Obama (16%). Today, Clinton has maintained her lead at 36 percent of the vote, twice as much as the support for Obama (18%). Clinton has also emerged as the inevitable Democratic primary nomination choice among 61 percent of voters.

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 403 likely Democratic 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 403 respondents has a maximum margin of sampling error of +/- 4.9%.

Are Democratic primary voters paying attention?

Interest in the 2008 presidential race is still strong among Democratic primary voters. When asked how closely they have followed the 2008 presidential race, 41 percent of Democratic primary voters said that they are following the race *very closely*, and an additional 48 percent said that they are following the race *somewhat closely*. Only 10 percent of likely Democratic primary voters said that they have *not followed the race that closely*.

Most Democratic primary voters are satisfied with the current selection of candidates.

When asked to gauge their satisfaction with the current selection of Democratic candidates, 50 percent of Democratic primary voters said that they *very* (37%) or *completely* (13%) *satisfied*, and an additional 39 percent said that they *somewhat satisfied*. Only nine percent of likely Democratic primary voters said that they are *not satisfied* with the current selection.

The situation in Iraq.

The situation in Iraq is still foremost in voters' minds when deciding who to vote for in the Democratic Presidential Primary. When asked to name the three policy issues that will be most important when deciding who to vote for in the Democratic Presidential Primary, nearly one-half of Democratic voters (47%) named *Iraq* first, similar to the number of Democratic voters in March (47%) who mentioned Iraq first. Overall, 75 percent of voters in the current poll named *Iraq* as one of the three most important issues when deciding who to vote for in the Primary. The results suggest that healthcare is also an important issue, with 25 percent of voters naming it first and 63 percent naming it overall.

Democratic primary voters were asked to identify the candidate who they think is most qualified to handle the situation in Iraq. One-third of voters (33%) identified Hillary Clinton as the most qualified candidate, far more than Barack Obama (10%), Bill Richardson (10%), Joe Biden (8%) or John Edwards (7%). Twenty-three percent of Democratic primary voters are *unsure* who is most qualified to handle the situation in Iraq.

Clinton has maintained a large lead among Democratic primary voters.

Support for Hillary Clinton has not dwindled since her strong showing in the June debate. If the Democratic presidential primary were held today, Clinton would receive 36 percent of the vote, compared to 18 percent for Obama and 12 percent for Edwards. As shown in the table below, Clinton's support has remained relatively stable from March (32%) and June (38%). Neither Obama nor Edwards have garnered increased support since March.

Interestingly, Richardson continues to improve his position, moving up from three percent in March and eight percent in June to 10 percent today. Support for Gore has dropped over time, from 10 percent in March to five percent today.

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

	September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
Hillary Clinton	36%	38%	32%
Barack Obama	18%	16%	25%
John Edwards	12%	13%	16%
Al Gore	5%	8%	10%
Bill Richardson	10%	8%	3%
Dennis Kucinich	3%	2%	2%
Joe Biden	3%	4%	1%
Chris Dodd	1%	1%	1%*
Mike Gravel	1%	0%	0%
Undecided	11%	10%	9%

*=Less than 1%

Without Gore in the race, Clinton's lead over her rivals widens even further.

As of today, Al Gore has not expressed any intention to run in the 2008 Democratic Presidential Primary. Without him in the race, voter support does not change significantly. Clinton would extend her lead three points, receiving 39 percent of the vote. Obama would come in a distant second, with 19 percent of the vote, followed by John Edwards (12%) and Bill Richardson (11%).

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

	Gore in the race	Gore NOT in the race
Clinton	36%	39%
Obama	18%	19%
Edwards	12%	12%
Richardson	10%	11%
Undecided	11%	12%

Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama enjoy the strongest favorability ratings among voters.

It is also interesting to track each candidate's favorability rating in order to better understand how the contest is shaping up over time. All of the top-tier candidates' favorability ratings have dropped from ratings immediately following the June debate. However, Obama (67%) and Clinton (65%) maintain the highest net favorability ratings in the current poll. The results outlined below indicate that Clinton, Obama and Edwards each have high net favorability ratings over time.

Notably, Al Gore's net favorability rating has dropped dramatically from 63 percent in June to 46 percent today. Joe Biden's net favorability rating has also dropped during the same time period from 31 percent to 20 percent.

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

	September 17, 2007			June 4, 2007			March 13, 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>
Clinton	81%	16%	65%	85%	12%	73%	74%	19%	55%
Obama	80%	13%	67%	85%	11%	74%	78%	11%	67%
Edwards	76%	18%	58%	80%	15%	65%	78%	12%	66%
Gore	68%	22%	46%	79%	16%	63%	75%	18%	57%
Richardson	51%	14%	37%	57%	16%	41%	29%	12%	17%
Kucinich	33%	32%	1%	36%	39%	-3%	25%	29%	-4%
Biden	45%	25%	20%	56%	25%	31%	38%	28%	10%
Dodd	38%	26%	12%	45%	24%	21%	24%	21%	3%
Gravel	8%	15%	-7%	9%	22%	-13%	2%	5%	-3%

Obama has lost ground in perceptions of his character, but nearly one-half of his supporters believe he has the best ability to lead in a new direction.

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

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

	Clinton			Obama			Edwards		
	September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007	September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007	September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
Electability	5%	11%	4%	4%	4%	5%	8%	11%	11%
Position on issues	32%	35%	43%	34%	41%	39%	55%	51%	59%
Best experience	26%	23%	23%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%	8%
Character	2%	3%	7%	11%	25%	33%	17%	21%	16%
Lead in new direction	30%	-	-	48%	-	-	20%	-	-

Clinton voters are drawn to her candidacy based on her position on the issues (32%), and her ability to lead in a new direction (30%). Many Clinton voters also perceive her as having the best experience.

Obama, on the other hand, has lost ground in some areas where he enjoyed a relative advantage in earlier polls. Specifically, he has lost ground in terms of being perceived as having the right character for the job. However, Obama voters are drawn to his candidacy based on his ability to lead in a new direction (48%).

In the current poll, voters were asked which of the following is most important to them when choosing a candidate for president: 1) a candidate's political experience; 2) a candidate's ability to bring about political change; or 3) both are equally important. Sixty-two percent of voters said that a *candidate's ability to bring about political change* is most important, while 15 percent said a *candidate's political experience* and 22 percent said that *both are equally important*. Interestingly, Clinton voters (19%) prize political experience more than Obama voters (5%).

Views toward Bill Clinton affect support for Hillary Clinton.

Respondents were asked how favorable or unfavorable they feel toward Bill Clinton. Overall, 86 percent of respondents feel *favorable* toward Bill Clinton, while 11 percent feel *unfavorable*. Democratic primary voters with a favorable view toward Bill Clinton are much more likely to vote for Hillary Clinton (39%) than voters with an unfavorable view (9%). Thirty percent of voters who feel unfavorable toward Bill Clinton said that they would vote for Obama. Still, 44 percent of those with an unfavorable view toward Bill Clinton think that Hillary Clinton will win the Democratic nomination. These results suggest that while Bill Clinton does have an effect on his wife's political fortune, few Democratic primary voters hold an unfavorable view toward the ex-President.

Variations in Support

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

	Clinton (36% today)			Obama (18 today%)			Edwards (12 today%)		
	September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007	September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007	September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
Party Registration									
<i>Democrats</i>	63	54	57	53	52	45	61	64	56
<i>Independents</i>	37	46	43	47	48	55	39	36	44
Ideology									
<i>Liberal</i>	40	44	28	40	44	38	48	38	44
<i>Moderate</i>	48	47	56	52	47	54	46	45	41
<i>Conservative</i>	10	9	16	7	9	8	6	17	15
Gender									
<i>Male</i>	32	41	44	46	44	50	49	45	50
<i>Female</i>	68	59	56	54	56	50	51	55	50
Age									
<i>18-34</i>	5	4	14	15	13	18	3	6	5
<i>35-54</i>	37	32	40	40	37	34	48	53	42
<i>55-64</i>	24	30	22	26	30	27	32	26	32
<i>65+</i>	33	34	24	19	20	21	17	15	21
Annual Income									
<i><\$35K</i>	21	19	23	8	9	14	7	11	19
<i>\$35-50K</i>	13	15	19	22	17	13	15	16	14
<i>\$50-75K</i>	32	20	24	29	22	32	28	22	28
<i>\$75-100K</i>	17	21	16	19	24	18	26	22	27
<i>>\$100K</i>	17	25	18	22	28	23	24	29	12
Labor Union									
<i>Yes</i>	16	23	19	19	22	24	23	12	29
<i>No</i>	81	77	81	81	78	76	77	88	71

Hillary Clinton has improved her position among female Democratic primary voters, attracting 68 percent today compared to 59 percent in June and 56 percent in March. Clinton has also maintained her improved position among self-identified liberal Democratic primary voters, at 40 percent today compared to 28 percent in March. Edwards, on the other hand, regained some support among self-identified liberals, at 48 percent today compared to 38 percent in June.

An “inevitability” factor is working to Clinton’s advantage.

When asked which candidate they think will ultimately win the Democratic nomination, 61 percent of identified Clinton, up from 48 percent in June and 38 percent in March. Obama, on the other hand, has dropped among Democratic primary voters from 18 percent in March and 13 percent in June to 11 percent today. In fact, the majority of Obama voters (57%) said that they think that Clinton will win the Democratic nomination.

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

	September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
Hillary Clinton	61%	48%	38%
Barack Obama	11%	13%	18%
John Edwards	4%	5%	7%
Al Gore	1%	3%	4%
Bill Richardson	1%	1%	1%
Joe Biden	0%	1%	1%*
Chris Dodd	0%	1%*	0%*
Dennis Kucinich	0%	0%	1%*
Mike Gravel	1%	0%	0%
Undecided	21%	30%	33%

*=Less than 1%

These results suggest that Clinton’s primary advantage right now is the perception that she will win the nomination. In March, only 38 percent of voters believed that Clinton would end up winning the nomination. In September, about four months before the New Hampshire Presidential Primary, Clinton has emerged as the strong front-runner, with the majority of voters saying that she will eventually win the Democratic nomination.