

REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

Romney Edges Gingrich Among Republican Primary Voters in the U.S.

Traditional policy positions on abortion and same-sex marriage take a back seat as GOP voters seek a strong leader who can handle the economy.

[NEW YORK – Dec. 30, 2011] – Republican Party supporters in the United States have two main favorite contenders as the 2012 presidential race is about to begin, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative sample of 1,009 American adults who are absolutely certain of taking part in the 2012 Republican presidential primary or caucus in their state, Mitt Romney holds the support of a third of decided voters and leaners (32%).

Newt Gingrich is second with 26 per cent, followed by Ron Paul with 10 per cent, Rick Perry and Michele Bachmann with seven per cent each, Rick Santorum with five per cent, and Jon Huntsman Jr. with two per cent. About one-in-ten absolutely certain primary voters or caucus goers (11%) remain undecided.

Romney is backed by roughly the same proportion of male (33%) and female (31%) Republican certain voters, while Gingrich scores better with men (29%) than with women (22%). Respondents who described themselves as Tea Party supporters favor Gingrich over Romney by a three-point margin (30% to 27%), with Paul and Bachmann tied for third place (10% each).

KEY FINDINGS

- **Support from GOP Voters: Romney 32%, Gingrich 26%, Paul 10%, Perry 7%, Bachmann 7%, Santorum 5%, Huntsman 2%, Undecided 11%**
- **Key Personality Factors: Understanding the problems of Americans (72%), Being a strong and decisive leader (68%)**
- **Key Policy Factors: Being able to manage the economy effectively (74%), Making government smaller (56%)**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From December 27 to December 29, 2011, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,009 American adults who are absolutely certain of taking part in the Republican presidential primary or caucus in their state and are Springboard America panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%. The results have been statistically weighted to ensure a sample representative of Republican Party voters in the United States. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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Views on Candidates

Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich are the only contenders who garner favorable views from more than half of Republican voters (at 58% and 51% respectively), followed by Michele Bachmann (41%), Rick Perry (39%), and Rick Santorum (33%). The two lowest ranked contenders are Ron Paul (27%) and Jon Huntsman Jr. (17%). Paul holds the largest proportions of unfavorable mentions (44%, with Gingrich and Perry tied for second place at 31%).

Personality Factors

Respondents were asked to select five personality factors that will be the most important when they decide which Republican candidate to support in the 2012 primary and caucus season. At least two-thirds of respondents want a nominee who understands the problems of Americans (72%), who is a strong and decisive leader (68%), and an honest and trustworthy person (66%). A majority also will take into account which contender is the best choice to defeat Democratic Party incumbent Barack Obama (58%) and who possesses a vision for America's future (56%).

Honesty and trustworthiness are more important for women (74%) than men (61%), but there is little fluctuation between the views of all Republicans and Tea Party supporters on the personality factors.

Respondents who intend to back Romney in a primary or caucus place a special emphasis on previous experience in business (45%), while Gingrich supporters are more likely to look for a candidate who has a vision for America's future (65%). Two-in-five Paul backers (41%) mention family values.

Policy Factors

Respondents were also asked to select six policy factors that will be the most important when they decide which Republican candidate to support in the 2012 primary and caucus season. A majority of respondents are seeking a nominee who can manage the economy effectively (74%), make government smaller (56%), keep taxes low (56%), oppose Obama's health care reform (55%), keep America safe (54%), and change the way Washington operates (52%).

Making government smaller is a big winner with men (65%, compared to 45% for women) and for Tea Party supporters (68%). Women are more interested in choosing a nominee who can work across party lines to get things done (48%, compared to 41% of men and 44% of Tea Party supporters).

Handling the economy is especially important for Romney backers (83%), while a smaller government is paramount for Gingrich supporters (64%). Paul voters are more likely to mention opposing amnesty for illegal immigrants (44%) and ensuring the freedoms of citizens (40%).

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The Effect of Potential Nominees

The survey of American adults who are absolutely certain of taking part in the 2012 Republican presidential primary or caucus in their state also looked ahead to November, and asked respondents who they would vote for in scenarios pitting the seven GOP presidential hopefuls against Barack Obama.

Romney is the best performer, holding on to 71 per cent of these Republican voters, followed by Gingrich with 66 per cent, Perry with 56 per cent, Bachmann with 54 per cent, and Santorum with 50 per cent. Neither Paul (46%) nor Huntsman (45%) can count on the unquestionable support of half of respondents if they were to face-off with Obama.

Analysis

Mitt Romney has survived the surges of four distinct rivals to end the year at the top, followed by Newt Gingrich. Ron Paul keeps a steady group of supporters, but he appears to throw off Republicans at large, as evidenced by the high proportion of respondents who view him unfavorably. At this point, Romney's base appears solid, while Gingrich is having trouble connecting with female voters.

On the personality front, Republicans are looking for an honest and trustworthy leader who understands their problems. Family values and previous experience are taking a back seat to more "presidential" qualities.

A similar situation ensues on the policy questions, where it becomes clear that the purity test is no longer applicable. Being pro-life, supporting an individual's right to own firearms and defining marriage as between a man and a woman are the lowest ranked policy factors for absolutely certain Republican primary voters and caucus goers. In this election, the economy, the size of government, taxes and health care are definitely more important issues for the GOP electorate.

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About Angus Reid Public Opinion

Angus Reid Public Opinion is a public affairs practice headed by Dr. Angus Reid: an industry visionary who has spent more than four decades asking questions to figure out what people feel, how they think and who they will vote for. A team of talented and experienced practitioners with a unique and profound understanding of global issues conduct high quality research throughout the world on a daily basis for corporations, governments, academic researchers, and non-profit organizations.

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**For more information, please contact
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Republican Presidential Primary

We'd like to ask you some questions about next year's presidential election. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each of the following people?

	Mostly Favorable	Mostly Unfavorable	Not sure
Mitt Romney	58%	23%	19%
Newt Gingrich	51%	31%	18%
Michele Bachmann	41%	29%	30%
Rick Perry	39%	31%	30%
Rick Santorum	33%	17%	50%
Ron Paul	27%	44%	29%
Jon Huntsman Jr.	17%	22%	61%

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Republican Presidential Primary

At this point, which one of these Republican presidential candidates are you thinking of supporting in your state's primary or caucus? – *“Decided Supporters” and “Leaners”*

	All Republicans	Tea Party Supporters	Men	Women
Mitt Romney	32%	27%	33%	31%
Newt Gingrich	26%	30%	29%	22%
Ron Paul	10%	10%	11%	9%
Rick Perry	7%	9%	6%	9%
Michele Bachmann	7%	10%	7%	7%
Rick Santorum	5%	6%	4%	5%
Jon Huntsman Jr.	2%	1%	2%	2%
Not sure	11%	8%	8%	16%

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Republican Presidential Primary

What are the most important **personality** factors for you in deciding which Republican presidential candidate you will support in your state's primary or caucus? Please select up to five factors from the list below.

	All Republicans	Tea Party Supporters	Men	Women
Understanding the problems of Americans	72%	72%	71%	73%
Being a strong and decisive leader	68%	70%	67%	69%
Being honest and trustworthy	66%	63%	61%	74%
Being the best choice to defeat Barack Obama	58%	61%	59%	57%
Having a vision for America's future	56%	57%	59%	53%
Sharing your own family values	33%	35%	32%	35%
Inspiring confidence	27%	27%	31%	22%
Previous experience in business	27%	27%	26%	28%
Previous experience in politics	26%	25%	26%	25%
Having the common touch	11%	10%	11%	11%

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What are the most important **personality** factors for you in deciding which Republican presidential candidate you will support in your state's primary or caucus? Please select up to five factors from the list below.

	All Republicans	Romney supporters	Gingrich supporters	Paul supporters
Understanding the problems of Americans	72%	66%	77%	75%
Being a strong and decisive leader	68%	68%	73%	60%
Being honest and trustworthy	66%	65%	49%	73%
Being the best choice to defeat Barack Obama	58%	66%	70%	42%
Having a vision for America's future	56%	51%	65%	52%
Sharing your own family values	33%	30%	21%	41%
Inspiring confidence	27%	27%	31%	22%
Previous experience in business	27%	45%	17%	24%
Previous experience in politics	26%	21%	43%	18%
Having the common touch	11%	7%	9%	17%

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Republican Presidential Primary

What are the most important **policy** factors for you in deciding which Republican presidential candidate you will support in your state's primary or caucus? Please select up to six factors from the list below.

	All Republicans	Tea Party Supporters	Men	Women
Being able to manage the economy effectively	74%	71%	73%	76%
Making government smaller	56%	68%	65%	45%
Keeping taxes low	56%	57%	56%	57%
Opposing Obama's health care reform	55%	65%	56%	53%
Keeping America safe	54%	51%	54%	55%
Changing the way Washington operates	52%	50%	50%	55%
Being able to work across party lines to get things done	44%	36%	41%	48%
Opposing amnesty for illegal immigrants	40%	44%	41%	38%
Ensuring our freedoms as citizens	38%	38%	37%	38%
Defining marriage as between a man and a woman	26%	26%	24%	28%
Support an individual's right to own firearms	23%	27%	26%	18%
Being pro-life	19%	21%	17%	22%

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What are the most important **policy** factors for you in deciding which Republican presidential candidate you will support in your state's primary or caucus? Please select up to six factors from the list below.

	All Republicans	Romney supporters	Gingrich supporters	Paul supporters
Being able to manage the economy effectively	74%	83%	71%	67%
Making government smaller	56%	56%	64%	60%
Keeping taxes low	56%	55%	58%	58%
Opposing Obama's health care reform	55%	58%	63%	43%
Keeping America safe	54%	53%	59%	38%
Changing the way Washington operates	52%	54%	51%	55%
Being able to work across party lines to get things done	44%	53%	44%	40%
Opposing amnesty for illegal immigrants	40%	40%	36%	44%
Ensuring our freedoms as citizens	38%	35%	37%	40%
Defining marriage as between a man and a woman	26%	22%	28%	23%
Support an individual's right to own firearms	23%	16%	24%	25%
Being pro-life	19%	13%	17%	23%

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Suppose that each one of the candidates listed in the columns below was already the Republican Party's presidential nominee in 2012. Who would you vote for in the presidential election under each scenario?

	The GOP nominee	Barack Obama	Third Party Candidate	Would not vote	Not sure
Mitt Romney	71%	4%	6%	4%	16%
Newt Gingrich	66%	6%	8%	5%	16%
Rick Perry	56%	6%	9%	7%	23%
Michele Bachmann	54%	6%	9%	7%	24%
Rick Santorum	50%	5%	8%	7%	30%
Ron Paul	46%	6%	11%	10%	27%
Jon Huntsman Jr.	45%	5%	8%	8%	34%

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