

Franklin Pierce University / WBZ Poll

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POLLING

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Democratic Presidential Primary

RINDGE, NH – As the 2008 New Hampshire Presidential Primary approaches, Senator Hillary Clinton maintains a narrow lead over her Democratic rivals, but the margin between her and her closest competitor, Barack Obama, has dwindled to just four points. In March, Clinton (32%) held a 7-point lead over Obama (25%). In June, following the Democratic debate, Clinton commanded a much larger number (38%) of Democratic primary voters than Obama (16%), a lead she maintained in September. But today, Clinton's lead has dropped to only four points, with Clinton at 32 percent and Obama close behind at 28 percent. Notably, John Edwards support has risen from 12 percent in September to 19 percent in the current poll.

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, December 27 – December 31, 2007. The survey of 403 respondents has a maximum margin of sampling error of +/- 4.9%.

Clinton's lead has diminished among Democratic primary voters.

Support for Hillary Clinton is still strong in New Hampshire, but Obama has narrowed the gap significantly. If the Democratic presidential primary were held today, Clinton would receive 32 percent of the vote, compared to 28 percent for Obama and 19 percent for Edwards. As shown in the table below, Clinton's support increased from March (32%) to June (38%) and stayed strong in September (36%). However, her support has dropped slightly in the current poll (32%). Also, both Obama and Edwards garnered increased support since September, narrowing the gap between Senator Clinton and her democratic rivals. According to R. Kelly Myers, "what appeared to be a race characterized by a single front runner for most of the year, these results indicate that the race has really tightened among the top 3 candidates."

While Bill Richardson improved his position among Democratic voters from March to September, his support has not increased in the current poll.

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

	January 2, 2008	September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
Hillary Clinton	32%	36%	38%	32%
Barack Obama	28%	18%	16%	25%
John Edwards	19%	12%	13%	16%
Bill Richardson	8%	10%	8%	3%
Joe Biden	3%	3%	4%	1%
Chris Dodd	1%	1%	1%	1%*
Dennis Kucinich	1%	3%	2%	2%
Mike Gravel	0%	1%	0%	0%
Undecided	8%	11%	10%	9%

*=Less than 1%

Over two-thirds of Clinton supporters said that their decision is firm.

After indicating their candidate choice, voters were then asked if their choice is firm, or if they could change their mind sometime between now and the primary election on January 8th. Overall, 38 percent of Democratic voters said that they could change their mind before the primary. Among likely voters who support Clinton, 69 percent indicated that their's is a firm choice, while 30 percent indicated that they could change their mind. Among likely voters who support Obama, 61 percent indicated that their's is a firm choice, while 38 percent indicated that they could change their mind. Among likely voters who support Edwards, 53 percent indicated that their's is a firm choice, and 45 percent indicated that they could change their mind.

Is that a firm choice, or could you change your mind between now and the primary election?

	Clinton (32%)	Obama (28%)	Edwards (19%)
Firm choice	69%	61%	53%
Could change mind	30%	38%	45%

John Edwards and Barack Obama enjoy the strongest favorability ratings among voters.

It is interesting to track each candidate's favorability rating in order to better understand how the contest is shaping up over time. Edwards (75%) and Obama (74%) enjoy the highest net favorability ratings in the current poll, while Clinton's net favorability (58%) has dropped slightly since June (73%) and September (65%). The results outlined below indicate that Clinton, Obama and Edwards each have high net favorability ratings over time.

Additionally, Bill Richardson's net favorability rating increased from 37 percent in September to 49 percent today.

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

	January 2, 2008			September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>
John Edwards	86%	11%	75%	58%	65%	66%
Barack Obama	86%	12%	74%	67%	74%	67%
Hillary Clinton	78%	20%	58%	65%	73%	55%
Bill Richardson	65%	16%	49%	37%	41%	17%
Joe Biden	56%	22%	34%	20%	31%	10%
Chris Dodd	42%	26%	16%	12%	21%	3%
Dennis Kucinich	42%	32%	10%	1%	-3%	-4%
Mike Gravel	8%	29%	-21%	-7%	-13%	-3%

Obama maintains lower figures in perceptions of his character, but approximately 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			
	<i>January 2, 2008</i>	<i>Sep 17, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>	<i>January 2, 2008</i>	<i>Sep 17, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>
Electability	5%	5%	11%	4%	3%	4%	4%	5%
Position on issues	44%	32%	35%	43%	33%	34%	41%	39%
Best experience	21%	26%	23%	23%	1%	0%	2%	0%
Lead in new direction	24%	30%			52%	48%		
Character	3%	2%	3%	7%	10%	11%	25%	33%

	Edwards			
	<i>January 2, 2008</i>	<i>Sep 17, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>
Electability	9%	8%	11%	11%
Position on issues	71%	55%	51%	59%
Best experience	1%	0%	1%	8%
Lead in new direction	8%	20%		
Character	8%	17%	21%	16%

Clinton voters are drawn to her candidacy based on her position on issues (44%). Many Clinton voters are also drawn to her candidacy based on her ability to lead in a new direction (24%) and perceive her as having the best experience (21%).

Obama, on the other hand, has lost ground in some areas where he enjoyed a relative advantage in earlier polls. Specifically, he lost ground in terms of being perceived as having the right character for the job from June (25%) to September (11%) and has maintained this loss in January (10%). Obama voters are drawn to his candidacy based on his ability to lead in a new direction (52%) and his position on issues (33%).

Edwards voters are drawn to his candidacy primarily based on his position on issues (71%).

Variations in Support

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

	Clinton (32%)				Obama (28%)				Edwards (19%)			
	Jan.	Sept.	June	March	Jan.	Sept.	June	March	Jan.	Sept.	June	March
Party Registration												
<i>Democrats</i>	67	63	54	57	54	53	52	45	63	61	64	56
<i>Independents</i>	33	37	46	43	46	47	48	55	37	39	36	44
Ideology												
<i>Liberal</i>	38	40	44	28	44	40	44	38	36	48	38	44
<i>Moderate</i>	50	48	47	56	49	52	47	54	55	46	45	41
<i>Conservative</i>	9	10	9	16	6	7	9	8	8	6	17	15
Gender												
<i>Male</i>	38	32	41	44	44	46	44	50	37	49	45	50
<i>Female</i>	62	68	59	56	56	54	56	50	63	51	55	50
Age												
<i>18-34</i>	4	5	4	14	15	15	13	18	4	3	6	5
<i>35-54</i>	31	37	32	40	37	40	37	34	29	48	53	42
<i>55-64</i>	27	24	30	22	25	26	30	27	35	32	26	32
<i>65+</i>	38	33	34	24	23	19	20	21	32	17	15	21
Annual Income												
<i><\$35K</i>	20	21	19	23	15	8	9	14	17	7	11	19
<i>\$35-50K</i>	11	13	15	19	10	22	17	13	21	15	16	14
<i>\$50-75K</i>	28	32	20	24	30	29	22	32	31	28	22	28
<i>\$75-100K</i>	15	17	21	16	19	19	24	18	13	26	22	27
<i>>\$100K</i>	26	17	25	18	26	22	28	23	18	24	29	12

Barack Obama has maintained a strong position among self-identified liberal Democratic primary voters, at 44 percent today, while both Clinton (38%) and Edwards (36%) maintain the support of fewer of these voters. Support for John Edwards was relatively equal among female and male Democratic primary voters in September, but today nearly two-thirds of his supporters (63%) are female.

Importantly, the results suggest that Obama may attract younger voters. The data consistently indicate that approximately one-half of Obama's supporters are under the age of 55, including the current poll in which 52 percent of his supporters are under 55. On the other hand, only around one-third of Clinton's (35%) and Edward's (34%) supporters are under the age of 55 in today's poll. According to Myers, "the demographic profile of voter turn-out on January 8th is crucial for candidates. If younger voters turn out in high numbers, which they rarely do, it could work to Obama's advantage."

Clinton and Edwards supporters are somewhat more likely to vote earlier in the day, while approximately one-fifth of Obama supporters plan to vote after 5 pm.

Respondents were asked to identify the time of day that they plan to vote on January 8th. The results suggest that Clinton (40%) and Edwards (40%) supporters are more likely to vote before 11:00 am than Obama supporters (30%). However, Obama supporters are slightly more likely to vote later in the day – after 5:00 pm – than Clinton supporters.

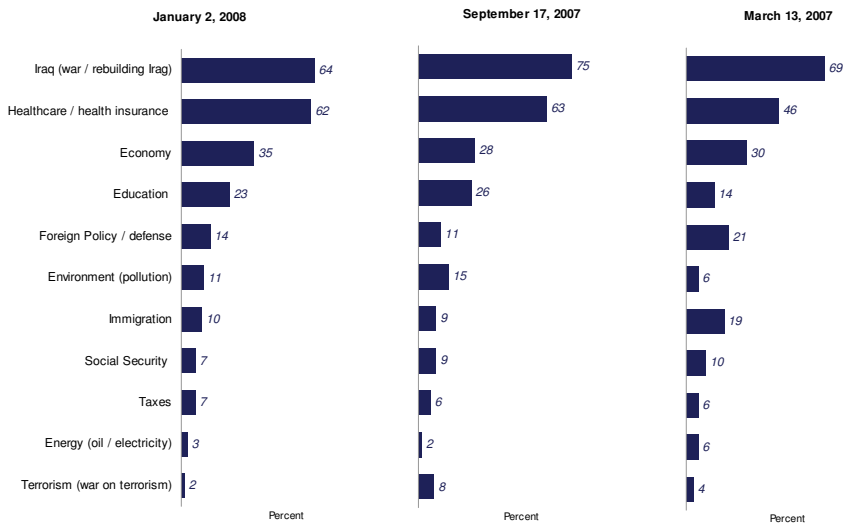
What time of day do you plan to vote on January 8th?

	Clinton (32%)	Obama (28%)	Edwards (19%)
Before 11 am	40%	30%	40%
11 am – 1 pm	11%	14%	8%
1 – 5 pm	14%	14%	11%
After 5 pm	15%	21%	19%
Unsure	20%	21%	22%

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

Voters were asked which three policy issues will be most important to them in deciding who to vote for in the Democratic primary. According to Myers, “while the war in Iraq remains the top issue, Democratic voters have begun to express more concerns about health care and the economy.” Sixty-four percent of voters mentioned the Iraq war or rebuilding Iraq and 62 percent mentioned health care or health insurance. Additionally, 35 percent of voters mentioned the economy and 23 percent mentioned education. While health care has retained its importance among Democratic voters since September, the results suggest that the Iraq situation is not as important to voters today as it was in September.

Which policy issues will be most important to you in deciding who to vote for in the NH primary?



Among: Democrats | compared over time | total mentioned

Fewer voters believe that Clinton will ultimately end up winning the Democratic nomination.

When asked which candidate they think will ultimately win the Democratic nomination, 48 percent identified Clinton, down from 61 percent in September. The belief that Obama will win the nomination, on the other hand, has increased 10 points among Democratic primary voters from 11 percent in September to 21 percent today. While the majority of Obama voters in September (57%) said that they think that Clinton will win the Democratic nomination, only 26 percent of Obama voters in the current poll expressed the same belief. According to Myers, “these numbers suggest that perceptions of Clinton’s ‘inevitability’ are beginning to weaken.”

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

	January 2, 2008	September 17, 2007	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
Hillary Clinton	48%	61%	48%	38%
Barack Obama	21%	11%	13%	18%
John Edwards	4%	4%	5%	7%
Bill Richardson	1%*	1%	1%	1%
Joe Biden	1%*	0%	1%	1%*
Chris Dodd	0%	0%	1%*	0%*
Dennis Kucinich	0%	0%	0%	1%*
Mike Gravel	0%	1%	0%	0%
Undecided	25%	21%	30%	33%

*=Less than 1%

These results suggest that Clinton’s “inevitability factor” has diminished somewhat since September. In September, a whopping 61 percent of voters believed that Clinton would end up winning the nomination. In January, with just under a week before the New Hampshire presidential primary, Clinton’s status as the front-runner has eroded, with fewer voters saying that she will eventually win the Democratic nomination.