



**NBC News/Marist Poll:
Cain Edges Romney in South Carolina**

*** Complete Tables for Poll Appended ***

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This NBC News/Marist Poll Reports:

Herman Cain narrowly leads Mitt Romney in the contest for the Republican nomination in South Carolina. The two current front-runners are separated by just four percentage points in this NBC News/Marist Poll.

Here is how the contest stands **among likely Republican primary voters** in South Carolina:

- 30% for Herman Cain
- 26% for Mitt Romney
- 9% for Rick Perry
- 6% for Newt Gingrich
- 5% for Ron Paul
- 5% for Michele Bachmann
- 2% for Rick Santorum
- 1% for Jon Huntsman
- Less than 1% for Gary Johnson
- 15% are undecided

“This first test of candidate strength in the South is shaping up right now as a two-way contest between Cain and Romney,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Team Romney has to be concerned about Cain's 40% lead among likely South Carolina voters who strongly support the Tea Party.”

When considering **those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate**, 31% support Cain while 28% back Romney. One in ten -- 10% -- favors Perry, and 7% are behind Gingrich. Paul and Bachmann each garner 5% of the vote while Santorum receives

the support of 2%. One percent favors Huntsman while less than 1% toss their support behind Johnson. One in ten -- 10% -- is still undecided.

Among South Carolina's **potential Republican electorate**, Cain and Romney are neck and neck. Cain garners the support of 28% compared with 27% for Romney. 10% back Perry while Gingrich and Paul each receive 6% of the vote. Five percent favor Bachmann, 2% support Santorum, and 1% backs Huntsman. Less than 1% are behind Johnson, and 17% are undecided.

Key points:

- Cain does better among **Tea Party supporters** (45% of the likely electorate) -- 41% -- and especially among those who **strongly support the Tea Party** (17%) -- 52%.
- **Conservatives** (50% of the likely electorate) -- 32% -- and especially those who are very conservative (21%) -- 36% -- also buoy Cain.
- Cain also has the advantage among Evangelical Christians (40% of the likely electorate). Among these voters, Cain receives 30%.
- **Among likely Republican primary voters who say they are Tea Party supporters, conservatives, and Evangelical Christians** (21% of the likely Republican electorate), 36% back Cain.
- However, Romney does better among **non-Tea Party supporters** (44% of the likely primary electorate). He receives 30% of the vote.

Tea Party Drives Support

45% of likely Republican primary voters who support the Tea party and a majority of those who *strongly* support the Tea Party -- 56% -- are firmly committed to their choice of candidate.

Only 39% of likely GOP primary voters overall strongly support their choice of candidate. 34% somewhat support their pick while one in four -- 25% -- might change their mind. Two percent are unsure.

Key points:

- Just 36% of likely Republican primary voters who are Evangelical Christians strongly support their candidate.
- 45% of Cain supporters are firmly committed to him while 37% of Romney's backers are staunchly in his corner.

One in Four Likely Voters Can't Get No Satisfaction from GOP Field

Although 66% of likely Republican primary voters are satisfied with the candidates seeking the nomination, a notable 25% are dissatisfied. Nine percent are unsure.

Cain and Romney Neck and Neck in Three-Way Contest...Perry Trails Behind

If the Republican Presidential Primary comes down to a race between Cain, Romney, and Perry, 37% of likely Republican primary voters in South Carolina say they would support Cain. Romney receives the backing of 35% while 16% throw their support behind Perry. 12% are undecided.

Debates Drum Up Support for Cain

The Republican debates have been an effective platform for Herman Cain. Among likely GOP primary voters who have watched at least most of the debates, 39% back Cain compared with 24% for Romney.

How many Republicans have tuned in for the debates? Nearly four in ten likely Republican primary voters -- 39% -- have watched all or most of the debates while 61% have watched little or none of the televised GOP debates.

Values and Issues Top List of Factors Important to SC GOPers

When it comes to the characteristics likely Republican primary voters want in a candidate, 31% want someone who shares their values while 27% think a candidate who is closest to them on the issues is the key factor when choosing a candidate. One in five -- 20% -- favors someone with experience while 19% want a candidate who can defeat President Barack Obama in next year's general election. Three percent are unsure.

Key points:

- Cain -- 33% -- bests Romney -- 19% -- among likely Republican primary voters who want a candidate who shares their values.
- Although a closer contest, Cain also leads Romney, 35% to 28%, among issues voters.
- Cain also does better among those who think electability is the key. Among these voters, 32% back Cain compared with 26% for Romney.
- However, Romney has the advantage among likely Republican primary voters who believe experience matters the most. 33% support Romney while 21% toss their support behind Cain.

Voters' Views about the Mormon Faith

The Mormon faith, shared by candidates Romney and Huntsman, became an issue in the campaign when a Baptist minister and Perry supporter likened it to a cult. Do likely Republican voters in South Carolina believe Mormons to be Christians? A majority -- 53% -- either believe they are not or are unsure while 47% say Mormons are Christians.

Key points:

- Among likely voters who do not think someone of the Mormon faith is Christian or are unsure about it (53% of the likely electorate), 33% support Cain, Romney receives the backing of 19%, and 11% are for Perry.
- 67% of those who are Evangelical Christians say Mormons are not Christians, or they are unsure.

Romney Leads Obama...Cain, Perry Run Competitively

South Carolina is a deal breaker for Republicans. If they want to re-claim the White House, they need to carry this red state. In 2008, President Barack Obama lost South Carolina by nine percentage points. How do the top three candidates fare against the president?

If Romney and Obama face off in next year's general election, 46% of registered voters in South Carolina would back Romney while four in ten -- 40% -- would support Obama. 14% are undecided.

South Carolina's electorate divides in a contest between Perry and Obama. 43% would cast their ballot for Perry while 42% would vote for Obama. 15% are undecided.

Cain is also competitive with Obama. 44% say they would support Cain while 42% would back Obama. 13% are undecided.

Key points:

- Independent voters make the difference. Romney has a 13 percentage point lead against Obama among these voters. Romney receives 47% to Obama's 34%.
- Cain -- 45% -- also has the advantage against Obama -- 36% -- among independent voters.
- Independent voters divide in a contest between Perry -- 40% -- and Obama -- 37%.

Majority Disapproves of Obama's Job Performance

Only four in ten -- 40% -- of registered voters in South Carolina approve of the job President Obama is doing in office while 51% *disapprove*. Nine percent are unsure.

By party:

- Republican and Democratic voters run true to party lines with 90% of Republican voters saying they disapprove of the job the president is doing and 83% of Democratic voters reporting they approve.
- A majority of independent voters in South Carolina -- 54% -- disapprove of the president's job performance.

About Two-Thirds Think Nation's Compass is Broken...Nearly Six in Ten Say the U.S. Economy Will Get Worse

67% of South Carolina residents believe the country is moving in the wrong direction while 23% say it is traveling along the appropriate path. Nine percent are unsure. Similar proportions of registered voters share these views.

When thinking about the future of the U.S. economy, 58% of adults in South Carolina report the worst is yet to come while 34% believe the worst is behind us. Nine percent are unsure.

Key points:

- 71% of Republicans and six in ten -- 60% -- independent voters believe the worst of the nation's economic problems are ahead. Even 38% of Democrats share this view.