



**NBC News/Marist Poll:  
Romney with 16 Percentage Point Lead in Arizona**

\*\*\* Complete Tables for Poll Appended \*\*\*

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Contact: Lee M. Miringoff  
Barbara L. Carvalho  
Mary E. Azzoli  
Marist College  
845.575.5050

**This NBC News/Marist Poll Reports:**

Mitt Romney has a wide lead in the contest for the Republican nomination in Arizona. Romney leads his closest competitor, Rick Santorum, 43% to 27%, among likely Republican primary voters including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate, early voters, and those who voted absentee in Arizona.

Here is how the contest stands **among likely Republican primary voters including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate, early voters, and those who voted absentee** in Arizona:

- 43% for Mitt Romney
- 27% for Rick Santorum
- 16% for Newt Gingrich
- 11% for Ron Paul
- <1% other
- 3% are undecided

“Electability is driving the Arizona GOP, and Romney is their pick,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Romney leads Santorum among most key voting groups and competes closely for the support of others.”

**Key points:**

- With early voting underway in Arizona, Romney -- 52% -- is ahead of Santorum -- 22% -- among **early and absentee Republican voters**. Gingrich and Paul receive 17% and 8%, respectively.
- Romney does best among likely Republican primary voters who **are not Tea Party supporters** -- 52% -- those who are **liberal or moderate** -- 50% -- those who want

a candidate who can **defeat President Obama** -- 49% -- likely Republican primary voters who value **experience** -- 46% -- **women** -- 46% -- and those who want a candidate who is **closest to them on the issues** -- 40%.

- Santorum is ahead among those who are **very conservative** -- 38% -- and among **Evangelical Christians** -- 38%.
- Santorum also does better among **values** voters -- 37% -- compared with 33% for Romney.
- Santorum -- 37% -- and Romney -- 35% -- vie for the lead among those who are **Tea Party supporters**.
- Looking at income, Romney -- 45% -- is ahead of Santorum -- 25% -- among those who **earn \$75,000 or more a year**. Romney -- 41% -- also outpaces Santorum -- 31% -- among those who earn **less than \$75,000 annually**.

### **Almost Eight in Ten in Arizona Firmly Behind Candidate**

How strongly do likely Republican primary voters in Arizona support their candidate? 78% report they are firmly in their candidate's camp while 14% are somewhat behind their pick. Six percent might cast their ballot differently on primary day, and 1% is unsure.

#### **Key points:**

- 83% of **Romney's supporters** are strongly committed to their candidate compared with 74% of **those who are for Paul**. 73% of **Gingrich's backers** and 69% of those who are **behind Santorum** express a high intensity of support.

### **Looking to Second**

Santorum is the reserve candidate of 28% of Arizona's likely Republican primary voters while 25% say the same about Gingrich. 24% select Romney as their second choice compared with 12% who view Paul as their fallback candidate. 11% are undecided.

Without Gingrich in the race, Romney maintains a similar lead. Half of likely Republican primary voters in Arizona -- 50% -- would support Romney compared with 33% for Santorum. Looking at the second choice of Gingrich's supporters, 41% select Santorum while 38% pick Romney.

### **Romney Perceived by 66% to be the Inevitable Nominee**

About two-thirds of likely Republican primary voters in Arizona -- 66% -- think Romney will be the eventual GOP nominee while 14% believe Santorum will be the victor. Seven percent think Gingrich will top the party's ticket, and only 2% think Paul will win the Republican nomination. One percent believes none of the candidates will achieve the nomination, and 10% are undecided.

### Key points:

- While most of **Romney's supporters** -- 88% -- think he will be the GOP nominee, even 59% of **Paul's backers**, 53% of **Santorum's supporters**, and half -- 50% -- of those **behind Gingrich** believe the nomination will go to Romney.

### Electability Key Candidate Quality

What matters most to likely Republican primary voters in Arizona? 33% want a candidate who can beat President Barack Obama. 25% want someone who has the same positions on the issues while 23% put shared values at the top of their checklist. Experience to govern is the most important candidate quality for 16% of the likely Republican primary electorate in Arizona, and 3% are unsure.

### Key points:

- Romney -- 49% -- is ahead among likely Republican primary voters in Arizona who think **electability** is the most important quality. Here, Santorum garners the support of 24%.
- Among those who want a candidate who has the same **positions on the issues**, Romney -- 40% -- outpaces Santorum -- 31%.
- Romney also does well among those who think **experience** is most important. He receives 46% to 25% for Gingrich and 19% for Santorum.
- When looking at **values** voters, Santorum receives 37% to 33% for Romney.

### Many Voters Choose Electability over Conservatism

63% of likely Republican primary voters in Arizona think it's more important to have a nominee with the best chance to defeat President Obama while 29% prefer one who is a true conservative. Eight percent are unsure.

Romney -- 57% -- is the candidate thought to have the best electoral chances while 17% say Santorum is best positioned to beat Obama in the general election. 11% report Gingrich is the candidate who can go the distance while just 4% believe Paul is the Republican who can win the White House. Three percent say none of them have good electoral odds, and 7% are undecided.

Santorum, however, is believed by 37% to be the true conservative in the contest. 18% have this opinion of Romney compared with 17% for Paul and 14% for Gingrich. Five percent think none of the candidates is a true conservative, and 9% are undecided.

When it comes to immigration, 24% say Romney best represents their views followed by Gingrich with 20%, Santorum with 18%, and Paul with 11%. Six percent report none of the candidates reflect their position on the issue, and 20% are undecided.

Support of Arizona's immigration law which allows police to check the citizenship papers of those detained or arrested if the officer suspects the person is in the country illegally is an attractive position to about two-thirds of likely Republican primary voters in the state. 67% would be more likely to support a presidential candidate with this stand while only 6% would be less likely to cast their ballot for that candidate. 25% say such a position does not affect their vote, and 2% are unsure.

### **More Than Six in Ten Say the Debates Matter**

64% of likely Republican primary voters in Arizona say the debates have affected their vote to, at least, some extent while 36% report the debates have had little influence or no impact at all on their vote.

### **Romney, Santorum Acceptable Candidates**

A majority of likely Republican primary voters in Arizona -- 56% -- believe Mitt Romney is an acceptable candidate for the GOP nomination. 32% agree but with reservations while 11% think he is wrong for the role. Only 1% is unsure.

When it comes to Santorum's acceptability, 54% believe Santorum is a satisfactory choice while 27% say he will do, but they have concerns. 15%, however, report Santorum is an unacceptable pick, and 4% are unsure.

Fewer perceive Gingrich to be acceptable. 36% think Gingrich is a good fit for the role while 30% agree but with hesitations. 33% say he is not an acceptable choice for the GOP nomination, and 1% is unsure.

Only 25% report Paul is an appropriate pick for the Republican nomination. 29% think he is acceptable, but they have reservations while 43% think Paul is not an acceptable selection.

### **Split Decision on GOP Field**

Despite Romney's strong lead in the state, only 49% of likely Republican primary voters in Arizona are satisfied with the GOP candidates seeking the presidency. 48% would like to see someone else run. Three percent are unsure.

### **More than Six in Ten Think Mormons are Christians**

63% of likely Republican primary voters in Arizona believe a Mormon is a Christian while 37% do not or are unsure.

### **Key points:**

- Romney -- 53% -- leads Santorum -- 22% -- among likely Republican primary voters who say **a Mormon is a Christian**. However, Santorum receives 37% to 26% for Romney among those who report a **Mormon is not a Christian or are unsure**.

### **General Election Chances**

How would the current field of Republican candidates fare against President Obama in the general election?

Here is how these **hypothetical contests** shape up among Arizona's registered voters:

- **Romney** receives the support of 45% of registered voters in Arizona while 40% are for Obama. 15% are undecided.
- 45% of registered voters back **Santorum** compared with 42% for Obama. 12% are undecided.
- **Paul** receives the support of 43% to 41% for Obama. 16% are undecided.
- Obama -- 45% -- leads **Gingrich** -- 40%. 16% are undecided.

When considering previous turnout, the GOP candidates improve their standing against Obama. In fact, Romney's lead over Obama grows from five percentage points currently to nine percentage points among those who voted in 2008. His lead increases to 14 percentage points if turnout resembles 2010.

### **Support for AZ Immigration Law a Plus, says Plurality**

45% of registered voters in Arizona would be more likely to vote for a presidential candidate if that candidate supports the state's current immigration law while 20% would be less likely to back such a candidate. Support for the law would make no difference to the vote of 31% of registered voters. Three percent are unsure.

### **Obama Scores Low Marks on Immigration...Job Approval Rating at 38%**

Only 31% of registered voters in Arizona approve of how President Obama is handling the issue of immigration while 60% disapprove, and 9% are unsure.

When it comes to the president's overall job approval rating, 38% of registered voters approve of the job the president is doing in office while 51% *disapprove*, and 10% are unsure.

### **Voters Divide about the Future of the U.S. Economy**

When thinking about the future of the U.S. economy, 47% of Arizona's registered voters think the worst is over while 44% say the worst is still to come. Nine percent are unsure.

### **Flake Leads Carmona in Hypothetical Senate Race**

Arizona voters will be tasked with filling an open U.S. Senate seat in the fall. If Republican Jeff Flake and Democrat Richard Carmona win their parties' nominations, how would the competition unfold? In this hypothetical contest, Flake leads Carmona, 42% to 29%. 28% are undecided.