



**NBC News/Marist Poll:
Cain and Romney Neck and Neck in Florida's GOP Contest**

*** Complete Tables for Poll Appended ***

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This NBC News/Marist Poll Reports:

In the battle for the Republican presidential nomination in Florida, Herman Cain and Mitt Romney are locked in a close race.

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

- 32% for Herman Cain
- 31% for Mitt Romney
- 8% for Rick Perry
- 6% for Ron Paul
- 6% for Newt Gingrich
- 2% for Michele Bachmann
- 2% for Jon Huntsman
- 1% for Rick Santorum
- Less than 1% for Gary Johnson
- 11% are undecided

"You can't get to the convention in Tampa without going through Florida," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "Interestingly, Romney's getting now about what he ended up with in the '08 primary."

When **those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate** are brought into the mix, 33% of likely Republican primary voters back Romney while 32% support Cain. Perry receives 9% of the vote followed by Paul and Gingrich who each garner 6%. Two percent favor Bachmann, and the same proportion -- 2% -- are behind Huntsman. One percent supports Santorum while less than 1% is behind Johnson. Eight percent are still undecided.

There is little change when looking at Florida's **potential Republican electorate**. Here, three in ten -- 30% -- support Romney while 29% are behind Cain. Nine percent favor Perry, 7% back Paul, and 6% throw their support toward Gingrich. Bachmann receives the backing of 3% followed by Huntsman with 2%. Johnson and Santorum each receive 1% of the vote, and 13% are undecided.

Key points:

- Cain does better among **likely Republican primary voters who support the Tea Party** (50% of the likely primary electorate) -- 40% -- and especially among **those who *strongly* support the Tea Party** (20% of the likely primary electorate) -- 43%.
- Those who are very conservative (21% of the likely primary electorate) -- 42% -- and Evangelical Christians (28% of the likely primary electorate) -- 35% -- also bolster Cain's support.
- **Among likely Republican primary voters who say they are Tea Party supporters, conservatives, and Evangelical Christians** (13% of the likely primary electorate), 34% back Cain.
- However, Romney does better among **likely Republican primary voters who do not support the Tea Party** (44% of the likely primary electorate). Here, Romney receives 38% among these voters.

Plurality of Voters Strongly Support Choice of Candidate...Tea Party Support Matters

Nearly half of likely voters who are Tea Party supporters -- 49% -- and almost six in ten -- 59% -- of those who say they *strongly* support the Tea Party are firmly committed to their choice of candidate. Among likely Republican primary voters overall, 44% say they strongly support their candidate, 27% are somewhat behind their pick, and the same proportion -- 27% -- thinks they might vote differently come primary day. Two percent are unsure.

Key points:

- Four in ten likely Republican primary voters who are Evangelical Christians -- 40% - - are strongly committed to their candidate.
- A majority of voters who support Cain -- 52% -- are firmly in his camp compared with 41% of likely voters who back Romney.

Three in Ten Dissatisfied with GOP Field

Although 63% of likely Republican primary voters are satisfied with the candidates from which to choose, a notable 30% are not satisfied. Eight percent are unsure.

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

If the Republican field comes down to Romney, Cain, and Perry, 40% of likely Republican primary voters say they would support Romney. The same proportion -- 40% -- report they

would back Cain while just one in ten -- 10% -- would cast their ballot for Perry. 10% are undecided.

Cain Captures Debate Spotlight

Herman Cain's performance in the Republican debates has paid off. Almost four in ten likely Republican primary voters who have watched at least most of the debates -- 39% -- support Cain while 29% back Romney.

Are likely primary voters in Florida watching the Republican debates? 47% say they have watched all or most of them while a majority -- 53% -- report they have watched very little or none of the televised debates.

What Matters Most in a Candidate? Little Consensus Among Likely Voters in Florida

When selecting a candidate to support, which factors matter the most to likely Republican primary voters? 28% want someone who is closest to them on the issues. Shared values follow closely behind with 26% while 23% say electability is the key. 21% want a candidate who has the experience to govern, and 3% are unsure.

Key points:

- Cain fares best among likely Republican primary voters who want someone who is closest to them on the issues. A plurality of these voters -- 46% -- supports Cain.
- However, Romney bests the competition among those who want a candidate with experience -- 44%.
- Cain and Romney are competitive among values voters and those who are intent on defeating President Obama in the general election. 29% of values voters back Cain compared with 28% for Romney. Among those who think electability is the key, 33% are behind Romney while 32% back Cain.

Impressions of the Mormon Faith

The Mormon faith, shared by candidates Romney and Huntsman, took center stage when a Baptist pastor and supporter of Rick Perry equated it to a cult. Do likely Republican voters in Florida consider Mormons to be Christians?

While nearly six in ten -- 58% -- believe Mormons are Christians, a notable 42% don't think they are or are unsure.

Key points:

- Among likely voters who do not think Mormons are Christians or are unsure (42% of the likely primary electorate), 30% back Cain, 24% support Romney, and 10% back Perry.
- Nearly seven in ten Evangelical Christians -- 68% -- do not think Mormons are Christians.

Romney Competitive with Obama...Obama Leads Perry, Cain

In a state that Obama carried narrowly in 2008, if Romney were to face off against President Barack Obama in next year's presidential election, 45% of registered voters in Florida would cast their ballot for the president while 43% would support Romney. 12% are undecided.

Obama opens up a lead when matched against Perry or Cain. When up against Cain, the president has a six percentage point lead. 47% support the president while 41% are behind Cain. 13% are undecided.

In a general election matchup with Perry, the president's advantage is eight percentage points. Here, 47% back the president compared with 39% for Perry. 13% are undecided.

Key points:

- Independent voters make the difference. There is a six percentage point gap between Obama -- 44% -- and Romney -- 38% -- among these voters. However, against Cain, 46% of independents back Obama while 36% support Cain, a difference of ten percentage points. Obama's support among independents grows further when paired against Perry. The president leads Perry 47% to 33% among independent voters, a 14 percentage point deficit for Perry.

Nearly Half Disapprove of President's Job Performance

41% of registered voters in Florida approve of the job President Obama is doing in office while nearly half -- 49% -- disapprove. One in ten -- 10% -- is unsure.

By party:

- Republican voters run true to party lines with 85% saying they disapprove of the president's job performance. However, while 69% of Democratic voters say they approve, a notable 23% report they disapprove of how Mr. Obama is doing in office.
- Independent voters divide. 45% disapprove while 40% approve.

Seven in Ten Floridians Say Nation Needs New Course...Majority Thinks Even More Bad Economic News is Ahead

70% of adults in Florida believe the country is moving in the wrong direction. One in five -- 20% -- thinks it is moving along the right track, and 9% are unsure.

When thinking about the U.S. economy, 56% of Florida residents say the worst is yet to come. 34% report the worst is over, and 9% are unsure. Similar proportions of registered voters share these views.

Key points:

- Democratic voters in Florida divide about the future of the U.S. economy. 45% believe more bad days are ahead while the same proportion -- 45% -- thinks the

worst is over. Almost six in ten independent voters -- 59% -- expect tougher economic times ahead. 70% of Republican voters say the same.