



**NBC News/Marist Poll:
Romney and Santorum Neck and Neck in Michigan**

*** 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:

In the race for the Republican nomination in Michigan, Mitt Romney -- 37% -- and Rick Santorum -- 35% -- are in a tight battle among likely Republican primary voters including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted absentee in the state.

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

- 37% for Mitt Romney
- 35% for Rick Santorum
- 13% for Ron Paul
- 8% for Newt Gingrich
- 2% uncommitted
- 1% other
- 4% are undecided

“Santorum’s appeal is on social issues, and he is seen as the true conservative,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Romney’s strong suit is electability, and most voters think he will be the nominee.”

Key points:

- Among those who already voted **absentee** in Michigan, Romney leads Santorum, 49% to 26%.

- Romney -- 42% -- is ahead of Santorum -- 34% -- among likely voters who are **Republican**, but the contest is competitive among those who are **independents**. Among these voters, 34% support Romney while the same proportion -- 34% -- is for Santorum. There are too few **Democrats** for analysis purposes.
- Among those who are **Tea Party supporters**, Santorum leads 48% to 29% for Romney. However, Romney -- 45% -- is ahead of Santorum -- 24% -- among those who are **not Tea Party supporters**.
- Santorum -- 59% -- outpaces Romney -- 20% -- among likely Republican primary voters in Michigan who are **very conservative**.
- Santorum receives nearly half -- 48% -- of **Evangelical Christians**. Among this group, Romney has 27%.
- Looking at **income**, both Santorum and Romney receive the support of 36% of likely Republican primary voters who earn **less than \$75,000 annually**. However, Romney has a slight edge among those who earn **\$75,000 or more**. He garners 41% to 36% for Santorum.

More Than Six in Ten Strongly Committed to Choice of Candidate in Michigan

61% of likely Republican primary voters in Michigan say they are firmly committed to their choice of candidate. 26% are somewhat behind their pick while 12% might vote differently. One percent is unsure.

Key points:

- 61% of **Santorum's backers** are firmly committed to their candidate. This compares with 59% of **those who are for Romney**.

Second Best

25% of Michigan's likely Republican primary voters report Santorum is their fallback candidate while 24% say the same about Gingrich. Romney is the second choice of 22% while 17% say Paul is their reserve candidate. 12% are undecided.

If Gingrich were to drop his bid for the nomination, Romney -- 41% -- and Santorum -- 39% - - would still face a fierce competition in Michigan. When asked who their second choice candidate is, 44% of Gingrich's supporters select Santorum while 31% choose Romney.

Nearly Six in Ten Expect Romney to Win Nomination

59% of likely Republican primary voters in Michigan believe Romney will secure the GOP nomination. 21% report Santorum will be victorious while 4% have this view of Gingrich. Just 3% think Paul will win the Republican nomination while 1% says none of the candidates will be chosen. 12% are undecided.

Key points:

- 87% of **Romney's supporters**, 57% of **Paul's backers**, and 45% of **those who are behind Gingrich** believe Romney will be the eventual Republican nominee. However, a plurality of **Santorum's supporters** -- 44% -- expect their candidate to clinch the nomination.

Little Consensus About Key Candidate Quality

When it comes to what likely Republican primary voters are looking for in a candidate, 29% want someone who shares their values. 27% think it's most important for a candidate to be close to them on the issues while 26% put electability at the top of their list. The experience to govern is the key quality for 14% of likely Republican primary voters in Michigan, and 4% are unsure.

Key points:

- Santorum -- 48% -- leads Romney -- 25% -- among those who want a candidate who **shares their values**.
- Romney -- 37% -- is ahead of Santorum -- 28% -- among likely Republican primary voters who want a candidate who has the same **positions on the issues**.
- Romney -- 44% -- also has the advantage among those who think **electability** is the most important quality. Among these likely Republican primary voters, Santorum receives the support of 35%.
- Among those who want a candidate with **experience**, Romney receives 54% to 24% for Santorum.

Electability Outweighs Conservatism

Do likely Republican primary voters in Michigan want a nominee who is a true conservative or one who has the best chance to defeat President Obama? 52% emphasize electability while 39% prefer a true conservative. Nine percent are unsure.

Who is the true conservative in the race? 40% give Santorum that title compared with 16% for Paul, 16% for Romney, and 11% for Gingrich. Five percent report none of the candidates are a true conservative, and 11% are undecided.

Santorum is also thought by 34% of likely Republican primary voters in Michigan as the candidate who best represents their views on social issues. 21% have this impression of Romney followed by Paul and Gingrich with 14% and 8%, respectively. Seven percent think none of the candidates is an adequate reflection of their views, and 16% are undecided.

When it comes to electability, 51% perceive Romney to be the candidate who has the best electoral chances. 24% have this view of Santorum while 8% and 4%, respectively, say

Gingrich and Paul are the most capable of defeating the president in the fall. Four percent don't think any of the candidates have this ability, and 9% are undecided.

Romney's Roots Have Little Impact...Half Think Auto Bailout Bad Idea

Although Romney was born and raised in Michigan, just 10% of likely Republican primary voters in the state report Romney's birthplace makes them more likely to vote for him while 2% say it makes them less likely to support him. In fact, 88% say it makes no difference to their vote.

When it comes to the auto bailout, 50% of likely Republican primary voters in Michigan think it was a bad idea while 42% say it was a good one. Eight percent are unsure.

Debates Matter

Likely Republican primary voters in Michigan have been paying attention to the candidates' debate performances. 57% say the debates have affected their vote to, at least, some extent while 43% report the debates have had little influence or no impact at all on their vote.

Nearly Identical Acceptability for Santorum and Romney

54% of likely Republican primary voters in Michigan believe Santorum is an acceptable choice for the Republican nomination. 27% think he is acceptable but with reservations, and 14% report he is an unacceptable pick. Four percent are unsure.

Looking at Romney's acceptability, 53% say he is a good fit for the nomination while 30% agree but with hesitation. 15% think he is wrong for the role, and 2% are unsure.

Gingrich is viewed as less acceptable. Just 29% believe Gingrich fits the bill while 30% think he is acceptable, but they have concerns. 38% think he is not an acceptable choice for the GOP nomination, and 3% are unsure.

Paul is the least acceptable candidate. Only 28% say Paul is a satisfactory choice. 26% agree but are hesitant while 42% think Paul is not an acceptable selection. Four percent are unsure.

Majority Satisfied with Field of Candidates

55% of likely Republican primary voters in Michigan are satisfied with the current field of candidates while 41% would like to see someone else run. Four percent are unsure.

56% Believe Mormons are Christians

Do likely Republican primary voters in Michigan believe a Mormon is a Christian? 56% do while 44% do not or are unsure.

Key points:

- Among likely Republican primary voters who say a **Mormon is a Christian**, Romney leads Santorum, 45% to 28%. Among those who report a **Mormon is not a Christian or are unsure**, Santorum -- 44% -- has the advantage over Romney -- 26%.

Obama Outpaces Potential Challengers in General Election Matchups

Looking ahead to November's general election, President Obama leads his closest competitor, Mitt Romney, by 18 percentage points among Michigan's registered voters.

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

- 51% of registered voters back Obama while 33% are for **Romney**. 15% are undecided.
- President Obama -- 53% -- leads **Paul** -- 31% -- by 22 percentage points. 16% are undecided.
- Against **Santorum**, Obama receives 55% to 29% for Santorum. 16% are undecided.
- In a contest with **Gingrich**, the president has the support of 56% to 28% for Gingrich. 16% are undecided.

"Michigan voters think the auto industry bailout was a good idea, and many credit President Obama for its recovery," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "Add to that their positive outlook on the economy, it's not surprising that President Obama is doing so well in Michigan."

Obama Given Credit for Auto Industry Recovery...Job Approval Rating at 51%

The U.S. auto industry is showing signs of improvement, but do registered voters in Michigan attribute that recovery to President Obama? 58% believe he deserves either a great deal or a good amount of credit for the turnaround. Included here are 24% who report he should receive a great deal of the kudos and 34% who think he deserves a good amount of the credit. However, 37% say the president should receive little or no credit for the recovery. This includes 22% who believe the president deserves little recognition and 15% who report he should receive none at all. Four percent are unsure.

Key points:

- Among **Democrats** in Michigan, most -- 87% -- give Obama at least some of the credit for the auto industry's recovery while just 23% of **Republicans** share this view. Among **independent voters**, a majority -- 53% -- say the president deserves at least a good amount of recognition.

When it comes to the bailout of the industry, 63% of Michigan's registered voters believe it was a good idea, including 61% of independents. 28% believe the bailout was a bad idea. Nine percent are unsure.

Looking at President Obama's job approval rating, 51% of registered voters in Michigan approve of the job he is doing in office while 38% do not, and 11% are unsure.

Majority Optimistic About Future of the U.S. Economy

55% of Michigan's registered voters believe the worst of the nation's economic conditions are over while 37% think there is more bad economic news ahead. Eight percent are unsure.

Stabenow Leads Hoekstra in Hypothetical Senate Race

If former U.S. Representative Pete Hoekstra becomes the Republican nominee for U.S. Senate, how would he fare against Democratic incumbent Debbie Stabenow? In this hypothetical contest, 53% back Stabenow while 32% are for Hoekstra. 15% are undecided.