



**NBC News/Marist Poll:  
Romney with Early Lead in NH Among Likely GOP Primary Voters**

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

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

With the New Hampshire Republican Presidential Primary just months away, Mitt Romney outpaces his GOP rivals in the Granite State.

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

- 44% for Mitt Romney
- 13% for Herman Cain
- 13% for Ron Paul
- 6% for Rick Perry
- 5% for Jon Huntsman
- 4% for Newt Gingrich
- 2% for Michele Bachmann
- 1% for Rick Santorum
- 1% for Gary Johnson
- 11% are undecided

“It’s a fluid contest and there’s still a long way to go, but Mitt Romney is enjoying somewhat of a home field advantage in neighboring New Hampshire,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “It will take a major change to dislodge him from the top position in this first-in-the-nation primary.”

When **those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate** are factored into the equation, there is little change. 45% of likely Republican primary voters including leaners back Romney. 13% support Cain while the same proportion -- 13% -- is behind Paul. Perry garners 7% while Huntsman receives 5% of the vote, and 3% pick Bachmann. Santorum and Johnson each receives 1%, and 8% are undecided.

The **potential Republican electorate** in New Hampshire, that is, all Republicans and those independents who plan to vote in the primary, shows a similar story. Romney leads with 43% followed by Paul with 14% and Cain with 12%. Perry receives 7% of the potential Republican electorate while 5% are for Huntsman. Three percent back Gingrich, 2% support Bachmann, and Santorum and Johnson each receive 1% of the vote. 12% are undecided.

**Key points:**

- **Among likely Republican primary voters who support the Tea Party**, 37% are behind Romney, 20% are for Cain, and 13% back Paul. Perry receives the support of 6% of these voters.
- 30% of **likely Republican primary voters who strongly support the Tea Party** back Cain. 28% are behind Romney.
- A majority of **likely primary voters who plan on voting in the GOP primary for the first time** -- 51% -- favor Romney.

**Likely Voters Lukewarm Toward Candidate of Choice**

Just 38% of likely Republican primary voters in New Hampshire say they strongly support their choice of candidate, including 44% of likely voters who are Tea Party supporters. 35% report they are somewhat committed to their pick while 26% believe they might vote differently. One percent is unsure.

**Key points:**

- 46% of likely Republican primary voters who support Paul and 45% who back Romney are firmly in their respective candidate's corner. 33% of those who are behind Cain report the same about their pick.

**Issues, Values Matter Most to Granite State Likely Republican Primary Voters**

When it comes to deciding upon a candidate, 30% of likely Republican primary voters say someone who is closest to them on the issues is the key. 28% report shared values is the most important quality in a candidate. More than one in five -- 22% -- think the experience to govern is the quality they would most like to see while 19% emphasize someone who can defeat President Barack Obama in the general election. Two percent are unsure.

**Key points:**

- More than six in ten likely Republican primary voters who think experience is key -- 63% -- support Romney. 48% of those who want a candidate who has the potential to defeat the president also throw their support behind Romney.
- Although his support isn't as strong, Romney also leads among those who view a candidate's stand on the issues to be the most important attribute in a candidate -- 38% -- and among those who prefer a candidate who shares their values -- 35%.

## **From the Primary to the General...Romney Leads Obama, but Prez tops Perry**

If Romney were to face off against President Obama in next year's general election, nearly half of registered voters in New Hampshire -- 49% -- say they would support Romney. Four in ten -- 40% -- report they would back the president, and 11% are undecided. In 2008, Obama won New Hampshire by nine percentage points over John McCain.

However, it's a different story if Perry challenges the president. In this hypothetical contest, the president leads 46% to Perry's 40%. 14% are undecided.

### **Key points:**

- Independent voters are the key. Romney receives the backing of 46% of independent voters. Perry, however, is supported by just 35% of these voters.

## **Obama Approval Rating at 38%...Nearly Three in Four Say Nation is Moving in Wrong Direction**

Just 38% of registered voters in New Hampshire approve of the job President Barack Obama is doing in office while a majority -- 53% -- disapproves. Nine percent are unsure.

### **By party:**

- Opinions divide along party lines with 73% of Democrats saying they approve of the president's job performance and 86% of Republicans reporting they disapprove. 51% of independents are dissatisfied with how the president is doing in office.

Almost three quarters of New Hampshire adults -- 73% -- think the country is moving in the wrong direction while 19% believe it is travelling along the right path. Eight percent are unsure.