

Franklin Pierce College / WBZ Poll

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Democratic Presidential Primary

RINDGE, NH – With just over half a year before the much anticipated 2008 New Hampshire Presidential Primary, Senator Hillary Clinton has opened a much larger lead over her Democratic rivals following Sunday night's debate. In March, Clinton (32%) held a 7-point lead over her closest challenger, Senator Barack Obama (25%). Today, Clinton commands a much larger lead, attracting the support of 38 percent of Democratic primary voters, while Obama's support has dropped to 16 percent. Former Senator John Edwards has also slipped somewhat in the most recent poll, dropping from 16 to 13 percent of the vote.

Overview

The findings outlined in this report are based on the latest Franklin Pierce College / WBZ Poll, conducted by RKM Research and Communication in collaboration with faculty and student interviewers at Franklin Pierce College. The Franklin Pierce College / WBZ Poll is sponsored by Franklin Pierce College and WBZ. The project represents a collaboration that provides Franklin Pierce College students unique learning opportunities to participate in the polling process and gain real-world experience working with an independent marketing research firm.

Methodology

The poll is based on interviews with 424 likely Democratic Presidential Primary voters. All respondents interviewed in this study were part of a fully representative sample. The survey was administered by telephone, June 4, 2007. The survey of 424 respondents has a maximum margin of sampling error +/- 4.8%.

Are Democratic primary voters paying attention?

The answer to this question appears to be an unqualified “yes.” Although early in the primary process, New Hampshire’s Democratic primary voters are paying attention to the race. When asked how closely they have followed the 2008 presidential race, 40 percent of Democratic primary voters said that they are following the race *very closely*, and an additional 50 percent said that they are following the race *somewhat closely*. Only 9 percent of likely Democratic primary voters said that they have *not followed the race that closely*.

Democratic primary voters were also asked if they watched the debate among Democratic presidential hopefuls held on Sunday evening, June 3rd - or if they have read, seen or heard any news stories about the debate.

How many voters watched the debate?

	Exposure to Debate
Watched debate ONLY	29%
BOTH—Watched debate and read, saw or heard news stories	23%
Read, saw or heard stories about the debate in the news	33%
Neither	16%

Overall, many Democratic primary voters (52%) watched the debate (which includes those who watched the debate *only* and those who watched the debate *and* recall reading, hearing or seeing stories about the debate in the news). An additional one-third of Democratic primary voters (33%) recall reading, hearing or seeing stories about the debate in the news (but did not watch the debate), and only 16 percent did not watch the debate nor read, see or hear any stories about the debate in the news.

Who won the debate?

Among Democratic primary voters who watched the debate, or have read, seen or heard stories about the debate in the news, nearly one-half (45%) said that Clinton won the debate, or performed better than the other candidates in the debate. Only 8 percent of Democratic primary voters said that Obama won the debate. Nor did many Democratic primary voters say that Edwards won the debate (4%), or outperformed the other candidates.

Which Democratic candidate won the debate?

	<i>Overall</i>
Hillary Clinton	45%
Barack Obama	8%
John Edwards	4%
Al Gore	0%
Bill Richardson	3%
Dennis Kucinich	1%*
Joe Biden	3%
Wesley Clark	0%
Chris Dodd	1%*
Mike Gravel	0%
Al Sharpton	0%
Unsure	37%

*=Less than 1%

Hillary Clinton won the debate, and attracted the most positive media coverage.

Hillary Clinton benefited by: 1) how voters perceived her performance in the debate; and 2) by the way her performance was interpreted by the news media.

Among Democratic primary voters who watched the debate, and were not exposed to any news coverage, Clinton is perceived to have won the debate by 47 percent of viewers. Obama is perceived to have won the debate by only 11 percent of viewers, followed by Edwards (6%), Former Governor Bill Richardson (4%) and Senator Joe Biden (3%).

It is interesting to note that perceptions that Clinton won the debate are strongest among Democratic primary voters who watched the debate AND read, saw or heard news stories about the debate in the media. Among these voters, nearly two-thirds (60%) said that Clinton outperformed her rivals. These results suggest that not only did Clinton perform well in the debate as viewed by voters, but also attracted the most positive coverage of the debate among the news media.

Which Democratic candidate won the debate?

	<i>Watched Debate Only</i>	<i>News Media Only</i>	<i>BOTH</i>
Hillary Clinton	47%	32%	60%
Barack Obama	11%	5%	7%
John Edwards	6%	3%	3%
Bill Richardson	4%	2%	1%
Joe Biden	3%	3%	2%
Undecided	27%	53%	27%

It is also useful to look only at Democratic primary voters exposed to media coverage of the debate, but who did not watch the debate themselves. Among these more passive voters, perceptions that Clinton won the debate (32%) far outpace perceptions that Obama (5%) or Edwards (4%) won. Again, these results appear to suggest that Clinton received the most positive coverage in the media following the debate.

Clinton has opened a wider margin among Democratic primary voters.

Clinton's strong showing in the debate has helped her widen her lead in the race for the New Hampshire Democratic presidential nomination. If the Democratic presidential primary were held today, Clinton would receive 38 percent of the vote, compared to 16 percent for Obama and 13 percent for Edwards. As shown in the table below, Clinton's support has increased from 32 to 38 percent in the past three months, while Obama's support has dropped from 25 to 16 percent. Edwards has also lost a couple of points, dropping from 16 to 13 percent over time.

Interestingly, Richardson is the only second-tier candidate who has moved significantly upward between March, 2007 (3%) and today (8%). Biden has also moved up, but to a lesser extent, from 1 to 4 percent.

If the Democratic presidential primary election were held today, who would you vote for?

	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
Hillary Clinton	38%	32%
Barack Obama	16%	25%
John Edwards	13%	16%
Al Gore	8%	10%
Bill Richardson	8%	3%
Dennis Kucinich	2%	2%
Joe Biden	4%	1%
Wesley Clark	1%	1%
Chris Dodd	1%	1%*
Mike Gravel	0%	0%
Al Sharpton	0%	0%
Undecided	10%	9%

*=Less than 1%

Without Gore in the race, Clinton's lead over her rivals widens even further.

As of today, Al Gore has not announced his intention to run in the 2008 Democratic Presidential Primary. Without him in the race, Clinton would extend her lead, receiving 41 percent of the vote. Obama would come in a more distant second, with 17 percent of the vote, followed closely by John Edwards (15%). These results provide additional evidence that Clinton's campaign currently has the most momentum in the race.

If the Democratic presidential primary election were held today, who would you vote for?

	Gore in the race	Gore NOT in the race
Clinton	38%	41%
Obama	16%	17%
Edwards	13%	15%
Richardson	8%	8
Undecided	10%	11%

The debate has affected the favorability ratings of certain candidates, but not others.

It is also interesting to track each candidate's favorability rating in order to better understand how the contest is shaping up over time. In March, Obama had the highest favorable rating (78%) and the lowest unfavorable rating (11%), giving him a net favorability rating of 67 percent. Since that time, Clinton's favorability rating has surged to 85 percent (up from 74%), and her unfavorability rating has dropped from 19 to 12 percent. The results outlined below indicate that Clinton, Obama, Edwards and former presidential candidate Al Gore each have a very high net favorability rating. Richardson's net favorability rating has also improved, from 17 to 41 percent in the past three months.

Do you have a somewhat or very favorable opinion of ... ?

	June 4, 2007			March 17, 2007		
	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Net Favorability</i>
Clinton	85%	12%	73%	74%	19%	55%
Obama	85%	11%	74%	78%	11%	67%
Edwards	80%	15%	65%	78%	12%	66%
Gore	79%	16%	63%	75%	18%	57%
Richardson	57%	16%	41%	29%	12%	17%
Kucinich	36%	39%	-3%	25%	29%	-4%
Biden	56%	25%	31%	38%	28%	10%
Clark	30%	32%	-2%	39%	25%	14%
Dodd	45%	24%	21%	24%	21%	3%
Gravel	9%	22%	-13%	2%	5%	-3%
Sharpton	9%	76%	-67%	17%	55%	-38%

The debate appears to have created an opportunity for a few second tier candidates to improve their standing with voters.

While Clinton is perceived as the clear winner of the debate, the debate has not eroded the prospects for Obama or Edwards. In fact, both candidates have improved their favorability with Democratic voters over time, suggesting that ample opportunity still exists for both candidates' to resurrect their currently faltering campaigns and make the race more competitive.

Do you have a somewhat or very favorable opinion of ... ?

	Watched the debate		Did not watch or hear news stories about the debate	
	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>
Clinton	86%	11%	86%	13%
Obama	87%	10%	79%	14%
Edwards	83%	13%	82%	15%
Richardson	68%	17%	30%	21%
Kucinich	43%	39%	32%	34%
Biden	68%	20%	45%	25%
Dodd	56%	23%	25%	34%
Gravel	14%	34%	4%	11%

According to R. Kelly Myers, “the political fortunes of Obama and Edwards appear to have stalled in the past couple of months, and were not dramatically improved by the debate. However, both candidates – as well as a few previous second-tier candidates – appear to be improving their relative position, which suggests that the race is likely to tighten over time. Clinton has improved her position among Democratic primary voters, but the other front-runners remain viable candidates in the race. There is plenty of time and opportunity for Obama, Edwards and others to make this race much more competitive.”

Clinton has improved perceptions of her leadership abilities and her electability.

Respondents were asked the reasons why they would vote for their first choice candidate. The results are shown below for the top three Democratic candidates.

Which of the following best describes why you would vote for ... ?

	Clinton		Obama		Edwards	
	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>
Electability	11%	4%	4%	5%	11%	11%
Position on issues	35%	43%	41%	39%	51%	59%
Best experience	23%	23%	2%	0%	1%	8%
Leadership qualities	22%	17%	24%	19%	13%	5%
Character	3%	7%	25%	33%	21%	16%

Clinton voters are drawn to her candidacy based on her position on the issues (35%), and increasingly on her electability. She has also move forward in terms of being perceived as having the best leadership qualities.

Obama, on the other hand, has lost ground in some areas where he enjoyed a relative advantage in the last poll. Specifically, he has lost ground in terms of being perceived as having the right character for the job.

Variations in Support

The following table shows variations in support for the Democratic candidates compared over time.

	Clinton (38% today)		Obama (16% today)		Edwards (13% today)	
	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>	<i>June 4, 2007</i>	<i>March 13, 2007</i>
Party Registration						
<i>Democrats</i>	54	57	52	45	64	56
<i>Independents</i>	46	43	48	55	36	44
Ideology						
<i>Liberal</i>	44	28	44	38	38	44
<i>Moderate</i>	47	56	47	54	45	41
<i>Conservative</i>	9	16	9	8	17	15
Gender						
<i>Male</i>	41	44	44	50	45	50
<i>Female</i>	59	56	56	50	55	50
Age						
<i>18-34</i>	4	14	13	18	6	5
<i>35-54</i>	32	40	37	34	53	42
<i>55-64</i>	30	22	30	27	26	32
<i>65+</i>	34	24	20	21	15	21
Annual Income						
<i><\$35K</i>	19	23	9	14	11	19
<i>\$35-50K</i>	15	19	17	13	16	14
<i>\$50-75K</i>	20	24	22	32	22	28
<i>\$75-100K</i>	21	16	24	18	22	27
<i>>\$100K</i>	25	18	28	23	29	12
Labor Union						
<i>Yes</i>	23	19	22	24	12	29
<i>No</i>	77	81	78	76	88	71

Perhaps the most striking finding is that Clinton has dramatically improved her position among self-identified liberal Democratic primary voters, attracting 44 percent today compared to 28 percent in March. Edwards, on the other hand, has lost a little support among self-identified liberals. Currently, many of the state's self-identified moderates and conservatives have moved toward Biden's candidacy, and/or remain relatively divided among the other top tier candidates.

The underlying intangible momentum in this race is working to Clinton' advantage, but could change quickly.

The New Hampshire presidential primary is ultimately an expectations game, whereby candidates are judged not merely by how they fare in the primary election, but how they fare relative to how they were expected to fare.

When asked which candidate they think will ultimately win the Democratic nomination, 48 percent of identified Clinton, up from 38 percent in March. Obama, on the other hand, has dropped among Democratic primary voters from 18 percent in March to 13 percent today. According to Myers, "this difference is an important indication about how Democratic primary voters think the race will eventually turn out, and it will be useful to continue to track each candidate's perceived momentum as the presidential primary approaches."

Which candidate do you think will end-up winning the Democratic nomination?

	June 4, 2007	March 13, 2007
Hillary Clinton	48%	38%
Barack Obama	13%	18%
John Edwards	5%	7%
Al Gore	3%	4%
Bill Richardson	1%	1%
Joe Biden	1%	1%*
Chris Dodd	1%*	0%*
Dennis Kucinich	0%	1%*
Wesley Clark	0%	0%
Mike Gravel	0%	0%
Al Sharpton	0%	0%
Undecided	30%	33%

*=Less than 1%

According to Myers, "what is interesting today is how far ahead Clinton has pulled in just three months. This appears to be due to the coverage she has received based on her national fund-raising and strong campaigning, her performance in last night's debate and the perception that she will ultimately win the Democratic nomination. In March, for example, only 35 percent of Democratic primary voters thought that Clinton would end-up winning the Democratic nomination, compared to 26 percent for Obama. Today, 48 percent of voters think that Clinton will ultimately win the nomination, compared to 13 percent who think Obama will. These results suggest that an ever-increasing number of Democratic voters believe in the inevitability of her nomination. With so much time left to go in the campaign, it remains uncertain whether Clinton will be able to maintain what clearly appears to be some early momentum relative to her closest rivals. The results from our poll suggest that Clinton's primary advantage right now is the perception that she will win the nomination. With several other candidates still occupying a strong position with voters, and other candidates still on the rise, there is every indication that opportunities exist for other candidates to chip away at Clinton's lead over time."

