

# Franklin Pierce College / WBZ-TV Poll



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By: R. Kelly Myers  
Senior Fellow  
Franklin Pierce College



President and Chief Analyst  
RKM Research and Communications

603.433.3982

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## Democratic Presidential Primary

**RINDGE, NH** - With nearly a year before the much anticipated 2008 New Hampshire Presidential Primary, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama are the early front-runners among likely Democratic Primary voters, with John Edwards in a competitive third place. Apart from Al Gore - who has not stated his intention to run for the Democratic nomination - all of the other candidates currently attract little support.

### Overview

The findings outlined in this report are based on the latest Franklin Pierce College / WBZ-TV Poll, conducted by RKM Research and Communication in collaboration with faculty and staff at Franklin Pierce College. Students from the Fitzwater Center for Communication at Franklin Pierce College will also be involved in subsequent polls. The Franklin Pierce College / WBZ-TV Poll is sponsored by Franklin Pierce College and WBZ-TV. 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.

The poll is based on interviews with 401 likely Democratic Presidential Primary voters. All respondents interviewed in this study were part of a fully representative sample. The survey was administered by telephone, March 7-11, 2007. The survey of 401 respondents has a maximum margin of sampling error + 4.9%.

## Candidate Favorability Ratings

New York Senator Hillary Clinton (74%), Illinois Senator Barack Obama, Former Vice Presidential Candidate John Edwards (78%) and Former Presidential Candidate Al Gore (75%) all have high favorability ratings.

|            | Favorable | Unfavorable | Heard of, but no opinion | Never heard of candidate |
|------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Clinton    | 74%       | 19%         | 7%                       | 0%                       |
| Obama      | 78%       | 11%         | 7%                       | 4%                       |
| Edwards    | 78%       | 12%         | 8%                       | 2%                       |
| Gore       | 75%       | 18%         | 7%                       | 0%                       |
| Richardson | 29%       | 12%         | 26%                      | 33%                      |
| Kucinich   | 25%       | 29%         | 17%                      | 29%                      |
| Biden      | 38%       | 28%         | 19%                      | 15%                      |
| Clark      | 39%       | 25%         | 20%                      | 16%                      |
| Dodd       | 24%       | 21%         | 32%                      | 23%                      |
| Gravel     | 2%        | 5%          | 12%                      | 81%                      |
| Sharpton   | 17%       | 55%         | 18%                      | 10%                      |

As shown, several candidates have relatively low name recognition. Candidates with the lowest name recognition include Mike Gravel, with 81 percent who have never heard of him, Bill Richardson, with 33 percent who have never heard of him, Dennis Kucinich, with 29 percent who have never heard of him and Chris Dodd, with 23 percent who have never heard of him.

## Net Favorability Ratings

In addition to overall favorability ratings, it is also useful to consider each candidate's net favorability, which represents the difference between each candidate's favorable and unfavorable rating.

The Democratic Presidential Primary hopeful with the highest overall favorable rating is Barack Obama, with a favorable rating of 78 percent. Obama also has a low unfavorable rating of just 11 percent, leaving him with a net favorability rating of 67 percent. John Edwards occupies a similar position, with a favorable rating of 78 percent and a unfavorable rating of 12 percent, leaving him with a net favorability rating of 66 percent.

Although the results are similar for Obama and Edwards, the data indicate that Obama may have stronger overall favorability. Forty-one percent of respondents feel very favorable toward Obama, compared to 31 percent who feel very favorable toward Edwards, and 33 percent who feel very favorable toward Clinton.

Overall favorable and unfavorable ratings are similar for Clinton and Gore, leaving them both with a net favorability rating of well-over 50 percent.

|            | Favorable | Unfavorable | Net Favorability |
|------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|
| Clinton    | 74%       | 19%         | 55%              |
| Obama      | 78%       | 11%         | 67%              |
| Edwards    | 78%       | 12%         | 66%              |
| Gore       | 75%       | 18%         | 57%              |
| Richardson | 29%       | 12%         | 17%              |
| Kucinich   | 25%       | 29%         | -4%              |
| Biden      | 38%       | 28%         | 10%              |
| Clark      | 39%       | 25%         | 14%              |
| Dodd       | 24%       | 21%         | 3%               |
| Gravel     | 2%        | 5%          | -3%              |
| Sharpton   | 17%       | 55%         | -38%             |

According to R. Kelly Myers, Senior Fellow, Fitzwater Center for Communication at Franklin Pierce College, "what is striking about the results is how many of the second-tier candidates in the race have high unfavorable ratings that virtually offset their favorable ratings. This is true for Dennis Kucinich, Joe Biden, Wesley Clark, Chris Dodd, and to a lesser extent, Mike Gravel."

## Democratic Presidential Primary

If the Democratic Presidential Primary were held today, Hillary Clinton would be in the lead, receiving 32 percent of the vote. However, Barack Obama is running a very competitive second place, attracting 25 percent of the vote. John Edwards is also polling well early in the contest, currently attracting 16 percent of the vote. Al Gore, though not an official candidate, would come in fourth place with 10 percent of the vote. Nine percent of Democratic Primary voters remain undecided.

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

\*=Less than 0.5%

Based on their overall favorability ratings, the results suggest that Edwards and Gore are both well-regarded by Democratic Primary voters, and well-positioned to improve their competitive position in the race.

According to Myers, "what is unique about the 2008 Democratic Presidential Primary is how well-defined the front-runners are so early in the race. Obama is polling much more competitively with Clinton in New Hampshire than he is nationally. Edwards is also polling competitively early in the race. Apart from Gore, who is not currently running, none of the other candidates who are running today appear to be in a position to close the gap anytime soon and make gains against the current front-runners."

## Variations in Candidate Preference

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

|                      | Clinton | Obama | Edwards | Gore |
|----------------------|---------|-------|---------|------|
| Electability         | 4%      | 5%    | 11%     | 2%   |
| Position on issues   | 43%     | 39%   | 59%     | 59%  |
| Best experience      | 23%     | 0%    | 8%      | 24%  |
| Leadership qualities | 17%     | 19%   | 5%      | 7%   |
| Character            | 7%      | 33%   | 16%     | 8%   |

Clinton voters are drawn to her candidacy based on her position on the issues (43%), her political experience (23%), and to some extent, her leadership qualities (17%). More so than any other candidate, many of Obama's voters think he has the strongest personal character (33%). He also stands out in terms of perceived strong leadership qualities (19%). None of his supporters cite his political experience (0%) as a reason for supporting his candidacy, though many cite his position on the issues (39%).

Edwards and Gore voters overwhelmingly cite each candidates' position on the issues that are important to them as primary reasons for supporting their candidacies.

Interestingly, electability (i.e., the ability to win the general election in 2008) is not currently an issue for any of the candidates except Edwards who has a small advantage.

## Variations in Support

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

|                                 | Clinton (32%) | Obama (25%) | Edwards (16%) |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| <b>Party Registration</b>       |               |             |               |
| <i>Democrats</i>                | 57            | 45          | 56            |
| <i>Independents</i>             | 43            | 55          | 44            |
| <b>Ideology</b>                 |               |             |               |
| <i>Liberal</i>                  | 28            | 38          | 44            |
| <i>Moderate</i>                 | 56            | 54          | 41            |
| <i>Conservative</i>             | 16            | 8           | 15            |
| <b>Gender</b>                   |               |             |               |
| <i>Male</i>                     | 44            | 50          | 50            |
| <i>Female</i>                   | 56            | 50          | 50            |
| <b>Age</b>                      |               |             |               |
| <i>18-34</i>                    | 14            | 18          | 5             |
| <i>35-54</i>                    | 40            | 34          | 42            |
| <i>55-64</i>                    | 22            | 27          | 32            |
| <i>65+</i>                      | 24            | 21          | 21            |
| <b>Annual Income</b>            |               |             |               |
| <i>&lt;\$35K</i>                | 23            | 14          | 19            |
| <i>\$35-50K</i>                 | 19            | 13          | 14            |
| <i>\$50-75K</i>                 | 24            | 32          | 28            |
| <i>\$75-100K</i>                | 16            | 18          | 27            |
| <i>&gt;\$100K</i>               | 18            | 23          | 12            |
| <b>Education</b>                |               |             |               |
| <i>HS or less</i>               | 28            | 14          | 23            |
| <i>Some college/2 yr</i>        | 30            | 16          | 30            |
| <i>Graduated college (4 yr)</i> | 25            | 34          | 23            |
| <i>Graduate School</i>          | 17            | 36          | 24            |
| <b>Labor Union</b>              |               |             |               |
| <i>Yes</i>                      | 19            | 24          | 29            |
| <i>No</i>                       | 81            | 76          | 71            |

Clinton's support is strongest among registered Democrats (57%), females (56%) and respondents in lower income households.

Obama's support is strongest among registered Independents (55%), highly educated voters, respondents in higher income households and young voters. Notably, Obama's support is stronger than Clinton's among liberals and comparatively weaker among conservatives.

Edwards' support is strongest among registered Democrats (56%), liberals (44%) and older voters. Edwards' support is stronger than Clinton's and Obama's among labor union voters.

## Democratic Presidential Nomination

Respondents were also asked which candidate they think will ultimately win the Democratic nomination. Thirty-eight percent of respondents believe that Clinton will ultimately receive the Democratic nomination, and 18 percent believe that Obama will receive the nomination. Thus, while the race is quite competitive today, with Clinton leading by only 7-points, there is a 20-point difference in the perception of which candidate voters think will ultimately win the Democratic nomination. According to Myers, "this difference is an early indication about how Democratic Primary Voters think the race will eventually turn out, and it will be interesting to track changes in perceived momentum as we get closer to the Primary."

Only seven percent of respondents said that Edwards will receive the nomination and four percent of respondents said that Gore will receive the nomination. Due to the length of time between now and the Democratic Presidential Primary, it is not surprising that one-third of respondents (33%) are unsure who will win.

## Changes in the Democratic Contest

Because it is early in the race and a lot could change over the course of the next year, it is useful to consider how the race might be different if any of the major candidates were not in the race. These results are shown below.

|           | Clinton not in<br>the race | Obama not in<br>the race | Edwards not<br>in the race | Gore not in<br>the race |
|-----------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Clinton   | -                          | 40%                      | 36%                        | 35%                     |
| Obama     | 37%                        | -                        | 31%                        | 26%                     |
| Edwards   | 22%                        | 22%                      | -                          | 18%                     |
| Gore      | 16%                        | 13%                      | 12%                        | -                       |
| Undecided | 13%                        | 12%                      | 11%                        | 12%                     |

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 35 percent of the vote. Obama would come in second, with 26 percent of the vote and John Edwards would come in third, with 18 percent of the vote. Twelve percent of respondents are unsure how they would vote. Without Gore in the race, Clinton has a slightly larger lead over Obama (9-points rather than 7-points).

Interestingly, the results suggest that Edwards is attracting voters that might otherwise support Obama. Without Edwards in the race, there is only a 5-point difference between Clinton (36%) and Obama (31%).