

March 31, 2008

Dems, Reps Agree: Obama Tougher Opponent for McCain

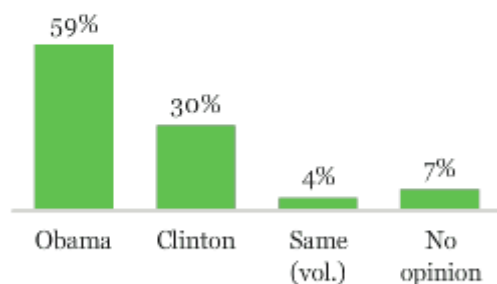
Perceived as having better chance than Clinton of winning in November

by Jeffrey M. Jones

PRINCETON, NJ -- A new Gallup Panel survey finds a majority of both Republicans and Democrats saying Barack Obama has a better chance than Hillary Clinton of defeating Republican John McCain in the November presidential election.

In your view, would Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama have a better chance of defeating John McCain in the presidential election in November?

Asked of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents

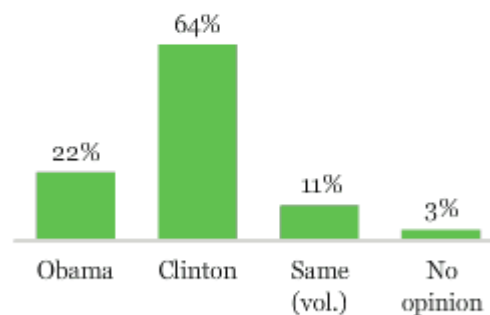


March 24-27, 2008
(vol.) = Volunteered response

GALLUP POLL

In your view, would John McCain have a better chance of defeating Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama in the presidential election in November?

Asked of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents



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GALLUP POLL

The survey was conducted March 24-27, interviewing a nationally representative sample of 1,005 Gallup Panel members. Democrats were asked whether Clinton or Obama has the better chance of defeating McCain in November: 59% say Obama does; 30% say Clinton. Republicans were asked whether McCain has a better chance of defeating Clinton or Obama on Election Day. Sixty-four percent say McCain has a better chance of beating Clinton, compared with only 22% choosing Obama, meaning Republicans view Obama as the more formidable candidate.

Gallup polling has recently shown some positive momentum for Obama in the Democratic nomination battle -- he has moved into the lead over Clinton in the preferences of Democratic voters nationwide. Both candidates are competitive with McCain in Gallup's latest polling on registered voters' general election preferences, though Obama has tended to do marginally better than Clinton [in the more recent updates](#).

Last Friday, Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy became the most prominent Democrat to call on Clinton to drop out of the race. Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean did not go that far, but urged the Democratic

superdelegates to decide by July 1 so the nominee is known well before the late August convention. Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen has made a pitch for superdelegates to hold their own mini-convention in June to determine the nominee.

Those calls have been made out of concern that the increasingly contentious nomination battle will hurt the party's chances in November. Most rank-and-file Democrats seem to agree, according to the Gallup Panel survey results. When asked about the effects of the continuing Democratic nomination campaign on the party's general election chances, 56% of Democrats say it is doing "more harm than good," while 35% think it is doing "more good than harm."

As would be expected, most Democrats who favor Obama for the nomination believe the ongoing campaign is doing more to hurt (61%) than to aid (32%) the party's chances of winning in November. But Clinton supporters also tend to believe this -- 48% say the continuing campaign is doing more harm than good, while 40% say it is doing more good than harm.

Implications

Clearly at this point, the party rank-and-file thinks Obama would present a stronger challenge to McCain in the fall than Clinton would. Those attitudes could certainly change over the remainder of the campaign, but it is notable that Obama maintains a wide lead in these perceptions shortly after the Jeremiah Wright controversy knocked his campaign off stride.

Also, the poll shows there is a fairly widely held belief among party supporters -- including a plurality of Clinton supporters -- that the ongoing campaign is hurting their chances of winning in November. It seems unlikely those attitudes would improve much going forward, particularly if the tone of the Democratic campaign remains negative. If so, then it is likely there would be further calls for Clinton to drop out of the race, and that would put more pressure on her to do well in the Pennsylvania primary on April 22 and all the contests that follow.

Survey Methods

Results for this Gallup Panel study are based on telephone interviews with 1,005 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted March 24-27, 2008. Gallup Panel members are recruited through random selection methods. The panel is weighted so that it is demographically representative of the U.S. adult population. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

For results based on the sample of 502 Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents, the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 5 percentage points.

For results based on the sample of 453 Republicans and Republican-leaning independents, the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 6 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on land-line telephones (for respondents with a land-line telephone) and cellular phones (for respondents who are cell-phone only).

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.