

Herman Cain Rises To The Top Among Republicans For The GOP Primary Win

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Mitt Romney is in second among Republicans, but makes it the tightest general election race

The debates continue and the calendar is quickly moving towards January when the first voting of the 2012 primary will take place.

Each month, the story line seems to take a new shift and this month is no exception. Among Republicans, one in five (20%) would vote for Godfather Pizza CEO Herman Cain in the GOP primary while 18% would vote for former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and 11% would vote for Texas Governor Rick Perry. Other candidates are all under 10% including Newt Gingrich (7%), Michele Bachman (4%), Ron Paul (4%), Jon Huntsman (1%), and Rick Santorum (1%). One-third of Republicans (32%), however, are still not at all sure who they would vote for in the Republican primary.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,463 adults surveyed online between October 10 and 17, 2011 by Harris Interactive.

Among Independents, 17% would vote for Herman Cain, 16% for Mitt Romney and 13% for Ron Paul with 5% voting for Rick Perry. Two in five Independents (40%) are not at all sure who they would vote for in the primary. Herman Cain jumps out to a larger lead among Conservatives, with one-quarter (26%) saying they would vote for the businessman; 14% would vote for Mitt Romney and 10% for Rick Perry. Over one-quarter of Tea Party supporters (27%) would vote for Herman Cain in the Republican primary, 17% would vote for Mitt Romney and 11% would vote for Rick Perry.

Head to head match-ups

Looking at some specific candidates versus President Obama, Mitt Romney is the closest competitor. If the presidential election were held today, 41% of Americans would vote for President Obama, 40% would vote for Mitt Romney and 18% are not at all sure. Looking at the probable swing states for 2012, 42% of people from those states would vote for Mitt Romney and 39% would vote for President Obama while 19% are not at all sure.

If Ron Paul is the eventual Republican nominee, 41% of Americans would vote for President Obama and 36% would vote for Ron Raul with one-quarter (23%) not at all sure. Among the swing states for next year it's a tie with 38% voting for President Obama and 38% voting for Ron Paul, with 23% not at all sure.

Between Rick Perry and President Obama, 45% of U.S. adults would vote for the President while 36% would vote for the Texas Governor and one in five Americans (19%) say they are not at all sure. Among Independents, more than two in five (43%) would vote for President Obama and 35% would vote for Rick Perry.

Herman Cain has made a push to the top among the Republican nominees, but in a head to head match-up, 43% of Americans would vote for President Obama and 35% would vote for Herman Cain with 22% saying they are not at all sure. Among the 2012 swing states, two in five (40%) would vote for the President while 36% would vote for Herman Cain.

So What?

For most people the months of November and December will be spent getting ready for the holidays and enjoying time with family. Not so for the Republican candidates who have a date with the Iowa caucus in very early January and a still to be determined date with the New Hampshire primary shortly thereafter. These are the weeks that will set the stage for the first contests and determine who moves on to Super Tuesday in March. Possibly by then, the general election field will be set.

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States between October 10 and 17, 2011 among 2,463 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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