

Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll

Minnesota Contests for Democratic and Republican Presidential Nominations: McCain and Clinton Ahead, Democrats Lead Republicans in Pairings

Report prepared by the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance

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According to a Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute poll conducted between January 20 and January 27, 2008, Republicans are rallying around John McCain's campaign, while Hillary Clinton holds a more narrow lead among Democrats.

McCain Advantage: McCain enjoys the support of 41 percent of Republicans followed by Mike Huckabee at 22 percent and Mitt Romney at 17 percent. Rudy Giuliani receives support from 6 percent of Republicans and Ron Paul has 5 percent of their backing. The margin of error is 5.5 for the survey of Republicans.

GOP Contest for Republican Presidential Nomination

McCain	Huckabee	Romney	Giuliani	Paul	DK / Refused
41%	22%	17%	6%	5%	10%

Number of Republican Minnesotans interviewed, 317; Margin of Error of 5.5.

Clinton Edge: Among Democrats, Clinton leads with 40 percent followed by 33 percent for Barack Obama and 12 percent for John Edwards. The margin of error is 4.5 for the survey of Democrats.

Contest for Democratic Presidential Nomination

Clinton	Obama	Edwards	Other	DK / Refused
40%	33%	12%	2%	13%

Number of Democratic Minnesotans interviewed, 478; Margin of Error, 4.5.

Further analysis below reveals:

- Clinton leads Obama and Edwards among women, older Minnesotans, and those concerned about Iraq and that the country is heading in the wrong direction.
- McCain dominates nearly every group of Republicans.
- Clinton and Obama enjoy large leads over Republican rivals in head-to-head pairings.
- The economy and jobs is the dominant concern of Minnesotans as well as Democrats and Republicans.

Details on the survey sponsored by Minnesota Public Radio and the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs are available at the end of this report.

Democratic Voters – Dueling Constituencies and Concerns

Race and Gender: Women in the Democratic Party are rallying to Clinton who receives 50 percent of their support compared to 23 percent for Obama. The Illinois Senator decisively trails Clinton among white Democrats but leads among non-whites, 54-31, who make up only 15 percent of Minnesotan Democrats and therefore are not sufficiently represented in our sample to draw firm conclusions.

	Clinton	Obama	Edwards	Other	DK / Refused
Male (42%)	27%	47%	14%	2%	10%
Female (58%)	50%	23%	10%	2%	15%
White (85%)	43%	29%	12%	2%	14%
Non-White (15%)	31%	54%	10%	0%	4%

Number of Democratic Minnesotans interviewed, 478; Margin of Error, 4.5.

Age Gap: Clinton enjoys strong support among Democrats 45 and older (especially among those 60 and over). Younger voters (30 to 44 years old) flock to Obama. (Not enough Democrats 18 to 29 were interviewed to draw reliable generalizations.)

	Clinton	Obama	Edwards	Other	DK / Refused
Age					
30-44 (35%)	31%	51%	8%	1%	9%
45-59 (26%)	41%	24%	17%	3%	14%
60 and older (27%)	56%	14%	14%	2%	15%

Number of Democratic Minnesotans interviewed, 478; Margin of Error, 4.5.

Clinton out-duels Obama among critical groups. Among the 91 percent of Democrats who believe the country is heading in the wrong direction, the New York Senator enjoys a 41-32 advantage. While Democrats who are concerned about the economy and jobs essentially split between the two Senators, Clinton has a decisive 41-27 advantage on Iraq. She also has a 7 point lead among Democrats with a great deal of interest in the election (41-34).

Source of Clinton Support among Minnesota Democrats

	Clinton	Obama	Edwards	Other	DK / Refused
Country heading in wrong direction (91%)	41%	32%	12%	2%	13%
Economy and Jobs most important problem (42%)	35%	40%	11%	1%	13%
Iraq most important problem (22%)	41%	27%	14%	2%	16%
Great deal of interest in presidential election (64%)	41%	34%	14%	2%	9%

Number of Democratic Minnesotans interviewed, 478; Margin of Error, 4.5.

Republican Voters – McCain’s dominance

McCain dominates among the most critical groups of Republican voters. On the top concern of 35 percent of Republicans (economy and jobs), the Arizona Senator enjoys a 49-20 advantage over his next rival, Mike Huckabee. McCain also leads solidly among both skeptics and optimists about the direction of the country, those with a strong interest in the election, men and women, and older voters 45 and over. (There was an insufficient number of Republicans in younger age groups to draw accurate conclusions.)

Source of McCain Support among Minnesota Republicans

	McCain	Huckabee	Romney	Other	DK / Refused
Economy and Jobs most important problem (35%)	49%	20%	8%	15%	7%
Country heading on right track (44%)	38%	24%	20%	14%	4%
Country heading in wrong direction (44%)	44%	20%	12%	15%	10%
Great deal of interest in presidential election (52%)	38%	21%	23%	11%	8%
Male (52%)	45%	16%	20%	12%	6%
Female (48%)	36%	29%	12%	14%	9%
45 + (58%)	44%	11%	19%	11%	14%

Number of Republican Minnesotans interviewed, 317; Margin of Error of 5.5.

The Horse Race: Democrats vs. Republicans

Democratic Candidates Lead Republican Rivals: Although we are about 9 months from Election Day in November, Minnesota residents heavily favor Democratic candidates over Republicans in a variety of matchups. Clinton leads by 10 points over McCain (48-38) and by considerably more over other GOP candidates; Obama enjoys similar leads. The margin of error is 4.5 percent points for the survey of 478 Minnesota residents.

Democrats lead Republicans in head-to-head match-ups among Minnesotans

	McCain	Huckabee	Romney	Giuliani
Clinton versus	48% vs 38%	55% vs 31%	55% vs 32%	56% vs 29%
Obama versus	50% vs 37%	58% vs 28%	56% vs 28%	58% vs 27%

Note: First number is the percentage for the Democrat, second number is the percentage for the Republican. Number of Minnesota residents interviewed, 478; Margin of Error, 4.5.

While McCain offers the stiffest challenge among Republicans, Clinton and Obama hold the edge among women (20 and 7 point advantages, respectively), among Minnesotans who are concerned that the country’s heading in the wrong direction (24 and 30 point advantages, respectively), and among those anxious about economy and jobs (a 15 point advantage for Obama).

	Clinton-McCain	Obama-McCain
Economy and Jobs most important problem (36%)	45% vs 43%	53% vs 38%
Health Care most important problem (17%)	50% vs 36%	50% vs 36%
Country heading in wrong direction (74%)	54% vs 30%	58% vs 28%
Preference of Women (“gender gap”)	54% vs 34%	47% vs 40%

Note: First number is the percentage for the Democrat, second number is the percentage for the Republican.
 Number of Minnesota residents interviewed, 478; Margin of Error, 4.5.

Accounting for Democratic leads. One factor that may explain the Democratic leads is that the survey sampled the general population; it did not focus on registered voters or likely voters. As the campaign shifts to the contests between the parties and likely voters, the Democratic leads may well diminish.

In addition to survey methodology, several other factors may contribute to the Democratic advantages at this early stage of the 2008 election. Democrats have a bit more “fire in the belly” than Republicans. Sixty-four percent of Democrats indicate that they have a “great deal” of interest in the presidential election compared to 52 percent of Republicans.

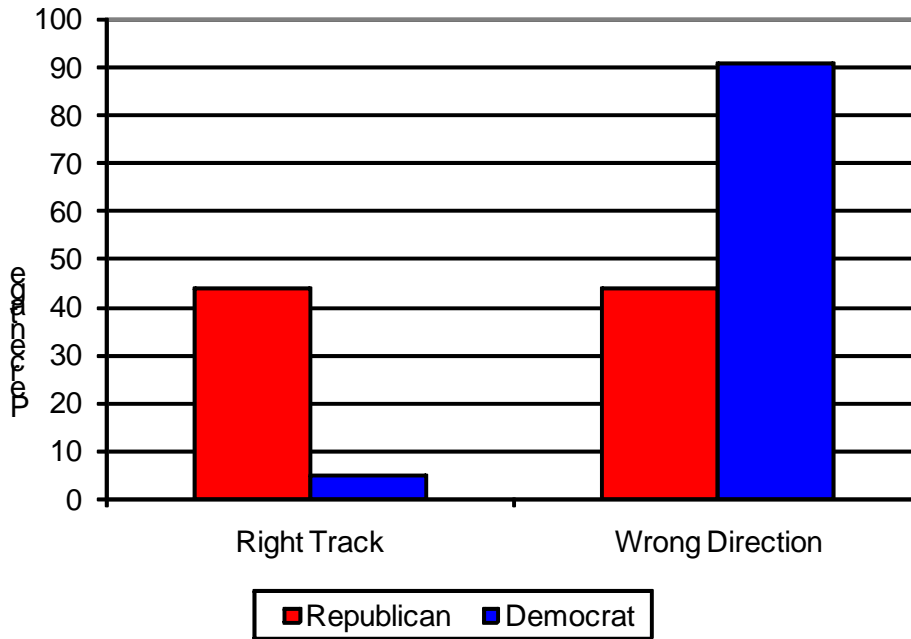
Interest in Presidential Elections

	Among Democrats	Among Republicans
A Great Deal	64%	52%
A Fair Amount	30%	41%
Only A Little	6%	7%
No Interest At All	1%	0%

Number of Minnesota residents interviewed, 478; Margin of Error, 4.5.

The higher interest among Democrats may in part stem from their concern that the country is heading in the wrong direction. While Republicans split between optimists and skeptics, 9 out of 10 of Democrats believe the country is heading in the wrong direction.

Direction of the Country



Another factor that may be driving the leads by Clinton and Obama is that the 2008 election year is starting off with Minnesotans leaning Democratic. Fifty two percent of a representative sample of Minnesotan adults identify themselves as Democratic compared to 34 percent who declare themselves Republican. This is consistent with the pattern we discovered in our last poll during October 2006.

Party identification among Minnesota Residents

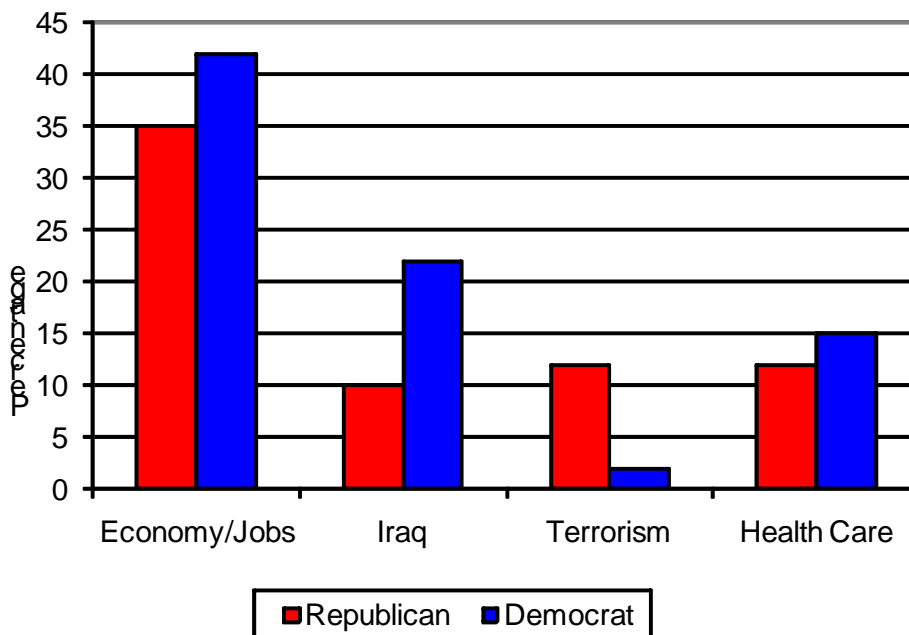
	January 2008	October 2006
Republican	34%	37%
Independent	14%	13%
Democrat	52%	48%

What Worries Minnesotans: “The Economy, Stupid.”

The economy is the dominant concern of Minnesotans, overshadowing Iraq. Thirty-six percent of all Minnesotans say that the economy and jobs is the single most important problem facing the country (35 percent among Republicans and 42 percent among Democrats).

Health care also ranks among the top concerns (14 percent). There are several notable partisan differences, though. Iraq ranks as the second most important concern of Democrats (22 percent) while less than half that percentage of Republicans (10 percent) agree. Conversely, 12 percent of Republicans consider terrorism to a top challenge while hardly any Democrats do (2 percent).

Most Important Problem Facing the Country



About the Survey

The survey is collaboration between Minnesota Public Radio and the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The survey was analyzed by the Center. The research team was Lawrence R. Jacobs (director) and Joanne M. Miller (Department of Political Science). Melanie Burns was the team's research and data analyst.

The survey was fielded by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut, which has extensive national and state experience conducting non-partisan surveys on politics and government policy. CSRA called a sample of telephone exchanges that was randomly selected by a computer from a list of active residential exchanges within the State of Minnesota. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. The sample was designed to represent different regions of the state in proportion to the number of adults living in each region. Within each household, one adult was selected to be the respondent for the survey.

The results have been weighted to reflect the number of adults in a household and the number of telephone lines reaching the household as well as the demographic characteristics of Minnesota based on region, sex, age, education, and race.

917 residents of Minnesota were interviewed by telephone between January 20 and January 27, 2008; 317 identified themselves as Republican and 478 identified themselves as Democratic. The margin of error for the full sample of Minnesota residents (917) is 3.2 percentage points, 5.5 points for the sub-sample of Republicans, and 4.5. points for the sub-sample of Democrats. In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results among Minnesota residents will differ by no more than 3.2 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all likely voters in the state. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error is larger.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.