

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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**ROMNEY CLINGING TO SLIM 3-POINT
LEAD OVER GINGRICH AMONG
CALIFORNIA REPUBLICANS IN GOP
PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY. INCREASING
PROPORTION OF VOTERS UNDECIDED.
COMMITMENTS TO CANDIDATES NOT
FIRM.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

While former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, at 26%, continues to hold the top spot in voter preferences among California Republicans in the race for the 2012 GOP presidential nomination, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich has moved up to a strong second position, with 23% of the vote.

Texas Governor Rick Perry, who was competitive with Romney in California as recently as two months ago, has fallen back, and now only obtains 3% of voter preferences. Each of the five other GOP contenders also poll in the single digits.

An increasing proportion of California Republicans (26%) are undecided. In addition, nearly eight in ten (77%) of the Republican voters who express a preference for one of the candidates say that it is still early and admit they have not made a final decision about whom they will support in next June's California presidential primary election.

These are the results of a *Field Poll* survey conducted November 15-27 among a random sample of Republican voters in California.

Preferences for Romney stable in California

Romney continues to be in first place in California in the eight-candidate GOP presidential election field, with 26% of Republican voter preferences. However, this represents a tightening of the race and a slight decline in support for the former Massachusetts Governor from two previous *Field Polls* conducted earlier this year. Gingrich, who was well back in the pack in previous measures, has vaulted to second place in the current poll, with 23%, and had displaced Perry as Romney's main challenger in the race.

Over the past two months there has been a dramatic drop-off in support for Perry. In September, he was in a strong second in California, with 22% of the preferences. Now, just 3% are supporting his candidacy.

Support for each of the other contenders is in the single-digits.

Table 1
Trend of preferences of California Republicans for the
2012 GOP presidential nomination

	Late November <u>2011</u>	September <u>2011</u>	June <u>2011</u>
Mitt Romney	26%	30%	30%
Newt Gingrich	23	7	8
Herman Cain	9	4	7
Ron Paul	5	7	8
Rick Perry	3	22	6
Michele Bachmann	3	7	5
Rick Santorum	2	1	2
Jon Huntsman	1	3	1
Other	2	3	15
Undecided	26	16	18

Differences among subgroups of the GOP electorate

California's twenty coastal counties represent 61% of California's Republican voters and they support Romney over Gingrich by ten points (30% to 20%). However, among the 39% of GOP voters who live in the state's inland counties, Gingrich is preferred by eight points (29% to 21%).

Gingrich's strongest base of support is among voters who identify a lot with the Tea Party movement. Among these voters, who constitute 26% of California Republicans, Gingrich leads Romney more than two to one (38% to 18%). However, among all other Republican voters, Romney is preferred over Gingrich by an eleven-point margin (29% to 18%).

Slightly less than half of this state's Republicans classify themselves as being strongly conservative in politics. Eighty-four percent of these voters express a preference for one of the GOP contenders, while just 16% are undecided. Among this segment Gingrich holds a slim two-point advantage (31% to 29%). By contrast, over one-third (34%) of Republicans who are more moderate in the political ideology remain undecided in the GOP primary. Romney leads among these voters by seven points (24% to 17%).

GOP men are dividing almost evenly between Romney (28%) and Gingrich (27%). Women prefer Romney over Gingrich by six points (25% to 19%), and a large 35% are undecided.

Romney holds a ten-point lead over Gingrich among Republicans under age 50, although a large 52% are undecided. However, those who are 50 or older favor Gingrich by three points (31% to 28%).

Table 2
Preferences of California Republicans for the 2012 GOP presidential nomination, by subgroup

	<u>Romney</u>	<u>Gingrich</u>	<u>Other candidates</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Total Republicans	26%	23	25	26
<u>Area</u>				
(.61) Coastal counties	30%	20	24	26
(.39) Inland counties	21%	29	23	27
<u>Political ideology</u>				
(.45) Strongly conservative	29%	31	24	16
(.55) All others	24%	17	25	34
<u>Tea Party identification</u>				
(.26) A lot*	18%	38	25	19
(.74) All others	29%	18	24	29
<u>Gender</u>				
(.50) Male	28%	27	27	18
(.50) Female	25%	19	21	35
<u>Age</u>				
(.48) Under 50	25%	15	28	32
(.52) 50 or older	28%	31	20	21

* Small sample base

Favorability measures

Romney is maintaining a very positive image among the GOP electorate, with 59% having a favorable view of him and 21% unfavorable. Gingrich's profile is also quite positive (55% to 22%), with more Republicans holding a favorable view of the former House Speaker now than was the case earlier in the year.

Businessman Herman Cain is much better known now than when he was earlier in the year. His image profile among Republicans is 45% favorable and 32% unfavorable. Bachman also is viewed more favorably than unfavorably (40% to 30%) by the GOP electorate.

On the other hand, Perry's image has become much more negative in recent months. At present, 34% of the Republican voters view him favorably, while more (38%) hold an unfavorable view. Paul, Santorum and Huntsman also have more negative than positive image ratings.

Table 3
Trend of voter impressions of the Republican presidential candidates
(among California registered Republicans)

		Impression is...		
		Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
Romney	Late November	59%	21	20
	September	54%	27	19
	June	56%	25	19
Gingrich	Late November	55%	22	23
	September	34%	45	21
	June	36%	44	20
Cain	Late November	45%	32	23
	September	25%	15	60
	June	23%	12	65
Paul	Late November	29%	46	25
	September	26%	42	32
	June	36%	10	54
Perry	Late November	34%	38	28
	September	50%	19	31
	June	36%	10	54
Bachmann	Late November	40%	30	30
	September	35%	35	30
	June	39%	19	42
Santorum	Late November	20%	25	55
	September	17%	19	64
	June	29%	15	56
Huntsman	Late November	16%	25	59
	September	15%	22	63
	June	16%	17	67

Preferences not firm

California Republicans are not firm in their current voting preferences. Of those expressing a preference, greater than seven in ten (72%) admit that it is still early and that they have not come to a final decision about whom they will eventually support. This low level of commitment exists across supporters of each of the candidates.

Table 4
**Is your mind made up about whom you'll support
 in the Republican primary, or is it still too early to say
 (among California registered Republicans)**

	Total	Romney supporter	Gingrich supporter	Support other candidates
Still early/ haven't made final decision	72%	74%	77%	65%
Mind made up	28	26	23	35

Few California Republicans very satisfied with the GOP field

The absence of a firm commitment to the candidates is also reflected in the relatively small proportion (16%) of California Republicans who say they are very satisfied with the field of GOP contenders running for the presidential nomination. Less than half (47%) indicate that they are somewhat satisfied, while 33% are not too satisfied or not at all satisfied.

Table 5
**Trend of voter satisfaction with the candidates
 running for the GOP nomination
 (among California registered Republicans)**

	Late November 2011	September 2011
Very satisfied	16%	19%
Somewhat satisfied	47	47
Not too satisfied	22	15
Not at all satisfied	11	12
No opinion	4	7

Still inclined to vote Republican

Despite the fluid nature of voter support for the GOP contenders, almost four in five Republican voters (77%) say they are inclined to vote for their party's nominee no matter who it is, and 52% hold to this view strongly.

Table 6
Inclination of GOP voters to vote for the
nominee of their party in next year's general election
(among California registered Republicans)

	Late November 2011
Inclined	<u>77%</u>
Very strongly	52
Somewhat strongly	22
Not strongly	3
Not inclined	<u>12</u>
Very strongly	5
Somewhat strongly	2
Not strongly	5
Depends/not sure	11

Information About The Survey

Methodological Details

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed November 15-27, 2011 among a random sample of 1,000 California registered voters, including 330 registered Republicans.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish using live interviewers working from Field Research Corporation's central location telephone interviewing facilities. Up to six attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

Interviewing was completed on either a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. In this survey 775 interviews were derived from landline sample listings and 225 from cell phone listings. After the completion of interviewing, the overall registered voter sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the characteristics of the registered voter population in California by region, age, gender and party registration.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for results based on the sample of registered Republicans have a maximum sampling error of +/- 5.7 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error.

There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other possible sources of error.

The Field Poll was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field, who is still an active advisor. The *Poll* has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. The *Poll* receives annual funding from media subscribers of *The Field Poll*, from several California foundations, and the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

Questions Asked

I am going to read some names of the Republican candidates running for President next year. As I read each name, please tell me whether your opinion of that person is favorable, unfavorable or whether you don't know enough about that person to have an opinion (NAMES AND TITLES READ IN RANDOM ORDER) Is your opinion of (LAST NAME) favorable or unfavorable? (SEE RELEASE FOR NAMES AND TITLES READ) (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF REGISTERED REPUBLICANS)

If the election for the Republican nomination for President were held today and the candidates were (NAMES OF ALL REPUBLICANS READ IN RANDOM ORDER), for whom would you vote?

(IF PREFERENCE GIVEN) Is your mind made up or is it still too early to say for sure whom you will support in the Republican presidential primary?

How satisfied are you with the candidates now running for the Republican presidential nomination? Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not too satisfied or not at all satisfied?

Based on what you have seen, read or heard about the Republican candidates for president, are you inclined or not inclined to vote for the Republican Party's nominee in next year's presidential election?