

ABC News/Washington Post poll: March 16, 2011

Palin's Favorability Declines; Negatives Exceed her Rivals'

Favorable impressions of Sarah Palin have dropped to a new low in her own party, with negative views of the former Alaska governor substantially exceeding those of other potential Republican presidential candidates, the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll finds.

Fifty-eight percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents see Palin favorably, in the top league with Mike Huckabee (61 percent), Mitt Romney (60 percent) and Newt Gingrich (55 percent). But on the flipside she's weaker: Thirty-seven percent see Palin unfavorably, exceeding Gingrich's unfavorable rating by 11 points, Romney's by 16 and Huckabee's by 19.

Palin also is following a different trajectory. She peaked at a remarkable 88 percent favorable among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (known collectively as "leaned Republicans") after stepping onto the national stage as John McCain's vice-presidential running mate in September 2008. That's declined since then to today's level, 30 points lower.

Romney, by contrast, is at a new high in favorability in ABC/Post polls, Huckabee off his peak by an insignificant 3 points and Gingrich about at his average in polls back to the mid-1990s.

Another difference is that almost everyone has an opinion of Palin: Just 5 percent of leaned Republicans haven't made up their minds about her in terms of favorability, the most basic measure of a public figure's popularity. More, about two in 10, have no opinion of Huckabee, Romney and Gingrich in this poll, produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#).

Others are vastly less well known: Anywhere from 57 to 68 percent of leaned Republicans haven't formed an opinion of potential candidates Haley Barbour, Tim Pawlenty, Mitch Daniels and Jon Huntsman.

The results indicate continued challenges for Palin in public opinion. In an ABC/Post poll in December, 59 percent of Americans said they would not consider voting for her for president (including 36 percent of leaned Republicans); Barack Obama led her in general election preferences by a 15-point margin. Last fall, moreover, 67 percent described her as unqualified for the position, including 49 percent of leaned Republicans.

Palin, closely associated with the Tea Party political movement, is rated favorably by 66 percent of leaned Republicans who also see the Tea Party favorably. However, Huckabee, Romney and Gingrich have equally high levels of support among Tea Party sympathizers – 72, 68 and 66 percent, respectively.

Sixty-eight percent of leaned Republicans have a favorable impression of the Tea Party – a sizable constituency within the party. However many fewer, 38 percent, see it "strongly" favorably. (Among all adults, 36 percent see the Tea Party favorably, 48 percent unfavorably.)

“Strong” favorability matters in primaries, where motivation to turn out is an important factor. Among strong Tea Party supporters, strongly favorable views of Huckabee and Palin are highest, at 45 and 42 percent, respectively; strongly favorable views of Gingrich and Romney drop off in this group to 35 and 31 percent, respectively.

There’s a similar pattern in a related group, leaned Republicans who say they are “very” conservative. Palin and Huckabee (at 45 and 44 percent) again attract much higher strongly favorable ratings among strong conservatives than do Gingrich and Romney (30 and 28 percent).

There are other differences among the top potential candidates. Palin and Huckabee do not have significant gender gaps, while Romney and Gingrich appeal more to men than to women. Romney and Gingrich attract similar constituencies – older leaned Republicans, men, and those with more education – so they could be battling for the same votes.

Huckabee, an ordained minister and former Arkansas governor, has particularly high ratings in two affinity groups: fellow Southerners, among whom 72 percent see him favorably; and evangelical white Protestants, 76 percent.

His challenge: There are few of either in New Hampshire.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone March 10-13, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,005 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. The results among the sample’s 378 leaned Republicans have a 6-point error margin. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Full results follow.

1-17, 24-31, 33 previously released.

18-23, 32, 34 held for release.

35. (ASKED OF LEANED REPUBLICANS) Do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of [ITEM]? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

3/13/11 - Summary Table

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
a. Sarah Palin	58	26	32	37	20	17	5
b. Mitt Romney	60	22	38	21	15	6	19
c. Mike Huckabee	61	28	33	18	12	6	23
d. Newt Gingrich	55	18	37	26	17	9	19
e. Haley Barbour	26	8	19	17	11	6	57
f. Tim Pawlenty	28	7	21	15	11	3	58
g. Jon Huntsman	20	4	16	12	11	1	68
h. Mitch Daniels	22	6	16	12	10	2	66

Trend where available:

a. Sarah Palin (Among leaned Republicans)

----- Favorable ----- ----- Unfavorable ----- No

	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
3/13/11	58	26	32	37	20	17	5
10/28/10 RV	70	30	41	24	13	11	6
3/26/10	66	32	34	30	14	16	4
2/8/10	63	31	32	31	18	13	6
11/15/09	72	39	33	24	14	10	4
7/18/09	67	37	30	28	16	12	6
10/23/08 LV	81	54	27	16	6	9	3
9/29/08 RV	84	55	29	11	6	5	5
9/22/08 RV	88	64	24	6	2	4	6
9/7/08 RV	88	63	25	5	3	2	6
9/4/08* RV	84	70	14	7	4	4	9

* "the Republican nominee for vice president"

b. Mitt Romney (Among leaned Republicans)

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
3/13/11	60	22	38	21	15	6	19
1/12/08	55	16	39	36	21	15	9
11/1/07	42	12	30	28	16	12	30
2/25/07	33	8	25	28	20	9	39
12/11/06	28	8	20	17	14	3	55

c. Mike Huckabee (Among leaned Republicans)

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
3/13/11	61	28	33	18	12	6	23
1/12/08	64	25	39	25	17	9	10
11/1/07	27	10	17	25	15	9	48

d. Newt Gingrich (Among leaned Republicans)

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
3/13/11	55	18	37	26	17	9	19
11/1/98	57	NA	NA	36	NA	NA	7
9/28/98	59			36			5
9/13/98	57			28			15
8/21/98	54			29			17
7/12/98	50			32			18
5/12/98*	53			35			12
4/4/98*	57			29			14
1/31/98*	49			28			23
1/19/98	48			34			18
9/4/96 RV	49			33			18
6/30/96	46			37			17
7/17/95	57			25			18

* Based on Republicans only.

e-h. No trend.

36. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of the political movement known as the Tea Party? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
3/13/11	36	18	18	48	18	30	16
1/16/11	35	16	19	52	21	31	13
9/2/10	38	18	19	45	24	21	18
6/6/10	36	17	19	50	25	24	14

3/26/10	41	21	21	39	16	23	20
2/8/10	35	20	15	40	20	20	25

END