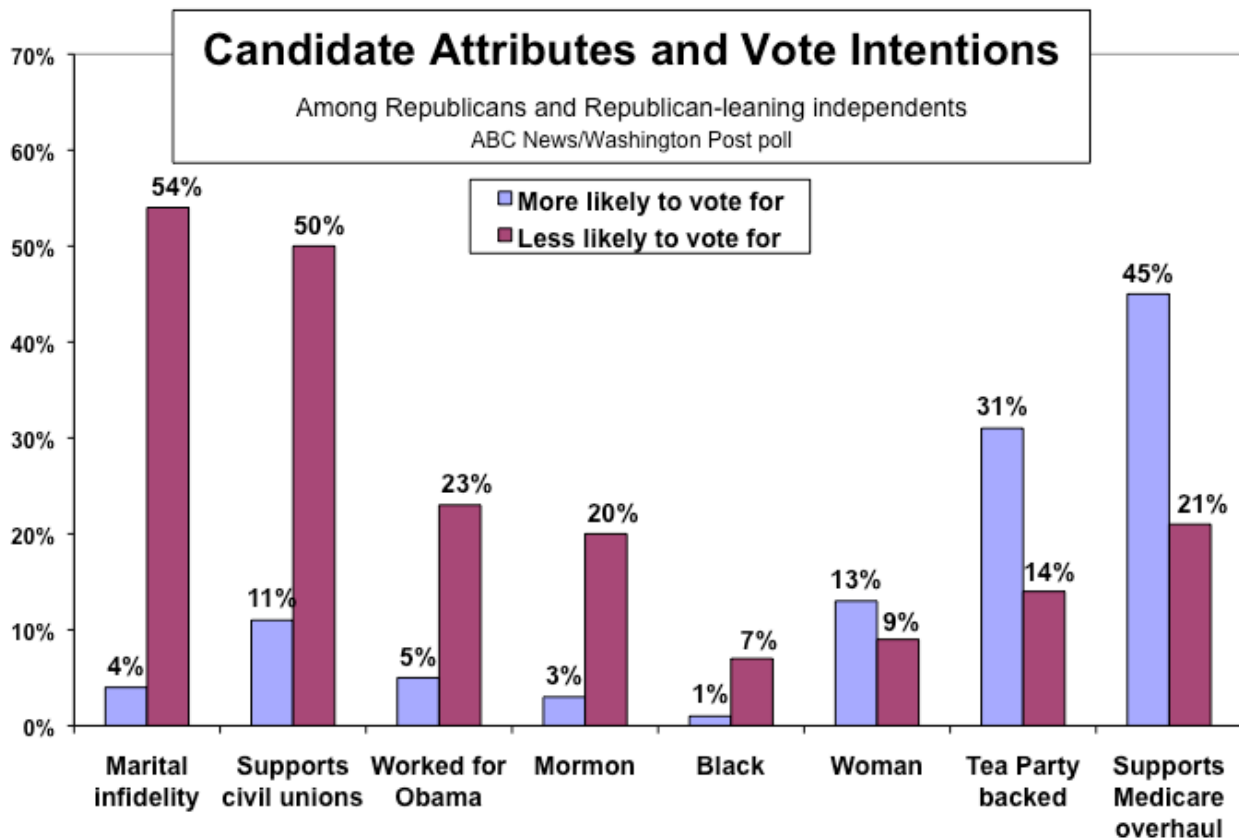


GOP Voting Factors: Look Out for Infidelity

Mitt Romney's religion is far less of a concern to potential Republican voters than it once was, and a candidate's race or sex are non-issues for vast majorities. But if a GOP contender supports gay civil unions – or has committed marital infidelity – all bets are off.

Twenty percent of Republicans and Republican leaning-independents in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll say they'd be less likely to support a candidate who's a Mormon; that compares to 36 percent when Romney entered the national political stage in December 2006.

Far more, 54 percent, say they'd be less apt to support a candidate for president who's been unfaithful to his or her spouse. And 50 percent would be less apt to support a candidate who favors civil unions for gay couples.



Two other items are positives overall, if somewhat divisive. Forty-five percent of leaned Republicans say they'd be more likely to support someone who favors major changes in Medicare, but 21 percent would be less apt to support such a candidate. Thirty-one percent say

they'd be more likely to back a candidate who's supported by the Tea Party political movement; 14 percent, less so.

Among others tested in this survey, 91 percent say it wouldn't matter to them if a candidate were black, and 78 percent said it wouldn't matter in their decision if a candidate were a woman. (Thirteen percent say they'd be more apt to support a woman; 9 percent, less so.)

The attributes or positions tested describe several of the current GOP candidates or possible candidates. Newt Gingrich has conceded marital infidelity; he also has described GOP-backed changes to Medicare as "right-wing social engineering." Jon Huntsman has expressed support for gay civil unions, and both he and Romney are Mormons. Sarah Palin, Ron Paul and Michele Bachmann are favorites of some supporters of the Tea Party political movement. And there's an African-American in the GOP race, Herman Cain, former CEO of Godfather's Pizza.

Another question asked specifically about Huntsman, the former Utah governor who served as ambassador to China from August 2009 to February 2011. His service in the Obama administration is a negative in terms of Republican vote preference, but not a powerful one: Seventy percent of leaned Republicans say it makes no difference in their choice, while 23 percent say it leaves them less likely to support Huntsman, should he run, vs. 5 percent more likely.

In another question, 39 percent of leaned Republicans say Gingrich – whose campaign sustained a large-scale staff resignation last week – lacks the kind of personality and temperament it takes to serve effectively as president, a big group to lose on this basic hurdle. An additional 11 percent were undecided.

Republican candidates including Bachmann, Cain, Gingrich, Paul, Tim Pawlenty, Romney and Rick Santorum meet Monday evening in their first New Hampshire debate.

GROUPS – There are differences among GOP groups in this poll, produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#). Among those who described themselves as very conservative, 72 percent say they'd be less apt to vote for a candidate who has had an extramarital affair. That drops to 42 percent of moderate Republicans and Republican-leaning independents.

More than seven in 10 who say they're very conservative also are less likely to vote for a candidate who supports gay civil unions, as are six in 10 evangelical white Protestants, another core Republican group. Very conservative leaned Republicans (who account for about a quarter of all Republicans and Republican leaners) also are the most critical of Huntsman's post in the Obama administration; four in 10 say this would make them less likely to vote for him.

Being more apt to vote for a Tea Party candidate peaks as well among very conservative leaned Republicans, at 57 percent. And these views on the Tea Party show up in candidate support: Among those who are more inclined to vote for a Tea Party-backed candidate, Palin and Romney split top billing, at 18 and 19 percent support, with Ron Paul at 12 percent. Among those who say Tea Party support doesn't matter to their vote, by contrast, Romney leads Palin by 8 points, and Paul receives just 3 percent support.

There are two areas in which older leaned Republicans stand out. The negative impact of a candidate's support for gay civil unions issue increases with age, peaking at 66 percent among seniors. GOP seniors, meanwhile, are least enthusiastic about changes to Medicare – but even in this group major changes to Medicare are a net positive in vote intentions, by 12 points.

Mormonism faded as a concern during the 2008 campaign. In December 2006, as noted, 36 percent of leaned Republicans described themselves as less apt to support a Mormon; by the end of the campaign this was down to 21 percent. It's remained there.

Resistance to a Mormon candidate is strongest among evangelical white Protestants, at 27 percent. But that compares with 39 percent in this group in December 2006.

Finally, it's noteworthy that objections among leaned Republicans to a woman presidential candidate are down sharply from the last presidential election cycle – a peak of 28 percent in December 2007, vs. 9 percent now. The likely reason: Back then they were probably thinking about Hillary Clinton, hardly a Republican favorite.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone June 2-5, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,002 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results reported in this analysis are among 435 Republicans and Republican-leaning independents and have a margin of sampling error of 5.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by Langer Research Associates of New York, N.Y, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Julie E. Phelan and Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

1-38, 40, 43-45 previously released.

39. (ASKED OF LEANED REPUBLICANS) Thinking about Newt Gingrich, do you think Gingrich has the kind of personality and temperament it takes to serve effectively as president, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
6/5/11	50	39	11
6/8/95	37	52	11

41. (ASKED OF LEANED REPUBLICANS) As you may know, Jon Huntsman served as U.S. Ambassador to China in the Obama administration. Does this make you (more likely) to vote for him as a candidate, (less likely) to vote for him, or wouldn't it make a difference in your vote?

More	Less	Wouldn't make	No
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	likely	likely	a difference	opinion
6/5/11	5	23	70	3

42. (ASKED OF LEANED REPUBLICANS) I'm going to read a few attributes that might be found in a candidate for president. Please tell me if each would make you (more likely) to vote for that candidate for president, or (less likely) to vote for that candidate, or if it wouldn't matter.

6/5/11 - Summary Table

	More likely	Less likely	Wouldn't matter	No opinion
a. Is a Mormon	3	20	75	2
b. Is a woman	13	9	78	0
c. Is someone who is black	1	7	91	*
d. Has had an extramarital affair	4	54	40	2
e. Is supported by the Tea Party political movement	31	14	53	1
f. Supports major changes in the Medicare system	45	21	30	3
g. Supports civil unions for gay couples	11	50	39	1

Trend where available, among leaned Republicans:

a. Is a Mormon

	More Likely	Less likely	Wouldn't matter	No opinion
6/5/11	3	20	75	2
12/9/07	6	21	72	1
6/1/07	5	30	64	1
2/25/07	4	30	65	1
12/11/06	2	36	61	1

b. Is a woman

	More Likely	Less likely	Wouldn't matter	No opinion
6/5/11	13	9	78	0
12/9/07	6	28	65	*
2/25/07	7	26	66	*
12/11/06	7	22	71	-

c. Is someone who is black

	More Likely	Less likely	Wouldn't matter	No opinion
6/5/11	1	7	91	*
12/9/07	6	7	88	*
2/25/07	4	8	88	-
12/11/06	4	6	89	*

d-g. No trend.

END