

Gingrich Consulting Draws Skepticism; Romney's Background, a Divided View

Neither Mitt Romney's nor Newt Gingrich's private sector experience is playing particularly well with the American public, although Gingrich's consulting work draws far more criticism than Romney's background buying and restructuring companies.

Americans by a broad 54-24 percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll hold an unfavorable opinion of Gingrich's work as a consultant for companies with an interest in federal policymaking after he left elective office. The division on Romney, while not positive, is much closer: Forty percent see his work experience negatively, vs. 35 percent positively.

Both do far better in their own party, especially Romney. Fifty-eight percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents express a favorable view of his business experience. Many fewer leaned Republicans, 44 percent, rate Gingrich's experience positively; indeed nearly as many see Gingrich's consulting work unfavorably, 40 percent, as favorably.

Nonetheless that's a substantial improvement for Gingrich. This poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds that positive reactions to his work experience among leaned Republicans have improved by 15 points since mid-January, while negative ratings have dropped by 11 points, from 51 percent. So while he still trails Romney in work-experience ratings, the margin has narrowed.

Across the political spectrum, these views are far more dim. Sixty-six percent of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents have an unfavorable opinion of Gingrich's consulting work. And while Romney's business experience is less unpopular, still more than half of leaned Democrats, 53 percent, see it negatively, vs. 22 percent favorably. A substantial 25 percent are undecided.

	Favorable-unfavorable ratings:	
	Business experience of...	
	Gingrich	Romney
All	24-54%	35-40
Democrats	10-72	18-60
Republicans	43-39	60-22
Independents	25-51	36-37
Leaned Democrats	13-66	22-53
Leaned Republicans	44-40	58-24
Liberals	13-64	22-55
Moderates	21-55	32-39
Somewhat conservatives	30-54	47-34

Very conservatives	44-40	50-29
Liberal Democrats	6-79	18-66
Conservative Republicans	50-37	67-19

The two have been going after each other hammer and tong on the subject in Florida, which holds its GOP primary today, with Gingrich accusing Romney of having invested in banks that foreclosed on homes in the state, and Romney criticizing Gingrich’s consulting work for mortgage giant Freddie Mac.

There are ideological as well as partisan differences in public views. Self-described “very” conservative Americans divide on Gingrich’s consulting work, 44 percent favorable, 40 percent unfavorable – a weak score given Gingrich’s efforts to appeal to this group. Among “somewhat” conservatives, 54 percent see his work negatively, about the same as it is among moderates.

Negative views of Romney’s work background are 11 points lower than Gingrich’s among very conservatives, and a broad 20 points lower among somewhat conservatives.

Intensity of opinion is another difference. There’s a slight negative tilt in “strongly” unfavorable vs. strongly favorable views of Romney’s experience restructuring companies, 19 percent vs. 12 percent. For Gingrich it’s a much wider margin, with views strongly negative by 24 points, 31 percent to 7 percent. Part of the reason is a particularly strong negative reaction to Gingrich’s consulting work among middle-aged and older adults, 40 and up.

Romney has a different challenge – broadening the appeal of his work experience beyond higher-income Americans. Favorable views are a bit higher among people with incomes of \$100,000 or more compared with those earning \$50,000 or less, 43 percent vs. 33 percent.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cell phone Jan. 25-29, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,005 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by SSRS/Social Science Research Solutions of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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

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Full results follow.

1. Overall, do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of (ITEM)? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

a. Newt Gingrich's work, since leaving elective office, as a consultant for companies with an interest in federal policymaking

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/29/12	24	7	17	54	23	31	22

Among leaned Republicans:

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/29/12	44	14	30	40	23	17	16
1/15/12	29	8	21	51	25	26	20
12/18/11	33	10	23	44	25	19	23

b. Mitt Romney's work buying and restructuring companies before he went into politics

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/29/12	35	12	23	40	21	19	25

Among leaned Republicans:

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/29/12	58	22	36	24	16	8	18
1/15/12	51	22	29	29	17	13	20
12/18/11	54	22	33	20	13	6	26

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