

## **Cain, Pulling in Strong Conservatives, Matches Romney in Favorability**

With the stage set for their latest debate, Herman Cain is challenging Mitt Romney and Rick Perry in popularity overall, and leading both in strong sentiment among very conservative Americans – a key Republican constituency that’s backed away from Perry in the past month.

The question raised by the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll is whether Cain proves any better able than Perry to withstand the new level of scrutiny he faces, in particular among the sizable numbers of Americans who’ve yet to form an opinion of him either way.

Within their party, all three are popular: Romney’s seen more favorably than unfavorably by 57-21 percent, Cain by 52-17 percent, Perry by 49-24 percent. Perry’s unfavorable rating is up by 13 points in his own party. Views of Romney have held about steady among Republicans overall.

Especially notable is the intensity of sentiment among Republicans and political independents who describe themselves as “very” conservative. Thirty-three percent in this group see Cain “strongly” favorably, compared with 15 and 14 percent for Perry and Romney, respectively. It’s a key group, given that greater ideological commitment suggests higher turnout in GOP primaries.

Moreover, while Cain leads in strongly positive sentiment in this group, overall unfavorable ratings of Perry and Romney have advanced in the last month among very conservative Republicans and independents, by 16 and 12 points respectively – negative trends for both.

Specifically, 28 percent of very conservative Republicans and independents now see Perry unfavorably, up from 12 percent a month ago. That’s now about as many as have an unfavorable view of Romney, who’s been consistently weaker among very conservatives. Thirty-two percent in this group now see him unfavorably, up slightly from 20 percent.

	Among very conservative Republicans and independents		
	Favorable-unfavorable views		
	Now	Month ago	Change in unfavorable
Romney	52-32%	56-20	+12 points
Perry	56-28	63-12	+16 points
Cain	57-20	NA	NA

Most of the Republican contenders meet in Las Vegas this evening for their fifth debate since Perry joined the race. It’s their first face-off since Cain’s vaulted to the upper echelon in GOP preferences, suggesting it may be his turn in the hot seat.

OUTSIDE – Outside their party, naturally, the GOP candidates are less popular – Democrats tend to see them negatively; independents roughly divide on Romney and Cain, while taking a dimmer view of Perry. Views among independents are especially critical in a general election campaign – they’re the quintessential swing voters.

Overall, given these divisions, the public roughly splits on Cain; 31 percent of Americans see him favorably, 27 percent unfavorably, with a plurality, 42 percent, unready to express an opinion. Romney’s in roughly the same place in terms of favorability (33 percent), but gets more negative reviews – 36 percent unfavorable, 9 points higher than Cain’s.

Perry, given his comparative weakness in the center, is in tougher shape; more Americans see him unfavorably than favorably by a 12-point margin, 38-26 percent, with unfavorable views 7 points higher than a month ago.

Favorability is the most basic measure of a public figure’s popularity. ABC and the Post will be tracking these ratings across a variety of individuals and entities throughout the next year, with ABC’s participation in the project directed by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York.

	Favorable-unfavorable ratings		
	Romney	Perry	Cain
All	33-36%	26-38	31-27
Democrats	20-48	16-50	19-36
Republicans	57-21	49-24	52-17
Independents	32-36	23-41	29-27
Liberals	22-50	15-54	21-41
Moderates	35-33	22-42	29-26
Somewhat conservatives	44-30	36-31	37-22
Very conservatives	46-36	50-31	53-21
Liberal Democrats	18-64	13-66	15-49
Conservative Republicans	60-25	55-26	58-19
Very conservative Reps and inds	52-32	56-28	57-20

Cain’s positioning is challenging for Romney on two fronts: As noted, Cain does better in intensity among very conservatives, who matter in the primaries; yet he also rivals Romney in more centrist constituencies that can be essential in a general election: In addition to independents, the two are rated similarly among moderates and “somewhat” conservatives alike.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cell phone Oct. 12-16, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,009 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.

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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 (NAME)? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat? SCRAMBLE ITEMS

a. Rick Perry

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
10/16/11	26	5	21	38	16	22	35
9/18/11	23	7	16	31	12	19	46

b. Mitt Romney

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
10/16/11	33	8	26	36	20	15	31
9/18/11	33	5	27	31	16	14	37

c. Herman Cain

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
10/16/11	31	10	20	27	14	13	42

\*\*\*END\*\*\*