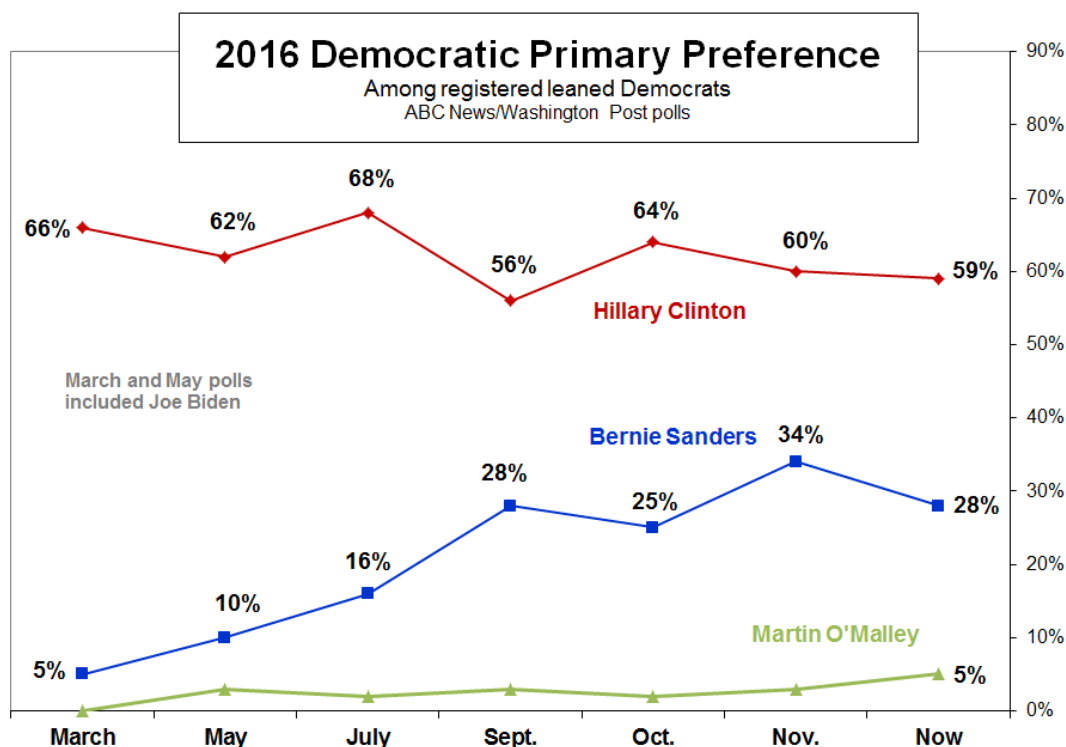


Clinton Takes Big Lead into Debate, But With a Trustworthiness Deficit

Hillary Clinton maintains a commanding lead for the Democratic presidential nomination heading into tomorrow’s ABC News debate – but with notable weakness on honesty and trustworthiness, a challenge not just in the primaries but in a potential general election contest ahead.

Clinton leads Bernie Sanders by 31 percentage points, 59-28 percent, among Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents who are registered to vote in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll, with Martin O’Malley in the single digits.

Clinton’s advantage over Sanders exactly matches its average in ABC/Post polls since September. That said, a candidate’s standing today is not necessarily predictive of his or her performance tomorrow: Clinton led Barack Obama by a similar margin, 28 points, in an ABC/Post poll at this time in 2007. Yet Obama rebounded to win the nomination.



And Clinton does have a prominent difficulty – a trustworthiness deficit. Even with her overall lead, 44 percent of leaned Democrats say Sanders is more honest and trustworthy, vs. 38 percent

who pick Clinton. She’s particularly vulnerable in this area among whites (a 26-point Sanders advantage) and political independents (Sanders +25).

Clinton manages 30 percent support from those who see Sanders as more honest and trustworthy, one reason her overall support overcomes the trust deficit. Further, she far surpasses Sanders on other measures in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#) – by 64-26 percent on who’d better handle the threat of terrorism, 54-37 percent on who’s closer to potential voters on the issues and 51-38 percent in empathy, as well as her lead in vote preference.

Clinton’s support is very near her average, 63 percent, in 10 ABC/Post polls to include her and Sanders this cycle, with a range from 56 to 69 percent. Sanders, for his part, peaked at 34 percent last month before slipping back in this survey. O’Malley’s 5 percent, low as it is, is a new high for him.

As covered earlier this week, in a general election matchup Clinton holds a slight 6-point advantage among registered voters vs. Republican frontrunner Donald Trump, 50-44 percent, compared with a 46-43 percent result against him in September.

GROUPS – Sanders’ gain last month was propelled by improvements among younger adults, women, nonwhites, liberals and those without a college degree. This month he’s seen a pullback in those same groups, and trails Clinton by double digits in all but one – leaned Democrats under age 40, among whom Sanders and Clinton run evenly.

Clinton, for her part, peaks with a 49-point lead over Sanders among nonwhites, 48 points among those 40 or older and 48 points among those who prefer someone with political experience over an outsider. She benefits heavily from the fact that leaned Democrats prefer experience by a broad 76-18 percent – a vastly different picture than the Republican contest.

Clinton’s also ahead of Sanders by 38 points among Democrats, 33 points among moderates, 36 points among women and 34 points among those without a college degree.

	Among reg. leaned Democrats Clinton-Sanders	Diff.
All	59-28%	+31 pts.
Democrats	63-25	38
Independents	54-32	22
Liberals	58-36	22
Moderates	58-25	33
Men	57-33	24
Women	60-24	36
Whites	53-36	17
Nonwhites	66-17	49
18-39	45-44	1
40-plus	67-19	48

College grads	58-32	26
Non-grads	59-25	34
Prefer experience	69-21	48
More honest:		
Clinton	93- 2	91
Sanders	30-53	-23

Clinton’s support among some groups differs compared with this point in 2007 (when John Edwards also was in the race, with 12 percent support). Her backing is 21 points higher now than then among those age 40 and older, 19 points among college graduates, 15 points among women, 12 points among Democratic-leaning independents, 11 points among moderates and 10 points among nonwhites. It’s also 13 points lower among those under 40 – and it’s those younger adults who now are most likely to side with Sanders on who’s more honest and trustworthy.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone Dec. 10-13, 2015, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,002 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points, including the design effect, for the full sample, and 5.5 points for registered leaned Democrats. Partisan divisions are 33-23-34 percent, Democrats-Republicans-independents.

The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y. See details on the survey’s methodology [here](#).

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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.

1-7, 10-20 previously released.

*= less than 0.5 percent

8. (ASKED OF LEANED DEMOCRATS) If the 2016 Democratic presidential primary or caucus in your state were being held today and the candidates were (Hillary Clinton), (Bernie Sanders) and (Martin O’Malley), for whom would you vote? Which candidate would you lean toward?

12/13/15 – NET LEANED VOTE PREFERENCE AMONG REG VOTERS

	----- 2015 -----				
	12/13	11/19	10/18*	9/10	7/19
Lincoln Chafee	NA	NA	*	1	1
Hillary Clinton	59	60	64	56	68
Martin O'Malley	5	3	2	3	2
Bernie Sanders	28	34	25	28	16
Jim Webb	NA	NA	2	2	5

Other (vol.)	1	1	1	1	2
None of these (vol.)	2	1	3	5	3
Would not vote (vol.)	2	0	1	1	1
No opinion	4	1	2	4	3

*10/18/15 and previous include Biden supporters' second choice. Call for previous results back to January 2014 with Biden included.

9. (ASKED OF LEANED DEMOCRATS) Thinking just about Clinton and Sanders, who do you think [ITEM]?

Full item wording:

- a. is more honest and trustworthy
- b. would be better at handling the threat of terrorism
- c. is closer to you on the issues
- d. better understands the problems of people like you

12/13/15 - Summary Table

	More honest	Handle threat of terrorism	Closer on issues	Understands problems
Clinton	38	64	54	51
Sanders	44	26	37	38
Both (vol.)	5	*	2	3
Neither (vol.)	7	2	2	3
No opinion	5	8	5	5

Trend:

- a. is more honest and trustworthy

	12/13/15	10/18/15
Clinton	38	42
Sanders	44	41
Both (vol.)	5	7
Neither (vol.)	7	7
No opinion	5	4

- b. No trend

- c. is closer to you on the issues

	12/13/15	10/18/15
Clinton	54	53
Sanders	37	36
Both (vol.)	2	3
Neither (vol.)	2	2
No opinion	5	5

- d. better understands the problems of people like you

	12/13/15	10/18/15
Clinton	51	51
Sanders	38	37
Both (vol.)	3	3
Neither (vol.)	3	5
No opinion	5	4

*** END ***