

New Poll Shows Narrowing Margin in RI Democratic Primary, 22 Percent Remain Undecided

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March 2, 2008, Providence, RI – A new poll administered by Brown University students in conjunction with Professor Jennifer Lawless, Professor of Political Science and Public Policy, finds that Senator Hillary Clinton’s lead over Senator Barack Obama in Rhode Island has narrowed. Forty-two percent of the 402 likely Democratic primary voters polled expressed support for Hillary Clinton, while 37 percent favor Barack Obama. The remaining 22 percent remain undecided. Commenting on the poll, which was conducted from February 27th to March 2nd through both phone calls and personal intercepts, Jennifer Lawless said, “The race in Rhode Island appears to mirror the race we’re seeing throughout the country. Hillary Clinton’s support is narrowing, even compared to poll results from just a few days ago. Barack Obama’s visit to the state on Saturday appears to have had an effect. Remarkably, though, 22 percent of likely Democratic primary voters have still not made up their minds. These men and women can, and probably will, decide this race in Rhode Island.”

Further analysis of the survey data reveal that Senator Clinton is heavily favored by women, receiving 49 percent, as opposed to 29 percent for Senator Obama. Among men, Senator Obama holds a substantial edge, receiving 46 percent of the vote, as compared to 31 percent for Senator Clinton.

The age breakdown shows a trend similar to that of other states. Younger voters favor Senator Obama to Senator Clinton (44 percent to 41 percent), whereas older voters express greater support for Clinton over Obama (51 percent, compared to 23 percent). Notably, fewer undecided voters comprise the 18-29 age group (16 percent) than the 65 and over age group (25 percent).

Though Senator Clinton retains her edge among Latinos, with 61 percent as opposed to 33 for Senator Obama, these are narrower margins than those that have been observed in several recent primaries. Support among African Americans falls strongly behind Senator Obama, who carries 70 percent of the African American vote, as compared to 7 percent for Senator Clinton.

It appears, however, that the race will come down to voter turnout and last minute decision-making. Based on trends this election cycle, as well as new voter registration figures in Rhode Island, high turnout among younger voters could boost Senator Obama’s support and possibly deliver a victory. “The critical nature and historical importance of this election has increased turnout, especially among younger voters across the country. Our analysis actually predicts a voter turnout of upwards of 90,000 voters,” said Adam Axler, a Brown University senior who helped conduct and analyze the poll. Increases in projected turnout of Latinos, however, may help Clinton maintain her edge, regardless of the upsurge in young voters.

See attached appendix for top line results for a more in-depth description of the findings and methodology.

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Top Line Results
Brown University Poll of 402 Likely Democratic Primary Voters
Conducted from February 27 – March 2, 2008

Vote Choice Overall:

	<u>Senator Clinton</u>	<u>Senator Obama</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
	42 %	37 %	22 %

Vote Choice by Sex:

	<u>Senator Clinton</u>	<u>Senator Obama</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Men	31 %	46 %	22 %
Women	49	29	21

Vote Choice by Race / Ethnicity:

	<u>Senator Clinton</u>	<u>Senator Obama</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
White	44 %	31 %	23 %
African American	7	70	22
Latino	61	33	6
Other	31	46	23

Vote Choice by Age Cohort:

	<u>Senator Clinton</u>	<u>Senator Obama</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
18 – 29 years	41 %	44 %	16 %
30 – 44 years	42	37	21
45 – 64 years	39	37	23
65 and over	51	23	25

Vote Choice by Sex and Age Cohort:

	<u>Senator Clinton</u>	<u>Senator Obama</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
18 – 29 years			
Men	18 %	68 %	14 %
Women	58	25	17
30 – 44 years			
Men	31	42	25
Women	48	33	18
45 – 64 years			
Men	33	44	21
Women	42	32	24
65 and over			
Men	39	32	25
Women	57	19	23

Methodology
Brown University Poll of 402 Likely Democratic Primary Voters
Conducted from February 27 – March 2, 2008

The poll results are based on responses from 402 likely Democratic voters who were contacted by phone and personal intercepts between February 27 and March 2, 2008. A group of 20 Brown University students conducted the poll, which was the only one in the field during and after visits to Rhode Island from Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

Two-thirds of the responses came from random digit dialing from the Rhode Island voter file. In addition, students conducted 130 intercept interviews in locations in communities chosen to reflect the demographics of likely primary voters, as determined from an analysis of Democratic primary turnout in other states. The use of two methods to acquire the sample ensures a demographic profile that more closely matches that of likely voters than other polls.

In order to predict the outcome of the Democratic primary, we considered voting patterns from the 2004 Rhode Island Democratic presidential primary, recent demographic shifts in Rhode Island, and exit poll data from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, and Wisconsin. We attempted to account for the following trends:

- Voter turnout has more than doubled
- Young voters have turned out in greater numbers
- Latino voters have turned out in greater numbers
- Women comprise a larger proportion of voters than men
- 45,000 new voters have registered in Rhode Island, half of whom are young people

We expect Rhode Island to follow these trends, especially because of Rhode Island's increased significance on the national stage. Given Rhode Island's size and the competitive nature of the election, we project a voter turnout of roughly 90,000 voters in the Democratic primary.

Based on these projections and the results we found in the poll, the significant bump among young voters should favor Senator Obama. The increased Latino voter turnout should mitigate some of that advantage and benefit Senator Clinton. And in the 2008 Democratic primaries held to date, women have comprised a slightly higher percentage of the electorate than in previous years. We expect this trend to continue in the Ocean State, which may confer an advantage to Senator Clinton. Ultimately, however, it looks like the 22 percent of undecided voters will determine the election outcome in the Democratic primary.