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Hawkeye Poll: Carson and Clinton lead in Iowa

Ben Carson building a lead among Republicans in Iowa.

The Feb. 1 Iowa Caucuses are fast approaching, and Ben Carson currently holds a strong lead in an Iowa caucus poll relative to Donald Trump and other Republican candidates. A recent University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll —conducted by faculty and students between Oct. 19 and Oct. 25 — indicates 25.3% of respondents who might participate in the GOP caucus expressed that they would vote for Ben Carson if the Republican caucus were held today. Donald Trump remains behind Carson, with 22% of respondents indicating that they would vote for Trump if the Republican caucus were held today. Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio trail with 11.3% and 10.2% respectively. 10.2% of respondents remain undecided.

Carson's lead grows among respondents who identified themselves as very or somewhat likely caucus goers: 26.1% would vote for him if the Republican caucus was held today compared to 16.3% who identified Trump as their preferred candidate if the caucus were held today. Trump leads among those less likely to attend the GOP caucus with 37.3% supporting him compared to 23.3% for Carson. Republican likely caucus goers indicated satisfaction with their choices with 52.5% saying they are very satisfied, 41.5% somewhat satisfied, and only 6% not satisfied.

Frederick Boehmke, professor of political science in the UI College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and faculty adviser of the Hawkeye Poll, says that the poll shows that Carson is solidifying his lead.

"Carson appears to be consolidating his recent surge past Trump, especially among likely caucusers," Boehmke says. "Trump's stronger support among those less likely to attend the caucuses could set up a big turnout battle, with Trump needing a big showing to have a chance on February 1."

Preferences among likely caucus goers between the candidates varied due to basic demographic factors.

For example, Carson received more support among male Iowans than among female Iowans; 22.9% of female Iowans would vote for Carson and 19.4% would vote for Trump if the caucuses were held today, while 29.5% of male Iowans indicated a preference for Carson compared to 13% for Trump. Other notable differences included 6% support for Carly Fiorina among women as opposed to 0.7% among men. Carson leads Trump in all age groupings with his greatest support coming from respondents aged 70 or older (39.1%) and his lowest level lies among younger voters (ages 18-34) at 10.4%. Preferences for Donald Trump were consistent at around 16-20% except among the younger group with only 9.5%. Jeb Bush (35.6%) and Rand Paul (10.6%) were the two leading candidates among 18-34 year old voters.

Hillary Clinton maintains support among Democrats in Iowa.

Hillary Clinton holds a strong lead relative to Bernie Sanders and other Democratic candidates. 52.5% of respondents indicated that they would vote for Clinton if the Democratic caucuses were held today with Bernie Sanders running second at 40.4%. Joe Biden received support from 3.1% but notably withdrew while the survey was in the field.

Clinton's lead holds among respondents who identified themselves as likely caucus goers (50.8% would vote for her if the Democratic caucuses were held today), compared to 40.5% who identified Sanders as their preferred candidate choice if the caucuses were held today. Only 2.9% of likely Democratic caucus

attendees are not satisfied with their choices, while 48.2% are somewhat satisfied and 48.9% indicated they are very satisfied.

Tim Hagle, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Iowa and author of *Riding the Caucus Roller Coaster* commented that “the results of the Hawkeye Poll show the race in Iowa is closer than other polls have suggested. Although Clinton appears to have a strong lead over Sanders, a victory for her in Iowa is not a foregone conclusion.”

Preferences between the two front-runners varied due to basic demographic factors. Clinton’s support lies mostly with older voters with 72.1% of those over 70 and 64.5% of those aged 55-69 selecting her. Younger voters prefer Sanders with 51.3% of those aged 35-54 and 59.6% of those 18-34 supporting him.

Clinton has the strong support of likely female caucusers; 57.3% of female Iowans would vote for Clinton if the caucus were held today while only 42.7% of male Iowans indicated the same preference. In contrast, more male Iowans expressed support for Sanders (46.2% compared to 36% of female Iowans).

Voters Expecting a Clinton-Trump matchup in the General Election.

Despite Carson’s lead among Republican caucus goers, respondents indicated that they thought Trump would be the eventual nominee, with 32.1% of all respondents and 31.4% of self-identified Republican respondents identifying him as the likely Republican nominee. A full 22.2% were not sure who would win. Voters appear much more confident that Clinton will secure the Democratic nomination. 67.9% of all respondents selected her as the eventual winner including 81.9% of Democrats and 64.2% of Republicans. Only 12.4% were unsure who would be the Democratic nominee.

“It’s intriguing that even though Trump’s support has slumped and Carson now has a 10 percent lead over him among likely caucus participants, Republican voters project Trump as the likely winner,” commented Boehmke. “It’s clear that there is still a lot of uncertainty about the eventual Republican nominee, suggesting that support will likely continue to shift between candidates.”

Were voters’ projected matchup to occur, Clinton currently holds a slight edge, with 45.4% of all respondents preferring her to 42.1% for Trump; 11.2% indicated they would vote for neither or someone else. Independents were split evenly between the two at 43.8% while Clinton leads among Democrats 91.2% to 4.7% and Trump leads among Republicans 74.5% to 10.4%. Clinton came out in front among female respondents, 48.8% to 40.2%, while Trump led among male respondents, 46.3% to 42.6%. Clinton holds a similar edge against Carly Fiorina, 45.1% to 41.1%, with female respondent evenly split between the two. Were she to match up against Marco Rubio, respondents leaned slightly towards the GOP nominee with 45.6% preferring Rubio against 45% for Clinton.

About the Hawkeye Poll

The list of GOP candidates included: “Donald Trump”, “Ben Carson”, “Ted Cruz”, “Jeb Bush”, “Marco Rubio”, “Carly Fiorina”, “Mike Huckabee”, “Rand Paul”, “John Kasich”, “Bobby Jindal” “Chris Christie”, “Rick Santorum”, “Lindsey Graham”, “Jim Gilmore”, “someone else”, and “don't know”.

The list of Democratic candidates included: “Hillary Clinton”, “Bernie Sanders”, “Joe Biden”, “Martin O’Malley”, “Lincoln Chafee”, “Jim Webb”, “someone else”, and “don’t know”. Chafee, Biden, and Webb were removed from the listed options after they withdrew from consideration.

Caucus-goers are self-identified. Participants were asked how likely they were to caucus, and for which party. A total of 175 respondents indicated they were “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to attend the 2016 Republican caucuses. The margin of error for the Republican likely caucus-goer subsample is plus or minus 7.4% percent. A total of 180 respondents indicated they were “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to attend the 2016 Democratic caucuses. The margin of error for the Democratic likely caucus-goer subsample is plus or minus 7.3% percent.

The poll was conducted by the Hawkeye Poll Cooperative, comprised of UI faculty and graduate students in political science. The faculty adviser for the poll is UI Professor of Political Science Frederick Boehmke. The poll used the facilities of the Iowa Social Science Research Center, directed by UI Professor of Political Science Frederick Boehmke. The poll is a teaching, research, and service project of the Department of Political Science in the UI College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Department of Political Science, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Office of the Provost fund the poll.

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