

Clemson University Palmetto Poll

Summary

With only three days remaining before the crucial South Carolina presidential primary on Saturday, Jan. 19, the electorate still is unsure of whom they will support, and many might change their minds before election day. The Clemson University Palmetto Poll in the GOP race shows John McCain in the lead, with Mike Huckabee in second and two more contenders fighting it out for third place.

The poll was conducted between Jan. 9 and 15. Respondents were chosen for the sample if they voted in at least one of the past four Republican primaries. The margin of error for the figures is plus or minus 4.6 percent for the sample size of 450 prospective voters. All people in the survey said they were going to vote on Saturday.

Our initial question asked if the voters were prepared to vote.

Q1. Thinking about the 2008 presidential election, which of the following best describes your thoughts on this contest?

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| 1. You have a good idea about who you will support | 58% |
| 2. You are following the news, but have not decided | 36% |
| 3. You are not paying much attention to the news about it | 3% |
| 4. Don't know/no answer | 4% |

Despite the impending vote at the end of the week, and the importance of South Carolina in the national pattern of GOP contests, only slightly more than half the voters had a “good idea” about whom they were going to support on election day. Nearly 40 percent of the voters were

unsure about who would receive their support. Based on these figures, we expect that as many as one-quarter of the voters might decide in the last 24 hours before the Saturday election.

The poll assumed that the candidates were making an impression, or not making an impression, on the voters based on their television advertising and direct mail campaigns. We followed the question about attention to the campaign with the familiar head-to-head race for each party.

Q2. If the 2008 presidential primary in South Carolina were held today, for whom would you vote?

Republicans:	August	November	January
1. Fred Thompson	19%	15%	10%
2. Rudy Giuliani	18%	9%	3%
3. John McCain	15%	11%	29%
4. Mitt Romney	11%	17%	13%
5. Mike Huckabee	6%	13%	22%
6. Ron Paul	1%	6%	6%
7. Duncan Hunter	--	1%	--
8. Undecided	20%	28%	17%

John McCain has emerged from the pack of GOP candidates and is leading former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee by seven points. The rise of Huckabee from single digits to contention for winning the primary is unusual, but the poll shows that McCain has a solid lead among likely voters. McCain has remained a familiar face to the electorate in South Carolina dating back to his second place finish in 2000. Fred Thompson and Mitt Romney are locked in a statistical dead heat for third place.

The final question in the poll asked voters about “how sure” they were that their choice of a candidate was conclusive. Voters were asked the following question as a follow-up after they made a choice for the primary election.

Q3. Are you sure about voting for _____ or might you change your mind before the South Carolina primary elections?

Republicans:

Very sure	53%
Might change	46%
DK/NA	1%

The final question asked how likely it was that the voter would stick with the choice made in the head-to-head competition. We find a very liquid environment in the state and the race still subject to change.