

Clemson University's Palmetto Poll

Summary

With only two days remaining before the crucial South Carolina presidential primary on Saturday, Jan. 26, an increasing number of voters are clarifying their choice. The last Clemson University Palmetto Poll in this primary cycle shows that Senator Barack Obama has established a statistically significant lead over his competitors, although many likely voters are still unsure about their choice.

The Palmetto Poll was conducted between Jan. 15 and 23. Respondents were chosen for the sample if they voted in at least one of the past four Democratic primaries and reported that they were planning to vote in this one. In this poll, 55 percent of the respondents are African-American and 58 percent are female, conforming closely to the projected turnout of Democratic primary voters. The margin of error for this poll is plus or minus 4.6 percent.

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 | 51% |
| 2. You are following the news, but have not decided | 40% |
| 3. You are not paying much attention to the news about it | 5% |
| 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 pattern of Democratic contests nationally, only half the voters had a "good idea" about

whom they were going to support. Forty percent of the voters were unsure about who they were going to support.

National interest in this 2008 primary contest in South Carolina has been sparked by the debate in Myrtle Beach and visits by candidates to across the state. Television advertising has been heavy. 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?

Democrats	November	January	Change
1. Barack Obama	17%	27%	+10%
2. Hillary Clinton	19%	20%	+1%
3. John Edwards	12%	17%	+5%
4. Undecided	49%	36%	-13%

African-Americans are favoring Barack Obama (43 percent) over Hillary Clinton (11 percent) and John Edwards (2 percent), with 45 percent of African-Americans undecided or refusing to express a preference. Of those who express a preference, Barack Obama leads all candidates with a seven point lead over Hillary Clinton. Obama is getting over three-quarters of the declared African-American vote in South Carolina; Clinton, 20 percent; and Edwards, 4 percent. In the previous Palmetto Polls, Clinton and Obama were splitting the black vote about evenly, but now Obama has a clear lead among African-American voters.

The final question in the Clemson University Palmetto 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?

Democrats:

Very sure 70%

Might change 26%

DK/NA 4%

Most voters who had chosen a candidate seemed committed to staying with their choice, but one-quarter of this group still might change. When combined with number of voters who are still not decided, this means that the candidates are smart to continue their campaigns until the primary election date, and the voters of South Carolina can still make a difference.