

NBC News Online Survey: Public Opinion on Republican Debates  
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## Post-Debate Overnight Poll Finds Trump Still Leading Pack; Carly Fiorina Winner of Debates

Following Thursday’s Republican debates, an overnight poll shows Donald Trump maintaining his edge over the crowded field of Republican candidates. The survey also finds a majority of Trump supporters say they would vote for him as an independent candidate for president, in the event he does not win the Republican nomination. The NBC News online poll conducted by SurveyMonkey over Friday night and into Saturday showed possible movement among the candidates following the debates, as well as Republican primary voters declaring Carly Fiorina the overall debate winner.

Donald Trump has the support of 23% of Republican primary voters following the debate, which had the highest viewership ever for a primary debate, with 24 million watchers. The poll was in the field for only a 24-hour period, during which Mr. Trump continued to make more headlines for his negative comments about Fox News moderator Megyn Kelly, which got him disinvited from speaking at a gathering of conservatives in Atlanta.

Ted Cruz and Carly Fiorina were the candidates with the most gains in support, 7 points and 6 points respectively, but there was no real change among most candidates given an error estimate of plus or minus 3.4 percentage points.

Change since last week among Republican primary voters including leaners			
	Last Week	Now	Change
Ted Cruz	6%	13%	+7
Carly Fiorina	2	8	+6
Ben Carson	8	11	+3
Donald Trump	22	23	+1
Mike Huckabee	4	5	+1
Lindsey Graham	1	1	0
Marco Rubio	8	8	0
Bobby Jindal	1	1	0
George Pataki	0	0	0
Rick Perry	2	2	0
John Kasich	3	2	-1
Rand Paul	6	5	-1
Rick Santorum	1	0	-1
Chris Christie	3	1	-2
Jeb Bush	10	7	-3
Scott Walker	10	7	-3

Among Trump supporters, a majority – 54% -- said they would vote for him for president as an independent candidate, even if he does not win the Republican nomination. During the Republican debate, Trump was met with both boos and cheers from the crowd as he said he would not rule out running as an independent if he didn't get the Republican nod. About 1 in 5 Trump supporters said they would support the eventual Republican candidate, while about the same number said it would depend.

Among Republican and Republican-leaning voters who watched either of the debates or followed coverage of the debates in the news, Carly Fiorina emerged as the clear winner. Twenty-two percent said Fiorina won or had the best performance in the debate, followed by 18% who said Trump had the best performance. However, another 29% said Trump did the worst in the debate, clearly showing how polarizing he is. When the candidates' negative performance percentages are subtracted from their positive percentages, Fiorina notched a positive 20, whereas Trump scored a negative 11. Both Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz did well, with net scores of positive 12 and 11. Rand Paul also fared poorly, scoring a negative 11.

	Best job in debate	Worst job in debate	Net score (worst subtracted from best)
Carly Fiorina	22	2	+20
Donald Trump	18	29	-11
Marco Rubio	13	1	+12
Ted Cruz	12	1	+11
Ben Carson	8	1	+7
Mike Huckabee	5	1	+4
Rand Paul	3	14	-11
Scott Walker	3	1	+2
Jeb Bush	2	11	-9
Chris Christie	2	9	-7
John Kasich	2	2	0
Lindsey Graham	*	8	-8
George Pataki	*	2	-2
Rick Santorum	*	1	-1
Bobby Jindal	*	1	-1
Jim Gilmore	0	2	-2
Rick Perry	0	2	-2
None of them	11	13	
No answer	1	1	

Finally, the poll found that Republican voters report that these debates matter: 25% said a candidate's debate performance is very important to their vote decision, and another 54% it is somewhat important. The next Republican debate will take place on September 16 at the Reagan Library in California.

**TOPLINES** Questions 1 – 5, 9, 11-13 held for future releases.

6. In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>No answer</u>
8.7-8.15	30	32	36	2
7.13-19.15	27	33	38	2
6.3-7.15	23	35	40	2
4.6-8.15	23	34	41	2

7. [ASK IF INDEPENDENT or SKIP] As of today, do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>N/A</u>
8.7-8.15	33	23	41	4
7.13-19.15	27	24	44	6
6.3-7.15	25	28	47	0
4.6-8.15	26	34	38	2

[ASK OF REPUBLICANS AND LEAN REPUBLICANS]

8. Here is a list of possible candidates for the Republican nomination for president in 2016. If the 2016 Republican presidential primary or caucus in your state were being held today, for whom would you vote? [RANDOMIZE 1-17]

	8.7-8.15 RV	7.13-19.15 RV	4.6-8.15 RV
Jeb Bush	7	10	12
Ben Carson	11	8	7
Chris Christie	1	3	8
Ted Cruz	13	6	7
Carly Fiorina	8	2	NA
Jim Gilmore	*	NA	NA
Lindsey Graham	1	1	1
Mike Huckabee	4	5	6
Bobby Jindal	1	1	1
John Kasich	2	3	2
George Pataki	*	*	NA
Rand Paul	5	6	7
Rick Perry	2	2	3
Marco Rubio	8	8	6
Rick Santorum	*	1	NA
Donald Trump	23	22	NA
Scott Walker	7	10	13
Someone else	1	2	5
Wouldn't vote/ Don't know	6	11	21

No answer	X	2	X
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[ASK OF TRUMP SUPPORTERS ONLY]

10. If Donald Trump does not win the Republican nomination for president and runs as an independent candidate, for whom would you vote?

	<u>8.7-8.15 Trump Supporters</u>
The Republican candidate	19
Donald Trump, the independent candidate	54
The Democratic candidate	*
Depends	21
Wouldn't vote/Don't know	3
Someone else	2
No answer	2

14. Did you happen to watch either of the debates among the Republican candidates for president that were held on Thursday night, or not?

	<u>8.7-8.15</u>
I watched both debates	18
I watched the first debate that included seven candidates	2
I watched the second debate that included ten candidates	21
I did not watch the debates live, but followed coverage of them in the news	33
I did not watch the debates and haven't really followed news coverage about them	25
No answer	2

15. From what you have heard and read, who do you think won or did the best job in the Republican debates? [RANDOMIZE 1-17]

8.7-8.15 (Among those who watched or followed coverage)	<u>Republican &amp; Republican Leaning RVs</u>
Jeb Bush	2
Ben Carson	8
Chris Christie	2
Ted Cruz	12
Carly Fiorina	22
Jim Gilmore	*
Lindsey Graham	*
Mike Huckabee	5
Bobby Jindal	*
John Kasich	2
George Pataki	*
Rand Paul	3
Rick Perry	*
Marco Rubio	13

Rick Santorum	*
Donald Trump	18
Scott Walker	3
None of them	11
No answer	1

16. From what you have heard and read, who do you think did the worst job in the Republican debates? [RANDOMIZE 1 - 17]

8.7-8.15 (Among those who watched or followed coverage)	<u>Republican &amp; Republican Leaning RVs</u>
Jeb Bush	11
Ben Carson	1
Chris Christie	9
Ted Cruz	1
Carly Fiorina	2
Jim Gilmore	2
Lindsey Graham	8
Mike Huckabee	1
Bobby Jindal	1
John Kasich	2
George Pataki	2
Rand Paul	14
Rick Perry	2
Marco Rubio	1
Rick Santorum	1
Donald Trump	29
Scott Walker	1
None of them	13
No answer	1

[AMONG REPUBLICAN AND REPUBLICAN LEANING VOTERS WHO WATCHED OR FOLLOWED COVERAGE OF THE DEBATES]

17. How important is a candidate's debate performance in deciding your vote for the Republican nominee for President?

	<u>Very important</u>	<u>Somewhat important</u>	<u>Not very important</u>	<u>Not at all important</u>	<u>DK/NA</u>
8.7-8.15	25	54	17	3	1

18. In general, how would you describe your views on most political issues? Are you:

	<u>Very conservative</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Very liberal</u>	<u>DK/NA</u>
8.7-8.15	13	25	36	15	8	3
7.13-19.15	8	24	40	17	8	2
6.3-7.15	7	20	45	19	7	2

4.6-8.15	6	19	39	23	12	2
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19. Some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you registered to vote in the election district where you now live, or aren't you?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>N/A</u>
8.7-8.15	85	10	3	2

20. Are you now married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?

	<u>Married</u>	<u>Widowed</u>	<u>Divorced</u>	<u>Separated</u>	<u>Never married</u>	<u>DK/NA</u>
8.7-8.15	53	4	13	2	25	2

21. Some people think of themselves as evangelical or born again Christians. Do you ever think of yourself in either of these ways?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/NA</u>
8.7-8.15	32	64	3

22. What is your current religion, if any?

	8.7-8.15
Christian / Protestant/ Methodist/ Lutheran/ Baptist	45
Catholic	22
Mormon	2
Greek or Russian Orthodox	0
Jewish	2
Muslim	1
Buddhist	1
Hindu	1
Atheist or agnostic	9
Nothing in particular	11
Something else	5
DK/NA	2

23. Are you:

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
8.7-8.15	48	52

24. How old are you?

	<u>18-24</u>	<u>25-34</u>	<u>35-44</u>	<u>45-54</u>	<u>55-65</u>	<u>65 and older</u>	<u>DK/NA</u>
8.7-8.15	13	17	17	19	16	18	0

27. What was the last grade of school you completed?

	<u>Did not complete high school</u>	<u>High school or G.E.D</u>	<u>Associate degree</u>	<u>Some College</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>Post graduate degree</u>	<u>DK/NA</u>
8.7-8.15	5	36	9	23	15	12	0

28. Are you:

	<u>8.7-8.15</u>
White	67
Black	12
Hispanic	14
Asian	2
Other	5
DK/NA	0

29. My total family income last year was:

	<u>Under \$15,000</u>	<u>Between \$15,000-\$29,999</u>	<u>Between \$30,000-\$49,999</u>	<u>Between \$50,000-\$74,999</u>	<u>Between \$75,000-\$99,999</u>	<u>Between \$100,000-\$150,000</u>	<u>Over \$150,000</u>	<u>DK/NA</u>
8.7-8.15	9	13	16	19	12	14	10	7

## METHODOLOGY

The NBC News Online Survey was conducted online by SurveyMonkey August 7-8, 2015 among a national sample of 3,551 adults aged 18 and over. Respondents for this non-probability survey were selected from the nearly three million people who take surveys on the SurveyMonkey platform each day.

Data for this survey have been weighted for age, race, sex, education, and region using the Census Bureau's *American Community Survey* to reflect the demographic composition of the United States. Because the sample is based on those who initially self-selected for participation rather than a probability sample, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. All surveys may be subject to multiple sources of error, including, but not limited to sampling error, coverage error, and measurement error. Polls conducted in one day may include additional error due to the limited time period that panelists have to respond to and complete the survey.

To assess the variability in the estimates and account for design effects, we create a bootstrap confidence interval to produce an error estimate, meaning we use the weighted data to generate 5000 independent samples and calculate the 95% confidence intervals for the weighted average.

When analyzing the survey results and their accuracy, this error estimate should be taken into consideration in much the same way that analysis of probability polls takes into account the margin of sampling error. For example, if 47 percent of voters say they support Candidate A and 43 percent of voters support Candidate B, and the error estimate is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points, Candidate A could be supported by as low as 44 percent of voters and Candidate B could have as high as 47 percent of support. Therefore, Candidate A does not have a "lead."

The following table provides the unweighted sample sizes and the error estimate that has been calculated in place of the margin of sampling error for a variable that is expected to have close to an even split in most groupings (such as gender):

Group	Unweighted N	Plus or minus
Total sample	3,551	2.4 percentage points
Republican RVs	1,591	3.4 percentage points
Democrat RVs	1,402	3.6 percentage points
18-29	375	6.8 percentage points
30-44	711	5.0 percentage points
45-64	1,631	3.4 percentage points
65+	834	4.6 percentage points
White	2880	2.5 percentage points
Black	203	8.4 percentage points
Hispanic	181	9.2 percentage points
Other	287	7.7 percentage points