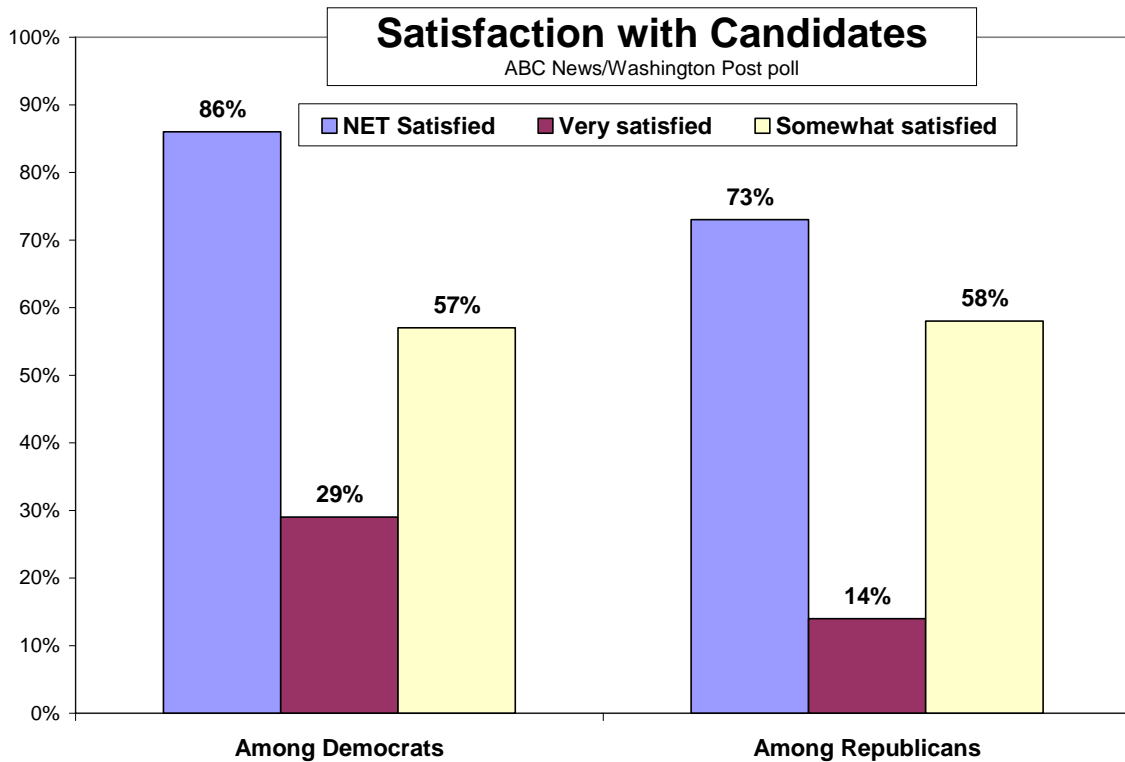


Public Interest Runs High In a Hearty Political Stew

Attention to the 2008 presidential race is extraordinarily high this early in the campaign, partisans are by and large happy with their choices – and initial support levels are showing some shifts in the preliminary jockeying for position.

It all makes for a hearty stew of election politics, with strong advantages but also serious hazards for the front-running candidates – on one side, the sharp polarization inspired by Hillary Clinton (whose favorable rating has slipped under 50 percent for the first time in years); on the other, Republican concerns about Rudy Giuliani’s positions on abortion and gay marriage – with a range of subtexts on race, religion, age and more.

Even with the first nominating contests 11 months off and the general election 20 months away, 65 percent of Americans are closely following the 2008 race. That compares to just 37 percent of Democrats who were paying close attention at roughly this time (actually two months later) in the 2004 cycle (when the Republican nomination was uncontested).

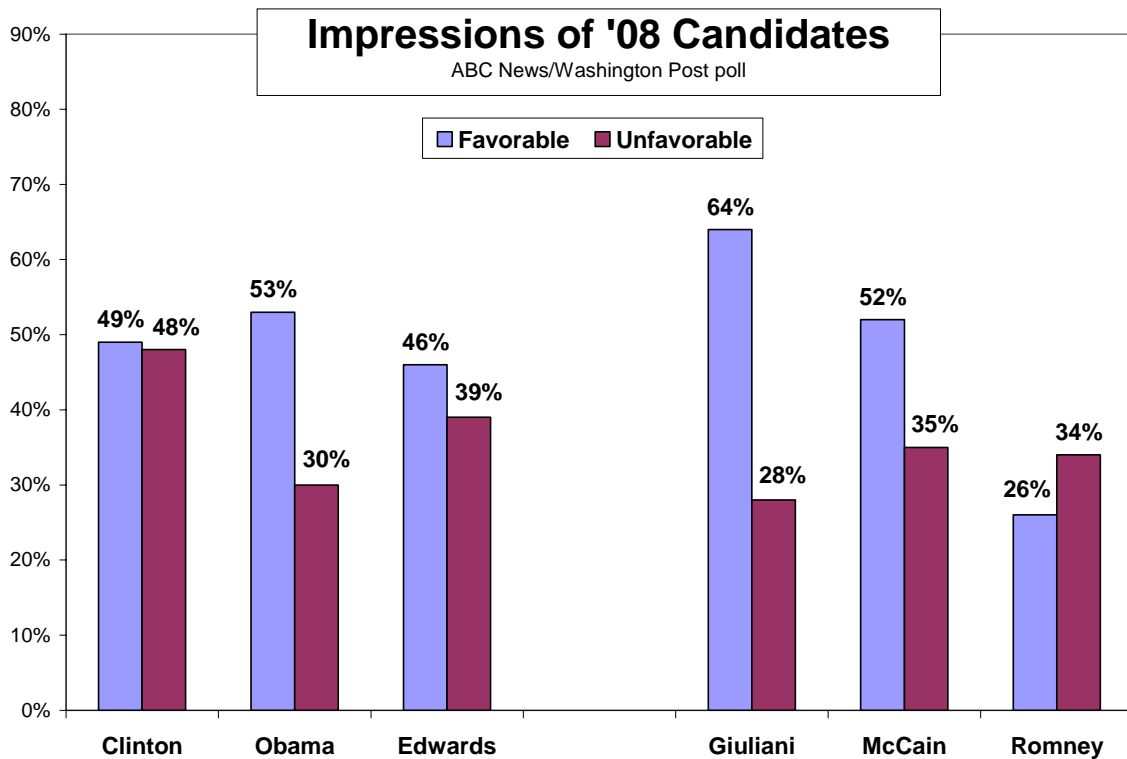


And most people – particularly Democrats – like what they see. Eighty-six percent of Democrats say they’re satisfied with the choice of candidates for the party’s nomination, sharply more than their 64 to 69 percent satisfaction in ABC News/Washington Post polls in the 2000 and 2004 races.

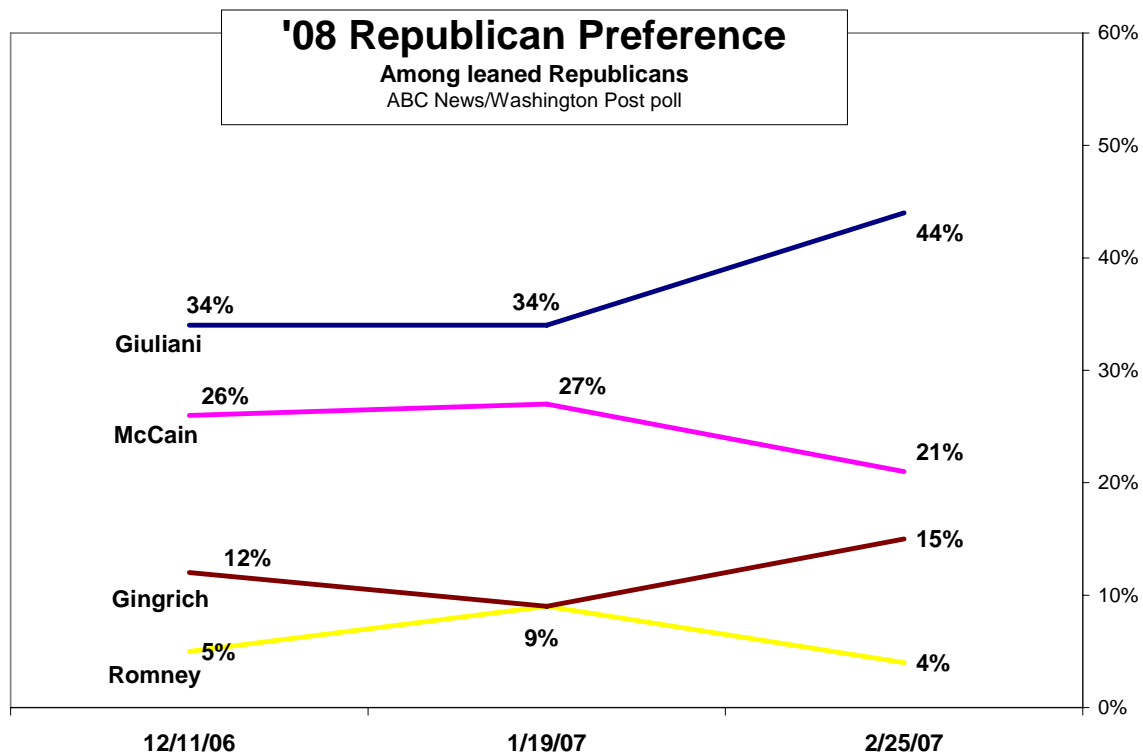
On the Republican side, 73 percent are relatively content with their choices – still a big majority, albeit 13 points lower than Democratic satisfaction. Indeed Republicans are twice as likely as Democrats to be dissatisfied with their crop of candidates, 24 percent vs. 12 percent; and half as likely to be “very satisfied,” 14 percent vs. 29 percent.

It follows that Democratic frontrunners, Clinton and Barack Obama, have notably stronger support within their party than do the Republican leaders, Giuliani and John McCain. For all, of course, there’s plenty of room – and time – to move.

Interests differ as well: Democrats cite the war in Iraq as the single biggest issue in their choice for the nomination, followed at some distance by the economy and health care; just three percent mention terrorism or security. Among Republicans, by contrast, terrorism, the war and the economy share top billing as voting concerns.



PREFERENCES and RISKS – As the race has shaped up in the last month there’s been a significant shift on the Republican side, with Giuliani gaining 10 points to a 2-1 lead over his closest competitor, John McCain, who’s slipped a bit. The main cause: movement among evangelical white Protestants, a key Republican group.

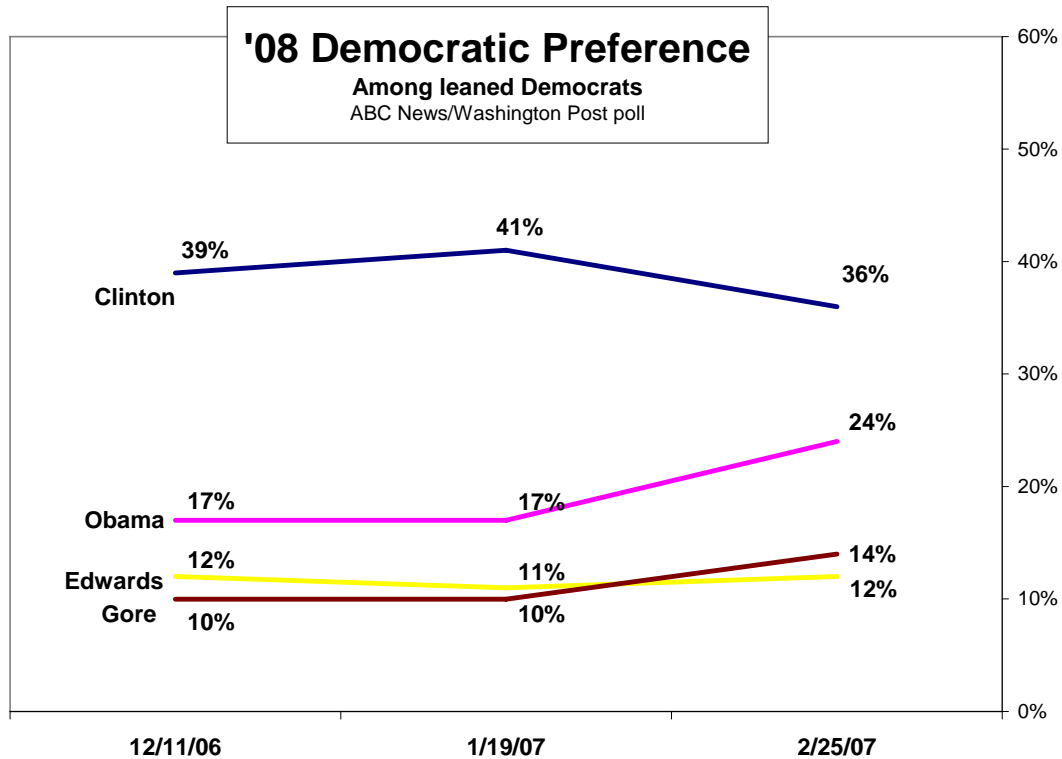


But there's risk as Giuliani's positions become better known. Nearly half of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say they're less likely to vote for him given his past support for legal abortion and gay civil unions. Of that group, half – 23 percent of all leaned Republicans – say there's no chance they could vote for Giuliani on account of those views.

Indeed, even among Giuliani's current supporters, more than a third, 36 percent, say they're less likely to support him because of his position on these issues. (Among Republicans who support other candidates, that rises to 54 percent.)

Among the Democrats, Clinton still leads, but by less of a margin than last month, given a seven-point gain in support for Barack Obama. His advance has come overwhelmingly among African-Americans, many of whom likely have learned more about Obama in recent news coverage.

Clinton's support, meanwhile, slipped by five points. The reason, again, is entirely blacks: In ABC/Post polls in December and January, she led Obama among African-Americans by 60-20 percent. Today it's a 44-30 percent race among blacks, with Obama in front.



Removing two well-known, unannounced contenders from the equation helps both the leaders: Without Newt Gingrich as a candidate, Giuliani's support jumps to 53 percent, while McCain's remains essentially unchanged. And without Al Gore as a candidate on the Democratic side, Clinton gains some ground over Obama.

Gore, for his part, seems unlikely to get much of a bounce from the best-documentary Oscar for his film, "An Inconvenient Truth." Eighty-seven percent in this survey, which was completed before the award, said it wouldn't impact their choice. The rest split evenly between saying it would make them more likely – or less likely – to support him.

DEMS – Clinton's public profile is highly polarized, though that's perhaps more relevant to the general election than to the primary campaign. Among all Americans, 49 percent view her favorably, but 48 percent unfavorably. Moreover, after a period of recent balance, more again strongly dislike her – 35 percent – than strongly like her, 25 percent.

It's inspired by partisanship, perhaps a hangover from her husband's time in office. Among leaned Democrats, 74 percent view Clinton favorably, 40 percent "strongly" so. But among leaned Republicans, 82 percent rate her unfavorably – 66 percent strongly.

At the same time, Clinton leads in expectations as well as outright support – 46 percent of Democrats expect her to win the nomination – and in most attributes as well. She leads Obama and John Edwards by sizable margins (in many cases vast ones) on having the best experience, being the strongest leader, being the most electable and being the closest to Democrats on the issues.

But it's a closer contest on best understanding Democrats' problems – an eight-point Clinton lead over Obama – and she flags on honesty and trustworthiness, trailing Obama by a scant five points; and on being the “most inspiring” candidate, trailing him by eight.

Among leaned Democrats			
	Clinton	Obama	Edwards
Has the best experience	71%	5	17
Is the strongest leader	52	23	17
Is the most electable	48	17	25
Is closest to you on issues	43	28	19
Best understands your problems	39	31	20
Is the most honest/trustworthy	29	34	21
Is the most inspiring	36	44	14

Democrats split on whether Clinton's vote authorizing George W. Bush to use force in Iraq was the right thing for her to have done (52 percent) or a mistake (47 percent). Among those who say it's a mistake, three in 10 say she should apologize for it – far from a majority, but at 14 percent of all leaned Democrats, not an insignificant group if the primary race tightens.

Obama, for his part, has had an eight-point boost in personal favorability; 53 percent of Americans now rate him favorably, 30 percent unfavorably – a better ratio than Clinton's, but with more people undecided, given his much shorter time in the public eye.

Edwards, the 2004 vice presidential nominee, has had a 13-point jump in his unfavorable rating. On the Republican side Mitt Romney, similarly, has seen a 10-point jump in his unfavorable score.

REPS – In terms of overall popularity, Giuliani has the brightest halo by far: Sixty-four percent of Americans have a favorable opinion of him overall, vs. just 28 percent unfavorable. Polarization is far milder: Giuliani's negative rating from leaned Democrats (41 percent) is just half Clinton's from leaned Republicans (82 percent).

	Giuliani		Clinton	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
All	64%	28	49%	48
Leaned Dems	49	41	74	22
Leaned Reps	84	11	17	82

In another contrast, while being “the most inspiring” candidate is a weaker attribute for Clinton, it's Giuliani's single best. And having the best experience, Clinton's best issue, is Giuliani's worst – the only one on which he trails McCain.

Among leaned Republicans			
	Giuliani	McCain	Romney
Is the most inspiring	65%	21	6
Is the strongest leader	63	26	5

Is the most electable	55	34	4
Best understands your problems	51	27	8
Is closest to you on issues	44	29	12
Is the most honest/trustworthy	43	29	11
Has the best experience	38	47	6

Of course there are other attributes to consider; separate results from this poll show a substantial risk to McCain from voter compunctions about his age (he turns 72 next year); as well as challenges for Romney over his Mormon religion; Giuliani over his two divorces; and Obama, who's trying to quit smoking. (See separate analysis at <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=2906639&page=1>.)

Among support groups, Giuliani's backing for the nomination is higher among women than among men – 50 percent vs. 39 percent. Clinton, as well, continues to do better with women than with men in her party, though she – like Giuliani – leads among both groups.

There may be more fluidity in the Republican race: A minority of Giuliani's supporters, 38 percent, support him strongly, as do 31 percent of McCain's; that soft support may provide less of a shock absorber on the campaign trail. Clinton's support among Democrats, by contrast, is 56 percent strong; Obama's, 60 percent.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Feb. 22-25, 2007, among a random national sample of 1,082 adults, including an oversample of black respondents. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1-13. Previously released.

14. Thinking specifically about the way the Bush administration is handling the situation in Iraq, would you say you're (pleased about it, satisfied but not pleased, dissatisfied but not angry, or angry)?

	----- Positive -----			----- Negative -----			No
	NET	Pleased	Satisfied	NET	Dissatisfied	Angry	op.
2/25/07	33	7	26	67	38	29	*
8/28/05	45	14	31	53	26	27	2
6/26/05	45	15	30	55	32	23	*

15. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of (NAME)? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

2/25/07 - Summary Table

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opin.
a. Hillary Clinton	49	48	3
b. John McCain	52	35	13
c. Barack Obama	53	30	16
d. Rudy Giuliani	64	28	8
e. Bill Clinton	55	42	2
f. John Edwards	46	39	14
g. Mitt Romney	26	34	40

Trend:

a. Hillary Clinton

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
2/25/07	49	25	24	48	13	35	3
1/19/07	54	31	23	44	14	30	3
12/11/06	56	27	29	40	11	29	4
5/15/06	54	29	25	42	11	31	4
3/5/06	52	27	25	46	12	33	2
6/5/05	51	NA	NA	46	NA	NA	3
6/1/03	44	15	29	48	16	32	8
9/2/99	49	NA	NA	44	NA	NA	7
6/6/99	59			35			6
3/14/99	60			36			4
2/14/99	63			31			6
11/1/98	64			31			5
8/21/98	64			28			8
8/19/98	64			32			4
4/4/98	58			33			10
1/30/98	60			30			10
1/19/98	52			39			9
3/9/97	47			44			9
9/4/96 RV	47			42			12
6/30/96	44			47			9
1/21/96	28			36			36
1/19/96	32			34			34
10/31/94	47			44			8
5/15/94	54			41			5
3/27/94	53			39			8
1/23/94	55			34			11
11/14/93	58			33			9
8/8/93	59			33			8
4/26/93	54			26			20
2/23/93	59			24			18
1/17/93	51			20			29
7/8/92	30			26			43
3/28/92	28			22			51

b. John McCain

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
2/25/07	52	13	39	35	22	13	13
1/19/07	49	NA	NA	35	NA	NA	16
12/11/06	50	17	33	31	20	11	19
5/15/06	55	20	35	31	20	11	14
3/5/06	59	22	38	29	18	11	12
6/5/05	57	NA	NA	32	NA	NA	11
7/30/01	57			30			12
2/27/00	60			21			19
10/31/99	36			22			41
9/2/99	22			10			68

9/27/92	LV	55	NA	NA	36	NA	NA	9
8/23/92	RV	54	NA	NA	36	NA	NA	10
7/19/92	RV	58	NA	NA	23	NA	NA	18
7/8/92		52	NA	NA	33	NA	NA	15
6/7/92		41	NA	NA	38	NA	NA	21
3/18/92		37	NA	NA	37	NA	NA	26
3/11/92		39	NA	NA	31	NA	NA	30
2/2/92		37	NA	NA	24	NA	NA	39
1/27/92		23	NA	NA	11	NA	NA	66
10/21/91		13	NA	NA	9	NA	NA	78

*Post poll

f. John Edwards

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
2/25/07	46	13	33	39	22	17	14
12/11/06	49	13	36	26	16	10	25
12/11/06	49	NA	NA	26	NA	NA	25
10/3/04*	LV	45	NA	30	NA	NA	25
9/8/04	RV	39	NA	26	NA	NA	35
8/1/04	RV	49	NA	18	NA	NA	33
7/25/04	RV	50	NA	24	NA	NA	26

*10/3/03 and previous: "Regardless of how you might vote, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of John Edwards or perhaps you don't know enough to say."

g. Mitt Romney

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
2/25/07	26	5	21	34	22	12	40
12/11/06	22	5	17	24	20	4	54

16-24. Previously released.

25. How closely are you following the 2008 presidential race: very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, or not closely at all?

	----- Closely -----			----- Not closely -----			No
	NET	Very	Smwt.	NET	Not too	At all	opin.
2/25/07	65	20	44	35	25	10	*
Early 2004:							
10/29/03	54	15	39	45	30	15	0
9/13/03	56	16	40	44	27	17	*
Early 2000:							
12/15/99	45	12	33	55	31	24	*
10/31/99	61	16	45	38	25	13	*
Among leaned Dems:							
2/25/07	67	21	46	33	25	8	*
Early 2004*							
10/29/03	53	13	40	47	29	18	0
9/13/03	63	19	44	37	24	13	0
4/30/03	37	8	29	63	33	30	0

*"the race for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination"

Call for full trend.

08DEM1. (ASKED OF LEANED DEMOCRATS) If the 2008 Democratic presidential primary or caucus in your state were being held today, and the candidates were: (Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, Barack Obama, Al Gore, Wesley Clark, Bill Richardson, Joe Biden, Chris Dodd, Dennis Kucinich, or Mike Gravel), for whom would you vote?

NET LEANED VOTE:

	2/25/07	1/19/07	12/11/06
Hillary Clinton	36	41	39
John Edwards	12	11	12
Barack Obama	24	17	17
John Kerry	NA	8	7
Al Gore	14	10	10
Wesley Clark	*	1	1
Tom Vilsack	*	*	1
Evan Bayh	NA	NA	1
Bill Richardson	3	1	2
Joe Biden	1	3	2
Chris Dodd	*	*	*
Dennis Kucinich	*	1	NA
Mike Gravel	0	*	NA
Other (vol.)	*	1	*
None of these (vol.)	3	2	2
Would not vote (vol.)	1	*	1
No opinion	3	3	4

08DEM2. (IF NAMED CANDIDATE, 08DEM1) Do you support (INSERT NAMED CANDIDATE) strongly, or somewhat?

2/25/07 - Summary Table

	Strongly	Somewhat	No opin.
Hillary Clinton	56	44	0
Barack Obama	60	38	1

26. (ASKED OF GORE SUPPORTERS) If Gore does not run, for whom would you vote?

NET LEANED VOTE IF NO GORE

	2/25/07
Hillary Clinton	43
John Edwards	14
Barack Obama	27
Wesley Clark	*
Tom Vilsack	*
Bill Richardson	3
Joe Biden	2
Chris Dodd	*
Dennis Kucinich	*
Mike Gravel	*
Other (vol.)	*
None of these (vol.)	4
Would not vote (vol.)	1
No opinion	4

08REP1. (ASKED OF LEANED REPUBLICANS) If the 2008 Republican presidential primary or caucus in your state were being held today, and the candidates were: (Rudy Giuliani, John McCain, Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich, Chuck Hagel, Tommy Thompson, Mike Huckabee, Duncan Hunter, George Pataki, Sam Brownback, Tom Tancredo, Jim Gilmore, or Ron Paul), for whom would you vote?

NET LEANED VOTE:

	2/25/07	1/19/07	12/11/06
Rudy Giuliani	44	34	34
John McCain	21	27	26
Mitt Romney	4	9	5
Newt Gingrich	15	9	12
Chuck Hagel	1	*	*
Tommy Thompson	2	1	2
Mike Huckabee	2	1	*
Duncan Hunter	*	*	1
George Pataki	1	2	3
Sam Brownback	1	1	1
Tom Tancredo	*	1	*
Jim Gilmore	*	1	NA
Ron Paul	1	1	NA
Other (vol.)	*	*	*
None of these (vol.)	2	2	6
Would not vote (vol.)	1	1	*
No opinion	4	9	9

08REP2. (IF NAMED CANDIDATE, 08REP1) Do you support (INSERT NAMED CANDIDATE) strongly, or somewhat?

2/25/07 - Summary Table

	Strongly	Somewhat	No opin.
Rudy Giuliani	38	61	*
John McCain	31	69	0

27. (ASKED OF GINGRICH SUPPORTERS) If Gingrich does not run, for whom would you vote?

NET LEANED VOTE IF NO GINGRICH

	2/25/07
Rudy Giuliani	53
John McCain	23
Mitt Romney	5
Chuck Hagel	1
Tommy Thompson	2
Mike Huckabee	2
Duncan Hunter	*
George Pataki	1
Sam Brownback	2
Tom Tancredo	1
Jim Gilmore	*
Ron Paul	1
Other (vol.)	*
None of these (vol.)	2
Would not vote (vol.)	1
No opinion	5

28. (ASKED OF LEANED DEMOCRATS) Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the choice of candidates for the Democratic nomination for President this year - are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?

	---- Satisfied -----			--- Dissatisfied ----			No opin.
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Very	
2/25/07	86	29	57	12	9	3	2
10/29/03	68	9	58	28	21	8	4
9/13/03	64	8	56	34	27	7	2
1/16/00	69	14	56	28	21	7	2

*10/29/03 and previous: "candidates in the Democratic primary"

29. (ASKED OF LEANED REPUBLICANS) Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the choice of candidates for the Republican nomination for President this year - are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?

	---- Satisfied -----			--- Dissatisfied ----			No opin.
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Very	
2/25/07	73	14	58	24	20	5	3

30. (ASKED OF LEANED DEMOCRATS) What's the single most important issue to you in your choice for the Democratic candidate for president?

	2/25/07
War in Iraq	28
Terrorism/security	3
Economy/jobs	17
Education	2
Environment	2
Health care	16
Someone I trust	2
The right experience	2
Strong leadership	4
Electability/best chance to win in November	1
Honesty	4
Immigration	1
Abortion	*
Foreign policy	2
Other	10
No opinion	5

31. (ASKED OF LEANED REPUBLICANS) What's the single most important issue to you in your choice for the Republican candidate for president?

	2/25/07
War in Iraq	17
Terrorism/security	18
Economy/jobs	15
Education	3
Health care	6
Someone I trust	4
The right experience	*
Strong leadership	4
Honesty	6
Immigration	3
Abortion	3
Foreign policy	2

Morals/family values	3
Other	11
No opinion	5

32. What's more important to you: supporting the presidential candidate in your party (who you agree with most on the issues), or the candidate (who's most likely to win in November 2008)?

	Agree on issues	Most likely to win	Same person (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Both (vol.)	No op.
2/25/07	85	13	*	1	1	1

33. (ASKED OF LEANED DEMOCRATS) Regardless of who you yourself support, which candidate do you think is most likely to win the Democratic nomination for president?

	2/25/07
Hillary Clinton	46
John Edwards	12
Barack Obama	16
Al Gore	4
Wesley Clark	1
Tom Vilsack	0
Bill Richardson	0
Joe Biden	*
Chris Dodd	0
Dennis Kucinich	*
Mike Gravel	0
Other (vol.)	3
No opinion	17

34. (IF NAMED CANDIDATE, Q33) Would you be satisfied or dissatisfied with (INSERT NAMED CANDIDATE) as the Democratic party nominee?

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	No opinion
2/25/07	86	13	1
Clinton	84	16	1

35. (ASKED OF LEANED REPUBLICANS) Regardless of who you yourself support, which candidate do you think is most likely to win the Republican nomination for president?

	2/25/07
Rudy Giuliani	44
John McCain	26
Mitt Romney	3
Newt Gingrich	2
Chuck Hagel	0
Tommy Thompson	1
Mike Huckabee	2
Duncan Hunter	0
George Pataki	1
Sam Brownback	*
Tom Tancredo	0
Jim Gilmore	0
Ron Paul	*
Other (vol.)	3
No opinion	17

36. (IF NAMED CANDIDATE, Q35) Would you be satisfied or dissatisfied with (INSERT NAMED CANDIDATE) as the Republican party nominee?

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	No opinion
2/25/07	87	12	2
Giuliani	89	9	1
McCain	82	16	2

37. (ASKED OF LEANED DEMOCRATS) Regardless of who you may support, who do you think (ITEM) - (Clinton) (Obama) or (Edwards)?

2/25/07 - Summary Table	Clinton	Obama	Edwards	All (vol.)	Any 2 (vol.)	None (vol.)	No op.
a. is the strongest leader	52	23	17	1	1	1	5
b. best understands the problems of people like you	39	31	20	1	1	3	4
c. is the most honest and trustworthy	29	34	21	3	2	7	5
d. has the best experience to be president	71	5	17	1	1	2	3
e. is the most inspiring	36	44	14	1	1	2	3
f. has the best chance of getting elected president in November 2008	48	17	25	*	2	1	6
g. is closest to you on the issues	43	28	19	1	1	2	6

38. (ASKED OF LEANED REPUBLICANS) Regardless of who you may support, who do you think (READ ITEM) - (Giuliani), (McCain) or (Romney)?

2/25/07 - Summary Table	Giuliani	McCain	Romney	All (vol.)	Any 2 (vol.)	None (vol.)	No op.
a. is the strongest leader	63	26	5	*	1	1	4
b. best understands the problems of people like you	51	27	8	*	*	6	8
c. is the most honest and trustworthy	43	29	11	1	2	7	7
d. has the best experience to be president	38	47	6	1	1	2	4
e. is the most inspiring	65	21	6	*	1	3	4
f. has the best chance of getting elected president in November 2008	55	34	4	*	*	1	5
g. is closest to you on the issues	44	29	12	*	*	2	12

39. (ASKED OF LEANED REPUBLICANS) Giuliani has been a supporter of legal abortion and gay civil unions. Does this make you (more likely) to vote for him for the Republican nomination for president, (less likely), or doesn't it make a difference in your vote?

	More	Less	Does not make a difference	No opin.
2/25/07	10	46	43	1

40. (IF LESS LIKELY, Q39) Given his position on abortion and gay civil unions, is there a chance you'd vote for Giuliani for the Republican nomination for president, or no chance?

	Chance	No chance	No opin.
2/25/07	49	49	2

41. (ASKED OF LEANED DEMOCRATS) As you may know, as a senator Hillary Clinton voted to authorize the war in Iraq. Given what was known at the time, do you think (this vote was the right thing for her to have done, or was it a mistake?) (this vote was a mistake, or was it the right thing for her to have done?)

	Right thing	Mistake	No opin.
2/25/07	52	47	1

42. (IF MISTAKE, Q41) Do you think she should apologize for it, or is that not necessary?

	Should apologize	Apology not necessary	No opin.
2/25/07	31	68	1

43. Does the fact that Hillary Clinton's husband served as president make you (more likely) to vote for her for President, (less likely), or doesn't it make a difference in your vote?

	More	Less	No difference	No opin.
2/25/07	17	20	62	*

44. (ASKED OF LEANED DEMOCRATS) As you may know, Al Gore is the subject of a movie on global warming that has been nominated for an Academy Award for best documentary. If Gore's movie wins the Oscar, would that make you more likely to vote for him for the Democratic nomination for president, less likely, or wouldn't it make a difference in your vote?

	More	Less	No difference	No opin.
2/25/07	6	7	87	1

45. Held for release.

END