

Gingrich Polls Higher than Obama among Evangelicals

A Christian polling firm found that evangelicals favor five possible Republican presidential candidates more than President Barack Obama.

Even the twice-divorced, thrice-married Newt Gingrich received a higher favorability rating among evangelicals than Obama, who has been married only once and for more than 18 years. Evangelicals have identified themselves as being pro-family.

Among evangelicals, Gingrich's ratings (57 percent favorable, 37 percent unfavorable) far outpaced Obama's (6 percent favorable, 94 percent unfavorable).

Obama has been identified habitually in conservative religious and political circles as a Muslim. He has repeatedly identified himself as a practicing Christian and framed issues from a Christian moral perspective.

Among the other four Republicans, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee was the evangelical favorite (88 percent positive, 11 percent negative), compared to former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin (79 percent-21percent), former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney (56 percent-29 percent) and U.S. Rep. Ron Paul (51 percent-26 percent).

Huckabee and Paul are both Baptists. Huckabee is a former Southern Baptist pastor who served as president of the Arkansas Baptist Convention.

Palin belongs to Wasilla Bible Church, a nondenominational church.

Romney is a Mormon. In 2007, he [addressed](#) his faith in a speech at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station, Texas, seeking to reassure voters.

Gingrich, a former Speaker of the House, was baptized by immersion at St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans as a graduate student. He converted to Catholicism in 2009 at St. Joseph's Church in Washington, D.C.

Barna defined evangelicals as "born-again Christians" who embrace seven other

beliefs, including that salvation is possible through grace, not works; accuracy of the Bible in all that it teaches; personal responsibility to witness to their faith to non-Christians; and the existence of Satan.

Evangelicals were numerically fewer than, and a subset of, born-again Christians. Evangelicals were defined as more conservative than born-again Christians.

Huckabee's numbers were much lower among born-again Christians than among evangelicals (58 percent favorable-27 percent unfavorable). Palin's positive numbers dropped and negatives increased (53 percent-43 percent), as did Romney's (49 percent-33 percent).

Gingrich was more unpopular than popular (43 percent-47 percent).

Catholics gave Obama a 54 percent favorable and 45 percent unfavorable rating.

Mainline Protestants gave the president a 62 percent favorable and 37 percent unfavorable rating.

Barna cast these denominational bodies as mainline Protestants: the American Baptist Churches-USA; the Episcopal Church; the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; the Presbyterian Church (USA); the United Church of Christ; and the United Methodist Church.

Members of non-Christian faiths offered the president a similar rating to mainline Protestants (61 percent positive-38 percent negative).

Obama found his highest support among religious skeptics (atheists and agnostics) at 65 percent positive and 34 percent negative.

None of the five potential Republican candidates received favorable ratings from members of non-Christian faiths and religious skeptics.

When asked to identify their favorite potential Republican candidate from a list of 11 names, survey respondents selected Romney and Palin at 13 percent each. Huckabee stood at 12 percent, while Gingrich received 6 percent. A number of candidates each received 1 percent. "None of the above" won 38 percent of the vote.

"If the election for the presidency were held today, Mr. Obama stands a better-

than-even chance of being re-elected. Of course, his chances depend on the identity of his opponent - and the survey showed that Mrs. Palin would be the easiest opponent for him to defeat, while Mr. Huckabee would be the toughest adversary," read the report.

Titled "Christian Preferences for 2010 Republican Nomination," the report said: "The most striking feature of those contests, however, is how many people are not firmly in support of either candidate. In other words, it's still an open race 20 months before Election Day in November 2012. But people are watching the prospective candidates and forming their opinions."

Founded in 1984 as a firm to provide research and information to Christian ministries, [Barna Group](#) broadened its purview in 2004 without leaving its Christian focus.

Evangelical organizations often cite Barna polls.