

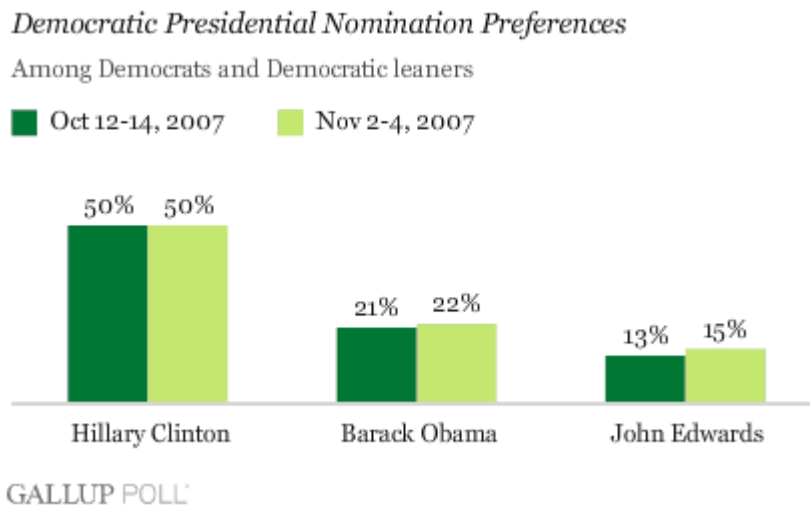
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Hillary Clinton's Big Lead in Democratic Race Unchanged

Little change coincident with recent Democratic candidate debate

by Frank Newport

PRINCETON, NJ -- New *USA Today*/Gallup polling conducted this past weekend shows few signs that front-runner Sen. Hillary Clinton's standing among Democrats nationally was affected by the recent Democratic candidate debate at Drexel University in Philadelphia. Clinton continues to lead all contenders as Democrats' first choice for the nomination, with half of the Democratic vote -- more than double the support of her nearest challenger, Sen. Barack Obama. Former Sen. John Edwards, the trial lawyer whose forceful approach to Clinton during the debate has become the subject of considerable discussion, saw no change in his position as the Democrats' third-place candidate.



Clinton's 50% of the vote, Obama's 22%, and Edwards' 15% are virtually unchanged from Gallup's Oct. 12-14 poll, and are representative of the general structure of the race for the Democratic nomination since August. Gov. Bill Richardson has 4% of the vote, while Sen. Joe Biden, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, and Sen. Chris Dodd each have only 1% of the Democratic vote.

Last week's debate was notable in that it was the first such event to see sustained criticism of the front-running Clinton by her challengers. Some observers had opined in print and on the air that Clinton had in fact "lost" last week's debate by virtue of the way she responded to questions about Iran and a plan to allow illegal immigrants in her home state of New York to obtain drivers' licenses.

This poll did not ask Democrats directly whether they saw the debate or news coverage of it, and thus did not measure directly any perceived gain or loss by candidates as a result of the debate or the news coverage that followed. But the stability in Gallup's nomination preference trends more indirectly suggests that the debate

had little impact on the standing of the candidates in the minds of Democrats nationwide -- at least to this point in time. Clinton's lead remains formidable.

Images of the Candidates

Nationally, Clinton is viewed favorably by 52% of Americans and unfavorably by 45%. This is almost precisely what Gallup measured in two October polls.

In similar fashion, there has been no statistically significant change in the images of either Obama or Edwards among Americans when the results before and after the debate are compared.

Images of Three Democratic Candidates

Among national adults

	Favorable	Unfavorable	NEVER HEARD OF (vol.)	HEARD OF, NO OPINION (vol.)
	%	%	%	%
Clinton, Oct 12-14	53	44	*	2
Clinton, Nov 2-4	52	45	*	3
Obama, Oct 12-14	53	32	6	9
Obama, Nov 2-4	53	30	7	10
Edwards, Oct 12-14	48	34	8	10
Edwards, Nov 2-4	50	31	8	11

* Less than 0.5%

(vol.) = Volunteered response

Among Democrats, there have been slight changes in the candidates' images, but none that are statistically meaningful. Clinton continues to have the highest favorable ratings of the three leading candidates, although Obama and Edwards suffer in comparison not because they have higher unfavorable ratings, but because there are higher percentages of Democrats who, even at this point in time, don't know enough about them to have an opinion.

Images of Three Democratic Candidates

Among Democrats and Democratic-Leaning Independents

	Favorable	Unfavorable	NEVER HEARD OF (vol.)	HEARD OF, NO OPINION (vol.)
	%	%	%	%
Clinton, Oct 12-14	84	13	1	1
Clinton, Nov 2-4	82	15	1	2
Obama, Oct 12-14	70	20	5	6
Obama, Nov 2-4	67	18	7	8
Edwards, Oct 12-14	64	17	8	11
Edwards, Nov 2-4	70	14	6	11

(vol.) = Volunteered response

Among Democrats, Clinton had an 84% favorable image in the Gallup Poll conducted before the debate, and has an 82% favorable image in the current poll. John Edwards' image became slightly more favorable between the two polls, but not enough to be statistically meaningful.

Implications

At this point in the race for the Democratic nomination, after 10 months of arduous campaigning, the structure of the race appears pretty well established, and it may take a powerful confluence of events to change it. Some observers saw the recent Democratic debate in Philadelphia as such an event -- but the latest Gallup Poll data suggest that the debate had little, if any, impact on the race. Clinton remains the dominant front-runner, and has the highest favorable image of any of the leading candidates among Democrats nationwide.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,024 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted Nov. 2-4, 2007. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points.

For results based on the sample of 508 Democrats or Democratic leaners, the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 5 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.