

Almost Half of Americans Dislike Newt Gingrich as a Person

Almost half of Independents would not vote for Newt Gingrich if he was the Republican nominee

NEW YORK, N.Y. – December 21, 2011 – As we head into the last days of 2011, 2012 will very quickly bring the first of the primaries and caucuses for the Republican presidential nomination. At this stage, one of the contenders near the top is former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, a man who has been in politics for some time and about who people have strong opinions. Among all Americans, more than two in five dislike Newt Gingrich as a person (46%), dislike his track record as Speaker of the House (43%), and dislike his political opinions (43%). One-third of U.S. adults like his political opinions (32%), three in ten (30%) like his track record as Speaker and just over one-quarter (28%) like him as a person.

These are some of the results of ***The Harris Poll*** of 2,237 adults surveyed online between December 5 and 12, 2011 by [Harris Interactive](#).

Among Republicans two-thirds (66%) like Newt Gingrich's political opinions, three in five (62%) like his track record as Speaker and over half (56%) like him as a person. Among Conservatives, these numbers surprisingly drop. Just half of Conservatives like Newt Gingrich as a person (51%) and like his track record as Speaker (54%) while three in five Conservatives like his political opinions (59%). He does best among Tea Party supporters where seven in ten (70%) like his political opinions, almost two-thirds (64%) like his track record as Speaker and almost three in five (58%) like him as a person.

When given some statements about Newt Gingrich people have mixed feelings on him. Just over half of Americans (53%) say Newt Gingrich is an intelligent person while one in five (20%) disagree with that statement. His tenure as Speaker is not seen all that well as two in five (39%) agree that positions he has taken as Speaker have hurt the country while 28% disagree and one-third of U.S. adults (34%) are not at all sure. One-third say Gingrich's "Contract with America" was a bad idea (34%), but over two in five (43%) are not at all sure, so people may not remember back to 1994.

Americans are divided as to whether Newt Gingrich's time away from government is an asset with one-third thinking it is (35%), three in ten (30%) saying it isn't and one-third (35%) not at all sure. Gingrich's personal life has also been made a small issue but over two in five U.S. adults (43%) disagree with the idea that his personal background, including his two divorces, makes him unsuitable to be president, but one-third (33%) do agree and one-quarter (24%) are not at all sure. But, probably not good for a presidential candidate, just one-quarter (28%) of Americans say Newt Gingrich inspires confidence personally and 44% say he does not.

Again, Tea Party supporters are most inclined to be favorable of Newt Gingrich. Almost three in five (58%) say he inspires confidence personally, compared to 54% of Republicans and 48% of Conservatives. Almost four in five Tea Party supporters (78%) say the former Speaker is an intelligent person as do 70% of Republicans and 67% of Conservatives. But, over one in five Tea Party supporters (22%) say positions Newt Gingrich took as Speaker hurt the country compared to 18% of Conservatives and 16% of Republicans.

Looking at Newt Gingrich's political ideology, over one-quarter of Americans say he is too conservative (27%) or say he is neither too liberal nor too conservative (28%) with just 4% saying he is too liberal; two in five (41%) say

they are not sure. Over half of Tea Party supporters (56%), Republicans (53%) and Conservatives (51%) all say Newt Gingrich is neither too liberal nor too conservative. But for someone who has been in politics for so long and on a national stage, it's interesting to note that one-third of Tea Party supporters (32%), and over one-third of both Republicans (35%) and Conservatives (37%) are not sure about Newt Gingrich's political ideology.

If Newt Gingrich was the Republican nominee, three in ten Americans (30%) would vote for him, almost half (46%) would not and 21% are not sure. Seven in ten Tea Party supporters (70%), two-thirds of Republicans (67%) and just over three in five Conservatives (62%) say they would vote for the former Speaker. Among Independents, 45% say they would not vote for Newt Gingrich while 30% would and among Moderates, half (51%) would not vote for him while 23% say they would.

So What?

From week to week the stories surrounding the Republican primary seem to shift. Newt Gingrich has risen only in the past few weeks and the questions are already starting about did he peak too soon or will it last and see him winning Iowa and South Carolina and doing well in New Hampshire. But what if he is the eventual nominee? In a head to head match-up with the President, [he does not do as well as Mitt Romney](#) and his numbers among Independents seem to show that as well. But, before the general election talk can start, the first votes in the primaries need to be cast.

**TABLE 1
PERCEPTION OF NEWT GINGRICH**

"Thinking about presidential politics, looking at the list of attributes, please indicate how you feel about each."

Base: All adults

	Total Like (NET)	Strongly like	Somewhat like	Total Dislike (NET)	Somewhat dislike	Strongly dislike	Not sure
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Newt Gingrich's political opinions	32	11	21	43	15	28	26
Newt Gingrich's track record as Speaker of the House	30	9	21	43	15	27	27
Newt Gingrich as a person	28	8	20	46	19	27	26

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 1A
PERCEPTION OF NEWT GINGRICH – SUMMARY OF LIKE

"Thinking about presidential politics, looking at the list of attributes, please indicate how you feel about each."
Those saying "Strongly/Somewhat like"

Base: All adults

	Total	Party ID			Party Philosophy			Swing States		Tea Party
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Cons.	Mod.	Lib.	2012	2008	Support
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Newt Gingrich's political opinions	32	66	9	31	59	26	6	34	36	70
Newt Gingrich's track record as Speaker of the House	30	62	10	27	54	24	9	30	32	64
Newt Gingrich as a person	28	56	9	26	51	23	7	27	30	58

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding; 2012 Swing States are Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia; 5% states in 2008 are Florida, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina and Ohio

TABLE 2
ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEWT GINGRICH

"Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about Newt Gingrich."

Base: All adults

	Total Agree (NET)	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Total Disagree (NET)	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
He is a very intelligent person	53	21	32	20	10	10	26
Positions he has taken as Speaker of the House have hurt the country	39	20	19	28	17	11	34
His time away from government is an asset	35	11	24	30	15	15	35
His "Contract with America" was a bad idea	34	18	16	23	12	12	43
His personal background, including his two divorces, makes him unsuitable to be president.	33	17	16	43	21	23	24
He inspires confidence personally	28	8	20	44	15	29	28

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 2A
ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEWT GINGRICH – SUMMARY OF AGREE

"Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about Mitt Romney."
Those saying "Strongly/Somewhat agree"

Base: All adults

	Total	Party ID			Party Philosophy			Swing States		Tea Party
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Cons.	Mod.	Lib.	2012	2008	Support
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
He is a very intelligent person	53	70	43	56	67	51	41	56	58	78
Positions he has taken as Speaker of the House have hurt the country	39	16	60	40	18	43	57	42	41	22
His time away from government is an asset	35	52	25	36	50	31	24	38	37	59
His "Contract with America" was a bad idea	34	17	48	35	16	37	52	35	35	20
His personal background, including his two divorces, makes him unsuitable to be president.	33	14	48	35	20	33	50	34	34	20
He inspires confidence personally	28	54	13	26	48	22	15	27	30	58

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding; 2012 Swing States are Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia; 5% states in 2008 are Florida, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina and Ohio

TABLE 3
NEWT GINGRICH'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

"Do you think Newt Gingrich...?"

Base: All adults

	Total	Party ID			Party Philosophy			Swing States		Tea Party
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Cons.	Mod.	Lib.	2012	2008	Support
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Is too liberal	4	5	4	4	8	3	2	4	4	7
Is neither too liberal nor too conservative	28	53	11	28	51	22	10	29	28	56
Is too conservative	27	7	47	26	3	30	55	26	26	6
Not sure	41	35	39	41	37	46	34	40	41	32

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding; 2012 Swing States are Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia; 5% states in 2008 are Florida, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina and Ohio; * indicates less than 1%

**TABLE 4
VOTING FOR NEWT GINGRICH**

"If Newt Gingrich was the Republican nominee for President, which is closest to the way you think?"
Base: All adults

	Total	Party ID			Party Philosophy			Swing States		Tea Party
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Cons	Mod.	Lib.	2012	2008	Support
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Would vote for him (NET)	30	67	5	30	62	23	3	34	36	70
I definitely would vote for him	14	38	2	9	38	6	2	16	19	38
I probably would vote for him	16	29	3	21	24	17	1	17	17	32
Would not vote for him (NET)	46	14	76	45	17	51	75	43	41	15
I probably would not vote for him	10	7	11	13	7	12	12	8	9	7
I definitely would not vote for him	35	7	65	32	10	39	63	35	32	7
I wouldn't vote at all	3	1	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	2
Not sure	21	18	16	22	19	23	18	20	20	13

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding; 2012 Swing States are Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia; 5% states in 2008 are Florida, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina and Ohio

Methodology

This **Harris Poll** was conducted online within the United States between December 5 and 12, 2011 among 2,237 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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By Regina A. Corso, SVP, Harris Poll, Public Relations and Youth Research, Harris Interactive

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