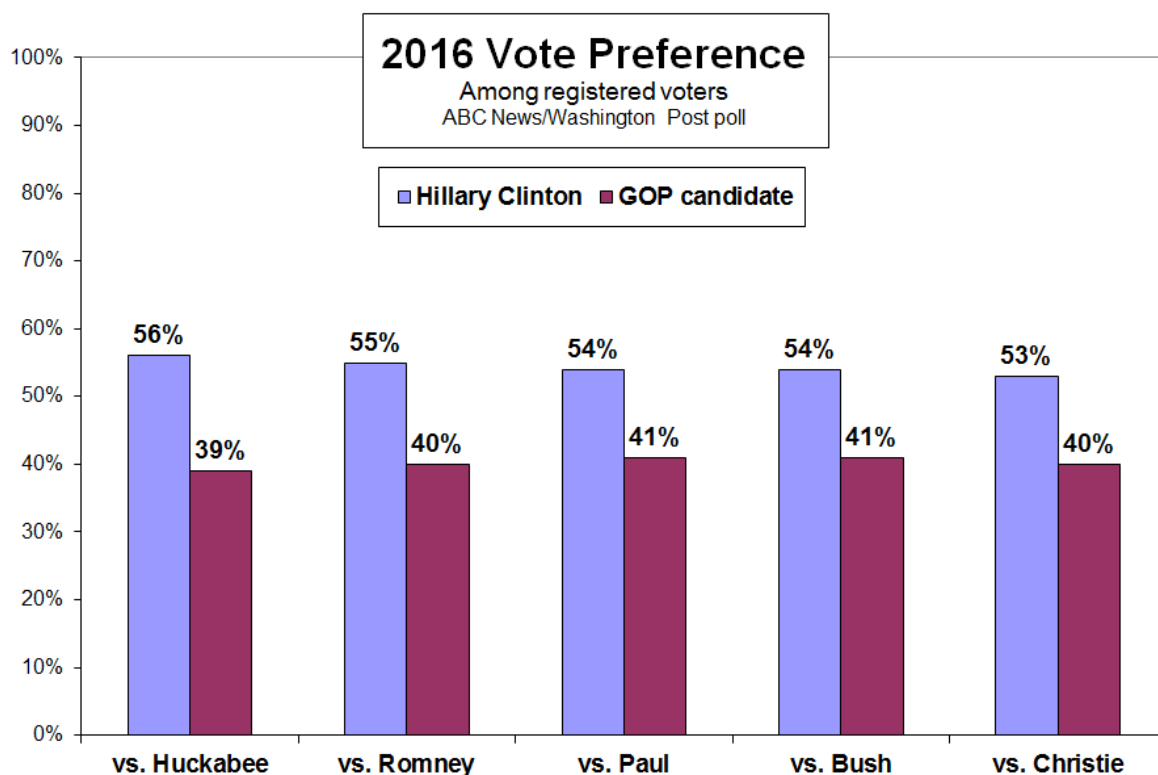


History's a Positive for Clinton; Not So for Bush or Romney

Hillary Clinton's potential place in history and her husband's tenure in the White House boost her presidential prospects, while Jeb Bush's political legacy and Mitt Romney's 2012 run for the office are negatives, a new ABC News/Washington Post poll finds.

Clinton leads both in hypothetical head-to-head matchups at this early stage – as well as Rand Paul, Chris Christie and Mike Huckabee alike.

The national survey finds 53 to 56 percent support for Clinton among registered voters against each of these potential Republican candidates, while they get 39 to 41 percent. One reason is that Clinton is stronger in her political base, given the far more fragmented nature of the current GOP field.



Further, registered voters by a 13-point margin say the fact that Clinton would be the first female president makes them more likely rather than less likely to support her. Her husband having served as president is another net positive, by an 8-point margin.

Those results stand in contrast to Bush's and Romney's backgrounds. The fact that his brother and father held the office is a net negative for Bush by a broad 25 percentage points; a third of registered voters say it makes them less likely to support him for president. And Romney's having run as the Republican nominee three years ago is a 14-point net negative for him.

Most registered voters, 57 to 65 percent, say none of these items would be a factor in their vote. But a presidential election is a game of margins, making these views potentially important in the campaign ahead.

THE FIELD – The poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds several reasons that Clinton leads all five potential GOP candidates tested:

- She's stronger in her base, backed by nine in 10 or more Democrats who are registered to vote, as well as by at least eight in 10 liberals and about six in 10 moderates.
- As with Barack Obama, the recovery helps Clinton. About three-quarters of registered voters who rate the economy positively support her, and she leads overwhelmingly among those who say they've gained ground financially under Obama's presidency. But she also leads, by 16 to 20 points, among those whose finances have just held steady.
- Clinton has a strong advantage among those who see income inequality as a major problem, and she runs essentially evenly vs. these potential Republican nominees among those who think it's a problem, but not a major one. She trails only among those who don't think the income gap is a problem – just 16 percent of registered voters.
- Women favor Clinton by 20- to 24-point margins, men by non-significant 2- to 7-point margins. She's also strong among racial and ethnic minorities, adults under 40 and lower-income voters.

The potential GOP candidates may be hamstrung by their intramural battle ahead; core Republican support likely will coalesce around the ultimate nominee. For the moment, those tested against Clinton in this survey win support from 76 to 81 percent of Republican registered voters and about six in 10 conservatives (including 67 to 73 percent of strong conservatives).

Each also has the support of half of white voters overall, far fewer than a GOP nominee needs to prevail, given whites' shrinking share of the country's population. (Romney won 59 percent of whites and lost the 2012 election nonetheless.)

In an example of the comparatively unsettled GOP base, Huckabee and Bush both hold more than 40-point leads over Clinton among evangelical white Protestants, but that eases to 27- and 32-point leads in this group for Christie and Romney, respectively.

Paul, for his part, runs essentially evenly with Clinton among college-educated registered voters, while Christie, Bush, Huckabee and Romney trail her by 12- to 17-point margins in this group. But there are few other differences, suggesting that partisanship, rather than individual candidate assessments, is playing the starring role in current choices.

Early matchups such as these are not predictive; campaigns matter, as Clinton demonstrated in 2008, and an ultimate double-digit margin is virtually unthinkable given the country's close political divisions. That said, Obama vs. Romney stood at a 49-45 percent in their earliest ABC/Post matchup, in April 2011. Clinton today leads Romney by 15.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone Jan. 12-15, 2015, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults, including 843 registered voters. Results have margins of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 and 4 points for the general population and registered voters, respectively, including design effect. Partisan divisions are 30-24-37 percent, Democrats-Republicans-independents among the general population, 33-26-33 percent among registered voters.

The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

Analysis by Gary Langer and Julie E. Phelan.

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

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Full results follow.

* in data columns = less than 0.5 percent

1-27, 28d, 30-31 previously released.

28. If the 2016 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were (Hillary Clinton, the Democrat) and ([ITEM], the Republican), for whom would you vote? Would you lean toward (Clinton) or toward ([ITEM])?

NET LEANED VOTE PREFERENCE - REG VOTERS

1/15/15 - Summary Table

	Hillary Clinton	Rep.	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No opinion
a. Rand Paul	54	41	*	2	1	1
b. Jeb Bush	54	41	0	2	1	1
c. Chris Christie	53	40	*	3	2	2
d. Mike Huckabee	56	39	1	2	1	2
e. Mitt Romney	55	40	*	2	2	1

Trend where available among registered voters:

a. Rand Paul

	Hillary Clinton	Rand Paul	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No opinion
1/15/15 RV	54	41	*	2	1	1
6/1/14 RV	53	43	*	3	1	1

b. Jeb Bush

	Hillary Clinton	Jeb Bush	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No opinion
1/15/15 RV	54	41	0	2	1	1
4/27/14 RV	53	41	*	4	1	1

c. Chris Christie

	Hillary Clinton	Chris Christie	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No opinion
1/15/15 RV	53	40	*	3	2	2
1/23/14 RV	53	41	*	2	2	2

d. No trend.

e. Mitt Romney

	Hillary Clinton	Mitt Romney	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No opinion
1/15/15 RV	55	40	*	2	2	1
2/1/08 RV	51	43	*	3	1	1
11/1/07 RV	57	39	1	2	1	1

29. [ITEM]. Does that make you more likely to support (Jeb Bush/Hillary Clinton/Mitt Romney) for president, less likely, or does it make no difference?

1/15/15 - Summary Table among RVs

	More likely	Less likely	No difference	No opinion
a. Jeb Bush's father and his brother both served as president	9	34	57	1
b. Hillary Clinton's husband served as president	24	16	59	1
c. Hillary Clinton would be the first female president	24	11	65	*
d. Mitt Romney ran as the Republican presidential nominee in 2012	12	26	61	1

*** END ***