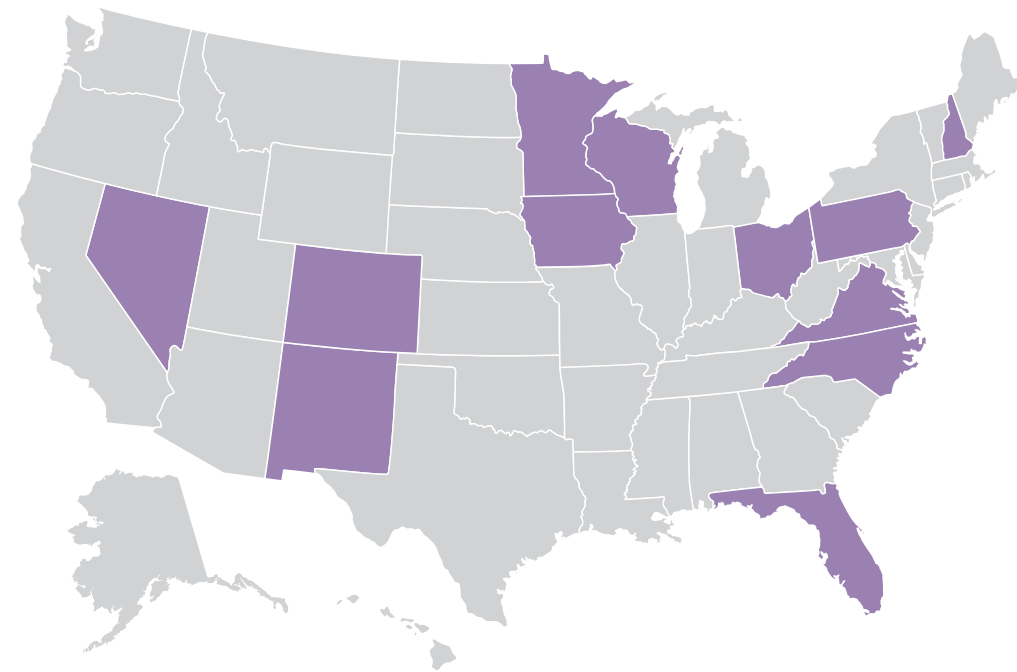


January 2012 Edition

# PURPLEPOLL



## WHY THE PURPLEPOLL?

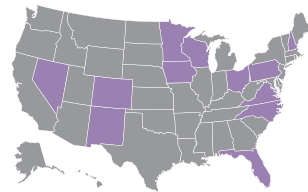
In 2012, a dozen states will decide whether President Obama is elected to a second term. The PurplePoll focuses exclusively on the Purple Electorate - likely voters only in these swing states. Updated regularly throughout the 2012 election cycle, the PurplePoll will follow leading political indicators and track new issues as they emerge.

It will offer a unique lens through which you can gather original insight into this critical election. Produced by Purple Strategies, the PurplePoll will offer balanced analysis from our bipartisan team.

For more information, contact Doug Usher, Ph.D. [[doug.usher@purplestrategies.com](mailto:doug.usher@purplestrategies.com)] or Bruce Haynes [[bruce.haynes@purplestrategies.com](mailto:bruce.haynes@purplestrategies.com)], at 703-548-7877.

# PURPLEPOLL

January 2012



## President Obama holds a small lead in Purple states, but a majority disapprove of the job he is doing, and he faces headwinds in Florida.

President Obama continues to hold a small lead against Mitt Romney (46% to 44%), and a slightly larger lead against Newt Gingrich (49% to 43%) in Purple states. Over the past month, the President's lead over Romney has tightened slightly, and among independent voters the race between President Obama and Mitt Romney is tied at 43%.

Obama performs best in the Heartland region, leading Romney 49%-42% and Gingrich 51%-39%. The Southern Swing is strongest for the GOP candidates: Romney leads Obama by 2 (46%-44%), and Gingrich trails Obama by just 2 points in that region (45%-47%).

Obama's job approval ratings have trended up over the course of the PurplePoll: today, 45% of voters in Purple states approve of the job he is doing, compared to 41% in December. However, a majority (50%) disapprove. Among independent voters, he remains in worse position (42%/51%). Despite the improvement, President Obama's approval rating is at the low end of recent successful incumbents: his approval rating trails the approval ratings of presidents Reagan (53%), Clinton (47%), and George W. Bush (56%) at similar points in their presidencies.

The continuing challenge facing Obama becomes clear when we ask Purple State voters who they believe will do the best job on the economy and creating jobs. They believe Romney would do a better job than Obama (43%-42%). The president leads Gingrich on this measure by just four points (45%-41%). While the economy is on the upswing, voters' confidence in Obama's handling of it will be important to monitor.

We took a close look at Florida in this PurplePoll, and we see substantial challenges for President Obama in a state that has 29 electoral votes at stake. He trails Romney in this critical swing state (44%-46%), and leads Gingrich by just a single point (47%-46%). Additionally, his approval rating is substantially worse in Florida than it is across Purple states – just 40% approve of the job he is doing, and 56% disapprove. Clearly, the president has work to do moving forward.

**Newt's personal life is relevant to nearly half of all voters. Among women who say it's relevant, just 8 percent hold a favorable view of Gingrich, and 77 percent have an unfavorable view.**

Newt Gingrich's favorability ratings steadily deteriorated over the course of the PurplePoll. Since November, his favorables have decreased by 2 points (to 31%) while his unfavorables have increased by 8 (to 56%). His favorabilities among women are striking: just 24% have a favorable view, with 60% holding an unfavorable view.

In the most recent PurplePoll, we asked voters whether Gingrich's personal life was relevant to them when evaluating his candidacy: 47% said yes, including 49% of women. Among those women who felt that his personal life is relevant to them, just eight percent (8%) hold a favorable view of the former Speaker (77% unfavorable).

## Romney's image is trending down among independent voters.

Like Gingrich, Mitt Romney has become less popular in Purple states over the past few months. Just 30% hold a favorable view, down 2 points since September. His unfavorables rating is up 15 points over that same period (to 54%).

At this point, Romney is less popular among independent voters than in the Purple states as a whole: 29% hold a favorable view (53% unfavorable). While his race against President Obama remains tight, the Republican nomination fight is doing direct harm to his image among key swing voters. By contrast, 42% of independent voters in Purple states approve of the job President Obama is doing (51% disapprove).

Romney's image in Florida is stronger than elsewhere in the Purple electorate. Thirty-six percent (36%) hold a favorable view (53% unfavorable). While these numbers are still low, it is an indicator that the Sunshine State is more hospitable to the GOP candidates.

## Voters believe Gingrich can win a debate against Obama, but fewer believe he can win an election. In Florida, Republicans are more evenly divided on electability.

Purple state general election voters believe that Newt Gingrich is more likely than Mitt Romney to win a debate against President Obama. Forty-two percent (42%) of voters believe he is more likely than Romney to win a debate (23% say Romney). In Florida, site of the most recent debates, the margin is slightly tighter (42%-26%).

However, Romney holds an 8-point advantage on electability: 33% say that Romney is more likely to win an election against Obama, compared to 25% that say Gingrich. Romney holds a 12-point advantage on that measure among women, and an 11-point advantage among independent voters.

Importantly, among Republican voters in Florida there is little distance between the two candidates on electability: 39% choose Romney as more electable, and 36% choose Gingrich.

## Recent debates over tax policy divide the electorate down the middle in Purple states. It's a base issue that reinforces existing perceptions, not a wedge issue that moves voters.

Mitt Romney's recent tax return release combined with President Obama's State of the Union speech has elevated tax policy in the presidential campaign. We tested the politics of this issue by providing voters two positions to choose from: Which do you think is the bigger problem? Government policies that give the wealthy and special interests tax breaks at the expense of the middle class or Government policies that tax and spend too much, putting us deeper in debt?

This question divided Purple State voters nearly down the middle: 45% say the bigger problem is tax breaks, and 48% say it's too much taxing and spending. This is an issue that divides neatly along partisan lines: 76% of Republicans point to taxing and spending, while 70% of Democrats point to unfair tax breaks. Independent voters in Purple states are evenly divided (47% tax breaks, 49% tax and spending).

While different framing of this question could lead to a different split, this direct test demonstrates that the issue is more likely to excite base voters than it is to provide an opportunity for bipartisan cooperation.

## WHAT IS THE PURPLEPOLL?

Unlike other polls, the PurplePoll focuses exclusively on the 12 states that are most likely to determine whether President Obama will win re-election: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

These states were won by President Obama en route to his 365 electoral votes. Since 1996, nine of these states swung between the Republican and Democratic candidates. Three states (MN, PA, and WI) have been decided by 3 points or less at least once since 2000. The voters in these states have held the presidential election balance for the past dozen years, and will continue to do so in 2012.

Updated regularly throughout the 2012 election cycle, the PurplePoll will follow leading political indicators and track new issues as they emerge. It will offer a unique lens to gather original insight into this critical election.

In addition to data from the overall Purple electorate, we divide the data in regional state clusters: "The Wild West" (CO, NV, NM), "The Heartland" (IA, MN, WI), "The Rust Belt" (NH, OH, PA) and "The Southern Swing" (NC, VA, FL). These groupings help provide more texture to our results.

The PurplePoll is fielded and analyzed by Purple Insights, the research division of Purple Strategies, the bipartisan public affairs firm.

The poll was fielded 1/23-1/26, using automated telephone interviews and RDD sample. Total weighted N size=1602 likely voters, margin of error +/-2.5. With regional oversamples, the margin of error for each regional cluster is no more than +/-4.4. Sample size in Florida is 520, with a margin of error of +/-4.4.

## ABOUT PURPLE STRATEGIES

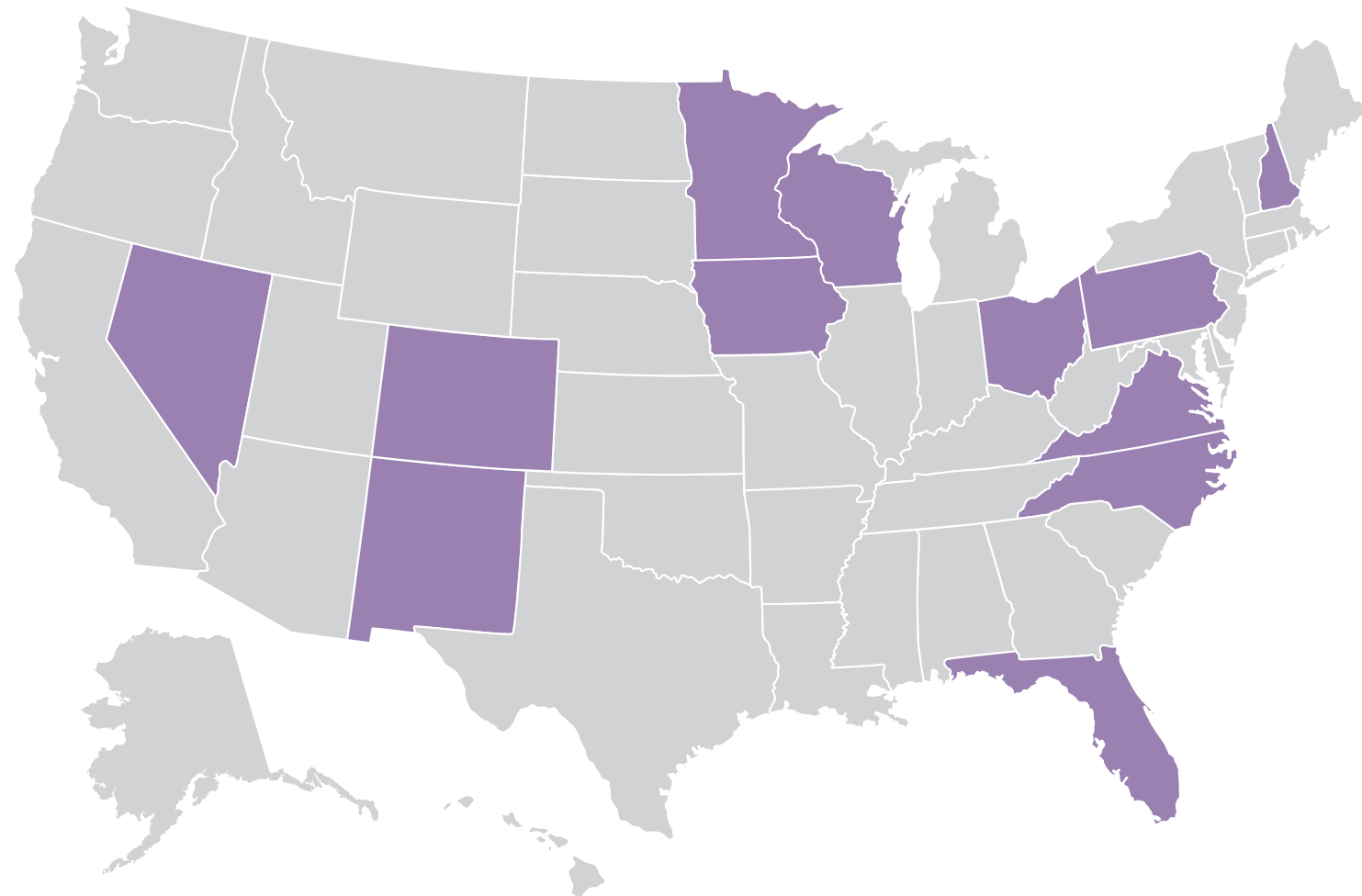
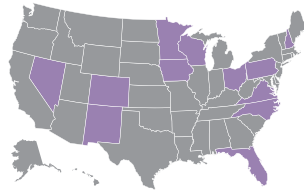
Purple is a fully integrated, bipartisan team that excels at merging red and blue perspectives to find effective strategic solutions. We look to build a consensus that will support a public affairs initiative, influence a debate or stimulate change. Our team includes experts in opinion research, strategic communications, grassroots, government affairs, digital communications and creative.

Recognizing the need for a balanced, bipartisan approach to corporate communications and issue advocacy, Alex Castellanos and Steve McMahon merged two well-established Republican and Democratic firms – National Media and Issue & Image – to create Purple Strategies. By joining forces, Purple brings together strategists and communication specialists from across the political spectrum, including veteran political strategists Bruce Haynes, Mark Squier, Rob Collins and Jim Jordan.

For more: [www.purplestrategies.com](http://www.purplestrategies.com)

# PURPLEPOLL

January 2012

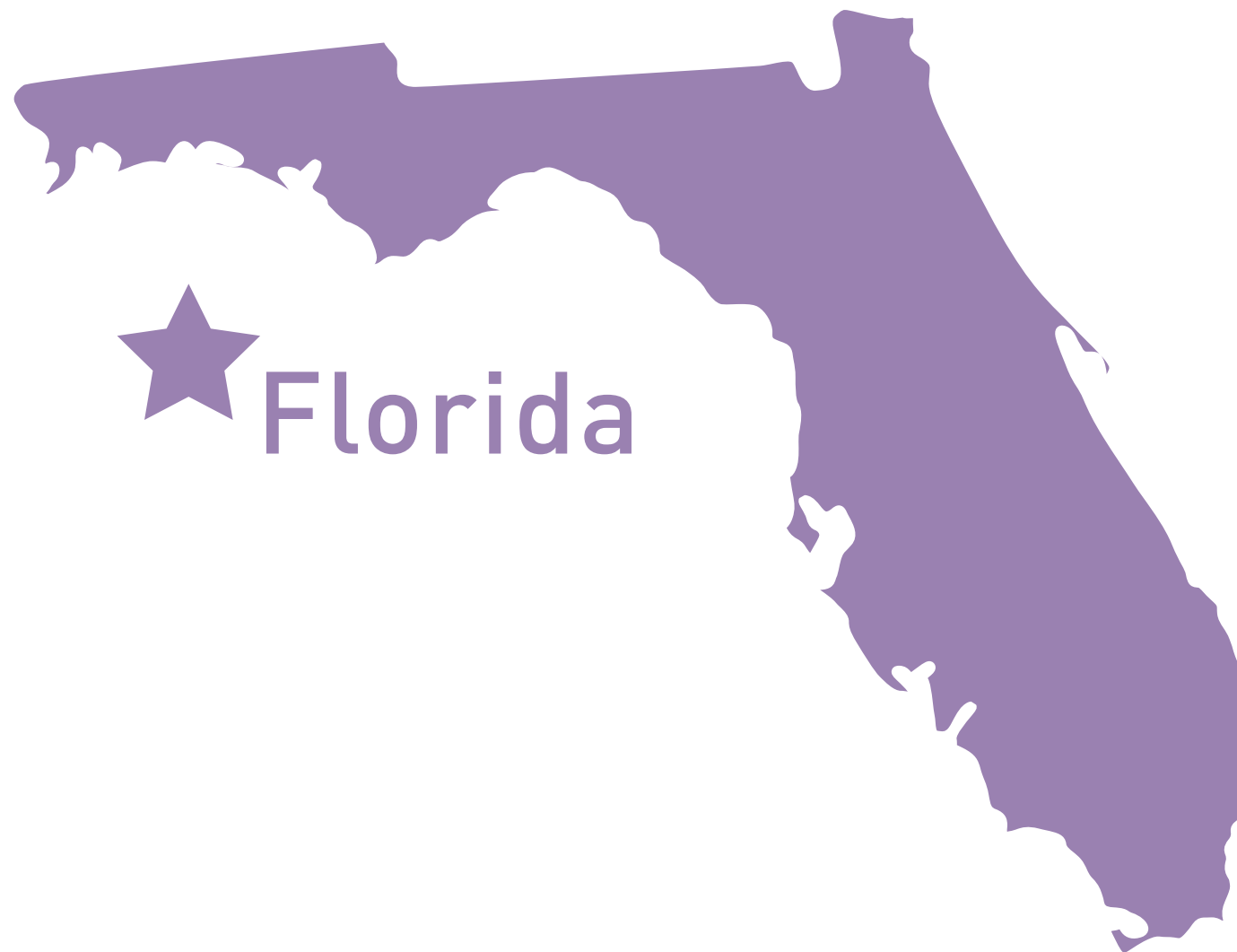
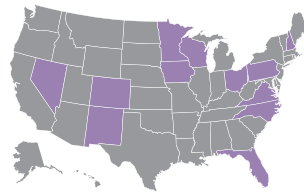


-  **The Wild West:** Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico
-  **The Heartland:** Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin
-  **The Rust Belt:** New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania
-  **The Southern Swing:** Florida, North Carolina, Virginia

## OVERALL:

<p><b>Obama Approval</b></p> <p>Approve: <b>45%</b> Disapprove: <b>50%</b> Not sure: <b>6%</b></p>	<p><i>Change from Sept.</i></p> <p><b>4</b> <b>-3</b> <b>-1</b></p>	<p><b>Handling Economy: Obama or Gingrich</b></p> <p>Obama: <b>45%</b> Gingrich: <b>41%</b> Not sure: <b>14%</b></p>
<p><b>Romney Favorability</b></p> <p>Favorable: <b>30%</b> Unfavorable: <b>54%</b> Not sure: <b>16%</b></p>	<p><i>Change from Sept.</i></p> <p><b>-2</b> <b>15</b> <b>-13</b></p>	<p><b>GOP candidate more likely to win <u>debate</u> vs. Obama</b></p> <p>Romney: <b>23%</b> Gingrich: <b>42%</b> Not sure: <b>35%</b></p>
<p><b>Gingrich Favorability</b></p> <p>Favorable: <b>31%</b> Unfavorable: <b>56%</b> Not sure: <b>13%</b></p>	<p><i>Change from Nov.</i></p> <p><b>-2</b> <b>8</b> <b>-6</b></p>	<p><b>GOP candidate more likely to <u>defeat</u> Obama</b></p> <p>Romney: <b>33%</b> Gingrich: <b>25%</b> Not sure: <b>41%</b></p>
<p><b>2012: Obama vs. Romney</b></p> <p>Obama: <b>46%</b> Romney: <b>44%</b> Not sure: <b>10%</b></p>	<p><i>Change from Sept.</i></p> <p><b>3</b> <b>-2</b> <b>-1</b></p>	<p><b>Bigger problem: Tax breaks for special interest/wealthy OR too much taxing, spending and debt?</b></p> <p>Tax breaks: <b>45%</b> Tax/spending: <b>48%</b> Not sure: <b>7%</b></p>
<p><b>2012: Obama vs. Gingrich</b></p> <p>Obama: <b>49%</b> Gingrich: <b>43%</b> Not sure: <b>9%</b></p>	<p><i>Change from Nov.</i></p> <p><b>3</b> <b>-1</b> <b>-1</b></p>	<p><b>Gingrich's personal life: relevant/not relevant</b></p> <p>Relevant: <b>47%</b> Not relevant: <b>43%</b> Not sure: <b>10%</b></p>
<p><b>Handling Economy: Obama or Romney</b></p> <p>Obama: <b>42%</b> Romney: <b>43%</b> Not sure: <b>15%</b></p>		

OVERALL



★ Florida

### Obama Approval

Approve: **40%**  
Disapprove: **56%**  
Not sure: **4%**

### Romney Favorability

Favorable: **36%**  
Unfavorable: **53%**  
Not sure: **11%**

### Gingrich Favorability

Favorable: **40%**  
Unfavorable: **51%**  
Not sure: **9%**

### 2012: Obama vs. Romney

Obama: **44%**  
Romney: **46%**  
Not sure: **10%**

### 2012: Obama vs. Gingrich

Obama: **47%**  
Gingrich: **46%**  
Not sure: **7%**

### Handling Economy: Obama or Romney

Obama: **41%**  
Romney: **45%**  
Not sure: **13%**

### Handling Economy: Obama or Gingrich

Obama: **45%**  
Gingrich: **41%**  
Not sure: **15%**

### GOP candidate more likely to win debate vs. Obama

Romney: **26%**  
Gingrich: **42%**  
Not sure: **32%**

### GOP candidate more likely to defeat Obama

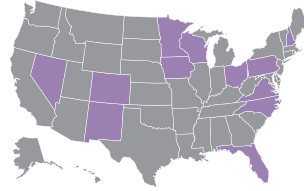
Romney: **35%**  
Gingrich: **25%**  
Not sure: **40%**

### Bigger problem: Tax breaks for special interest/wealthy OR too much taxing, spending and debt?

Tax breaks: **41%**  
Tax/spending: **52%**  
Not sure: **7%**

### Gingrich's personal life: relevant/not relevant

Relevant: **49%**  
Not relevant: **41%**  
Not sure: **10%**



## The Wild West

### Obama Approval

*Change from Sept.*

Approve: **47%** **7**  
 Disapprove: **49%** **-4**  
 Not sure: **5%** **-2**

### Handling Economy: Obama or Gingrich

Obama: **48%**  
 Gingrich: **38%**  
 Not sure: **14%**

### Romney Favorability

*Change from Sept.*

Favorable: **28%** **-1**  
 Unfavorable: **54%** **11**  
 Not sure: **17%** **-12**

### GOP candidate more likely to win debate vs. Obama

Romney: **24%**  
 Gingrich: **40%**  
 Not sure: **36%**

### Gingrich Favorability

*Change from Nov.*

Favorable: **29%** **-6**  
 Unfavorable: **56%** **7**  
 Not sure: **15%** **-2**

### GOP candidate more likely to defeat Obama

Romney: **31%**  
 Gingrich: **29%**  
 Not sure: **40%**

### 2012: Obama vs. Romney

*Change from Sept.*

Obama: **47%** **5**  
 Romney: **42%** **-3**  
 Not sure: **11%** **-2**

### Bigger problem: Tax breaks for special interest/wealthy OR too much taxing, spending and debt?

Tax breaks: **43%**  
 Tax/spending: **51%**  
 Not sure: **7%**

### 2012: Obama vs. Gingrich

*Change from Nov.*

Obama: **51%** **5**  
 Gingrich: **40%** **-1**  
 Not sure: **9%** **-3**

### Gingrich's personal life: relevant/not relevant

Relevant: **43%**  
 Not relevant: **48%**  
 Not sure: **9%**

### Handling Economy: Obama or Romney

Obama: **46%**  
 Romney: **41%**  
 Not sure: **13%**

## The Heartland

### Obama Approval

*Change from Sept.*

Approve: **48%** **2**  
 Disapprove: **47%** **0**  
 Not sure: **5%** **-1**

### Handling Economy: Obama or Gingrich

Obama: **47%**  
 Gingrich: **39%**  
 Not sure: **14%**

### Romney Favorability

*Change from Sept.*

Favorable: **32%** **2**  
 Unfavorable: **51%** **6**  
 Not sure: **17%** **-8**

### GOP candidate more likely to win debate vs. Obama

Romney: **21%**  
 Gingrich: **41%**  
 Not sure: **38%**

### Gingrich Favorability

*Change from Nov.*

Favorable: **24%** **-2**  
 Unfavorable: **62%** **10**  
 Not sure: **14%** **-8**

### GOP candidate more likely to defeat Obama

Romney: **35%**  
 Gingrich: **20%**  
 Not sure: **45%**

### 2012: Obama vs. Romney

*Change from Sept.*

Obama: **49%** **1**  
 Romney: **42%** **-2**  
 Not sure: **9%** **1**

### Bigger problem: Tax breaks for special interest/wealthy OR too much taxing, spending and debt?

Tax breaks: **49%**  
 Tax/spending: **44%**  
 Not sure: **8%**

### 2012: Obama vs. Gingrich

*Change from Nov.*

Obama: **51%** **4**  
 Gingrich: **39%** **0**  
 Not sure: **10%** **-5**

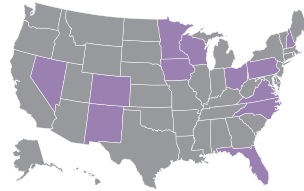
### Gingrich's personal life: relevant/not relevant

Relevant: **48%**  
 Not relevant: **39%**  
 Not sure: **13%**

### Handling Economy: Obama or Romney

Obama: **42%**  
 Romney: **42%**  
 Not sure: **16%**





## The Rust Belt

### Obama Approval

*Change from Sept.*

Approve: **41%** **0**  
 Disapprove: **51%** **-1**  
 Not sure: **7%** **1**

### Handling Economy: Obama or Gingrich

Obama: **41%**  
 Gingrich: **43%**  
 Not sure: **16%**

### Romney Favorability

*Change from Sept.*

Favorable: **27%** **-3**  
 Unfavorable: **54%** **13**  
 Not sure: **18%** **-11**

### GOP candidate more likely to win debate vs. Obama

Romney: **22%**  
 Gingrich: **43%**  
 Not sure: **35%**

### Gingrich Favorability

*Change from Nov.*

Favorable: **30%** **-1**  
 Unfavorable: **60%** **7**  
 Not sure: **10%** **-6**

### GOP candidate more likely to defeat Obama

Romney: **32%**  
 Gingrich: **27%**  
 Not sure: **41%**

### 2012: Obama vs. Romney

*Change from Sept.*

Obama: **45%** **3**  
 Romney: **43%** **-3**  
 Not sure: **12%** **1**

### Bigger problem: Tax breaks for special interest/wealthy OR too much taxing, spending and debt?

Tax breaks: **45%**  
 Tax/spending: **49%**  
 Not sure: **6%**

### 2012: Obama vs. Gingrich

*Change from Nov.*

Obama: **48%** **1**  
 Gingrich: **42%** **-2**  
 Not sure: **10%** **1**

### Gingrich's personal life: relevant/not relevant

Relevant: **48%**  
 Not relevant: **43%**  
 Not sure: **9%**

### Handling Economy: Obama or Romney

Obama: **36%**  
 Romney: **43%**  
 Not sure: **20%**

## The Southern Swing

### Obama Approval

*Change from Sept.*

Approve: **42%** **3**  
 Disapprove: **53%** **-1**  
 Not sure: **5%** **-2**

### Handling Economy: Obama or Gingrich

Obama: **46%**  
 Gingrich: **42%**  
 Not sure: **13%**

### Romney Favorability

*Change from Sept.*

Favorable: **33%** **0**  
 Unfavorable: **52%** **16**  
 Not sure: **15%** **-16**

### GOP candidate more likely to win debate vs. Obama

Romney: **24%**  
 Gingrich: **40%**  
 Not sure: **36%**

### Gingrich Favorability

*Change from Nov.*

Favorable: **35%** **-2**  
 Unfavorable: **50%** **6**  
 Not sure: **15%** **-4**

### GOP candidate more likely to defeat Obama

Romney: **36%**  
 Gingrich: **24%**  
 Not sure: **40%**

### 2012: Obama vs. Romney

*Change from Sept.*

Obama: **44%** **1**  
 Romney: **46%** **-2**  
 Not sure: **9%** **0**

### Bigger problem: Tax breaks for special interest/wealthy OR too much taxing, spending and debt?

Tax breaks: **44%**  
 Tax/spending: **50%**  
 Not sure: **7%**

### 2012: Obama vs. Gingrich

*Change from Nov.*

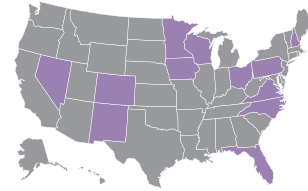
Obama: **47%** **1**  
 Gingrich: **45%** **-1**  
 Not sure: **8%** **-1**

### Gingrich's personal life: relevant/not relevant

Relevant: **46%**  
 Not relevant: **44%**  
 Not sure: **10%**

### Handling Economy: Obama or Romney

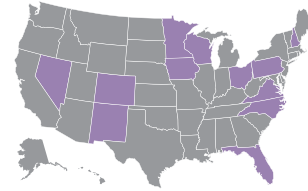
Obama: **43%**  
 Romney: **45%**  
 Not sure: **12%**







**The Wild West:** Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico  
**The Heartland:** Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin  
**The Rust Belt:** New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania  
**The Southern Swing:** Florida, North Carolina, Virginia

Complete Questionnaire		%	%	%	%	States	Region				Gender		Party			Education	
		Total	Dec'11	Nov'11	Sept'11	FL					Male	Female	GOP	Ind	Dem	Non-Coll	Coll+
Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?	Approve	45	41	41	41	40	47	48	41	42	43	46	9	42	80	43	47
	Disapprove	50	53	52	53	56	49	47	51	53	52	47	87	51	15	50	49
	Not sure	6	6	6	7	4	5	5	7	5	5	6	4	7	6	7	4
Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of Mitt Romney?	Favorable	30	29	30	32	36	28	32	27	33	31	30	48	29	15	31	29
	Unfavorable	54	47	45	39	53	54	51	54	52	58	51	37	53	71	51	58
	Not sure	16	24	25	29	11	17	17	18	15	11	20	15	18	14	18	13
Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of Newt Gingrich?	Favorable	31	30	33	--	40	29	24	30	35	39	24	51	24	17	34	27
	Unfavorable	56	53	48	--	51	56	62	60	50	52	60	37	64	69	51	63
	Not sure	13	17	19	--	9	15	14	10	15	9	16	12	13	14	15	10
If the 2012 presidential election were held today and the candidates were: Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney, for whom would you vote?	Barack Obama	46	47	45	43	44	47	49	45	44	44	48	9	43	83	44	49
	Mitt Romney	44	43	45	46	46	42	42	43	46	47	41	80	43	11	44	43
	Not sure	10	11	11	11	10	11	9	12	9	9	10	10	14	6	12	8
If the 2012 presidential election were held today and the candidates were: Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Newt Gingrich, for whom would you vote?	Barack Obama	49	48	46	--	47	51	51	48	47	46	51	10	49	84	47	50
	Newt Gingrich	43	42	44	--	46	40	39	42	45	47	39	79	40	12	43	42
	Not sure	9	10	10	--	7	9	10	10	8	7	10	11	11	4	9	8
Who do you think would do better at handling the economy and creating jobs?	Barack Obama	42	--	--	--	41	46	42	36	43	41	42	7	37	77	39	44
	Mitt Romney	43	--	--	--	45	41	42	43	45	46	41	78	42	11	43	43
	Not sure	15	--	--	--	13	13	16	20	12	14	17	15	20	12	18	12
Who do you think would do better at handling the economy and creating jobs?	Barack Obama	45	--	--	--	45	48	47	41	46	45	46	9	42	81	43	47
	Newt Gingrich	41	--	--	--	41	38	39	43	42	45	38	75	40	10	41	41
	Not sure	14	--	--	--	15	14	14	16	13	11	17	15	19	9	16	12

Fielded 1/23-1/26, using automated telephone interviews and RDD sample. Total N size=1602 likely voters, margin of error +/-2.5. Regional margins of errors (with oversamples) are +/-4.4. The same is true in Florida.



-  **The Wild West:** Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico
-  **The Heartland:** Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin
-  **The Rust Belt:** New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania
-  **The Southern Swing:** Florida, North Carolina, Virginia

Complete Questionnaire		%	%	%	%	States	Region				Gender		Party			Education	
		Total	Dec'11	Nov'11	Sept'11	FL					Male	Female	GOP	Ind	Dem	Non-Coll	Coll+
Which Republican candidate would be more likely to win a debate with President Obama?	Mitt Romney	23	--	--	--	26	24	21	22	24	21	24	24	21	22	24	21
	Newt Gingrich	42	--	--	--	42	40	41	43	40	49	36	59	42	26	39	45
	Not sure	35	--	--	--	32	36	38	35	36	30	40	16	36	52	37	34
Which Republican candidate would be more likely to defeat President Obama?	Mitt Romney	33	--	--	--	35	31	35	32	36	33	34	37	35	29	30	38
	Newt Gingrich	25	--	--	--	25	29	20	27	24	29	22	37	24	16	27	23
	Not sure	41	--	--	--	40	40	45	41	40	37	45	26	41	56	43	39
Which do you think is the bigger problem? Government policies that give the wealthy and special interests tax breaks at the expense of the middle class or Government policies that tax and spend too much, putting us deeper in debt?	Government policies that give the wealthy and special interests tax breaks at the expense of the middle class	45	--	--	--	41	43	49	45	44	44	45	16	47	70	42	49
	Government policies that tax and spend too much, putting us deeper in debt	48	--	--	--	52	51	44	49	50	49	47	76	49	21	49	47
	Not sure	7	--	--	--	7	7	8	6	7	7	8	7	5	9	10	4
Is information about Newt Gingrich's personal life relevant to you as you evaluate his candidacy for president, or is it not relevant to you as you evaluate his candidacy for president?	Relevant	47	--	--	--	49	43	48	48	46	46	49	37	46	58	42	53
	Not relevant	43	--	--	--	41	48	39	43	44	46	40	55	43	31	45	40
	Not sure	10	--	--	--	10	9	13	9	10	8	12	8	11	11	13	7

Fielded 1/23-1/26, using automated telephone interviews and RDD sample. Total N size=1602 likely voters, margin of error +/-2.5. Regional margins of errors (with oversamples) are +/-4.4. The same is true in Florida.