

The WMUR / CNN Poll

By: Andrew E. Smith, Ph.D.
UNH Survey Center
(603) 862-4367

September 13, 1999

BRADLEY CLOSES GAP ON GORE

DURHAM, NH-Vice President Al Gore has lost much of his lead over former New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley among New Hampshire Democratic primary voters. Bradley's supporters are more certain in their vote than Gore supporters, and Bradley is now viewed more favorably than Gore.

These findings are based on the latest **WMUR / CNN Poll**, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. The WMUR / CNN Poll is sponsored by *WMUR-TV*, Channel 9 in Manchester, New Hampshire and CNN. We ask users to properly attribute this copyright to the "WMUR/ CNN Poll", conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center.

Bradley Cuts Into Gore's Lead

Labor Day is the traditional start of the campaign season and this year looks to be an exciting one for the candidates vying for the Democratic nomination for President. With 5 months remaining until the New Hampshire First in the Nation Presidential Primary, Vice President Al Gore's once substantial lead over former New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley has shrunk to only 5%. In the latest WMUR / CNN Poll, 46% of likely New Hampshire Democratic primary voters favor Gore, 41% favor Bradley, 4% favor some other candidate, and 9% are undecided.

Support for Bradley has almost doubled since the May, 1999 WMUR / CNN Poll when Gore was favored by 68% of New Hampshire democratic primary voters and Bradley was favored by only 23%.

Bradley has been campaigning hard in the Granite State raising money and working to make himself seen as a viable candidate. His challenge for the Democratic nomination is

now a serious threat to Gore, a prospect that many in the Democratic party have hoped to avoid. The battle for the Democratic nomination is now likely to be costly and divisive for the Democratic party and could damage their chances of retaining the Presidency in the 2000 general election.

Independents Lean to Bradley

One of the reasons for Bradley's surge is his support among voters who are registered as Independents, but say they plan to vote in the Democratic primary. Among this important group of swing voters, 44% favor Bradley, 42% favor Gore, 3% favor some other candidate, and 11% remain undecided. Gore holds a 50% to 39% lead over Bradley among registered Democrats.

Bradley Supporters More Committed

A second reason that Bradley has narrowed the gap with Gore is that his supporters are more committed to him than are Gore's. Among Bradley supporters, 43% say they are certain to vote for Bradley and 57% say they may change their minds. Among Gore supporters, only 34% say they are certain to vote for Gore and 66% say they may change their mind.

Favorability Ratings

A third problem for Gore is that his favorability ratings among Democratic primary voters have dropped significantly. Sixty-nine percent of likely Democratic primary voters have a favorable opinion of Gore, 24% have an unfavorable opinion of him, 6% are neutral, and 1% don't know enough about him to say. This results in a net favorability rating of +45. In the May, 1999 WMUR / CNN Poll, Gore's net favorability rating was +72.

By contrast, Bradley has risen in the eyes of likely Democratic primary voters. In the latest WMUR / CNN Poll, 60% said they have a favorable opinion of Bradley, 8% have an unfavorable opinion, 12% are neutral, and 21% don't know enough about him to say. His net favorability rating of +52 is higher than Gore's and has risen from +44 in the May, 1999 WMUR / CNN Poll.

Clinton Fatigue?

The race between Gore and Bradley is not dividing the Democratic party on traditional Liberal-Conservative lines. Gore, the more moderate candidate, is running stronger among self-identified Liberals than is Bradley, the more Liberal candidate. Also, older Democratic voters, who are generally more moderate than younger voters, are strongly

supporting Bradley. This may be an indication of Gore's being linked with Bill Clinton. Older voters give Bill Clinton lower approval ratings than do younger voters while Liberals more strongly approve of Clinton than do Moderates or Conservatives.

Can Gore Beat Bush?

Another possible reason that Democrats are moving away from Gore is that he continues to trail the leading Republican candidate, George W. Bush, in a hypothetical race for President in 2000. Democrats are becoming increasingly concerned that he cannot beat Bush. Among likely primary voters, 56% say they will vote for Bush, only 35% favor Gore, 6% favor some other candidate, and 2% are undecided. Gore has not been able to cut into Bush's lead since May.

No Clamor for a Third Choice

In recent weeks, Republican Pat Buchanan has been debating whether to leave the Republican party and run for President as a candidate from the Reform Party. Several months ago, New Hampshire Senator Bob Smith did leave the Republican party and declare his intention to run for President as an Independent. These two prominent defections have led many observers to think there is strong, grass roots support for a Third Party challenge in 2000. And there is some support among New Hampshire voters for a Third Party. In the latest WMUR / CNN Poll, 11% said they are "very likely" to vote for a Third Party candidate in 2000, 12% are "fairly likely", 26% are "somewhat likely", 37% are "not very likely", and 13% say that it depends on the candidate.

While these results do not indicate that a Third Party candidate will win in 2000, Third Party voters could be crucial in a tight election by drawing support from either the Republican or Democratic candidate. Currently, Democrats are just as likely as Republicans to say they might vote for a Third Party candidate in 2000.

Sub-Group Analysis

Al Gore runs strongest among likely Democratic primary voters with lower levels of education, women, younger voters, Liberals, and people who say they "may vote" in the election. Bill Bradley runs strongest among likely Democratic Primary voters with higher levels of income and education, men, older voters, and Conservatives. While it is too early to predict the actual makeup of the Primary electorate, Bradley is running strong

among demographic groups who tend to vote more frequently, older voters, upper income voters, and highly educated voters. However, his Independent supporters have traditionally been less likely to actually vote on election day than registered Democrats, perhaps canceling out some of the turnout advantage he currently has over Gore.

Bradley gets his highest favorability ratings from Democratic primary voters aged 46 and older, those with college degrees, upper income primary voters, and those who attend church regularly. Gore's favorability ratings are high among all Democratic primary voters and his highest ratings come from lower income voters.

In the 2000 race for President, George W. Bush leads Al Gore among all groups of likely voters with the exception of Democrats, Liberals, pro-choice voters, those who do not attend church, and younger voters.

WMUR / CNN Poll Methodology

These findings are based on the most recent WMUR / CNN Poll, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center from September 5 through September 11, 1999.

A random sample of 702 likely New Hampshire Primary voters was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 3.7 percent. A sub-sample of 325 likely Democratic Primary voters was interviewed as part of this sample. In 95 of 100 cases, statewide estimates for the Democratic sub-sample will be accurate to plus or minus 5.4 percent. Results reported for subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population.

In addition to sampling error, all surveys have other potential sources of non-sampling error including question order and question wording effects, and non-response.

Respondents to the WMUR / CNN Poll were asked:

"I'd like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or an unfavorable opinion of that person -- or if you have never heard of him or her." (ROTATE NAMES)

- Former New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley
- Vice President Al Gore

"Currently, Al Gore and Bill Bradley are expected to be on the Democratic primary ballot. If you were voting in the Democratic primary today ... would you vote for Al Gore or Bill Bradley?"

"Are you certain to support that person, or do you think you may change your mind and support someone else in the 2000 New Hampshire primary?"

"Thinking ahead to the Presidential election in November 2000. Suppose the 2000 election for President was being held today and the candidates were George W. Bush, the Republican, and Al Gore the Democrat. Which would you like to see win?"

"How likely is it that you would consider voting for an independent candidate for President in 2000 rather than the Democratic or Republican candidates ... very likely ... fairly likely ... somewhat likely ... or not very likely?"

Candidate Favored in Democratic Primary

(Likely Democratic Primary Voters)

	May '99	Sept. '99
Al Gore	68%	46%
Bill Bradley	23	41
Other	3	4
Undecided	6	9
	(N=190)	(N=315)

Certainty of Voting for Candidate

(Likely Democratic Primary Voters)

	All Democrats	Gore Supporters	Bradley Supporters
Certain	37%	34%	43%
May Change Mind	64	66	57
	(N=286)	(N=146)	(N=129)

Democratic Favorability Ratings

(Likely Democratic Primary Voters)

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Don't Know	Net Favorable	
Al Gore	69%	24%	6%	1%	+45	(N=320)
Bill Bradley	60	8	11	21	+52	(N=321)

Net Favorability Ratings

(Likely Democratic Primary Voters)

	<u>May '99</u>	<u>Sept. '99</u>
Al Gore	+72	+45
Bill Bradley	+44	+52

Bush or Gore in 2000
(Likely New Hampshire Primary Voters)

	<u>May '99</u>	<u>Sept. '99</u>
Al Gore	35%	35%
George W. Bush	55	56
Other	3	6
Undecided	7	2
	(N=677)	(N=683)

Vote for Independent in 2000
(Likely New Hampshire Primary Voters)

	<u>Sept. '99</u>
Very Likely	11%
Fairly Likely	12
Somewhat Likely	26
Not Very Likely	37
Depends on candidate	13

(N=674)