

Involved and Informed Voters: That's What Makes New Hampshire Unique

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DURHAM, NH -- New Hampshire voters were highly involved and informed in the 2000 presidential primary. Not only was turnout high, but voters were active in other aspects of the campaign as well.

These are the findings of the New Hampshire 2000 Survey conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. One thousand four (1004) New Hampshire residents were interviewed between June 16 and June 28, 2000. The potential sampling error for the survey is $\pm 3.1\%$. The New Hampshire 2000 Survey, is sponsored by the Library and Archives of New Hampshire's Political Tradition, the New Hampshire Business and Industry Association, Fidelity Investments, the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the New Hampshire Small Business Development Center, and the University System of New Hampshire.

More than Just Turnout

The Republican and Democratic parties are holding their national conventions in August and a critical issue that will be addressed is the fate of New Hampshire's "First in the Nation Primary." One of the strongest arguments for keeping New Hampshire first is that voters in the Granite State take their role very seriously. Former Governor Hugh Gregg, speaking for The Library and Archives of New Hampshire's Political Tradition, one of the sponsors of the New Hampshire 2000 Survey, commented that "the New Hampshire electorate is highly informed and engaged. The national

media recognize that New Hampshire represents the nation's interests well".

Exciting races in both the Democratic and Republican primaries drew a record number of New Hampshire voters to the polls this year. The New Hampshire Secretary of State's office reported that in the 2000 New Hampshire primary 85% of Republicans and 74% of Democrats went to the polls. This is approximately 50 percent higher than national averages. But in New Hampshire, political engagement goes well beyond voting. Nearly 3/4ths of New Hampshire residents paid "a lot of attention" or "some attention" to the presidential primary in 2000. Less than 10% said they paid "no attention" to the primary. Registered voters paid even greater attention, more than 8 of 10 said they paid "a lot of attention" or "some attention" to the primary.

Ross Gittell, associate professor at the Whittemore School of Business and Economics at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) and research director on a project for the Library and Archives of New Hampshire's Political Tradition commented that "New Hampshire residents interacted and listened to the candidates during the nomination process at a level unmatched in any other state."

I Want to Shake Your Hand

New Hampshirites were so involved in the primary campaign that a higher percentage of residents said they shook hands with a candidate than did not pay attention to the primary. Approximately 1 in 10 of those surveyed said they actually shook hands with a presidential candidate during the 2000 primary in New Hampshire while less than 10% said they paid no attention to the primary. This suggests some sore wrists among candidates who pressed the flesh with an estimated 100,000 New Hampshire residents.

A 1999 survey conducted by the Library and Archives of New Hampshire's Political Tradition found that nearly 20% of New Hampshire adults said they had shaken hands with a presidential candidate sometime in the past.

New Hampshire residents also participated in the primary in other ways, 13% said they attended a rally, speech or other event on behalf of one of the primary candidates and 9% made a campaign contribution to one of the candidates.

Not Debatable

Perhaps most striking in an era of people turning away from politics, is that nearly 70% of New Hampshire

residents reported watching one or more of the presidential debates during the New Hampshire primary campaign. In all regions of the state, more than 60% of residents watched the 2000 debates.

Andy Smith, the Director of the UNH Survey Research Center observed that "the state's citizens truly stand out in attention paid to the presidential nomination process." The NH 2000 Survey data support and add detail to the results from the "Vanishing Voter Project" by the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University. That project identified New Hampshire residents as having the highest level of involvement in the 2000 presidential nominating campaigns, 10% higher than the next engaged state, Arizona.

Subgroup Analysis

Registered Republicans and Democrats, older New Hampshire residents, those with higher levels of income, and those with higher levels of education are most likely to say they paid "a lot of attention" to the 2000 New Hampshire primary. Younger residents (under 30), residents with lower levels of education, lower levels of income, and residents who are not registered to vote were least interested in the 2000 New Hampshire primary.

Upper income residents and those with higher levels of education are most likely to report making a campaign contribution during the 2000 New Hampshire primary.

Majorities of all demographic and economic groups report watching at least one of the presidential debates held during the 2000 New Hampshire primary.

Methodology

These findings are based on the New Hampshire 2000 Survey, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center from June 16 to June 28, 2000. A random sample of 1004 New Hampshire adults was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 3.1 percent. Results reported for other subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population. The data have been weighted to adjust for numbers of adults and telephone lines within households. In addition to potential sampling error, all surveys have other potential sources of non-sampling error including question order effects, question wording effects, and non-response.

Respondents to the NH 2000 Survey were asked:

- "I'd like to ask you some questions about the 2000 New Hampshire primary. Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. Others pay more attention. How about you? How much attention did you pay to the 2000 New Hampshire primary campaign -- a lot, some, not much, or none at all?"
- "As you know, there are many ways in which the candidates attempt to win the support of voters. We would like to know if you had any of the following contacts with candidates during the primary campaign. Did you personally attend a rally, speech, or other event on behalf of any of the presidential candidates during the primary campaign?"
- "Did you personally shake hands with any of the presidential candidates during the primary campaign?"
- "Did you personally make a campaign contribution to any of the presidential candidates during the primary campaign?"
- "Did you watch any of the presidential debates held in New Hampshire during the primary campaign?"

Attention Paid to 2000 NH Primary

A lot of attention 34%

Some attention 40%

Not much attention 17%

None at all 9%

(N=1002)

NH 2000 Primary Campaign Activities

Activity Yes No (N)

Watch a debate in NH 68% yes, 32% no, (N=1003)

Attend rally, speech, event 13% yes, 87% no, (N=1004)

Shake hands with candidate 10% yes, 89% no,

(N=1003)

Make campaign contribution 9% yes, 98% no, (N=999)

Visit the UNH Survey Center Website at
www.unh.edu/ipssr/survey-center.

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