



Where Strategy Meets Science

To: Steven Law | Carl Forti | Crossroads GPS
From: Brenda Gianiny | Axis Research
Glen Bolger | Public Opinion Strategies
Date: April 14, 2015
RE: Hillary Clinton's Image and Standing in Battleground States

As you know, Axis Research and Public Opinion Strategies conducted an extensive survey from March 22nd through March 26th in likely presidential battleground states, evaluating the key issues and trends that are affecting Americans' perceptions as they look toward 2016. The poll also evaluated voters' perceptions of the Democratic frontrunner for president, Hillary Clinton. This memorandum provides observations on that part of the poll.

Voters Know Hillary Clinton Well and Her Image is Sharply Divided...

Hillary Clinton's polarized image is acute in key battleground states. Voters' impressions of her are positive by just 3 net points, with 95% of voters aware of and able to articulate an opinion of her (49% favorable | 46% unfavorable). These numbers are unlikely to change dramatically in her favor because, unlike the Republican field, Clinton cannot tap a large well of voters who are currently unaware of her or without impression of her, in order to strengthen her image.

In fact, instead of improving her image, our research suggests that Hillary Clinton's image could deteriorate further during a presidential campaign. After respondents were given positives and negatives about Clinton's accomplishments, record and goals, her image worsened by a net 10 points to -7 (44% favorable | 51% unfavorable). Voters who are generally assumed to be the most supportive of her candidacy, including young women and young Democrats, are among the most likely to become more unfavorable to Hillary. It's possible that these groups are too young to remember Hillary's days in the Senate and the turmoil and scandals of the 1990s.

...And She's Losing the Ballot

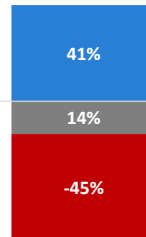
Once a Republican nominee is selected, that candidate will likely start the race in strong shape throughout these battleground states. Across the 15 states surveyed, Hillary Clinton loses against a generic Republican nominee by one point: (43% Clinton vs. 44% Republican). While some would argue that an unnamed Republican candidate presents an unrealistic best-case scenario in a poll, over one-third of battleground state voters who selected the Republican nominee in our survey said that their vote was directly "a vote against Hillary Clinton," and independent from who the Republican nominee is (37%).

Moreover, contrary to a great deal of conventional wisdom, Hillary Clinton does not have a commanding lead among women in the battleground states that will decide the next election.

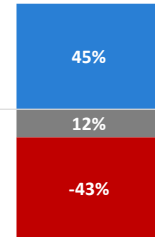
While women tend to have a favorable impression of Hillary, she leads the ballot by just two points with this crucial segment of voters. By contrast, women favor a generic Democrat on the congressional ballot by a greater margin of five points.

■ Vote Republican ■ Depends on GOP Candidate / Don't Know ■ Vote Clinton

Clinton: -4



Clinton: +2



Nor is Clinton’s status (and core message) as the potential “first woman president” a decisive advantage for her. Eight in ten voters (80%) say that Hillary Clinton becoming the first woman president “makes no difference” in their support or opposition to her candidacy. Just 15% are more likely to support her as the first female president. The only group to be meaningfully motivated by the “first woman president” message is high-income women (those with a total household income of \$100,000 or more yearly).

Character – Voters Just Don’t Trust Her

Decades of controversy about alleged illegal and unethical behavior have made a lasting impact on Hillary Clinton’s image with voters, many of whom are deeply aware of these ethical issues, particularly after the recent email controversy. The most cited weakness of Hillary Clinton as a presidential candidate is her “record of scandals,” followed by her handling of the Benghazi embassy attack. In addition, Hillary Clinton is viewed by significant numbers of voters as out of touch, a poor manager of the State Department, and possessing questionable ethics.

These negative feelings are evident when voters are asked if they agree or disagree whether certain key attributes represent Hillary Clinton. Fewer than half of all battleground state voters believe Clinton “shares [their] values” and “is honest and trustworthy.” In fact, over one-third (37%) STRONGLY disagree that Clinton shares their values. Remarkably, 60% of voters view Clinton as a typical politician who “will say or do anything to get elected.”

Methodology

Axis Research, Inc. and Public Opinion Strategies fielded a poll with 1,003 likely 2016 general election voters distributed proportionate to voters in battleground states. Battleground states were defined as the following: AR, CO, FL, NV, IL, IA, MI, NH, NM, NC, OH, PA, VA, WI and WV. All interviews were conducted with live interviewers and took place from March 22nd through March 26th; 41% of all interviews were conducted on cell phones.

The margin of error on these results is ±3.16%.