

2016 Republican Presidential Primary Panel: Results from Survey Waves 1 & 2

Morning Consult¹
February 9, 2016

Click [here](#) for latest version.

Comments Welcome!

Morning Consult will interview the same Republican and Republican-leaning independents multiple times from late January 2016 through March 2016. This white paper summarizes the results from the first two rounds of interviews conducted the weekend before the Iowa caucus (January 29 - February 1, 2016, n = 2,180) and immediately after the Iowa caucus (February 2-5, 2016, n = 868). This memo describes how we designed the study and analyzes whether overall candidate support levels and views about which candidate will win the nomination changed due to the results in Iowa. Additional study materials are available at kyleadropp.com/goppanel

¹Kyle A. Dropp is Co Founder and Executive Director of Polling and Data Science at Morning Consult (kyle@morningconsult.com) and Assistant Professor in the Department of Government at Dartmouth College (kyle.dropp@dartmouth.edu). I would like to thank Adam Petrihos, Alex Dulin, Tyler Sinclair, James Wyatt, Travis Byrum, and Nathan Teetor at Morning Consult for help with research design, survey execution, data analysis and writing. I would like to thank Morning Consult for financial support and am grateful to the following people at Morning Consult for help: Michael Ramlet, Meghan McCarthy, Paul Cenoz and Jeff Cartwright. Special thanks to Barry Burden, Daniel Butler, Kevin Collins, Dean Eckles, Ken Goldstein, Sunshine Hillygus, Dan Hopkins, Shanto Iyengar, Simon Jackman, Neil Malhotra, Ishan Nath, Otis Reid, Jonathan Robinson, Jon Rogowski and John Sides for helpful advice, conversations and feedback in designing and implementing this study. Any errors or omissions are my own.

Morning Consult is interviewing the same Republicans throughout the months of January, February and March 2016. In contrast with most studies that interview individuals at a single point in time, the panel study described here collects repeated measures on the same questions with the same individuals. A panel is uniquely suited for measuring changes in attitudes over time, and it may be particularly useful for understanding the dynamics in a Republican presidential primary field that included more than 10 candidates in the lead up to the Iowa caucus. This white paper first describes key methodological details such as survey data collection, questionnaire design and survey weighting and then outlines key results such as shifts in candidate support and shifts which candidate Republicans say will win the Republican nomination. This document will be updated regularly to reflect additional analyses.

SURVEY DATA COLLECTION

Morning Consult interviewed a national sample of 2,180 Republican and Republican leaning Independents from January 29 - February 1, 2016, and then re-interviewed 868 of these same respondents immediately following the Iowa caucus from February 2-5, 2016. The third round of interviews will be conducted following the February 9th New Hampshire primary (February 10-12, 2016), the fourth round of interviews will be conducted following the February 23rd Nevada caucus for Republicans (February 25-27, 2016), and a potential fifth round of interviews will be conducted following the March 1st Super Tuesday primaries (March 2-4, 2016). We will ensure at least 750 respondents complete each wave of the panel study by inviting new respondents to the study in Waves 2, 3, and 4.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND CONTENT

Respondents interviewed in this panel study first answered standard demographic items such as age, gender, educational attainment, race, zip code, and party affiliation.² Respondents who were under 18 years of age, who were not registered to vote, who were not living in the United States or who were not U.S. citizens were excluded from the study at this point. Additionally, respondents who were not Republican or Republican leaning Independents, or who said they were not planning on voting in the Republican primary or caucus in their state, were excluded from the study.

Respondents then answered likely voter questions such as voter registration status, self-reported previous vote history, interest in the current election, and a 1-100 scale regarding likelihood of voting in the 2016 presidential primary or caucus in their state. Then, respondents were asked for their first and second choice candidates in the Republican presidential primary, whether they might change their mind, who they thought would gain the primary election nomination on the Democratic and Republican sides, and which candidate they would like to see win. Then, respondents answered similar questions about general election match ups with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and top Republican contenders, who will likely win the general election, and the chance for each top candidate to win the general election. Then, they stated whether they agreed with a series of brief statements

²We obtained respondents' full names and street addresses to enable us to obtain their registration status and previous voting history from a voter file.

about the leading candidates on both sides, such as whether the candidates were leaders or were honest and trustworthy. The survey also included questions measuring racial attitudes, favorability toward all Republican and Democratic candidates, favorability toward in-groups and out-groups such as whites, African Americans and Hispanics, media exposure, political knowledge, and a 10-item scale for categorizing individuals as liberal or conservative. Follow up questionnaire waves, such as Wave 2, were much shorter in length and did not include questions on basic demographics, political knowledge, favorability toward in-groups and out-groups, or the 10-item liberal-conservative ideology scale.

SURVEY SAMPLING AND WEIGHTING

The population of Republican and Republican-leaning independent registered voters and likely voters can be difficult to estimate for many reasons: party affiliation can change rapidly over time, Census data does not include political questions such as party affiliation and voter turnout varies considerably across states and election types. We used a few approaches to present our results and to attempt to generalize our national sample of Republican and Republican-leaning independents to the general population of these voters. Each approach has potentially important strengths and weaknesses. First, we analyzed six large Morning Consult national surveys conducted throughout December 2015 and January 2016 among 20,060 registered voters and 7,391 Republican and Republican-leaning independent registered voters. Second, we analyzed Pew Research Center surveys conducted throughout 2014 among 25,010 adults nationally and about 10,000 Republican and Republican-leaning independents. Third, we analyzed all Pew Research Center national surveys conducted from January 2014 through July 2015 among 53,584 registered voters and 18,994 Republican and Republican-leaning independent registered voters.³ For these three approaches, we treated the large samples of Republicans and Republican-leaning independent registered voters as the approximate population totals and we applied survey weights using age, gender, educational attainment and race/ethnicity.⁴

Table 1 displays the percent of adults broken down by gender, age, race and education across the Morning Consult six survey sample, the Pew Research Center 2014 sample, the Pew Research Center 2014-15 sample and the Wave 2 of the Republican and Republican-leaning independents panel. The Pew samples contain slightly more men than the six survey Morning Consult sample and the Pew respondents have slightly higher levels of education than the six survey Morning Consult sample. On age and race, the samples look quite similar.

Each approach has important strengths and weaknesses. Importantly, they yield similar estimates of changes in overall support in the Republican primary race and in perceptions of the likelihood that candidates such as Donald Trump or Marco Rubio would gain the

³We were able to obtain the raw data for surveys conducted through the summer of 2015. Raw data for more recent surveys was not publicly available.

⁴A key advantage of the first approach is that it is a recent, large sample of registered voters. The 2014 Pew Research Center sample is a bit less recent and includes all adults rather than only registered voters. However, the 2014 Pew data is slightly larger and contains survey with adults via landline and cell phone interviews. The 2014-15 Pew Research Center data is the largest dataset we utilize, is more recent, and includes registered voters rather than all adults over 18 years of age.

Republican nomination for President. The results discussed throughout will be presented using weights from the large Morning Consult national surveys. As noted above, though, the results are highly similar across the three approaches.

TABLE 1. Summary Statistics For Three Survey Weighting Approaches for Republican and Republican-leaning independents

	Morning Consult RVs n = 7,391	Pew Research '14 Adults n = 10,000	Pew Research '14-'15 RVs n=18,994	Wave 2 RVs n = 868
% Male	49	55	53	48
% Female	51	45	47	52
% Age: < 50	44	40	45	57
% Age: 50+	56	60	55	43
% White	93	90	89	95
% No Bachelors	64	58	68	60
% Bachelors+	36	42	32	40

BALANCE ON KEY VARIABLES ACROSS WAVES:

All respondents who completed Wave 1 prior to the Iowa caucus were invited to complete a follow up interview in the days following the caucus, but only 40 percent of respondents completed this second wave. This section contains some balance checks to examine whether the individuals who completed the second interview differ from the individuals who completed the first interview on key background variables.

TABLE 2. Summary Statistics For Survey Waves 1 & 2

	Wave 1 n = 2,180	Wave 2 n = 868
% Female	52	52
% Age: 18-29	22	16
% Age: 65+	14	16
% White	92	95
% Bachelors+	38	40
% High Interest in Politics	55	59

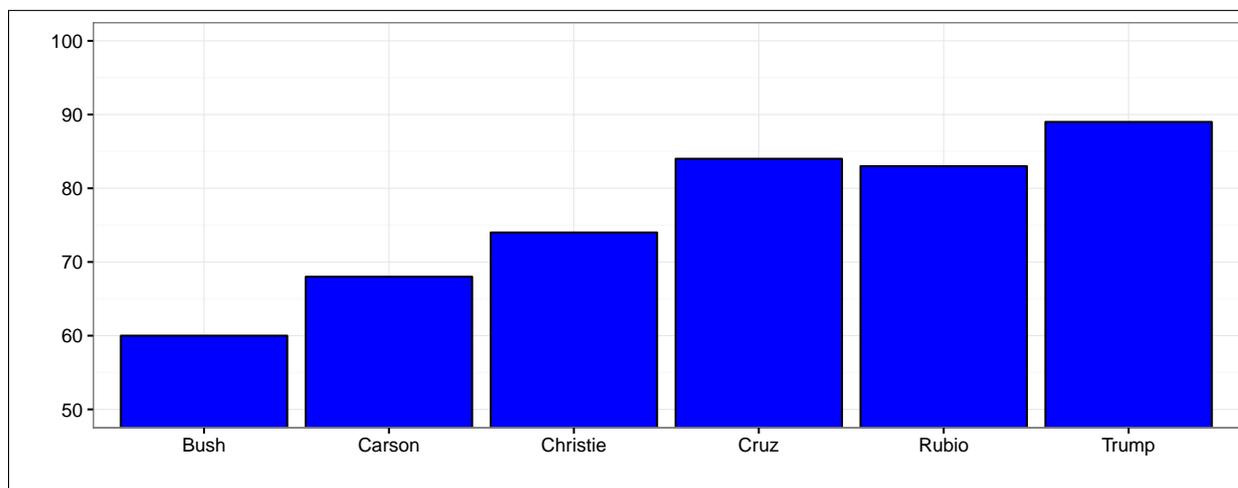
Table 2 indicates that the gender, age, education and racial breakdowns of Wave 1 panelists (n = 2,180) and Wave 2 panelists (n = 868) are highly similar. Fifty-two percent of respondents in both samples are women. The two samples have nearly the same levels of education – 38 percent of Wave 1 respondents have a Bachelor’s degree or higher and 40 percent of Wave 2 respondents have a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Fifty-five percent of respondents in Wave 1 say they are very or extremely interested in politics, compared with 59 percent who completed Wave 2. The Wave 1 sample is slightly older – 16 percent of individuals who completed Wave 1 are less than 30 years old, compared with 22 percent of respondents who completed Wave 2.

REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY VOTE CHOICE

Following the Iowa caucus, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz see gains in support among registered voters while businessman Donald Trump's level of support stays about the same. Following the Iowa caucus, 41 percent of Republican and Republican-leaning independents nationally support Trump, followed by Cruz (18 percent), Rubio (14 percent) and Carson (9 percent). When these same Republican and Republican-leaning independents were interviewed the weekend before the Iowa caucus, 42 percent supported Trump. Cruz received support from 13 percent, followed by Rubio (10 percent) and Carson (9 percent).

We then analyzed which Republican voters changed their support before and after the Iowa caucus. Nine in 10 (89 percent) voters who say they supported Trump prior to the Iowa caucus still support him today. The parallel figure for Rubio supporters is 83 percent and the same figure for Cruz supporters is 84 percent. It is a bleaker story for candidates who did not finish in the top three in Iowa. Three in four (74 percent) who supported New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie still support him today, seven in 10 (68 percent) who supported neurosurgeon Ben Carson before Iowa still support him today after his fourth place finish in Iowa, and only six in 10 (60 percent) who supported former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush before Iowa still support him today.

FIGURE 1. % of Wave 1 Supporters Who Support Same Candidate in Wave 2

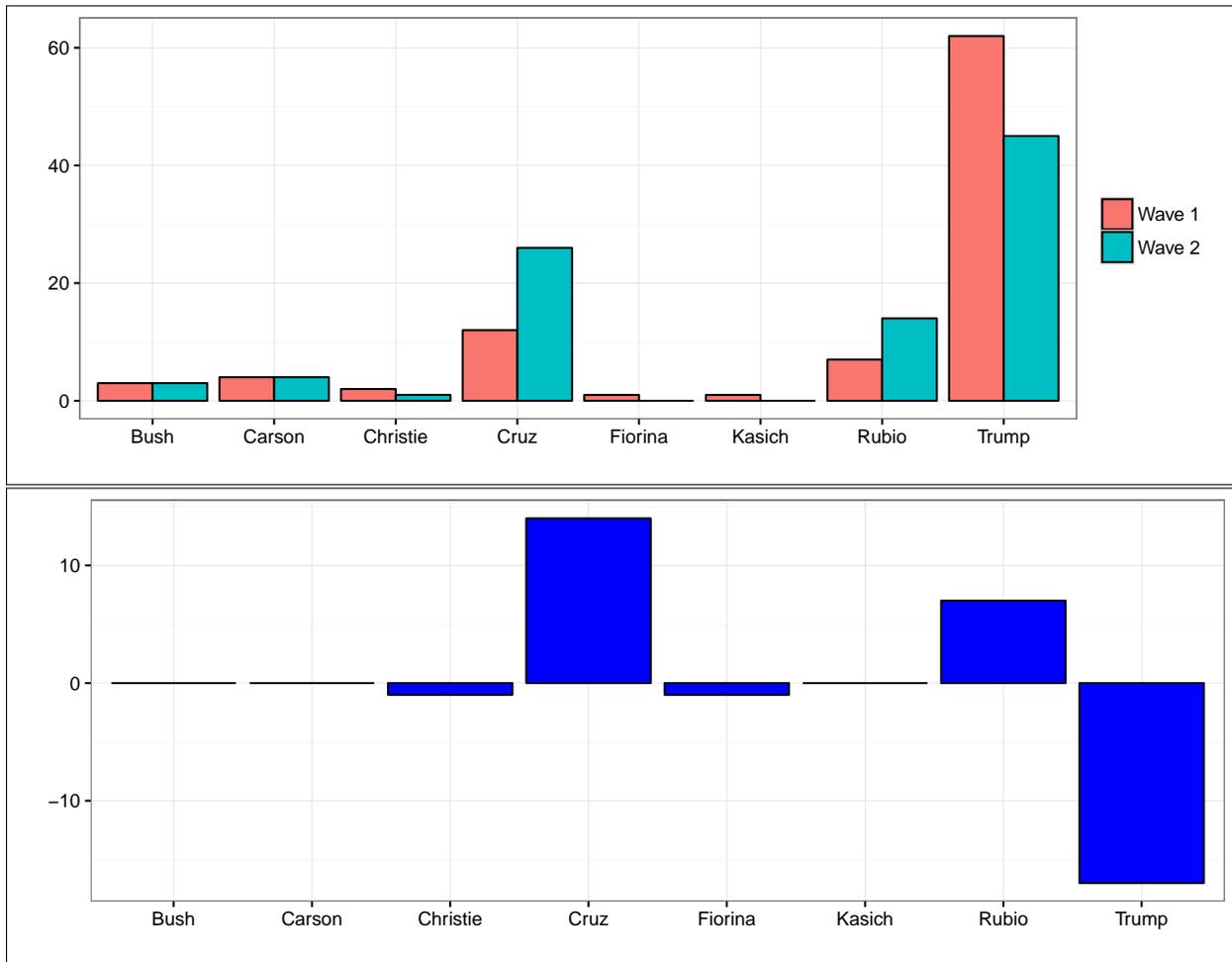


WHO DO VOTERS BELIEVE WILL WIN THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION?

Twice as many voters say Texas Sen. Ted Cruz will win the GOP nomination following his win in Iowa, as shown in Figure 2. Nearly three in 10 (26 percent) say Cruz will win the Republican nomination following his win in Iowa, up from only 12 percent the weekend before. Donald Trump is down on this measure. Fewer, 45 percent, say Donald Trump will win the nomination today, compared with 62 percent prior to the Iowa caucus. Twice as many (14 percent) say Rubio will win the GOP caucus following his strong third place finish as before the Iowa caucus (7 percent). Figure 2 shows that Cruz gains 14 points on this

measure of viability, Rubio gains 7 points on this measure, and Trump loses 16 points on this measure. The percent who say other candidates such as Jeb Bush, Ben Carson, Carly Fiorina and John Kasich remain low and unchanged across the two surveys.

FIGURE 2. Top Panel: Percent Who Say Each Candidate Will Win the Republican Nomination (Wave 1 vs. Wave 2). Bottom Panel: Change in Percent Who Say Each Candidate Will Win the Republican Nomination (Wave 1 vs. Wave 2).

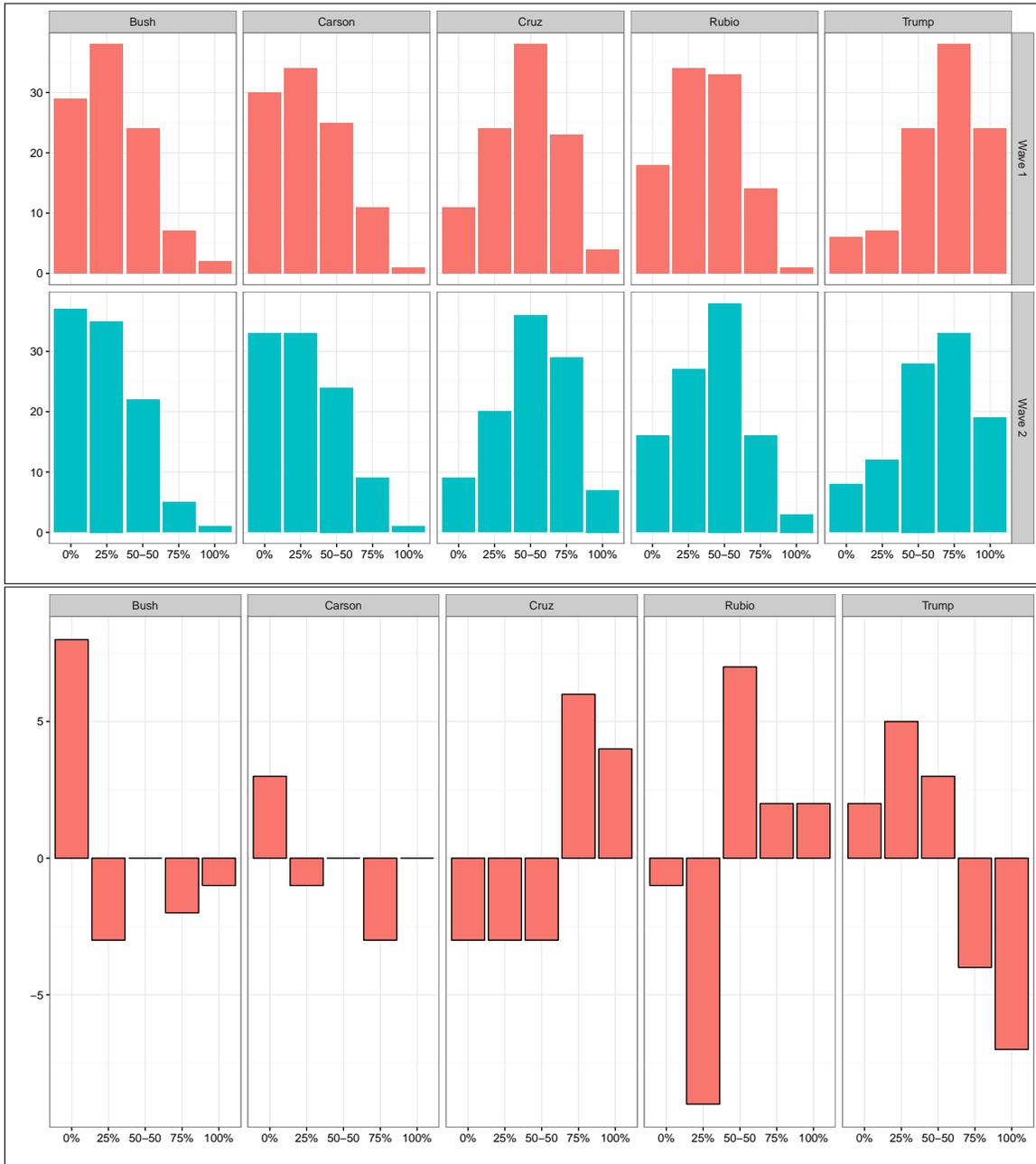


Two in three (66 percent) voters who said Trump had the best chance of winning prior to Iowa still say he has the best chance of winning today. Seven in 10 (71 percent) who said Cruz had the best chance of winning prior to Iowa still say the Texas Senator has the best chance of winning today, and more than six in 10 (64 percent) who said Rubio had the best chance of winning prior to Iowa still say Rubio has the best chance of winning today.

Figure 3 displays how voters rate the likelihood of each of five leading GOP candidates winning the GOP nomination before and after the Iowa caucus. Respondents were asked whether each candidate had a 0%, 25%, 50-50, 75%, or a 100% chance of winning the Republican nomination. The bottom third of the figure, which displays the change among all respondents before and after Iowa, demonstrates that respondents are more likely to say Cruz and Rubio have a higher chance of winning the nomination after Iowa, whereas fewer

say Trump will definitely win after Iowa. Specifically, 10 percent more respondents now say Cruz has a 75% or better chance of winning compared with before Iowa, and 10 percent fewer respondents say Trump has a 75% or better change of winning now.

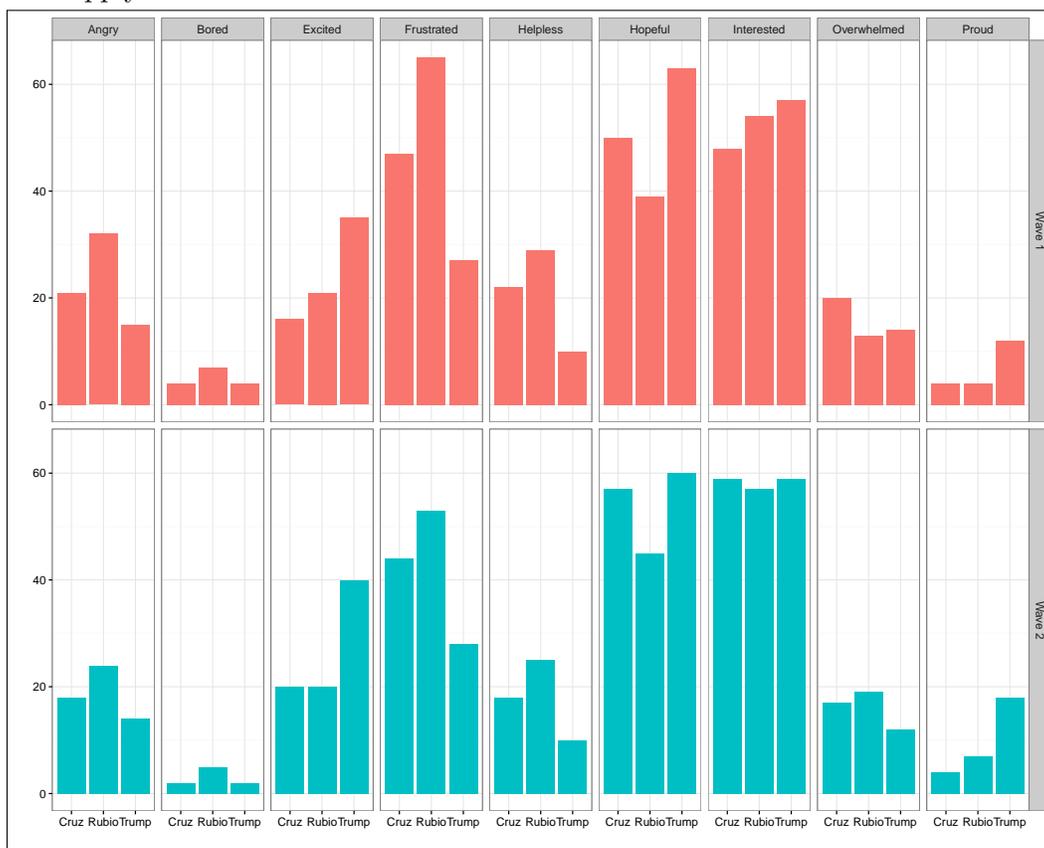
FIGURE 3. Top Panel: ‘Now, thinking about these nominating conventions, who how likely is it that each of the following candidates win the Republican nomination for President?’ (Wave 1 vs. Wave 2). Bottom Panel: Change Between Waves in Single Figure.



GENERAL FEELINGS ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

Figure 4 displays the percentage of supporters of Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz and Donald Trump who say the following words describe how they are feeling about the upcoming presidential campaign. Compared with interviews prior to the Iowa caucus, supporters of Cruz and Rubio are more likely to say they are hopeful and less likely to say they are frustrated.

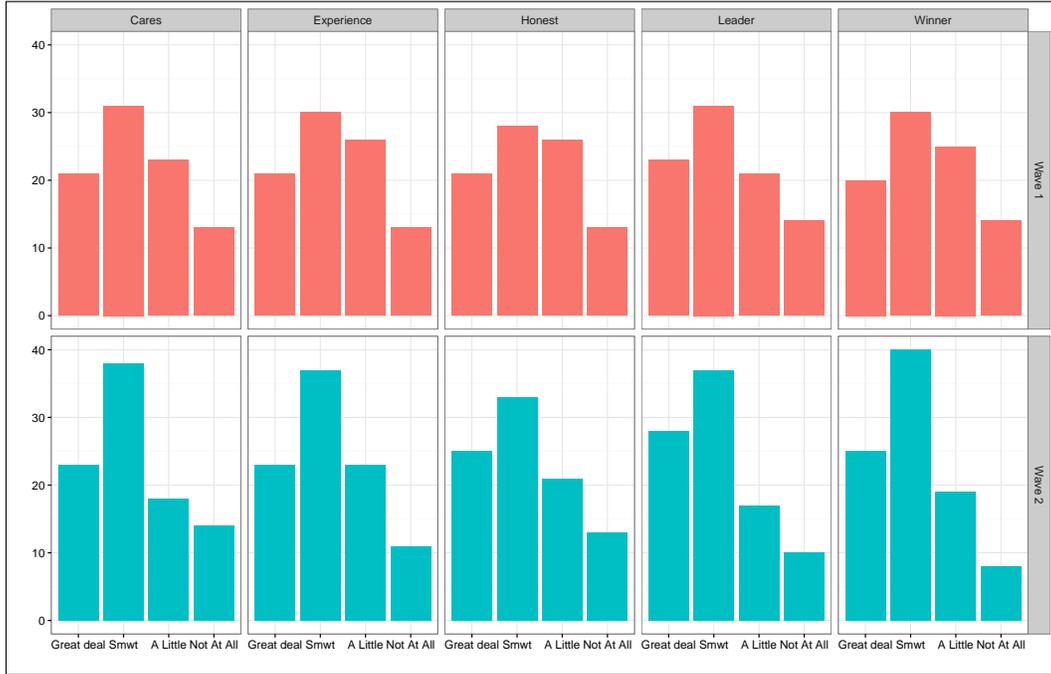
FIGURE 4. The percent of supporters of Cruz, Rubio and Trump who say the following words describe how they feeling about the campaign - ‘Do any of the following words describe how you feel about the upcoming presidential election? Check all that apply?’



AGREEMENT WITH CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES

Figure 5 displays the percent of voters who say the following descriptions apply to Texas Sen. Ted Cruz. In general, more respondents today say Cruz is a winner and a leader than before the Iowa caucus.

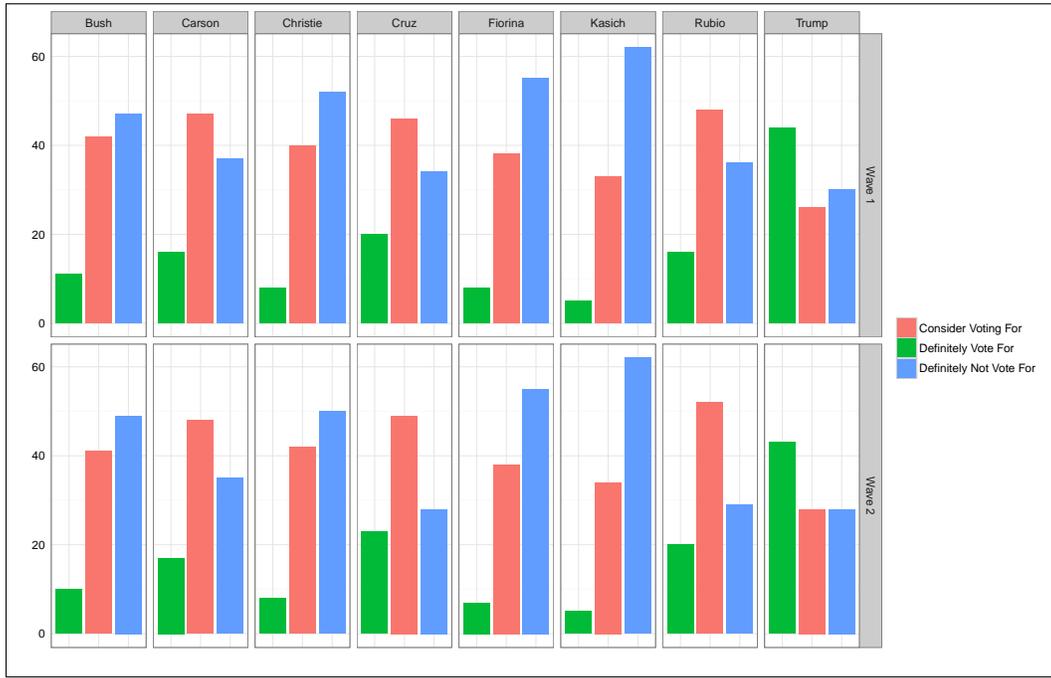
FIGURE 5. 'Thinking about the following characteristics and qualities, how much would you say the following statements fit your impression of Ted Cruz?'



CONSIDER VOTING FOR GOP CANDIDATES

Figure 6 displays the percent of Republicans who would definitely vote for, consider voting for, or definitely not vote for the following Republican candidates.

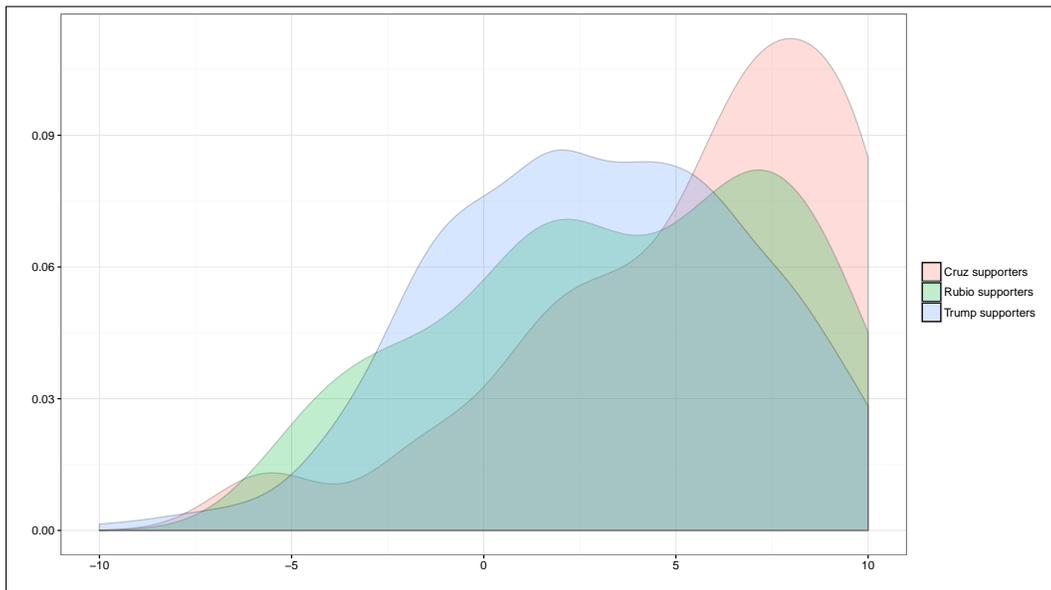
FIGURE 6. ‘Please indicate whether you would definitely vote for, consider voting for, or definitely not vote for each of the following candidates in the Republican primary for President.’



LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY OF CRUZ, RUBIO AND TRUMP SUPPORTERS

Figure 7 displays the distribution of Cruz, Rubio and Trump supporters based on their answers to 10 questions designed to place respondents on a liberal-conservative scale.

FIGURE 7. Liberal (-10) vs Conservative (10) Ideology of Cruz, Rubio and Trump Supporters. Trump supporters are the most moderate and Cruz supporters are the most conservative



This white paper only begins to address some of the practical research questions that motivated the creation of this panel. Here are a few of the research questions that we will attempt to address with this study:

- How do perceptions of viability change throughout a campaign?
- How quickly do voters become aware of election outcomes?
- How do perceptions of candidates on traits such as leadership, honesty, and empathy vary throughout a campaign?
- Do respondents' preferences for issue stances that candidates take change throughout a primary campaign?
- Which candidates gain and lose support throughout the primary campaign?
- Can we better understand sincere and strategic voting by asking who you would vote for today, who you would like to win the nomination, and who you think will win the nomination?
- How do candidates perform under more or less restrictive likely voter models?