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Reuters/C-SPAN/Zogby Poll: Obama’s SC lead slipping but still wide

Edwards makes gains amid shifting voter preferences

Utica, NY – Illinois Sen. Barack Obama’s lead over New York Sen. Hillary Clinton has shrunk by four points overall and by nine points among black voters, during the last 24 hours of polling, but he retains a sizable edge, the latest Reuters/C-SPAN/Zogby survey shows.

The telephone tracking poll taken Jan. 21-23 shows Obama with 39% support from likely Democratic voters, compared to Clinton’s 24% support. The three-day daily tracking survey included 811 likely Democratic primary voters across South Carolina and carries a margin of error of +/-3.4 percentage points. In yesterday's tracking poll, Obama had 43% support to Clinton’s 25%.

Former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards still trails, but has gained four points and now has support from 19% of likely voters.

Obama still has a healthy lead among African American voters, but lost almost nine points since yesterday, dropping from 65% to 56% support among that group. Edwards, who registered no support from black voters the day before, picked up five points and Clinton added about two points to reach 18% of black support. Nearly one in five - 19% - of black voters said they were not sure for whom they would vote, which was up a point from the day before.

Democrats – South Carolina	1/21-23	1/20-22
Obama	39%	43%
Clinton	24%	25%
Edwards	19%	15%

Obama, meanwhile, made gains among male voters, attracting 50% support, up from 42% the

day before. Clinton held steady at 19% of male support, while Edwards leapt ahead of her, attracting 23% of male support, up from just 15% the day before. Obama continued to outdo Clinton among women, with 36% backing him to Clinton's 29%.

The Illinois senator also had a slim lead over Clinton among voters over age 65, drawing 30% of their support, compared to Clinton's 28%. Senior citizens and women have been groups that preferred Clinton in Nevada and New Hampshire. Obama continued to dominate among the youngest voters, getting 42% of their number to Clinton's 14%. Edwards beat Clinton in this category as well, taking the support of 25%.

Pollster John Zogby: *"The Democratic race in South Carolina is reminding me now of the beginning of the old Buffalo Springfield song: "There's something happening here/What it is ain't exactly clear."*

"Obama maintains a 15-point lead, but he has dipped under 40%, losing ground, including a few points among African Americans. And nearly one in five African Americans is now undecided with just three days to go until the election. Still, his is a commanding lead with just three days to go.

"Edwards, meanwhile, has had his second good day since the Monday night CNN debate, in which he delivered a strong performance. He hit 19% support on Tuesday alone and then 27% support on Wednesday alone. And, on Wednesday alone, he pulled ahead of Clinton overall. He has pulled ahead among whites. Could he pull ahead of Clinton and finish in second place? Even with a strong showing here, where does he go next to take advantage of the momentum?"

"Clinton has slipped slightly, and is at a point where you could wonder what implications a third place showing here could have for her heading into the Super Tuesday primaries on Feb. 5. She has left the state to campaign elsewhere, leaving her husband behind to keep up appearances in South Carolina.

"Overall, Obama maintains the advantage, but change appears to be in the air here – there are a lot of undecideds for this late stage in the contest - and we are watching developments closely."

The three-day Reuters/C-SPAN/Zogby tracking poll included polling from Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Each day, the oldest data is folded out of the survey and is replaced with fresh polling data from the most recent day of polling. All telephone calls were made using live operators from the Zogby call center in Upstate New York.