

ROMNEY Associates

NEWSLETTER

(Winning is the name of the game)

Romney Leads Johnson and Kennedy Now

BY LOUIS HARRIS

Gov. Romney would defeat President Johnson by 53 to 47 percent if a presidential election were held now. The Michigan Republican's strength is real and far-reaching among the voters. When pitted against Sen. Robert Kennedy, Romney wins by 54 to 46 percent.

Romney leads Mr. Johnson in the East, Midwest and Far West and would lose only in the South. Perhaps most significant of all is the governor's showing among people

under 35 years of age, with whom he holds a 56 to 44 percent edge. This is the first time a Republican has demonstrated majority support among young people since President Eisenhower ran in 1956.

In order to explore the Romney phenomenon in depth, the Harris survey asked a series of specific questions of a carefully drawn national cross section of the electorate. The results show clearly that

Romney's record as governor of Michigan, his experience as a successful businessman and his deep religious convictions stand him in good stead.

A special test was made to see how much his Mormon religion might hurt him. On a national basis, 12 percent say it would matter to them if a Mormon were in the White House, far less than the 30 percent who were worried about John F. Kennedy's Catholic religion in 1960.

Although it might hurt him in his hunt for delegates, Romney's failure to support Barry Goldwater in 1964 helps him with the voters. It is apparent that he is one Republican who avoids the right-wing stigma that plagued the GOP in 1964.

The major criticism of Romney is that he is inexperienced in foreign affairs. Among the key affluent groups, 45 percent feel that lack of background in the international sphere is a distinct shortcoming.

Overall, however, Romney is remarkably free of negatives. The Romney profile stands in sharp contrast to that of President Johnson who is in trouble on a wide front.

Here is the trend in the Romney-Johnson pairings:

	ROMNEY Percent	JOHNSON Percent
Nation-wide		
February, 1967	53	47
November, 1966	54	46
October, 1966	49	51
By age		
Under 35	56	44
35-49	53	47
50 and over	51	49
By region		
East	52	48
Midwest	53	47
South	44	56
West	62	38

The question of Romney's religion was probed in a question like that used in 1960 to measure the impact of John F. Kennedy's Catholicism:

Would it make a difference to you to have a Mormon such as Gov. Romney as President?

	Matters Percent	Doesn't Matter Percent
Nationwide	12	88
Protestants	16	84
Catholics	4	96
Jews	6	94
Negroes	16	84
Voters in South	21	79

It is significant that regardless of religion he loses the Negro vote to Mr. Johnson by 95 to 5 percent, identical to Goldwater's showing in 1964.

To test what lies back of Romney's political strength, voters were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with eight statements about the Michigan governor:

	Agree Percent	Disagree Percent	Not Sure Percent
Been good governor of Michigan	65	1	34
Successful background in business	53	1	46
Deeply religious, moral man	43	1	56
Right not to back Goldwater	42	16	42
Inexperienced in foreign affairs	28	14	58
Indecisive in stands on issues	13	31	56
Poor in handling politicians	12	24	64
Overdoes his piety and morality	8	34	58

This roster of attributes is brought into sharper focus when the answers of the most affluent segment of the electorate—people earning \$10,000 and over a year—is analyzed:

	Agree Percent	Disagree Percent	Not Sure Percent
Been good governor of Michigan	83	1	16
Successful background in business	74	1	25
Deeply religious, moral man	65	2	33
Right not to back Goldwater	61	20	19
Inexperienced in foreign affairs	45	16	39
Indecisive in stands on issues	14	47	39
Poor in handling politicians	17	30	53
Overdoes his piety and morality	13	50	37

The total positive impact of Romney on the electorate is a far cry from the essentially negative reading given him by many politicians and political commentators.

