

Rick Santorum gaining on Mitt Romney among N.J.'s Republican voters

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A new **Rutgers-Eagleton poll** finds Mitt Romney maintaining a comfortable lead among New Jersey's Republican voters -- though not necessarily a secure one. Rick Santorum is gaining on him, and fast: While 36 percent of GOP voters back Romney, 19 percent now support the former Pennsylvania senator, according to the poll.

"As in other states, we have seen Santorum rise from nearly nothing to become a contender," said poll director David Redlawsk, a Rutgers University professor of political science. And with only 11 percent of Republican voters saying they are very satisfied with their field of candidates, none of the presidential hopefuls can feel too secure.

If Romney does lock up the nomination, he may have a difficult fight in New Jersey come the general election. President Obama is leading Romney by a 25-point margin, the poll found, 6 more than when voters were asked earlier in the campaign season.

So what are the issues driving New Jersey's voters?

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GOP presidential candidate Rick Santorum speaks at a rally in Cumming, Ga. on Sunday.

The vast majority of Democrats and Republicans put the economy and jobs at the top of their list. Among Republicans and independents, the budget deficit is in second place, while Democrats rank health care and education at a distant second.

Share your thoughts: What are the issues most important to you in this race? What qualities are most important to you in a leader? See how your answers match up with other New Jersey voters by checking out the full poll results.

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