

Donald Trump leads popularity charts among Republican presidential hopefuls

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Washington: Notwithstanding widespread criticism after his call to ban Muslims entering America, Donald Trump emerged as the most popular Republican candidate in an opinion poll released on Wednesday that placed the runner-up at a distant second with less than half the support.

Trump, the 69-year-old New York-based real estate tycoon, has a support of 39% of the Republican and Republican leaning voters, according to the CNN/ORC poll.

Texas Senator Ted Cruz, his closest competitor, has gathered 18% of the votes.

The poll indicates that his recent anti-Muslim rhetoric and comments against Democratic presidential frontrunner Hillary Clinton has had no impact on the popularity of Trump, who announced to join politics only this summer.

Trump, who has consistently maintained a substantial lead over his Republican rivals this election season, topped another poll by Quinnipiac University where he led over Cruz - his nearest rival - by 16 points.

Both the polls were conducted after the latest Republican presidential debate last week.

Earlier this month, Trump called for "a total and complete shutdown" of Muslims entering the US in the aftermath of the California massacre, the most divisive remarks yet by the Republican presidential frontrunner that drew widespread global condemnation including from his party's rival candidates and the White House.

- PTI