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Does Chris Christie need to be a nice guy to govern?

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Is it necessary for a leader to be considered a nice guy to govern?

A Rutgers-Eagleton poll released Monday gives us an interesting look at how opinions of Gov. Chris Christie diverge when it comes to both his negatives and his leadership qualities. And that divergence presents the governor with some good news and potentially some bad news.

Those surveyed were asked to give a "yes" or "no" answer to whether a series of character traits fit Christie. Fifty-four percent said the term "strong leader" fits Christie very well. Another 29 percent said the trait fits him

somewhat well.

But do they trust him? There the numbers show some slippage. Only 23 percent say that "trustworthy" fits Christie very well. Another 38 percent say the term fits him somewhat well. Overall, those numbers aren't horrible. A total of 61 percent say the term "trustworthy" can be applied to the governor, while 83 percent consider him a good leader. But the rest of the governor's negatives are also high. A total of 77 percent of those polled say the term "arrogant" fits him very or somewhat well; 66 percent say the same for "bully."

Polling director David Redlawsk points to a partisan divide in the results, with Republicans naturally siding with the GOP governor and Democrats thinking less positively about him. Redlawsk hints at the danger facing Christie and the silver lining as well.

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“Losing the trust of voters puts Christie into the category of an ordinary politician,” Redlawsk said. “At the same time, his overall New Jersey ratings remain pretty good for a Republican in this blue state.”

It is also apparent that high negatives aren't necessarily a disqualifier for voters. Even with an administration beset by the George Washington Bridge lane-closure scandal and questions about the distribution of superstorm Sandy recovery money, the governor still is seen as a pretty good leader.

The more sobering numbers in the poll, however, come from the emotional responses people gave when asked about Christie. Forty percent of voters admitted to be angry when they thought about Christie. A lane-closure scandal that implicates former members of his administration will do that to a voter.

But there is danger in that number. Just as in any relationship, anger can lead to distrust and distrust can lead to disgust. Disgust, in turn, can lead to a political divorce. All of which shows us that Christie still has some work to do in patching up his relationship with those who not so long ago sang his praises without reservation.

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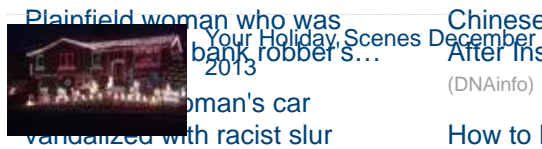
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