

Christie, Clinton favored for 2016 nominations by N.J. voters, poll shows

by Brent Johnson August 7, 2014

2016 Presidential Race



Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (left) and Gov. Chris Christie (right) are considered top possible candidates for president in 2016. *(File photos)*

TRENTON — A new poll shows New Jersey's Republican voters heavily favor the state's governor, Chris Christie, for the party's nomination for president in 2016, while a majority of Democrats pick Hillary Clinton as their candidate.

Still, when matched against each other, Christie trails Clinton by 10 percentage points among all voters in the Democratic-leaning state, according to [the Rutgers-Eagleton survey](#).

The poll, released this afternoon, shows more than 7 in 10 Republicans and Democrats in the Garden State can name a preferred nominee, even though Election Day is more than two years away and no one has officially declared their candidacy.

Forty-one percent of Republicans named Christie as their top pick for the party's nod. Another 8 percent tapped him as their second choice.

Fifty-eight percent of Democrats chose Clinton as their nominee, while 7 percent picked her second.

"This is a hard test for voters," said David Redlawsk, the poll's director and a professor of political science at Rutgers University. "We did not provide a list of candidates, so voters must think about who they know. Not surprisingly, Christie overwhelms other Republicans here. On the other side, lack of media coverage of Democrats other than Clinton makes it hard for Democrats to name anyone else."

No other possible contender from either party comes close to the frontrunners. On the Republican side, former presidential candidate Mitt Romney finished second with a combined 11 percent for first- and second-place mentions. Romney has said repeatedly he is not interested in running again.

Former Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida and U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin tied for third at 8 percent. U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida and U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas were at 7 percent each, while U.S. Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky and Gov. Rick Perry drew 5 percent or lower.

Among Democrats, Vice President Joe Biden drew a combined 10 percent of first- and second-place mentions, U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and U.S. Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey had 7 percent apiece.

But Clinton holds a double-digit lead when pitted head-to-head against Christie. Half of New Jersey's voters backed Clinton, while

Christie drew 40 percent, 3 percent wanted someone else, and 7 percent were unsure.

That's a slight decrease from the group's poll in January, when Clinton led Christie 55 to 34 percent as the George Washington Bridge scandal was erupting. It's similar, though, to the group's survey in March, when Clinton was also in front by 10 points.

"Both are constantly scrutinized with never-ending 'Will they or won't they run?' buzz," Redlawsk said of Clinton and Christie. "All this media attention puts them at the top of voters' minds and thus makes them the top choices by far. But it is important to recognize that voters today are mostly responding to what they hear and see in media reports. Hearing little of other candidates, they respond accordingly when they don't get a list containing different options."

Today's poll shows Clinton's favorability rating among New Jerseyans remains higher than Christie's, though her numbers have dipped over the last six months. Fifty-three percent viewed her favorably, 32 percent saw her unfavorably, and 14 percent had no opinion.

Christie's numbers, meanwhile, jumped a bit: 50 percent had a favorable opinion of him, 40 percent had an unfavorable view, and 10 percent had no opinion. In January's poll, 65 percent liked Clinton, while 46 percent liked Christie.

"Clinton continues to top Christie in favorability for 2016, even with the Bridgegate frenzy subsiding and the backlash against the former Secretary of State during her recent book tour," Redlawsk said. "So while New Jersey voters still have a net positive feeling about Christie, they like Clinton somewhat more. And, of course, this remains a Democratic state, suggesting even Christie would have trouble winning it in 2016."

As for independent voters, which could be key to swinging the results of an election? Forty-three percent picked Christie, while 42 percent chose Clinton.

The poll was conducted July 28 to Aug. 5 via phone with 871 New Jersey adults. It includes a subsample of 750 registered voters, with a margin of error of plus-or-minus 4.1 percentage points.

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