Voters’ personal opinions of Chris Christie drop, poll says

TRENTON — New Jersey voters’ perceptions of Gov. Chris Christie’s personal characteristics have taken a dip as controversies envelop his administration, according to results of the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

The trait voters most strongly associate with Christie remains a positive one — fighter, which two-thirds of registered voters said describes him very well. The other traits that at least half of registered voters said describe Christie very well are stubborn (64 percent), smart (58 percent), strong leader (56 percent) and arrogant (51 percent).

The share of voters who say “bully” describes Christie very well is at the highest point in the eight polls in which Rutgers-Eagleton has asked, 43 percent. Twenty-one percent said that fits him somewhat well, while 32 percent said that doesn’t describe him at all.

Christie’s administration is grappling with two controversies — the closure of George Washington Bridge access lanes that was apparently politically motivated and allegations, which Christie’s team denies, from Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer that state officials withheld superstorm Sandy funds from a flood-mitigation project because they wanted a local development project approved.

The poll found that the percentage of people who say “trustworthy” describes Christie very well is down 16 percentage points since October, at 27 percent. While Republicans are still far more likely than Democrats or independents to call him trustworthy, the share of Republicans who did so declined 22 points.

“Trust in most politicians has been very low in recent years, but Christie has enjoyed comparatively high trust post-Sandy,” said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. “That appears to have evaporated outside of the GOP while dropping significantly among Republicans as well.”

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll of 826 New Jersey adults, including 757 registered voters, was conducted from Jan. 14 to 19. The margin of error among registered voters is plus or minus 3.6 percentage points.

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