

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll: Clinton at 50%, Christie 40% with NJ voters

New Jersey Republicans unsurprisingly want Gov. Chris Christie to run for president, while Democrats overwhelmingly pick former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, according to today's Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Two years ahead of the election, more than 7 in 10 Republicans and Democrats can name a preferred nominee.

Christie's name arises first for 41 percent of Republicans and "GOP leaners," according to the poll. Another eight percent name Christie their second choice. By contrast, 58 percent of Democrats choose Clinton as their candidate. For another seven percent, she is second choice.

No other prospective candidate from either party approaches the front-runners; nearly all others score below 10 percent as first or second choices.

"This is a hard test for voters," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and 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."

When the frontrunners are matched head-to-head in a hypothetical 2016 race, Clinton holds a double-digit margin over Christie, albeit smaller than in early 2014. Half the state's voters support Clinton with 40 percent for Christie in a direct matchup. Three percent want someone else, and another 7 percent are unsure. In a January 2014 Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, as Bridgegate swirled around Christie, Clinton led 55 percent to 34 percent. That lead was cut to 10 points in March.

Clinton also holds a slight favorability edge over Christie among New Jerseyans, although her numbers have trended downward over the past six months. Fifty-three percent now view her favorably, 32 percent unfavorably, and 14 percent have no opinion. Christie's favorability has climbed to 50 percent during the same time period while 40 percent feel unfavorably and 10 percent have no opinion. In January, 65 percent felt favorable toward Clinton, 46 percent liked Christie.

Results are from a statewide poll of 871 adult New Jerseyans contacted by live callers on both landlines and cell phones from July 28 to August 5, 2014. This release reports on a subsample of 750 registered voters with a margin of error of +/- 4.1 percentage points.