

New Jersey voters divided over Gov. Christie's future

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By [Edith Honan](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - New Jersey Governor Chris Christie has been touted as a rising star in the Republican Party. But even giving the keynote speech at last week's party convention in Florida hasn't lifted his approval rating back home, and voters aren't all that sure they want to give him a second term.

A pair of polls released on Wednesday show New Jersey voters are ambivalent about the hard-charging, high-profile governor.

Asked if they were ready to re-elect Christie, 47 percent of voters said they were, but 46 percent said it was time for someone new, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton poll. Just under half of registered voters in that poll say the state is going in the right direction.

But a second poll, from Quinnipiac University, finds a slight majority of New Jersey voters, 53 percent, approve of his job as governor, a figure that showed little movement in the aftermath of the convention speech.

Christie took office in 2010 and will face voters again in 2013.

Known for his brash, confrontational style, Christie has spent the summer touting an upturn in the state's economy - what he calls the "New Jersey comeback" - and pushing for a tax cut that the Democratic-led legislature conditionally approved at the close of the last budget year.

He has also boasted that his leadership has made the state a model of bipartisan cooperation, despite his frequent and colorful spats with the Democratic-led legislature.

But 63 percent of voters surveyed in the Rutgers poll said Christie's "comeback" rhetoric was overstated, and fewer than a third of voters agreed that a rebound was under way.

"Overall, the numbers are a mixed bag for Governor Christie," said David Redlawsk, director of the poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. "While the number ready to re-elect him is less than a majority, it's not particularly weak at this point."

In June, the Rutgers-Eagleton poll found half of state voters had a favorable view of Christie, up 4 percentage points from three months earlier. The June poll did not ask voters directly about his re-election prospects.

Christie, a popular surrogate for Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney, got mixed reviews following his August 28 convention speech: He was criticized for dwelling on his own story before offering praise for Romney.

Christie, often named as a possible Republican candidate in 2016 if Romney loses to President Barack Obama, got no discernible bump from his nationally televised convention appearance in Tampa, Florida, the Quinnipiac poll found.

The poll found the governor's overall popularity among New Jersey voters was unchanged since the convention speech.

Among state voters, 53 percent approve of his job performance while 42 percent disapprove, the Quinnipiac poll found. This compares to a 54 percent to 39 percent job-approval rating in a July 17 survey.

"If Gov. Christopher Christie's speech marked the opening of a 2016 presidential campaign he might want to try again. People who like the governor liked the speech; those who don't didn't. The net result - zero," said Maurice Carroll, director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute.

Christie's support is strongest among men, who back Christie by a margin of more than six in 10, while women are almost evenly divided in their support, the poll found.

The Rutgers-Eagleton survey of 916 registered voters was taken in late August - before Christie's convention address - and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

The Quinnipiac poll of 1,560 registered voters was conducted from August 27 to September 2 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.

(Editing by [Ciro Scotti](#) and [Eric Beech](#))



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