

Jersey Guy Runs Better Nationally than Other Big Republicans

In a head-to-head match-up against President Obama, New Jersey's Gov. Chris Christie outperforms several marquee Republicans, according to a new national poll of registered voters by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind™.

The president steamrolls former Alaskan Gov. Sarah Palin by a 20-point margin, 54%-34%. The president also wins easily - 48%-34% - over the only major Republican to have formed an exploratory committee for the 2012 election, former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty. And the president handily beats the former Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, by 15 points, 52%-37%. Yet the New Jersey governor in his first term, and his first time in the national spotlight, closes the gap to just 6 points, running behind the president by 46%-40%.

"That's pretty good for a Jersey guy," said Peter Woolley, a political scientist and director of the poll. "People do not see New Jersey as typical of America, though it is. And they don't see New Jersey problems as typical of America, though they are. And Christie is very New Jersey."

Only two Republicans outperform Christie in match-ups with Obama. The president runs even with former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee 46%-46% and about even with former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, 44%-43%. "Huckabee and Romney have a huge advantage since they've run before for the presidency and are more familiar to voters than Christie," said Woolley.

Asked about the Republican nomination for president, 10% of Republican voters pick Christie first, while Pawlenty gets just 5%, Gingrich 10% and Palin 12%. Only Romney (20%) and Huckabee (21%) break from the pack. "Christie has now, without running, the kind of support among Republicans that some others have taken years to cultivate," said Woolley.

Christie also shows appeal among independent voters. While Palin runs behind Obama 34%-52% among independents, Christie runs ahead of Obama with independents 43%-40%. Similarly, Gingrich loses to the president 40%-45% among independents, and Pawlenty comes in behind by 33%-41%. "Christie can appeal to voters beyond the party base in a way that some other big-name Republicans can't and won't," Woolley added.

Three of five voters (59%) continue to say the country is "on the wrong track" while just 27% say the country is moving in the right direction. The president is also running behind in his approvals, with 44% saying they approve of the way he is handling his job but 48% saying they disapprove.

"I know Christie is not running for president," said Woolley. "But because New Jersey's fiscal problems are a reflection of the nation's fiscal problems, it is well worth testing his national appeal."

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 800 registered voters nationwide was conducted by telephone using both landlines and cell phones from March 21, 2011, through March 28, 2011, and has a margin of error of +/-3.5 percentage points.

Methodology, Questions, and Tables

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from Mar. 21, 2011, through Mar. 28, 2011, using a randomly selected national sample of 800 registered voters. The margin of error for a sample of 800 randomly selected respondents is +/- 3.5 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers. PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected. Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone-only-households, interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender among the voting population.

In your opinion, is the country moving in the right direction or has it gotten off on the wrong track?							
	All	Men	Wom	Dem	Ind	Rep	Year ago
Right direction	27%	29	24	41	25	11	34%
Wrong track	59%	59	59	39	61	81	56%
Unsure/ref.	15%	12	17	20	14	7	10%

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?							
	All	Men	Wom	Dem	Ind	Rep.	Year ago
Approve	44%	42	45	74	39	13	44%
Disapprove	48%	51	46	17	53	81	47%
Unsure/ref.	8%	7	9	8	7	6	9%

I know it's early, but let me ask.... In a race for president between ... and Who would you vote for? [ROTATE ORDER, ROATE NAMES] IF "DK" ASK: "which way to you lean?"

<i>N= 800</i>				
	All	Dem	Ind	Rep
Barack Obama, the Democrat	46%	82	40	9
Chris Christie, the Republican	40%	7	43	78
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	14%	11	16	12
<i>N=800</i>				
		Dem	Ind	Rep
Barack Obama, the Democrat	54%	87	52	17
Sarah Palin, the Republican	34%	6	34	71
unsure/neither/other	12%	7	14	12
<i>N=379</i>				
		Dem	Ind	Rep
Barack Obama, the Democrat	44%	77	45	4
Mitt Romney, the Republican	43%	10	44	86
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	12%	13	11	10
<i>N=364</i>				
		Dem	Ind	Rep
Barack Obama, the Democrat	46%	83	40	8
Mike Huckabee, the Republican	46%	12	49	85
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	8%	5	11	6
<i>N=371</i>				
		Dem	Ind	Rep
Barack Obama, the Democrat	52%	91	45	7
Newt Gingrich, the Republican	37%	3	40	86
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	10%	6	15	7
<i>N=392</i>				
		Dem	Ind	Rep
Barack Obama, the Democrat	48%	92	41	5
Tim Pawlenty, the Republican	34%	4	33	75
unsure/neither/other (vol.)	18%	5	26	19

In 2012 there will be an election for President of the United States. To run as the Republican candidate for President, who would you prefer....READ AS NECESSARY, ROTATE LIST? And who would be your second choice?								
	Republicans		Rep. + Rep. leaners		Independents		Rep + Ind. Combined	
	1 st choice	2 nd choice	1 st choice	2 nd choice	1 st choice	2 nd choice	1 st choice	2 nd choice
Chris Christie	10	6	11	8	8	10	8	8
Sarah Palin	12	14	11	15	10	13	11	14
Mitt Romney	20	21	19	19	19	19	19	20
Tim Pawlenty	5	9	5	8	6	6	6	7
Mike Huckabee	21	19	21	20	16	18	18	18
Newt Gingrich	10	14	8	13	5	12	7	13
Unsure/other	23	18	23	17	36	23	31	21

Question Wording and Order

US1. In your opinion, is the country moving in the right direction or has it gotten off on the wrong track?

- Right direction
- Wrong track
- DK/Unsure [DON'T READ]
- Ref. [DON'T READ]

US2. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?

- Approve
- Disapprove
- DK/Unsure [DON'T READ]
- Ref. [DON'T READ]

D1. Regardless of who you might vote for, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, or an independent?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent [ASK: which way do you lean?]
- Other [DON'T READ]
- Don't Know/Ref [DON'T READ]

[AT RANDOM ASK ½ D7A HERE AND ½ AFTER D7]

D7A. By the way... are you married, living as married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?

D7B. [If married or living as married, ASK:]
 Would you say that your spouse earns... READ
 More than you or
 Less than you
 About the same (DO NOT READ)
 DK

D7C. [If divorced, separated, ASK:]
 When you were married, would you say that your spouse earned... READ

More than you or
Less than you
About the same (DO NOT READ)
DK

[ASK Republicans, lean Republicans, independents, lean Democrats....]

USP1. In 2012 there will be an election for President of the United States. To run as the Republican candidate for President, who would you prefer....READ AS NECESSARY, ROTATE LIST?

Chris Christie
Sarah Palin
Mitt Romney
Tim Pawlenty
Mike Huckabee
Newt Gingrich
Don't know (vol): ASK "Which way do you lean?" IF lean "don't know" SKIP USP2.

USP2. And who would be your second choice...READ AS NECESSARY, ROTATE?

[ELIMINATE CHOICE FROM ABOVE]

Chris Christie
Sarah Palin
Mitt Romney
Tim Pawlenty
Mike Huckabee
Newt Gingrich
Don't know (vol): ASK "Which way do you lean?"

ASK ALL

USP3A-E. I know it's early, but let me ask....

In a race for president between ... and Who would you vote for?

ROTATE ORDER, NAMES

Barack Obama, the Democrat
Chris Christie, the Republican

And in a race for president between... and... Who would you vote for?

ROTATE NAMES

Barack Obama, the Democrat
Sarah Palin, the Republican

[AND CHOOSE ANY TWO MATCHED AGAINST BARACK OBAMA: ROTATE ORDER: ROTATE NAMES]

Mitt Romney, the Republican
Mike Huckabee, the Republican
Newt Gingrich, the Republican
DK (vol. ASK: "which way to you lean?"

Demographics

Gender

Male	50
Female	50

Party ID

Democrat	31
Ind. Lean Dem.	12
Independent	15
Ind. Lean Rep.	14
Republican	23
Other/ref.	4

Age

18-29	12
30-44	25
45-59	30
60+	30
ref.	2

In addition to being American, would you say you are...?

White	68
Black	13
Hispanic or Latino	9
Asian	4
Other/ref.	5

Census regions

Northeast	21
North central	24
South	34
West	20