Corzine Catches Up

According to the most recent poll by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind™, Democratic incumbent Jon Corzine edges Republican challenger Chris Christie 44% to 43% among likely voters in the race for New Jersey governor. Another 4% volunteer they will vote for independent Chris Daggett and 5% say they are undecided. "With the start of an advertising blitz and the raw exposure of the debate, the race has tightened to a dead heat," said Peter Woolley, a political scientist and director of the poll.

Corzine's new poll position is reflected by a shift in secondary measures. Corzine has all but caught up to Christie (34%-36%) on the question of "which candidate better understands the concerns of the average person?" Asked which candidate is better described as "honest, trustworthy," a measure in which Christie originally led by 33%-24%, Corzine is now slightly ahead 31%-28%. Corzine continues to lead easily (45%-29) on the question of which candidate "has the background and experience to be a good governor."

Corzine comes out on the short end of several other ratings: 37% have a favorable opinion of him compared to 54% who have an unfavorable view. Just 23% say the state is moving in the right direction. Only 29% say Corzine is doing a good or excellent job as governor. And just 38% approve of his job performance, compared to 50% who disapprove – numbers essentially unchanged from a month ago. But three quarters (76%) of Democrats say they will vote for him, up slightly from 73% a month ago and from two-thirds (66%) in early summer. "Corzine is still swimming upstream against heavy currents," said Woolley. "Many Democrats are voting for him despite their misgivings."

Christie attracts 4-in-5 Republicans (81%) and about half of independents (52%), but his ratings are suffering: 35% have a favorable opinion of him, while 42% have an unfavorable view.

Half of likely voters (50%) now say they have heard of independent Chris Daggett, up from a third (33%) one month ago; but another 27% say that, while they've heard of him, they have no opinion of him. "Daggett's support is a measure of voter discontent," said Woolley. "Rather than being a draw, he is the reflection of voters' unhappiness with the direction of the state and the campaign."

When Daggett's name is read in an interview along with Jon Corzine's and Chris Christie's name, Corzine leads Christie 38%-37% and Daggett gets 17% of the vote. Daggett attracts twice as many Democrats as Republicans. But when another independent candidate's name is read--in this case we chose Gary Steele--the effect is similar. Independent Gary Steele gets 12% of the vote while Corzine and Christie tie at 38%. Compared to 77% who say they've never heard of Daggett or have no opinion of him, 85% of likely voters say they have not heard of Steele and another 10% say they've heard of him but have no opinion.

While 7-in-10 can't name a winner in the recent gubernatorial debate, 14% say it was Daggett, 12% point to Corzine and 4% say Christie. More Democrats identify Corzine as the winner than identify Daggett as the winner, but about twice as many Republicans say Daggett was the winner as say Christie won. "The debate clearly increased Daggett's name recognition and doubled his favorable ratings," (to 23% from 12%) noted Woolley.

Nearly half (49%) now say Corzine will win in November compared to 37% who say Christie will win.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 667 likely voters statewide was conducted by telephone from Sept. 28, 2009, through Oct. 5, 2009, and has a margin of error of +/- 4 percentage points.

Methodology, Questions, and Tables

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from Sept. 28, 2009, through Oct.5, 2009, using a randomly selected sample of 667 likely voters statewide. The margin of error for a sample of 667 randomly selected respondents is +/- 4 percentage points. 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 professionally trained interviewers use 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. Results are mathematically weighted to match known demographics.

Question: Now, turning to New Jersey… In your opinion, do you think things in New Jersey are moving in the right direction or do you think the state has gotten off on the wrong track?

	All	Party			Public employee household	
		D	I	R	Yes	no
Right direction	**23%**	40	14	4	27	22
Wrong track	**68%**	50	76	89	63	69
Unsure	**9%**	10	11	6	10	9

Right track/wrong track trend

	Sep 09	Jun 09	Apr 09	Mar 09	Jan 09	Nov 08	Oct '08	Sept '08	June '08	Apr '08	Feb '08	Jan '08	Oct '07	Sep '07	Jun '07	May '07	Mar '06
Right track	**22%**	21	23	25	25	24	23	23	25	26	25	28	30	38	36	42	39
Wrong track	**68%**	66	64	59	65	65	67	67	64	66	65	61	59	49	50	44	47
Unsure	**10%**	14	13	16	10	10	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	12	14	14	15

Question: Have you heard of [rotate list]? If you haven't just tell me. [If yes, ask:] Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of …? Would that be very or somewhat?

	Haven't heard of	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	Unsure/ no opinion	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable
Jon Corzine (all)	**1%**	**15%**	**22%**	**9%**	**17%**	**37%**
Democrats only	--	26	34	11	15	14
Independents only	1	8	25	7	16	43
Republicans only	--	2	6	4	22	65
Previous Surveys…						
Corzine 09/09	--	12%	25%	9%	19%	35%
Democrats only		22	40	9	16	13
Independents only		6	17	14	24	40
Republicans only		1	7	7	22	64
Corzine 07/09	2%	8%	23%	13%	24%	30%
Corzine 05/09	1%	10%	23%	9%	18%	38%
Corzine 03/09	1%	10%	28%	13%	22%	26%
Corzine 01/09	2%	14%	28%	12%	21%	23%
Corzine 11/08	3%	13%	27%	14%	17%	26%

	Haven't heard of	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	No opinion	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable
Chris Christie (all)	**2%**	**14%**	**21%**	**20%**	**21%**	**21%**
Republicans only	--	28	39	17	11	4
Independents only	1	21	19	19	24	16
Democrats only	3	4	9	20	28	36
Previous Surveys…						
Christie 09/09	3%	15%	23%	25%	17%	18%
Republicans only	1	30	36	21	8	4
Independents only	1	11	23	37	17	11
Democrats only	5	5	14	25	22	30
Christie 07/09	13%	10%	24%	28%	14%	11%
Christie 04/09	38%	14%	17%	20%	8%	4%
Christie 03/09	43%	12%	18%	22%	4%	2%
Christie 01/09	56%	11%	12%	15%	4%	2%
Christie 09/08	60%	2%	3%	14%	11%	9%

	Haven't heard of	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	No opinion	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable
Chris Daggett	**50%**	**4%**	**12%**	**27%**	**5%**	**2%**
before debate	**58**	**2**	**10**	**24**	**5**	**1**
after debate	**37**	**6**	**17**	**32**	**6**	**2**
Democrats only	54	3	10	24	7	2
Independents only	47	9	14	24	5	1
Republicans only	45	3	15	32	3	2
Previous Surveys…						
Daggett 09/09	67%	1%	8%	20%	3%	1%
Democrats only	68	2	7	19	4	1
Independents only	61	1	9	25	3	--
Republicans only	67	1	10	20	2	1
Daggett 07/09	89%	--	1%	9%	--	--

	Haven't heard of	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	No opinion	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable
Gary Steele	85	--	2	10	2	--

Asked at random of ½ sample:

N=373	Haven't heard of	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	No opinion	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable
Loretta Weinberg	71%	2%	6%	18%	2%	1%
Previous Surveys…						
Weinberg 09/09	65%	4%	6%	19%	2%	3%

Asked at random of ½ sample:

N=341	Haven't heard of	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	No opinion	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable
Kim Guadagno	85%	2%	2%	8%	2%	1%
Previous Surveys…						
Guadagno 09/09	85%	1%	3%	8%	1%	2%

Question: In November there will be an election for governor. I know it's early but if the election were held today who would you vote for … or …? [ROTATE NAMES] [If "don't know" ASK: "at this moment, which way do you lean?" If "other" ASK: "who would that be?"]

	All	Dem	Ind	Rep	Race white	Race Afr.-Am	Sept
Jon Corzine, the Democrat	42						41
Lean Corzine	2						1
Total Corzine	44%	76	30	8	38	81	42%
Chris Christie, the Republican	40						45
Lean Christie	2						2
Total Christie	43%	13	52	81	48	14	47%
Daggett (vol.)	4%	3	7	2	4	--	1%
Neither/other (vol.)	4%	3	6	6	5	2	4%
Don't know (vol.)	5%	5	4	3	5	3	6%

Corzine v. Christie trend

	Sept	July	April	March	Jan
Total Corzine	42%	39%	33%	32%	40%
Total Christie	47%	45%	42%	41%	33%
Don't know/neither/other	11%	16%	25%	27%	26%

Reading Chris Daggett or another independent

[Split sample at random] **Question:** Now let me ask that question in a slightly different way… if the election were held today, who would you vote for in a race between… and…and…? [ROTATE NAMES] [If "don't know" ASK: "at this moment, which way do you lean?" If "other" ASK: "who would that be?"]

N=336	All	D	I	R	N=331	All	D	I	R
Jon Corzine, the Democrat	38				Jon Corzine, the Democrat	37			
Lean Corzine	--				Lean Corzine	1			
Total Corzine	38%	68	24	7	Total Corzine	38%	65	19	7
Chris Christie, the Republican	34				Chris Christie, the Republican	36			
Lean Christie	3				Lean Christie	2			
Total Christie	37%	5	45	76	Total Christie	38%	12	41	78
Chris Daggett, the independent	16				Gary Steele, the independent	11			
Lean Daggett	1				lean Steele	1			
Total Daggett	17%	20	23	11	Total Steele	12%	14	20	7
Neither/other (vol.)	2%	1	2	1	Neither/other (vol.)	3%	--	12	4
Don't know (vol.)	6%	6	6	4	Don't know (vol.)	8%	8	9	3

Question: Which candidate for New Jersey governor… or … is better described by…?

rotate names, rotate order	All	Dem	Ind	Rep	men	women	Sept	July
…Honest, trustworthy								
Jon Corzine	31%	52	26	7	32	30	31%	24%
Chris Christie	28%	12	27	53	34	23	32%	33%
neither (vol)	25%	22	30	28	22	28	20%	18%
both (vol)	3%	2	4	4	3	4	2%	5%
don't know (vol)	11%	12	12	9	8	14	14%	20%
…Understands the concerns of the average person								
Jon Corzine	34%	57	31	6	35	33	30%	28%
Chris Christie	36%	15	38	66	41	31	43%	40%
neither (vol)	16%	15	21	17	15	18	15%	11%
both (vol)	3%	3	4	3	2	4	3%	2%
don't know (vol)	10%	11	7	8	6	14	10%	18%
…Has the background and experience to be a good governor?								
Jon Corzine	45%	71	32	17	40	50	45%	42%
Chris Christie	29%	10	33	54	35	22	32%	29%
neither (vol)	11%	7	15	14	11	11	8%	7%
both (vol)	4%	3	4	5	3	5	4%	4%
don't know (vol)	11%	9	16	11	11	12	11%	18%

Question: Now, regardless of which candidate you <u>want</u> to win, if you had to guess, who would you say is <u>going</u> to win the election for governor in November… or …?

Rotate names	All	Dem	Ind.	Rep.	Sept.	July
Jon Corzine	49%	64	40	30	45%	46%
Chris Christie	37%	21	38	59	41%	38%
Neither/other	1%	1	5	--	--	--
Don't Know (vol.)	13%	14	17	10	15%	15%

Job rating, current

Question: How would you rate the job Jon Corzine is doing as governor… [READ]?

	All		Party		Public Pension household	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Excellent	3	5	4	--	4	3
Good	26	42	15	7	25	26
Only fair	35	39	31	34	36	35
Poor	34	13	51	58	34	34
unsure (vol)	1	1	--	1	--	2

Job rating, previous measures

	2009					2008							2007					2006		
	Se	Jy	Ap	Mar	Ja	No	Oc	Se	Jun	Ap	Fe	Ja	Oc	Sep	Jun	Mar	Ja	No	Oc	Se
Excellent	3	2	3	2	4	6	4	3	4	3	5	6	5	7	5	6	4	10	11	9
good	22	24	24	28	28	28	27	28	27	29	28	29	37	37	37	39	34	40	40	33
only fair	40	39	36	40	41	39	41	41	41	36	38	39	38	39	36	39	38	30	32	33
poor	33	31	35	28	25	24	25	25	24	30	27	23	17	15	14	12	17	17	14	20
unsure	2	3	2	3	2	4	3	4	4	2	2	3	3	3	8	4	7	3	3	5

Approve/disapprove Current

Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the job Jon Corzine is doing as governor?

	All	Dem	Ind	Rep	Public Pension Household	
					Yes	No
Approve	38%	62	33	10	38	39
Disapprove	50%	25	60	83	50	51
Mixed/unsure	11%	14	6	7	12	11

Approve/disapprove, previous surveys

	2009					2008								2007					2006		
	Se	Jy	Ap	Mr	Ja	No	Oc	Sep	Jun	Ap	Fe	Ja 30th	Ja 7th	Oc	Se	Jun	Mar	Ja	No	Oc	Se
Approve	37%	36	40	40	46	46	45	41	40	44	42	41	48	51	54	50	55	51	58	56	51
Disapprove	52%	49	49	46	40	37	39	43	41	45	43	39	32	29	25	27	25	29	27	28	31
mixed/DK	12%	15	11	13	14	17	17	16	19	11	16	20	20	20	21	23	20	19	15	16	18

Asked Oct 2, 3, 4

Question: By the way, just the other day the candidates for governor had a debate. Did you see or hear the debate, or did you not have the chance?

	All	Party ID			
		D	I	R	
Yes	24%	22	27	25	
No	76%	78	73	75	

Asked Oct 2, 3, 4

Question: From what you have seen or heard, who won the debate?

	All	Party ID			Vote preference	
		D	I	R	**Corzine**	**Christie**
Christie	4%	2	7	7	1	10
Corzine	12%	19	3	5	20	5
Daggett	14%	12	13	17	13	13
No one/everyone/tie	10%	5	24	10	7	12
Don't know	60%	61	52	61	59	59

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