FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY'S PublicMind POLL

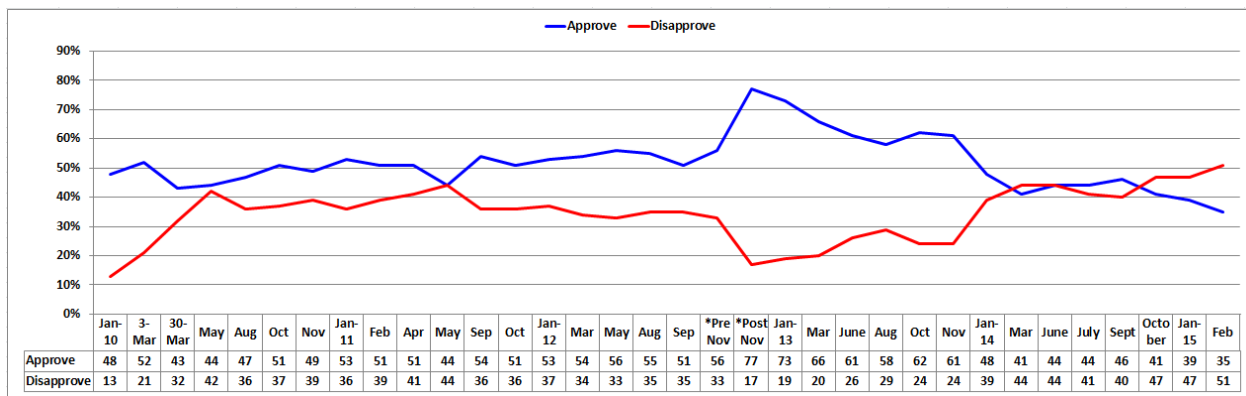## NO GAINS FOR THE GOVERNOR AFTER BUDGET ADDRESS BUT A SLIGHT PRESIDENTIAL REBOUND

Governor Christie's budget address last week failed to move the needle on his approval rating among registered voters in New Jersey. The governor is now facing his lowest approval rating since taking office. Similar numbers believe the state is headed in the wrong direction. At the same time, however, it looks like President Obama is experiencing a small rebound in his approval in the state, with about equal numbers saying they approve as disapprove of his job performance. A majority remain concerned about the direction the country is headed.

Governor Christie

The most recent statewide survey of registered voters in the Garden State finds Governor Christie mired in upside down public perceptions of his leadership. Thirty-five percent approve of his job performance as compared with 51 percent who say they disapprove. This is the lowest approval and highest disapproval for the governor that PublicMind has recorded for Governor Christie. It's only among self-described Republicans that the governor finds himself in territory that is more favorable (55% approve/31% disapprove). Coveted demographic groups including independents (33% versus 47%) and women (33% versus 51%) are roundly critical of the governor. All of these numbers are consistent with recent trends documented by PublicMind, as recent as last month.
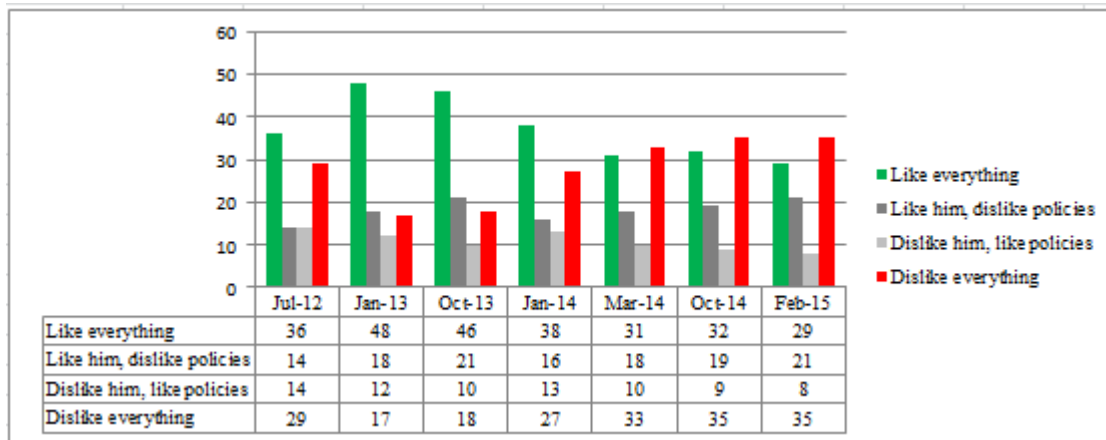
"It may be a different day, but it's the same dismal story. The state's problems are taking their toll on the governor's ratings," said Krista Jenkins, professor of political science and director of PublicMind, Fairleigh Dickinson University's survey research center. "His budget address attempted to hit the reset button on the gaping pension hole, but did little to assuage the broad concerns of the public," she added.

Christie Approval – Trend

	Jan-10	3-Mar	30-Mar	May	Aug	Oct	Nov	Jan-11	Feb	Apr	May	Sep	Oct	Jan-12	Mar	May	Aug	Sep	*Pre Nov	*Post Nov	Jan-13	Mar	June	Aug	Oct	Nov	Jan-14	Mar	June	July	Sept	October	Jan-15	Feb
Approve	48	52	43	44	47	51	49	53	51	51	44	54	51	53	54	56	55	51	56	77	73	66	61	58	62	61	48	41	44	44	46	41	39	35
Disapprove	13	21	32	42	36	37	39	36	39	41	44	36	36	37	34	33	35	35	33	17	19	20	26	29	24	24	39	44	44	41	40	47	47	51

Not surprisingly, the same survey finds that also unchanged is the percentage of voters who express concern about the state's overall health. Only about a third (33%) believe the state's headed in the right direction, with (52%) who believe it's decidedly on the wrong track. As with Governor Christie's overall approval, only Republicans perceive confidence (45%) relative to concern (37%).

When it comes to what voters like and dislike about the governor, about equal numbers say they like both his policies and personality as dislike both elements of his leadership. Around a third (29%) say they find his policy positions and personality appealing, with close to the same number who say the exact opposite (35%). PublicMind last asked this question in October 2014, and the intervening months have failed to get the governor back to where he was before, when the appreciation for his polices and persona significantly outpaced the number of those looking with disfavor on these two attributes.
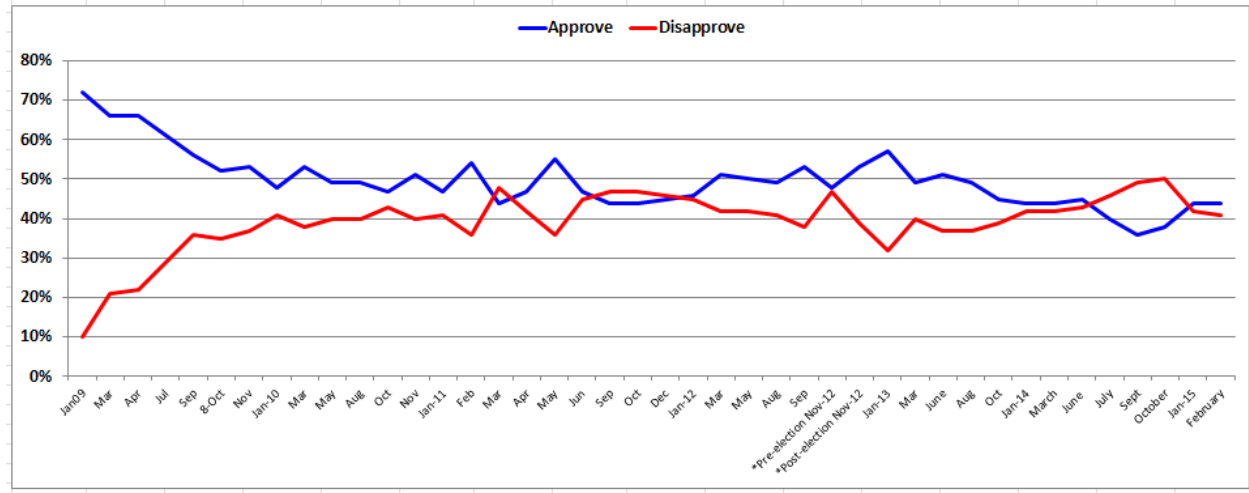

	Jul-12	Jan-13	Oct-13	Jan-14	Mar-14	Oct-14	Feb-15
Like everything	36	48	46	38	31	32	29
Like him, dislike policies	14	18	21	16	18	19	21
Dislike him, like policies	14	12	10	13	10	9	8
Dislike everything	29	17	18	27	33	35	35

"On everyone's mind these days is this central question: How can the governor run for the Republican nomination with voters back home largely unhappy with what they're seeing? Thankfully it's still early, and it remains to be seen how interested national voters are with what New Jerseyans think about their leader. If he's defined by his record, these numbers will make an already difficult journey harder. If, however, he's able to define himself to Republicans nationally through his accomplishments, like tenure and pension reform among teachers, and winning reelection with support from key demographics as a Republican in a Democratic state, the next year could be better for the governor," said Jenkins.

President Obama

Although President Obama has struggled for months with approval ratings in New Jersey that belied his shared partisanship with a majority of voters, things are looking up, albeit slightly, for him. Obama's approvals are not back to where they were when he began his second term, but he is pulling about as many supporters as detractors now. Forty-four percent approve with 41 percent disapproving, numbers that are unchanged from January, and up slightly from last fall. President Obama is doing

particularly well among the millennials (59%) and non-whites (67%), two groups he depended heavily on for support in both of his elections.

Obama Approval – Trend

"At the national level, the economic news has been better with unemployment falling and job growth more robust. People look to the president for economic stewardship, and healthy economic reports reflect well on any president. Complicating things is, of course, foreign policy and what to do about ISIS, negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program, and Russian aggression against Ukraine. These ongoing problems no doubt temper a public opinion rebound for the president in New Jersey," said Jenkins.

Finally, just as voters perceive the direction the state is headed negatively, half say the country is headed down the wrong track (52%) with a little more than a third (37%) who believe it's going the right way.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 790 registered voters in New Jersey was conducted by telephone with both landline and cell phones from February 23 through March 1. The margin of error is +/- 3.5 percentage points.

Methodology

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from February 23 through March 1 using a randomly selected sample of 790 registered voters in New Jersey. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of +/- 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 landline 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 respondents interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Tables

And turning to New Jersey, do you approve or disapprove of the job Chris Christie is doing as governor? [Randomize approve/disapprove]

		PID			Gender		Race		Union household?		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	18-34	35-59	60+
Approve	35%	23	33	55	38	33	39	30	20	41	32	37	36
Disapprove	51%	68	47	31	51	51	49	54	70	45	55	52	48
Neither/ Neutral (vol)	7%	5	9	8	6	9	8	7	5	8	7	6	8
DK/Both (vol)	6%	4	10	5	4	7	5	8	5	6	5	5	7
Refused (vol)	1%	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

In your opinion, do you think things in New Jersey are moving in the right direction or are they on the wrong track? [Rotate right direction/wrong track]

		PID			Gender		Race		Union household?		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	18-34	35-59	60+
Right direction	33%	25	33	45	36	31	33	37	23	38	38	35	31
Wrong track	52%	64	50	37	51	52	52	49	66	47	50	53	51
DK/Ref (vol)	15%	12	17	18	13	17	16	14	11	16	12	12	19

	I'm going to read you four statements about Chris Christie. Please tell me which comes closest to your own views: 1) I like him, AND I like his policies; 2) I like him, BUT I don't like his policies; 3) I don't like him, BUT I like his policies; 4) I don't like him, AND I don't like his policies.										
		PID			**Gender**		**Race**		**Age**		
	All	**Dem**	**Ind**	**Repub**	**Male**	**Female**	**White**	**Nonwhite**	**18-34**	**35-59**	**60+**
Like him & policies	**29%**	14	25	51	28	30	32	20	23	30	32
Like him, not policies	**21%**	20	28	19	23	19	19	27	22	19	22
Dislike him, like policies	**8%**	6	15	8	10	6	8	8	9	11	5
Don't like him or policies	**35%**	54	22	17	35	36	35	35	36	36	35
DK/Ref. (vol)	**7%**	6	10	4	4	9	5	10	11	5	6

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?										
	All	**PID**			**Gender**		**Race**		**Age**		
		Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-59	60+
Approve	**44%**	69	41	11	40	48	35	67	59	44	36
Disapprove	**41%**	15	42	80	45	38	52	16	21	42	53
DK(vol)	**13%**	15	14	8	13	13	12	15	18	13	9
Refused (vol)	**2%**	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2

	In your opinion, do you believe the country is moving in the right direction or is it on the wrong track?										
	All	**PID**			**Gender**		**Race**		**Age**		
		Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-59	60+
Right direction	**37%**	56	30	12	36	37	28	59	50	36	27
Wrong track	**52%**	30	58	80	53	51	62	28	36	53	61
DK (vol)	**10%**	12	10	8	9	11	10	12	13	10	10
Refused (vol)	**1%**	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Exact Question Wording and Order

US1.   First, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?
1   Approve
2   Disapprove
8   DK/Unsure/mixed (vol)
9   Refused (vol)

US2.   In your opinion, do you believe the country is moving in the right direction or is it on the wrong track?
1   Right direction
2   Wrong track
8   DK (vol)
9   Refused (vol)

NJ1.   And turning to New Jersey, do you approve or disapprove of the job Chris Christie is doing as governor? [Randomize approve/disapprove]
1   Approve
2   Disapprove
3   Neither [vol] or Neutral [vol]
8   DK [vol] or both [vol]
9   Refused (vol)

NJ2.   In your opinion, do you think things in New Jersey are moving in the right direction or are they on the wrong track? [Randomize right direction/wrong track]
1   Right direction
2   Wrong track
8   DK (vol)
9   Refused (vol)

NJ3   I'm going to read you four statements about Chris Christie. Please tell me which comes closest to your own views: 1) I like him, AND I like his policies; 2) I like him, BUT I don't like his policies; 3) I don't like him, BUT I like his policies; 4) I don't like him, AND I don't like his policies.
RANDOMIZE BUT KEEP 1 AND 2, 3 AND 4 TOGETHER
1   I like him, AND I like his policies
2   I like him, BUT I don't like his policies
3   I don't like him, BUT I like his policies
4   I don't like him, AND I don't like his policies
8   DK (vol)
9   Refused (vol)

Weighted sample characteristics

		Registered voters **N = 790; MoE = +/- 3.5**
Gender	*Male*	49%
	Female	51%
Age	*18-34*	22%
	35-59	42%
	60+	34%
	Refused	2%
Race	*White*	67%
	African American	12%
	Hispanic	12%
	Asian	4%
	Other/Refused	5%
Union household	*Self*	15%
	Someone else	10%
	No/Refused/DK	75%
Party (with leaners)	*Dem*	45%
	Ind/DK/Refused	23%
	Repub	32%