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QuickTakes!

Stockton Poll Puts Clinton Ahead of Trump in New Jersey and Indicates Thumbs Down to Casino Expansion

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Democrat Hillary Clinton holds a six-percentage-point lead over Republican Donald Trump in the presidential contest in New Jersey, according to a Stockton Poll released on September 30.

Including voters leaning toward one candidate or another, Clinton leads among likely voters 46 percent to 40 percent for Trump. Ten percent say they plan to vote for a third-party candidate, a write-in or “nobody,” with 4 percent undecided or refusing to identify their choice.

The first presidential debate was held five days into the polling. Based on partial results through Monday evening, Clinton led Trump by four points prior to the debate. Since Monday night, Clinton’s lead inched up two percentage points.

New Jersey will award 14 Electoral College votes in the November 8 election.

“New Jersey is a blue state, so it’s not surprising Clinton is ahead,” said Sharon Schulman, executive director of the Hughes Center. “But there are still 14 percent who are undecided or not choosing either Clinton or Trump at this point.”

Men split 41-40 percent for Clinton over Trump, but women favor Clinton over Trump by 48-34 percent. Whites favor Trump 45-38 percent over Clinton. Black voters favor Clinton 83 percent to 8 percent for Trump. The vote is closer among Hispanics, who favor Clinton by 20 points, 53 percent to 33 percent for Trump.

The poll was conducted with 638 likely New Jersey voters by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University. Live interviewers on the Stockton campus called both landlines and cell phones from September 22-29, 2016. The poll’s margin of error is +/- 3.9 percentage points.

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On another question of major interest in New Jersey, voters overwhelmingly oppose a proposal to amend the New Jersey Constitution to allow two new casinos 72 miles from Atlantic City.

Sixty-eight percent oppose the amendment, while 27 support casino expansion and 5 percent are not sure or refuse to say. Sixty-three percent in North Jersey oppose the amendment, while 74 percent in the eight southernmost counties oppose it.

“These results should provide some comfort to residents of the Atlantic City region, which has seen the loss of 5,400 casino industry jobs since the start of 2014,” Schulman said. “Clearly the voters – especially those in South Jersey – do not want to see Atlantic City casino competition within the state.”

Possible casino locations being discussed, if the amendment were to pass, include Jersey City and the Meadowlands. More than half (53 percent) say knowing these specific locations would have no impact on their vote. Only 5 percent of opponents would support the amendment because of the locations, and 8 percent of supporters would switch to opposing casino expansion.

While Clinton is leading in the presidential race, majorities of voter’s view both major-party candidates negatively. Only 36 percent have somewhat or very favorable views of Republican Trump, with 61 percent viewing him somewhat or very unfavorably. Clinton rates only a little better, with 42 percent having somewhat or very favorable views of her and 55 percent with somewhat or very unfavorable opinions.

Despite the negative feelings, interest in the election appears high. More than 90 percent say they are paying close or very close attention to news about the election. According to data from the N.J. Division of Elections, more than 5.6 million New Jerseyans were registered to vote on August 31. In comparison, 5.5 million were registered to vote on Election Day (November 6) in 2012.

Poll respondents were asked who they trusted more to handle several issues. Both candidates tied on managing the economy and honesty or trustworthiness, with Clinton barely edging out Trump on keeping the country safe from terrorism. Clinton is preferred on temperament by a 67-20 percent margin. Voters also said she would handle foreign policy better by a 57-33 percent margin.

Which candidate ...	Clinton	Trump
Would manage the economy better?	45%	45%
Has a better temperament?	67%	20%
Is more honest and trustworthy?	38%	37%
Would keep the country safer from terrorism?	45%	43%
Would handle foreign policy better?	57%	33%

The economy is identified by 24 percent of poll respondents as the top issue in this election, followed by terrorism (11 percent), jobs (6 percent) and foreign policy and security issues, both at 5 percent.

Exactly half rate President Barack Obama's job performance as good or excellent, and half rate it as fair or poor.

However, only 22 percent give good or excellent job performance ratings to New Jersey Governor Chris Christie. Thirty percent rate it as fair and 47 percent as poor.

The Stockton Poll went into the field shortly after both prosecuting and defense attorneys and witnesses claimed in court that the governor knew that George Washington Bridge lanes had been closed as political retaliation while traffic backups clogged Fort Lee. The "Bridgegate" trial of two Christie aids began on September 19.

Christie has some company in the negative-rating territory. Eleven percent rate the job performance of the U.S. Congress as good or excellent, with 85 percent as fair or poor.

Regarding a second proposed constitutional amendment on the New Jersey ballot this election, 72 percent support dedicating more of the current state gasoline tax to highway and road projects, while 23 percent oppose it and 5 percent are undecided or refuse to say.

Methodology

The survey was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter). Live interviewers on the Stockton University campus called both landlines and cell phones from September 22-29, 2016. The poll was conducted with 638 adults who are likely voters in New Jersey. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.9 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets. Data are weighted based on United States Census Bureau demographics for the New Jersey population.

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is named for William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/StocktonHughesCenter> and can be followed on Twitter @hughescenter.