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NEW JERSEY AND PARTISANSHIP

*Independents actively dislike both parties,
but the Dems are seen as more concerned for middle class*

Democrats think Republicans are wrong. Republicans feel the same about Democrats. New Jersey is not immune to the partisanship dominating the nation's political discourse. But the latest ***Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll*** found there is also some nuance to Garden State residents' views of the two parties. In the end, concern for the middle class is the one perception that appears to explain the Democrats' continued success among New Jersey's electorate.

In general, the poll finds that neither side of the political spectrum is particularly beloved. New Jerseyans are divided on the Democratic Party – 44% have a favorable opinion and 44% have an unfavorable one. While this result is certainly no ringing endorsement, it is still better than state residents' rating of the Republican Party – 35% favorable to 54% unfavorable.

Overall, 11% of the public holds favorable views of both major parties, 33% have a positive view of only the Democrats and 24% have a positive view of only the Republicans. On the other hand, 24% have a decidedly negative view of both parties and the remaining 8% have no strong opinion of either party.

One reason why the Democratic Party fares better than the GOP in overall favorability is simple partisan inclination. New Jerseyans who identify themselves as Democrats in their political leanings (35%) outnumber self-identifying Republicans (21%).

Independents, though, tend to control the political equation in New Jersey because they make up an unusually large portion of the population, currently 44%. And they are unhappy with both parties – 51% are unfavorable toward the Democrats and a nearly identical 52% have an unfavorable view of the

Republicans. Only 1-in-3 independents have a favorable view of either party (34% Democrats and 33% Republicans).

“Both parties have been tarnished by attacks on their core values. However, underlying perceptions of what the two parties stand for tend to give Democrats an advantage in most New Jersey elections,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

The survey presented respondents with five statements about each major party, including allegations that have been made by political opponents. The most potent attack against Republicans is that they “would rather cut taxes for the rich even at the expense of important programs like education,” which nearly half (49%) of the public says describes the GOP a lot. On the other side of the political spectrum, a similar number (45%) of New Jerseyans say the characterization that Democrats “would rather raise taxes than make hard choices about cutting spending” describes that party a lot.

Four-in-ten New Jerseyans agree a lot that Democrats “are too concerned with social welfare programs” (41%) and also that Republicans “want to get rid of Medicare and Medicaid” (39%). Fewer residents strongly agree with some of the more base charges that have been floated in the public debate, specifically, that Democrats “dislike the wealthy” (28%) and Republicans “dislike the poor” (29%).

The poll also asked two identical items for each party. Neither the Democrats (33%) nor the Republicans (27%) have a sizable advantage when it comes to which party “better represents American values.” However, one party does have a decided edge when it comes to perceptions of “looking out for the middle class.” Fully 4-in-10 (40%) New Jerseyans say that this describes the Democratic Party a lot while only 17% feel it equally applies to the Republican Party.

“While New Jerseyans tend to be moderate in their own views, very liberal candidates may still have the upper hand in statewide races because middle class voters are more likely to overlook ideological extremes in Democrats than in Republicans,” said Murray.

More than 6-in-10 state residents feel that New Jersey’s versions of the two political parties are within the national mainstream. However, more people are likely to call Garden State Democrats liberal compared to the national party than feel that the state GOP is more conservative than its national counterpart. Specifically, 22% of New Jerseyans say that Democrats in the state are more liberal than Democrats nationally, 11% say the state party is more moderate and 63% say it is about the same ideologically. By comparison, 11% of New Jerseyans say the state’s Republicans are more conservative than the national GOP, 24% say the state party is more moderate and 60% say it is about the same.

The poll also asked about the practical implications of partisanship closer to home. The current composition of New Jersey’s state government pits a Republican governor against a Democratic led legislature. Only 22% of the state feel that they have been working together well, while two-thirds (66%)

say they have not. Among this latter group, most (54%) blame Christie and the Democrats equally while 25% put more of the blame on the governor and 20% point the finger at the legislative leadership.

Much of what the public thinks of the political parties is learned from – or reinforced by – the national news media. Focusing just on televised outlets, the poll asked New Jerseyans which network or cable channel they rely on most for national politics. CNN tops the list at 34%. Fox News Channel (17%) and ABC national news (13%) trail behind. Other outlets are chosen by fewer than 1-in-10 residents, including the CBS network (8%), NBC broadcast news (6%), the MSNBC cable outlet (5%), and PBS (2%).

Democrats rely more on CNN (43%) than any other national TV news, while Republicans choose Fox News (33%) more than any other single outlet. CNN (33%) is also the top pick among New Jersey independents.

Regardless of which news channel they watch, CNN comes out on top as the most trusted television news source. Nearly half (49%) of New Jerseyans say they have a lot of trust in CNN. About 1-in-3 residents say they have a similar level of trust for any of the other major TV news outlets, including ABC (37%), Fox News (34%), CBS (33%), NBC (33%), and MSNBC (31%).

There are some significant partisan differences in these findings. While most Garden State Democrats (63%) and half of independents (49%) say they trust CNN a lot, only 28% of Republicans feel the same. On the other hand, a majority of New Jersey Republicans (58%) have a lot of trust in Fox News, but only 30% of independents and 24% of Democrats agree.

The *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* was conducted by telephone with 807 New Jersey adults from May 12 to 16, 2011. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute and originally published by the New Jersey Press Media newspaper group (Asbury Park Press, Courier-Post, Courier News, Daily Journal, Daily Record, and Home News Tribune).

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. In general, have Governor Christie and Democratic leaders in the legislature been working together well or not so well?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID		
		Dem	Ind	Rep
Well	22%	18%	24%	26%
Not so well	66%	76%	63%	53%
(VOL) Mixed/Depends	3%	2%	4%	3%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	5%	9%	18%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	807	227	389	172

TREND:	May 2011	September 2010
Well	22%	21%
Not so well	66%	61%
(VOL) Mixed/Depends	3%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	14%
Unwtd N	807	801

[The following question was asked only of those who said "Not so well" or "Mixed/Depends" to Q1, moe= ± 4.1%]

2. Who is more to blame for this – Christie, the Democrats, or both equally?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID		
		Dem	Ind	Rep
Christie	25%	36%	18%	16%
Democrats	20%	2%	26%	47%
Both equally	54%	60%	55%	35%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	1%	2%
Unwtd N	563	178	275	98

TREND:	May 2011	September 2010
Christie	25%	26%
Democrats	20%	17%
Both equally	54%	54%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	3%
Unwtd N	563	510

[QUESTIONS 3 AND 4 WERE ROTATED]

3. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of the Democratic Party?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID		
		Dem	Ind	Rep
Favorable	44%	79%	34%	12%
Unfavorable	44%	14%	51%	82%
(VOL) Don't know	11%	7%	16%	6%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172

4. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of the Republican Party?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID		
		Dem	Ind	Rep
Favorable	35%	15%	33%	74%
Unfavorable	54%	77%	52%	22%
(VOL) Don't know	11%	8%	15%	4%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172

[QUESTIONS 5 AND 6 WERE ROTATED]

5. I'm going to read you some things people have said about the Democratic Party. For each one, please tell me whether you think it describes the Democratic Party a lot, a little, or not at all? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

They look out for the middle class

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
A lot	40%	62%	32%	20%	50%	63%	18%	24%
A little	36%	30%	38%	42%	37%	29%	38%	46%
Not at all	22%	8%	27%	36%	11%	6%	44%	25%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	1%	4%	2%	2%	1%	0%	5%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

They would rather raise taxes than make hard choices about cutting spending

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
A lot	45%	24%	47%	74%	33%	24%	78%	48%
A little	30%	39%	30%	14%	44%	36%	15%	27%
Not at all	22%	35%	18%	8%	20%	38%	6%	19%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	2%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	6%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

They dislike the wealthy

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
A lot	28%	17%	27%	49%	20%	13%	50%	30%
A little	33%	39%	34%	23%	42%	40%	28%	30%
Not at all	34%	41%	35%	22%	36%	43%	19%	35%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	3%	4%	6%	2%	3%	3%	5%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

They are too concerned with social welfare programs

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
A lot	41%	32%	38%	64%	38%	27%	61%	44%
A little	36%	39%	40%	23%	43%	41%	27%	35%
Not at all	19%	27%	17%	11%	17%	30%	11%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	2%	5%	3%	2%	2%	0%	7%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

They are the party that better represents American values

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
A lot	33%	62%	23%	6%	38%	67%	4%	12%
A little	31%	28%	35%	28%	31%	26%	29%	39%
Not at all	33%	9%	37%	65%	28%	6%	67%	43%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	1%	5%	2%	2%	1%	0%	6%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

6. I'm going to read you some things people have said about the Republican Party. For each one, please tell me whether you think it describes the Republican Party a lot, a little, or not at all? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

They look out for the middle class

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
A lot	17%	8%	14%	39%	11%	6%	39%	14%
A little	41%	37%	46%	42%	62%	36%	48%	38%
Not at all	39%	53%	37%	17%	27%	57%	12%	44%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%	3%	2%	0%	1%	1%	4%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

They would rather cut taxes for the rich even at the expense of important programs like education

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
A lot	49%	71%	47%	18%	37%	77%	14%	51%
A little	22%	14%	25%	32%	33%	10%	35%	24%
Not at all	24%	12%	24%	43%	29%	10%	45%	21%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	3%	5%	7%	1%	3%	6%	4%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

They dislike the poor

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
A lot	29%	45%	26%	10%	13%	49%	10%	28%
A little	24%	28%	22%	19%	37%	27%	18%	21%
Not at all	43%	24%	47%	69%	49%	22%	70%	47%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	3%	5%	2%	1%	2%	1%	4%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

They want to get rid of Medicare and Medicaid

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
A lot	39%	56%	37%	14%	34%	63%	13%	35%
A little	23%	21%	25%	24%	32%	22%	26%	24%
Not at all	32%	19%	32%	54%	29%	12%	56%	36%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	3%	6%	7%	4%	3%	5%	5%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

They are the party that better represents American values

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
A lot	27%	11%	24%	61%	18%	8%	66%	24%
A little	33%	28%	39%	25%	54%	30%	27%	33%
Not at all	37%	60%	32%	11%	26%	62%	7%	38%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	2%	5%	3%	3%	1%	1%	6%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

[QUESTIONS 7 AND 8 WERE ROTATED]

7. Are New Jersey Democrats more liberal or more moderate than Democrats nationally, or are they about the same?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
NJ Dems more liberal	22%	16%	22%	29%	11%	15%	30%	26%
NJ Dems more moderate	11%	13%	11%	8%	12%	14%	5%	9%
NJ Dems about the same	63%	68%	63%	57%	75%	67%	60%	60%
(VOL) More conservative	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	3%	4%	6%	2%	4%	4%	4%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

8. Are New Jersey Republicans more conservative or more moderate than Republicans nationally, or are they about the same?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
NJ Reps more conservative	11%	9%	11%	13%	9%	12%	14%	5%
NJ Reps more moderate	24%	20%	27%	26%	26%	19%	26%	34%
NJ Reps about the same	60%	67%	56%	57%	58%	66%	56%	59%
(VOL) More liberal	1%	2%	1%	1%	5%	0%	1%	0%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	3%	4%	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

9. From what TV network or cable channel do you get most of your news about national politics?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
CNN	34%	43%	33%	22%	39%	41%	25%	32%
Fox News Channel	17%	9%	17%	33%	10%	9%	36%	17%
MSNBC	5%	7%	6%	1%	0%	8%	1%	9%
ABC national news	13%	13%	12%	14%	13%	14%	14%	11%
CBS national news	8%	7%	8%	9%	15%	5%	7%	10%
NBC national news	6%	7%	6%	7%	9%	6%	7%	5%
PBS	2%	2%	2%	4%	1%	3%	3%	1%
Other	2%	4%	2%	0%	4%	2%	3%	1%
None, don't watch national/political news	11%	9%	12%	10%	7%	11%	6%	12%
(VOL) No answer	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	0%	2%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

10. For each of the news sources I read, please tell me if you trust them a lot, a little, or not at all. First, [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

CNN

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
Trust a lot	49%	63%	49%	28%	57%	63%	29%	43%
Trust a little	36%	32%	32%	47%	39%	30%	46%	40%
Trust not at all	10%	3%	12%	20%	2%	3%	20%	11%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	2%	7%	5%	2%	3%	5%	6%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

Fox News Channel

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
Trust a lot	34%	24%	30%	58%	30%	24%	54%	31%
Trust a little	31%	29%	34%	28%	43%	28%	31%	30%
Trust not at all	30%	42%	32%	9%	22%	44%	10%	36%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%	4%	5%	3%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

MSNBC

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
Trust a lot	31%	36%	31%	22%	44%	35%	20%	25%
Trust a little	42%	52%	35%	39%	36%	48%	41%	40%
Trust not at all	17%	5%	22%	27%	5%	6%	28%	25%
(VOL) Don't know	11%	7%	12%	12%	15%	11%	11%	9%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

ABC national news

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
Trust a lot	37%	47%	33%	31%	57%	42%	29%	30%
Trust a little	49%	45%	51%	48%	39%	50%	50%	53%
Trust not at all	9%	3%	11%	16%	4%	2%	17%	14%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%	5%	5%	1%	5%	5%	3%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

CBS national news

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
Trust a lot	33%	40%	32%	27%	48%	41%	24%	27%
Trust a little	47%	47%	48%	45%	45%	51%	43%	50%
Trust not at all	13%	7%	16%	19%	5%	3%	25%	19%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	6%	5%	9%	3%	5%	8%	4%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

NBC national news

	TOTAL	PARTY ID				PARTY FAVORABILITY		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Both	Dem only	GOP only	Neither
Trust a lot	33%	42%	30%	27%	53%	42%	21%	23%
Trust a little	47%	45%	49%	46%	39%	44%	49%	60%
Trust not at all	14%	8%	16%	19%	8%	8%	22%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	5%	5%	8%	0%	6%	8%	3%
Unwtd N	807	227	389	172	88	250	215	196

The *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on May 12 to 16, 2011 with a statewide random sample of 807 adult residents. Sampling and live telephone interviewing services were provided by Braun Research, Inc. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

<i>POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)</i>			
35% Dem	48% Male	27% 18-34	66% White
21% Rep	52% Female	40% 35-54	12% Black
44% Ind		33% 55+	14% Hispanic
			8% Asian/Other

It is the Monmouth University Polling Institute's policy to conduct surveys of all adult New Jersey residents, including voters and non-voters, on issues that affect the state. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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