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EMERSON POLL: Clinton and Trump Lose Ground in NY, but Still in Control; Voters Weigh in on Open-Conventions

BOSTON, MA – Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders has gained significant ground on Hillary Clinton in the upcoming New York primary, shaving off 30 points from the massive lead Clinton held in New York just three weeks ago. He now trails the former Secretary of State by 18 points (56% to 38%). In a March 17 ECPS poll, conducted in the days following Clinton's decisive performance on Super Tuesday II, she was winning by 48 points (71% to 23%) among Democratic primary voters in New York.

In the Empire State's GOP primary race, frontrunner Donald Trump has lost 8 points in the same three weeks but still holds a commanding home-field advantage over Texas Senator Ted Cruz, 56% to 22%, with Ohio Governor John Kasich finishing third with 17%.

Trump receives 61% of the male vote but drops to 51% of the female vote. He also wins in every age group, with his weakest support (42%) coming from voters ages 18-34. Trump has a much higher loyalty rating (82%) than Cruz (45%); loyalty is defined as the number of people who say they like the candidate and are also voting for them.

Trump shows underlying strength in several areas. Among New York's 27 Congressional districts, each worth 3 delegates, he appears to dominate in five (the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Eleventh) and stands a good chance of passing the crucial 50% threshold in 11 other districts which would give him a winner-take-all victory. In contrast, Cruz is competitive in only seven Congressional districts.

In the Democratic race, the Brooklyn-born Sanders still has work to do if he hopes to overtake Clinton, who represented New York in the U.S. Senate. Although Sanders picked up 6 points with African Americans and 23 points with Hispanics since the last ECPS poll, Clinton still has a better than 2-1 advantage with both groups. African Americans favor her 72% to 28%, and Hispanics lean her way 68% to 32%. She also leads Sanders 48% to 43% among white Democratic voters, a group that has tended to favor him.

Sanders has closed a big gender gap with both men and women, but Clinton still leads him 60% to 36% among women and 51% to 41% with men. His unflagging popularity with young voters gives him a 60% to 36% edge in the 18-34 age group,

but in the other three age categories, Clinton enjoys a wide margin of support: 26 points (ages 35-54), 29 points (55-74) and 41 points (75+).

Although Clinton's favorable rating with primary voters has dropped 13 points since mid-March, from 82% to 69%, her favorable/unfavorable numbers are still +40. Sanders's rating of 67% to 26% (+41) has changed little. However, Clinton commands higher loyalty: 76% compared to 50% for Sanders.

Out of five hypothetical matchups for the general election in November, the Democratic candidate would win handily in four of them. Clinton beats Trump 54% to 36% (+18) and Cruz 58% to 30% (+28). Sanders stumps Trump 51% to 38% (+13) and Cruz 56% to 29% (+27). Ohio governor John Kasich is most competitive in a head-to-head matchup with Clinton. However, she still wins 48% to 41%.

Amid uncertainty over whether Trump can gain the 1,237 delegates needed to clinch the party's presidential nomination before the GOP convention in July, 69% of New York GOP voters say the candidate who comes closest to that tally should win the nomination. Only 31% favor a brokered convention if no one earns a majority of delegates during the primaries.

As recent Sanders victories have narrowed the gap between the number of committed delegates Clinton has earned (1,280) compared to Sanders (1,030), more attention is being given to how Democratic super-delegates will vote. When asked if at the Democratic convention neither candidate has secured the nomination through 2,383 pledged delegates alone, should super delegates be allowed to decide the nominee, or should the candidate with the most pledged delegates be the nominee, 21% said the super delegates should be allowed to decide while 64% said the candidate with the most pledged delegates should be the nominee.

Almost one-fourth of Democrats (23%) listed dissatisfaction with government as the top issue of this election cycle, followed by jobs and unemployment, named by 19%. Dissatisfaction with government was also the foremost issue for New York's Republican voters, with 44% saying it's their biggest worry. Since the March 17 ECPS poll, concerns about defeating ISIS and terrorism, cited by 19%, displaced the state of the economy as GOP voters' second-most urgent issue. The terrorist attacks in Belgium occurred a week after the March survey.

Under New York's GOP delegate rules, 95 delegates are split into two sets: 14 at-large delegates statewide and 81 delegates allocated by congressional district, with each of the 27 districts having three. If a candidate breaks the 50% threshold, it becomes "winner take all." Otherwise, there is proportional distribution of delegates among candidates who win more than 20 percent of the vote. In the Democratic primary, the state's 291 Democrat delegates are allocated proportionally.

Caller ID

The Emerson College Polling Society poll was conducted from April 6 and 7, 2016. The GOP primary consisted of 321 likely primary voters, with a margin of error of +/-

5.4% and weighted by gender based on 2012 and 2008 exit polling. The Democratic primary consisted of 325 likely primary voters, with a margin of error of +/-5.4% and weighted by age based on 2008 and 2004 exit polling. The General Election sample consisted of 864 likely general election voters, and weighted by 2012 federal general election returns with a margin of error of +/-3.3%. Data was collected using an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system of landlines only. The full methodology and results can be found at www.theecps.com.