

Quarterly Profile

OF NEW MEXICO CITIZENS

A UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER REPORT

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FOCUS 1: THE GENDER GAP

Definition and Background

Since the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, political observers have witnessed a clear pattern: women have been more likely than men to vote for Democratic presidential candidates. Some explanations of this so-called “gender gap” have pointed to demographic differences between men and women, such as variations in household income, whereas others have pointed to changing party dynamics, especially the exodus of male voters from the Democratic party.

This *Quarterly Profile* complements these previous studies in two respects. First, we go beyond voting behavior to look at the differences between how women and men view public officials. Second, we attempt to understand the gender gap as a reflection of both party membership and the strength of one’s identification with party ideology.

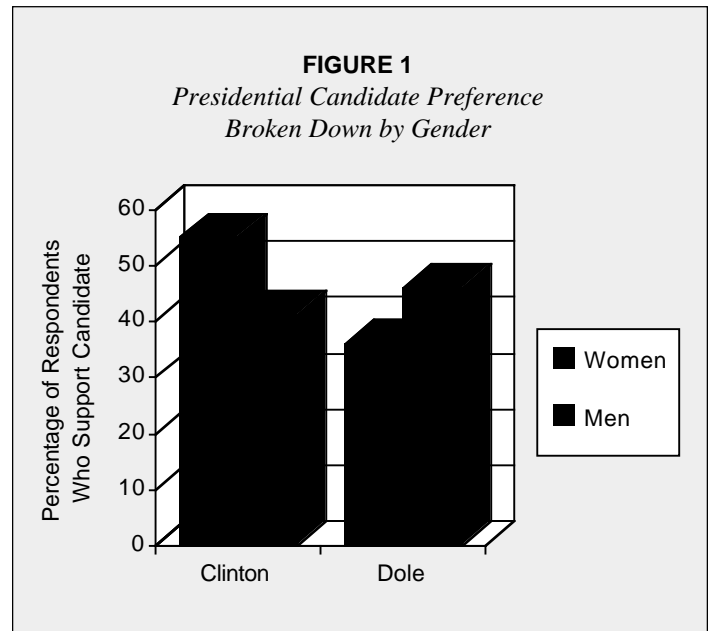
Voting Preferences

Past studies of the political gender gap have focused on voting behavior. With that in mind, we asked respondents whom they would favor as the next President if their choices were only Bill Clinton or Bob Dole. Figure 1 shows that women clearly preferred Bill Clinton (55%) to Bob Dole (36%); however, men showed a slight preference for Dole (46% versus 41%).¹

A Gender Gap in Approval Ratings?

In New Mexico, the gender gap may exist in regard to voting, but does it extend to more general political opinions? When asked what issue is New Mexico’s biggest problem, a majority of women (54%) viewed crime and drug abuse as most important, whereas only 43% of men did. Thirty-nine percent of women rated jobs/economy and public education as most important compared to 43% of men.

According to these results, women are more concerned about crime and drug abuse than men, but men and women are about equally concerned about the economy and public education. In addition, women are more concerned about crime and drug abuse than about the economy and public education, whereas men are concerned about both policy categories equally.



When looking at the approval ratings for New Mexico public officials, only one major difference between women and men stood out. Forty-two percent of men, but only 34% of women, approved of the job Governor Gary Johnson is doing. All other public officials (NM legislature, public employees, and police), however, received almost equal amounts of approval from both men and women.

Moreover, Table 1 on the following page shows that Governor Johnson’s approval rating varies by both party and gender. Among both men and women, support for the governor is much higher among Republicans than Democrats, but within each party, women give Johnson a lower rating. In other words, men and women rate Johnson differently not only due to different party identities, but also due to a gender gap *within* the Democratic and Republican parties. *(continued on page 2)*

¹ We should note that the *Quarterly Profile* reports on the opinions of *all* New Mexicans surveyed, including those who say they are not registered to vote. Our aim is to understand the views of the entire New Mexico public, not merely the subset of the public that has chosen to register.

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FOCUS 1: THE GENDER GAP

A Gender Gap in Approval Ratings?

(continued from page 1)

Party identity differences between men and women do explain some of the gender gap. More women than men identified themselves as Democrats in this *Quarterly Profile*. A majority (52%) of women surveyed identified themselves as Democrats, whereas a plurality (39%) of men identified with the Republican party. In other words, women and men differ both in their party identities and in their views *within* those parties.

Given these partisan and attitudinal differences, it may surprise some readers to find that the gender gap is not always so wide when women and men rate the performance of national public officials and institutions. Figure 2 shows that the sexes give equally low marks to Congress, with only 18% approving of its performance. In addition, women and men did not really differ in their approval of Dole, and they differed only slightly in their approval of Gingrich. When it came to the Clinton family, though, women and men clearly disagreed. In both cases, female respondents' approval far outweighed that of male respondents (39% versus 28% for Bill Clinton and 39% versus 23% for Hillary Clinton).

Again, this gap between women and men appears to be strongest when considering Democratic public officials. It appears that women and men are fairly equal in their support for Republicans, but men show much less support for Democrats than do

women. Qualifying this generalization, Table 2 on the following page shows that among Republicans, the gender gap is apparent for Hillary Clinton but not for Bill Clinton, who receives low marks from both sexes within the GOP. (continued on page 3)

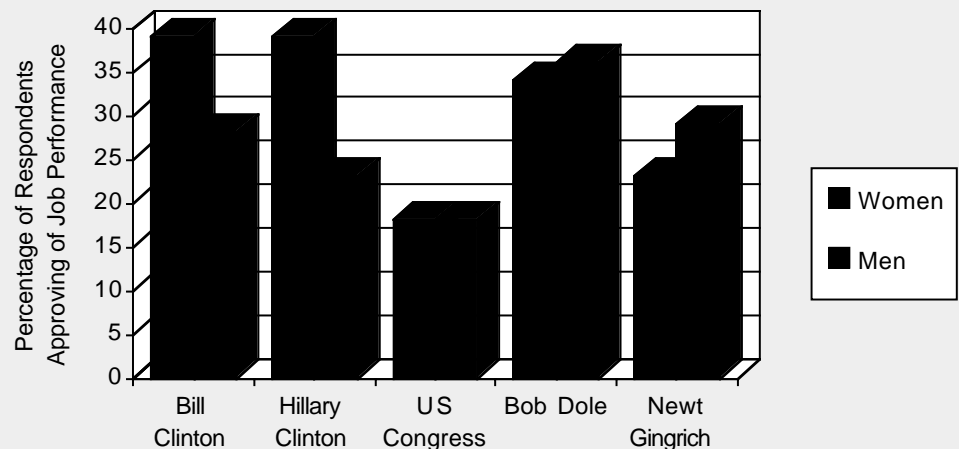
TABLE 1

Approval Ratings for Governor Johnson Broken Down by Gender and Party Identification

	Democrat	Republican	No Party	Other
Female approval	29%	40%	32%	43%
Female sample size	149	89	28	21
Male approval	35%	52%	35%	41%
Male sample size	84	101	49	22

FIGURE 2

Approval Ratings for National Public Officials



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We wish to acknowledge the assistance of Scott Goold as Survey Manager for the *Quarterly Profile* survey conducted in November 1995.

UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The Institute for Public Policy serves New Mexicans as a non-partisan forum for research, analysis, data collection and training. The Institute's Survey Research Center conducts surveys and research on the policy preferences and political attitudes of New Mexico citizens. The *Quarterly Profile* is distributed to federal, state, and local New Mexico policy makers, corporate and civic leaders, private organizations, the media and interested citizens.

SURVEY DATA

The UNM Institute for Public Policy conducted its survey of New Mexico citizens through telephone interviews with 574 adult New Mexicans in February of 1996. The telephone numbers were selected randomly by computer. The results of the poll have a four percentage point margin of error at a 95 percent level of confidence, which means that 19 out of 20 times the findings should be within four percentage points of the results that would be obtained if all New Mexico households were surveyed. The margin of error is larger for subgroups of the sample because of the smaller number of observations. As with any survey a potential source of error is the possibility that variation in the wording of questions or the order in which questions are asked could produce different results.

FOCUS 1: THE GENDER GAP

A Gender Gap in Approval Ratings?

(continued from page 2)

In general, this *Quarterly Profile* has shown that women are more supportive of Democrats than are men, but in many cases men and women support Republicans fairly equally. As discussed earlier, these differences partly reflect men and women's different political party identities: a majority of women identified with the Democratic party compared to only a third of men; two-fifths of men surveyed identified with the Republican party, compared to fewer than a third of the women interviewed.

Party Identity and Ideology

It is useful to look even deeper, though, to differences in partisanship *within* these two political parties. Thirty-two percent of women but only 24% of men completely identify with their chosen political party. An even finer pattern emerges when these differences are broken down by party. Figure 3 shows that 30% of both Republican women and Republican men completely identify with their party, but among Democrats, 34% of women and only 18% of men completely identify with the party. Thus, the gender gap reflects both women's propensity to identify with the Democratic Party and the relatively weak party identity expressed by those men who are Democrats.

To further examine gender gaps within political parties, we studied the ideological differences among Democratic and Republican respondents. An individual's location on the crude liberal-conservative continuum gives a remarkable degree of insight into how she or he thinks about public officials and political issues.

Within the Democratic Party, a plurality of both men (39%) and women (41%) identified themselves as liberal, with the remainder almost evenly divided between middle-of-the-road and conservative. Among Republicans, though, a significantly larger percentage of men (70%) viewed themselves as conservative than did women (61%). Republican women are also more likely than Republican men to view themselves as moderates (29% versus 17%).

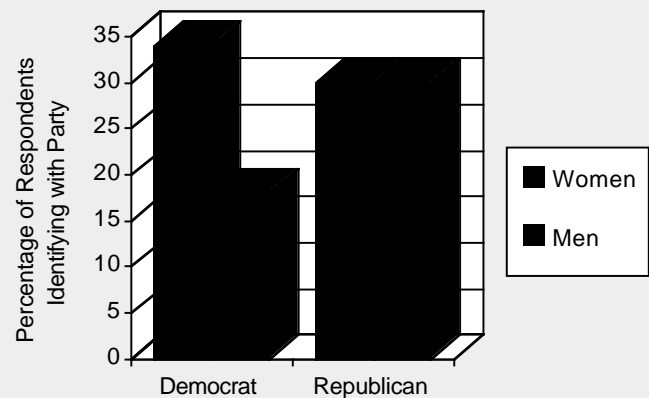
Thus, it appears that despite the differences in the strength of their party identification, men and women within the Democratic party are similar ideologically. Within the Republican party, though, similar party identities are contrasted with a difference in ideology.

In sum, there is, indeed, a modest gap between the voting preferences, attitudes, and partisanship of New Mexico men and women. This gap exists not only in the population as a whole, but also within the Democratic and Republican political parties. The gap stems from differences in party membership, as well as ideology and the strength of party identity. Of course, we found tremendous variation in political perspectives among women and among men, but on average, different socialization patterns and different adult life experiences may have created a real difference between the average views of women and men in New Mexico.

TABLE 2
Approval Ratings of National Public Officials

	Bill Clinton	Hillary Clinton	US Congress	Bob Dole	Newt Gingrich
Female Democrats	54%	47%	16%	28%	13%
Male Democrats	46%	36%	13%	29%	15%
Female Republicans	16%	26%	24%	46%	39%
Male Republicans	17%	14%	25%	48%	45%

FIGURE 3
Percent of Respondents Completely Identifying with Their Chosen Political Party



The National Gender Gap

The most recent national study of the gender gap was conducted March 20-24 by Democratic pollsters Stan Greenberg and Celinda Lake on behalf of Emily's List, an organization that supports pro-choice Democratic women running for public office. Their survey found that women favored Clinton over Dole by 19 percentage points and Democratic over GOP congressional candidates by 13 points. By contrast, men favored Clinton by 6 points and GOP candidates by 6 points.

--*The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, Vol 13, No 25 (April 22-28, 1996), p. 41.

FOCUS 2: THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Introduction: The New Mexico Primary

On June 4th, New Mexico will hold primary elections for several federal and state offices. New Mexico's primary is on the last day of the Presidential primary election cycle, though, and it is already clear that President Bill Clinton will face Republican Senator Bob Dole (and various third-party candidates) in the 1996 general election. This *Quarterly Profile* takes an early look at the November election, and presidential elections in general, to better understand how New Mexicans think about the Presidency.

The Horse Race

We asked New Mexicans two questions to gauge their support for the different candidates running for president this year. First, interviewers asked, "If the presidential election were held today, whom would you vote for?" Nearly a third (32%) said they did not know, but 27% said they supported Clinton. Only 12% said they would vote for Dole, 7% wanted to vote for Colin Powell, 4% favored Ross Perot, and 8% gave answers ranging from "anyone but Clinton" to "Jimmy Carter."

Interviewers followed-up this initial question with the following query: "If the presidential election were held today and your only choices were Bill Clinton and Bob Dole, whom would you vote for?" Within this forced-choice format, 49% of respondents said they favored Clinton, 41% supported Dole, 4% were unsure, and 7% said they would not vote. (Figures were almost identical for the subsample of respondents who said they were registered to vote.)

When broken down along party lines, these results reflect independent support for Dole along with strong partisan loyalties among both Democrats and Republicans. Among those respondents who did not identify with a political party, Dole held a 12% margin over Clinton (44% to 32%). Among Republicans, Dole's margin was 54% (73% to 19%) over Clinton, and among Democrats, Clinton had a 50% margin (72% to 22%) over Dole.

How New Mexicans Evaluate Candidates

Clearly, partisanship accounts for many New Mexicans' candidate preferences, but even within the Democratic and Republican parties, a fraction favor the other party's candidate. Why is this the case, and why do independent voters pick one party's candidate over another's? Aside from party loyalty, how do people evaluate Presidential candidates?

We explored this issue by asking New Mexicans what qualities they valued most in a President. Using a scale from zero ("not at all important") to ten ("extremely important"), respondents rated the importance of four presidential characteristics: sound judgment in a crisis, experience in foreign affairs,

high ethical standards, and the ability to work with Congress. Not surprisingly, respondents rated all four as very important, with sound judgment deemed most important (mean rating = 9.1) and experience in foreign affairs being least important of the four (mean = 7.5).

Given that respondents said these four attributes were important, one might assume that respondents' candidate preferences should correspond to their ratings of the two candidates. Thus, Clinton, who led in the poll reported previously, should rate higher than Dole, and candidates should rate highest among their respective supporters. To test this hypothesis, interviewers asked respondents to rate the candidates on a scale from zero ("extremely poor") to ten ("extremely good") for each of the four attributes.

Consistent with this hypothesis, Table 3 shows that Dole supporters rated their preferred candidate as "good" (above the scale midpoint) far more often than they gave a positive rating to Clinton. A third of Dole supporters said that Clinton could show "sound judgment in a crisis," but these respondents rated Clinton less favorably on the other three attributes.

By contrast, for each of the four presidential characteristics, a majority of Clinton supporters rated Dole as being "good." In fact, 63% of Clinton supporters said Dole could "work with Congress," whereas only 53% said Clinton could do this. Only with regard to "sound judgment in a crisis" did Clinton supporters rate their candidate well above Dole.

We conducted another test of the connection between candidate ratings and voter preference by integrating respondents' candidate evaluations with their judgments about the importance of the four presidential attributes. For each respondent, we calculated overall Dole and Clinton ratings by weighting each rating with the importance of each attribute for a given respondent. Thus, if a respondent said that sound judgment was most important, this respondent's ratings of the candidates on this quality would receive the greatest weight in the overall rating. *(continued on page 5)*

TABLE 3
Perceived Qualifications of Presidential Candidates
Broken Down by Candidate Preference

	Presidential Attribute			
	Judgment in a Crisis	Experience in Foreign Affairs	High Ethical Standards	Ability to Work with Congress
Percentage of Dole Supporters Who Rate...				
Clinton as "Good" on this Attribute	33%	26%	21%	11%
Dole as "Good" on this Attribute	84%	73%	88%	87%
Percentage of Clinton Supporters Who Rate...				
Clinton as "Good" on this Attribute	87%	64%	67%	53%
Dole as "Good" on this Attribute	53%	54%	52%	63%

Note. Respondents were identified as preferring or supporting a candidate if they said they would vote for him in a Presidential election between Dole and Clinton. A "good" rating was any rating above five on a zero-to-ten scale.

FOCUS 2: THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

How New Mexicans Evaluate Candidates

(continued from page 4)

The results of these calculations show that 91% of those respondents who gave a higher overall rating to Clinton also said that they would vote for him in a two-way race against Dole. On the other hand, only 68% of those rating Dole higher than Clinton said they would support Dole in a two-way race. Broken down by party identification, 13% of Republicans who rated Dole higher said they would, nonetheless, vote for Clinton, and 46% of Democrats who rated Dole higher supported Clinton.

Although these results show a relationship between candidate evaluations and electoral support, they do present a paradox. For each of the four attributes, Dole received a higher average rating than did Clinton, and Dole's overall rating is above that of Clinton. Nonetheless, Clinton leads Dole in a poll of these same respondents. Dole may have earned greater public admiration, but without a concomitant pledge of electoral support. Meanwhile, Clinton appears to have maintained strong support, even among some citizens who have mixed feelings about his qualifications.

One reason for this discrepancy is that Democrats who view Dole more favorably remain inclined to vote for their party's candidate. People's votes depend not only upon thoughtful evaluations of the candidates but also upon crude partisan heuristics. Another explanation is that voters may rate Clinton higher than Dole on important characteristics unmeasured in this survey.

"You're no Jack Kennedy..."

How do New Mexico's Dole and Clinton supporters rate past presidents? Do Dole supporters revere Reagan and revile Carter? Do Clinton backers have fond memories of Kennedy and bad memories of Nixon? New Mexicans who said they would vote for Clinton or Dole rated the performance of eight U.S. presidents. This list shows how the presidents fared, ranked from best to worst:

Bill Clinton Supporters	Bob Dole Supporters
1. Kennedy	1. Reagan
2. Eisenhower	2. Eisenhower
3. Carter	3. Bush
4. Bush	4. Kennedy
5. Johnson	5. Ford
6. Ford	6. Nixon
7. Reagan	7. Johnson
8. Nixon	8. Carter

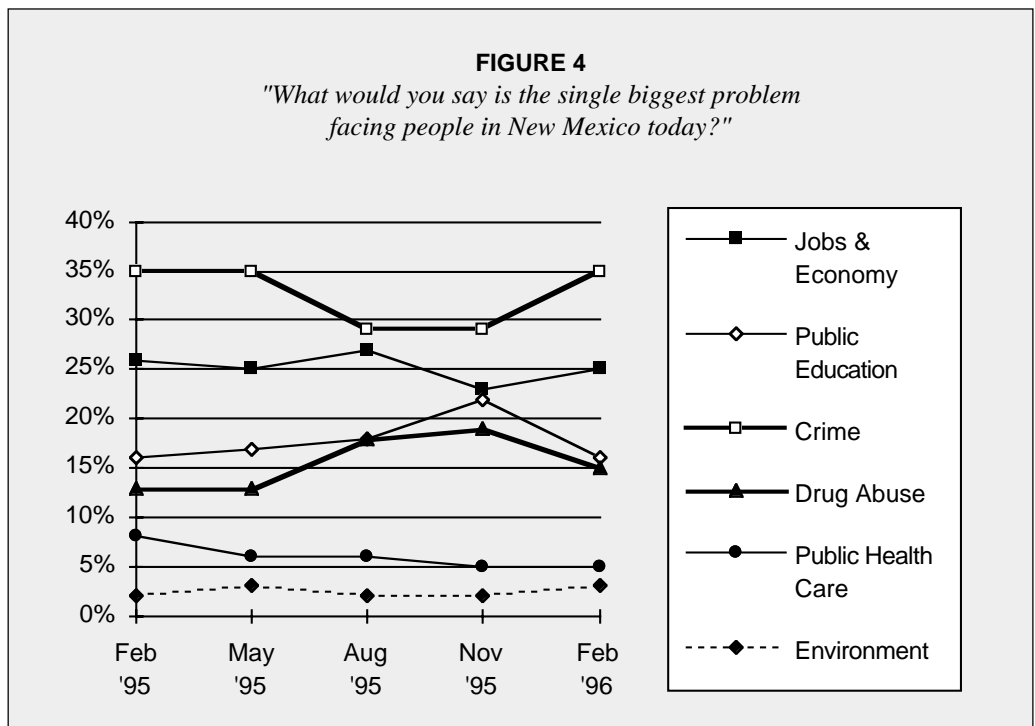
Age differences were not strongly associated with differences in ratings of past presidents, although younger respondents were somewhat more likely to give "don't know" responses for Ford, Nixon, Johnson, and Eisenhower.

TRENDS

Most Pressing Policy Concerns

New Mexicans reported roughly the same policy concerns in the current *Quarterly Profile* as they did a year ago in the February '95 survey. In the past year, citizens' worries about crime have dropped and risen, and, in turn, concern about public education and drug abuse have risen and fallen.

In the current *Quarterly Profile*, over a third (35%) rated crime as the most serious problem facing New Mexico, and a quarter said jobs and the economy were the state's most pressing concern (see Figure 4). Sixteen percent said that public education was the state's primary problem, whereas 15% said the biggest problem was drug abuse. Only 5% said public health care was the state's major policy problem, and the environment was the primary concern for only 3%.

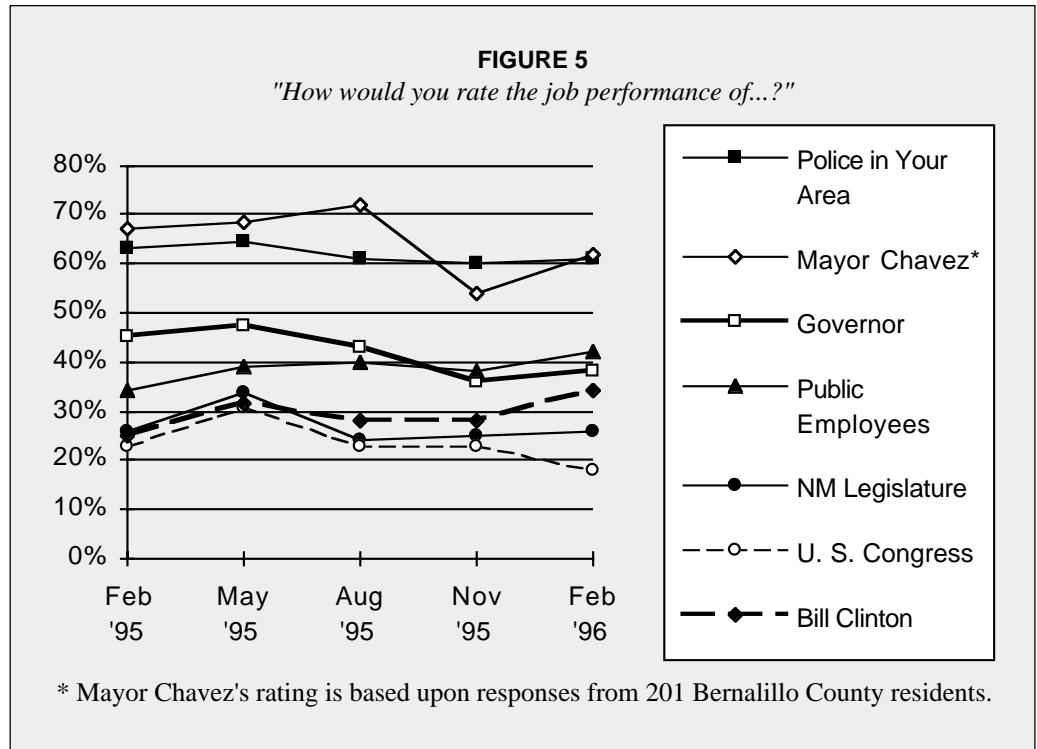


TRENDS

Citizen Approval Ratings

Figure 5 shows that since our last February survey (1995), there has been a mixed pattern in New Mexicans' job performance ratings of local, state, and federal public officials. For all six officials and institutions, ratings rose from February '95 to May '95, then fell back by November '95. From November '95 to February '96, approval ratings rose again, with the exception of Congress, which dropped from a 23% approval rating to one of 18%.

After rising and falling over the past few months, Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez has the highest approval rating (based on a sample of Bernalillo County residents only), followed closely by "the police in your area" at 61%. Twenty points lower, at 42%, are New Mexico's public employees, followed by Governor Johnson (38%), President Clinton (34%), the New Mexico Legislature (26%), and the U.S. Congress (18%).



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