

## **Breaking News: LE&A/Denno Research Poll Shows 46% Have Unfavorable View of Tea Party, Movement Down 19 Points with Women, Independents**

*Thursday, November 21, 2013, 7:00 a.m.*

The tea party has an image problem in Michigan, with 46% of voters holding an unfavorable view of the conservative movement, according to a new Lambert Edwards & Associates (LE&A) poll done by Denno Research.

The tea party sparks strong feelings – and most of them are negative -- with more than one-third of voters (35.3%) saying their opinion of the tea party is “strongly unfavorable.” Just 28.8% of voters view the movement favorably, with 10.7% saying their opinion of it is “strongly favorable.”

The live-operator survey of 600 likely voters included 20% cell users and had a 4% margin of error. The party breakdown was 34.8% Democrats, 32% Republicans and 30.8% independents.

The poll was taken on Nov. 12 through 14, after the partial federal government shutdown. LE&A Senior Director **T.J. Bucholz** said he believes that timing is a factor in the tea party's poor showing.

“The impasse, I think, really damaged the general public's perception of the tea party's brand of politics, which is generally not to compromise,” Bucholz said. “Voters expect some sense of that from their politicians.”

Women and independents are problem areas for the tea party, according to the survey.

The survey polled 55% women and 45% men. The movement is viewed unfavorably by 44% of women and favorably by 25% -- a 19-point deficit. The tea party is also underwater with men, with 47% holding an overall unfavorable opinion of it and just 33% holding a favorable opinion.

“It's painfully clear the tea party philosophy doesn't resonate at all with a majority of a critical demographic – women,” Bucholz said. “It's like that line Princess Leia delivers in *Star Wars* to Governor Tarkin -- the more tea party members tighten their grip on women's issues, the more women slip through their fingers.”

Bucholz said that the tea party damaged its brand by veering away from a strictly economic message.

“Economic issues were, at one point, at their core, but leadership has allowed social issues to completely draw them off what was once a good rhetorical course,” he said. “And I don’t think they can ever right the ship.”

Independents also have a negative image of the tea party, with 44% giving the movement unfavorable marks and 25% having a favorable opinion. Not surprisingly, Republicans still are on board with the tea party, with 55% having a favorable opinion of it and just 19% holding an unfavorable view.

“The tea party ultimately caters to very conservative voters, but their messaging is targeted toward people who identify themselves as independents,” Bucholz said. “I think tea party leadership believes the voters in the in the middle and tired of politics as usual. But the crosstabs didn’t bear that out -- only one-quarter of indies identified as supportive. So for a movement that wants to broaden its horizons, it’s clear who they are trying to target just aren’t buying.”

You have to do some digging to find Democrats who like the tea party, with only 7% expressing a favorable opinion and 74% viewing the movement unfavorably.

For the racial breakdown, 11.2% of survey respondents were African-American, 80.2% were white and 1.7% were Latino. The tea party struggles with African-American voters, with just 6% having a favorable impression and 70% having an unfavorable opinion. For white voters, 43% had an unfavorable opinion and 32% had a favorable one.

Breaking the poll down by age, 16.3% were ages 18 to 34, 31.2% were 35 to 49, 29.3% were 50 to 64 and were 65 and older. For the under-34 demographic, 26% have a favorable impression of the tea party and 44% view it unfavorably. For 35- to 49-year-olds, 26% view the tea party favorably and 49% have an unfavorable opinion.

Voters 50 to 64 aren’t sold on the tea party, either, with 34% holding a favorable view and 43% having an unfavorable opinion. Even seniors are underwater, with 30% holding a favorable impression of the movement and 46% holding an unfavorable one.

Bucholz said the tea party hasn’t proved to be a real force in Michigan, and he doesn’t expect it to be in the 2014 election.

“If the tea party had some real cache here, they’d be able to take on more of the establishment than they have,” he said. “Instead, we’ve seen no challenge to the Governor, and a party threat to the LG [Lt. Gov. **Brian Calley**] fizzle out. You may see some challenges in primaries next year, but I am not sure they will be a factor everywhere as they would like to be. Nationally, the tea party is all dependent on the flow of dollars -- rank and file give very little to the cause, it’s the independent expenditure money that matters. And if funders don’t see a pathway to victory and only dead ends, the cash will disappear quickly.”