

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Tuesday's *Star-Ledger*. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll."

In this release *The Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll includes a classification of voters that is based on how firmly they support a candidate. A "firm voter" is one who selects a candidate and says they are "very sure" about their choice and will not change their mind before the election. "Not firm voters" are those who select a candidate and say they might change their mind or who are initially undecided.

All of the percentages in this release, unless otherwise indicated, are based on New Jersey residents who report that they are registered to vote.

The *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll web address: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~eaglepol>

1997 GUBERNATORIAL RACE:

MOST VOTERS UNCERTAIN ABOUT CHOICE

WHITMAN MORE WIDELY KNOWN THAN MCGREEVEY

As the 1997 campaign for Governor of New Jersey begins, half (53%) of registered New Jerseyans are not yet firm in their selection of a candidate. Among registered voters who say they will not change their minds before Election Day, Christie Whitman (22%) and Jim McGreevey (25%) have about equal support. Whitman has a 44 to 38 percent lead over McGreevey when those who have made a choice but might change their mind before the election are included in the support for the candidates.

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The latest *Star Ledger/Eagleton* Poll of 623 registered voters conducted by telephone between June 6 and June 8, 1997 shows, not surprisingly, that more registered voters have an opinion of incumbent Governor Whitman than the challenger Jim McGreevey. While 79 percent of the voters have an impression of the Governor, a smaller 22 percent have an opinion about the Democratic challenger.

“At this very early stage in the campaign both candidates are being backed by their expected bases of support,” commented Janice Ballou. “The eventual winner will have to attract the voters who are not included in this base.”

THE RACE FOR GOVERNOR

At this time the incumbent Governor has firm support from 22 percent of registered voters compared to 25 percent for the challenger McGreevey with half (53%) of the voters still not having made a definite choice about who to vote for.

When the voters who might change their minds are included in the support for each candidate, Christie Whitman receives 44 percent of the vote and Jim McGreevey 38 percent with 18 percent undecided.

As would be expected, the candidates receive strong partisan among their firm supporters with 54 percent of the Republicans supporting Whitman while McGreevey is the choice of 51 percent of the Democrats. Among the critical group of independent voters, Whitman (17%) and McGreevey (22%) are about even.

Firm support for the candidates among some different types of voters is as follows:

Region of the State: Among voters in North Jersey who are firm in their choice of a candidate Whitman (20%) and McGreevey (24%) are about even. They also have similar

firm support in Central Jersey – Whitman (25%) and McGreevey (26%); and in South Jersey – Whitman (20%) and McGreevey (26%).

Gender: About equal percentages of men who are firm in their choice of candidates support Whitman (24%) and McGreevey (23%). In comparison, more women are firm in their choice of McGreevey (27%) than Whitman (19%).

Interest in the Election: Among those who are firm in their choice of candidates and who say they have a lot of interest in the election, McGreevey (34%) has more support than Whitman (24%). However, Whitman (19%) leads McGreevey (14%) among those who have some interest in the election. Those who have a little or no interest in the 1997 election have equal support for McGreevey (22%) and Whitman (20%).

Among the voters who might change their minds there are some differences for specific types of voters as follows:

Region of the State: Among voters in North Jersey who have selected a candidate, but might change their mind prior to election day, Whitman has support from 44 percent compared to 39 percent for McGreevey. They also have similar support in Central Jersey – Whitman (45%) and McGreevey (37%); and in South Jersey – Whitman (42%) and McGreevey (38%).

Gender: Equal percentages of females who have selected a candidate, but might change their minds support Whitman (40%) and McGreevey (40%). In comparison, more men select Whitman (48%) than select McGreevey (36%).

Interest in the Election: Among those who have selected a candidate, but might change their minds and who say they have a lot of interest in the election, McGreevey (48%) has more support than Whitman (33%). However, Whitman (47%) leads McGreevey (34%)

among those who have some interest in the election and those who have a little or not interest (Whitman 53%/McGreevey 36%).

KNOWLEDGE AND IMPRESSIONS OF THE CANDIDATES

As the incumbent Governor, Christie Whitman is better known among registered voters than Jim McGreevey. Sixty-five percent correctly name Whitman as the Republican candidate compared to 45 percent of registered voters who know that McGreevey is the Democratic nominee. Republicans (79%) are more likely than independents (60%) or Democrats (62%) to know that she is the candidate. While all registered voters can either name Whitman as the candidate or recognize her when her name is given, 21 percent of registered voters do not recognize McGreevey's name at this time. In addition, 79 percent of the voters say they only know McGreevey a little (59%) or not at all (20%) while 3 percent feel that they know a lot about him and 17 percent know some. Whitman is much better known with 27 percent saying they know a lot about her, 49 percent some, 22 percent feel they know just a little about the incumbent, and 2 percent say that they know nothing at all.

Overall, 46 percent have a favorable impression of Whitman, 33 percent have an unfavorable impression, and 21 percent do not have an impression of the Governor. In comparison, 78 percent either don't have an impression (21%) or don't know McGreevey (57%). The challenger receives favorable impressions from 17 percent and 5 percent have unfavorable impressions.

CLIMATE FOR THE ELECTION

Interest in the 1997 gubernatorial election is similar to 1993 when Whitman ran against the incumbent Governor Jim Florio. Overall, 81 percent of the registered voters say they

have a lot (47%) or some (34%) interest in the upcoming election. In the June 1993 gubernatorial election 85 percent said they had a lot (56%) or some (29%) interest in the election.

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The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between June 6 and June 8, 1997, when a random sample of 804 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of about ± 3.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are presented below. The location of each question on the actual questionnaire is in brackets. This data has been weighted using voter registration information from the New Jersey Secretary of State's office for party identification.

NOTE: FOR THIS RELEASE THE FINDINGS ON THE ELECTION ARE BASED ON 623 REGISTERED VOTERS AND HAVE A MARGIN OR ERROR OF ± 4 PERCENT.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE SL/EP62-1 (EP112-1), TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 1997

"How much interest do you have in this election--a lot, some, a little, or none at all?" [Q.4]

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>None At All</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1997							
--Registered Voters	47%	34%	14%	5%	1%	101%	(623)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	52	32	11	4	1	100	(212)
--Independent	43	36	15	6	1	101	(218)
--Republican	50	30	17	2	1	100	(162)

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1993							
--Registered Voters	56	29	10	4	1	100	(666)

"On June 3 there was a primary election in New Jersey. Not all races were contested and most people didn't vote. Did you vote in the primary election for Governor?" [Q.5]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1997					
--Registered Voters	20%	79%	1%	100%	(623)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	35	65	--	100	(212)
--Independent	12	88	--	100	(218)
--Republican	18	82	--	100	(162)

"Do you know who the (Republican/Democratic) candidate for Governor is?" [Q.8, Q.12] ASKED OF THOSE WHO DID NOT NAME (WHITMAN/MCGREEVEY): "The (Republican/Democratic) candidate is Christie Whitman/Jim McGreevey)--have you ever heard of (her/him) before?" [Q.9, Q.13]

	<u>Names</u>	<u>Recognizes</u>	<u>Doesn't Recognize</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1997					
WHITMAN--Registered Voters	65%	34%	1%	100%	(623)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	62	38	--	100	(212)
--Independent	60	39	1	100	(218)
--Republican	79	21	--	100	(162)
MCGREEVEY--Registered Voters	45	34	21	100	(621)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	47	30	22	99	(211)
--Independent	43	39	18	100	(217)
--Republican	45	31	24	100	(162)

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1993					
WHITMAN--Registered Voters	59	32	10	101	(665)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	49	36	15	100	(225)
--Independent	61	31	9	101	(248)
--Republican	68	28	4	100	(178)
FLORIO--Registered Voters	79	21	--	100	(666)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	75	25	--	100	(226)
--Independent	81	19	--	100	(248)
--Republican	83	16	1	100	(178)

"How much do you think you know about (Christie Whitman/Jim McGreevey)--a lot, some or just a little?" [Q.10, Q.14]

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>Nothing (VOL)</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1997							
WHITMAN--Registered Voters	27%	49%	22%	2%	1%	101%	(621)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	29	45	24	2	1	101	(212)
--Independent	24	50	24	2	1	101	(217)
--Republican	28	53	19	1	--	101	(162)
MCGREEVEY--Registered Voters	3	17	59	20	1	100	(489)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	4	30	50	15	--	99	(166)
--Independent	1	12	65	20	1	99	(175)
--Republican	4	9	60	25	1	99	(123)

PAST SURVEYS

JUNE, 1993							
WHITMAN--Registered Voters	6	30	53	10	1	100	(665)
FLORIO--Registered Voters	31	47	21	--	1	100	(666)

"Is your general impression of (Christie Whitman/Jim McGreevey) favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion about (her/him)? Is that very (favorable/unfavorable) or somewhat (favorable/unfavorable)?" [Q.11, Q.15]

	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Doesn't Know Candidate	No Opinion/Don't Know	Total	(n)
June, 1997								
WHITMAN--Registered Voters	16%	30%	14%	19%	1%	20%	100%	(623)
<i>Party ID</i>								
--Democrat	4	21	24	31	--	19	99	(212)
--Independent	11	35	11	18	1	23	99	(218)
--Republican	41	30	10	9	--	10	100	(162)
MCGREEVEY--Registered Voters								
MCGREEVEY--Registered Voters	4	13	4	1	21	57	100	(623)
<i>Party ID</i>								
--Democrat	10	19	2	1	23	46	101	(212)
--Independent	2	13	4	1	19	62	101	(218)
--Republican	2	9	7	3	24	55	100	(162)
PAST SURVEYS								
June, 1993								
WHITMAN--Registered Voters	8	19	9	7	10	47	100	(664)
<i>Party ID</i>								
--Democrat	2	12	11	7	15	52	99	(225)
--Independent	10	21	8	8	9	44	100	(248)
--Republican	15	28	8	6	4	40	101	(177)
FLORIO--Registered Voters	18	26	19	16	--	21	100	(664)
<i>Party ID</i>								
--Democrat	27	38	8	7	--	20	100	(226)
--Independent	16	21	24	18	--	21	101	(247)
--Republican	5	15	29	29	1	22	101	(177)

STRENGTH VOTE CHOICE [Q.16,Q.17,Q.18]

Those choosing either Whitman or McGreevey were asked if they were "very sure about voting for her/him, or might you change your mind before election day?" Undecided voters were asked "at this moment do you lean more towards Whitman, or more towards McGreevey?" With the leaners allocated, and with firmness of preference taken into account, voters displayed the following pattern:

	WHITMAN				MCGREEVEY			OTHER	Total	(n)
	Firm	Soft	Lean	Undecided	Lean	Soft	Firm			
June, 1997										
--Registered Voters	21%	22%	3%	11%	3%	12%	24%	3%	99%	(621)
<i>Party ID</i>										
--Democrat	6	16	1	5	4	17	50	2	101	(210)
--Independent	16	25	5	12	4	12	21	6	101	(218)
--Republican	54	26	1	4	--	7	7	1	100	(162)
PAST SURVEYS										
June, 1993										
--Registered Voters	27	16	1	5	3	17	31	--	100	(642)
<i>Party ID</i>										
--Democrat	10	8	1	5	1	21	55	--	101	(218)
--Independent	25	22	1	7	5	17	23	--	100	(238)

--Republican 56 18 3 3 1 13 6 -- 100 (174)

VOTE CHOICE - TRADITIONAL Note: The traditional method of simplifying the vote choice has been to group the people who are "firm" and "soft" supporters of a candidate and combine people who "lean" towards a candidate with the undecided voters. The data for this classification is based on Q.16.

	<u>Whitman</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1997					
--Registered Voters	44%	18%	38%	100%	(602)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	22	9	69	100	(206)
--Independent	43	22	35	100	(205)
--Republican	81	5	14	100	(160)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	48	16	36	100	(291)
--Female	40	21	40	101	(311)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 - 29	54	6	40	100	(78)
--30 - 49	48	13	39	100	(238)
--50 - 64	37	25	38	100	(144)
--65 and older	38	25	37	100	(130)
<u>Region</u>					
--North	44	17	39	100	(291)
--Central	45	18	37	100	(154)
--South	42	20	38	100	(157)
<u>Interest In The Election</u>					
--A lot	33	19	48	100	(166)
--Some	47	19	34	100	(292)
--Little/none	53	11	36	100	(138)
<u>Probability of Voting</u>					
--Definitely will vote	43	14	43	100	(435)
--Probably will vote	47	27	26	100	(142)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
June, 1993					
--Registered Voters	43	9	48	100	(642)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	17	7	76	100	(218)
--Independent	47	12	40	99	(238)
--Republican	74	7	18	99	(174)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	43	9	49	101	(315)
--Female	43	10	48	101	(327)

VOTE CHOICE - FIRM Note: During this election the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll will be tracking the dynamics of voter "stability". Post-election analysis has substantiated the phenomena of voters "switching" candidates as late as Election Day. Firm voters are those who pick a candidate they support and say they will not change their

minds prior to Election Day; voters who are not firm are either initially undecided or say that they might change their mind about who they will vote for. The data for these classifications are based on Q.16 and Q.18.

	<u>Whitman</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1997					
--Registered Voters	22%	53%	25%	100%	(602)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	6	43	51	100	(206)
--Independent	17	61	22	100	(205)
--Republican	54	39	7	100	(160)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	24	52	23	99	(291)
--Female	19	54	27	100	(311)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 - 29	23	57	20	100	(78)
--30 - 49	22	53	26	101	(238)
--50 - 64	19	53	28	100	(144)
--65 and older	25	50	26	101	(130)
<u>Region</u>					
--North	20	56	24	100	(291)
--Central	25	48	26	99	(154)
--South	20	54	26	100	(157)
<u>Interest In The Election</u>					
--A lot	24	42	34	100	(295)
--Some	19	67	14	100	(202)
--Little/None	20	58	22	100	(99)
<u>Probability of Voting</u>					
--Definitely will vote	24	47	29	100	(435)
--Probably will vote	15	68	17	100	(142)