

# The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

## VOLUNTEER AND CIVIC BEHAVIORS: A PORTRAIT OF NEW JERSEY'S SAMARITANS

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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the March 22 *Star-Ledger*. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll."

An impressive number of New Jersey citizens are deeply involved in the lives of their communities or in causes and issues that are of personal importance to them, according to the most recent *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll.

The survey of 800 New Jersey residents, conducted in February of this year, is the same poll that found an extremely low level of factual knowledge about state politics among New Jerseyans. But while citizens may know or care little about public affairs in their state, a significant number volunteer their time to a variety of civic, educational, environmental, political and religious organizations. In fact, the poll finds that 45 percent of those living in the Garden State give the most precious gift they have--their time--on at least a monthly basis to some organization or group that is important to them. The poll has a margin of error of just over  $\pm 3$  percentage points.

People were asked how often, if ever, they have volunteered their time to nine different types of organizations in the last week, month, and year. Some 20 percent, "Specialists," say they volunteer time to at least one organization on a monthly basis (9 percent to a religious organization, 6 percent to an educational organization, and 5 percent to some other type of organization). Another 10 percent, "Activists," give their time to two organizations on a monthly basis, while a significant number--15 percent, "Angels," donate time to at least three organizations every month. The remaining 55 percent of state residents are inactive as volunteers.

The number of New Jerseyans involved in such activities has changed little over the past 10 years, and mirrors national survey data on voluntary activities, suggesting that New

Jerseyans are much like Americans as a whole in terms of their participation in civic and community life.

Participants in the survey were asked about their involvement in nine different types of groups. One-fifth of all New Jersey residents (20%) report donating their time to a religious group within the last month, while similar numbers say they have given time to a group involved with education (17%) or a civic or community organization (15%). A lesser number--between 10 and 12 percent--report volunteering their time to three types of organizations in the last month: a child or youth development program such as day care centers; an organization to help the poor, elderly or homeless; or a health-related organization. In the final tier of the nine types of groups asked about in terms of monthly participation are: a group involved with the arts (6%), an environmental organization (6%), and bringing up the rear, a political organizations or candidates for office (3 percent).

Looking at the number of New Jerseyans who participate in each of these nine activities on a voluntary basis, the survey estimates that 64 percent participate in one or more on at least a yearly basis, 45 percent on at least a monthly basis, and 25 percent of the New Jersey public participates in one or more on at least a weekly basis.

When asked to contrast this new portrait of a more active citizen with the poll's findings of low engagement with state government and politics, the Poll's director, Cliff Zukin, said, "People put their time, energy and attention into areas where they think they can have some impact--something that relates to their daily lives. For most, politics is a distant, foreign world, where they don't understand the actors, rules, or consequences. In contrast, they see immediate impacts and payoffs when they give their energy to a local civic concern. It is here that they think they can make a difference."

Voluntary activity is far from evenly spread throughout the New Jersey social spectrum. The survey finds more participation among the better educated and more affluent members of the public, and that racial and ethnic minorities are more active than Whites. One-quarter of the minorities surveyed say they give time to at least three organizations on a monthly basis, compared to 12 percent of Whites.

Those with school-aged children were also more active in predictable ways--in educational activities and religious groups. However, there was no difference between men and women in how the percentage of each donating time to various groups. Middle-aged New Jerseyans were more active than either their younger or older cohorts.

In a detailed summary of findings:

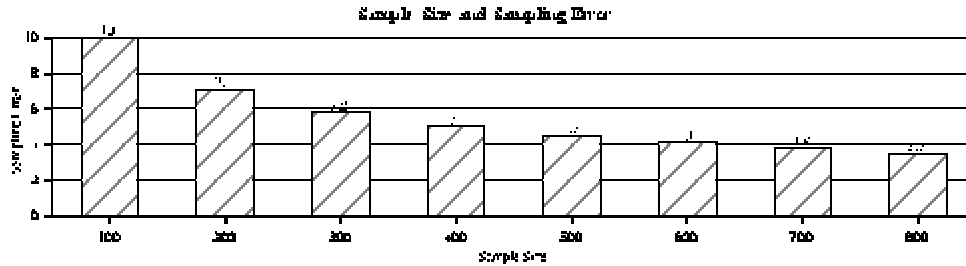
- 33 percent of all New Jerseyans say they have volunteered time to "a religious group" in the past year. A subset, 20 percent of all state residents, say they have done so in the past month and within this, 9 percent of Garden State citizens say they have done so in the past week.

- 27 percent say they have volunteered time to "a group involved in education" in the past year, 17 percent in the past month and 7 percent in the past week.
- 26 percent say they have volunteered time to "a civic or community organization, or a group providing social services" in the past year, 15 percent in the past month and 6 percent in the past week.
- 23 percent say they have volunteered time to "an organization to help the poor, elderly or homeless" in the past year, 12 percent in the past month and 4 percent in the past week.
- 19 percent say they have volunteered time to "a health organization" in the past year, 10 percent in the past month and 3 percent in the past week.
- 18 percent say they have volunteered time to "a child or youth development program, such as day care centers" in the past year, 12 percent in the past month and 5 percent in the past week.
- 12 percent say they have volunteered time to "an environmental organization" in the past year, 6 percent in the past month and 2 percent in the past week.
- 11 percent say they have volunteered time to "a group involved with the arts" in the past year, 6 percent in the past month and 2 percent in the past week.
- 9 percent say they have volunteered time to "a political organization or candidates for office" in the past year, 3 percent in the past month and 1 percent in the past week.

**BACKGROUND MEMO -- RELEASE SL/EP67-5 (EP117-5), SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 1998**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagle* Poll was conducted between February 12 and 17, 1998, when a scientifically selected random sample of 800 New Jersey adult residents was interviewed by telephone.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for the total sample size of 800 is just over  $\pm 3$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jerseyans were found to have a favorable opinion of the Governor, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 47 and 53 percent ( $50 \pm 3$ ) had all New Jerseyans been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported for men and women, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error.



Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects. The verbatim wording of all questions asked are reproduced in this background memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. Two versions of the questionnaire were used in this study. Not all questions were on both versions.

" Please tell me if you can recall having volunteered time to each of the following types of groups in the last 12 months. First, have you volunteered time in the last 12 months without pay to:" (V1 to V9)

For each yes, probe: "Is this something you do every week, at least once every month, or less often?"

		Less <u>Often</u>		Don't <u>Know</u>	
			No		
<u>Weekly</u>	<u>Monthly</u>				Total (n)

A religious group	8%	11%	12%	68%	--	99%	(802)
A health organization	3	7	9	80	--	99	(802)
A civic or community organization or a group providing social services	6	9	11	73	1	100	(802)
A group involved with the arts	2	4	5	88	1	100	(802)
A group involved with education	7	10	10	73	--	100	(802)
A political organization or candidates for office	1	2	6	91	--	100	(802)
An environmental organization	2	4	6	87	--	99	(802)
A child or youth development program, such as day care centers	5	7	6	82	--	100	(802)
An organization to help the poor, elderly or homeless	4	8	11	77	--	100	(802)

The following table shows the number of organizations people volunteer time to on a monthly basis.

	Number of Volunteer Activities per Month				<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	Inactives	Specialists	Activists	Angels		
	<u>No Activities</u>	<u>One Activity</u>	<u>Two Activities</u>	<u>Three or More</u>		
February 1998	<b>55%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>
Income Level						
<\$30K	65	14	9	12	100	(143)
\$30K-50K	52	25	6	18	101	(162)
>\$50K	47	22	13	18	100	(366)
Education Level						
High School or Less	65	17	7	11	100	(286)
Some College	44	24	12	20	100	(184)
College Graduate	42	24	13	20	99	(300)
Race						
White	57	21	11	12	101	(609)
Non-white	49	20	6	24	99	(190)

Gender					
Male	54	23	9	14	100 (391)
Female	56	18	10	16	100 (411)
Age					
18-29	57	22	9	12	100 (120)
30-49	50	23	10	17	100 (351)
50-64	46	22	11	21	100 (188)
65+	75	11	7	6	99 (128)

The following tables show the percentage of New Jersey residents having engaged in the various voluntary activities over the last 12 months. Respondents were also grouped by education and by the presence of children in the household where appropriate.

Data are also included from a Star Ledger-Eagleton Poll of 10 years ago for a time comparison, and from a 1997 national survey conducted by The Pew Research Center For The People & The Press, Washington,D.C. (<http://www.People-Press.org>)

"A religious group" (V1)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>68%</b>	--	<b>99%</b>	<b>(802)</b>

Education Level

High School or Less		25	74	--	99	(286)
Some College		39	62	--	101	(216)
College Graduate		39	61	--	100	(300)

Children in Household?

Yes	40	59	--	99	(260)
No	28	72	--	100	(535)

**Comparison Surveys**

New Jersey 1987	29	71		100	(800)
National 1997	38	61	1	100	(1003)

"A health organization" (V2)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>80%</b>		<b>--</b>	<b>99% (802)</b>

Education Level

High School or Less		14	86	--	100	(286)
Some College		23	76	--	99	(216)
College Graduate		30	70	--	100	(300)

**Comparison Surveys**

New Jersey 1987		15	85		100	(800)
National 1997		15	84	1	100	(1003)

"A civic or community organization, or a group providing social services" (V3)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>73%</b>		<b>1%</b>	<b>100% (802)</b>

Education Level

High School or Less		19	81	1	101	(286)
Some College		29	69	1	99	(216)
College Graduate		40	60	--	100	(300)

Children in Household?

Yes	34	65	1	100	(260)
No	22	77	--	99	(535)

Comparison Surveys

New Jersey 1987	25	75		100	(800)
National 1997	23	77	--	100	(1003)

"A group involved with the arts" (V4)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>88%</b>		<b>--</b>	<b>99% (802)</b>

Education Level

High School or Less		8	92	1	101	(286)
Some College		13	87	--	100	(216)
College Graduate		16	83	--	99	(300)

**Comparison Surveys**

New Jersey 1987		8	92		100	(800)
National 1997		11	89	--	100	(1003)

"A group involved with education" (V5)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>73%</b>		<b>--</b>	<b>100% (802)</b>

Education Level

High School or Less		18	81	--	99	(286)
Some College		31	69	--	100	(216)
College Graduate		41	59	--	100	(300)

Children in Household?



Yes	45	55	--	100	(260)
No	18	82	--	100	(535)

**Comparison Surveys**

New Jersey 1987		26	74		100	(800)
National 1997		22	78	--	100	(1003)

"A political organization or candidates for office" (V6)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>91%</b>	--	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>

Education Level

High School or Less		7	93	1	101	(286)
Some College		12	88	--	100	(216)
College Graduate		12	88	--	100	(300)

Comparison Surveys

National 1997		8	92	--	100	(1003)
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"An environmental organization" (V7)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>87%</b>	--	<b>99%</b>	<b>(802)</b>

Education Level

High School or Less		10	90	--	100	(286)
Some College		15	85	--	100	(216)

College Graduate	17	83	--	100	(300)
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**Comparison Surveys**

National 1997	11	89	--	100	(1003)
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"A child or youth development program, such as day care centers" (V8)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>82%</b>	--	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>

Education Level

High School or Less	14	86	--	100	(286)
Some College	19	80	--	99	(216)
College Graduate	23	77	--	100	(300)

Children in Household?

Yes	27	74	--	101	(260)
No	14	86	--	100	(535)

**Comparison Surveys**

National 1997	26	74	--	100	(1003)
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"An organization to help the poor, elderly or homeless?" (V9)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>77%</b>	--	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>

Education Level

High School or Less	19	81	--	100	(286)
Some College	28	71	--	99	(216)
College Graduate	25	75	--	100	(300)

**Comparison Surveys**

National 1997	34	66	--	100	(1003)
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"Would you say you spend more, less, or about the same number of hours on volunteer work now than you did two years ago?" (V10) Figures based on a subset of respondents who report having volunteered time to at least one group in the past twelve months.

	<u>More</u>	<u>Less</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(553)</b>

**Comparison Surveys**

New Jersey 1987	36	30	32	1	99	(429)
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Number of Voluntary Organizations Participated in on a:

	<u>None</u>	<u>One</u>	<u>Two</u>	<u>Three</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>February 1998</b>						
Yearly Basis	37	20	14	30	101	(802)
Monthly Basis	55	20*	10	15	100	(802)
Weekly Basis	75	17	5	3	100	(802)

\*This 20 percent comprised of: 9% who volunteer to a religious organization, 6% to an educational organization, and 5% to some other kind of organization.

