

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 the Sunday, April 9 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll."

WHAT NEW JERSEYANS BELIEVE!

(BELIEVE IT OR NOT)

You think you're a regular Jersey guy/girl? Maybe you think you got the Garden State pegged? Well, let's see how smart you are. Here's a test of your New Jerseyana.

Answer each of the following questions as True or False:

- 1) *More people believe in "extra sensory perception" than in "the theory of evolution."*
- 2) *More people believe in "ghosts" than that "Bill and Hillary Clinton like each other."*
- 3) *More people believe in "global warming" than in "love at first sight."*
- 4) *More people believe there is "life on other planets" than believe "medical doctors are usually right."*
- 5) *More people believe "dogs can think" than believe in "life after death."*
- 6) *More people believe in "the mafia" than in "heaven and hell."*

Which of these is really true?

All of them are!

So says the latest Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll. Eighteen different ideas were tested on a random cross-sectional sample of 800 New Jersey adults, interviewed by

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll • Eagleton Institute of Politics

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telephone between Feb. 28 and March 9. Each person was asked if they did or did not believe each one--some serious, others playful.

Counting down from the top, here's *What New Jerseyans Believe*, with an occasional line or two of commentary that inquiring minds may want to know. All speculation that follows is purely fanciful and for entertainment purposes only.

WHAT NEW JERSEYANS BELIEVE

92%	In God—a Supreme Being
90%	In The Mafia
90%	That Men & Women have different natures
78%	In Global Warming
77%	In Heaven and Hell
75%	That Dogs can think
70%	That Mother knows best
68%	In Life after Death
63%	In ESP—extra sensory perception
63%	In Love at First Sight
57%	That God created Earth in 6 days
56%	In Life on other Planets
53%	In the Theory of Evolution—that humans evolved from lower life forms
45%	That Medical Doctors are usually right
44%	In Ghosts—that some places may be haunted
41%	That Bill and Hillary Clinton like each other
38%	In Astrology
35%	In UFOs

Consensus Beliefs

At the top of the ladder are three beliefs that are absolutely consensual among New Jerseyans—that virtually everyone believes. At least 90 percent believe (1) *that there is a God, or Supreme Being*; (2) *in the Mafia*; (3) *that men and women have fundamentally different natures*.

With this all being so consensual, it is hard to pull out much in the way of background nuggets. But here are a couple of notes:

- Only 5 people in the 800 person sample said they neither believed in God nor in the Mafia. That's six-tenths of one percent for you statisticians.
- Women (93%) were a little more likely to believe the sexes have different natures than were men (88%).

Widespread Beliefs

The survey also turned up three beliefs that are widespread, if not consensual. Three out of every four New Jerseyans believe each of the following: (1) *the phenomenon of global warming is real*; (2) *in Heaven and Hell*; (3) *that dogs can think*.

- For some reason, Democrats are the most likely to believe in global warming (83%) followed by Independents (78%). While most Republicans believe, they are the most suspicious (72%), perhaps feeling this is an Al Gore plot to retain the White House.
- And for some reason, conservatives and moderates (80%) are more likely to believe in heaven and hell than are liberals (68%). Perhaps liberals don't feel they are going anywhere later so they want to do more things now while they are here.
- I asked my Golden Retriever Molly if she had any way to explain the 20 percent or so who *do not* believe that dogs can think. (It was, after all, Molly's idea for the question in the first place). Sorry to say that neither one of us have a clue as to what is going on here.

Core Beliefs

We define core beliefs as those held by two-thirds of New Jersey adults. There are two that are probably not related: (1) *Mother knows best*; (2) *Life after Death*.

- It is well beyond us to speculate here as to why there is a gender difference, but for some reason 75 percent of women believe that mother knows best, compared to just 65 percent of men.
- Belief in an afterlife varies with religion. Three-quarters of the Catholics believe, as do two-thirds of the Protestants. 11 of the 12 Muslims interviewed say they believe, but only 22 of the 57 people in the sample of the Jewish faith believe.

Clear Majority Beliefs

A clear majority of New Jerseyans—63 percent in each case—believe in (1) *Love at first sight*; (2) *ESP—Extra Sensory Perception*.

- Put your silly romantic notions aside. It is *men* (67%) rather than women (59%) who are more likely to believe in love at first sight. Poll analysts speculate this is because women see less pleasant sights at first look than do men.
- The belief in love at first sight decreases with age: among those under 30 years, 67% believe; 63% of those aged 30-64 believe; and among those over 65, 53% believe. Poll analysts speculate this is because vision gets worse with age.

Conflicting Majority Views

The poll finds a majority believing in 3 views we are calling conflictual: (1) *God created the Earth in 6 days* (57%); (2) *the Theory of Evolution—that humans evolved from lower life forms* (53%); (3) *that there is Life on other Planets* (56%). We call the first two conflictual because it is hard to understand how a majority can believe each. We call the last one conflictual because everyone we interviewed reported having been born on Earth.

- Poll analysts explored the first conflict by cross-tabulating responses to the creationism and evolution answers. Here's what we found: More than half of New Jerseyans are clearly consistent--29% believe in creationism but don't believe in evolution; 25% believe in evolution, but don't believe in creationism. However, about a quarter (23%) are clearly hedging their bets—they say they believe each is true. Another 6 percent obviously have

their own explanation for how they got here—they believe in neither creationism nor evolution. The rest are sort of unsure about how all this fits together.

- As a footnote of religious significance, 5 of the 43 atheists in the sample also said they thought God created the Earth in 6 days.
- Charles Darwin, reached by those who believe in life after death, was reportedly perplexed by the poll finding that only 53 percent believe in evolution. “Perhaps,” he is reported to have said, “natural selection doesn’t work in New Jersey for some reason.”
- My stepdaughter Rachel, who is nine and insists that she is from Pluto, helped me go through who believes there is life on other planets. It is about what she expected: liberals (63%) more than conservatives (45%); men (61%) more than women (51%); young—under 30 (71%) more than old—over 65 (38%); and those who have gone on-line in the last week (61%) more than those who don’t ever go (48%).

Non-Majority Beliefs

It is hard to know whether to smile or grimace at the news that as many people *(1) believe in ghosts—that some places are haunted, as (2) believe that medical doctors are usually right.*

But the numbers are the numbers. More do not believe in each than do; in fact only about 45% of New Jerseyans believe each. This is probably comforting if you are a ghost and do not wish to be discovered; it is probably frightening if you are a member of the AMA.

- MDs have more of a problem with women than men, and with older folks—individuals in these groups are less likely than their counterparts to say doctors are usually right. Those in the upper education and income brackets are more likely to believe their doctors are generally right, but this may be because they can afford to see better physicians.
- Ghosts have more of a problem with older people too. And conservatives. Just 17% of those over 65 believe in ghosts, compared to fully 62% of those under 30. Wow. A majority of liberals (53%) believe in ghosts, while moderates are split (46% do, 48% do not) and most conservatives do not believe in them (61%), or perhaps think ghosts are liberals.
- My other stepdaughter Hannah does believe in ghosts, but doesn’t believe her twin sister is from Pluto. It’s hard to figure kids out.

Far Fetched Beliefs

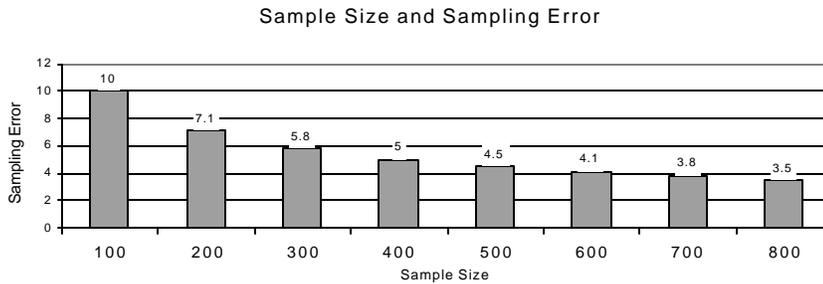
Three of the 18 beliefs we asked about seem far fetched to New Jerseyans—held by 35-40 percent or so: (1) *In UFOs--Unidentified Flying Objects*; (2) *In Astrology*; (3) *That Bill and Hillary Clinton like each other*.

- Younger folks are the most likely to believe in UFOs. But basically it is about one-third of each demographic group who believe that UFOs exist.
- Four-in-10 (39%) believe in Astrology. Again, those under 30 (54%) are the most likely to believe; more women (43%) than men (34%) believe in the power of the stars to direct worldly events.
- About the same number who believe in Astrology believe that Bill and Hillary Clinton like each other (41%). Partisan prisms are clearly in play: 54% of Democrats, 41% of Independents and just 29% of Republicans believe the first couple are friends. There is also a clear generational affect: Baby boomers are the most likely to believe that the Clintons like each other (46%), followed by Matures—those born before 1946 (40%). Just over one-third (36%) of Generation Xers—born after 1964—think Bill and Hillary Clinton like each other.
- Oddly, beliefs about whether the Clintons like each other was not strongly related to any of the other beliefs asked about. The only other belief with which it had a statistically significant relationship was the belief that there is life on other planets. Those who believe in love at first sight were no more likely than others to believe the Clintons like each other.

*Author's note: Advance apologies to any who may be offended by our treatment of **What New Jerseyans Believe**. In defense we can only say that we hope everybody is equally offended and that no one is really offended. We find what people believe to be an interesting subject, and one with no right or wrong answers. Beliefs are just that—what people believe for whatever reason.. We sincerely hope this playful write-up is taken in that spirit, and that you enjoyed reading this material. CZ*

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP125-5), SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 2000

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted between February 28 and March 9 with a scientifically selected random sample of 800 New Jersey adult residents 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 this survey is ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jerseyans believe in love at first sight, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent (50 ± 3.5) 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 Republicans, Independents or Democrats, 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 is reproduced in this background memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age, gender and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

“Different people believe different things. I’m going to read you a list of items and would like you to tell me whether or not you personally believe each one exists or not. Some are more serious than others. First, (RANDOMIZE)...just Yes or No.” [QBL1 and QBL2]

	<u>Yes, Believe in</u>	<u>No, Don't believe in</u>	<u>Don't know/other</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
That there is a God or Supreme Being	92	6	2	100	(800)
The Mafia	90	6	3	99	(800)
That Men and Women have fundamentally different natures	90	6	4	100	(800)
Global warming	78	14	8	100	(800)
In Heaven and Hell	77	16	7	100	(800)
That dogs can think	75	20	5	100	(800)
Mother knows best	70	25	5	100	(800)
Life after death	68	23	9	100	(800)
Extra-Sensory Perception, or ESP	63	30	7	100	(800)

	<u>Yes, Believe in</u>	<u>No, Don't believe in</u>	<u>Don't know/other</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
In Love at First Sight	63	33	4	100	(800)
That God created the Earth in 6 days	57	33	10	100	(800)
Life on other planets	56	33	11	100	(800)
In the theory of evolution—that humans evolved from lower life forms	53	37	10	100	(800)
Medical Doctors are usually right	47	49	5	101	(800)
In Ghosts—that some places may be haunted	44	51	5	100	(800)
That Bill and Hillary Clinton like each other	41	45	14	100	(800)
In Astrology	39	56	6	101	(800)
UFOs	35	56	9	100	(800)