

# The Star-Ledger/**Eagleton-Rutgers Poll**

**JULY 3, 2000**

**CONTACT: CLIFF ZUKIN or RACHEL ASKEW**

**RELEASE: (EP126-4)**

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Monday, July 3rd Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

## **DMV INSPECTION NIGHTMARE? ONLY A DREAM!**

### **MAJORITY OF NEW JERSEYANS GIVE THUMBS UP TO AUTO INSPECTIONS**

Contrary to widespread belief, the vast majority of New Jersey is well satisfied with the state's new motor vehicle inspection system. Only 2 in 10 report a longer wait since the new test's inception; just under half say they made it through the test in less than fifteen minutes.

While two-thirds of New Jerseyans are aware that there are problems plaguing the DMV's new test, the third of residents who have actually had their cars tested since December are overwhelmingly positive about the experience. A majority say the people running the test are courteous and experienced; more than eight-in-ten report that the test itself was fair.

These are some of the main findings of the most recent *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* conducted between June 8 and 13. The current survey was done by telephone with a random sample of 802 New Jersey adult residents. Sampling error for the full sample is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. When focusing on the 206 New Jerseyans who had their cars tested at a state inspection center since December, sampling error increases to plus or minus 7 percentage points.

News about problems with the New Jersey auto inspection system is widely

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

191 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

**Phone: 732-932-9384 - Website: <http://slerp.rutgers.edu> - Fax: 732-932-6778**

held—67% of residents say they have heard or read something about the well-publicized DMV debacle. Despite a high level of awareness about the plagued new system, though, the third of residents who actually took their cars in for an inspection since the system's inauguration last December are somewhat confused about which test they received. Of those having gone to a state inspection center for their check-up since December 1999, just over half think they got the new test, one-fifth think they got the old test, and one quarter aren't sure *which* test they received.

For most New Jersey automobile owners, the dreaded long lines and marathon waits at the DMV were anything but. Just under half (46%) say they waited no more than fifteen minutes. More than 7-in-10 report waiting no longer than 30 minutes. Only one-driver-in-seven recalls waiting more than an hour at the DMV. The average wait reported was half an hour.

And if that weren't anticlimactic enough, when asked to compare their latest car inspection with their previous one, a plurality (43%) of test-goers say that their latest test was finished quicker! Only twenty-two percent report a longer wait this time around--about the same number (27%) as say the wait was "the same as the last time" their car was inspected.

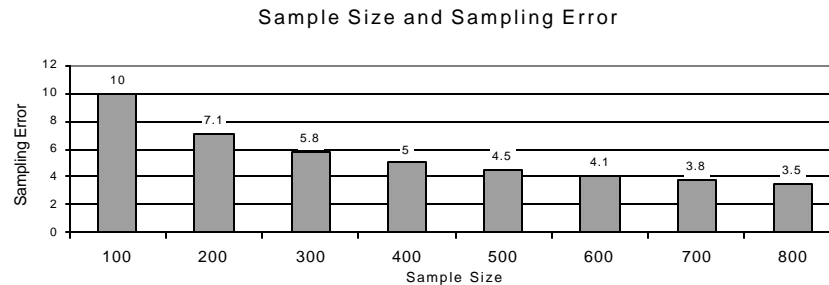
Cliff Zukin, director of the Poll, commented: "These findings are quite a surprise given the reported problems with the new car inspection system. It may be that people went for inspection when the more onerous parts of the test were suspended, or that only a minority of stations had extreme difficulties, but statewide, New Jerseyans are clearly not upset with the DMV situation."

New Jersey drivers report extremely positive experiences the last time their cars were inspected. Satisfied customers outnumber dissatisfied customers by 79 to 18 percent. In fact, a majority (52%) report being “very satisfied” with the experience.

Asked if the test they received was “fair or unfair,” more than 8-in-10 believe the test was fair. And the positive impression of the state’s inspection system carries over to those conducting the inspections as well. More than 8-in-10 describe the inspectors as “courteous,” while a slightly lower 67% report that the people running the test were experienced.

**BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP126-4), MONDAY, JULY 3, 2000**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted between June 8-13 with a scientifically selected random sample of 802 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 New Jerseyans who had their cars inspected since December is  $\pm 7$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of this group report being very satisfied with their inspection at the DMV, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 43 and 57 percent ( $50 \pm 7$ ) had all New Jerseyans who had their cars inspected since December 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 those who got the new or the old test, 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 and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

“Have you heard or read anything about problems with the new car inspection system at the New Jersey DMV or not?” (QMV1)

	<b>Yes, Heard or Read</b>	<b>No, Not Heard or Read, or Don't Know</b>	<b>Total %</b>	<b>(n)</b>
<b>Statewide, June 2000</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(802)</b>
<u>Gender</u>				
--Men	72	28	100	(399)
--Women	62	38	100	(403)
<u>Age</u>				
--18-29	39	61	100	(134)
--30-49	73	26	99	(331)
--50-64	76	24	100	(176)
--65+	68	32	100	(136)
<u>Region of State</u>				
--North	62	38	100	(353)
--Central	68	32	100	(222)
--South	74	26	100	(215)
<u>Race</u>				
--White	72	28	100	(590)
--Black and Hispanic	50	50	100	(148)

“Have you taken your car for an inspection since the new inspection procedures started in December 1999, or not?” (QMV3)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No or Don't</u>	<u>Total %</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>Statewide, June 2000</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>
<u>Gender</u>				
--Men	36	64	100	(399)
--Women	29	71	100	(403)
<u>Area Where Live</u>				
--City	22	78	100	(145)
--Suburb	33	67	100	(511)
--Rural	42	58	100	(133)

THE FOLLOWING QUESTION WAS ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO REPORTED TAKING THEIR CAR IN FOR AN INSPECTION AFTER NEW INSPECTION PROCEDURES STARTED:

“Did you go to a state inspection center or a private garage for your inspection?”(QMV4)

	<u>State</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Don't</u>	<u>Total %</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	<u>Inspection</u>	<u>Garage</u>	<u>Know</u>		
	<u>Center</u>				
<b>Statewide, June 2000</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(253)</b>

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO HAD THE TEST DONE AT A STATE INSPECTION CENTER:

“Did you get the new test, the old test, or aren't you sure?” (QMV5)

	<u>New</u>	<u>Old</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	<u>Total %</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>Statewide, June 2000</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(206)</b>

“How long did you have to wait, in minutes, to get your car inspected?” (QMV6)

	<b>5 minutes or less</b>	<b>6-15 Minutes</b>	<b>16-30 Minutes</b>	<b>31-45 minutes</b>	<b>46 minutes- 1 hour</b>	<b>Over an hour</b>	<b>Total %</b>	<b>(n)</b>
<b>Statewide, June 2000</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(206)</b>
Got New Test	17	23	27	8	8	17	100	(118)

“Was your wait longer, shorter, or the same as the last time your car was inspected?” (QMV7)

	<b><u>Longer Wait</u></b>	<b><u>Shorter Wait</u></b>	<b><u>About the Same</u></b>	<b><u>Can't Compare (voluntary)</u></b>	<b><u>Don't Know</u></b>	<b><u>Total %</u></b>	<b><u>(n)</u></b>
<b>Statewide, June 2000</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(206)</b>
Got New Test	29	40	30	1	--	100	(118)

“Now some quick questions about the test and the people running the facility. Was the test fair or unfair?” (QMV8A)

	<b><u>Test Was Fair</u></b>	<b><u>Test Was Unfair</u></b>	<b><u>Don't Know</u></b>	<b><u>Total %</u></b>	<b><u>(n)</u></b>
<b>Statewide, June 2000</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(206)</b>
Got New Test	80	13	7	100	(118)

“Were the people running the test courteous or not courteous?” (QMV8B)

	<b><u>People Were Courteous</u></b>	<b><u>People Were Not Courteous</u></b>	<b><u>Don't Know</u></b>	<b><u>Total %</u></b>	<b><u>(n)</u></b>
<b>Statewide, June 2000</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(206)</b>
Got New Test	84	15	1	100	(118)

“Were the people running the test experienced or inexperienced?” (QMV8C)

	<b><u>People Were Experienced</u></b>	<b><u>People Were Not Experienced</u></b>	<b><u>Don't Know</u></b>	<b><u>Total %</u></b>	<b><u>(n)</u></b>
<b>Statewide, June 2000</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(206)</b>
Got New Test	63	25	12	100	(118)

“Overall, would you say you were satisfied or dissatisfied with your experience having your car tested? IF SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED, PROBE: Would you say very or somewhat (SATISFIED/DISSATISFIED)?” (QMV9)

	<b><u>Very Satisfied</u></b>	<b><u>Somewhat Satisfied</u></b>	<b><u>Somewhat Dissatisfied</u></b>	<b><u>Very Dissatisfied</u></b>	<b><u>Don't Know</u></b>	<b><u>Total %</u></b>	<b><u>(n)</u></b>
<b>Statewide, June 2000</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(206)</b>
Got New Test	46	26	11	16	1	100	(118)
<b><u>Region</u></b>							
--North	57	28	7	5	4	101	(96)
--Central	55	32	4	9	--	100	(50)
--South	42	21	9	23	5	100	(58)