

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

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CONTACT: CLIFF ZUKIN  
OR RACHEL ASKEW

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

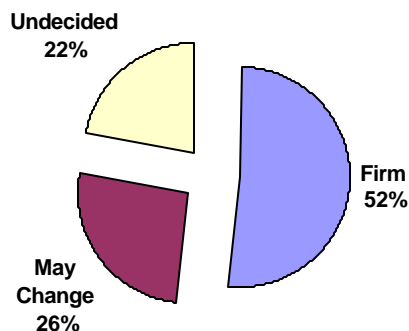
## THE SENATE ELECTION: *WHO'S UNDECIDED*

A statewide survey conducted between October 12 and 15<sup>th</sup> by the Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll found that only half of registered voters said they were sure about who they would be voting for in the Senate election between Democrat Jon Corzine and Republican Bob Franks. Another quarter said they had made a decision, but might change their minds before Election Day, and the remaining quarter said they were undecided.

Who are these undecided voters?

Are they Democrats, Republicans or fiercely independent? Men or women?

How much do they know about the candidates? How attentive are they to the campaign--are they engaged citizens who simply can't make up their minds, or are they simply inattentive to politics and current events?



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

To answer these and other questions, poll researchers working on the Rutgers-based survey took a closer look at those who reported earlier this month that they were still undecided about the Senate race. Here are some of the main findings about this group of late deciders:<sup>1</sup>

- Far from being interested voters awaiting more information, undecided voters know less and care less about the election.
- They are woefully ignorant about both Jon Corzine and Bob Franks.
- They tend to be disproportionately Democratic, or at least more of them lean toward the Democratic Party than toward the Republican Party. A plurality favor Gore over Bush in the presidential race.
- Women are more likely than men to be undecided at this point in the Senate election.
- By their own admission, they are less likely to actually vote in the election.

#### *Political Leanings*

A larger number of those currently undecided about the Senate race seem slightly more likely to break for Corzine than for Franks, if they follow their party sympathies. They are divided 42 to 39 percent for Gore over Bush in the presidential, with 18 percent undecided in that contest as well.

And they tilt toward the Democratic Party. When those who clearly identify with one of the parties are combined with those who initially report being Independent but then acknowledge leaning more towards one party than the other, the poll finds that 57

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<sup>1</sup> The sample contained a little over 100 undecided voters. This is subject to a high sampling error of about  $\pm 10$  percentage points. In order to increase the reliability of our statements about undecided voters, we used a social science test of statistical significance (Chi-Square) to examine differences between undecided and decided voters. Only those differences that met this test are included in the text of this release. All test findings are reported in the background memo accompanying this release.

percent of undecided voters are nominally Democratic, compared to 35 percent who are Republican and 8 percent who do not lean towards either party.

Undecided voters are clearly happy with the direction of the country: Far more say they are satisfied (65%) than dissatisfied (35%), very much like their counterparts who have decided how they are going to vote in the Senate race. Finally, undecided voters certainly are not ideologues--two-thirds say they are moderates, 19 percent conservatives and 13 percent liberals.

#### *Knowledge and Views of the Senate Candidates*

Less than one-in-five undecided voters have any sort of substantial knowledge about either of the Senate candidates. Just 17 percent say they feel they know "a lot" or even "some" about Franks; just 18 percent say they know this much about Corzine. In comparison, almost half of those who have already decided how they will be voting in the Senate election (48%) say they know a lot or some about Corzine; knowledge about Franks is a lower 31% among decided voters.

With knowledge so low, it is hardly surprising that so few late deciders have formed impressions of the candidates--either favorable or unfavorable. Seventy percent say they have no opinion of Franks, and 60 percent have no opinion of Corzine, despite the millions of dollars his campaign has already spent on television advertising.

Cliff Zukin, director of the Poll, commented: "It is somewhat ironic and hardly comforting that the late deciders often hold the critical balance of power in elections. These people tend to know less, care less and base their decisions on information that they literally bump into in a haphazard fashion."

*Interest, Attentiveness & Voting History*

While half of undecided voters profess to have "a lot" of interest in the presidential election, they are about 15 percentage points lower on this measure than those having already chosen a candidate for Senate; they are also about 10-percentage-points less likely to believe that the outcome of the presidential election will make a difference in how the country is run.

Whereas three-quarters of those having made a choice of Senate candidates tuned in to see at least one of the first two presidential debates, only about four-in-ten of the undecideds did so, demonstrating a much lower level of interest in politics.

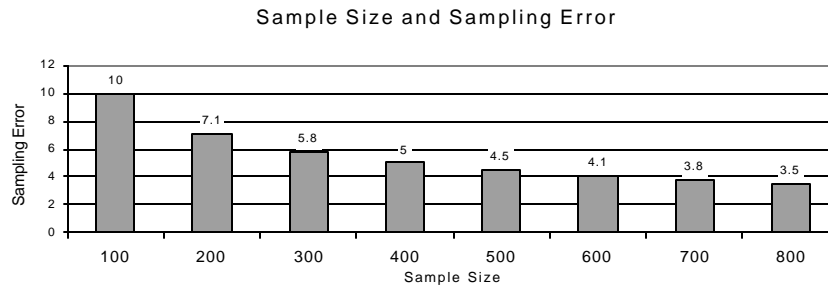
And lower interest translates into less political participation. Seven-in-ten of those currently undecided in the Senate contest say they "always" or "nearly always" vote, 15 percentage points lower than those having already chosen a candidate.

*Demographics*

In terms of background characteristics, those having decided and those undecided on a Senate candidate are quite similar. No significant differences were found by age, race, income, region of the state or marital status. The only major difference was gender. Women make up 64 percent of undecided voters, yet only make up 52 percent of those who have chosen a Senate candidate.

**BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP128-3), SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2000**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted between October 12-15 with a scientifically selected random sample of 500 New Jersey registered voters interviewed by telephone. The figures in this release are based on this sample size. 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 registered voters is  $\pm 4.5$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey registered voters were found to have a favorable opinion of Democratic Senate Candidate Jon Corzine, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 45.5 and 54.5 percent ( $50 \pm 4.5$ ) had all New Jersey registered voters 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 and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. In this release we also refer to 'likely voters.' These figures are based on the 72% of registered voters deemed most likely to vote based on a combination of reported voting intention, reported past voting behavior and interest in the election. Turnout in the 1996 Presidential election was approximately 72% of all those registered. Turnout in 2000 may, of course, be somewhat higher or lower. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

“How much do you think you know about Republican Bob Franks/Democrat John Corzine-- a lot, some, just a little, or nothing at all?” (ROTATE Q17 and Q18)

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total %</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>CORZINE</b>							
<b>Registered Voters</b>							
<b>October 2000</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(494)</b>
--Sept. 2000	11	34	36	19	1	101	(670)
--June 2000	10	39	29	21	--	99	(618)
<u>Likely Voters</u>							
--October 2000	9	37	36	18	1	101	(372)
--Sept. 2000	13	38	34	14	1	100	(542)
--June 2000	13	43	28	16	1	101	(464)
<b>FRANKS</b>							
<b>Registered Voters</b>							
<b>October 2000</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(494)</b>
--Sept. 2000	6	21	35	38	1	101	(670)
--June 2000	6	22	29	43	--	100	(618)
<u>Likely Voters</u>							
--October 2000	3	30	35	31	1	100	(372)
--Sept. 2000	7	25	37	30	1	100	(542)
--June 2000	8	25	31	37	--	101	(464)

“Regardless of how you plan to vote in the Senate election, please just tell me whether you think each of the following statements applies more to Bob Franks or to Jon Corzine. First (RANDOMIZE... Franks or Corzine?)” (Q19)

	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Franks</u>	<u>Both/Same</u>	<u>DK/Refuse</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Is in touch with the average New Jersey voter	35%	29%	5%	31%	100%	(494)
Will be an effective Senator representing New Jersey in Washington	39	29	4	28	100	(494)
Generally agrees with you on the issues you care about	40	27	2	30	99	(494)
Is honest and trustworthy	30	22	9	39	100	(494)
Has a vision for the country’s future	38	23	8	30	99	(494)
Has strong qualities of leadership	39	24	6	31	100	(494)
Would better handle the situation in the Middle East	27	25	4	45	101	(494)

“As you might have heard, Jon Corzine will probably spend about 50 million dollars of his own money on his Senate campaign. Does his spending this much bother you, or not? IF BOTHERS, PROBE: How much does it bother you --a lot, some, or just a little?” (Q20)

	<u>Bothers Lot</u>	<u>Bothers Some</u>	<u>Bothers A Little</u>	<u>Doesn’t Bother</u>	<u>Don’t Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>Registered Voters</b>							
<b>October 2000</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(494)</b>
June 2000*	31	12	4	52	2	101	(618)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	18	10	7	65	--	100	(177)
--Independent	31	16	1	50	2	100	(143)
--Republican	35	11	6	43	5	100	(126)
<u>Vote Intention</u>							
--Franks	46	14	3	36	1	100	(169)
--Undecided	29	7	5	50	8	99	(103)
--Corzine	13	11	6	69	1	100	(210)

\*The question in June of 2000 read, “As you might know, Jon Corzine spent over 30 million dollars--almost all was his own money-- in his campaign for the Democratic Senate nomination. Does his spending this much bother you, or not? IF BOTHERS, PROBE: How much does it bother you --a lot, some, or just a little?”

## Composite Tables of Senate Election Decision Makers

### Political Background

	<u>Decided</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
<u>Vote Intention</u> <sup>2</sup>		
--Gore	53	42
--Undecided	6	18
--Bush	41	39
Total*	100%	99%
(n)	(353)	(102)
<u>By Party</u> <sup>3</sup>		
--Democrat	54	57
--Independent	3	8
--Republican	44	35
Total*	101%	100%
(n)	(353)	(85)
<u>Ideology</u>		
--Liberal	18	13
--Moderate	54	68
--Conservative	28	19
Total*	100%	100%
(n)	(377)	(102)
<u>Satisfaction with direction of country</u> <sup>4</sup>		
--Satisfied	65	65
--Dissatisfied	35	35
Total	100%	100%
(n)	(362)	(96)

### Demographic Characteristics<sup>5</sup>

	<u>Decided</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
<u>Gender</u>		
--Male	48	36
--Female	52	64
Total*	100%	100%
(n)	(379)	(103)

<sup>2</sup> Those people who initially said they were undecided in the presidential race but when asked if they leaned toward either Bush or Gore indicated that they preferred one of the candidates are counted as intending to vote for the candidate they leaned toward.

\* Despite the small number of respondents in this category, statistical tests indicate the difference between decided and undecided voters is significant.

<sup>3</sup> Those who initially responded "Independent" or "no party affiliation" were then asked a follow-up question: "Do you lean more toward the Democratic Party or more toward the Republican Party?" (D1) The above categories of Democrat and Republican include those who reported that they lean toward one of the respective parties.

<sup>4</sup> This is based on the question: "All in all, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today?" (Q2A)

<sup>5</sup> The demographic characteristics of race, region, age, income and marital status were also examined. There were no significant differences between the answers of decided and undecided voters in these categories.

**Familiarity With Candidates**

	<u>Decided</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
<u>How much do you know about Franks?<sup>6</sup></u>		
--A lot/some	31	17
--A little/nothing	69	83
Total*	100%	100%
(n)	(379)	(103)
<u>How much do you know about Corzine?</u>		
--A lot/some	48	18
--A little/nothing	52	82
Total**	100%	100%
(n)	(379)	(103)
<u>Opinion of Franks<sup>7</sup></u>		
--Favorable	42	20
--No opinion	33	70
--Unfavorable	24	10
Total*	99%	100%
(n)	(379)	(103)
<u>Opinion of Corzine</u>		
--Favorable	54	26
--No opinion	15	60
--Unfavorable	32	14
Total*	101%	100%
(n)	(379)	(103)

**Interest, Attentiveness & Reported Voting History**

	<u>Decided</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
<u>A lot of interest in Presidential election?</u>		
--Yes	65	51
--No	35	50
Total*	100%	101%
(n)	(379)	(103)
<u>How much difference will outcome of the presidential election make?<sup>8</sup></u>		
--Great deal	39	30
--Some/Not very much/Depends	61	71
Total*	100%	101%
(n)	(379)	(103)

<sup>6</sup> This is based on the question: "How much do you think you know about Republican Bob Franks/ Democrat Jon Corzine—a lot, some, just a little, or nothing at all?" (Q17 & Q18)

\* Despite the small number of respondents in this category, statistical tests indicate the difference between decided and undecided voters is significant.

<sup>7</sup> This is based on the question: "I'd like to hear a little more about your opinions of the candidates. After I read each name, please tell me if your general impression of him is favorable or unfavorable, or if you don't have an opinion of him."(Q12)

<sup>8</sup> This is based on the question: "In your opinion, how much of a difference will the outcome of this election make in the way the government is run over the next few years—a great deal of difference, some, or not very much difference?" (Q5)



	<b><u>Decided</u></b>	<b><u>Undecided</u></b>
<u>Watch Presidential debates?<sup>9</sup></u>		
--Yes	74	42
--No	26	58
Total*	100%	100%
(n)	(379)	(103)
<u>How often vote</u>		
--Always	45	37
--Nearly Always	41	34
--Part of the time	11	26
--Seldom	2	1
--Never	--	2
Total*	99%	100%
(n)	(379)	(102)

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<sup>9</sup> This is based on the question: "Did you watch either of the two televised debates between the presidential candidates, or not?" (Q15)