

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

February 4, 2001

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RELEASE: (EP130-2)

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Sunday, February 4 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll."

Governor Whitman Waves Farewell To New Jersey: State Shrugs

Garden State Residents Look Back on 7 Years of Christie Whitman

New Jerseyans appear to be losing little sleep over the departure of their Governor of the last seven years – Christine Todd Whitman. While enjoying generally popular regard, and being seen as a "fair-to-good" Governor, just three-in-ten credit her with any major accomplishment over her tenure as chief executive of the state. Whitman leaves a mixed legacy on handling a variety of issues in New Jersey, and she gets more of the blame for problems facing the state than she gets credit for those things that are going well.

While New Jerseyans describe Whitman as intelligent and hard working, they feel she lacked the common touch. Most show little emotional attachment to Whitman as a person; just one-in-four say they will miss having her as Governor. Moreover, assessments of Whitman's leadership ability and work ethic have declined somewhat over the last two years.

These are some of the main findings of the most recent Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll, conducted by telephone with a scientific sample of 803 New Jersey residents between January 24 and 30. The sampling error for the survey is ± 3.5 percentage points.

When asked to think back over the last seven years, two thirds of New Jerseyans choose middle categories of either "good" (38 percent) or "only fair" (29 percent) to describe the job Whitman has done as Governor. Far fewer feel that she has done either an "excellent" (13 percent) or "poor" (17 percent) job of running the state.

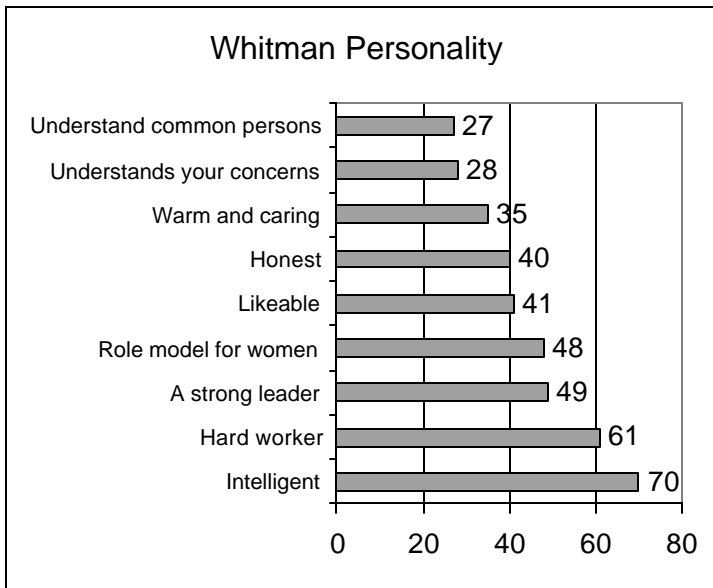
Whitman left the governorship being generally well regarded as a person – 51 percent say they have a favorable impression of her, compared to 29 percent who have an unfavorable one, although a fairly high 20 percent voiced no opinion of her despite her seven years in the Governor's mansion.

Cliff Zukin, Director of the Poll, commented, "positive views of Whitman seem to be based more on her competency as a manager than on affection for her as a person. While New Jerseyans liked her, there was always some reserve and distance in the public's feelings for her."

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

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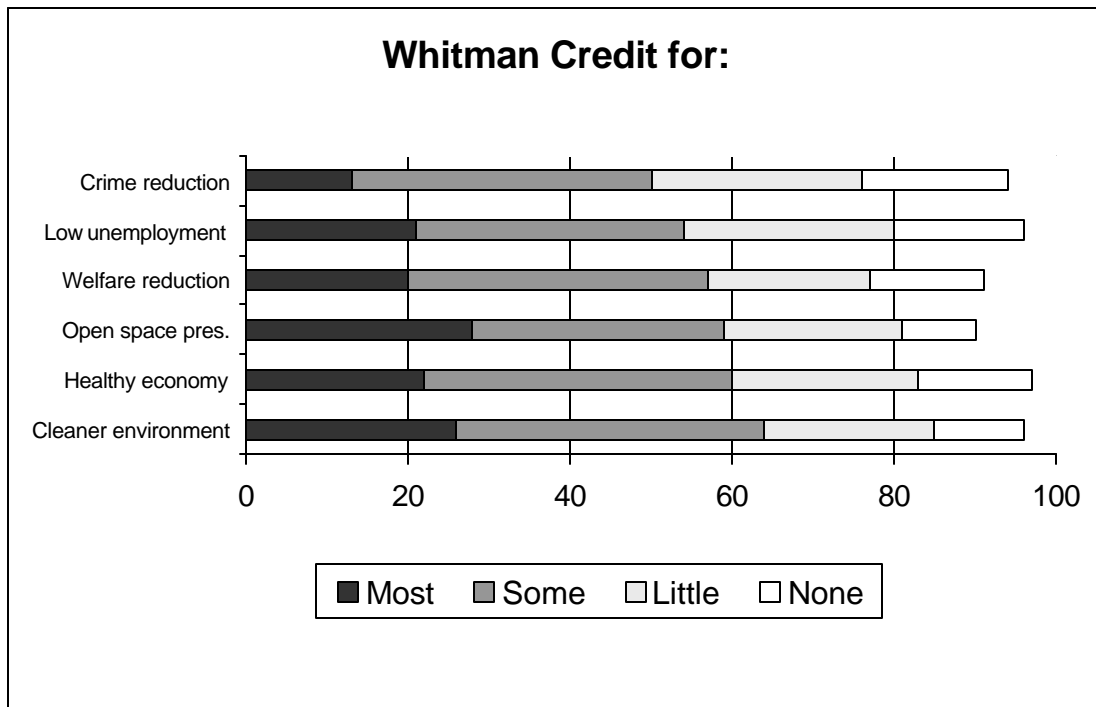


The Rutgers-based survey asked how well each of nine personality characteristics fit Whitman. At the top of the list are “intelligent” (70 percent, down 12 percentage points from 1997), “a hard worker” (61 percent, down 13 points) and “a strong leader” (49 percent, down 17 points from 1997).

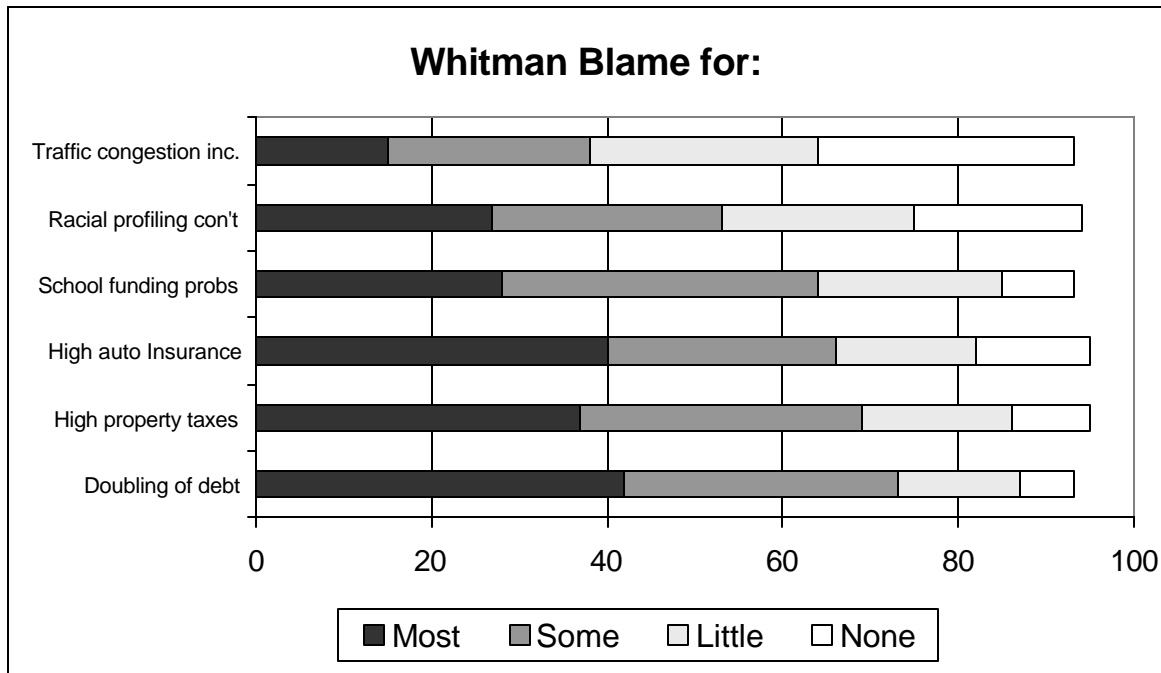
At the other extreme are more empathetic qualities: just 27 percent say Whitman well understands the common person,

and 28 percent say she understands “the concerns you personally face in day-to-day life.” Just about one-third feel the words “warm and caring” describe Whitman “a lot.”

In policy terms, Whitman seems to have left a small footprint in the state, at least as far as the public is concerned. Just 31 percent credit her with some major accomplishment during her seven years in the Statehouse. A plurality of 43 percent say she has “minor accomplishments” to point to, and fully one-in-five say she has no accomplishments at all.



The survey finds that Whitman gets credit for a number of positive developments that have occurred in the state over the past few years. About six-in-ten give her at least “some” of the credit for a cleaner environment (64 percent), a healthy state economy (60 percent) and preservation of open spaces (59 percent), although it is only about one-in-four who give her “most” of the credit for these accomplishments. Slightly fewer, but still a majority, give Whitman at least “some” of the credit for a reduction in the number of people on welfare (57 percent), a low unemployment rate (54 percent) and a reduction in the amount of crime (50 percent). Again, far fewer – about one-in-five – give her “most” of the credit for these achievements.

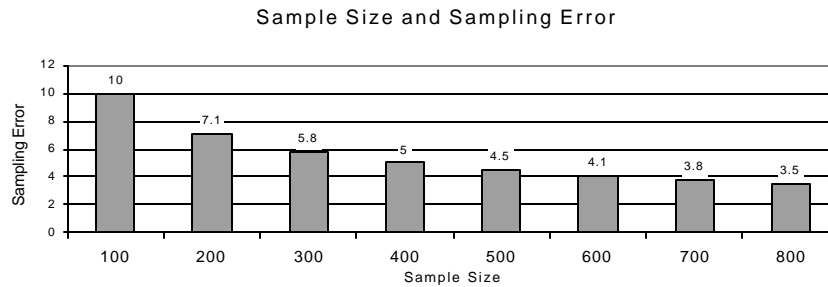


On the negative side, Whitman gets at least “some” of the blame for a number of problems now plaguing the state: 73 percent put this much responsibility on the Governor’s shoulders for a doubling of the state’s debt. Additionally, 69 percent feel Whitman is at least somewhat to blame for high property taxes, 66 percent feel that way about continuing high auto insurance rates, and 64 percent for the problems of school finance in less affluent areas around the state. Fewer, 53 percent, give Whitman some of the blame for the continued practice of racial profiling by New Jersey state troopers. About 40 percent feel that Whitman deserves “most” of the blame for the problems of state debt, car insurance costs, and high property taxes. The only area where Whitman gets a pass from Garden State residents is in the area of “increased traffic congestion,” where only 38 percent feel she is due at least some of the blame.

Finally, the Poll finds that New Jersey residents bear the Governor no animosity for leaving before her term had run its full course: 60 percent say they approve of her leaving to run the Environmental Protection Agency in the new Bush administration. However, only 28 percent say they will miss having her as Governor.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP130-2), SUNDAY FEBRUARY 4, 2001

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted between January 24-30 with a scientifically selected random sample of 803 New Jersey adult residents 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 ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adult residents were found to have a favorable opinion of Governor Christie Whitman, 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 Jersey adult residents 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. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

“Thinking back over the last seven years, how would you rate the job Christie Whitman has done as Governor -- excellent, good, only fair or poor?” (W1)

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	13 %	38%	29%	17%	3%	100%	(803)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	11	29	37	21	2	100	(278)
--Independent	11	42	27	17	4	100	(314)
--Republican	20	44	24	10	2	100	(179)
<u>Past Surveys</u> **							
--March 2000	9	40	28	19	4	100	(800)
--September 1999	11	42	31	13	3	100	(802)
--April/May 1999	9	37	34	16	4	100	(804)
--January 1999	10	40	32	14	3	99	(800)
--September 1998	9	39	33	14	6	101	(804)
--June 1998	11	36	34	15	4	100	(602)
--February 1998	10	39	33	13	4	99	(802)
--October 1997	9	34	32	21	5	101	(800)
--September 1997	10	37	32	16	5	100	(800)
--June 1997	9	40	29	17	5	100	(800)
--February 1997	10	42	29	15	5	101	(800)
--September 1996	12	41	29	12	6	100	(808)
--February 1996	9	40	34	15	3	101	(804)

** Modified question wording: “How would you rate the job Christie Whitman *is doing*...”

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
--November 1995	9	43	32	10	6	100	(803)
--September 1995	8	40	36	10	6	100	(804)
--May 1995	11	42	29	11	7	100	(802)
--February 1995	13	43	28	12	4	100	(801)
--September 1994	12	40	33	9	6	100	(801)
--June 1994	11	39	29	7	14	100	(801)
--February 1994	9	28	28	5	31	101	(801)
FLORIO							
--June 1993	8	28	36	23	5	100	(801)
--September 1991	3	20	39	34	5	101	(800)
--March 1990	8	34	34	14	10	100	(800)
KEAN							
--June 1989	16	43	22	13	5	99	(800)
--February 1986	27	53	14	4	3	101	(600)
--February 1983	3	30	41	8	18	100	(471)
BYRNE							
--September 1980	4	29	43	21	3	100	(601)
--February 1977	2	20	39	33	7	100	(1235)
--February 1974	4	22	15	4	56	100	(1226)
CAHILL							
--October 1973	2	26	44	21	7	100	(1235)
--October 1972	5	37	41	11	4	100	(1237)
--October 1971	7	38	39	10	6	100	(1235)

“Is your general impression of Christie Whitman favorable or unfavorable, or don’t you have an opinion about her? IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE, PROBE: Is that very (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE) or somewhat (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE)?” (W2)

	<u>Very Favorable</u> 20%	<u>Somewhat Favorable</u> 31%	<u>Somewhat Unfavorable</u> 14%	<u>Very Unfavorable</u> 15%	<u>DK</u> 20%	<u>Total</u> 100%	<u>(n)</u> (803)
January 2001							
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	13	26	23	19	18	99	(278)
--Independent	21	32	10	15	22	100	(314)
--Republican	29	38	9	7	18	101	(179)
<u>Past Surveys</u>							
--March 2000	23	28	10	17	22	100	(800)
--February 1998	17	29	13	14	27	100	(800)

“Whitman is leaving as Governor a year before her term is up to serve in the Bush administration as the head of the Environmental Protection Agency. Do you approve or disapprove of Whitman leaving to run the Environmental Protection Agency?” (W3)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	60%	31%	8%	99%	(803)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	50	44	6	100	(278)
--Independent	61	29	9	99	(314)
--Republican	79	15	6	100	(179)

“When Whitman leaves office, do you think you will miss having her as Governor, or not?” (W4)

	<u>Yes, will miss</u>	<u>No, will not miss</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	28%	64%	8%	100%	(803)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	21	72	7	100	(278)
--Independent	27	65	8	100	(314)
--Republican	37	54	9	100	(179)

“Thinking back over Whitman’s term in office, would you say that she has major accomplishments to point to, minor accomplishments, or no real accomplishments?” (W5)

	<u>Major</u>	<u>Minor</u>	<u>No real ones</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	31%	43%	20%	6%	100%	(803)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	23	47	24	6	100	(278)
--Independent	31	45	19	5	100	(314)
--Republican	44	34	19	3	100	(179)
<u>Past Surveys</u>						
--March 2000	25	48	17	10	100	(800)
--January 1999	28	49	15	7	99	(800)
--February 1998	28	50	16	5	99	(802)

“People are often described by a number of characteristics such as “smart” or “nice.” Please tell me if you think each characteristic I read describes Christie Whitman a lot, a little, or not very well.” (RANDOMIZE ITEMS)

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not very well</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
A hard worker	61%	24%	10%	5%	100%	(408)
--February 1998	77	14	6	4	101	(200)
--February 1997	74	18	3	5	100	(523)
Warm and caring	35	35	23	7	100	(408)
--February 1998	35	40	18	7	100	(200)
Understands the common person	27	37	31	5	100	(408)
--February 1998	26	41	30	3	100	(200)
Honest	40	38	18	4	100	(408)
--February 1998	52	29	13	7	101	(189)
--February 1997	53	27	10	10	100	(523)
A strong leader	49	30	17	3	99	(803)
--February 1998	58	27	12	3	100	(381)
--February 1997	66	24	7	2	99	(523)
Understands the concerns you personally face in day-to-day life	28%	39%	26%	6%	99%	(395)
--February 1998	27	45	26	2	100	(181)
Intelligent	70	21	6	3	100	(395)
--February 1998	80	12	2	6	100	(177)
--February 1997	82	12	2	4	100	(523)
Likeable	41	36	18	5	100	(395)
--February 1998	43	41	11	5	100	(181)
A role model for women	48	28	17	7	100	(395)
--February 1998	58	25	12	5	100	(181)

ROTATE QUESTIONS W8 AND W9

“There have been a number of POSITIVE things that have happened in New Jersey over the past few years. Please tell me how much of the CREDIT you think Governor Whitman should get for each item I read. Should she get most, some, a little, or no credit at all for.... (read each item)?”
(RANDOMIZE ITEMS)

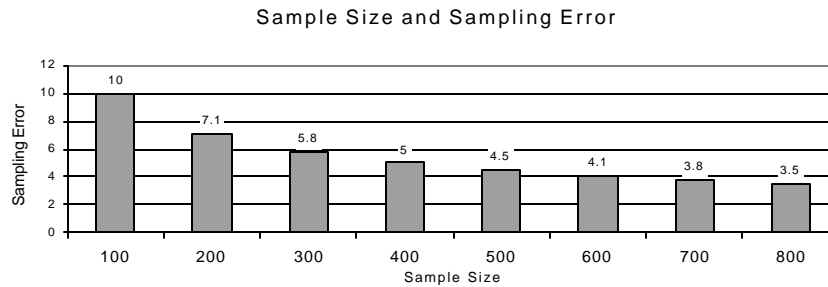
	<u>Most</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>None at all</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
A healthy state economy	22%	38%	23%	14%	3%	100%	(803)
--February 1998	23	45	24	5	2	99	(403)
A cleaner environment	26	38	21	11	4	100	(803)
--February 1998	21	40	31	5	4	101	(403)
A reduction in the number of people on welfare	20	37	20	14	9	100	(803)
--February 1998	26	39	25	4	6	100	(403)
A reduction in the amount of crime	13	37	26	18	6	100	(803)
--February 1998	15	45	31	5	3	99	(403)
A low unemployment rate	21	33	26	16	4	100	(803)
--February 1998	19	46	27	5	4	100	(403)
Preservation of open spaces	28	31	22	9	10	100	(803)

“There have been a number of NEGATIVE things that have happened in New Jersey over the past few years. Please tell me how much of the BLAME you think Governor Whitman should get for each item I read. Should she get most, some, a little, or no blame at all for... (read each item)?” (RANDOMIZE ITEMS)

	<u>Most</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>None at all</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Continued racial profiling by New Jersey state troopers	27%	26%	22%	19%	6%	100%	(803)
A doubling of the state debt	42	31	14	6	7	100	(803)
High auto insurance rates	40	26	16	13	6	101	(803)
--February 1998	49	28	15	6	3	101	(399)
High property taxes	37	32	17	9	5	100	(803)
--February 1998	41	34	19	3	3	100	(399)
Problems funding schools in less affluent school districts	28	36	21	8	8	101	(803)
--February 1998	27	39	26	5	3	100	(399)
Increased traffic congestion	15	23	26	29	7	100	(803)

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--October 1973	2	26	44	21	7	100	(1235)
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“People are often described by a number of characteristics such as “smart” or “nice.” Please tell me if you think each characteristic I read describes Christie Whitman a lot, a little, or not very well.” (RANDOMIZE ITEMS)

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not very well</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
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Warm and caring	35	35	23	7	100	(408)
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Understands the common person	27	37	31	5	100	(408)
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Honest	40	38	18	4	100	(408)
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Intelligent	70	21	6	3	100	(395)
--February 1998	80	12	2	6	100	(177)
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ROTATE QUESTIONS W8 AND W9

“There have been a number of POSITIVE things that have happened in New Jersey over the past few years. Please tell me how much of the CREDIT you think Governor Whitman should get for each item I read. Should she get most, some, a little, or no credit at all for.... (read each item)?”
(RANDOMIZE ITEMS)

	<u>Most</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>None at all</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
A healthy state economy	22%	38%	23%	14%	3%	100%	(803)
--February 1998	23	45	24	5	2	99	(403)
A cleaner environment	26	38	21	11	4	100	(803)
--February 1998	21	40	31	5	4	101	(403)
A reduction in the number of people on welfare	20	37	20	14	9	100	(803)
--February 1998	26	39	25	4	6	100	(403)
A reduction in the amount of crime	13	37	26	18	6	100	(803)
--February 1998	15	45	31	5	3	99	(403)
A low unemployment rate	21	33	26	16	4	100	(803)
--February 1998	19	46	27	5	4	100	(403)
Preservation of open spaces	28	31	22	9	10	100	(803)

“There have been a number of NEGATIVE things that have happened in New Jersey over the past few years. Please tell me how much of the BLAME you think Governor Whitman should get for each item I read. Should she get most, some, a little, or no blame at all for... (read each item)?” (RANDOMIZE ITEMS)

	<u>Most</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>None at all</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Continued racial profiling by New Jersey state troopers	27%	26%	22%	19%	6%	100%	(803)
A doubling of the state debt	42	31	14	6	7	100	(803)
High auto insurance rates	40	26	16	13	6	101	(803)
--February 1998	49	28	15	6	3	101	(399)
High property taxes	37	32	17	9	5	100	(803)
--February 1998	41	34	19	3	3	100	(399)
Problems funding schools in less affluent school districts	28	36	21	8	8	101	(803)
--February 1998	27	39	26	5	3	100	(399)
Increased traffic congestion	15	23	26	29	7	100	(803)