

# The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

September 5, 2001  
(Release 132-2)

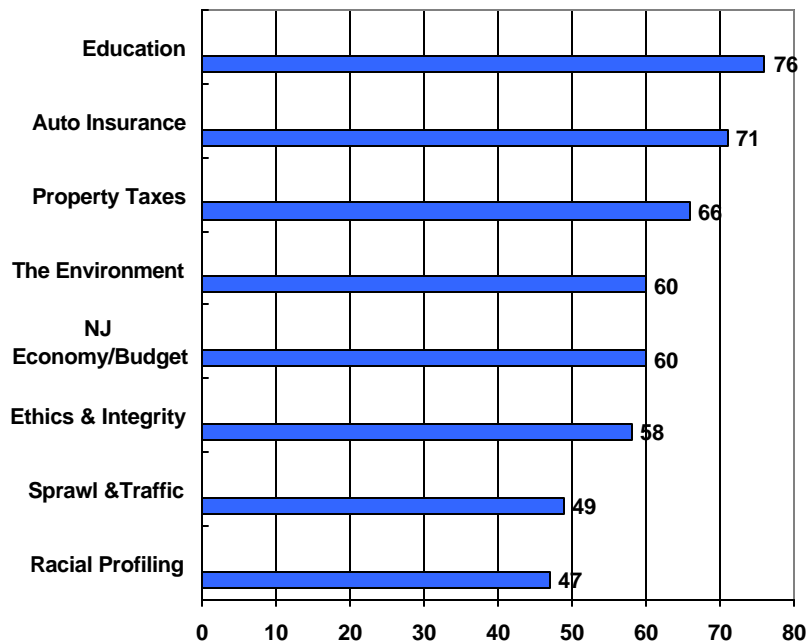
CONTACT: CLIFF ZUKIN  
OR MONIKA McDERMOTT

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Wednesday, September 5 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll."

## GUBERNATORIAL ISSUES: EDUCATION AND AUTO INSURANCE TOP VOTERS' CONCERNS: McGREEVEY SUPPORTERS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT ISSUES

As the general election season in this year's race for governor heats up, New Jersey voters have serious issue concerns, with "education" and "auto insurance rates" topping the list according to a new Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll. Three-quarters of registered voters in the Garden State say that education is an "extremely important" issue to them in this year's election, and seven in ten say automobile insurance rates are extremely important. Property taxes are also considered extremely important by two-thirds of voters.

Percent Rating Each Issue as  
"Extremely Important"



The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll • Eagleton Institute of Politics  
33 Livingston Avenue, Suite 202, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1980  
Director: Cliff Zukin x712 • Associate Director: Monika McDermott x706  
Graduate Research Assistants: • Jen Nersesian x874 • Kelly Sand x874  
Phone: 732-932-2499 - Website: <http://slerp.rutgers.edu> - Fax: 732-932-1107

But while voters show great interest in these perennial issues, other longstanding ones – racial profiling and suburban sprawl – command far less concern. Just about half of registered voters rate each of these issues as extremely important. In the middle tier of voters’ concerns--with three in five saying they are extremely concerned--are the environment, the state economy and budget, and government ethics and integrity.

The poll was conducted from August 15<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup> with 660 registered voters in New Jersey. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points. Some 395 respondents were identified as likely voters; the margin of error for figures based on this sub-sample is  $\pm$  5 percentage points.

Cliff Zukin, director of the Rutgers-based survey commented, “In our polling we have not yet asked about some issues that have received campaign discussion, such as the building of a new sports facility in Newark or removing the tolls from the Parkway, but the more traditional issues we asked about in this survey tend to favor Jim McGreevey over Bret Schundler in the Governor’s race.” The average score of “extremely concerned” over the 8 issues is 65 percent for McGreevey voters and a lower 57 percent among Schundler voters.

A larger number of likely voters saying they intend to cast their ballot for the Democrat McGreevey than those planning to vote for Schundler rate education, auto insurance, the environment, the state’s economy and racial profiling as “extremely important.” In contrast, a greater number of those planning to vote for Schundler are extremely concerned only about two issues of property taxes and ethics. About the same number planning to vote for each candidate consider sprawl and traffic problems to be extremely important.

Percentage of Likely Voters Rating Each Issue as “Extremely Important”

	<u>McGreevey Voters</u>	<u>Schundler Voters</u>
<b><u>August 2001</u></b>		
--Education	<b>86%</b>	71%
--Auto Insurance	<b>73</b>	61
--Property Taxes	64	<b>70</b>
--Environment	<b>67</b>	49
--NJ Economy / Budget	<b>69</b>	59
--Ethics / Integrity	57	<b>66</b>
--Sprawl and Traffic	50	48
--Racial Profiling	<b>54</b>	32
<b><i>AVERAGE SCORE</i></b>	<b>65</b>	<b>57</b>

While education topped the list of both candidates' supporters, the agendas diverge after that. The top three issues on the minds of McGreevey voters are education (86%), auto insurance (73%) and the shape of New Jersey's economy and budget (69%). The top three areas of concern to Schundler voters are education (71%), property taxes (70%) and government ethics and the integrity of public officials (66%).

None of the issues asked about works to a Schundler advantage at this point in time. Among that group saying the top issue of education is "extremely important" to them, McGreevey holds a 54 percent to 28 percent lead, with the remainder undecided. Here are the breakdowns for those saying each issue is "extremely important" to them:

ISSUE IS EXTREMELY IMPT.	McGREEVEY	SCHUNDLER	% PT MARGIN
Education	54%	28	26
Auto Insurance	52%	27	25
Property Taxes	48%	32	16
Environment	54%	24	30
NJ Economy & Budget	52%	27	25
Ethics & Integrity	46%	33	13
Sprawl & Traffic Probs.	50%	30	20
Racial Profiling	59%	21	38

Also perhaps aiding McGreevey at this point is that a greater number of women than men say that each issue is "extremely important" to them. Blacks and Hispanics are also more likely than whites to rate each issue as "extremely important" to them, with the exceptions of sprawl and integrity.

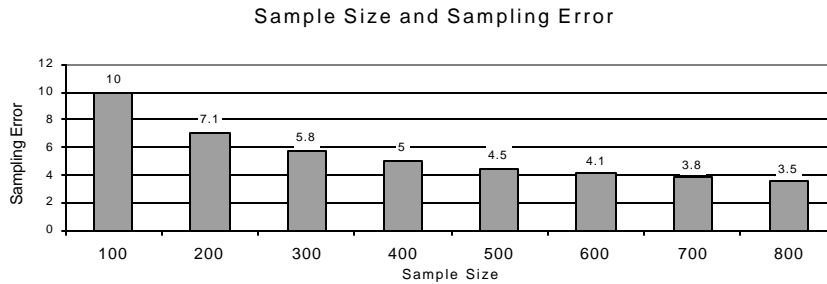
In other findings:

- Among the issues offered in the survey, education is the top concern of nearly all groups of New Jersey voters. Seventy-six percent rate the issue "extremely important," and another 20 percent view it as "fairly important." Only 4 percent of voters say it is "not that important" to them personally. And while Democrats care more about the issue than do Republicans – 83 percent of Democrats rate it as "extremely important" versus 74 percent of Republicans – the issue is number one among members of both parties. Independents also rank the issue first – 71 percent find it "extremely important."

- Seventy-one percent of registered voters in New Jersey rate automobile insurance rates as “extremely important,” and another 23 percent rate the issue as “fairly important” to them. Only 5 percent feel the issue is “not that important.” Partisans care equally for the issue of auto insurance premiums. Seventy-four percent of Democrats and 70 percent of Republicans consider auto insurance rates to be “extremely important” to them personally. Sixty-eight percent of independents rate auto insurance premiums as “extremely important.”
- Property taxes are also a top concern for voters in this year’s election. Nearly two-thirds rate property taxes as an extremely important issue with another 26 percent dubbing the issue “fairly important.” Older voters are more concerned with property taxes than are those under 30 years of age.
- Fewer than half of New Jersey voters rate the issues of racial profiling and suburban sprawl as top concerns. Forty-nine percent of registered voters feel that suburban sprawl and traffic is an “extremely important” issue, while 38 percent rate it as “fairly important” and 13 percent call it “not that important.”
- On the issue of race relations and racial profiling, feelings are similarly lukewarm – only 47 percent call the issue “extremely important” and another third consider it “fairly important.” Nearly one in five voters says that race relations and racial profiling is “not that important” to them personally. Seventy-three percent of blacks and Hispanics, compared to just 40 percent of whites, say that racial profiling is “extremely important” to them.

**BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP132-2) September 5, 2001**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted by telephone from August 15-21 with a scientifically selected random sample of 660 New Jersey adults who reported being registered to vote. Most of 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 is  $\pm 4$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey registered voters thought that education was an extremely important issue, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46 and 54 percent ( $50 \pm 4$ ) had all New Jersey registered voters been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Some statements in this release are based on a sub-sample of 395 likely voters. The sampling error for this group is  $\pm 5$  percent. 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 to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

“I am going to read a list of some of the issues that might come up in this year’s election for Governor. As I read each one, please tell me how important that issue is to you personally – extremely important, fairly important, or not that important. Is [FILL – RANDOMIZE A-H] extremely important, fairly important or not that important of an issue to you personally?” [Q18]

	<u>Extremely important</u>	<u>Fairly important</u>	<u>Not that important</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>REGISTERED VOTERS</b>						
<u>Education</u>						
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>4%</b>	--	<b>100%</b>	<b>(660)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	83	15	3	--	101	(248)
-- Independent	71	23	6	1	101	(195)
-- Republican	74	23	3	--	100	(192)
<u>Likely Voters</u>	80	18	3	--	101	(395)
<u>The Environment</u>						
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>5%</b>	--	<b>99%</b>	<b>(660)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	69	27	4	--	100	(248)
-- Independent	59	35	5	--	99	(195)
-- Republican	51	43	6	1	101	(192)
<u>Likely Voters</u>	62	33	4	0	99	(395)
<u>The State Economy and Budget</u>						
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(660)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	65	31	3	--	99	(248)
-- Independent	56	37	5	2	100	(195)
-- Republican	59	35	5	1	100	(192)
<u>Likely Voters</u>	66	32	2	1	101	(395)

	<b><u>Extremely important</u></b>	<b><u>Fairly important</u></b>	<b><u>Not that important</u></b>	<b><u>DK</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>(n)</u></b>
<b><u>Property Taxes</u></b>						
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(660)</b>
<b><u>Party ID</u></b>						
-- Democrat	63	25	11	1	100	(248)
-- Independent	67	26	6	2	101	(195)
-- Republican	67	28	5	1	101	(192)
<b><u>Likely Voters</u></b>	<b>66</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<b><u>Suburban Sprawl and Traffic Problems</u></b>						
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(660)</b>
<b><u>Party ID</u></b>						
-- Democrat	48	40	12	1	101	(248)
-- Independent	51	36	12	1	100	(195)
-- Republican	48	38	15	--	101	(192)
<b><u>Likely Voters</u></b>	<b>50</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<b><u>Race Relations and Racial Profiling</u></b>						
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(660)</b>
<b><u>Party ID</u></b>						
-- Democrat	58	28	12	2	100	(248)
-- Independent	49	34	17	1	101	(195)
-- Republican	31	41	25	3	100	(192)
<b><u>Likely Voters</u></b>	<b>46</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<b><u>Government Ethics and the Integrity of Public Officials</u></b>						
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(660)</b>
<b><u>Party ID</u></b>						
-- Democrat	54	31	14	--	99	(248)
-- Independent	57	29	14	1	101	(195)
-- Republican	63	30	7	1	101	(192)
<b><u>Likely Voters</u></b>	<b>62</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<b><u>Automobile Insurance Rates</u></b>						
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(660)</b>
<b><u>Party ID</u></b>						
-- Democrat	74	21	5	--	100	(248)
-- Independent	68	26	6	1	101	(195)
-- Republican	70	23	6	1	100	(192)
<b><u>Likely Voters</u></b>	<b>68</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>(395)</b>

“Thinking of your family’s financial situation over the last year, have things gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same?” [Q21]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>REGISTERED VOTERS</b>						
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(660)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	16	24	60	--	100	(248)
--Independent	19	17	63	--	99	(195)
--Republican	24	19	56	--	99	(192)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>						
<u>Registered Voters</u>						
April 2001	26	18	55	1	100	(632)
February 1995	23	20	57	--	100	(693)
February 1994	17	27	55	1	100	(680)
February 1993	13	28	59	1	101	(687)
March 1990	17	27	55	1	100	(667)

“I am going to read a list of some of the issues that might come up in this year’s election for Governor. As I read each one, please tell me how important that issue is to you personally – extremely important, fairly important, or not that important. Is [FILL – RANDOMIZE A-H] extremely important, fairly important or not that important of an issue to you personally?” [Q18]  
(cell percentages refer to respondents answering “extremely important”)

	<u>Education</u>	<u>Auto Insurance</u>	<u>Property Taxes</u>	<u>Environment</u>	<u>NJ Economy / Budget</u>	<u>Ethics/ Integrity</u>	<u>Sprawl and Traffic</u>	<u>Racial Profiling</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>									
<b>Total</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>(660)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>									
--Democrat	83	74	63	69	65	54	48	58	(248)
--Independent	71	68	67	59	56	57	51	49	(195)
--Republican	74	70	67	51	59	63	48	31	(192)
<u>Gender</u>									
--Male	70	65	63	52	57	54	44	44	(307)
--Female	82	76	69	68	63	61	53	50	(353)
<u>Race</u>									
--White	72	70	65	59	57	59	49	40	(498)
--Black & Hispanic	93	79	69	67	73	49	47	73	(121)
<u>Age</u>									
--18 – 29	78	73	47	57	54	45	44	51	(89)
--30 – 49	81	70	70	61	57	56	44	46	(281)
--50 +	72	72	67	61	65	63	55	48	(265)
<u>Education</u>									
--H.S. Diploma	79	78	70	62	70	55	54	52	(187)
--Some College	79	79	70	67	63	60	54	52	(201)
--College Graduate	72	61	60	55	52	58	41	40	(272)

“I am going to read a list of some of the issues that might come up in this year’s election for Governor. As I read each one, please tell me how important that issue is to you personally – extremely important, fairly important, or not that important. Is [FILL – RANDOMIZE A-H] extremely important, fairly important or not that important of an issue to you personally?” [Q18]

If the election for Governor were held today, for whom would you vote [PROGRAMMING: ROTATE CHOICES] Bret Schundler [SHUN – dler], the Republican, or Jim McGreevey, the Democrat? [Q4]

The table below shows the percentage of those intending to vote for McGreevey and Schundler who rate each specific issue as “extremely important” to them.

<b>LIKELY VOTERS</b>	<b><u>McGreevey Voters</u></b>	<b><u>Schundler Voters</u></b>
<b><u>August 2001</u></b>		
--Education	86%	71%
--Auto Insurance	73	61
--Property Taxes	64	70
--Environment	67	49
--NJ Economy / Budget	69	59
--Ethics / Integrity	57	66
--Sprawl and Traffic	50	48
--Racial Profiling	54	32
(n)	(193)	(119)

The table below provides a breakdown of the reported voting intentions of those respondents saying each specific issue is “extremely important” to them personally.

	<b><u>Education</u></b>	<b><u>Auto Insurance</u></b>	<b><u>Property Taxes</u></b>	<b><u>Environment</u></b>	<b><u>NJ Economy / Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Ethics/ Integrity</u></b>	<b><u>Sprawl and Traffic</u></b>	<b><u>Racial Profiling</u></b>
<b>LIKELY VOTERS</b>								
<b><u>August 2001</u></b>								
--McGreevey voters	54%	52%	48%	54%	52%	46%	50%	59%
--Schundler voters	28	27	32	24	27	33	30	21
--DK/Undecided	19	20	20	22	21	22	20	20
--Total	101	99	100	100	100	101	100	100
(n)	(308)	(267)	(257)	(241)	(256)	(241)	(192)	(178)