

# 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, October 21, Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

## WILL VOTERS EVER TUNE IN?

### *The Governor's Race Tightens Slightly, But Voter Interest Wanes*

Voters are tuning out, rather than in, as the election for New Jersey Governor draws near. And as a result, little about the race has changed. While a new Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll shows that the race has tightened a few points in the past three weeks, Democrat Jim McGreevey continues to hang onto a double-digit lead. Currently McGreevey leads Republican Bret Schundler 45 percent to 33 percent, with 22 percent of voters still undecided. In late September McGreevey led Schundler by 15 points – 46 percent to 31 percent. When those who lean towards a candidate are included, McGreevey leads Schundler 50 percent to 38 percent in the current poll.

Remarkably, voters are less engaged in the campaign now than they were in September – only 9 percent of voters are following the election “very closely” now, compared to 17 percent who were three weeks ago. Even the candidates’ first televised debate could not stir voters’ interest – only 14 percent of likely voters report having seen or heard the debate on October 10<sup>th</sup>. This is fewer than half as many as reported watching similarly timed debates in the 1993 and 1989 gubernatorial elections.

While two weeks of hard campaigning remain, many voters believe McGreevey already has the race sewn up – 55 percent of likely voters predict that McGreevey will win the election, while only 20 percent believe Schundler will win. One quarter of voters do not hazard a guess as to the eventual outcome.

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted by telephone October 13 through 17 among 449 likely voters in New Jersey. The poll has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 4.7 percentage points.

Schundler has been making slow headway in the race since August, when he trailed McGreevey by 19 points among likely voters – 30 percent to 49 percent. His current 12-point deficit overall reflects some marginal gains among voters who have made up their minds in the past few weeks. Among voters who decided how to vote in the past month, Schundler does 4 points better than among voters who decided earlier, but he still trails McGreevey among each group.

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Monika McDermott, associate director of the Rutgers-based poll, explains that progress like this won't be enough. "While we see evidence that Schundler has been gaining ground, with only two weeks left in the contest he needs to do dramatically better than he has been if he wants to close that persistent double-digit gap."

At this point in the race, 22 percent of likely voters have not decided whom to support. This number is virtually unchanged from September. Among those who have made a choice, eight out of ten say their minds are now set. One in five think that they may still change their vote.

A potential visit by President Bush remains a hope for the Schundler campaign, but the poll demonstrates that even the commander-in-chief's newfound popularity may not provide the boost Schundler needs. When asked how an endorsement of Schundler by Bush would affect their vote, over three quarters of likely voters say it would make no difference. But it would not be a total loss – 13 percent of voters say it would make them more likely to vote for Schundler while only 8 percent say it would make them less likely to support him. Among likely voters, Bush's job approval rating is currently at 88 percent.

The one real wild card in the race is voter attention and involvement. No doubt because of the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, and pressing national events in their aftermath, voters have still not focused on the race for governor. Voters' engagement in the race remained flat between August and September, and has actually dipped over the past three weeks. In August, 19 percent of likely voters were following the gubernatorial election "very closely," in September 17 percent were, but now only 9 percent claim to be. And while only 22 percent of likely voters were following the election "not very closely" in August, that number has risen to 36 percent in the current survey.

A disengaged electorate potentially holds bad news for both candidates, as McDermott explains: "Schundler is going to have a hard time selling his candidacy to voters who aren't even window shopping at this point. But at the same time, McGreevey's lead is only as good as the turnout and enthusiasm he can generate among his base – when turnout drops off, Democrats are among the first voters to stay home."

The first televised candidate debate on October 10<sup>th</sup> was another casualty of voters' diverted attentions. Only 14 percent of likely voters report having watched or heard the debate. In stark contrast, in the 1993 gubernatorial race 32 percent of likely voters reported watching or listening to a mid-October debate, and in the 1989 race 30 percent saw or heard the mid-October debate. Many voters this year got information from other sources about the debate – 37 percent of those who did not watch the debate say they heard or read news coverage of it.

Among those who are familiar with the debate, McGreevey came off the best. Forty-two percent of those who either saw the debate itself or coverage of the debate think that McGreevey performed the best, while only 19 percent feel that Schundler did. One quarter of those familiar with the debate do not express an opinion, and 15 percent think neither candidate got the better of the debate. And among those

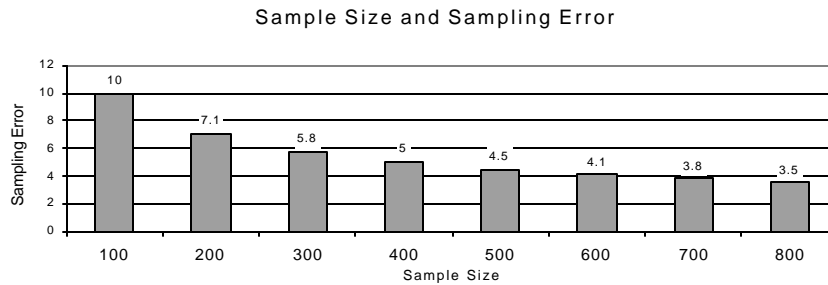
who saw the debate or the coverage, 40 percent say they now have a more favorable image of McGreevey while 22 percent have a less favorable image. Schundler's performance has had mixed effects – 34 percent of those familiar with the debate now have a more favorable image of him, but a nearly equal 32 percent now have a less favorable impression.

Overall, both candidates' images are positive, although McGreevey continues to be the more popular. Fifty-two percent of likely voters have a favorable impression of McGreevey while only 22 percent have an unfavorable impression of him. Forty-three percent of likely voters have a favorable impression of Schundler, while 28 percent have an unfavorable impression.

Most voters are supporting their candidate because they like him, rather than because they dislike his opponent. Seventy-one percent of those who are supporting a candidate say they are voting for their candidate, rather than against the other, while only 21 percent say they are voting against one of them. Among McGreevey supporters, 22 percent say they are voting against Schundler rather than for McGreevey, and among Schundler voters, 18 percent are in his camp to cast a vote against McGreevey.

## BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP134-2) October 21, 2001

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted by telephone from October 13-17 with a scientifically selected random sample of 1005 New Jersey adults, 802 of whom reported being registered to vote. This yielded 449 adult residents deemed likely to vote in the November election. 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  $\pm 4.7$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey likely voters were found to have watched the debates, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 45.3 and 54.7 percent ( $50 \pm 4.7$ ) had all New Jersey likely 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. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

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

	<u>Schundler</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Other candidate</u>	<u>Don't know/ Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001</b>						
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(449)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	4	75	1	20	100	(167)
--Independent	28	46	1	25	100	(128)
--Republican	73	6	2	19	100	(144)
<i>Gender</i>						
--Male	37	39	1	23	100	(228)
--Female	28	50	1	21	100	(221)
<i>Region</i>						
--North	33	48	--	18	99	(199)
--Central	33	44	2	21	100	(127)
--South	31	39	2	28	100	(121)
<i>Time of Decision</i>						
--Within last month	44	56	--	--	100	(99)
--Earlier	42	58	--	--	100	(242)
<b>Previous Surveys</b>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	31	46	3	21	101	(424)
August 2001						
Likely Voters	30	49	2	19	100	(395)

**ASKED OF THOSE WHO CHOSE A CANDIDATE IN Q4**

“Are you very sure about voting for (FILL CANDIDATE FROM Q4); or might you change your mind before Election Day?” [Q6]

	<u>Very sure</u>	<u>Might change</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001</b>					
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(348)</b>
<u>Probable vote(Q4)</u>					
--Schundler	79	21	--	100	(146)
--McGreevey	82	17	2	101	(202)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>					
September 2001					
Likely Voters	73	25	1	99	(323)
August 2001					
Likely Voters	73	26	1	100	(312)

**COMPOSITE VOTE WITH LEANERS**

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

**IF UNDECIDED:** “At this moment do you lean more towards Schundler or more towards McGreevey?” [Q5]

	<u>Schundler</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001</b>						
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(449)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	7	82	1	11	101	(167)
--Independent	32	52	1	16	101	(128)
--Republican	81	10	2	8	101	(144)
<u>Region of State</u>						
--North	41	51	--	8	100	(199)
--Central	35	48	2	14	99	(127)
--South	35	50	2	14	101	(121)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	35	51	3	12	101	(424)
August 2001						
Likely Voters	33	54	2	12	101	(395)

“And when did you decide whom to support for Governor – in the last few days, in the last week, within the last 4 weeks, or earlier?” [Q7]

	<u>Last Few Days</u>	<u>Last Week</u>	<u>Last 4Weeks/Month</u>	<u>Earlier</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001</b>							
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(348)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	2	5	19	69	5	100	(133)
--Independent	6	6	16	71	2	101	(97)
--Republican	2	4	22	67	4	99	(112)
<u>Probable vote</u>							
--Schundler	2	5	22	67	3	99	(146)
--McGreevey	5	5	16	70	4	100	(202)

“Would you say you are voting more for (FILL CANDIDATE FROM Q4 OR Q5) or more against the other candidate?” [Q8]

	<u>More for</u>	<u>More against</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001</b>					
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<u>Probable vote(Q4)</u>					
--Schundler	78	18	4	100	(146)
--McGreevey	73	22	5	100	(202)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	76	18	6	100	(151)
--Independent	64	23	13	100	(108)
--Republican	71	22	7	100	(129)

"If George W. Bush were to endorse Bret Schundler in the election for Governor, would that make you more likely to vote for Schundler, less likely to vote for Schundler, or would it make no difference in your vote?" [Q9]

	<u>More likely to vote for Schundler</u>	<u>Less likely to vote for Schundler</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>No Difference</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001</b>						
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(449)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	3	17	2	78	100	(167)
--Independent	13	4	--	83	100	(128)
--Republican	28	1	2	69	100	(144)
<u>Probable vote (Q4)</u>						
--Schundler	27	1	1	71	100	(146)
--McGreevey	3	16	1	81	101	(202)
<u>Approve of Bush Performance (QV20)</u>	15	6	--	78	99	(398)

"Regardless of how you intend to vote, who do you expect to win the election for Governor in November – [ROTATE CHOICES] Bret Schundler or Jim McGreevey?" [Q10]

	<u>Schundler</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Someone else</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001</b>						
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(449)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	6	76	--	18	100	(167)
--Independent	14	57	--	29	100	(128)
--Republican	44	28	--	28	100	(144)
<u>Probable vote (Q4)</u>						
--Schundler	50	24	--	27	101	(146)
--McGreevey	3	86	--	11	100	(202)

“And if the election for State Assembly were held today, would you vote for the Republican or Democratic candidates for Assembly in your district?” [Q11]

	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Split/Other</u>	<u>DK/Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001</b>						
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(449)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	81	6	1	12	100	(167)
--Independent	27	33	5	35	100	(128)
--Republican	2	85	0	13	100	(144)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	31	48	2	19	100	(228)
--Female	47	29	3	22	101	(221)
<u>Region</u>						
--North	39	39	2	20	100	(199)
--Central	38	39	2	21	100	(127)
--South	39	37	3	21	100	(121)
<b><u>Previous Surveys</u></b>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	40	39	1	20	100	(424)
August 2001						
Likely Voters	40	34	2	24	100	(395)
April 2001						
Registered Voters*	42	33	2	22	99	(632)
September 1999						
Registered Voters*	34	31	5	30	100	(516)
September 1997						
Registered Voters*	33	29	--	38	100	(673)

\* previous survey sample of registered voters, compared to current sample of likely voters

"As far as you know, which party now controls the Assembly -- the Republicans or the Democrats, or aren't you sure?" [Q12]

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001</b>					
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(449)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	36	15	49	100	(167)
--Independent	43	15	42	100	(128)
--Republican	40	14	46	100	(144)

**ROTATE 13A AND 13B**

"Is your opinion of Democrat Jim McGreevey favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion of him? **IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE:** Is that very [favorable/unfavorable] or somewhat [favorable/unfavorable]?" [Q13A]

	<u>Very favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat unfavorable</u>	<u>Very unfavorable</u>	<u>DK/ No opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001</b>							
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>(449)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	44	32	3	1	20	100	(167)
--Independent	20	29	16	11	23	99	(128)
--Republican	4	24	18	24	30	100	(144)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	19	30	17	13	20	99	(228)
--Female	30	26	6	9	28	99	(221)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>							
September 2001							
Likely Voters	24	29	9	10	27	99	(424)
August 2001							
Likely Voters	23	35	5	8	29	100	(395)

"Is your opinion of Republican Bret Schundler (SHUN – dler) favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion of him? **IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE:** Is that very [favorable/unfavorable] or somewhat [favorable/unfavorable]?" [Q13B]

	<u>Very favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat unfavorable</u>	<u>Very unfavorable</u>	<u>DK/ No opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2001</b>							
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(449)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	3	12	20	22	43	100	(167)
--Independent	22	25	13	14	26	100	(128)
--Republican	42	33	7	3	15	100	(144)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>							
September 2001							
Likely Voters	19	22	9	12	38	100	(424)
August 2001							
Likely Voters	15	23	9	12	40	99	(395)



“Do you like the direction in which the state of New Jersey has been moving and hope it continues like this, or do you dislike what’s going on and want to change direction?” [Q19]

	<u>Like direction</u>	<u>Change direction</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001, Likely Voters</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(449)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>					
-- Democrat	40	55	5	100	(167)
-- Independent	35	57	8	100	(128)
-- Republican	56	38	6	100	(144)

“Did you watch any of [last] Wednesday’s debate between Bret Schundler and Jim McGreevey on TV, or listen to it on the radio?” [Q20]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001, Likely Voters</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(449)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>					
-- Democrat	12	88	--	100	(167)
-- Independent	15	85	--	100	(128)
-- Republican	15	85	--	100	(144)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>					
-- October 1993, Likely Voters	32	68**	--	100	(601)
-- October 1989, Likely Voters	30	71**	--	101	(717)

\*\* “No” and “Don’t Know” categories combined

**ASKED OF THOSE WHO DIDN’T WATCH/HEAR THE DEBATE:**

“Have you seen or read any news stories about their debate?” [Q21]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001, Likely Voters</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(383)</b>
<u>Previous Surveys</u>					
-- October 1993, Likely Voters	38	62	--	100	(400)
-- October 1989, Likely Voters	40	58	2	100	(499)

**ASKED OF ALL THOSE WHO WATCHED/HEARD OR READ ABOUT THE DEBATE:**

“Who do you think actually got the best of the debate—Schundler or McGreevey? IF CHOICE MADE, PROBE: By a lot or just a little?” [Q22]

	<u>Schundler</u> <u>--A lot</u>	<u>Schundler</u> <u>--A little</u>	<u>McGreevey</u> <u>y--A lot</u>	<u>McGreevey</u> <u>--A little</u>	<u>Neither /</u> <u>Both (Vol)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001, Likely Voters</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(219)</b>
<u>Previous Surveys</u>								
-- October 1993, Likely Voters	<u>Whitman (R)</u> 9	17	14	<u>Florio (D)</u> 22	37	--	99	(361)
-- October 1989, Likely Voters	<u>Courter (R)</u> 8	11	13	<u>Florio (D)</u> 18	51	--	101	(438)

**ASKED OF ALL THOSE WHO WATCHED/HEARD OR READ ABOUT THE DEBATE:**

[Q23 &amp; Q24 Rotated]

“Based on what you saw or heard about the debate, did your overall impression of Bret Schundler become more favorable or less favorable?” [Q23]

“Based on what you saw or heard about the debate, did your overall impression of Jim McGreevey become more favorable or less favorable?” [Q24]

	<u>More favorable</u>	<u>Less favorable</u>	<u>Didn't Change (Vol)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>SCHUNDLER</u>						
October 2001, Likely Voters	34%	32%	29%	5%	100%	(219)
<u>MCGREEVEY</u>						
October 2001, Likely Voters	40%	22%	33%	5%	100%	(219)

“How closely have you been following the campaign for Governor -- very closely, somewhat closely, or not very closely so far?”[QV3]

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Somewhat closely</u>	<u>Not very closely</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>October 2001</u>						
Likely Voters	9%	55%	36%	--	100%	(454)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	8	54	38	--	100	(169)
--Independent	9	54	36	--	99	(129)
--Republican	10	56	33	--	99	(146)
<u>Previous surveys</u>						
September 2001	17	57	25	1	100	(424)
August 2001	19	59	22	--	100	(395)

“In your opinion, how much of a difference will the outcome of the election make in the way the New Jersey government is run over the next few years—a great deal of difference, some, or not very much difference?” [QV4]

	<u>Great Deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not very much</u>	<u>No difference at all</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>October 2001</u>								
Likely Voters	42%	37%	16%	--	3%	1%	99%	(454)
<u>Party ID</u>								
--Democrat	47	35	12	--	4	2	100	(169)
--Independent	34	38	21	1	4	2	100	(129)
--Republican	43	39	15	--	2	1	100	(146)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>								
September 2001	37	41	17	1	1	2	99	(424)
August 2001	34	48	13	1	1	2	99	(395)

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President?” [V20]

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001, Likely Voters</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(454)</b>
<u>Previous Surveys</u>					
--August 2001					
Likely Voters	55	35	10	100	(395)

**As you may know, there will be an election for New Jersey Governor and the state legislature this coming November.**

“How much interest do you have in the election for Governor -- a lot, some, a little or none at all?” [Q2]

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October 2001, Registered Voters</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>
<u>Previous Surveys</u>							
--October 1997							
Registered Voters	44	39	13	3	1	100	(631)