

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

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ISSUES AND CANDIDATES IN THE RACE FOR GOVERNOR

Trust and Leadership Top Voters' Wish List, but Neither Candidate Has the Advantage

Above all, voters in New Jersey want to be able to trust their next governor to do what's right, and they want him to be a strong leader. But according to *The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*, voters are currently divided over which candidate better offers these qualities. Given a list of candidate traits, nine out of ten likely voters say it is "extremely important" to them that their next governor be someone they can trust to do what's right, and a nearly equal number say it is "extremely important" for their next governor to be a strong leader.

Despite Democrat Jim McGreevey's long-standing lead in the race, when asked which candidate they think better fits these descriptions, voters are evenly divided – 39 percent think McGreevey is more trustworthy while 36 percent think Republican Bret Schundler is. Thirty-six percent say McGreevey is the stronger leader, while a nearly equal 34 percent feel that way about Schundler. But on another top-ranked trait – understanding voters' concerns – McGreevey has a clear advantage: 42 percent say he better understands their concerns, compared to 31 percent who feel Schundler does.

Two traits which have been at issue in the campaign – experience and outsider status – turn out not to be that important to voters. Only 42 percent of likely voters say that having a governor with a lot of experience in office is "extremely important." And when it comes to having an outsider who could shake things up, something Schundler has promised to do, only 19 percent feel it is "extremely important."

Three issues currently top voters' list of concerns – crisis management, education and the economy – but as with the top candidate traits, McGreevey only has a clear advantage on one of them. Given a list of issues in the campaign, 77 percent of voters say that the issue of preparing the state to deal with crisis is "extremely important" to them. Another 75 percent say that education is "extremely important" and 74 percent feel the same about the state economy. On the issue of education, McGreevey has a large advantage – 48 percent think he could better handle the issue as governor while only 30

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percent feel Schundler could. But on crisis management and the economy, there is no such consensus as voters divide evenly over which candidate could better handle each of these.

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted by telephone among 449 likely voters, from October 13 through 17. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4.7 percentage points.

While Schundler is holding his own on the two important traits of trust and leadership, he is not reaping the full benefit of voters' opinions at this point. Among those who say that trust and leadership describe Schundler better than McGreevey, Schundler receives only 80 percent and 74 percent of the vote respectively. In contrast, among those who choose McGreevey on trust and leadership, McGreevey receives 93 percent and 87 percent of the vote respectively.

The poll's associate director, Monika McDermott, addresses these findings: "Schundler is giving McGreevey a run for his money on many of voters' top concerns in this election, but for some reason this has yet to translate into votes. If Schundler can coax these potential supporters into his camp it looks like he could make more of a contest of this race than we've seen up to now."

In addition to trust, leadership, and understanding, voters also rate the trait of agreeing with them on the issues as "extremely important." Fifty-nine percent of likely voters say they think it "extremely important" that the next governor generally agrees with them on the issues. McGreevey also holds an advantage on this trait – by 46 to 36 percent more voters feel that McGreevey agrees with them on the issues than feel that Schundler does.

Traits	Rated Extremely Important	Who describe better?	
		McGreevey	Schundler
Trust to do what's right	91%	39%	36%
Is a strong leader	88%	36%	34%
Understands your concerns	77%	42%	31%
Agrees with you on issues	59%	46%	36%
Is very experienced	42%	37%	22%
Is the same party as you	25%	--	--
Is an outsider	19%	19%	39%

Voters rate candidate traits such as experience, party identification and being an outsider as much less important than the other traits. Only 42 percent of voters rate experience as "extremely important" and only 25 percent and 19 percent respectively rate party affiliation and outsider status as "extremely important." Voters feel that McGreevey is the more experienced candidate, and that Schundler is the outsider who "will shake things up."

Education, the economy, auto insurance rates and taxes have topped voters' issue lists since the poll began asking about issues in August, and this remains the case. But a new issue has also joined them at the top of the list – “preparing the state to deal with crisis or disaster.” Seventy-seven percent of likely voters rate this issue “extremely important.”

But while dealing with crisis or disaster tops the list of issues offered to voters, when asked to choose between hearing the candidates talk about that, or hearing them talk about issues like education and the economy, voters choose their perennial issues. Nearly three-quarters – 72 percent – say they would rather hear the candidates discuss issues like education and the economy, while only 24 percent say they would rather hear the candidates discuss safety and disaster preparedness.

Issues	Rated Extremely Important	Who could better handle?	
		McGreevey	Schundler
Dealing with crisis or disaster	77%	35%	35%
Education	75%	48%	30%
State economy and budget	74%	38%	39%
Property taxes	67%	37%	41%
Automobile insurance rates	63%	41%	31%

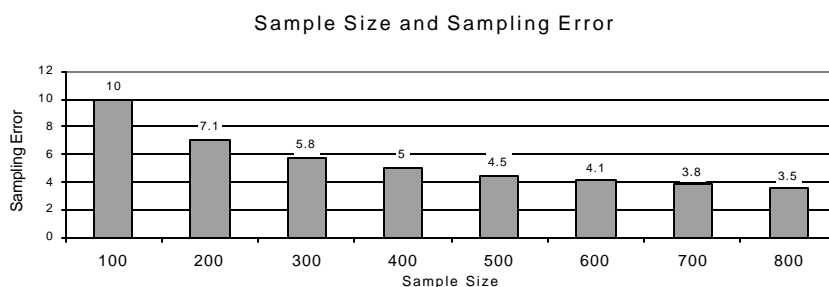
Among the top issues, McGreevey holds substantial advantages on two – education and automobile insurance rates – and Schundler holds a slight 4-point advantage on property taxes. On disaster preparedness and the economy, voters are divided.

Despite predictions of economic gloom both nationally and here in New Jersey, likely voters still think New Jersey's economy is doing well, and this may benefit Schundler. Fifty-two percent of voters say that New Jersey is in economic “good times” right now, while 39 percent think the economy has hit “bad times.” Among those who think the economy is doing well, 47 percent believe Schundler would better handle the economy and 31 percent think McGreevey would. But among those who think the economy is in bad times, McGreevey is preferred on this issue by 47 percent to 32 percent.

Voters' ambivalence on which candidate could better handle their top issues is now reflected in their images of the candidates' ideologies. Just over half – 52 percent – of voters feel that McGreevey's positions on the issues are “just about right,” but 47 percent of likely voters now think Schundler's positions are “just about right” for them. In September, only 42 percent of voters thought Schundler's positions were right for them.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP134-3) October 23, 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 were 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 ± 4.7 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey likely voters were found to think education is a very important issue, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 45.3 and 54.7 percent (50 ± 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:

"I'm going to read you a list of candidate traits, and for each one I would like you to tell me how important you think it is for the next Governor of New Jersey to have that trait – extremely important, fairly important, or not that important. First, how important is it that the next Governor [FILL – RANDOMIZE] extremely important, fairly important, or not that important?" [Q14]

	<u>Extremely important</u>	<u>Fairly important</u>	<u>Not that important</u>	<u>Not important at all (VOL)</u>	<u>DK/ No opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 2001 – Likely Voters							
<u>Understands the concerns you face in day-to-day life</u>	77%	20%	2%	--	1%	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	85	12	1	--	2	100	(167)
--Independent	74	24	1	--	1	100	(128)
--Republican	73	26	2	--	--	101	(144)
<u>Is very experienced in public office</u>	42%	44%	14%		--	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	50	41	9	--	--	100	(167)
--Independent	32	46	21	--	1	100	(128)
--Republican	40	46	13	--	--	99	(144)
<u>Is an outsider who will shake things up</u>	19%	38%	37%	2%	4%	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	22	34	37	1	6	100	(167)
--Independent	16	40	38	2	4	100	(128)
--Republican	17	40	36	4	3	100	(144)

	Extremely important	Fairly important	Not that important	Not important at all (VOL)	DK/ No opinion	Total	(n)
<u>Generally agrees with you on issues you care about</u>	59%	36%	4%	--	1%	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	69	29	2	--	--	100	(167)
--Independent	50	42	5	--	2	99	(128)
--Republican	53	42	5	--	--	100	(144)
<u>Is someone you trust to do what's right</u>	91%	8%	--	--	1%	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	91	9	--	--	--	99	(167)
--Independent	91	8	--	--	1	100	(128)
--Republican	92	7	--	--	1	100	(144)
<u>Is a strong leader</u>	88%	11%	1%	--	--	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	88	10	1	--	--	99	(167)
--Independent	82	16	1	1	--	100	(128)
--Republican	91	9	--	--	--	100	(144)
<u>Is the same political party as you</u>	25%	24%	46%	3%	1%	99	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	34	24	41	1	--	100	(167)
--Independent	9	9	71	8	4	101	(128)
--Republican	27	39	32	1	1	100	(144)

"Now I'm going to read you a list of candidate traits, and for each one, I'd like you to tell me whether you think it describes Jim McGreevey or Bret Schundler better. First, which candidate [FILL – RANDOMIZE] – Bret Schundler or Jim McGreevey?" [Q15]

	Bret Schundler	Jim McGreevey	Neither / Both	DK/ No opinion	Total	(n)
October 2001 – Likely Voters						
<u>Understands the concerns you face in day-to-day life</u>	31%	42%	13%	14%	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	7	69	9	15	100	(167)
--Independent	27	40	18	15	100	(128)
--Republican	64	10	13	13	100	(144)
<i>"Extremely Important" in Q14</i>	30	43	13	14	100	(337)
<u>Is very experienced in public office</u>	22%	37%	23%	17%	99%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	13	51	12	24	100	(167)
--Independent	18	36	31	15	100	(128)
--Republican	39	22	28	11	100	(144)
<i>"Extremely Important" in Q14</i>	30	36	17	17	100	(187)

	Bret Schundler	Jim McGreevey	Neither / Both	DK/ No opinion	Total	(n)
<u>Is an outsider who will shake things up</u>	39%	19%	16%	26%	100%	(449)
Party ID						
--Democrat	28	31	14	28	101	(167)
--Independent	47	13	17	24	101	(128)
--Republican	47	10	18	25	100	(144)
<u>Generally agrees with you on issues you care about</u>	36%	46%	7%	11%	100%	(449)
Party ID						
--Democrat	7	75	7	11	100	(167)
--Independent	32	48	7	13	100	(128)
--Republican	74	10	8	7	99	(144)
<i>"Extremely Important" in Q14</i>	35	49	5	11	100	(254)
<u>Is someone you trust to do what's right</u>	36%	39%	12%	13%	100%	(449)
Party ID						
--Democrat	9	67	11	14	101	(167)
--Independent	33	36	17	14	100	(128)
--Republican	71	8	10	10	99	(144)
<i>"Extremely Important" in Q14</i>	36	39	13	13	101	(407)
<u>Is a strong leader</u>	34%	36%	16%	15%	101	(449)
Party ID						
--Democrat	12	61	11	17	101	(167)
--Independent	29	31	23	17	100	(128)
--Republican	67	9	14	10	100	(144)
<i>"Extremely Important" in Q14</i>	35	36	15	15	101	(389)

"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-I] extremely important, fairly important or not that important of an issue to you personally?" [Q16]

	Extremely important	Fairly important	Not that important	DK	Total	(n)
<u>EDUCATION</u>						
October 2001 – Likely Voters	75%	21%	3%	--	99%	(449)
Party ID						
-- Democrat	85	13	2	--	100	(167)
-- Independent	77	19	3	1	100	(128)
-- Republican	61	34	5	--	100	(144)
Previous Surveys						
-- September 2001, Likely Voters	77	19	4	--	100	(424)
-- August 2001, Likely Voters	80	18	3	--	101	(395)
<u>THE STATE ECONOMY AND BUDGET</u>						

	<u>Extremely important</u>	<u>Fairly important</u>	<u>Not that important</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 2001, Likely Voters	74%	23%	3%	--	100%	(449)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	75	23	1	--	99	(167)
-- Independent	72	23	4	1	100	(128)
-- Republican	74	23	3	--	100	(144)
Previous Surveys						
-- September 2001, Likely Voters	72	26	2	--	100	(424)
-- August 2001, Likely Voters	66	32	2	1	101	(395)
<u>PROPERTY TAXES</u>						
October 2001, Likely Voters	67%	30%	3%	--	100%	(449)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	68	28	4	--	100	(167)
-- Independent	70	26	4	--	100	(128)
-- Republican	62	35	3	--	100	(144)
Previous Surveys						
-- September 2001, Likely Voters	71	23	5	1	100	(424)
-- August 2001, Likely Voters	66	29	4	1	100	(395)
<u>AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES</u>						
October 2001, Likely Voters	63%	29%	7%	--	99%	(449)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	70	23	7	--	100	(167)
-- Independent	60	32	8	--	100	(128)
-- Republican	58	36	7	--	101	(144)
Previous Surveys						
-- September 2001, Likely Voters	70	23	6	1	100	(424)
-- August 2001, Likely Voters	68	26	6	1	101	(395)
<u>PREPARING THE STATE TO DEAL WITH CRISIS OR DISASTER</u>						
October 2001, Likely Voters	77%	21%	2%	--	100	(449)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	82	17	1	--	100	(167)
-- Independent	75	23	1	1	100	(128)
-- Republican	71	25	4	--	100	(144)

“Now I am going to read a list of issues and I’d like you to tell me, regardless of whom you support for Governor – which candidate you think would do a better job handling that issue, Jim McGreevey or Bret Schundler. First, which candidate do you think could better handle [FILL – RANDOMIZE] – Bret Schundler or Jim McGreevey? [Q17]

	<u>Schundler</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Neither / Both (Vol)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
EDUCATION						
October 2001 – Likely Voters	30%	48%	6%	16%	100%	(449)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	9	73	3	15	100	(167)
-- Independent	25	45	11	20	101	(128)
-- Republican	62	20	6	12	100	(144)

	<u>Schundler</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Neither / Both (Vol)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<i>“Extremely important” from Q16</i>	27	52	6	15	100	(331)
<u>THE STATE ECONOMY AND BUDGET</u>						
October 2001, Likely Voters	39%	38%	6%	17%	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	17	61	4	18	100	(167)
-- Independent	34	38	9	19	100	(128)
-- Republican	73	10	5	12	100	(144)
<i>“Extremely important” from Q16</i>	41	38	5	16	100	(332)
<u>NJ Economy</u>						
-- Good Times	47	31	5	16	99	(237)
-- Bad Times	32	47	6	15	100	(173)
<u>PROPERTY TAXES</u>						
October 2001, Likely Voters	41%	37%	5%	17%	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	13	68	2	18	101	(167)
-- Independent	41	29	8	22	100	(128)
-- Republican	75	7	6	12	100	(144)
<i>“Extremely important” from Q16</i>	40	36	5	19	100	(298)
<u>AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES</u>						
October 2001, Likely Voters	31%	41%	11%	17%	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	14	64	6	15	99	(167)
-- Independent	29	35	16	21	101	(128)
-- Republican	55	19	11	15	100	(144)
<i>“Extremely important” from Q16</i>	30	45	9	16	100	(275)
<u>PREPARING THE STATE TO DEAL WITH CRISIS OR DISASTER</u>						
October 2001, Likely Voters	35%	35%	11%	19%	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	13	61	8	18	100	(167)
-- Independent	34	30	12	23	99	(128)
-- Republican	63	7	12	18	100	(144)
<i>“Extremely important” from Q16</i>	35	36	10	19	100	(335)

“In general, are you more interested in hearing the candidates for Governor discuss issues like safety and disaster preparedness or are you more interested in hearing them discuss issues like education and the economy?” [Q18]

	<u>Safety and disaster preparedness</u>	<u>Education and the economy</u>	<u>None (Vol)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 2001, Likely Voters	22%	72%	1%	5%	100%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	24	71	--	6	101	(167)
-- Independent	17	77	2	4	100	(128)
-- Republican	24	71	1	4	100	(144)

	<u>Safety and disaster preparedness</u>	<u>Education and the economy</u>	<u>None (Vol)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>Gender</u>						
-- Male	16	79	1	4	100	(228)
-- Female	28	66	1	5	100	(221)

“How much do you feel you know about (Bret Schundler/Jim McGreevey – CANDIDATE ORDER ROTATED) -- a lot, some, just a little, or nothing at all?” [Q25, Q27]

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>SCHUNDLER</u>							
October 2001, Likely Voters	20%	44%	23%	12%	--	99%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>							
-- Democrat	16	41	25	18	--	100	(167)
-- Independent	16	47	24	13	--	100	(128)
-- Republican	31	47	19	3	1	101	(144)
<u>Probable Vote [from Q4]</u>							
-- McGreevey	15	45	27	13	--	100	(202)
-- Schundler	34	50	14	1	1	100	(146)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>							
September 2001, Likely Voters	19	44	25	11	2	101	(424)
<u>MCGREEVEY</u>							
October 2001, Likely Voters	26%	45%	22%	6%	--	99%	(449)
<u>Party ID</u>							
-- Democrat	31	47	17	5	--	100	(167)
-- Independent	27	50	14	8	--	99	(128)
-- Republican	19	41	34	5	1	100	(144)
<u>Probable Vote [from Q4]</u>							
-- McGreevey	38	48	12	1	--	99	(202)
-- Schundler	21	46	28	4	1	100	(146)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>							
September 2001, Likely Voters	29	46	18	6	1	100	(424)

[Asked of those who knew at least “Some” in Q25 or Q27]

“Do you think (Bret Schundler’s/Jim McGreevey’s – CANDIDATE ORDER ROTATED) views on most issues are too liberal for you, too conservative for you, or just about right?” [Q26, 28]

	<u>Too liberal</u>	<u>Too conservative</u>	<u>Just about right</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>MCGREEVEY</u>						
October 2001, Likely Voters	33%	6%	52%	10%	101%	(421)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	6	3	82	10	101	(160)
--Independent	34	8	46	12	100	(118)
--Republican	67	6	20	7	100	(135)
<u>Probable Vote [from Q4]</u>						
-- McGreevey	4	4	86	6	100	(199)
-- Schundler	74	6	14	6	100	(140)

Previous Surveys

September 2001, Likely Voters 33 2 51 14 100 (396)

SCHUNDLER

October 2001, Likely Voters 9% 32% 47% 11% 99% (400)

Party ID

--Democrat 13 51 21 16 101 (142)

--Independent 7 38 45 10 100 (112)

--Republican 9 9 76 6 100 (139)

Probable Vote [from Q4]

-- McGreevey 14 57 15 14 100 (178)

-- Schundler 6 5 85 4 100 (143)

Previous Surveys

September 2001, Likely Voters 6 35 42 17 100 (367)

"How would you generally describe economic conditions in New Jersey right now? Would you say that economically New Jersey is in good times or bad times right now?" (QV12)

	<u>Good times</u>	<u>Bad times</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 2001 – Likely Voters	52%	39%	9%	100%	(454)

Previous Surveys*

April 2001	67	24	9	100	(802)
February 1995	41	50	10	101	(801)
February 1994	28	66	5	99	(801)
February 1993	22	72	6	100	(801)
January 1992	8	84	7	99	(800)
February 1991	12	84	4	100	(800)
March 1990	36	55	8	99	(800)
September 1989	57	31	12	100	(1,000)

* Among New Jersey adults

"During the next year, do you think economic conditions in New Jersey will get better, get worse, or stay about the same?" (QV13)

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>About the same</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 2001, Likely Voters	29%	27%	36%	8%	100%	(454)

Previous Surveys*

April 2001	25	20	50	5	100	(802)
February 1995	31	16	49	4	100	(801)
February 1994	46	11	38	5	100	(801)
February 1993	39	15	43	3	100	(801)
January 1992	40	14	41	5	100	(801)
February 1991	31	23	42	4	100	(800)

* Among New Jersey adults

COMPOSITE TABLE – VOTE BY CANDIDATE TRAITS

“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>McGreevey</u>	<u>Schundler</u>	<u>Neither / Both (Vol)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 2001, Likely Voters	45%	33%	1%	22%	101%	(449)
<u>Trust to do what is right [Q15E]</u>						
--McGreevey	93	2	1	5	101	(182)
--Schundler	4	80	1	15	100	(156)
<u>More of a leader [Q15F]</u>						
--McGreevey	87	4	1	9	101	(161)
--Schundler	9	74	2	15	100	(154)