

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

September 15, 2002
(Release 138-3)

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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Sunday, September 15 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*."

***THE SOPRANOS* A "HIT" IN JERSEY**

Like diners, toll roads, and Jimmy Hoffa's final resting place, television's "The Sopranos" has become a fundamental part of the New Jersey landscape, with many state residents eagerly awaiting the show's fourth season. According to the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*, just over half of all New Jersey adults have tuned into the HBO series at least once since it premiered in 1999. This includes one-in-five residents who say they never miss an episode of the hit show that follows the trials and tribulations of a New Jersey mafia family.

A gritty depiction of mob life and family dysfunction, "The Sopranos" has received some criticism for how it portrays Italian-Americans as well as residents of the Garden State. New Jersey's answer to these critics? A resounding "Fuggedaboutit!"

Only one-quarter of those familiar with the show believe it is a source of embarrassment to the state. Even fewer – 13 percent – feel that "The Sopranos" portrays Italian-Americans unfairly, although most simply state that they don't think of the show's fictional characters in terms of a realistic ethnic group depiction.

These are some of the main findings of the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*, which was conducted by telephone with a statewide sample of 804 New Jerseyans 18 and older from September 3 to 8. This release also includes the views of 637 residents who are familiar with the show and 260 regular viewers. The margin of error is ± 3.5 percent for the full sample, ± 4 percent for those familiar with the show, and ± 6 percent for regular viewers.

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

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A majority – 54 percent – of New Jerseyans report having watched “The Sopranos,” including two-thirds of Italian-American residents in the state (65%). The show is particularly popular among young adults age 18 to 29 – 69 percent have seen it. Overall, 19 percent of New Jersey adults say they watch the show every week, 13 percent watch some or most of the time, and 21 percent tune in occasionally. Another 23 percent of New Jerseyans have not seen the show, but say they are familiar with it.

Most residents familiar with the show are ambivalent as to whether it is a source of pride or embarrassment for New Jersey. Overall, 28 percent say they are proud to have “The Sopranos” set in their home state, 24 percent say it is a source of embarrassment to them as New Jerseyans, and 29 percent feel the show’s impact on New Jersey’s reputation is not an issue.

On a related issue, only 3-in-10 residents think about the show’s depiction of Italian-Americans in terms of fairness, with 16 percent saying the show depicts this ethnic group fairly and 13 percent saying Italian-Americans are unfairly portrayed. Most residents – 55 percent – say they don’t think of the show in those terms. Even among Italian-Americans in the state, most – 53 percent – don’t think of the show in terms of how realistically it portrays their culture, although others are split on whether their ethnicity is shown in a fair (18%) or unfair (18%) light.

“For all the attention, both positive and negative, *The Sopranos* has brought to the state, most New Jerseyans take it at face value as a fictional TV show,” observed Patrick Murray, associate director of the Rutgers-based poll. “While some residents may worry about how the show reflects on their home state or on Italian-Americans, most viewers are mainly concerned about what will happen to Tony and his family in the coming season.”

Apparently, many fans can relate to the problems faced by Tony, Carmela, and their children, Meadow and A.J. Nearly two-in-three regular viewers – 64 percent – feel that the Soprano household has the same amount of problems as most real families while another 28 percent say they have more problems than most. A small but scary 7 percent of New Jersey viewers feel that the Soprano family – with a tendency for depression, deceit, and attempted murder – actually has fewer problems than most real families.

Furthermore, most viewers believe that Tony and Carmela Soprano’s marriage will weather whatever storms lay ahead. Only one-in-four viewers (24%) predict that the couple will separate in the upcoming season. Another six-in-ten (59%) say the two will definitely stay together this year and 17 percent take a wait and see attitude.

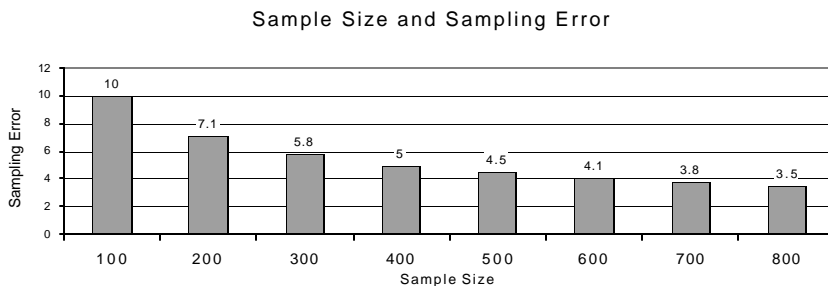
Anticipation for the new season is high, with more than half – 53 percent – of past regular viewers planning to catch the show every week. The characters who viewers will be paying attention to most closely are the two leads – Tony and Carmela. When asked to name their favorite characters on the show, nearly two-thirds of regular viewers pay their respects to the head of the family (64%) while 23 percent choose his wife.

Interestingly, 42 percent of female viewers select Carmela as one of their favorites compared to 56 percent for Tony. Among male viewers, 71 percent say Tony is one of their top two characters while only a few brave souls – 8 percent – identify with Carmela. Among other characters on the show, Tony’s psychiatrist Dr. Melfi is a favorite of one-in-ten viewers while fewer name other “family” members such as Paulie Walnuts (6%), Christopher (4%), Silvio (4%), Uncle Junior (3%), Meadow (3%), and “Big Pussy” (2%).

The poll also found that most regular viewers (78%) feel that the graphic depictions of mob violence on the show are appropriate for the subject matter portrayed.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP138-3) September 15, 2002

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted by telephone from September 3 to September 8 with a scientifically selected random sample of 804 New Jersey adults. The figures in this release are based on this sample size as well as sub-samples of 637 New Jerseyans who are familiar with “The Sopranos” and 260 regular “Sopranos” viewers. 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 804 is ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to be less likely to travel overseas since the terrorist attacks, 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 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 residents of North, Central and South Jersey, 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:

“Have you ever seen the HBO television show “The Sopranos” – a show about the mafia set in New Jersey, or not? IF NOT SEEN: Are you familiar with the show?” [SO1]

	<u>Seen the show</u>	<u>NOT seen, BUT IS familiar</u>	<u>NOT seen, AND is NOT familiar</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	54%	23%	23%	--	100%	(804)
<u>Age</u>						
--18 to 29	69	15	15	--	99	(103)
--30 to 49	59	22	19	--	100	(355)
--50 and older	41	28	31	--	100	(327)
<u>Italian Ancestry</u>						
--Yes	65	24	11	1	101	(201)
--No	50	24	27	--	101	(589)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	63	21	16	--	100	(379)
--Female	46	26	29	--	101	(425)
<u>Region</u>						
--North	57	24	19	--	100	(325)
--Central	51	20	28	1	100	(221)
--South	53	24	23	--	100	(253)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>						
April 2001	50	26	24	--	100	(802)

AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN OR ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE SHOW:

“As a New Jerseyan, would you say the show is more of a source of pride, OR more of a source of embarrassment to you?” [SO2]

	<u>Pride</u>	<u>Embarrassment</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	28%	24%	29%	19%	100%	(637)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 to 29	48	17	17	18	100	(89)
--30 to 49	28	26	32	14	100	(297)
--50 and older	16	27	31	26	100	(236)
<i>Italian Ancestry</i>						
--Yes	33	23	28	17	101	(174)
--No	25	25	29	20	99	(454)
<i>Viewership</i>						
--Have seen show	34	22	33	10	99	(441)
--Have heard of it	12	28	19	40	99	(196)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>						
April 2001	28	28	28	17	101	(625)

AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN OR ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE SHOW:

“The main characters in the Sopranos are Italian-Americans living in New Jersey. Do you think the show portrays this group fairly, not fairly, or don’t you think of it in these terms?” [SO3]

	<u>Fairly</u>	<u>Not fairly</u>	<u>Don’t think of it in these terms</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	16%	13%	55%	15%	100%	(637)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 to 29	16	15	66	3	100	(89)
--30 to 49	17	11	59	13	100	(297)
--50 and older	17	17	44	22	100	(236)
<i>Italian Ancestry</i>						
--Yes	18	18	53	12	101	(174)
--No	16	11	56	16	99	(454)
<i>Viewership</i>						
--Have seen show	20	14	62	4	100	(441)
--Have heard of it	9	11	40	40	100	(196)

“In the past, have you watched the show every week, most of the time, some of the time, once in a while, or never?” [SO4]

	<u>Every week</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Some of the time</u>	<u>Once in a while</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	19%	8%	5%	21%	46%	99%	(804)
<u>Age</u>							
--18 to 29	24	10	8	30	27	99	(103)
--30 to 49	24	8	4	21	42	99	(355)
--50 and older	10	7	6	18	59	100	(327)
<u>Italian Ancestry</u>							
--Yes	23	8	10	24	34	99	(201)
--No	17	8	4	20	50	99	(589)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	23	9	7	25	36	100	(379)
--Female	15	8	4	18	54	99	(425)

AMONG REGULAR SOPRANOS VIEWERS:

“Who is your favorite character on the Sopranos? Probe: Do you have another favorite?” [SO5]

	<u>* (n)</u>	<u>All viewers (260)</u>	<u>Male viewers (142)</u>	<u>Female viewers (118)</u>
Tony Soprano		64%	71%	56%
Carmela Soprano		23	8	42
Dr. Jennifer Melfi		10	8	11
Paulie Walnuts		6	10	1
Christopher Moltisanti		4	6	2
Silvio Dante		4	3	4
“Uncle Junior” Soprano		3	4	1
Meadow Soprano		3	2	4
“Big Pussy” Bonpensiero		2	3	--
A.J. (Anthony Jr) Soprano		1	2	--
Furio Giunta		1	2	--
Other		3	3	3
No one		11	10	12
Don't Know		9	6	13

* Note: Columns add to more than 100% because respondents were given the opportunity to name up to two favorite characters.

AMONG REGULAR SOPRANOS VIEWERS:

“As you probably know, the Sopranos includes a number of scenes of mob violence. Do you think the violence is too graphic for what is being portrayed, not graphic enough, or about right for the subject matter?” [SO6]

	<u>Too graphic</u>	<u>Not graphic enough</u>	<u>About right</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	16%	3%	78%	3%	100%	(260)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	10	3	84	3	100	(142)
--Female	24	2	71	3	100	(118)

AMONG REGULAR SOPRANOS VIEWERS:

“In the coming season, do you plan to watch the show every week, most of the time, some of the time, once in a while, or never?” [SO7]

	<u>Every week</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Some of the time</u>	<u>Once in a while</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	53%	23%	13%	7%	4%	1%	101%	(260)

AMONG REGULAR SOPRANOS VIEWERS:

“Do you think Tony’s household of Carmela, A.J., and Meadow has more problems than most real families, less, or the same amount of problems as most?” [SO8]

	<u>More</u>	<u>Less</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	28%	7%	64%	1%	100%	(229)

AMONG REGULAR SOPRANOS VIEWERS:

“Do you think Tony and Carmela will separate on this year’s show, or not?” [SO9]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	24%	59%	17%	100%	(229)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	28	52	20	100	(124)
--Female	18	68	13	99	(105)