

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

September 22, 2002
(Release 138-5)

CONTACT: PATRICK MURRAY
OR CLIFF ZUKIN

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Sunday, September 22 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

GOVERNOR MCGREEVEY FALL REPORT CARD: MEETS EXPECTATIONS BUT COULD DO BETTER

While James E. McGreevey's job approval rating has slipped somewhat in the last few months, the news from the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* is not all bad for New Jersey's chief executive. While fewer than half of the state's residents give their governor positive marks on his job performance, most acknowledge that the state is facing serious budgetary problems and few residents hold McGreevey responsible for increases in local property taxes. On the whole, most residents say he is doing as well as they expected.

These are some of the findings of the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*, conducted between September 3 and 8 with a scientifically selected sample of 804 New Jersey adults. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

Overall, 43 percent of New Jerseyans approve of the job McGreevey has been doing as Governor compared to 32 percent who disapprove. This marks a drop in affirmative ratings from June 2002, when approval outweighed disapproval by a 50 to 24 percent margin.

Furthermore, 37 percent say the governor is doing an excellent or good job, while 51 percent rate his job performance as only fair or poor. Only among his own partisans does McGreevey get a slight edge in positive ratings – with 49 percent of Democrats who give positive ratings compared to 42 percent who are negative.

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

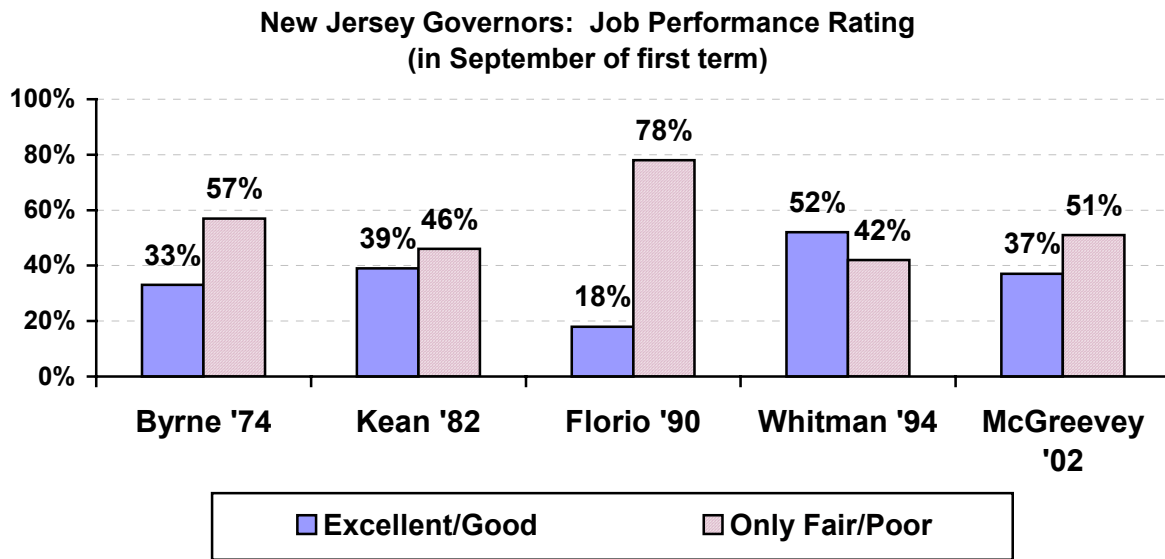
185 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Director: Cliff Zukin x247 • Associate Director: Patrick Murray x243

Graduate Research Assistants: Kelly Sand • Robert Suls

Phone: 732-932-9384 - Website: <http://slerp.rutgers.edu> - Fax: 732-932-1551

Compared to previous governors at this stage in their term, McGreevey is doing better than the last two Democratic governors and almost as well as Republican Tom Kean after their first eight months in office. At that point in time, Kean received positive ratings from 39 percent of New Jerseyans, Brendan Byrne stood at 33 percent positive, and Jim Florio garnered positive job ratings from only 18 percent of residents. All three of these former governors also faced fiscal problems when they took office.



Only Christie Whitman did better in the first few months of her term, with 52 percent giving her job performance positive marks at this stage in her term. However, in a head to head assessment, New Jerseyans are split on which of their last two elected governors has done a better job – 37 percent select Whitman and 35 percent choose McGreevey in the current poll.

“While having to deal with shortfalls in the state budget may have had a negative impact on Governor McGreevey’s overall job rating, few New Jerseyans feel that the governor has failed to meet their expectations in the present economic climate” remarked Patrick Murray, associate director of the Rutgers-based poll. In fact, 61 percent of residents feel that James McGreevey is doing about as well as they thought he would, while 13 percent say he has exceeded expectations and 15 percent say he is doing worse than expected.

New Jersey residents acknowledge that McGreevey is facing some tough times as the state's chief executive – 41 percent say the state's budget problems are very serious and 37 percent call them somewhat serious. Only 11 percent say New Jersey does not face serious budget problems. These opinions are in line with those taken right after McGreevey first took office this year.

PROPERTY TAXES

The government's budget issues have hit New Jerseyans in their pocketbooks. Two-thirds report that their local property taxes have increased over the past year – 34 percent say they have gone up a lot and 33 percent say they have gone up a little. These findings represent a broader impact than has been noted in the past ten years when fewer residents – between half and six-in-ten – reported a rise in their property taxes.

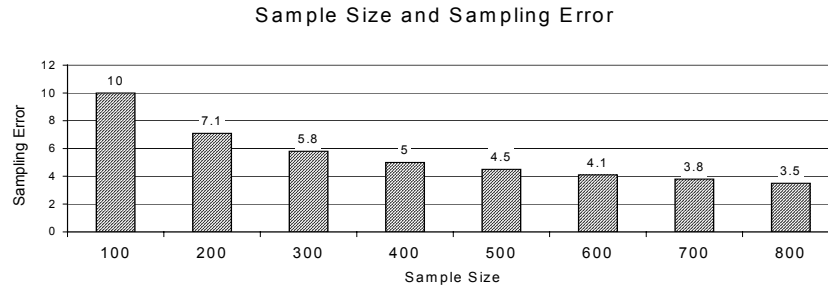
Despite this increase, only a small percentage of those who have experienced a property tax hike – 8 percent – hold McGreevey accountable, while slightly more – 17 percent – say former governor Christie Whitman is chiefly responsible for the most recent rise in their property taxes. Overall, public schools are most likely to get the blame, with 38 percent saying local schools are mainly responsible for the increase in their property tax bills. Another 16 percent say local governments are most responsible and 8 percent hold county governments responsible.

NEW JERSEY'S DIRECTION

The poll also found the New Jerseyans are divided on the direction the state is taking. Right now, 45 percent say the state is going in the right direction while 41 percent say it has gotten off on the wrong track. These findings are slightly less positive than five years ago, when 54 percent felt the state was headed in the right direction, but more positive than ten years ago when only one-in-three residents felt the state was on the right track. Currently, residents of North Jersey are somewhat most optimistic – with 50 percent saying the state is headed in the right direction – compared to 42 percent in Central Jersey and 39 percent in South Jersey who say the same.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP138-5) September 22, 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. 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 ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to approve of an issue, 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:

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way James McGreevey is handling his job as Governor?”
[JM1]

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	43%	32%	26%	101%	(804)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	55	23	22	100	(257)
--Independent	39	36	25	100	(212)
--Republican	32	46	21	99	(227)
<i>Region</i>					
--North	46	27	27	100	(325)
--Central	43	32	25	100	(221)
--South	38	39	23	100	(253)
<i>Gender</i>					
--Male	41	32	27	100	(379)
--Female	44	31	24	99	(425)
Previous Surveys					
--June 2002	50	24	26	100	(801)
--March 2002	45	21	34	100	(803)

COMPOSITE:**If Approve:** “Would you say he is doing an excellent, good, or only fair job?” [JM2A]**If Disapprove:** “Would you say he is doing a good, only fair, or poor job?” [JM2B]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	4%	33%	37%	14%	12%	100%	(804)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>							
--Democrat	9	40	32	10	9	100	(257)
--Independent	2	29	44	12	14	101	(212)
--Republican	3	25	40	24	8	100	(227)
<u>Region</u>							
--North	5	34	38	9	14	100	(325)
--Central	5	35	34	17	9	100	(221)
--South	3	31	38	18	10	100	(253)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	4	29	41	11	14	99	(379)
--Female	4	36	34	16	10	100	(425)
Previous Governors							
<u>(at this point in their term)</u>							
--Whitman 1994*	12	40	33	9	6	100	(801)
--Florio 1990*	3	15	33	45	5	101	(800)
--Kean 1982*	4	35	41	5	15	100	(503)
--Byrne 1974**	3	30	45	12	10	100	(1004)

* Previous survey wording – “How would you rate the job of [governor], excellent, good, only fair or poor?”

** Previous survey wording – “Overall, how good a job do you think the Governor of New Jersey – Brendan Byrne – is doing –excellent, good, only fair or poor?”

“And has McGreevey done a better job as Governor than you expected, a worse job, or about the same as you thought he would do?” [JM3]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	13%	15%	61%	12%	101%	(804)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>						
--Democrat	18	14	57	11	100	(257)
--Independent	11	17	64	8	100	(212)
--Republican	8	16	65	11	100	(227)
<u>Region</u>						
--North	15	12	62	11	100	(325)
--Central	12	14	63	11	100	(221)
--South	11	19	56	14	100	(253)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	13	15	61	11	100	(379)
--Female	12	15	61	12	100	(425)

“Comparing Jim McGreevey to New Jersey’s last governor Christie Whitman, who do you think has been a better governor – McGreevey or Whitman?” [JM4]

	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Whitman</u>	<u>Neither (Vol)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	35%	37%	7%	20%	99%	(804)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	51	26	4	18	99	(257)
--Independent	34	40	9	17	100	(212)
--Republican	16	55	8	20	99	(227)
<i>Region</i>						
--North	33	41	5	22	101	(325)
--Central	38	32	9	21	100	(221)
--South	39	35	10	17	101	(253)
<i>Gender</i>						
--Male	34	40	4	21	99	(379)
--Female	36	35	10	20	101	(425)

“Would you say things in New Jersey are going in the right direction, or have they pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?” [JM5]

	<u>Right Direction</u>	<u>Wrong Track</u>	<u>Depends/ Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	45%	41%	15%	101%	(804)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	52	33	16	101	(257)
--Independent	45	41	15	101	(212)
--Republican	37	49	14	100	(227)
<i>Region</i>					
--North	50	34	16	100	(325)
--Central	42	44	14	100	(221)
--South	39	48	13	100	(253)
<i>Gender</i>					
--Male	50	39	12	101	(379)
--Female	40	42	17	99	(425)
Previous Surveys					
--September 1997	54	36	10	100	(802)
--September 1996	53	35	12	100	(802)
--February 1995	51	38	11	100	(801)
--September 1994	49	40	11	100	(801)
--June 1994	50	39	12	101	(801)
--June 1993	40	52	8	100	(800)
--April 1992	33	60	7	100	(799)
--June 1991	37	55	8	100	(800)
--October 1990	19	74	7	100	(800)

“How serious do you think New Jersey’s budget problems are – very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious?” [JM6]

	<u>Very Serious</u>	<u>Somewhat Serious</u>	<u>Not Very Serious</u>	<u>Not at All Serious</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	41%	37%	8%	3%	11%	100%	(804)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	37	43	6	2	11	99	(257)
--Independent	40	37	7	3	12	99	(212)
--Republican	46	39	7	1	7	100	(227)
<i>Region</i>							
--North	37	38	9	2	14	100	(325)
--Central	44	41	4	2	9	100	(221)
--South	46	35	7	4	8	100	(253)
Previous Surveys							
-- June 2002	37	48	7	2	7	101	(801)
-- March 2002	39	44	8	2	7	100	(803)
-- March 1982	26	46	15	3	10	100	(1206)

“In the past year, have your local property taxes gone up, gone down, or stayed about the same? PROBE: Have they gone (up/down) a lot or just a little?” [JM7]

	<u>Gone UP</u>		<u>Gone DOWN</u>		<u>Stayed Same</u>	<u>NA/DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>A Lot</u>				
September 2002	34%	33%	--	--	18%	15%	100%	(804)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>								
--Democrat	32	34	--	--	23	10	99	(257)
--Independent	33	31	--	--	17	19	100	(212)
--Republican	42	33	--	--	14	11	100	(227)
<i>Region</i>								
--North	31	33	--	--	19	17	100	(325)
--Central	36	35	--	--	15	14	100	(221)
--South	37	32	1	--	17	13	100	(253)
Previous Surveys								
-- September 1999		55		3	23	19	100	(802)
-- February 1998	25	29	2	--	28	17	101	(802)
-- February 1997	28	28	3	1	25	15	100	(800)
-- February 1995	28	31	3	1	26	12	101	(801)
-- February 1994	29	30	2	--	26	12	99	(801)
-- September 1991		59		9	15	17	100	(800)

AMONG THOSE WHOSE PROPERTY TAXES HAVE GONE UP:

“Which of the following do you think is most responsible for the increase in your local property taxes – Governor McGreevey, former Governor Whitman, your county government, local government, or the local public schools?” [JM8]

	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Whitman</u>	<u>County Govt</u>	<u>Local Govt</u>	<u>Public Schools</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002	8%	17%	8%	16%	38%	13%	100%	(550)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>								
--Democrat	5	25	6	15	35	14	100	(169)
--Independent	3	18	8	17	39	15	100	(144)
--Republican	14	7	11	14	45	8	99	(171)