

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

September 14, 2003
(Release 144-3)

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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo appears in the Sunday, September 14, 2003 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll."

WHITHER MCGREEVEY?

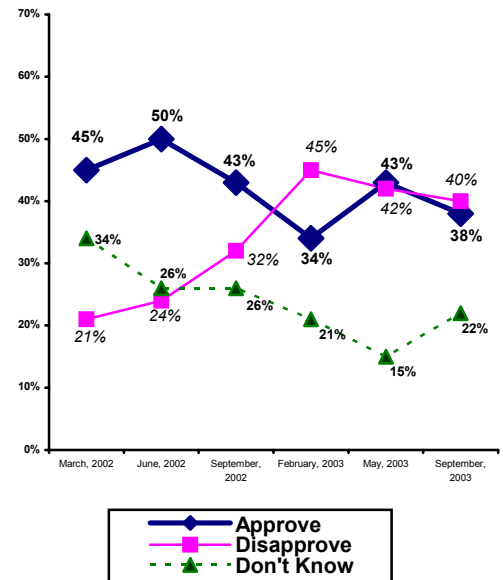
NEW JERSEYANS AMBIVALENT ABOUT THEIR GOVERNOR

Halfway into his term as Governor, James McGreevey is at a crossroad. At midterm, the public's assessment of the Governor is decidedly ambivalent. As many New Jerseyans approve as disapprove of the job McGreevey is doing as Governor, many are unsure whether he has a clear vision for the state, and few feel that the incumbent Democrat has any major accomplishments to point to at this point in his term.

The most recent *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* shows a clear split in public opinion about the job Governor McGreevey is doing – 38 percent of New Jerseyans approve while 40 percent disapprove. And, more than 1-in-5 (22%) don't have an opinion of their governor nearly two years after he was elected.

Currently, only 11 percent of New Jerseyans feel that Governor McGreevey has any major accomplishments to point to in his term so far. Another 45 percent say he has some minor accomplishments and 32 percent feel he has no real accomplishments to point to. These findings are basically unchanged from the February 2003 poll, which was taken right after his first year in office.

Governor McGreevey Job Rating



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

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The poll also found New Jerseyans divided on whether McGreevey has a well-defined plan for the state – 42 percent say that he does while 38 percent say that he does not have a clear vision for making New Jersey a better place. “With nearly two years as governor under his belt, James McGreevey has not made a definite mark on his state,” remarked Patrick Murray, associate director of the poll.

When asked by interviewers if they could “recall the name of the current Governor of New Jersey,” just two-thirds (68%) spontaneously volunteered McGreevey’s name, although most then recognized him as their governor when reminded. Murray commented, “From simple name recognition to actual policy goals and accomplishments, New Jerseyans seem to have a muddled picture of their governor.”

The survey results indicate that the governor has done little to make New Jersey residents take positive notice of his job performance. While most residents (58%) say that McGreevey has performed up to what they expected of him, only 9 percent feel he has exceeded their expectations. And another 21 percent say he has done a worse job than they expected. Even among his own partisans, only 1-in-10 Democrats (9%) say he has done better than expected compared to 16 percent who say he has done worse.

Additionally, while 41 percent of residents would characterize the governor as someone who generally makes good choices in routine matters, another 30 percent see McGreevey as someone who seems to make a lot of mistakes in his day to day life as governor.

Murray noted, “One of the major issues from the poll is the number of people who do not register an opinion of the governor. As time passes, we would have expected residents to become more familiar with the state’s chief executive. Yet, we are seeing the opposite happen with the current incumbent.”

The number of New Jerseyans unable or unwilling to rate McGreevey’s current job performance has increased over the past few months – from 15 percent in May to 22 percent in the current poll. At that time the remainder also divided their opinion, as 43 percent approved of his job performance and 42 percent disapproved. While the current ratings are an improvement over the negative 34-45 job rating he registered back in February, they are still lower than the positive numbers McGreevey recorded during the first nine months of his term.

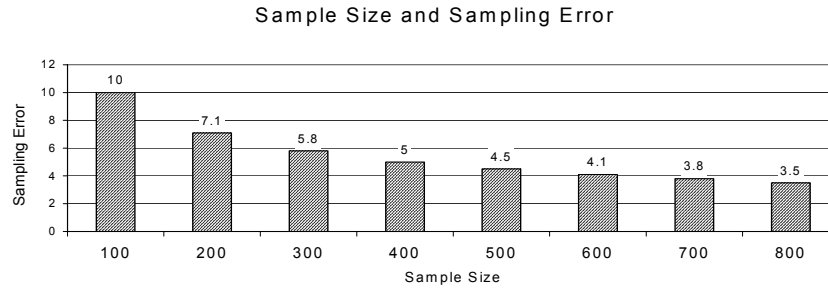
With the governor's approval stagnating, there is cause for concern among some of his key constituencies. While most Democrats give the governor from their party positive ratings, this number has dropped to 52 percent – down from 58 percent in May. Women remain about evenly split in their opinion of the governor, but the percentage who actually approve of the job he is doing has dropped from 42 percent in May to 36 percent in the current poll. One-in-four female residents (25%) now have no opinion on the governor's job – up from 16 percent in May.

Among the key group of independent voters in the state, uncertainty about McGreevey has increased tremendously over this past summer. In May, 16 percent offered no opinion on the job McGreevey was doing as Governor. The current survey finds this number having doubled to 33 percent. This uncertainty among independents has come at the expense of the governor's approval. During the last few months, McGreevey's approval rating among independents has dropped from 40 percent to 26 percent while his disapproval numbers have remained fairly stable – 45 percent in May to 41 percent now.

The most recent *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* was conducted by telephone with a random sample of 802 New Jersey adults from September 2 to 8, 2003. The sampling error associated with the full sample is ± 3.5 percent

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP144-3) September 14, 2003

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted by telephone from September 2 to 8 with a scientifically selected random sample of 802 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 be less likely to agree with a statement, 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:

“Can you recall the name of the current Governor of New Jersey?” [JM1]

	<u>Names</u> <u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Other name</u> <u>given</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	68%	7%	25%	100%	(802)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>					
--Democrat	69	6	26	101	(285)
--Independent	66	6	28	100	(212)
--Republican	72	11	17	100	(195)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	70	8	22	100	(386)
--Female	66	6	28	100	(416)
<u>Region</u>					
--North	66	7	28	101	(367)
--Central	77	7	16	100	(205)
--South	67	7	26	100	(215)
<u>Race</u>					
--White	74	7	20	101	(597)
--Black & Hispanic	54	5	41	100	(143)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 to 29	49	7	45	101	(105)
--30 to 49	72	7	21	100	(326)
--50 and older	74	6	20	100	(344)

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way James McGreevey is handling his job as Governor?”
[JM2]

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	38%	40%	22%	100%	(802)
<i><u>Party Affiliation</u></i>					
--Democrat	52	29	19	100	(285)
--Independent	26	41	33	100	(212)
--Republican	26	59	15	100	(195)
<i><u>Gender</u></i>					
--Male	41	41	18	100	(386)
--Female	36	39	25	100	(416)
<i><u>Region</u></i>					
--North	39	37	24	100	(367)
--Central	38	42	20	100	(205)
--South	39	40	21	100	(215)
<i><u>Race</u></i>					
--White	36	43	21	100	(597)
--Black & Hispanic	48	29	22	99	(143)
<i><u>Age</u></i>					
--18 to 29	50	23	28	101	(105)
--30 to 49	36	42	22	100	(326)
--50 and older	36	46	18	100	(344)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
May 2003	43	42	15	100	(1002)
<i><u>Party Affiliation</u></i>					
--Democrat	58	29	13	100	(313)
--Independent	40	45	16	101	(322)
--Republican	29	57	15	101	(242)
<i><u>Gender</u></i>					
--Male	44	42	15	101	(482)
--Female	42	42	16	100	(520)
--February 2003	34	45	21	100	(802)
<i><u>Party Affiliation</u></i>					
--Democrat	43	34	23	100	(254)
--Independent	33	45	22	100	(238)
--Republican	20	68	11	99	(205)
<i><u>Gender</u></i>					
--Male	37	44	19	100	(388)
--Female	30	46	23	99	(414)
--September 2002	43	32	26	101	(804)
<i><u>Party Affiliation</u></i>					
--Democrat	55	23	22	100	(257)
--Independent	39	36	25	100	(212)
--Republican	32	46	21	99	(227)
<i><u>Gender</u></i>					
--Male	41	32	27	100	(379)
--Female	44	31	24	99	(425)
--June 2002	50	24	26	100	(801)
--March 2002	45	21	34	100	(803)

“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 2003	9%	21%	58%	12%	100%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	9	16	65	9	99	(285)
--Independent	7	22	58	13	100	(212)
--Republican	6	27	58	9	100	(195)
<i>Region</i>						
--North	8	19	60	13	100	(367)
--Central	10	25	57	9	101	(205)
--South	10	19	59	13	101	(215)
<i>Gender</i>						
--Male	9	22	57	11	99	(386)
--Female	9	19	59	13	100	(416)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
May 2003	9	24	59	8	100	(1002)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	14	21	59	6	100	(313)
--Independent	6	27	61	7	101	(322)
--Republican	6	27	58	8	99	(242)
September 2002	13	15	61	12	101	(804)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	18	14	57	11	100	(257)
--Independent	11	17	64	8	100	(212)
--Republican	8	16	65	11	100	(227)

“Do you think he does or does NOT have a clear vision for making New Jersey a better place to live?” [JM4]

	<u>Does</u>	<u>Does Not</u>	<u>No opinion/ DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	42%	38%	21%	101%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	51	29	20	100	(285)
--Independent	34	45	21	100	(212)
--Republican	33	50	17	100	(195)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
February 2003	42	43	15	100	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	51	32	17	100	(254)
--Independent	42	44	14	100	(238)
--Republican	27	62	11	100	(205)

“Thinking about McGreevey’s term as Governor so far, would you say that he has major accomplishments to point to, minor accomplishments, or no real accomplishments?” [JM5]

	<u>Major</u>	<u>Minor</u>	<u>No Real Ones</u>	<u>No opinion/ DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	11%	45%	32%	12%	100%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	13	54	23	10	100	(285)
--Independent	8	40	37	15	100	(212)
--Republican	9	37	46	8	100	(195)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
February 2003	11	41	37	12	101	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	17	48	26	9	100	(254)
--Independent	6	39	41	14	100	(238)
--Republican	7	35	52	6	100	(205)

“Regardless of how you feel about the job he is doing, do you think that McGreevey generally makes good choices in the day to day matters he deals with or does he seem to make a lot of mistakes in his day to day life as governor?” [JM6]

	<u>Makes good choices</u>	<u>Makes mistakes</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	41%	30%	7%	22%	100%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	50	25	7	18	100	(285)
--Independent	33	32	9	26	100	(212)
--Republican	35	37	8	20	100	(195)
<i>Gender</i>						
--Male	45	32	7	16	100	(386)
--Female	38	28	7	27	100	(416)
<i>Region</i>						
--North	40	27	7	25	99	(367)
--Central	38	35	6	21	100	(205)
--South	46	29	8	17	100	(215)
<i>Race</i>						
--White	40	32	7	21	100	(597)
--Black & Hispanic	47	25	6	21	99	(143)