

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

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## KERRY LEADS BUSH IN NEW JERSEY

With the war in Iraq foremost in voters' minds, presumptive Democratic nominee John Kerry leads President George W. Bush in New Jersey by a narrow 43 to 37 percent, with 19 percent undecided. By including those undecided voters who say they "lean" towards one or the other candidate, Kerry's lead over Bush expands to 49 favoring the Massachusetts Senator to 40 percent favoring the President.

These are the main findings of the most recent *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* poll, which was conducted with 643 registered voters interviewed by telephone between April 28 and May 4. The poll has a sampling error of  $\pm 4$  percentage points.

There is a sense in the Garden State that the stakes of this presidential election are higher than normal. Fully three-quarters of registered voters say they have "a lot" of interest in November's election, compared to just half of registered voters at this time in both 2000 and 1996, the last two presidential election years. In fact, even in October of 2000, less than a month before election day, just 63 percent said they had a similar level of interest in that election.

George Bush is a sharply polarizing figure in New Jersey—41 percent say they have a favorable opinion of him, and 44 percent have an unfavorable one. And in addition to being evenly divided, opinions are intensely held. About one-third of all registered voters (31%) say their impression of Bush is very unfavorable, slightly larger than the one-quarter (23%) who say their view of him is very favorable.

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

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John Kerry is less well known by Garden State residents, whose nominating primary is not even scheduled to take place until June 8. At this point, registered voters' introduction to Kerry is generally positive: 41 percent hold a favorable view of him, 27 percent hold an unfavorable view, and fully one-third (32%) offer no opinion of the Democrats' expected flag-bearer. In contrast, just 15 percent of registered voters in New Jersey offer no assessment of Bush.

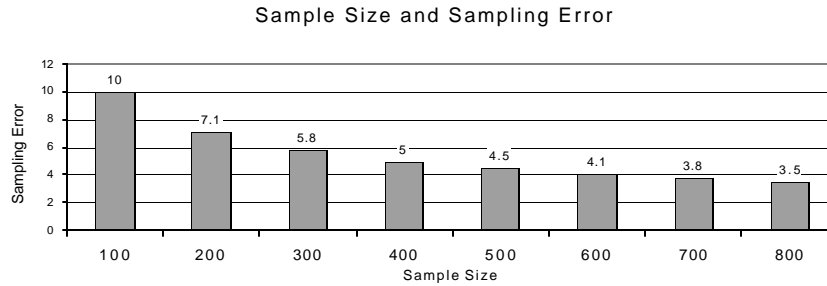
The Rutgers-based survey asked its respondents if there was any one issue that stood out in their decisions of whom to vote for in the presidential election. About two-thirds cited a particular issue, led by 27 percent citing the war in Iraq. Another 11 percent spoke about economic concerns, and about one-in-ten each mentioned terrorism or various domestic concerns. One-in-three said that no particular issue stood out for them.

Kerry's lead in New Jersey is built on three bases: First, even though not well known by the state's Democrats, he gets solid support. Even now, months before their convention and the choice of a running mate, 81 percent of Democrats say they plan to vote for Kerry. While Bush gets 85 percent of Republican support, there are more Democrats than Republicans in New Jersey. Second, Kerry leads among the strata of the state's independent voters, besting Bush by a margin of 42 to 31 percentage points. Finally, Kerry holds a 10 point lead among women voters in New Jersey, while Bush and Kerry run neck-and-neck among men.

Cliff Zukin, director of the poll commented, "New Jersey has been considered a solid Democratic state in the last few presidential contests, and it looks like that will probably be the case this year. Four years ago Al Gore easily won New Jersey by a double digit margin. Unless there is some dramatic foreign happening that causes a rally for the President, Kerry will probably increase his lead as he becomes better known after the Democratic convention."

**BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP145P-1), FRIDAY, MAY 7, 2004**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted from April 28 to May 4 with a scientifically selected random sample of 802 New Jersey adult residents interviewed by telephone. This sampling yielded a total of 643 respondents who reported being registered to vote. 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 for registered voters is  $\pm 4$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey registered voters were found to have a favorable opinion of a presidential candidate, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46 and 54 percent ( $50 \pm 4$ ) had all New Jersey registered 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 questions referred to in this release are as follows:

“As you know, there will be an election for president this fall. How much interest do you have in the coming presidential election – a lot, some, a little, or none at all” (Q3)

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little/ None</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>May 2004</b>						
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(643)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	77	13	9	1	100	(209)
--Independent	77	12	10	--	99	(203)
--Republican	82	10	7	1	100	(163)
<u>Vote Intention</u>						
--Bush	83	9	6	1	99	(227)
--Undecided	63	20	13	3	99	(117)
--Kerry	80	13	7	--	100	(264)
<b><u>PAST ELECTIONS</u></b>						
<b>June 2000</b>						
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(618)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	45	29	24	2	100	(272)
--Independent	41	35	23	1	100	(235)
--Republican	56	28	15	1	100	(194)
<b>June 1996</b>						
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(646)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	57	31	11	1	100	(212)
--Independent	50	39	9	--	98	(204)
--Republican	56	32	12	--	100	(176)



"If the election for President was held today and you had to choose right now, would you vote for (ROTATE NAMES) *George W. Bush, the Republican* or *John Kerry, the Democrat?*" (Q5)

	<u><b>Bush</b></u>	<u><b>Undecided</b></u>	<u><b>Kerry</b></u>	<u><b>Other</b></u>	<u><b>Total</b></u>	<u><b>(n)</b></u>
<b>May 2004</b>						
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(619)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	6	12	81	1	100	(201)
--Independent	31	23	42	4	100	(197)
--Republican	85	10	4	--	99	(162)
<u>Education</u>						
--High School or less	35	21	42	3	101	(168)
--Some College	36	20	43	2	101	(127)
--College Graduate	38	17	43	1	99	(320)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	41	19	39	2	100	(489)
--Black and Hispanic	19	19	62	1	101	(91)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	42	14	43	1	100	(293)
--Female	32	24	42	2	100	(326)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-29	31	6	61	3	101	(36)
--30-49	38	19	42	1	100	(246)
--50-64	39	17	43	1	100	(211)
--65+	30	27	40	3	100	(121)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>						
<b>January 2004, Reg. voters*</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(823)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	8	16	73	2	99	(261)
--Independent	40	23	30	5	98	(271)
--Republican	81	10	10	--	101	(202)
<b><u>PAST ELECTIONS</u></b>						
<b>June 2000, Reg. voters</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(602)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	9	11	79	1	100	(204)
--Independent	36	18	39	8	101	(176)
--Republican	86	7	4	4	101	(162)
<b>June 1996, Reg. voters</b>						
	<u><b>Dole</b></u>	<u><b>Undecided</b></u>	<u><b>Clinton</b></u>	<u><b>Other</b></u>	<u><b>Total</b></u>	<u><b>(n)</b></u>
	<b>35%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(633)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	7	3	89	1	100	(210)
--Independent	35	14	48	4	101	(199)
--Republican	74	8	18	1	101	(172)

\*The January 2004 poll question pitted President Bush against an unnamed Democrat.

**NEW JERSEY-NATIONAL COMPARISON\***

	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Kerry</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
CBS News/New York Times April 23-27, 2004	44%	9%	46%	1%	100%	(856)
New Jersey Registered Voters, April 28-May 4, 2004	37%	19%	43%	2%	101%	(619)

“Is your general impression of George Bush/John Kerry favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion about him? (IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE, PROBE: Is that very (favorable/unfavorable) or somewhat (favorable/unfavorable)?” (Q8/Q9)

May 2004	<u>Very Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very Unfavorable</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>BUSH</b>							
Registered Voters	23%	18%	13%	31%	15%	100%	(643)
Party ID							
--Democrat	4	10	20	54	12	100	(209)
--Independent	18	19	14	33	15	99	(203)
--Republican	58	29	6	2	5	100	(163)
<b>KERRY</b>							
Registered Voters	17%	24%	10%	17%	32%	100%	(643)
Party ID							
--Democrat	34	36	1	1	27	99	(209)
--Independent	16	25	11	17	32	101	(203)
--Republican	1	10	23	41	25	101	(163)
<b>PAST ELECTIONS</b>							
<b>June 2000, Reg. voters</b>							
BUSH	12%	28%	16%	14%	30%	100%	(618)
GORE	14%	32%	14%	14%	25%	99%	(618)
<b>June 1996, Reg. voters</b>							
DOLE	13%	24%	19%	16%	26%	99%	(646)
CLINTON	18%	35%	17%	18%	13%	101%	(646)

“Is there any one issue that stands out as the most important in determining who to vote for in this election, or not?” (Q10) “What is most important for you?” (Q11)

May 2004	Registered <u>Voters</u>	VOTE INTENTION		
		<u>Bush</u>	<u>Kerry</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
War in Iraq	<b>27%</b>	22%	34%	25%
Terrorism / Homeland security	<b>8</b>	19	--	4
The economy / jobs / stock market	<b>11</b>	8	14	15
Other domestic issues	<b>8</b>	8	9	4
Candidate’s personal qualities: Morals / ethics / personal integrity / age / honesty	<b>6</b>	9	4	4
Other issues	<b>3</b>	3	3	3
Don’t Know	<b>4</b>	1	4	9
No specific issue stands out	<b>34</b>	29	32	37
Total	<b>101%</b>	99%	100%	101%
(n)	<b>(643)</b>	(227)	(264)	(117)