

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

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NEW JERSEY PUBLIC REACTS TO GOVERNOR'S RESIGNATION

New Jerseyans are trying to sort out the recent bombshell dropped by James McGreevey. On Thursday, the Governor announced that he is gay and will resign from office because of issues surrounding an extramarital affair with another man. On first hearing the news, New Jerseyans are divided on whether McGreevey should have stuck out his term. However, many also feel there is more to the story than what the Governor revealed in his unprecedented statement and most say this is just one of many potentially damaging personal dealings he has kept from the public's eye.

Initial public reaction to this shakeup at the State House was obtained by the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* in a telephone survey conducted August 12 and 13 with a scientifically selected sample of 400 New Jersey adults. The poll has a sampling error margin of plus or minus 5 percentage points.

Most New Jersey residents – 56 percent – were taken by surprise by the news that the governor is, in his own words, “a gay American.” However, a sizable minority of 41 percent said that the revelation really didn't shock them.

Residents are evenly split on whether the details revealed thus far warrant the Governor's resignation. Nearly half – 44 percent – say that, based on what they know of the situation, McGreevey did not need to leave office, whereas an identical 44 percent say he did the right thing in stepping down. The feeling that this issue is grounds for resignation has grown as the story developed. In interviews conducted on the day of the announcement, more surveyed adults felt that McGreevey should have stayed on through 2005 by a margin of 49 to

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

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39 percent. By Friday, this sentiment had reversed with 50 percent of those interviewed on that day saying his resignation was justified to 40 percent who felt he should stay in office.

“This is a rapidly developing story,” remarked Patrick Murray, acting director of the poll, “and each day’s news cycle will cause the public to re-evaluate their position. This poll gives us a snapshot of New Jersey’s initial reaction to this unprecedented event.”

The poll also found a clear partisan divide on this issue – 6-in-10 Democrats say McGreevey should stay while a similar 6-in-10 Republicans say he should go. Political independents are somewhat more likely to feel the Governor should resign (47%) than serve out his term (40%).

The public is also split on the timing of the Governor’s departure. Forty-five percent agree with his decision to wait until November to step down, thus allowing Senate President Richard Codey to fill the remainder of McGreevey’s term. However, a similar 44 percent feel he should leave office now in order to allow for a special election this year. Again, opinion on this aspect of his resignation shows a sharp partisan divide. A majority of Democrats (62%) agree with the Governor’s decision to wait until November to leave office, while 3-in-4 Republicans (76%) – many undoubtedly sensing a unique opportunity to retake the State House – want McGreevey to step aside immediately. Independents are divided – 45 percent would prefer McGreevey’s resignation to be effective immediately compared to 46 percent who feel it is better for him to allow the Senate president to fill in as acting governor through 2005.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Governor’s confession has had no significant impact on the public’s view of his job performance. In a poll taken earlier this month, New Jerseyans were split, with 43 percent who approved of McGreevey’s performance as governor compared to 41 percent who disapproved. On the heels of his announcement, McGreevey’s job rating now stands at 45 percent approve to 39 percent disapprove – a slight improvement, but within the poll’s margin of error. The Governor’s favorability ratings after the news are also unchanged – 36 percent have a favorable impression of him, 33 an unfavorable impression and 31 percent give no opinion.

“The Governor and his family are surely registering sympathy from many New Jerseyans for the painful ordeal they are going through,” Murray commented. “Most do not want to kick McGreevey when he is down. However, there is a sneaking suspicion that we have not heard the full story and there may be other skeletons in the closet.”

The poll found that many New Jerseyans are skeptical that all the details surrounding this issue have been revealed. A majority (60%) suspect that there is more to the story that

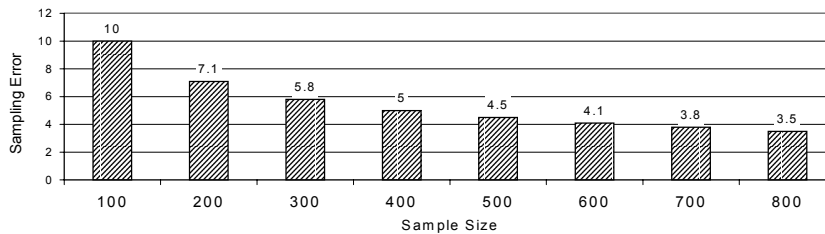
could further damage the Governor. Only 23 percent say that James McGreevey revealed all the relevant details in his statement on Thursday.

It appears that many New Jerseyans feel that questions surrounding this relationship are just the tip of the iceberg. Throughout his term, McGreevey's reputation has been tainted by the actions of colleagues which have lead to investigations, indictments and resignations. Only 1-in-4 residents (24%) feels that McGreevey has been forthcoming about all his personal dealings. More than twice as many – 58 percent – believe he has kept many things from the public.

Prospects for the Governor's re-election were not looking good even before this news hit. A *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* conducted earlier this month showed that just 34 percent of registered voters in the state were ready to commit to a second McGreevey term. At that time, independents said they were more likely to vote for the yet-to-be-named Republican candidate (30%) than for the incumbent (25%). Even so, it appears that the news about his sexuality would not have mattered to most voters. Only 10 percent of registered voters feel that these recent revelations would have figured into their ballot choice had McGreevey stuck out his term and ran for re-election in 2005. And the vast majority of those voters say the real problem for them is how he handled the situation and not the fact that he is gay.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP147-S) AUGUST 15, 2004

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted August 12 and 13 with a scientifically selected random sample of 400 New Jersey adult residents interviewed by telephone. 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 ± 5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to have a favorable opinion of a presidential candidate, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 45 and 55 percent (50 ± 5) had all New Jersey adults 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:

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way James McGreevey is handling his job as Governor?” [G1]

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12-13, 2004					
All Adults	45%	39%	16%	100%	(400)
Registered Voters	45%	42%	14%	101%	(317)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>					
--Democrat	62	20	18	100	(128)
--Independent	41	42	17	100	(121)
--Republican	24	66	10	100	(89)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	46	40	14	100	(192)
--Female	44	38	18	100	(208)
<u>Know Someone Who is Gay</u>					
--Yes, closely	40	46	14	100	(164)
--Yes, but not close	45	42	14	101	(123)
--No	53	26	21	100	(104)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
Early August 2004					
All Adults	43%	41%	17%	101%	(800)
Registered Voters	43	44	13	100	(624)
January 2004	34%	46%	21%	101%	(904)
September 2003	38%	40%	22%	100%	(802)
May 2003	43%	42%	15%	100%	(1002)
February 2003	34%	45%	21%	100%	(802)
September 2002	43%	32%	26%	101%	(804)
June 2002	50%	24%	26%	100%	(801)
March 2002	45%	21%	34%	100%	(803)

“Is your general impression of McGreevey 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)?” [G2]

	<u>Very Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very Unfavorable</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12-13, 2004	18%	18%	11%	22%	31%	100%	(400)
All Adults							
Registered Voters	17%	18%	13%	23%	28%	99%	(317)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>							
--Democrat	30	21	8	8	34	101	(128)
--Independent	18	22	9	24	28	101	(121)
--Republican	4	8	22	41	24	99	(89)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	18	20	12	24	25	99	(192)
--Female	19	15	9	20	37	100	(208)
<u>Know Someone Who is Gay</u>							
--Yes, closely	21	14	13	24	28	100	(164)
--Yes, but not close	14	20	12	22	31	99	(123)
--No	17	22	5	18	38	100	(104)

PAST SURVEYS

Early August 2004	13%	23%	15%	19%	31%	101%	(800)
January 2004	---	36	---	43	---	21	100 (904)
February 2003	8	20	15	17	39	99	(802)
March 2002	---	51	---	19	---	30	100 (803)

“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?” [G3]

	<u>Good choices</u>	<u>Makes mistakes</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12-13, 2004	41%	36%	3%	19%	99%	(400)
All Adults						
Registered Voters	38%	39%	5%	19%	101%	(317)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>						
--Democrat	57	23	5	14	99	(128)
--Independent	39	41	5	15	100	(121)
--Republican	23	51	1	25	100	(89)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
Early August 2004	40%	34%	7%	19%	100%	(800)
September 2003	41%	30%	7%	22%	100%	(802)

“Did you see or hear anything about the Governor's press conference?” [G4]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12-13, 2004	87%	13%	100%	(400)
All Adults				
Registered Voters	89%	11%	100%	(317)

“The governor announced at his press conference that he is gay and that he had a homosexual relationship while he was married. Did the news that McGreevey is gay surprise you, or not?” [G5]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12-13, 2004					
All Adults	56%	41%	3%	100%	(400)
Registered Voters	55%	42%	3%	100%	(317)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	65	34	2	101	(128)
--Independent	54	44	2	100	(121)
--Republican	52	43	5	100	(89)

“The Governor also announced that he will resign from office on November 15. Based on what you know or have heard, should he have resigned or should he have served out his term in office?” [G6]

	<u>Should have resigned</u>	<u>Serve out term</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12-13, 2004					
All Adults	44%	44%	11%	99%	(400)
Registered Voters	44%	44%	12%	100%	(317)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	32	61	8	101	(128)
--Independent	47	40	12	99	(121)
--Republican	60	28	12	100	(89)
<i>Know Someone Who is Gay</i>					
--Yes, closely	40	51	9	100	(164)
--Yes, but not close	57	35	8	100	(123)
--No	36	44	20	100	(104)
<i>Day of Interview</i>					
--Thursday	39	49	12	100	(202)
--Friday	50	40	11	101	(198)

“The Senate President Richard Codey will take over as acting Governor through 2005. If McGreevey had resigned immediately there would have been a special election for Governor this November. Do you think he should have resigned now so we could elect a new Governor to take over in January or do you think it is better that the Senate President serve until next year's regular election?” [G7]

	<u>Resign immediately</u>	<u>Better to wait</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12-13, 2004					
All Adults	44%	45%	11%	100%	(400)
Registered Voters	44%	45%	11%	100%	(317)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	29	62	9	100	(128)
--Independent	45	46	9	100	(121)
--Republican	76	17	7	100	(89)
<i>Day of Interview</i>					
--Thursday	42	43	15	100	(202)
--Friday	46	47	7	100	(198)

“Do you think there was more to the story that would have caused further damage to McGreevey or did he basically reveal the major details?” [G8]

	<u>More to the story</u>	<u>Revealed major details</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12-13, 2004 All Adults	60%	23%	16%	99%	(400)
Registered Voters	63%	22%	15%	100%	(317)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>					
--Democrat	45	31	24	100	(128)
--Independent	71	18	11	100	(121)
--Republican	79	12	9	100	(89)
<u>Know Someone Who is Gay</u>					
--Yes, closely	63	28	9	100	(164)
--Yes, but not close	66	19	15	100	(123)
--No	50	22	27	99	(104)
<u>Day of Interview</u>					
--Thursday	57	25	18	100	(202)
--Friday	64	21	15	100	(198)

“Aside from this recent news about his private life, do you think that James McGreevey has been forthcoming about his personal dealings or do you think he has kept many things from the public?” [G9]

	<u>Has been forthcoming</u>	<u>Kept things from public</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12-13, 2004 All Adults	24%	58%	19%	101%	(400)
Registered Voters	23%	59%	18%	100%	(317)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>					
--Democrat	34	43	23	100	(128)
--Independent	24	63	13	100	(121)
--Republican	11	72	17	100	(89)

[ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY:]

“If McGreevey had decided to stick out his term and run for re-election in 2005, would it have mattered to you that he kept his sexuality private or would it have made no difference in your vote? [IF YES, ASK:] Does it matter more to you that he is gay or that he tried to hide things about his life?” [G10]

	<u>Would have mattered that he is gay</u>	<u>Would have mattered because he hid things</u>	<u>Would have made no difference</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12-13, 2004 Registered Voters	3%	7%	83%	7%	100%	(317)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>						
--Democrat	3	5	87	5	100	(102)
--Independent	3	4	85	9	101	(92)
--Republican	4	16	75	4	99	(73)