

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

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(Release 151-1)

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UP IN THE AIR IN NEW JERSEY

Presidential Race Hinges on Terrorism Concerns

With concerns about terrorism already rising before the latest Osama bin Laden tape was released, John Kerry holds an extremely precarious lead over George Bush in New Jersey. The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* shows the Democratic challenger with a 45 to 41 percent lead over the incumbent among likely voters, with 12 percent undecided. When "leaners" – voters who are initially undecided but say they lean to a candidate – are taken into account, the Senator's lead is 48 to 44 percent. However, more than two-thirds of the interviews in this poll took place before the bin Laden tape was aired on Friday.

"This has been perhaps the most volatile presidential election in recent history. Concerns about terrorism have led to wide swings among the New Jersey electorate throughout the fall," remarked Patrick Murray, acting director of the poll. "Early poll results last week indicated that the importance of terrorism in the vote decision was already on the rise, with a net gain going to President Bush."

Of the four issues which have been on the top of voters' minds this fall – terrorism, Iraq, the economy and health care – the clear primary issue is now terrorism. Four-in-ten voters (40%) identify this as their number one concern. And for those voters, Bush is tabbed as being better able to handle it, by a 78 to 16 percent margin.

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

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Fewer voters select economic concerns (23%), the war in Iraq (21%) or health care (13%) as the top issue in their vote. John Kerry is seen as the better man for the job on all three of these – 68 to 21 percent on economy, 68 to 21 percent on Iraq and 66 to 17 percent on health care.

The poll also found that nearly two-thirds of voters (63%) say that having a president who is a strong and decisive leader is extremely important to them. For voters who consider this quality to be critical, President Bush is the clear favorite – 57 percent of those who feel this personal quality is extremely important say Bush is stronger and more decisive, compared to 33 percent of the same group who feel Kerry has more of this quality.

Murray commented, “This campaign will be won or lost on which issues voters consider most important when they step into the booth on Tuesday. There is still a good chunk of voters who have not made up their minds. If enough feel that terrorism and personal resolve are the paramount concerns in this race on November 2nd, George Bush may be able to take New Jersey.”

In a poll immediately following the final debate, John Kerry was up by 13 points as voters became more focused on domestic concerns. However, while Senator Kerry has not visited the state since he was nominated, President Bush made a campaign stop in South Jersey on October 18. During that visit he focused almost exclusively on leading the war against terrorism. That stop, along with recent events, may have been a crucial difference to the Republican’s chances of claiming the Garden State’s 15 electoral votes.

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* was conducted by telephone with 740 likely voters from October 27 to 29, 2004. This sample has a margin of error of \pm 3.6 percent. It should be noted that 531 of these interviews were conducted on October 27 and 28, before the bin Laden tape was aired.

The poll does include some positive news for the Democrat in that New Jersey voters are still ambivalent about President Bush. They are basically divided on whether they have a favorable (44%) or unfavorable (43%) opinion of the incumbent. John Kerry does slightly better on this score with a 43 favorable to 38 unfavorable rating, although this is somewhat less positive than two weeks ago. Also, the Garden State electorate is not convinced that President Bush has done enough to earn a second term in the White

House – only 41 percent say he deserves to be re-elected compared to 51 percent who feel it is time for someone new.

“The new bin Laden tape will most likely heighten terrorism concerns among an already jittery New Jersey public,” commented Murray. “This could remind voters that President Bush has not been successful in capturing the man responsible for 700 lives lost in this state. On the other hand, it could elevate fears in such a way as to create a rally effect for the sitting president.”

Another factor in this race will be the impact of newly registered voters. New Jersey has added more than 460,000 new voters since last year’s legislative election. Poll results indicate that these newer voters prefer Kerry by a 2 to 1 margin. In a high turnout race, these voters can comprise anywhere from 5 to 10 percent of the total vote. In a tight race, these voters could determine the margin of victory.

Trends in the Race

Currently, the race in New Jersey appears to be trending towards George W. Bush. Over the past two weeks, the President has made significant gains among independents (cutting an 18 point deficit to 4), white voters (changing a 5 point deficit to an 8 point advantage) and in the southern part of the state where he campaigned earlier in the month (changing a 14 point deficit to a 4 point advantage).

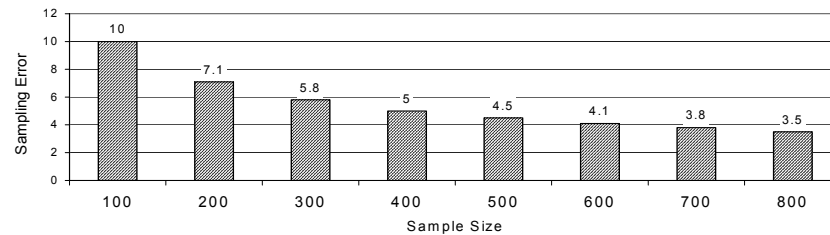
NEW JERSEY 2004					
VOTE TREND DYNAMICS					
<i>Kerry Advantage</i>					
<u>Voter Group</u>	<u>August</u>	<u>September</u>	<u>Oct 1-6</u>	<u>Oct 14-17</u>	<u>Oct 27-29</u>
Likely Voters	+20	+2	+6	+13	+4
<i>Party ID</i>					
Democrat	+88	+67	+82	+80	+80
Independent	+24	+3	+3	+18	+4
Republican	-76	-83	-85	-77	-82
<i>Gender</i>					
Male	+14	+1	-6	+10	+2
Female	+25	+4	+16	+16	+5
<i>Race</i>					
White	+14	-9	-3	+5	-8
Black/Hispanic	+46	+57	+64	+54	+60
<i>Age</i>					
18 to 29	+38	+42	+26	+28	+23
30 to 49	+17	-4	+9	+9	+8
50 to 64	+16	-4	+5	+15	-11
65 +	+19	+6	-2	+16	+4
<i>Education</i>					
H.S. or less	+19	+3	+4	+13	+4
Some college	+12	0	-5	+11	-3
College grad	+24	+5	+13	+13	+6
<i>Region of State</i>					
North	+22	+6	+5	+15	+11
Central	+25	+2	+4	+9	+1
South	+10	-5	+10	+14	-4

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP151-1) OCTOBER 31, 2004

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted from October 27 to 29 with a scientifically selected random sample of 877 registered voters. The figures in this release are based on a subsample of 740 voters who are considered most likely to go to the polls, based on their interest in the election as well as their past voting history. 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 likely voters is ± 3.6 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey likely 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 46.4 and 53.6 percent (50 ± 3.6) had all New Jersey likely 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.

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 on November 2nd. How much interest do you have in the coming presidential election – a lot, some, a little, or none at all” [W1]

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little/ None</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Registered Voters	79%	11%	8%	1%	99	(877)
Likely Voters	93%	6%	1%	--	100%	(740)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
Registered Voters						
October 14-17, 2004	82	11	6	--	99	(805)
October 1-6, 2004	82	12	6	1	101	(681)
September 2004	73	16	9	1	99	(738)
August 2004	79	13	8	--	100	(614)
May 2004	75	13	11	1	100	(643)

“If the election for President was held today and you had to choose right now, would you vote for (ROTATE Bush/Kerry) George W. Bush, the Republican; John Kerry, the Democrat; or Ralph Nader, the independent?” [W3]

	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Kerry</u>	<u>Nader/ Other</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004	41%	12%	45%	2%	100%	(740)
Likely Voters						
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	5	10	85	1	101	(235)
--Independent	39	11	43	6	99	(221)
--Republican	88	6	6	--	100	(217)
<u>Region</u>						
--North	38	11	49	2	100	(327)
--Central	42	13	43	3	101	(187)
--South	44	13	40	2	99	(218)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	47	12	39	2	100	(601)
--Black and Hispanic	13	9	73	4	99	(96)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	42	10	44	3	99	(339)
--Female	40	14	45	1	100	(401)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-29	32	9	55	4	100	(51)
--30-49	39	11	47	3	100	(283)
--50-64	48	15	37	--	100	(231)
--65+	40	13	44	3	100	(165)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
October 14-17, 2004						
Registered Voters	38%	11%	48%	3%	100%	(794)
Likely Voters	38%	10%	51%	2%	101%	(661)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	5	8	85	1	99	(227)
--Independent	33	13	51	2	99	(218)
--Republican	85	6	8	2	101	(172)
October 1-6, 2004						
Registered Voters	40%	11%	47%	1%	99%	(664)
Likely Voters	41%	10%	47%	1%	99%	(576)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	6	6	88	--	100	(201)
--Independent	41	13	44	3	101	(173)
--Republican	90	4	5	1	100	(167)
September 2004						
Registered Voters	39%	13%	43%	5%	100%	(719)
Likely Voters	41%	11%	43%	5%	100%	(639)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	10	9	77	3	99	(216)
--Independent	37	15	40	7	99	(187)
--Republican	89	4	6	1	100	(188)
August 2004						
Registered Voters	32%	12%	52%	3%	99%	(603)
Likely Voters	33%	12%	53%	3%	101%	(529)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	3	6	91	1	101	(190)
--Independent	27	14	51	8	100	(168)
--Republican	83	9	7	1	100	(133)

HEAD-TO-HEAD RACE ***[COMPOSITE TABLE OF QUESTIONS W3/4/5]**

"If the election for President was held today, would you vote for George Bush, the Republican; John Kerry, the Democrat; or Ralph Nader, the independent?" [W3]

IF RESPONDENT CHOSE A CANDIDATE, "Are you very sure about voting for (Bush/Kerry), or might you change your mind before the election?" [W4]

IF RESPONDENT WAS UNDECIDED, "At this moment do you lean more towards Bush or more towards Kerry?" [W5]

	Sure about Bush	Chooses Bush, but may change	>>> Initially Undecided <<<			Chooses Kerry, but may change	Sure about Kerry	Total	(n)
			Leans Bush	Does Not Lean	Leans Kerry				
October 27-29, 2004 Likely Voters	40%	2%	2%	9%	3%	3%	42%	101%	(732)
Party ID									
--Democrat	4	--	2	6	3	3	82	100	(234)
--Independent	38	2	4	8	4	7	38	101	(216)
--Republican	87	1	1	4	1	1	5	100	(216)
PAST SURVEYS									
October 14-17, 2004 Registered Voters	36%	3%	3%	6%	4%	4%	45%	101%	(781)
Likely Voters	36%	2%	2%	5%	4%	3%	48%	100%	(656)
Party ID									
--Democrat	4	--	--	3	6	2	84	99	(226)
--Independent	32	2	3	9	3	4	48	101	(216)
--Republican	85	1	3	1	2	2	6	100	(171)
October 1-6, 2004 Registered Voters	37%	4%	3%	5%	4%	5%	42%	100%	(656)
Likely Voters	39%	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%	43%	99%	(572)
Party ID									
--Democrat	5	1	1	1	4	8	81	101	(200)
--Independent	36	5	4	5	5	4	41	100	(170)
--Republican	86	4	3	2	--	1	5	101	(167)
September 2004 Registered Voters	34%	5%	3%	8%	5%	6%	38%	99%	(709)
Likely Voters	36%	5%	2%	8%	5%	5%	39%	100%	(632)
Party ID									
--Democrat	8	2	1	6	6	6	71	100	(216)
--Independent	28	10	4	10	7	7	34	100	(183)
--Republican	85	4	2	2	1	3	3	100	(188)
August 2004 Registered Voters	27%	6%	3%	7%	5%	7%	46%	101%	(592)
Likely Voters	28%	5%	2%	6%	5%	6%	47%	99%	(519)
Party ID									
--Democrat	3	1	1	2	3	5	86	101	(189)
--Independent	21	8	4	8	6	10	43	100	(160)
--Republican	74	9	3	3	4	2	5	100	(133)
May 2004 Registered Voters	30%	7%	3%	12%	5%	10%	34%	101%	(608)

* Those selecting another candidate have been omitted from this table.

“When did you decide who you would vote for – in the last few days, in the last couple of weeks, in the last month or two, or did you know all along? [W6]

	<u>Last few days</u>	<u>Last two weeks</u>	<u>Last month or two</u>	<u>Knew all along</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Liable Voters	3%	8%	19%	68%	2%	100%	(673)
<u>Vote Intention</u>							
--Bush	2	9	18	71	1	101	(307)
--Kerry	3	8	18	70	1	100	(328)

** Asked only of those respondents who have decided for whom they will vote in the Presidential election.*

“Is your vote more for [CANDIDATE NAMED] or more against [OTHER CANDIDATE]?” [W7]

	<u>“For” my candidate</u>	<u>“Against” other candidate</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Liable Voters	62%	34%	4%	100%	(673)
BUSH VOTERS	80	18	2	100	(307)
KERRY VOTERS	49	47	4	100	(328)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
October 14-17, 2004 Liable Voters	63%	31%	6%	100%	(621)
--Bush Voters	83	13	4	100	(248)
--Kerry Voters	50	44	6	100	(334)
September 2004 Liable Voters	56	41	3	100	(582)
--Bush Voters	80	19	2	101	(278)
--Kerry Voters	35	60	5	100	(261)
August 2004 Liable Voters	60	36	5	101	(487)
--Bush voters	84	14	2	100	(174)
--Kerry voters	45	50	5	100	(278)
<u>PAST ELECTIONS</u>					
November 1996 Liable Voters	57%	40%	4%	101%	(511)
--Clinton voters	71	26	4	101	(253)
--Dole voters	42	54	4	100	(192)
--Perot voters	44	51	5	100	(41)
October 1992 Liable Voters	57	38	6	101	(762)
--Clinton voters	52	41	7	100	(344)
--Bush 41 voters	61	36	3	100	(248)
--Perot voters	65	32	3	100	(128)

In your opinion, do you think President Bush deserves to be re-elected or is it time for someone new?
[W8]

	<u>Deserves Re-Election</u>	<u>Time for Someone New</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004	41%	51%	8%	100%	(740)
Likely Voters					
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	5	88	7	100	(235)
--Independent	38	54	8	100	(221)
--Republican	90	8	1	99	(217)

PAST SURVEYS

October 14-17, 2004	38	56	6	100	(661)
Likely Voters					
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	7	89	4	100	(227)
--Independent	33	58	9	100	(218)
--Republican	86	10	4	100	(172)

PAST ELECTIONS

November 1996*	46	46	8	100	(557)
Likely Voters					
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	84	11	4	99	(202)
--Independent	37	50	13	100	(151)
--Republican	14	83	4	101	(184)

* Question wording: Thinking about the job that Bill Clinton has done as President, do you think he deserves to be re-elected or do you think it's time for a change?

“Is your general impression of [INSERT NAME] favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion about him?” [W9]

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004					
GEORGE W. BUSH					
Likely Voters	44%	43%	13%	100%	(740)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
October 14-17, 2004	40	49	11	100	(661)
September 2004	44	45	11	100	(642)
August 2004	39	52	9	100	(534)
JOHN KERRY					
Likely Voters	43%	38%	18%	99%	(740)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
October 14-17, 2004	51	34	15	100	(661)
September 2004	44	32	24	100	(642)
August 2004	56	27	16	99	(534)

“Has the presidential campaign so far done a good job or bad job of addressing the issues that are important to you?” [W10]

	<u>Good Job</u>	<u>Bad Job</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Likely Voters	54%	39%	8%	101%	(740)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	57	35	8	100	(235)
--Independent	43	49	8	100	(221)
--Republican	65	29	6	100	(217)
<u>Vote Intention</u>					
--Bush	63	32	5	100	(307)
--Undecided	41	47	12	100	(89)
--Kerry	50	40	9	99	(328)
PAST SURVEYS					
October 14-17, 2004	62	30	8	100	(661)
October 1-6, 2004	51	37	12	100	(576)

“Of the following issues, which ONE will be most important in your vote on November 2nd – [RANDOMIZE ORDER]?” [W11]

	<u>War in Iraq</u>	<u>Terrorism and national security</u>	<u>Economy</u>	<u>Health Care</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Likely Voters	21%	40%	23%	13%	1%	2%	100%	(740)
<u>Party ID</u>								
--Democrat	28	19	31	21	--	1	100	(235)
--Independent	28	37	25	8	1	1	100	(221)
--Republican	10	68	14	6	--	1	99	(217)
<u>Gender</u>								
--Male	20	40	25	11	2	2	100	(339)
--Female	22	39	22	15	1	2	101	(401)
<u>Age</u>								
--18-29	15	43	30	11	--	--	99	(51)
--30-49	19	36	29	13	2	1	100	(283)
--50-64	24	43	15	14	2	1	99	(231)
--65+	22	41	18	14	--	5	100	(165)

“And which candidate will do a better job on that issue – Bush or Kerry?” [W12]

	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Kerry</u>	<u>Neither/Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Likely Voters	44%	46%	3%	7%	100%	(724)
<u>By Issue</u>						
War in Iraq	21	68	4	7	100	(166)
Terrorism and national security	78	16	3	4	101	(295)
Economy	21	68	2	9	100	(168)
Health Care	17	66	4	12	99	(87)

“How important is it to you personally that our next president be a strong and decisive leader – extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important?” [W13]

	<u>Extremely Important</u>	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not too important</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Likely Voters	63%	32%	2%	1%	1%	99%	(740)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	58	36	4	1	1	100	(235)
--Independent	60	36	2	2	--	100	(221)
--Republican	73	25	1	--	--	99	(217)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	55	39	3	2	1	100	(339)
--Female	71	26	2	--	1	100	(401)

“And which candidate is more strong and decisive – George W. Bush or John Kerry?” [W14]

	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Kerry</u>	<u>Neither/ Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Likely Voters	51%	36%	5%	9%	101%	(740)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	14	71	6	9	100	(235)
--Independent	53	29	7	10	99	(221)
--Republican	92	6	2	1	101	(217)
<u>Importance of Strong & Decisive</u>						
--Extremely important	57	33	4	7	101	(475)
--Not extremely important	41	42	5	12	100	(259)

“Which situation would you be more afraid of – if George Bush were re-elected president or if John Kerry were elected president?” [W15]

	<u>Scared if Bush re-elected</u>	<u>Scared if Kerry elected</u>	<u>Scared by both</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Likely Voters	45%	43%	2%	3%	7%	100%	(740)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	83	7	1	3	6	100	(235)
--Independent	46	42	3	3	6	100	(221)
--Republican	7	87	--	3	3	100	(217)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	47	44	2	2	5	100	(339)
--Female	44	42	2	3	9	100	(401)

“Regardless of who you are planning to vote for in this election, who do you think is going to win?” [W17]

	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Kerry</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Likely Voters	46%	30%	24%	100%	(740)
<u>Vote Intention</u>					
--Bush	80	1	18	99	(307)
--Undecided	33	12	55	100	(89)
--Kerry	18	62	20	100	(328)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
October 14-17, 2004	48	33	19	100	(661)
<u>Vote Intention</u>					
--Bush	80	5	15	100	(248)
--Undecided	36	22	42	100	(67)
--Kerry	25	57	18	100	(334)

“There will also be an election for the U.S. House of Representatives in your district this November. If the election were held today, would you vote for the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate?” [W18]

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October 27-29, 2004 Likely Voters	36%	43%	1%	20%	100%	(740)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	4	87	--	9	100	(235)
--Independent	33	38	1	29	101	(221)
--Republican	83	5	2	11	101	(217)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
October 14-17, 2004	33	45	--	21	99	(661)