

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

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(Release 152-3)

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The survey findings presented in this release and background memo appeared in the Friday, March 4, 2005 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll."

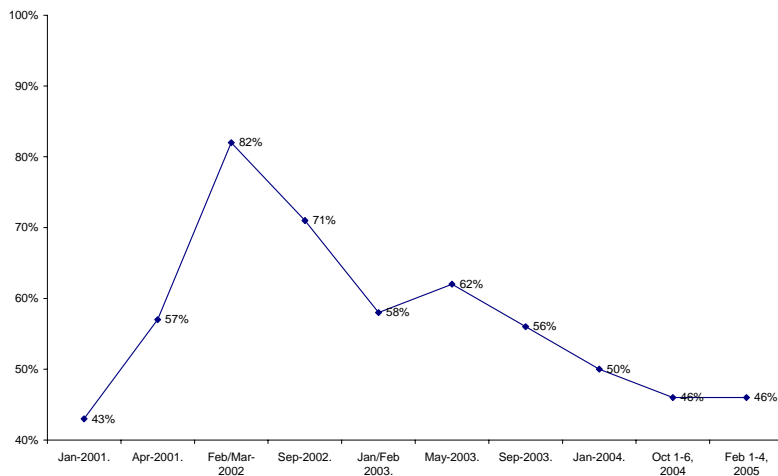
PRESIDENT BUSH'S APPROVAL AT LOWEST POINT **SINCE JANUARY 2001**

On Friday, President George W. Bush made New Jersey the first stop on his tour to build support for his Social Security plan. While national polls suggest that the President faces some challenges in persuading voters to support his plan, the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* demonstrates that Bush faces an additional hurdle in his efforts to sway New Jerseyans: a public increasingly disappointed in Bush's handling of his presidency.

Despite Bush's relatively strong showing in New Jersey in November, a *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* conducted between February 1 and 4

finds that more New Jersey registered voters disapprove (50 percent) than approve (46 percent) of the job Bush is doing as president. This marks the lowest level of approval for President Bush in New Jersey since he took office in January 2001 – when his approval rating was at 43 percent –

Approve of the way President Bush is handling his job



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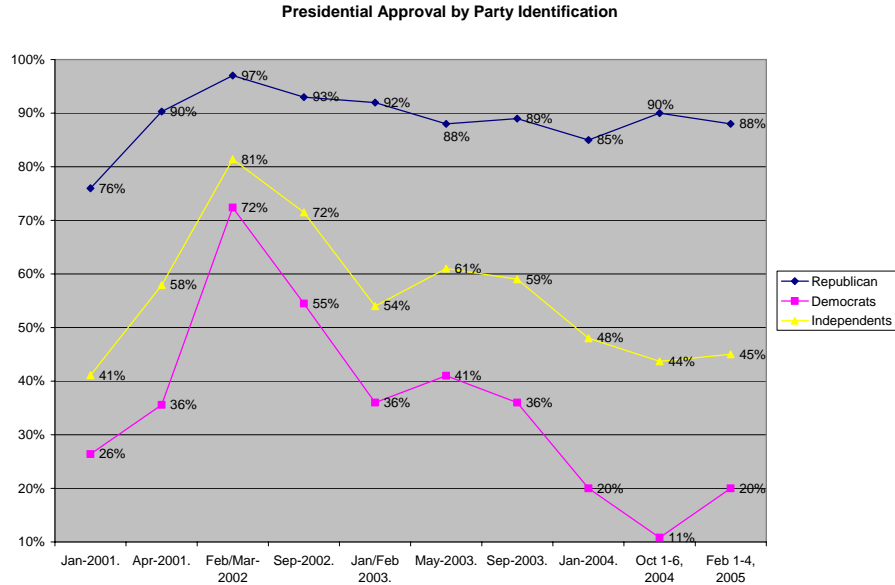
and represents the continuation of a steady decline in perceptions of Bush since the immediate post-9/11 period – when Bush’s approval rating was at 82 percent among registered voters.

Although Bush’s national job approval has also fallen off since the post-9/11 period, the latest national approval numbers for Bush still hover above the 50 percent mark.

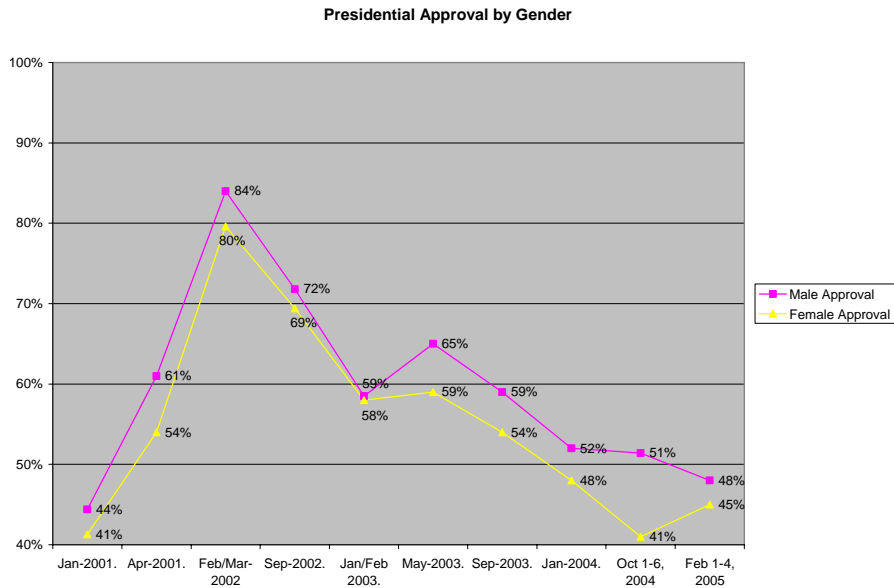
Jeffrey Levine, Director of the *Poll*, commented, “Despite a tendency for New Jerseyians to rally to the President after 9/11, Bush nevertheless begins his second term facing a New Jersey electorate as skeptical about his policies as they were at the start of his first term. Bush’s improved performance in New Jersey on Election Day 2004 does not appear to have been followed by a corresponding improvement in the public’s view of his performance in office.”

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* was conducted among a statewide sample of 678 New Jersey registered voters between February 1 and 4, 2005. The poll has a sampling error of +/- 3.8 percentage points.

Bush’s job performance ratings have become more polarized along partisan lines since the post-9/11 period. Support among Democrats declined from a high of 72 percent in February/March, 2002, to 20 percent in February, 2005. During the same period, Republican approval of Bush stayed well above the 80 percent mark. Partisans differed most in their perceptions of Bush just before the 2004 election, when Democratic approval of Bush’s job performance was at 11 percent and Republican approval at 90 percent.



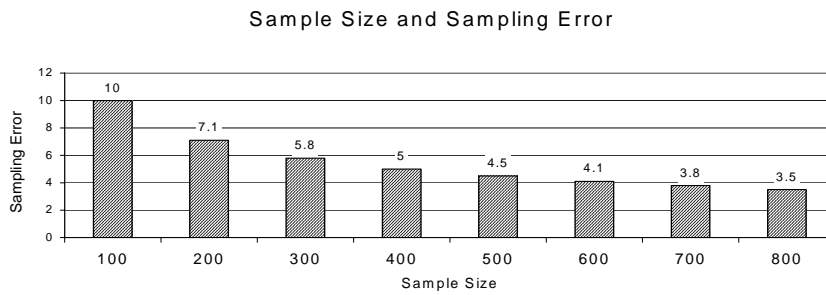
The gender gap on perceptions of Bush’s handling of the presidency tends to be relatively small, with men only slightly more positive than women toward Bush. In the most recent February, 2005 poll, 48 percent of men and 45 percent of women approved of the way Bush was handling his job. The most significant gender gap can be found just before the 2004 election – in October, 2004, 51 percent of men and just 41 percent of women reported approval of Bush’s job performance.



BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP 152-3) March 7, 2005

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted from February 1 to 4 with a scientifically selected random sample of 802 New Jersey adults. This sample yielded 678 adult residents registered to vote in New Jersey. Most of the figures in this release are based on this voter 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 ± 3.8 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 gubernatorial candidate, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.2 and 53.8 percent (50 ± 3.8) 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 referred to in this release are as follows:

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President?”
[QGB1]

*Note: All numbers are based on samples of registered voters.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2005	46%	50%	4%	100%	678
<i>Party Affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	20	77	3	100	(246)
--Independent	45	50	5	100	(207)
--Republican	88	9	3	100	(152)
<i>Gender</i>					
--Male	48	48	5	101	(323)
--Female	45	52	3	100	(355)
PAST SURVEYS					
--October 2004	46	49	6	101	(664)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	11	84	5	100	(223)
--Independent	44	47	10	101	(206)
--Republican	90	9	2	101	(183)
<i>Gender</i>					
--Male	51	44	5	100	(313)
--Female	41	53	7	101	(351)
--January 2004	50	45	6	101	(679)
--September 2003	56	38	6	100	(628)
--May 2003	62	31	8	101	(773)
--Jan/Feb 2003	58	30	12	100	(301)
--September 2002	71	24	6	101	(596)
--Feb/Mar 2002	82	15	4	101	(622)
--April 2001	57	34	9	100	(606)
--January 2001	43	21	37	101	(636)