

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

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RELEASE: SL/EP 36-4 (EP 86-4)

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RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Sunday's *Star-Ledger*. Other newspapers may also use this information in their Sunday editions. Electronic media may release after 5:00 P.M. Saturday, November 23, 1991. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

POLITICS IN NEW JERSEY:

INTEREST, KNOWLEDGE, MEDIA USE

A TWENTY YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

Special Note To Reporters

In the fall of 1971 the Eagleton Institute of Politics launched the first statewide public poll in New Jersey with a grant from the Wallace-Eljabar Foundation (currently The Fund for New Jersey). From 1983 to the present, *The Star-Ledger* has provided financial support to enable Eagleton to continue the Poll. Over the years, Eagleton has conducted 86 public polls on about 400 different topics.

To commemorate two decades of polling, the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll repeated a series of questions that were asked on the first poll in the fall of 1971. This release focuses on comparisons between 1971 and 1991.

The political environment in 1971 was similar to 1991. At both times, all of the seats in the New Jersey Senate and Assembly were up for election. However, in 1971 the incumbent Republicans had majorities in both the State Senate and the Assembly and the Governor, William Cahill, was also a Republican.

Overall New Jerseyans, are not very informed about their state government — 3-in-10 cannot identify the political party of the Governor; about 6-in-10 cannot name the political party that controls the state legislature; 3-in-4 did not know what state offices were being

ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

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contested in the past election; and 9-in-10 cannot correctly name their state senator. This is about the same level of knowledge that was noted in the first statewide poll conducted in the fall of 1971.

In both 1971 and 1991, newspapers are reported as the most valuable source of information about New Jersey politics. However, while newspapers have declined somewhat as the most valuable source of information about New Jersey politics, television has increased.

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll conducted by telephone with 800 state residents between October 22 and October 30, 1991 also found that interest in local, state, and national politics has declined since 1971.

POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

New Jersey residents are not very knowledgeable about state politics. Although Governor Jim Florio is a highly visible political figure, 70 percent of the state's residents can correctly identify him as a Democrat compared to 13 percent who think he is a Republican and 17 percent who say they do not know the party of their Governor.

Knowledge of the partisan affiliation of the Governor is about the same as it was in 1971. On the first statewide survey of New Jersey residents, 68 percent correctly identified Governor Cahill as a Republican compared to 20 percent who thought he was a Democrat, and 12 percent who did not know.

Even fewer New Jerseyans can identify the party that currently controls the state legislature. While 44 percent currently report that the legislature is dominated by Democrats, 21 percent think the Republicans are in control and 35 percent do not know.

Twenty years ago 43 percent were correct in noting that the Republicans controlled the legislature compared to 28 percent who thought the Democrats were in charge and 29 percent who did not know.

Only 10 percent can identify their state senator compared to 25 percent who gave an incorrect name and 65 percent who say they do not know the name of their state senator. This is an improvement from 1971 when only 2 percent knew their state senator's name, 23 percent gave an incorrect name, and 76 percent did not know their state senator's name.

Seventy-four percent of New Jerseyans could not identify the state offices that were up for election in November 1991. In comparison, 82 percent did not know this information in 1971.

Overall, it is the younger New Jersey residents who are less likely to have political information. For example, while 79 percent of those who are 50 years old or older know that Governor Florio is a Democrat, 73 percent who are 30-49 years old have this information compared to 53 percent of the 18-29 year old residents.

"It is not surprising that knowledge of New Jersey politics has not increased," commented Janice Ballou, Poll Director. "In the past twenty years there have not been significant changes in access to statewide sources of information. In addition, the emerging generations of the electorate are not attentive to state politics."

INTEREST IN POLITICS

More people in New Jersey are interested in national politics than in either state or local levels of government. While 77 percent of New Jerseyans are "very" (35%) or "somewhat" (42%) interested in national politics, 62 percent ("very" 19 %; somewhat 43%) feel this way about state politics, and 54 percent ("very" 16 %; somewhat 38%) say they are interested in local politics.

Overall, fewer New Jerseyans are interested in politics now than in 1971. The greatest decline is in local government which is now 13 points lower than the 67 percent in 1971. There is a 6 percentage point drop in interest in state government from 68 percent in 1971.

New Jerseyans' interest in national government had a modest 3 point decline from 80 percent twenty years ago.

Younger state residents are more likely than those who are 30 years old or older to report less interest in politics at all three levels of government.

SOURCES OF POLITICAL INFORMATION

Newspapers are the most common source of information about New Jersey politics. While 84 percent of the state's residents use newspapers to find out what is happening in New Jersey politics, 55 percent use television, 13 percent use radio, and 24 percent use other sources such as friends and acquaintances. Among these media sources, 60 percent feel that newspapers are the most valuable, compared to 20 percent who say television, 3 percent radio, and 10 percent who name another source.

Compared to twenty years ago, newspaper use has declined 6 points from 90 percent and radio use dropped 7 points from 20 percent. However, the use of television as a media source for information about New Jersey has increased 20 points from 35 percent in 1971.

There has been a similar shift in the media source residents consider to be the most valuable. Newspapers have decreased 10 points from 70 percent in 1971, while television has increased 7 points from 13 percent.

New Jerseyans who use newspapers and those who use the radio as a source of information about New Jersey politics are more likely to be satisfied with the coverage than those who use television. While 87 percent of those who use newspapers say they are "very" (30%) or "fairly" (57%) satisfied and 74 percent of those who listen to the radio feel this way, 65 percent of the television viewers are pleased with the quantity of the New Jersey information they receive.

Overall, in the past twenty years New Jerseyans satisfaction with newspaper and television coverage has increased, while satisfaction with radio is about the same. Satisfaction with newspaper coverage of New Jersey politics is up 10 points from 77 percent in 1971 and the rating of television information has improved 6 points from 59 percent. The 72 percent that was satisfied with radio coverage in 1971 is about the same as in the current poll.

Almost all of the state's residents who use a newspaper to get political information report that it is a New Jersey paper (88%), compared to just 11 percent who read an out-of-state newspaper. This is an 8 point increase from the 80 percent who used New Jersey newspapers in 1971. However, more state residents who use the radio for New Jersey information listen to out-of-state stations by a margin of 48 to 43 percent. In addition, in the past twenty years there has been an 8 point decline in the percentage who listen to New Jersey radio stations.

PARTISANSHIP AND IDEOLOGY

During the past twenty years New Jerseyans have become more Republican and less likely to describe themselves as liberals. Thirty percent of New Jerseyans now identify themselves as Democrats which is the same percentage as in 1971. However, there is a 9 point increase in self-identified Republicans up to 29 percent from 20 percent. Those saying they are independent have decreased 9 points from 38 percent to the current 29 percent.

Twenty years ago New Jerseyans were more likely to identify themselves as liberals than they are today. Since 1971 there has been a 7 point decline from 25 to 18 percent in liberal identification, a 4 point increase in conservatives from 23 to 27 percent, and an 8 point increase from 43 to 51 percent among those who say they are "in-between."

BACKGROUND MEMO--RELEASE SL/EP36-4 (EP86-4), SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1991

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between October 22 and October 30, 1991, when a random sample of 800 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of about ± 3.5 percent. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are presented below. The location of each question on the actual questionnaire is in brackets.

"As far as you know, is the Governor of New Jersey a Democrat or a Republican?" [Q.2]

	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total, 1991	70%*	13%	17%	100%	(800)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	71	16	13	100	(225)
--Independent	67	11	22	100	(303)
--Republican	75	13	12	100	(242)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 - 29	53	19	28	100	(155)
--30 - 49	73	14	13	100	(347)
--50 or over	79	9	13	101	(283)

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	20	68 *	12	100	(1,208)
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"Which party controls the New Jersey State Legislature--the Republicans or the Democrats?" [Q.3]

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total, 1991	44%*	21%	35%	100%	(800)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	45	22	33	100	(225)
--Independent	41	23	36	100	(303)
--Republican	51	18	31	100	(242)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 - 29	30	27	44	101	(155)
--30 - 49	51	19	30	100	(347)
--50 or over	48	20	32	100	(283)

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	28	43 *	29	100	(1,208)
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*Correct answer.

"Are you aware of what state offices are up for election in November? Which ones?" [Q.4]

	State <u>Senate</u>	State <u>Assembly</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Other</u>	Don't <u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total, 1991	8%	3%	12%	2%	74%	99%	(800)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
Total, 1971	5	4	7	2	82	100	(1,208)

"Do you happen to know who is now your State Senator in Trenton?" [Q.5]

	Names <u>Correctly</u>	Names <u>Incorrectly</u>	Don't <u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total, 1991	10%	25%	65%	100%	(800)
<i>Age</i>					
--18 - 29	4	19	77	100	(155)
--30 - 49	12	24	64	100	(346)
--50 or over	12	31	58	101	(282)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
Total, 1971	2	23	76	101	(1,208)

"Next, I'd like to know how interested you are in politics at various levels of government. First take local politics--are you very interested, somewhat interested, or not interested in local politics?" (Question repeated for state and national government.) [Q.7]

	Very <u>Interested</u>	Somewhat <u>Interested</u>	Not <u>Interested</u>	Don't <u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>LOCAL GOVERNMENT</u>						
Total, 1991	16%	38%	45%	--	99%	(800)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	6	40	55	--	101	(155)
--30 - 49	15	46	38	1	100	(347)
--50 or over	24	31	45	--	100	(283)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
Total, 1971	24	43	32	1%	100	(1,208)
<u>STATE GOVERNMENT</u>						
Total, 1991	19	43	36	1	99	(800)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	11	40	49	--	100	(155)
--30 - 49	21	50	27	2	100	(347)
--50 or over	23	40	36	1	100	(283)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
Total, 1971	15	53	31	2	101	(1,208)
<u>NATIONAL GOVERNMENT</u>						
Total, 1991	35	42	22	1	100	(800)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	24	47	29	--	100	(155)
--30 - 49	35	47	17	2	101	(347)
--50 or over	44	34	21	1	100	(283)

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	45	35	19	1	100	(1,208)
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"Where do you get information about what is happening in New Jersey politics?" [Q.22]

	<u>Newspapers</u>	<u>Television</u>	<u>Radio</u>	<u>Other</u>
Total, 1991	84%	55%	13%	24%
<u>Age</u>				
--18 - 29	75	53	13	23
--30 - 49	87	54	16	26
--50 or over	86	55	11	23

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	90	35	20	21
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"Which one of these do you consider most valuable?" [Q.23]

	<u>Some Considered Most Valuable</u>				<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	<u>Newspapers</u>	<u>Television</u>	<u>Radio</u>	<u>Other</u>			
Total, 1991	60%	20%	3%	10%	7	100%	(785)

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	70	13	5	10	1	99	(1,208)
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(IF A NEWSPAPER IS MENTIONED)

"Is that a New Jersey, New York, or Philadelphia newspaper?" [Q.24b]

	<u>New Jersey</u>	<u>Not New Jersey</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	Total, 1991	88%		

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	80	19	99	(1,087)
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"How satisfied are you with the coverage given New Jersey politics by this newspaper--very satisfied, fairly satisfied, fairly dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?" [Q.25]

	<u>Very Satisfied</u>	<u>Fairly Satisfied</u>	<u>Fairly Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Very Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total, 1991	30%	57%	6%	2%	5%	100%	(698)

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	20	57	12	5	6	100	(1,087)
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(IF TELEVISION IS MENTIONED)

"How satisfied are you with the amount of information you get from television about New Jersey politics--very satisfied, fairly satisfied, fairly dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?" [Q.26]

	<u>Very Satisfied</u>	<u>Fairly Satisfied</u>	<u>Fairly Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Very Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total, 1991	14%	51%	20%	9%	5%	99%	(445)

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	11	48	26	10	6	101	(423)
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(IF RADIO IS MENTIONED)

"Is the radio station you get this information from a New Jersey station or not?" [Q.27]

	<u>New Jersey</u>	<u>Not New Jersey</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total, 1991	43%	48%	10%	101%	(123)

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	51	43	7	101	(242)
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"How satisfied are you with the amount of information you get from the radio station you listen to about New Jersey politics--very satisfied, fairly satisfied, fairly dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?" [Q.28]

	<u>Very Satisfied</u>	<u>Fairly Satisfied</u>	<u>Fairly Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Very Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total, 1991	22%	52%	17%	4%	7%	102%	(123)

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	19	53	17	8	4	101	(242)
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"In politics as of today, do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or something else? [Q.D1]

	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Other/ Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total, 1991	30%	29%	29%	11%	99%	(800)

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	30	20	38	12	100	(1,208)
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"Regardless of the political party you might favor, do you consider yourself to be a liberal, conservative, or somewhere in between?" [Q.D3]

	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>In Between</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total, 1991	18%	27%	51%	4%	100%	(800)

PAST SURVEYS

Total, 1971	25	23	43	10	101	(1,208)
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