

# The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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## RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in *The Star-Ledger*. Other newspapers may also use this information in their Tuesday editions. Electronic media may release after 5:00 P.M. Monday, September 21, 1992. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll."

## ECONOMIC ISSUES DOMINATE VOTER CONCERNS;

### CLINTON SEEN AS BETTER ABLE TO HANDLE IMPORTANT ISSUES

Economic concerns top the list of issues New Jersey voters think are important in the 1992 presidential campaign. More than 9-in-10 voters say that both "providing jobs" and "managing the economy" are very important issues in this presidential election. Also, more than 2-in-5 voters specifically mention unemployment as the most important problem the next president will have to solve.

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll, conducted by telephone from September 9 through September 15, 1992 with 663 New Jersey registered voters also finds more than 8-in-10 voters saying that reducing crime and drug use, controlling health care costs, and improving the educational system are very important concerns in this election.

The poll shows that more New Jersey voters feel Governor Bill Clinton would do a better job than President Bush of handling the most important problems facing the country. And while more New Jerseyans favor Clinton on handling the top policy issues, they are divided on who they favor with respect to "character issues."

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### ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 5:00 P.M. on Monday, September 21, 1992, from (908)932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

***THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE***

When New Jersey voters are asked to name the most important issue the next president will have to face, more than 7-in-10 say that either "unemployment" (43%) or "other economic issues" (30%) is their top concern in this campaign. Other issues cited as top-of-mind concerns of voters include "health care" issues (5%), "social services" (4%), "foreign policy issues" (2%), "education" (2%), and "drug/alcohol abuse" (2%).

When asked which candidate would be more likely to "do what you want done" to address the most important issue that voters identify, 43 percent say Clinton would do a better job and 23 percent say Bush would.

***THE IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS ISSUES***

The poll asked voters to evaluate how important each of 16 specific policy issues are in the 1992 presidential race, and also to identify which candidate they think will do a better job handling those issues. Eight of these 16 issues are considered "very important" by at least 7-in-10 voters; and Governor Bill Clinton is preferred as the candidate who will do a better job handling each of these top 8 issues.

Fully 95 percent of New Jersey voters say that "providing jobs" is a very important issue in this campaign, and 93 percent feel that "managing the economy" is very important. Democratic candidate Bill Clinton is seen as the person who would do a better job handling these economic issues. On "providing jobs," Clinton is preferred over Bush by a 55 percent to 28 percent margin. On "managing the economy," voters favor Clinton by a 50 percent to 34 percent margin.

"The poorly performing economy has led New Jersey voters to sharply focus on economic issues in this campaign, and Clinton is seen as the candidate who can better address these problems," commented Ken Dautrich. "His current 13-point lead over Bush is partly due to the perception that Clinton is better for the economy."

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After these economic concerns, voters are prioritizing other domestic issues. At least 4-in-5 state voters view as very important: "reducing crime and drug use" (87%), "controlling the cost of health care" (86%), and "improving the educational system" (84%).

As with economic issues, more voters think Clinton can better handle these three domestic issues than Bush. On "reducing crime and drug use," 41 percent think Clinton would do a better job, compared to 34 percent who say Bush would. On "controlling health care costs" and "improving education," Clinton is favored over Bush by margins of 56 percent to 26 percent, and 54 percent to 29 percent, respectively.

Among the 16 issues asked about, three additional issues are seen as very important in this election by at least 7-in-10 voters: "reducing the budget deficit" (77%), "protecting the environment" (71%), and "improving race relations" (70%). Again, Democratic candidate Bill Clinton is seen as better able to handle "reducing the budget deficit" (by a margin of 49% to 30%), better able to "protect the environment" (58% to 26%), and better able to "improve race relations" (55% to 24%).

At least 3-in-5 New Jersey voters say that the following are very important issues in this year's campaign: "holding down taxes" (67%), "reducing the risk of war" (66%), and "providing social services to the poor, elderly, and handicapped" (61%). Bush is seen by more voters as the candidate who is best able to hold down taxes (by a margin of 44% to 36%), and the President is also seen as better able to reduce the risk of war (51% to 34%). Governor Clinton is viewed as being better able to provide important social services (by a margin of 69% to 18%).

Slightly more than half of New Jersey voters say that "securing equal rights for women" (56%) and "providing foreign policy leadership" (54%) are very important issues in this election. Also, 49 percent say "keeping the country militarily strong" and 48 percent feel "promoting family values" are very important. Finally, 45 percent of New Jersey voters say

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that "abortion" is a very important issue in this election.

In considering which candidate would do a better job of "securing equal rights for women," Clinton is favored by a margin of 60 percent to 20 percent. On "providing foreign policy leadership" and on "keeping the country militarily strong," voters prefer Bush by a 68 to 23 percent margin. And while Bush is seen as better able to "promote family values" (by 47% to 34%), Clinton is favored on the abortion issue (54% to 24%).

### ***THE "CHARACTER" ISSUES***

Along with asking New Jersey voters which candidate they favor on specific policy issues, the survey also identified voter preferences on ten "character issues." On these issues, the largest perceived differences between the candidates are found on the issue of "experience," where the incumbent President is favored by more than a 10 to 1 margin over Clinton (85% to 8%). President Bush is also viewed as a "stronger leader" by a 52 percent to 30 percent margin.

More New Jersey voters (48% to 28%) feel Governor Bill Clinton, rather than Bush, "cares more about people like me." Clinton is also preferred as the candidate "who would bring better people into government" by margin of 46 percent to 32 percent.

The perceived differences between Clinton and Bush are less pronounced on the character issues of "intelligence" (Bush is favored 38% to 31%), "having a clearer vision for the country's future" (Clinton is favored 44% to 38%), "sincerity" (Clinton is favored 41% to 36%), "competence" (Bush is preferred 44% to 39%), "honesty" (35% to 31% favoring Bush).

Finally, New Jersey voters were asked which candidate they trusted more. Forty-one percent say they trust Clinton more, while 38 percent say they have more trust in Bush — a difference of only three points.

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### ***RAISING TAXES TO REDUCE DEFICIT***

By a margin of 61 percent to 30 percent, New Jersey voters reject the idea of raising taxes to reduce the federal budget deficit. Seventy-one percent of voters who consider themselves to be Republican say that taxes should not be raised to reduce the deficit, compared to 63 percent of independents, and 53 percent of Democrats.

New Jersey voters are more likely to feel that taxes will be raised if Bill Clinton is elected. Seventy-six percent feel that taxes will be raised if Clinton becomes President, compared to two-thirds who believe taxes will be raised if Bush is re-elected.

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## BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP39-2 (EP89-2), TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1992

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between September 9 and 15, 1992, when a random sample of 800 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. This sampling yielded a total of 663 respondents who reported being registered to vote. The figures in this release are based on this sample size and are subject to a sampling error of about  $\pm 4$  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.

"Different people are concerned with different issues. What do you feel if the most important problem facing the country that the next President will have to solve? DO NOT READ OPTIONS. IF MORE THAN ONE GIVEN, PROBE: Which do you think is most important?" [Q.30]

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Vote Choice</u>	
		<u>Bush Voters</u>	<u>Clinton Voters</u>
Unemployment	43%	43%	45%
Other Economic Problem (budget deficit, cost of living, taxes)	30	30	31
Health Care	5	5	4
Social Services (welfare, child care, poor, handicapped)	4	3	4
Drug/Alcohol Abuse	2	2	2
Education/Schools	2	4	--
Foreign Policy Issues	2	2	2
Abortion	1	2	--
Environment	1	1	1
Other/Don't Know/None	11	8	11
TOTAL	101%	100%	100%
	(n=663)	(n=267)	(n=340)

"Which candidate would be more likely to do what you want done about this problem--Bush, Clinton, or wouldn't there be any difference between them?" [Q.31]

	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>No Difference</u>	<u>Other/ Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1992</b>						
--Registered Voters	23%	43%	26%	8%	100%	(649)
<u>Vote Choice</u>						
--Bush	57	3	34	7	101	(260)
--Clinton	1	78	16	4	99	(334)

"We're interested in finding out which issues are important to you in this Presidential election. Please tell me if you personally think each of the following is very important, somewhat important, or not very important." [Q.32A]

"Regardless of which candidate you might favor, please tell me which one--Bush or Clinton--you think would do a better job of (READ ITEM)?" [Q.32B]

	<u>This is "Very" Important Issue</u>	<u>Candidate Who Would Best Handle the Issue</u>			<u>Total</u>
		<u>Bush</u>	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Other/Don't Know No Difference</u>	
Providing Jobs	95%	28%	55%	18%	101%
Managing Economy	93	34	50	16	100
Reducing Crime/Drug Use	87	34	41	24	99
Controlling Health Costs	86	26	56	19	101
Improving Educational System	84	29	54	17	100
Reducing Budget Deficit	77	30	49	21	100
Protecting Environment	71	26	58	15	99
Improving Race Relations	70	24	55	20	99
Holding Down Taxes	67	44	36	20	100
Reducing Risk of War	66	51	34	14	99
Providing Social Services	61	18	69	13	100
Securing Equal Rights for Women	56	20	60	20	100
Providing Foreign Policy Leadership	54	68	23	8	99
Keeping Country Militarily Strong	49	68	23	9	100
Promoting Family Values	48	47	34	20	101
Abortion	45	24	54	22	100

	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Other No Difference Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
"Which candidate has a clearer vision of the country's future?" [Q.33]	38%	44%	18%	100%	(663)
"Who cares more about people like you?" [Q.34]	28	48	24	101	(663)
"Who is more honest?" [Q.35]	35	31	35	101	(663)
"Who is more sincere?" [Q.36]	36	41	24	101	(663)
"Who is more competent?" [Q.37]	44	39	18	101	(663)
"Who is more intelligent?" [Q.38]	38	31	32	101	(663)
"Who would bring better people into government?" [Q.39]	32	46	22	100	(663)
"Who is more experienced?" [Q.40]	85	8	6	99	(663)
"Which one is the stronger leader?" [Q.41]	52	30	18	100	(663)
"Which candidate do you trust more?" [Q.42]	38	41	21	100	(663)

"There has been a lot of talk about raising taxes to reduce the federal budget deficit. Do you feel that taxes should, or should not be raised to reduce the deficit?" [Q.43]

	<u>Should</u>	<u>Should Not</u>	<u>Depends Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1992</b>					
--Registered Voters	30%	61%	9%	100%	(663)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	37	53	10	100	(202)
--Independent	29	63	8	100	(278)
--Republican	20	71	9	100	(172)

"If Bill Clinton is elected, do you think taxes will be raised or not?" [Q.44]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1992</b>					
--Registered Voters	76%	15%	9%	100%	(663)

"If George Bush is elected, do you think taxes will be raised or not?" [Q.45]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1992</b> --Registered Voters	<b>66%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(663)</b>

"If the election for President were held today and you had to choose between Bill Clinton, the Democrat; and George Bush, the Republican; who would you vote for? (IF RESPONDENT SAYS "OTHER," PROBE: `But, if you had to choose only between Clinton and Bush who would you vote for?)" [Q.18]

	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Won't Vote</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1992</b> --Registered Voters	<b>52%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(663)</b>