

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

EMBARGOED – NOT FOR RELEASE UNTIL: SUNDAY, JULY 17, 1994

RELEASE: SL/EP 48-4 (EP 98-4)

**CONTACT: KEN DAUTRICH (908)828-2210, Ext. 241
OR JANICE BALLOU (908)828-2210, Ext. 240**

RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Sunday's *Star-Ledger*. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

NEW JERSEYANS WANT TO GET TOUGH ON CRIME

Majorities of state residents favor an assortment of proposals to get tough on crime in New Jersey, according to the findings of the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*. The proposals that are favored by the largest majorities (about 8-in-10) are "three strikes and your in" and the idea of increased funding to put more police on the streets.

Other proposals to combat crime receiving strong support from New Jerseyans are more frequent use of the death penalty (72%), giving judges the option of using corporal punishment in sentencing (68%), and increased funding for rehabilitation programs such as drug treatment centers (66%).

Proposals favored by smaller majorities of state residents are increased funding to build more prisons (57%) and banning the sale and possession of handguns (54%).

Ken Dautrich, Associate Director of the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*, commented "Most people are willing to support crime reduction measures ranging from rehabilitation programs to greater use of the death penalty. Broad support for such a wide variety of measures underscores public frustration with the problem of crime and the sentiment that something, whatever it may be, must be done to curb it."

The Poll, conducted by telephone between June 14 and 22 with 801 New Jersey adults, also finds that while 6-in-10 residents say crime is a very serious problem in New Jersey, only 1-in-10 say it is very serious in their own neighborhood.

The survey also finds that more than one-third (37%) of residents have been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. Specifically, 1-in-5 report that they had property vandalized, had money or property stolen, or had a car stolen or broken into. Seven percent say a household member was assaulted or mugged and 6 percent had their home broken into over the past year.

PROPOSALS TO DEAL WITH CRIME PROBLEM

Majorities of New Jersey residents favor each of seven different proposals presented to them for reducing crime in the state, two of which are endorsed by 4-in-5 residents; namely, mandatory life imprisonment for those convicted of three serious criminal offenses and increased funding for more police. The "three strikes and your in" proposal is strongly favored by 69 percent of residents and mildly favored by another 10 percent, while increased funding for more police is strongly favored by 56 percent and mildly favored by 24 percent of residents.

Support is expressed by nearly three-quarters of state residents for more frequent use of the death penalty in the state—strongly favored by 59 percent of residents and mildly favored by another 13 percent.

About two-thirds of state residents strongly (49%) or mildly (19%) favor giving judges the option to use corporal punishment in handing down sentences to the convicted; and about the same number favor (40% strongly; 26% mildly) increased funding for programs to rehabilitate criminals, such as drug treatment facilities.

Two other crime fighting proposals asked about in the survey are favored by smaller majorities of state residents. Fifty-seven percent favor increasing funding to build more prisons (36% strongly; 21% mildly) as a means of reducing crime; and 54 percent support banning the sale and possession of hand guns (49% strongly; 5% mildly).

SERIOUSNESS OF THE CRIME PROBLEM

Six-in-ten (61%) state residents say that crime is a very serious problem in New Jersey while one-third describe the problem as somewhat serious. When thinking about crime in one's own neighborhood, residents are much less likely to feel crime is a problem, as 11 percent describe their neighborhood crime to be very serious and another 38 percent say it is somewhat serious. Residents of New Jersey's center cities are most likely (31%) to say crime is a very serious problem in their neighborhood.

Public perceptions tend to indicate that crime is becoming a larger problem, with 61 percent saying crime in the Garden State has gone up over the past year and only 7 percent saying it has gone down. Twenty-six percent feel it has stayed the same. Women (68%) are more likely to feel crime in the state has gone up than are men (55%).

Compared to feelings about the direction of the crime problem for New Jersey as a whole, residents are less likely to feel that the crime problem in their own neighborhood has worsened over the past year. Twenty-five percent say crime in their neighborhood has gone up while 8 percent say it has gone down and 64 percent feel it has stayed the same.

CRIME VICTIMIZATION

Overall, 37 percent of state residents report having been a victim of at least one of five different types of crimes in the past year.

Specifically, 1-in-5 residents say that someone in their household either had property vandalized (20%), had money or property stolen (19%), or had a car stolen or broken into (18%) within the past year. Seven percent say that in the past year they or a household member had been assaulted or mugged, and 6 percent report having had their home broken into.

Younger adults between the ages of 18 and 29 (53%), and nonwhite residents (50%) are most likely to have been victimized by one of these five types of crimes within the past year.

BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP48-4 (EP98-4), SUNDAY, JULY 17, 1994

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between June 14 and June 22, 1994, when a random sample of 801 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 at a 95 percent confidence interval.

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.

"How serious a problem do you feel crime is in New Jersey—very serious, somewhat serious, or not at all serious?" [Q.35]

	<u>Very Serious</u>	<u>Somewhat Serious</u>	<u>Not At All Serious</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1994	61%	33%	4%	2%	100%	(801)
<i><u>Victim of Crime—Past Year</u></i>						
--Yes	67	28	4	--	99	(301)
--No	58	36	3	3	100	(500)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
February, 1993	66	31	2	1	100	(801)

"In the past year, would you say that the amount of crime in New Jersey has gone up, done down, or remained the same?" [Q.36]

	<u>Gone Up</u>	<u>Gone Down</u>	<u>Stayed Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1994	61%	7%	26%	5%	99%	(801)
<i><u>Gender</u></i>						
--Men	55	10	30	5	100	(374)
--Women	68	5	22	6	101	(427)
<i><u>Victim of Crime—Past Year</u></i>						
--Yes	69	3	21	7	100	(301)
--No	57	9	29	5	100	(500)

"How serious a problem is crime in your neighborhood—very serious, somewhat serious, or not at all serious?" [Q.37]

	<u>Very Serious</u>	<u>Somewhat Serious</u>	<u>Not At All Serious</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1994	11%	38%	49%	2%	100%	(801)
<i>Race</i>						
--White	7	38	54	1	100	(642)
--Non-white	23	43	32	2	100	(137)
<i>Victim of Crime—Past Year</i>						
--Yes	19	46	33	2	100	(301)
--No	6	34	59	1	100	(500)

"In the past year, would you say that the amount of crime in your neighborhood has gone up, gone down, or remained the same?" [Q.38]

	<u>Gone Up</u>	<u>Gone Down</u>	<u>Stayed Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1994	25%	8%	64%	3%	100%	(801)
<i>Race</i>						
--White	22	6	69	3	100	(642)
--Non-white	36	15	47	2	100	(137)
<i>Victim of Crime—Past Year</i>						
--Yes	39	6	51	4	100	(301)
--No	16	9	72	3	100	(500)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
February, 1993	28	6	62	4	100	(801)
February, 1987	23	8	66	3	100	(499)

"I'm going to read some proposals that have been made for reducing crime in New Jersey. For each, please tell me whether you favor or oppose it. First, do you favor or oppose (READ ITEM). PROBE: Strongly or mildly?" [Q.39]

	<u>Strongly Favor</u>	<u>Mildly Favor</u>	<u>Mildly Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
A. Increased funding for more police	56%	24%	6%	11%	3%	100%	(801)
B. Mandatory life imprisonment for those convicted of 3 serious criminal offenses	69	10	5	12	4	100	(801)
C. More frequent use of the death penalty	59	13	8	15	5	100	(801)

[Q.39 continued]

	<u>Strongly Favor</u>	<u>Mildly Favor</u>	<u>Mildly Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
D. Give judges the option to use corporal punishment in sentencing	49	19	9	15	8	100	(801)
E. Increased funding for programs to rehabilitate criminals, such as drug treatment centers	40	26	10	20	3	99	(801)
F. Increased funding to build more prisons	36	21	11	26	5	99	(801)
G. Banning the sale and possession of handguns	49	5	12	31	4	101	(801)

"During the past year have any of the following things happened to you or anyone in your household? First (READ ITEM)."
[Q.40]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
A. Had property vandalized	20%	80%	--	100%	(801)
B. Had money or property stolen	19	81	--	100	(801)
C. Had your car stolen or broken into	18%	82%	--	100%	(801)
D. Had your home broken into	6	94	--	100	(801)
E. Been assaulted or mugged	7	93	--	100	(801)

The following table depicts the percentage of residents who say that they or a member of their household were a victim of one or more of the above five crimes in the past year:

	<u>Victim</u>	<u>Not Victim</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1994	37%	63%	100%	(801)
<u>Race</u>				
--White	34	66	100	(642)
--Non-white	50	50	100	(137)
<u>Age</u>				
--18 - 29	53	47	100	(127)
--30 - 49	40	60	100	(335)
--50 - 64	31	69	100	(185)
--65 and over	20	80	100	(145)