

# 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 Sunday's *Star-Ledger*. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

## NEW JERSEYANS EVALUATE GOVERNOR WHITMAN

Eight months into her term as New Jersey's governor, Christie Whitman is given positive job performance ratings by about half of New Jersey residents while negative ratings are offered by 4-in-10 residents. Also while one-third of residents do not yet have an overall impression of her, those with a favorable impression of Governor Whitman outnumber those with an unfavorable impression by a margin of 30 points.

Whitman receives higher ratings than each of the past three New Jersey Governors at the eight month mark in their terms of office. At this point in Jim Florio's term, 18 percent offered positive ratings. Eight months into his first term, Tom Kean received positive marks from 39 percent of New Jerseyans, and Brendan Byrne was graded positively by 33 percent of residents at this point in his first term.

In identifying Governor Whitman's accomplishments thus far, about 3-in-10 state residents cite lowering state income tax rates. In thinking about her biggest failure, 12 percent say it has been her inability to keep property taxes from rising.

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*, conducted by telephone with 801 New Jersey adults from August 30 to September 6, also finds that about 3-in-10 residents give positive ratings to the job the state legislature is doing.

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Also, about half of New Jerseyans now say that things in New Jersey are going in the right direction while 4-in-10 feel things are off on the wrong track.

### ***RATINGS OF THE GOVERNOR***

With the better part of her first year in office complete, about half of New Jerseyans give Governor Christie Whitman positive job performance ratings of either excellent (12%) or good (40%), while two-fifths provide negative ratings of only fair (33%) or poor (9%). The remaining 6 percent have no opinion. In June of this year, about the same number of residents gave Governor Whitman positive ratings of excellent (11%) or good (39%).

Compared to the previous three governors of New Jersey at the same points in their terms of office, Whitman posts considerably higher positive job performance ratings. Whitman's 52 percent positive ratings are 34 points higher than Jim Florio in September 1990, 13 points higher than Tom Kean in September of 1982, and 19 points higher than Brendan Byrne in September of 1974.

"Governor Whitman achieved and maintains relatively good performance ratings early on in her term, probably the result of delivering on a controversial campaign promise to cut the state income tax along with her personable communications style," commented Associate Poll Director Ken Dautrich. "Her rather quickly acquired popularity enhances her political power in the state and provides for good national exposure as well."

In the current survey, nearly three-quarters of Republicans rate Whitman's performance as either excellent (24%) or good (48%), compared to 46 percent of independents (11% excellent and 35% good) and Democrats (6% excellent and 40% good).

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The survey also finds that while one-third of New Jerseyans have yet to form an overall impression of Christie Whitman, those with a favorable impression (48%) outnumber those with an unfavorable impression (18%) by a 30 point margin.

### ***WHITMAN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FAILURES***

Residents were asked to identify Governor Whitman's biggest accomplishments and failures in her first eight months as New Jersey's Chief Executive. On the positive side, 3-in-10 (29%) residents say that reducing the state income tax is a major accomplishment and another 6 percent particularly liked her state budget. Five percent mention her education policies as a big accomplishment and 4 percent say something about crime policies. Fifteen percent of residents say that Whitman has not had any big accomplishments thus far. Thirty-five percent do not name of any particular Whitman successes.

In terms of Whitman failures, 12 percent say that the Governor's inability to keep property taxes from rising has been problematic and 7 percent mention something about her education policies. Sixteen percent volunteer that Governor Whitman has had no failures, and 45 percent do not name a particular failure.

### ***RATINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE***

About 3-in-10 New Jerseyans give positive marks of excellent (2%) or good (27%) to the performance of the New Jersey state legislature. Forty-nine percent say the legislature is doing an only fair job, and 8 percent rate its job performance as poor. The remaining 14 percent have no opinion.

### ***MOOD OF THE STATE***

The survey also finds that about half (49%) of state residents feel that things in the state generally are going in the right direction, while 4-in-10 say that things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track. The remaining 11 percent have no opinion.

These figures are about the same as a June 1994 survey, and suggests that the upward trend in the general mood of state residents over the past two years (when, in April 1992, only 33% felt the state was going in the right direction) has tapered off.

### ***NOTE ON CLINTON RATINGS***

The tables in the background memo attached to this press release include the findings from questions asking state residents to rate President Clinton's performance. The interviewing dates for this survey were August 30 through September 6, which was prior to American action in Haiti.

National polls suggest there have been significant changes in evaluations of Clinton over the past week. Due to these changes we do not report the Clinton ratings in the text of this release. For the record, however, we include these findings in the background memo.

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**BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP49-3 (EP99-3), SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1994**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between August 30 and September 6, 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  $\pm 3.5$  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.

"Generally speaking, would you say things in New Jersey are going in the right direction, or have they pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?" [Q.2]

	<u>Right Direction</u>	<u>Wrong Track</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<i>Family Income</i>					
--Under \$20,000	38	46	15	99	(115)
--\$20,001 - \$30,000	47	41	12	100	(105)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	53	42	5	100	(203)
--Over \$50,000	55	36	8	99	(282)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>					
June, 1994	50	39	12	101	(801)
June, 1993	40	52	8	100	(800)
April, 1992	33	60	7	100	(799)
June, 1991	37	55	8	100	(800)

"Is your general impression of President Bill Clinton favorable or unfavorable, or don't you have an opinion about him? PROBE: IS THAT VERY (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE) OR SOMEWHAT (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE)?" [Q.39]

	<u>Very Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very Unfavorable</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
June, 1993	15	25	18	24	18	100	(801)

"How would you rate the job Bill Clinton is doing as President--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.40]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	10	49	32	6	2	99	(245)
--Independent	5	33	43	18	1	100	(323)
--Republican	4	14	37	42	3	100	(203)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
June, 1993	5	23	45	25	2	100	(801)
February, 1993	15	29	26	18	12	100	(801)

"How would you rate President Clinton's handling of the nation's foreign affairs--excellent, good, only fair, or poor?" [Q.41a]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
June, 1993	3	22	47	23	4	99	(801)

"How would you rate President Clinton's handling of the problems of the economy?" [Q.41b]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
June, 1993	3	18	44	33	2	100	(801)

"How would you rate President Clinton's handling of the nation's social problems?" [Q.41c]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
June, 1993	4	21	44	26	5	100	(801)

"How would you rate President Clinton's handling of Health Care Reform?" [Q.41d]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
June, 1993	7	21	32	29	12	101	(801)

"How would you rate President Clinton's handling of the nation's crime problem?" [Q.41e]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(801)</b>

"Is your general impression of Governor Christie Whitman favorable or unfavorable, or don't you have an opinion about her? PROBE: IS THAT VERY (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE) OR SOMEWHAT (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE)?" [Q.42]

	<u>Very Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very Unfavorable</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	10	29	14	10	36	99	(245)
--Independent	18	28	11	9	35	101	(323)
--Republican	37	36	3	5	20	101	(203)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
February, 1994	17	19	7	4	53	100	(801)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	6	15	10	7	61	99	(237)
--Independent	15	17	5	4	59	100	(334)
--Republican	35	27	7	2	30	101	(197)

"How would you rate the job Christie Whitman is doing as Governor--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.43]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	6	40	36	11	7	100	(245)
--Independent	11	35	36	10	8	100	(323)
--Republican	24	48	23	3	2	100	(203)
<i>Race</i>							
--White	13	43	33	7	4	100	(646)
--Non-white	11	27	36	15	11	100	(135)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
June, 1994	11	39	29	7	14	100	(801)
February, 1994	9	28	28	5	31	101	(801)
<i>Rating of Florio</i>							
--September, 1990	3	15	33	45	5	101	(800)
<i>Rating of Kean</i>							
--September, 1982	4	35	41	5	15	100	(800)
<i>Rating of Byrne</i>							
--September, 1974	3	30	45	12	10	100	(1005)

"Governor Christie Whitman has been in office for about 8 months. What would you say has been the Whitman administration's biggest accomplishment? Is there anything Whitman has done that has been particularly good for the state?" [Q.44]

	<u>Percent</u>
--Lowered State Income Tax	29%
--Good State Budget	6
--Education policies	5
--Crime policies	4
--Personal characteristics	3
--Reduced size of Government	2
--Created jobs	1
--Good communication with voters	1
--Gun control	1
--Brought Business to NJ	1
--Has done nothing good	15
--Don't Know/can't think of anything in particular	35



"And, what would you say has been the biggest failure of the Whitman administration? Is there anything Whitman has done or failed to do that has been bad for the state?" [Q.45]

	<u>Percent</u>
--Increased property taxes	12%
--Education policies	7
--Not done enough on unemployment	3
--Poor state budget	3
--Abortion position	1
--Auto insurance problems	1
--Gun control position	1
--Health Care policies	1
--Cut state programs	1
--Layoff state workers	1
--Cuts to pension programs	1
--Not deal with urban problems	1
--Personal characteristics	1
--Done nothing bad for State	16
--Don't know/can't think of anything bad	45

"How would you rate the job the New Jersey State Legislature is doing--excellent, good, only fair, or poor?" [Q.46]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September, 1994</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	3	25	49	7	16	100	(245)
--Independent	2	24	50	8	15	99	(323)
--Republican	3	33	51	6	8	101	(203)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
February, 1993	1	27	51	13	8	100	(801)
April, 1992	--	19	50	23	8	100	(800)
September, 1991	2	20	46	17	15	100	(800)
July, 1990	4	28	42	16	11	101	(800)
March, 1989	2	34	41	12	10	99	(800)
October, 1987	3	41	38	4	14	100	(1000)
October, 1986	3	39	34	6	18	100	(800)
August, 1985	5	40	37	6	13	101	(800)