

Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling Survey

Background memo

This survey was conducted by telephone from May 14 to 21, 2002 with a scientifically selected random sample of 803 New Jersey adults. The figures in this release are based on this 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 is ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to think the state was in good economic condition, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent (50 ± 3.5) had all New Jersey residents 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 by race or age, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. 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 asked is reproduced in this memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows. This study was conducted by the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling ("Eagleton Poll") at Rutgers University.

I'd like to ask you a few questions about your views of the death penalty here in New Jersey. Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder? Is that strongly or somewhat [favor/oppose]?

	<u>Strongly Favor</u>	<u>Some what Favor</u>	<u>Some what Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	41%	19%	12%	19%	10%	101%	(803)
<u>Registered Voter</u>							
-- Yes	43	18	10	19	10	100	(645)
-- No	34	19	17	18	12	100	(158)
<u>Party Identification</u>							
-- Democrat	30	21	16	23	10	100	(271)
-- Independent	44	16	11	19	10	100	(302)
-- Republican	52	21	7	14	6	100	(182)
OTHER POLLS							
<i>Current National ABC News May 2002</i>	65%		26%		9%	100%	(610)
<i>Past New Jersey September 1999 Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers</i>	63%		23%		15%	101%	(802)

What do you think should be the penalty for murder – the death penalty or life in prison with absolutely no chance of parole?

	<u>Life in Prison without Parole</u>	<u>Death Penalty</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	48%	36%	16%	100%	(803)
<u>Registered Voter</u>					
-- Yes	47	39	13	99	(645)
-- No	50	26	24	100	(158)
<u>Party Identification</u>					
-- Democrat	61	27	13	101	(271)
-- Independent	45	39	17	101	(302)
-- Republican	35	51	14	100	(182)
<u>Initial Support for Death Penalty</u>					
-- Favor	25	59	16	100	(465)
OTHER POLLS					
<i>Current National ABC News May 2002</i>	43%	46%	11%	100%	(610)
<i>Past New Jersey September 1999 Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers</i>	37%	44%	19%	100%	(802)

[IF PREFER DEATH PENALTY, ASK:]

Would you support or oppose life in prison with no chance of parole as an alternative to the death penalty if the sentence included either restitution to the victim's family or payment to a charity of the family's choice?

	<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Depends/ Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Death penalty supporters	43%	49%	8%	100%	(297)

Many states are considering a moratorium, or temporary halt, on executions until it can be determined if the death penalty is being administered accurately, economically, and fairly. Do you favor or oppose a one-year moratorium on executions in New Jersey while the death penalty is studied? Is that strongly or somewhat [favor/oppose]?

	<u>Strongly Favor</u>	<u>Some what Favor</u>	<u>Some what Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	39%	27%	8%	17%	9%	100%	(803)
<u>Registered Voter</u>							
-- Yes	40	26	8	19	8	101	(645)
-- No	35	34	8	12	12	101	(158)
<u>Party Identification</u>							
-- Democrat	48	27	7	8	9	99	(271)
-- Independent	37	30	7	18	8	100	(302)
-- Republican	29	24	11	29	7	100	(182)
<u>Support for Death Penalty</u>							
-- Favor	29	31	9	25	6	100	(465)

I'm going to read you a few brief statements about the death penalty. For each one please just tell me if you agree or disagree. [READ STATEMENT]... do you agree or disagree?

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
(n=803)			
A poor person is more likely than a person of average or above average income to receive the death penalty for the same crime	65%	30%	5%
A black person is more likely than a white person to receive the death penalty for the same crime	52	40	8
Imposing the death penalty on convicted murderers costs less than keeping them in prison for life	71	21	9

Do you think that innocent people are sometimes convicted of murder, or that this never happens?

	<u>Sometimes happens</u>	<u>Never happens</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	96%	2%	2%	100%	(803)

Last month marked the one hundredth time a person on death row in the United States was freed from prison after his innocence was proven. This Arizona man was released after DNA evidence showed that he did not commit the murder he was accused of. How much have you read or heard about this – a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all?

	<u>Great deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not much</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	10%	29%	21%	39%	1%	100%	(803)

Does the fact that one hundred people on death row have later been proven innocent make you more likely or less likely to favor a temporary moratorium on the use of the death penalty in New Jersey, or doesn't this change your opinion?

	<u>More likely to favor moratorium</u>	<u>No impact on opinion</u>	<u>Less likely to favor moratorium</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	54%	34%	6%	5%	99%	(803)

Support for Death Penalty

-- Favor	51	38	7	4	100	(465)
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Have you ever voted for or against a candidate for public office based largely on the candidate's position on the death penalty?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	12%	86%	2%	100%	(645)

If your state legislator voted for a temporary one year suspension of executions in New Jersey while the death penalty is studied, would you be more likely or less likely to vote for him or her, or would this make no difference in your vote choice? [If more/less likely, **PROBE:** Is that a lot or only a little (more/less) likely?]

	<u>Lot more likely</u>	<u>Little more likely</u>	<u>No impact</u>	<u>Little less likely</u>	<u>Lot less likely</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	13%	12%	64%	4%	3%	5%	101%	(645)

Party Identification

-- Democrat	19	18	55	3	3	3	101	(219)
-- Independent	12	7	73	3	2	3	100	(238)
-- Republican	7	10	66	5	6	6	100	(158)

Support for Death Penalty

-- Favor	8	8	73	4	4	4	101	(382)
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