

THE EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS
WOOD LAWN•NEILSON CAMPUS•NEW BRUNSWICK•NEW JERSEY 08901•201/828-2210.

RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the data contained in this release appeared in this morning's Star-Ledger. Other news organizations may use these survey results as they wish. If used, we request proper attribution to the source as the Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll.

MONDALE GAINS WITH DEBATE, BUT REAGAN RETAINS LARGE LEAD IN N.J.

Walter Mondale is the clear, and surprise winner of last Sunday's debate with President Reagan. But while he has gained some ground on the President, he remains far behind in the contest for New Jersey's 16 electoral votes. Mondale trails Reagan by 16 points, according to a Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll conducted during the three days following the debate. Reagan held a 23 point lead in early August.

The survey, conducted with 600 registered voters who said they definitely or probably would vote in November's election, finds Reagan to be the choice of 52 percent while 36 percent prefer Mondale and 12 percent are undecided.

Seven in ten registered voters said they watched last Sunday's debate, with the vast majority expecting the President to outshine his democratic opponent. Sixty-one percent thought Reagan would get the best of the encounter compared to the 21 percent who thought Mondale would do better.

But viewers found Mondale to be the more impressive debater by an even wider margin of 69 to 15 percent. The remaining 16 percent offered no opinion. Even half of those planning to vote for Reagan conceded Mondale had "won" the debate, with one-quarter saying the President had got the best of the encounter. Virtually all Mondale supporters--96 percent--felt their candidate had won.

The debate helped Mondale to improve his image among New Jersey voters while Reagan's slipped to a lesser degree. Among those who had either watched the debate or heard news stories about it, 40 percent said their impression of Mondale had become more favorable. Six percent said their view of Mondale had become more negative, with a majority of 54 percent saying their image of him had not changed. While 65 percent said their view of Reagan had remained the same, 26 percent said their impression of him had

became less favorable compared to only 9 percent who came away from the debate with a more favorable impression.

Other findings from the poll suggest that the main effect of the debate was to strengthen how people had viewed the candidates even before Sunday's encounter. Forty-five percent of all registered voters said their general impression of Mondale was favorable in the survey conducted after the debate--unchanged from the 44 percent giving him a positive evaluation in August. But the percentage saying their impression of Mondale was "very" favorable increased from 12 to 21 percent between the two surveys. Forty-three percent said their general impression of Mondale was unfavorable in October.

Views of Ronald Reagan changed much more between August and October, but he remains a popular figure with Garden State voters. Favorable evaluations of Reagan declined from 65 to 57 percent over the last two months while unfavorable ones rose from 25 to 33 percent.

While the number of undecided voters remained steady at 12 percent, the survey also found a firming up of support for both candidates among those having already decided. About 85 percent of both Reagan and Mondale voters said they were very sure of their choice, up from 78 percent in August.

Cliff Zukin, the poll's director, commented that Mondale may have made up slightly more ground than the survey figures indicate. "In the last two elections the impact of presidential debates has come in two waves. Whoever is seen as the winner generally gets an immediate shot in the arm. When the themes of the campaign change as the debate is discussed in the media there is often a second small boost in that candidate's support."

-30-

Copyright: The Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University/

The Newark Star-Ledger, 1984

NOTE TO REGULAR POLL READERS/JOURNALISTS:

The data released in this survey are from the first wave of a two-part survey. A second independent sample of 600 New Jerseyans (also based on registered voters who said they would "definitely" or "probably" vote in the election) will be interviewed in the 3 or 4 days following last night's Vice Presidential debate. We will release most of the results of that survey next week. Releases will focus on whether or not there has been continued movement in vote preference and a demographic breakdown of the bases of each candidate's support; how the public views the candidates' strengths and weaknesses of character and who is closer to the majority on various issues; how images of the Vice Presidential candidates have changed as a result of their debate; and whether or not there has been any change in how the Senate election is shaping up.



THE EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS
WOOD LAWN • NEILSON CAMPUS • NEW BRUNSWICK • NEW JERSEY 08901 • 201/828-2210

BACKGROUND MEMO---RELEASE SL/EP5-1 (EP54-1) OCTOBER 12, 1984

The latest Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll was conducted between October 8 and 10 with a random sample of 600 registered New Jersey voters saying they would "definitely" or "probably" vote in November's election. Figures are subject to a sampling error of ± 4.1 percent. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in a 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 as follows.

"If the election for President was held today and you had to choose between Walter Mondale, the Democrat; or Ronald Reagan, the Republican; who would you vote for?"

	Mondale	Reagan	Undecided	Total	(n)
Registered Voters					
October 8-10, 1984	36	52	12	100%	(592)*
August, 1984	32	55	13	100%	(619)
May, 1984	39	44	16	99%	(595)

*Excludes the small fraction saying they do not plan to vote for President.

"Are you very sure about your choice or do you think you might change your mind before election day?"

	Oct 8-10, 1984		Aug 1984		Sept 1980		Sept 1976	
	Mondale	Reagan	Mondale	Reagan	Carter	Reagan	Carter	Ford
Sure/Firm	85	86	78	78	70	71	80	78
Might Change	15	14	22	22	30	29	20	22
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(n)	(211)	(308)	(187)	(354)	(287)	(325)	(279)	(243)

Undecided voters were asked, "At this moment do you lean more towards Mondale, or more towards Reagan?" Combining responses to the questions about voting intention, firmness of support, and "leaners" produces the following distribution.

TOTAL REGISTERED	MONDALE			Pure Undecided	REAGAN			Total	(n)
	firm	soft	lean		lean	soft	firm		
--Oct. 8-10	30	5	3	6	4	7	45	100%	(592)
--August, 1984	25	7	2	7	5	12	43	101%	(619)

"Now I'd like to get your general feelings of the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates. For each name please tell me whether you have a favorable or unfavorable impression. If you don't have an opinion on some just say so. First, how about...do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of (him/her)?" IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE, PROBE: Is that very (favorable/unfavorable) or only somewhat (favorable/unfavorable)? Next, how about..."

	Favorable		Unfavorable		No Opinion/ Don't Know	Total	(n)
	very	somewhat	somewhat	very			
A. Ronald Reagan							
October 8-10	34	23	14	19	10	100%	(598)
August	34	31	12	13	10	100%	(637)
May	23	26	13	18	20	100%	(600)
B. Walter Mondale							
October 8-10	21	24	23	20	12	100%	(598)
August	12	32	22	17	18	101%	(637)
May	17	29	17	16	22	101%	(600)

"Did you watch last Sunday's Presidential debate on TV or listen to it on the radio?"

	Yes	No	Total	(n)
Total	70	30	100%	(597)

"Before the debate took place, which candidate did you expect to do better? (Only asked of debate viewers.)"

	Mondale	Reagan	Same/Don't Know	Total	(n)
Total	21	61	18	100%	(451)

"Who do you think actually got the best of the debate--Mondale or Reagan?" (IF CHOICE MADE, PROBE: "By a lot or just a little?")

	Mondale by_lot	Mondale by_little	Reagan by_lot	Reagan by_little	Nobody, No Opinion	Total	(n)
Total	41	28	7	8	16	100%	(453)
Vote Preference							
--Mondale	75	21	1	1	2	100%	(166)
--Reagan	18	32	12	14	24	100%	(242)

"Based on what you saw or heard about the debate, did your overall impression of (candidate) become more favorable, less favorable; or didn't your view of him change much?*"

	More Favorable	Less Favorable	No Change	Don't Know	Total	(n)*
Mondale--All	40	6	51	3	100%	(552)
Mondale--Viewers	45	7	47	1	100%	(444)
Reagan--All	9	26	62	3	100%	(552)
Reagan--Viewers	9	28	60	2	99%	(444)

*"Viewers" includes only those who saw the actual debate. "All" includes viewers and those saying they had heard or read news stories about the debate.