

TUESDAY APRIL 7, 2015

EDITOR'S NOTE: ATTENTION POLITICAL, ASSIGNMENT EDITORS, Poll Director David Redlawsk may be contacted at 319-400-1134 (cell), 848-932-8504 (office), or redlawsk@rutgers.edu until 11:00pm. Poll manager Ashley Koning may be contacted at 908-872-1186 or akoning@rutgers.edu. Questions and tables are available during embargo at http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu/new-wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/release_04-07-15-Embargoed.pdf. Visit our blog at <http://eagletonpollblog.wordpress.com> for additional commentary. Follow the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/RutgersEagletonPoll> and Twitter [@EagletonPoll](https://twitter.com/EagletonPoll).

RUTGERS-EAGLETON POLL: NEW JERSEYANS SAY KEEP MENENDEZ IN OFFICE UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – Despite last week's multi-count federal indictment of U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) on alleged corrupt dealings with a wealthy ophthalmologist friend and campaign donor, New Jerseyans are not yet ready to throw the Senator out of office. Fifty-eight percent of Garden State residents say Menendez should stay unless he is proven guilty, while 34 percent want him to leave immediately, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Half of the poll sample was asked specifically about Menendez, while the other half was asked a generic question from an earlier poll. As with Menendez, New Jerseyans generally believe a politician should not leave office until found guilty, with two-thirds taking this position. Just 29 percent prefer that an accused official quit immediately. This is a sharp departure from October 2009, when a Rutgers-Eagleton poll found that half of New Jersey residents demanded that accused officials quit when charged, while 42 percent thought they should wait it out.

In the wake of initial rumors, and then the indictment itself, 34 percent of residents have a favorable impression of Menendez – down a mere three points compared to February 2015. Twenty-seven percent are unfavorable towards the Senator (up four points), while 38 percent have no opinion.

But the quarter of Garden Staters who have heard a lot about the charges are decidedly more negative: 47 percent are unfavorable, compared to 35 percent favorable; just 18 percent have no opinion. Similarly, residents asked after Menendez's actual indictment are more negative than those asked in the days when the charges were only rumors.

“The last time we asked about corruption was in the wake of the July 2009 ‘Operation Bid Rig’ scandal. At that time, people seemed more adamant that an accused official should immediately leave office than they are today,” said David Redlawsk, director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling and professor of political science at Rutgers University. “Either New Jerseyans are more

accepting of such accusations than they once were, or the Menendez case has not yet sunk in. But opinions on Sen. Menendez's future may also be less harsh because this case does not seem as cut and dry as Bid Rig.”

Results are from a statewide poll of 860 residents contacted by live callers on both landlines and cell phones from Mar. 27 – Apr. 3, 2015. The sample has a margin of error of +/-3.8 percentage points. The margin of error for the subsamples asked about Menendez or generic officials is +/- 5.2 and +/- 5.3 percentage points respectively. Interviews were completed in English and, when requested, Spanish.

Menendez should stay unless convicted, residents say

The poll was ongoing as rumors that Menendez would be indicted changed to reality. Residents interviewed following the indictment, while less favorable toward the Senator, also tended to be more likely to say he should stay in office unless found guilty than those who were asked earlier. The difference – 65 percent supported remaining in office post-indictment, compared to 55 percent before the announcement – while large, is not statistically significant due to the relatively small number asked this question after the indictment was made public.

While those who have heard a lot about the allegations are more unfavorable toward Menendez overall, nearly two thirds of these most aware residents also say the Senator should remain in office unless he is convicted.

“Once the indictment was announced, we made an appropriate change in the question; the result seems to be more support for the idea of ‘innocent until proven guilty,’ even as the *Star Ledger* and *New York Times* have called for Menendez to quit,” said Redlawsk. “Perhaps the Senator’s strong response that he will fight the charges had some initial effect as the story was breaking.”

The idea that Menendez, or any official, should not be forced from office before corruption charges are substantiated is supported by both Republicans and Democrats. While 63 percent of Democrats and those leaning Democrat asked specifically about Menendez say he should stay unless convicted, 61 percent of Republicans and GOP leaners agree, little different from the results of the generic question not naming any official. Independents not leaning toward either party are less supportive: only 48 percent say Menendez should remain in office, far fewer than the 65 percent who say the same about a generic official.

A slight ratings slip post-indictment?

Menendez’s favorability ratings have stayed relatively steady across the years he has been in office; in June 2006, one of the first times Rutgers-Eagleton asked about him, 36 percent had a favorable

impression. His current rating of 34 percent favorable is indistinguishable from his ratings across the past decade and little changed from last February.

However, the announcement of the actual indictment appears to make a difference: those asked to rate the Senator prior to his indictment were less likely to have an unfavorable impression (23 percent) than those asked after (36 percent), as well as more likely to say they had no opinion or did not know Menendez (41 percent before and 33 percent after the indictment). The share of residents favorable towards Menendez also shows a slight slip post-indictment – 36 percent prior, compared to 31 percent after charges were announced.

“Our pre-indictment sample is much larger than the sample after, which makes us less certain of the changes we see,” explained Redlawsk. “But if the trend continues, the drop in favorability may eventually lead to more people preferring that Menendez step down rather than fight. For now, though, many may be giving him the benefit of the doubt.”

While little partisan difference is evident in whether any accused official should immediately quit, the usual party differences appear in Menendez’s ratings. Among Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents, 43 percent have a favorable impression, compared to 27 percent of independents and 25 percent of Republicans and GOP-leaners. But 38 percent of Democrats, 47 percent of independents, and 31 percent of Republicans still do not express an opinion about the Senator.

Menendez’s job approval follows a similar pattern. While his approval is basically unchanged from February, disapproval is up 8 points. After the indictment, disapproval increased by 11 points to 36 percent, compared to before the announcement of charges, while approval remained steady (37 percent before, 35 percent after). As with favorability, disapproval increases with attention to coverage of the corruption case.

New Jersey not seen as more corrupt

Most Garden Staters say there is a lot (51 percent) or some (35 percent) corruption in New Jersey politics, but this is little changed from the last time they were asked in October 2009. The apparent leniency toward Menendez and other officials accused of corruption may instead be influenced by the majorities who say the state is no more corrupt than in the past nor compared to other states. Just 20 percent think New Jersey has become more corrupt in the past five years, while 54 percent say nothing has changed, and 17 percent think corruption has declined. At the same time, the 52 percent who think New Jersey is just like other states represents a sharp decline from a February 2014 poll, when 67 percent saw no difference.

Despite perceiving corruption as the norm in politics, residents nonetheless prefer an honest politician, even if he or she may have trouble making things happen, over a politician who might be corrupt but could get things done – 67 percent versus 26 percent. New Jerseyans also see corruption as a major problem in the state: 15 percent mention government corruption and abuse of power as the most important issue in New Jersey, ranking third overall only behind taxes and the economy.

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QUESTIONS AND TABLES BEGIN ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Questions and Tables

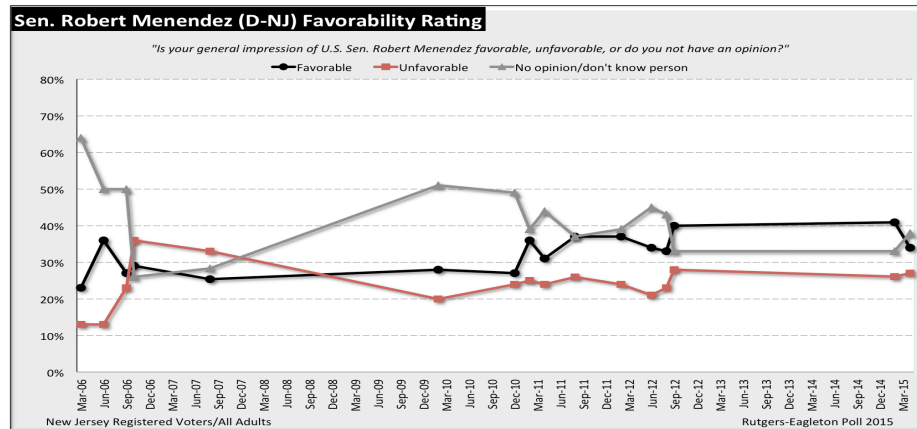
The questions covered in the release of April 6, 2015 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are New Jersey adults, unless otherwise indicated; all percentages are of weighted results.

Q. First, I'd like to ask about some people and groups. Please tell me if your general impression of each one is favorable or unfavorable, or if you do not have an opinion. If you do not know the name, just say so.

[OTHER NAMES ALSO GIVEN; ORDER RANDOMIZED; HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE]

	SEN. ROBERT MENENDEZ	Indictment Announcement		Heard about Menendez Corruption Charges			Most Important Problem	
		Pre- indictment	Post- indictment	Nothing A lot	Some Little	at All	Gov corruption and abuse of power	
Favorable	34%	36%	31%	35%	36%	35%	30%	32%
Unfavorable	27%	23%	36%	47%	35%	20%	7%	36%
No opn/don't know person	38%	41%	33%	18%	28%	45%	63%	32%
Unwgt N=	853	580	273	245	234	190	170	129

Trend



	Party ID (w/ leaners)			Ideology			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non- white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Favorable	43%	27%	25%	43%	32%	34%	34%	35%	28%	44%	31%	36%	33%	34%
Unfavorable	19%	26%	43%	22%	27%	36%	30%	25%	37%	14%	11%	24%	36%	39%
Don't know	38%	47%	31%	35%	41%	29%	36%	41%	34%	42%	58%	40%	31%	26%
Unwgt N=	395	218	237	187	489	152	404	449	545	277	118	237	274	224

	Region				
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South Shore	
Favorable	39%	39%	26%	36%	24%
Unfavorable	23%	28%	35%	21%	32%
Don't know	37%	33%	39%	43%	44%
Unwgt N=	125	280	130	167	151

[QUESTIONS ON OTHER POLITICAL FIGURES LOCATED HERE; HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE]

Q. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Robert Menendez is handling his job as a U.S. Senator?

		Indictment Announcement		Heard about Menendez Corruption Charges			Nothing at All	Most Important Problem Gov corruption and abuse of power
		Pre-indictment	Post-indictment	A lot	Some	Little		
Approve	37%	37%	35%	39%	42%	33%	31%	38%
Disapprove	29%	25%	36%	47%	32%	23%	13%	34%
Don't know	35%	37%	30%	14%	25%	44%	56%	28%
Unwgt N=	845	574	271	246	231	187	168	128

	Party ID (w/ leaners)			Ideology			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Approve	45%	28%	31%	42%	35%	37%	37%	36%	34%	41%	33%	35%	39%	40%
Disapprove	23%	26%	41%	25%	29%	35%	32%	26%	35%	20%	15%	27%	37%	33%
Don't know	32%	46%	27%	32%	36%	28%	31%	38%	31%	39%	52%	38%	25%	27%
Unwt N=	391	215	236	186	485	149	400	445	541	273	118	233	268	226

	Region				
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore
Approve	45%	38%	34%	37%	29%
Disapprove	29%	28%	36%	23%	30%
Don't know	26%	35%	30%	40%	41%
Unwt N=	123	275	129	167	151

[QUESTIONS ON OTHER POLITICAL FIGURES LOCATED HERE; HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE]

Q. Of the following, which is the MOST important problem facing New Jersey today? Is it: [RANDOMIZE OPTION ORDER]

	RV
Taxes, including property taxes	25%
The economy and jobs	16%
Government corruption and abuse of power	15%
Education and schools	14%
Crime and drugs	8%
Health care	6%
The state pension fund	5%
Government spending	5%
Something else	4%
Don't know	3%
Unwgt N=	849

[QUESTIONS ON OTHER POLITICAL FIGURES AND ISSUES, AND TOPICS UNRELATED TO CORRUPTION, LOCATED HERE; HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE]

Q. Is New Jersey more or less corrupt than other states, or is it about the same?

		Indictment Announcement		Most Important Problem
		Pre-indictment	Post-indictment	Gov corruption and abuse of power
More	31%	30%	35%	50%
Less	9%	8%	9%	3%
About the same	52%	54%	49%	43%
Don't know	8%	9%	7%	3%
Unwgt N=	851	574	277	129

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
More	29%	30%	39%	31%	31%	35%	38%	25%	37%	25%	19%	31%	39%	32%
Less	6%	10%	8%	8%	7%	14%	6%	11%	5%	14%	16%	10%	5%	3%
About the same	56%	51%	47%	54%	51%	49%	49%	55%	52%	52%	57%	49%	50%	56%
Don't know	9%	8%	5%	6%	10%	3%	7%	9%	6%	10%	8%	9%	6%	9%
Unwgt N=	287	400	149	189	487	150	400	451	546	276	118	233	272	228

	Region				
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore
More	36%	32%	35%	30%	24%
Less	8%	10%	5%	11%	6%
About the same	47%	48%	53%	53%	63%
Don't know	9%	10%	7%	6%	6%
Unwgt N=	124	278	128	167	154

Q. How much corruption would you say there is in New Jersey POLITICS? Is it a lot, some, only a little, or none at all?

		Indictment Announcement		Most Important Problem
		Pre-indictment	Post-indictment	Gov corruption and abuse of power
A lot	51%	51%	51%	76%
Some	35%	35%	37%	22%
Only a little	7%	7%	6%	1%
None at all	1%	1%	2%	0%
Don't know	5%	6%	5%	1%
Unwgt N=	852	575	277	130

*Sen. Menendez April 2015
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
A lot	47%	52%	57%	52%	50%	54%	55%	47%	55%	45%	41%	48%	58%	54%
Some	40%	33%	31%	35%	37%	30%	32%	39%	35%	38%	40%	37%	35%	28%
Only a little	8%	5%	9%	9%	6%	9%	7%	7%	6%	8%	11%	4%	5%	11%
None at all	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Don't know	2%	9%	2%	3%	6%	5%	5%	6%	4%	6%	6%	8%	1%	6%
Unwt N=	286	401	150	189	488	150	402	450	548	276	118	234	272	228

Region

	Region				
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore
A lot	51%	56%	47%	43%	52%
Some	39%	29%	37%	40%	37%
Only a little	5%	6%	8%	10%	6%
None at all	0%	1%	2%	2%	1%
Don't know	5%	7%	5%	5%	4%
Unwt N=	124	279	128	166	155

Q. Would you say there is more or less political corruption in New Jersey today than there was five years ago, or is it about the same?

		Indictment Announcement		Most Important Problem
		Pre-indictment	Post-indictment	Gov corruption and abuse of power
More	20%	21%	17%	22%
Less	17%	16%	18%	13%
About the same	54%	54%	56%	58%
Don't know	9%	9%	9%	6%
Unwgt N=	851	574	277	129

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
More	23%	19%	16%	17%	22%	17%	18%	22%	18%	23%	22%	17%	21%	21%
Less	11%	19%	20%	10%	18%	21%	17%	16%	17%	17%	18%	18%	16%	14%
About the same	58%	51%	57%	64%	51%	59%	58%	51%	57%	49%	49%	55%	55%	57%
Don't know	7%	10%	8%	9%	9%	3%	6%	11%	7%	11%	11%	9%	8%	8%
Unwt N=	286	400	150	188	488	150	402	449	548	275	117	234	272	228

Region

	Region				
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore
More	24%	18%	14%	28%	17%
Less	16%	19%	16%	12%	19%
About the same	52%	52%	60%	54%	58%
Don't know	9%	11%	10%	7%	6%
Unwt N=	124	278	128	166	155

Q. Given a choice, and if you had to choose, would you prefer:

- 1. A politician who might be corrupt but could get important things done**
- 2. An honest politician who had trouble making things happen**

		Indictment Announcement		Most Important Problem
		Pre- indictment	Post- indictment	Gov corruption and abuse of power
Corrupt	26%	28%	23%	15%
Honest	67%	66%	71%	81%
Don't know	6%	6%	6%	4%
Unwgt N=	812	548	264	126

	Party ID		Ideology				Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non- white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Corrupt	25%	30%	17%	23%	29%	20%	26%	26%	26%	27%	35%	28%	22%	21%
Honest	68%	65%	75%	73%	64%	75%	71%	64%	67%	68%	60%	66%	72%	70%
Don't know	8%	5%	7%	4%	7%	5%	3%	9%	7%	5%	5%	5%	7%	9%
Unwt N=	272	383	146	179	467	143	383	429	524	263	114	225	260	213

	Region				
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/ South	Shore
Corrupt	26%	25%	26%	28%	27%
Honest	66%	68%	71%	65%	67%
Don't know	8%	6%	4%	7%	5%
Unwt N=	115	268	121	161	147

[VERSION USED 3/27 THROUGH 4/1 PRIOR TO 4 P.M.]

Q. There are reports that New Jersey U.S. Senator Bob Menendez will face federal criminal corruption charges stemming from his actions on behalf of a friend and campaign donor. How much have you heard about this? A lot, some, a little, or nothing at all?

[VERSION USED 4/1 STARTING AT 4P.M. THROUGH 4/3]

Q. U.S. Senator Menendez was recently indicted for corruption stemming from his actions on behalf of a friend and campaign donor. How much have you heard about this? A lot, some, a little, or nothing at all?

		Indictment Announcement		Most Important Problem
		Pre- indictment	Post- indictment	Gov corruption and abuse of power
A lot	26%	22%	35%	24%
Some	26%	28%	23%	32%
A little	24%	26%	19%	24%
Nothing at all	24%	24%	23%	20%
Unwgt N=	845	569	276	130

**Sen. Menendez April 2015
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
A lot	27%	25%	28%	26%	26%	31%	25%	27%	31%	19%	8%	19%	35%	45%
Some	26%	26%	31%	27%	25%	30%	26%	27%	30%	21%	17%	22%	34%	32%
A little	26%	22%	24%	26%	23%	25%	26%	22%	22%	27%	27%	33%	16%	15%
Nothing at all	21%	27%	16%	21%	26%	15%	23%	24%	16%	33%	48%	26%	14%	9%
Unwt N=	286	392	151	189	482	151	400	445	548	270	115	229	273	228

	Region				
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore
A lot	28%	28%	27%	20%	27%
Some	25%	24%	35%	27%	24%
A little	17%	26%	19%	24%	31%
Nothing at all	31%	22%	20%	29%	17%
Unwt N=	122	276	128	165	154

[SPLIT SAMPLE: HALF GIVEN VERSION A, HALF GIVEN VERSION B]

[VERSION A]

[VERSION USED 3/27 THROUGH 4/1 PRIOR TO 4 P.M.]

Q. If officially accused of corruption, should Senator Menendez be forced to leave office immediately or should he be allowed to stay in office unless he is found guilty?

[VERSION USED 4/1 STARTING AT 4P.M. THROUGH 4/3]

Q. Now that Senator Menendez has been indicted should he be forced to leave office immediately or should he be allowed to stay in office unless he is found guilty?

		Menendez Favorability		Menendez Job Approval		Heard about Menendez Corruption Charges			Indictment Announcement	
		Fav	Unfav	App	Disapp	A lot	Some	Little/Nothing at All	Pre-indictment	Post-indictment
Leave immediately	34%	21%	55%	20%	51%	32%	40%	34%	37%	29%
Stay in office	58%	75%	42%	76%	45%	64%	56%	57%	55%	65%
Other/don't know	8%	4%	3%	5%	4%	3%	4%	10%	8%	7%
Unwgt N=	433	153	135	161	137	136	116	175	300	133

	Party ID (w/ leaners)			Gender		Race	
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white
Leave immediately	31%	40%	33%	36%	32%	32%	39%
Stay in office	63%	48%	61%	59%	57%	60%	55%
Other/don't know	7%	11%	6%	6%	11%	8%	6%
Unwt N=	198	121	113	209	224	280	139

[VERSION B]

Q. Should officials who have been accused of corruption be forced to leave office immediately or should they be allowed to stay in office unless they are found guilty?

		Menendez Favorability		Menendez Job Approval		Heard about Menendez Corruption Charges			Indictment Announcement	
		Fav	Unfav	App	Disapp	A lot	Some	Little/Nothing at All	Pre-indictment	Post-indictment
Leave immediately	29%	20%	36%	20%	42%	26%	27%	32%	29%	29%
Stay in office	66%	78%	61%	78%	55%	72%	71%	60%	64%	68%
Other/don't know	5%	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	8%	7%	3%
Unwt N=	417	134	123	147	113	111	118	183	273	144

	Party ID (w/ leaners)			Gender		Race	
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white
Leave immediately	28%	26%	32%	27%	31%	24%	36%
Stay in office	66%	65%	65%	68%	64%	73%	55%
Other/don't know	6%	9%	3%	6%	6%	3%	10%
Unwt N=	198	94	123	191	226	267	136

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll March 27 – April 3, 2015

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live callers March 27 – April 3, 2015 with a scientifically selected random sample of 860 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. Respondents within a household are selected by asking randomly for the youngest adult male or female currently available. If the named gender is not available, the youngest adult of the other gender is interviewed. The poll was available in Spanish for respondents who requested it. This telephone poll included 545 landline and 315 cell phone adults, all acquired through random digit dialing using a sample obtained from Survey Sampling International. Distribution of household phone use in this sample is:

Cell Only:	15%
Dual Use, Reached on Cell:	21%
Dual Use, Reached on LL:	58%
Landline Only:	6%

Data were weighted to the demographics adults in New Jersey. Weights account for the probability of being selected within the sample frame and the probability of being sampled within a household, based on the number of individuals living in the household and the phone composition (cell, landline) of the household. The samples were weighted to several demographic variables reflecting the population parameters of the state of New Jersey: gender, race, age, and Hispanic ethnicity. The final weight, which combined all of the parameters mentioned, was trimmed at the 5th and 95th percentile so as to not accord too much weight to any one case or subset of cases. All results are reported with these weighted data

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. Sampling error should be

*Sen. Menendez April 2015
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

adjusted to recognize the effect of weighting the data to better match the population. In this poll, the simple sampling error for the 860 adults is +/-3.2 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The adult sample weighting design effect is 1.27, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.8 percentage points for the adult sample.

Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adults in this sample favor a particular position, we would be 95 percent sure that the true figure is between 46.2 and 53.8 percent (50 +/-3.8) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample.

In this poll, the subsample of 437 adults asked specifically about Sen. Robert Menendez has a margin of error of +/-5.2 percent points, while the sample of 423 adults asked about a generic official has a margin of error of +/-5.3 percentage points.

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.

This Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was fielded in house by the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling. The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll is paid for and sponsored by the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, a non-partisan academic center for the study of politics and the political process. Full questionnaires are available on request, and can also be accessed at the Eagleton Poll archive at www.eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu. For more information, please contact eagleton.poll@rutgers.edu.

Weighted Sample Characteristics 860 New Jersey Adults			
33% Democrat	49% Male	18% 18-29	58% White
49% Independent	51% Female	27% 30-44	13% Black
18% Republican		36% 45-64	17% Hispanic
		19% 65+	12% Asian/Other/Multi