

THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 2019

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Joint Rutgers-Eagleton/FDU Poll: 80 Percent of New Jerseyans are Happy

New Brunswick and Madison, New Jersey (June 6, 2019) – Garden Staters may complain about the high cost of living in New Jersey, but overall, they’re pretty happy.

A joint survey from Rutgers University and Fairleigh Dickinson University finds that eight-in-ten New Jersey residents describe things in their life these days as happy, with one in five (21 percent) specifically saying “very happy”; another 60 percent say they are “pretty happy.” Just 19 percent describe themselves as either “not too happy” (16 percent) or “not happy at all” (3 percent). The New Jersey results are consistent with [national polling on personal happiness](#).

Some New Jerseyans are much happier than others, however. While men and women are equally content, key factors like race, education, and income make a difference. White residents (23 percent “very,” 64 percent “pretty”) express greater happiness than either black residents (17 percent “very,” 62 percent “pretty”) or Hispanic residents (21 percent “very,” 50 percent “pretty”). New Jerseyans who are married are more likely to say they are “very happy” than those who are not married (26 percent to 16 percent).

Education also has some impact: 79 percent among those without a college degree say they are either “very” or “pretty” happy, versus 84 percent among those with a college degree or higher (88 percent among those who have done graduate work).

Happiness increases with household income. Those in households making under \$50,000 annually are about half as likely as those in households making \$150,000 or more to say they are “very happy” (14 percent versus 31 percent). Three in ten residents in the lowest income bracket say they are not happy (26 percent “not too happy,” 4 percent “not at all”), compared to less than one in five making between \$50,000 and \$100,000 and about one in ten making \$100,000 or more.

“Happiness means different things to different people. But when the cost of living keeps going up, it’s not a surprise to see happiness appear elusive to those who are likely struggling the most to afford the basics,” said [Krista Jenkins](#), professor of government at Fairleigh Dickinson University and director of the [Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll](#). “Even if money can’t directly buy happiness, it certainly helps.”

Political affiliation is also correlated with happiness. More than eight in ten Republicans and independents are happy (85 percent among independents, 82 percent among Republicans) compared to three-quarters (76 percent) of Democrats.

“Living in a state with one party Democratic rule isn’t casting much shade on Republicans or independents these days,” said Ashley Koning, assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPIP\)](#) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). “But the reality is that these partisan differences are most likely picking up the different demographics that make up each

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party's base. Lower income and non-white residents are more likely to be Democratic, while higher income and white residents are more likely to be Republican.”

Even how and when residents are asked about happiness has an impact on their responses. Those who were asked about their general happiness at the end of the survey are slightly more likely to say they are “very happy” than those asked at the beginning of the survey – 23 percent versus 19 percent. Respondents contacted for the survey interview by phone are also more likely to say they are either “very” or “pretty” happy (26 percent, 61 percent) than those contacted online (17 percent, 59 percent).

“Question order and survey mode can have a significant impact on how a respondent answers a survey question, noted both Koning and Jenkins. “Respondents can be influenced by the topics they have been asked about up until that point in the survey, the length of the survey, and by whether or not they are talking to a live interviewer.”

In this poll, 1,203 adults were contacted between March 7 and 22, 2019, 621 of which were contacted by live callers on both landlines and cell phones and 582 through an online probability-based panel. The combined sample has a margin of error of +/-3.7 percentage points; the phone sample has a margin of error of +/-4.5 percentage points, and the online probability-base sample has a margin of error of +/-6.0 percentage points. Interviews were done in English and, when requested, Spanish. The full analysis, along with the poll's questions and tables, can be found on the [Rutgers-Eggleton Poll](#) website and the [FDU Poll](#) website.

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Broadcast interviews: Rutgers University–New Brunswick has broadcast-quality TV and radio studios available for remote live or taped interviews with Rutgers experts. For more information, contact Neal Buccino neal.buccino@echo.rutgers.edu

ABOUT RUTGERS—NEW BRUNSWICK

Rutgers University–New Brunswick is where Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, began more than 250 years ago. Ranked among the world's top 60 universities, Rutgers's flagship university is a leading public research institution and a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities. It is home to internationally acclaimed faculty and has 12 degree-granting schools and a Division I Athletics program. It is the Big Ten Conference's most diverse university. Through its community of teachers, scholars, artists, scientists, and healers, Rutgers is equipped as never before to transform lives.

ABOUT THE EAGLETON CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEREST POLLING (ECPIP)

Home of the Rutgers-Eggleton Poll, ECPIP was established in 1971 and is the oldest and one of the most respected university-based state survey research centers in the United States. Now in its 48th year and with the publication of over 200 polls, ECPIP's mission is to provide scientifically sound, non-partisan information about public opinion. To read more about ECPIP and view all of our press releases and published research, please visit our website: eggletonpoll.rutgers.edu. You can also visit our [extensive data archive](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).

ABOUT THE EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

The Eggleton Center for Public Interest Polling is a unit of the Eggleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. The Eggleton Institute explores state and national politics through research,

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education, and public service, linking the study of politics with its day-to-day practice. The Institute focuses attention on how the American political system works, how it changes, and how it might work better. To learn more about Eggleton programs and expertise, visit eggleton.rutgers.edu.

ABOUT FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY

The largest private university in New Jersey, FDU is a not-for-profit, nonsectarian, multi-campus institution. Founded in 1942, FDU achieved four-year status in 1948 and approval as a university in 1956. The University offers over 100 [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) degree programs, including doctoral programs in pharmacy, nursing practice, clinical psychology and school psychology; and an AACSB-accredited [business school](#). Degree programs are offered on two New Jersey campuses and at two FDU locations outside the U.S.: [Wroxton College](#), in Oxfordshire in England, and the [Vancouver Campus](#), in British Columbia, Canada. FDU's 11,500 full- and part-time students pursue quality career-oriented programs on schedules tailored to their needs – days, evenings and weekends. The curriculum reflects a mission of [global education](#) and a foundation of a world-renowned [University Core](#).

ABOUT THE FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY POLL

For the second year, the FDU Poll received an “A” rating from statistician Nate Silver’s [FiveThirtyEight](#) blog. The ratings measure both accuracy and bias for all major polling services in the United States, providing an update to similar research the poll watchers conducted in 2014. FDU’s “A” rating puts it in the top 15 of the more than 380 polling institutes reviewed and graded from A+ through F. The FDU poll was found to have a 94 percent accuracy rate for predicting election results, and is one of only three A-rated polling institutes with zero bias to their rankings. Please visit our website: publicmind.fdu.edu.

QUESTIONS AND TABLES START ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Questions and Tables

The questions covered in this release are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are New Jersey adults. All percentages are of weighted results. Interpret groups with samples sizes under 100 with caution.

Q. Generally, how would you say things are these days in your life? Would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, not too happy, or not happy at all? [SPLIT SAMPLE – ASK HALF AT BEGINNING OF SURVEY, ASK HALF AT END]

	Combined	Asked at Start	Asked at End
Very happy	21%	19%	23%
Pretty happy	60%	61%	59%
Not too happy	16%	16%	15%
Not happy at all	3%	5%	2%
Unwght N=	1237	613	624

[COMBINED RESULTS]

	Party ID			Gender		Race				Age				Income			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Black	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	<\$50K	\$50K- <\$100K	\$100K- <\$150K	\$150K+
Very happy	20%	22%	21%	20%	22%	23%	17%	21%	19%	16%	23%	19%	24%	14%	23%	21%	31%
Pretty happy	56%	63%	61%	61%	59%	64%	62%	50%	55%	63%	56%	63%	61%	55%	60%	70%	58%
Not too happy	21%	11%	14%	16%	15%	11%	13%	27%	25%	18%	17%	15%	11%	26%	14%	8%	10%
Not happy at all	2%	5%	4%	3%	4%	3%	8%	3%	1%	3%	5%	3%	3%	4%	3%	1%	2%
Unwght N=	457	439	314	539	698	844	108	162	102	123	329	421	361	268	423	263	209

	Region			Education				Married		Survey Mode			
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/ South	Shore	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work	Yes	No	Phone	Online
Very happy	20%	24%	19%	21%	21%	21%	15%	21%	31%	26%	16%	26%	17%
Pretty happy	56%	61%	63%	60%	58%	55%	67%	60%	57%	60%	60%	61%	59%
Not too happy	19%	11%	14%	17%	19%	19%	13%	18%	10%	11%	20%	10%	21%
Not happy at all	5%	4%	4%	2%	2%	4%	5%	1%	2%	3%	4%	3%	3%
Unwght N=	262	369	248	170	188	225	334	378	297	672	558	610	627

About the Rutgers-Eagleton/Fairleigh Dickinson Polling Partnership

For almost 50 years, the [Rutgers-Eagleton Poll](#) – established in 1971 at Rutgers University’s Eagleton Institute of Politics – has been conducted by telephone, using what is known as a [probability-based sample](#) to survey New Jersey residents. That methodology has since been used by all other academic organizations that have conducted surveys in New Jersey – including Fairleigh Dickinson University (established in 2001), Monmouth University (established in 2005), and Quinnipiac University.

[The polling landscape](#) has dramatically transformed within the last decade, however. Due to technological changes (like [cell phones](#) and caller ID), [behavioral changes](#) (like fewer people answering their phones and responding to surveys), and an increased number of unsolicited calls (like telemarketing and spam), telephone surveys have become far more difficult and far more expensive. Response rates are now in the [single digits](#), meaning more call attempts have to be made than ever before to achieve a single completed interview – which, in turn, means more time and more money. It now costs almost three times as much to complete a telephone interview than it did just five years ago, with fielding costs reaching over \$100 per completed interview at some of the most well-known and respected telephone survey call centers. The polling profession has started to adapt by [moving online](#) but has faced a major hurdle – the current inability to take a probability-based sample of Internet users. The industry has attempted to tackle this problem in two ways:

- 1) By conducting a probability sample by mail or phone and recruiting those respondents to join an online panel (with those not online being given that capacity by the survey organization). This has been the approach of organizations like the [Pew Research Center](#) and Ipsos’ [KnowledgePanel](#), the latter of which was used for this current study.
- 2) By conducting a [non-probability sample](#), where respondents volunteer to be surveyed rather than the probability sample where they are selected to be surveyed. The [New York Times/CBS News Poll](#) took this approach in 2014, for example.

A number of research studies have found that the results of probability and non-probability samples are similar, if weighted correctly at the end. But probability samples are still slightly more accurate, may have better reliability over time, and allow for the computation of [sampling error](#) – a statement of the probabilities of how likely the poll is to be accurate. Because of the need to move away from telephone surveys, the [Rutgers-Eagleton Poll](#) at Rutgers-New Brunswick’s [Eagleton Institute of Politics](#) and the [FDU Poll](#) at Fairleigh Dickinson University have combined their resources to conduct one of the first ever in-depth experiments testing the effects of both survey mode and type of sample on statewide public opinion polling. The extensive study involves testing an identical questionnaire on three different samples:

1. A probability-based sample of 621 respondents from a traditional dual-frame telephone survey conducted by live callers on both landline and cellular phone between March 7 and March 12, 2019. The telephone survey was fielded by [Braun Research, Inc](#) with sample provided by [Dynata](#).

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2. A probability-based sample of 629 respondents from Ipsos' online probability-based [KnowledgePanel](#)® conducted online between March 13 and March 22, 2019.
3. A non-probability sample of 643 respondents from Ipsos' opt-in panel conducted online between March 17 and March 28, 2019.

The results reported on in this series of releases by Rutgers-Eggleton and FDU will report results only from the combined samples of the telephone survey and online probability-based panel. The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house by Dr. Ashley Koning and Dr. Cliff Zukin at the Eggleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP) at Rutgers University-New Brunswick and Dr. Krista Jenkins at Fairleigh Dickinson University. William Young and Kyle Morgan assisted with preparation of the questionnaire and analysis and preparation of this release. This poll is paid for and sponsored by both the Eggleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick and Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Telephone Methodology

The telephone survey was conducted by live callers on both landlines and cellular phones between March 7 and 12, 2019, with a scientifically selected random sample of 621 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. Persons without a telephone could not be included in the random selection process. 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 258 adults reached on a landline phone and 363 adults reached on a cell phone, all acquired through random digit dialing. Distribution of household phone use in this sample is:

Cell Only:	34%
Dual Use, Reached on Cell:	24%
Dual Use, Reached on LL:	39%
Landline Only:	2%

The data were weighted to be representative of the non-institutionalized adult population of New Jersey. The weighting balanced sample demographics to target population parameters. The sample is balanced to match parameters for sex, age, education, race/ethnicity, region and phone use. The sex, age, education, race/ethnicity and region parameters were derived from 2017 American Community Survey PUMS data. The phone use parameter was derived from estimates provided by the National Health Interview Survey Early Release Program.¹²³

¹ NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2012-2016; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015; and infoUSA.com consumer database, 2012-2016.

² Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, July–December 2015. National Center for Health Statistics. May 2016.

³ Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, January–June 2018. National Center for Health Statistics. December 2018.

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Weighting was done in two stages. The first stage of weighting corrected for different probabilities of selection associated with the number of adults in each household and each respondent’s telephone usage patterns. This adjustment also accounts for the overlapping landline and cell sample frames and the relative sizes of each frame and each sample. This first stage weight was applied to the entire sample which included all adults.

The second stage of the weighting balanced sample demographics, by form, to match target population benchmarks. This weighting was accomplished using SPSSINC RAKE, an SPSS extension module that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables using the GENLOG procedure. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target population.

An adjustment was incorporated into the raking to ensure that the party ID distribution of both forms were similar to each other. This was done by first raking the entire sample to target population benchmarks and extracting from that weighted data a party ID “benchmark”. Then the final weighting by form included all the weighting demographics listed above, plus the party ID distribution derived from the first raking.

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 adjusted to recognize the effect of weighting the data to better match the population. In this poll, the simple sampling error for 621 New Jersey adults is +/-3.9 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 1.31, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 4.5 percentage points. 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 45.5 and 54.5 percent (50 +/- 4.5) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a 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.

This telephone survey was fielded by Braun Research, Inc. with sample from Dynata.

Weighted Telephone Sample Characteristics
621 New Jersey Adults

Male	48%	Democrat	36%	18-34	25%	HS or Less	30%	White	58%
Female	52%	Independent	41%	35-49	24%	Some College	30%	Black	12%
		Republican	23%	50-64	30%	College Grad	22%	Hispanic	19%
				65+	20%	Grad Work	17%	Other	12%

Online Methodology

The online survey was conducted between March 13 and 22, 2019, using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, Ipsos provides at no cost a laptop/netbook and ISP connection. People who already have computers and Internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists then receive unique log-in information for accessing surveys online, and then are sent emails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research. This survey contained 582 New Jersey adults, 18 or older and was available in Spanish for respondents who requested it.

The data were weighted to be representative of the non-institutionalized adult population of New Jersey. The sample was balanced, by form, to match target population benchmarks for sex, age, education, race/ethnicity, region and phone use. The sex, age, education, race/ethnicity and region parameters were derived from 2017 American Community Survey PUMS data. The phone use parameter was derived from estimates provided by the National Health Interview Survey Early Release Program.⁴⁵⁶

This weighting was accomplished using SPSSINC RAKE, an SPSS extension module that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables using the GENLOG procedure. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target population. The IPSOS KnowledgePanel base weight was used as the input weight for the weighting.

An adjustment was incorporated into the raking to ensure that the party ID distribution of both forms were similar to each other. This was done by first raking the entire sample to target population benchmarks and extracting from that weighted data a party ID “benchmark”. Then the final weighting by form included all the weighting demographics listed above, plus the party ID distribution derived from the first raking.

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 adjusted to recognize the effect of weighting the data to better match the population. In this poll, the simple sampling error for 582 New Jersey adults is +/-4.1

⁴ NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2012-2016; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015; and infoUSA.com consumer database, 2012-2016.

⁵ Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, July–December 2015. National Center for Health Statistics. May 2016.

⁶ Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, January-June 2018. National Center for Health Statistics. December 2018.

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percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 2.18, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 6.0 percentage points. 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 44 and 56 percent (50 +/- 6.0) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a 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.

This online survey was fielded by Ipsos. Ipsos is an independent market research company controlled and managed by research professionals. Visit www.ipsos.com/en-us to learn more about Ipsos' offerings and capabilities.

Weighted Online Sample Characteristics
582 New Jersey Adults

Male	47%	Democrat	41%	18-34	25%	HS or Less	34%	White	59%
Female	53%	Independent	38%	35-49	26%	Some College	26%	Black	11%
		Republican	21%	50-64	28%	College Grad	24%	Hispanic	18%
				65+	21%	Grad Work	17%	Other	11%

Telephone + Online Combined Probability Sample Methodology

The entire survey was conducted between March 7 and March 22, 2019 with a combined total sample of 1,203 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. Distribution of the combined sample is as follows:

Reached on Cell:	30%
Reached on LL:	21%
Reached online:	48%

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 adjusted to recognize the effect of weighting the data to better match the population. In this poll, the simple sampling error for 1,203 New Jersey adults is +/-2.8 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 1.73, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.7 percentage points. 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 45.63 and 53.7 percent (50 +/- 3.7) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a 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.

Weighted Combined Sample Characteristics

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1,203 New Jersey Adults

Male	47%	Democrat	39%	18-34	25%	HS or Less	32%	White	59%
Female	53%	Independent	40%	35-49	25%	Some College	28%	Black	11%
		Republican	22%	50-64	29%	College Grad	23%	Hispanic	19%
				65+	21%	Grad Work	17%	Other	11%