

Rutgers - Eagleton Poll

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(Note: News media covering the New Jersey Supreme Court ruling in Mark Lewis, et al. v. Gwendolyn L. Harris, et al. may find the following information useful. This release consists of data released in June 2006, plus additional data analyses.)

NEW JERSEY VOTERS DIVIDED OVER SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

A Rutgers-Eagleton Poll on same-sex marriage, conducted in June 2006, found the state's voters divided on the issue. Forty-nine percent of voters supported legalizing marriage for gay and lesbian couples, and 44 percent were opposed.

Voters in the Garden State were far more likely to support allowing gays and lesbians to form civil unions "that would give them many of the same rights and benefits as a married man and woman," with 66 percent in favor and 29 percent opposed.

Opposition to amending the U.S. Constitution to define marriage as being between a man and a woman also was strong among New Jersey voters, who opposed the idea 53 percent to 39 percent.

The telephone survey of 699 registered voters was conducted June 14-19, 2006, and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.7 percent.

There was an interesting methodological effect in the survey that indicated that the support for gay marriage was soft while the support for gay civil unions was much more solid.

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll • Eagleton Institute of Politics

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In order to test whether one proposal made the other proposal more or less acceptable, the poll randomly assigned half of the sample to hear the gay marriage question first, followed by the civil union question. The other half heard the civil union question first, and the gay marriage question second.

Support for legalizing gay marriage was higher, with 52 percent of registered voters in favor and 41 percent opposed, when that question came first. When the gay marriage question came after the question about civil unions, survey respondents were evenly divided, with 46 percent of registered voters in favor of gay marriage, and 48 percent opposed. Responses to the question about civil unions, however, did not vary by the order of the questions.

Murray Edelman, distinguished scholar at the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling, said the results suggest “there is a general desire to give legal recognition to gay and lesbian relationships, but there needs to be more discussion of the specifics. The respondents who heard the civil union question first were reminded, or perhaps told for the first time, that there was a way other than marriage that could give gay and lesbian relationships legal recognition, and that may have made them less likely to support marriage.”

Majorities of Democrats and independent voters favored same-sex marriage, while a majority of Republicans were opposed. Fifty-two percent of women favored gay marriage, while 50 percent of men were opposed. Support declined with age, with the greatest support among those ages 30 to 49 years old. Those with at least some college education were more likely to support gay marriage than those with a high school education or less.

Public opinion over same-sex marriage could factor into the race for the U.S. Senate between Democrat Bob Menendez and Republican Tom Kean, Jr. Voters who supported same-

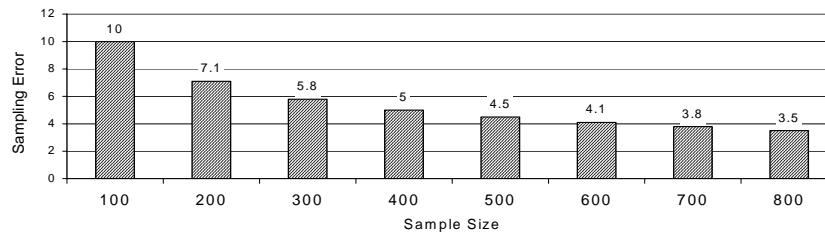
sex marriage backed Menendez over Kean 51 percent to 30 percent in the June 2006 poll. Voters who opposed same-sex marriage supported Kean over Menendez 49 percent to 33 percent.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP 159) June 2006

The latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted from June 14-19, 2006 with a scientifically selected random sample of 803 New Jersey adults. This sample yielded 699 adult residents registered to vote in New Jersey. Most of the figures in this release are based on the statewide sample of all adults. Sampling and data collection were conducted by Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, Inc (SRBI).

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 for a sample of 803 adults is ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adults were found to have a favorable opinion of a senatorial candidate, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 47.5 and 53.5 percent (50 ± 3.5) had all New Jersey adults been interviewed, rather than just a sample. The margin of sampling error for 699 registered voters is ± 3.7 percent. 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. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error. 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 release contains the verbatim wording of all questions featured in the release.

Sample Size and Sampling Error



Would you favor or oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally? (G1a)
 (Rotated with question G1b)

June 2006		Favor	Oppose	DK/RF	(n)
Registered voters		49%	44%	7%	699
Party ID	Democrat	56%	38%	6%	247
	Republican	38%	59%	3%	183
	Independent	50%	41%	9%	214
Gender	Male	44%	50%	6%	323
	Female	52%	40%	7%	376
Race	White	50%	44%	6%	565
	Non-white	46%	47%	6%	120
Age	18-29	***	***	***	***
	30-49	56%	37%	8%	240
	50-64	47%	45%	8%	243
	65+	25%	69%	6%	163
Education	High school or below	41%	51%	8%	187
	Some college and above	54%	40%	6%	510
Region	North	51%	43%	6%	314
	Central	55%	36%	9%	177
	South	42%	53%	5%	196
All adults		50%	44%	6%	803

***Fewer than 50 respondents.

	June 2006 Senate Horse Race (Registered Voters)				(n)
	Menendez	Kean, Jr.	Would Not Vote	DK/RF/ Undecided	
Favor same-sex marriage	51%	30%	2%	17%	332
Oppose same-sex marriage	33%	49%	1%	17%	318

Would you favor or oppose allowing gays and lesbians to form a civil union that would give them many of the same rights and benefits as a married man and woman? (G1b)
(Rotated with question G1a.)

June 2006	Favor	Oppose	DK/RF	(n)
Registered voters	66%	29%	5%	699
All adults	65%	30%	5%	803

Would you favor or oppose a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as being between a man and a woman, thus barring marriages between gay or lesbian couples? (G3)

June 2006	Favor	Oppose	DK/RF	(n)
Registered voters	39%	53%	8%	699
All adults	40%	52%	8%	803