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RUTGERS-EAGLETON POLL: NEW JERSEYANS WORRY ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE

Voters prefer controlling gun ownership to protecting owner rights

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J – Two-thirds of New Jersey's registered voters are "very concerned" about the scope of gun violence in America, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll released today. The poll, taken both before and after the Aug. 24 Empire State Building shooting, also finds 65 percent of voters think controlling gun ownership is more important than protecting gun owner rights. Voters are split, however, on whether America has become more violent in recent years (42 percent) or if violence is simply more visible in the news (48 percent).

Among the 22 percent who have a gun owner in their household, a majority (53 percent) is very concerned over gun violence, while 41 percent agree that controlling ownership is more important than gun owner rights.

Nearly half of voters think New Jersey guns laws should be made stricter, though only 28 percent in households with guns are on board with tightening state laws; a plurality (40 percent) of these voters prefer gun laws remain unchanged.

"With the high-profile shootings in Colorado and the Wisconsin Sikh Temple, it seemed time to revisit the question of gun control," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. "Interestingly, people we talked to after the Empire State Building shooting were no more concerned about gun violence than those we talked to beforehand. The evening after the shooting, we did get a slight increase in support for gun owner rights, opposite of what we expected, and people were more likely to say violence is not on the rise, just more visible in the news."

Results are from a poll of 916 registered voters conducted statewide among landline and cell phone households from Aug. 23-25. The poll was in the field when the Empire State Building shooting occurred on Aug. 24. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.2 percentage points.

Concern about gun violence especially strong in urban New Jersey

Concern over gun violence statewide has climbed somewhat since 60 percent expressed "a lot" of concern when Eagleton last polled in 1999. Voters in the northeastern urban areas of the state and in the south Jersey/Philadelphia area counties are most worried, with about three-quarters "very

concerned” about gun violence in America. Residents of shore counties follow right behind at 71 percent, while 60 percent of suburban and 52 percent of northwestern (exurban) New Jerseyans are very concerned. Ninety percent of black voters are “very concerned” while 60 percent of whites feel the same. Older voters are also much more worried: 74 percent of those 65 and over report being very concerned, while 47 percent of voters under 30 feel the same.

Women express greater concern than men, 73 percent to 57 percent. Those with guns in their home are much less likely to be very concerned about gun violence, though a majority (53 percent) still takes this position, compared to 70 percent of those without guns.

“With recent gun violence taking a center stage in the news, it is slightly surprising that the level of concern has increased only a little since 1999,” said Redlawsk. “At the same time, it is already pretty high for many groups, especially those most likely to face violence personally because of where they live.”

Voters are split on whether there really has been more gun violence in recent years, or if violence is simply more visible in the news. Nearly half think news visibility has increased, while 42 percent see a real increase in gun violence. In 1999, the numbers were reversed: 51 percent believed there had been more gun violence while 42 percent thought visibility had increased.

Those most concerned about gun violence are much more likely to think violence is real and has increased: 54 percent say violence is up. More than two-thirds of less-concerned voters think news coverage has made the gun violence more visible.

Garden Staters continue to support gun control

Nearly two-thirds of New Jersey voters say controlling gun ownership is more important than gun owner rights. This represents a decline since 1999, when 73 percent preferred gun control over gun owner rights. Today, 72 percent without guns at home say gun control is more important than owner rights, 31 points higher than voters in gun owning households.

“The stereotype is that those with guns want nothing to do with restricting their rights,” said Redlawsk. “Here, that also appears mostly true. While many with guns at home say gun ownership should be controlled, a majority thinks owners’ rights should trump. Overall we’ve seen a small move toward the gun owner rights position over time.”

Republicans, at 45 percent, are evenly split on the issue. Democrats overwhelmingly choose gun control over owner rights, 82 percent to 11 percent. By about a 2 to 1 margin, independent voters favor control over owners’ rights. Unsurprisingly, as concern for gun violence increases, so does support for gun control generally. Three-quarters of those very concerned about violence think gun control is more important than owner rights, while only a quarter of unconcerned voters agree.

“Concern over violence, driven in part by where people live, also leads them to support gun

control,” said Redlawsk. “Those who are closest to the violence are strongest gun control advocates. Those living further away, and gun owners, are much more interested in gun owner rights.”

New Jersey laws should be tightened

Voters prefer to see the state’s gun laws tightened: 47 percent want stricter laws while 11 percent want them more lax. Twenty-eight percent prefer the status quo. While a plurality would tighten laws, the percentage is down from the 58 percent who wanted stricter laws in 1999.

Black voters are much more likely than whites to call for increasingly strict gun laws, 63 percent to 39 percent. Age makes little difference, but gender matters. Women favor stricter laws by 14 points. Forty percent of gun owners prefer the status quo and 24 percent want state laws to be relaxed further. More than half (54 percent) without guns want state laws tightened further.

“While New Jersey is less supportive of gun rights than many places, there has been a conservative trend over the past decade,” noted Redlawsk. “More people are concerned about violence. Most still want gun control, but the number favoring fewer restrictions has clearly grown.”

More than half (54 percent) of voters prefer gun laws to be managed at the federal level compared with 41 percent who would rather leave legislation to the states. Most Republicans (63 percent) want state-level laws, while 69 percent of Democrats favor federal laws. Independents favor the federal approach, 53 percent to 42 percent.

Gun ownership varies regionally

Gun ownership patterns show significant regional variation, with exurban (29 percent) and shore households (26 percent) most likely to have guns, followed by south Jersey/Philadelphia (24 percent), suburban (18 percent) and urban households (17 percent). Whites are more likely to live in households with guns, at 25 percent, while 14 percent of blacks report at least one gun in the home.

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QUESTIONS AND TABLES BEGIN ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Questions and Tables

The questions covered in the release of September 12, 2012 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are New Jersey Registered Voters unless otherwise noted.

Q. On another topic, there have been several shootings in the news lately. How concerned are you about the amount of gun violence in the U.S. today? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not at all concerned?

	ALL RV	Interview Date		
		Aug 23	Aug 24	Aug 25
Very concerned	66%	66%	65%	66%
Somewhat	24%	26%	24%	23%
Not at all	10%	8%	11%	10%
Unwgt N=	915	218	356	341

Registered Voters

	Party ID			Ideology			Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Very concerned	81%	59%	55%	74%	69%	51%	72%	66%	61%	65%
Somewhat	16%	30%	28%	21%	23%	32%	20%	23%	30%	24%
Not at all	3%	11%	17%	5%	9%	17%	8%	11%	10%	11%
Unwgt N=	304	378	221	197	479	218	231	241	253	186

	Race			Age			
	White	Black	Hisp	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Very concerned	60%	91%	66%	47%	64%	69%	74%
Somewhat	27%	7%	24%	39%	23%	25%	18%
Not at all	12%	2%	10%	14%	14%	6%	8%
Unwgt N=	713	95	51	84	205	343	271

	Income				Gender	
	<50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female
Very concerned	80%	63%	62%	64%	57%	73%
Somewhat	17%	26%	27%	24%	28%	21%
Not at all	3%	12%	11%	12%	15%	5%
Unwgt N=	211	277	133	120	457	458

	Region					Gun Owner	
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore	Yes	No
Very concerned	75%	60%	52%	73%	71%	53%	70%
Somewhat	17%	29%	30%	19%	24%	29%	23%
Not at all	8%	11%	18%	8%	5%	19%	7%
Unwgt N=	149	323	132	162	149	206	689

Q. Thinking back over the last few years or so, do you think the U.S. has become a more violent place in general, or have events related to gun violence simply become more visible in the news?

	ALL RV	Interview Date			Concern over Guns		
		Aug 23	Aug 24	Aug 25	Very	Some- what	Not
More violent	42%	47%	36%	45%	54%	21%	17%
More visible	48%	45%	54%	44%	38%	66%	72%
Both (vol)	5%	3%	5%	7%	5%	6%	3%
Neither (vol)	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	3%	7%
DK (vol)	3%	3%	4%	2%	2%	4%	1%
Unwgt N=	914	217	356	341	603	220	91

Registered Voters

	Party ID			Ideology			Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
More violent	46%	41%	38%	50%	41%	37%	40%	44%	43%	41%
More visible	42%	51%	52%	39%	49%	54%	49%	46%	48%	50%
Both (vol)	6%	4%	5%	4%	7%	2%	6%	6%	5%	3%
Neither (vol)	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%	1%
DK (vol)	3%	3%	3%	5%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	4%
Unwgt N=	304	377	221	197	478	218	231	241	253	186

	Race			Age			
	White	Black	Hisp	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
More violent	41%	50%	33%	22%	43%	46%	47%
More visible	48%	42%	55%	62%	50%	45%	42%
Both (vol)	6%	4%	5%	6%	5%	5%	6%
Neither (vol)	2%	2%	3%	4%	1%	2%	2%
DK (vol)	3%	2%	4%	5%	1%	2%	4%
Unwgt N=	713	95	51	84	205	343	271

	Income				Gender	
	<50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female
More violent	46%	44%	44%	36%	38%	45%
More visible	44%	48%	49%	55%	52%	45%
Both (vol)	5%	5%	2%	6%	4%	6%
Neither (vol)	2%	2%	3%	1%	3%	1%
DK (vol)	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%
Unwgt N=	211	277	133	120	457	457

	Region					Gun Owner	
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore	Yes	No
More violent	44%	38%	35%	53%	43%	38%	43%
More visible	41%	53%	59%	42%	43%	56%	46%
Both (vol)	5%	5%	4%	4%	7%	2%	6%
Neither (vol)	4%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%
DK (vol)	6%	2%	1%	1%	5%	2%	3%
Unwgt N=	149	323	131	162	149	206	688

Q. Which do you think is more important--to protect the right of Americans to own guns, or to control gun ownership?

	ALL RV	Interview Date			Concern over Guns		
		Aug 23	Aug 24	Aug 25	Very	Some- what	Not
Right to own guns	27%	22%	28%	30%	18%	36%	64%
Control ownership	65%	72%	62%	63%	75%	53%	24%
Both (vol)	4%	3%	5%	4%	3%	6%	4%
Neither (vol)	2%	%	2%	2%	1%	1%	5%
DK (vol)	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	4%	3%
Unwgt N=	911	214	356	341	600	220	91

Registered Voters

	Party ID			Ideology			Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Right to own guns	11%	31%	45%	8%	27%	47%	30%	26%	26%	26%
Control ownership	82%	61%	45%	84%	65%	44%	61%	66%	66%	66%
Both (vol)	5%	4%	3%	6%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Neither (vol)	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%
DK (vol)	1%	2%	4%	1%	2%	4%	3%	2%	2%	4%
Unwgt N=	303	376	220	196	476	218	231	240	252	185

	Race			Age			
	White	Black	Hisp	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Right to own guns	32%	12%	22%	22%	29%	26%	29%
Control ownership	60%	79%	70%	68%	66%	66%	60%
Both (vol)	4%	6%	2%	5%	4%	4%	4%
Neither (vol)	1%	3%	3%	4%	0%	2%	3%
DK (vol)	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%	3%	4%
Unwgt N=	710	95	51	84	205	342	269

	Income				Gender	
	<50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female
Right to own guns	24%	28%	36%	22%	35%	20%
Control ownership	66%	64%	59%	75%	56%	72%
Both (vol)	6%	4%	3%	2%	4%	4%
Neither (vol)	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%
DK (vol)	3%	3%	1%	1%	2%	3%
Unwgt N=	210	276	132	120	455	456

	Region					Gun Owner	
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore	Yes	No
Right to own guns	24%	25%	32%	23%	34%	57%	18%
Control ownership	65%	66%	57%	70%	61%	41%	72%
Both (vol)	7%	4%	5%	3%	2%	2%	5%
Neither (vol)	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%
DK (vol)	3%	2%	4%	3%	2%	0%	3%
Unwgt N=	149	321	131	161	149	205	686

Q. Some say individual states should make and enforce gun laws. Other says we need federal gun laws that apply to all states. What about you? Do you think gun laws should be determined by the states or by the federal government?

	ALL RV	Interview Date			Concern over Guns		
		Aug 23	Aug 24	Aug 25	Very	Some- what	Not
States	41%	39%	41%	43%	34%	50%	66%
Fed. government	54%	57%	54%	52%	62%	45%	24%
DK (vol)	5%	4%	6%	5%	5%	5%	10%
Unwgt N=	910	217	353	340	600	220	90

Registered Voters

	Party ID			Ideology			Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
States	26%	42%	63%	20%	42%	60%	37%	42%	43%	41%
Fed. government	69%	53%	31%	75%	54%	34%	57%	51%	53%	56%
DK (vol)	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%	6%	6%	7%	4%	3%
Unwgt N=	302	375	221	197	476	217	229	240	253	185

	Race			Age			
	White	Black	Hisp	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
States	46%	28%	33%	39%	41%	37%	48%
Fed. government	49%	64%	66%	57%	55%	58%	45%
DK (vol)	5%	8%	1%	4%	5%	5%	7%
Unwgt N=	710	95	51	84	205	342	268

	Income				Gender	
	<50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female
States	39%	43%	45%	35%	44%	38%
Fed. government	57%	53%	49%	63%	51%	57%
DK (vol)	4%	4%	6%	3%	5%	5%
Unwgt N=	209	277	133	120	456	454

	Region					Gun Owner	
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore	Yes	No
States	29%	38%	51%	38%	51%	55%	37%
Fed. government	67%	56%	45%	57%	42%	40%	58%
DK (vol)	4%	6%	4%	5%	7%	5%	5%
Unwgt N=	149	322	131	160	148	206	684

Q. Do you think New Jersey's laws covering gun ownership should be made more strict, less strict, or kept as they are now?

	ALL RV	Interview Date			Concern over Guns		
		Aug 23	Aug 24	Aug 25	Very	Some- what	Not
More strict	47%	50%	48%	44%	59%	28%	14%
Less strict	11%	11%	11%	11%	5%	16%	34%
Kept as they are	28%	29%	25%	30%	22%	38%	37%
DK (vol)	14%	10%	16%	14%	13%	18%	14%
Unwgt N=	914	217	356	341	603	220	91

Registered Voters

	Party ID			Ideology			Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
More strict	63%	45%	27%	60%	49%	30%	54%	49%	44%	42%
Less strict	5%	13%	16%	4%	11%	19%	9%	10%	13%	12%
Kept as they are	20%	29%	37%	25%	27%	32%	28%	29%	30%	24%
DK (vol)	12%	13%	20%	11%	13%	19%	9%	13%	14%	22%
Unwgt N=	304	377	221	197	478	218	231	241	253	186

	Race			Age			
	White	Black	Hisp	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
More strict	39%	63%	72%	49%	42%	50%	49%
Less strict	13%	8%	7%	8%	17%	10%	6%
Kept as they are	32%	20%	11%	30%	26%	28%	28%
DK (vol)	16%	9%	10%	12%	16%	12%	17%
Unwgt N=	713	95	51	84	205	343	271

	Income				Gender	
	<50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female
More strict	55%	47%	40%	45%	40%	54%
Less strict	8%	11%	16%	10%	17%	5%
Kept as they are	25%	27%	34%	34%	32%	24%
DK (vol)	13%	15%	10%	11%	11%	17%
Unwgt N=	211	277	133	120	457	457

	Region					Gun Owner	
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore	Yes	No
More strict	52%	51%	39%	49%	41%	28%	54%
Less strict	9%	9%	14%	11%	13%	24%	7%
Kept as they are	23%	29%	32%	24%	30%	40%	24%
DK (vol)	16%	11%	14%	15%	16%	8%	16%
Unwgt N=	149	323	131	162	149	206	688

Q. Does anyone in your household own any kind of gun?

	ALL
	RV
Yes	22%
No	78%
Unwgt N=	896

Registered Voters

	Party ID			Ideology			Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Yes	15%	25%	29%	14%	23%	30%	22%	23%	24%	19%
No	85%	75%	71%	86%	77%	70%	78%	77%	76%	81%
Unwgt N=	302	371	212	196	467	213	228	235	248	181

	Race			Age			
	White	Black	Hisp	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Yes	25%	14%	19%	16%	24%	23%	22%
No	75%	86%	81%	84%	76%	77%	78%
Unwgt N=	694	96	51	82	203	336	265

	Income				Gender	
	<50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female
Yes	16%	24%	33%	24%	24%	21%
No	84%	76%	67%	76%	76%	79%
Unwgt N=	209	275	132	116	448	448

	Region				
	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore
Yes	17%	18%	29%	24%	26%
No	83%	82%	71%	76%	74%
Unwgt N=	146	317	131	158	144

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll August 23-25, 2012

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone from August 23-25, 2012 with a scientifically selected random sample of 916 New Jersey registered voters. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, using gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity matching to 2010 US Census Bureau data. Data are further weighted to ensure geographical representation by county. All results are reported with these weighted data. This telephone poll included 735 landline respondents and 181 cell phone respondents, all acquired through random digit dialing.

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 916 registered voters is +/-3.2 percentage points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey voters favored a particular position, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.8 and 53.2 percent (50 +/-3.2) had all New Jersey registered voters 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.

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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 by Braun Research Incorporated. 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 focused on the study and teaching of politics and the political process.

Weighted Sample Characteristics 916 New Jersey Registered Voters			
35% Democrat	47% Male	13% 18-29	71% White
41% Independent	53% Female	30% 30-49	14% Black
24% Republican		32% 50-64	9% Hispanic
		25% 65+	6% Asian/Other/Multi