

FRIDAY, OCT. 28, 2011

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RUTGERS-EAGLETON POLL FINDS NEW JERSEYANS STILL FAVOR LEGALIZING GAY MARRIAGE

Support jumps if status is termed 'marriage equality'

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – The seasons may have changed but New Jerseyans have not changed their minds about gay marriage since the summer. Now, as in August, 52 percent believe same-sex marriages should be legal, according to a new Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. Support for legalizing gay marriage jumps to 61 percent when the issue is framed in terms of “marriage equality,” the favored description of advocates for same-sex couples.

Almost four-in-10 respondents (39 percent) oppose legalizing gay marriage while 9 percent are unsure. Twenty-seven percent are against “marriage equality,” while 3 percent are unfamiliar with the term and 9 percent have no opinion.

“Support for legalizing same-sex relations in New Jersey continues to be solid,” said poll Director David Redlawsk, a professor of political science at Rutgers University. “Young people are overwhelmingly in favor, though a majority of all age groups is supportive, except for those 65 and over. Whatever it is called, support for state recognition of same-sex marriage remains strong and most likely will grow over time.”

Support is particularly strong among younger age groups, women and those with a gay or lesbian family member, friend, or acquaintance. Catholics are stronger supporters than Protestants and also more likely to increase support when the issue is phrased as “marriage equality.”

Democrats and independents both show majority support for gay marriage and even greater support for “marriage equality,” but the large majority of Republicans oppose legalization regardless of how the issue is phrased.

Results are from a poll of 903 adults conducted statewide among both landline and cell phone households from Oct. 6-9. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.4 percentage points. The two different versions of the same-sex marriage question were asked of randomly selected half- samples.

The margin of error for these questions is +/-4.7 percentage points.

Language matters: ‘marriage equality’ overwhelmingly favored

While support measured with the term “marriage equality” is stronger than for “gay marriage,” by 61 percent to 52 percent, certain groups are especially influenced by the name change. Support among those who never attended college jumps 25 points to 66 percent for marriage equality, while support among men climbs 16 points to 63 percent. Women, stronger supporters of the issue in the first place, are less influenced; their support increases 3 points to 59 percent when marriage equality is used to describe the relationship. Catholics are also particularly responsive to reframing the issue: 49 percent favor legalizing gay marriage but rises 63 percent when asked about marriage equality.

Language also greatly influences senior citizens. While opposition to gay marriage is strong among those 65 and over, with only 32 percent supporting legalization and 53 percent opposing it, results flip when marriage equality is used. Nearly half (49 percent) of older respondents approve if marriage equality is used. One-third oppose and 16 percent are unfamiliar with the phrase or are uncertain.

“This illustrates how language used to describe an issue really matters,” said Redlawsk. “While on the whole, New Jerseyans are ready to see the state legalize same-sex marriage, calling the issue marriage equality minimizes many of the differences between groups we see when gay marriage is used. Americans have a deep belief in equality as a concept. When equality is attached to same-sex relationships, it generates a more positive response based on that underlying ideal.”

Some less influenced by the label

Self-identified Republicans and those with at least some college education are far less affected by changing the language used to describe the issue. While 59 percent of Democrats and 52 percent of independents favor “gay marriage,” only 36 percent of Republicans agree and 51 percent oppose.

Calling the issue marriage equality fails to move Republicans at all: 36 percent continue to show support and 51 percent oppose. Democrats and independents, however, become much more supportive, reaching 69 percent and 67 percent respectively.

Similarly, while those with no college education are strongly influenced by the term marriage equality, others are much less so. Having any level of college education seems to minimize the impact of the term marriage equality over gay marriage, with gains of only 1 to 3 points in support among those with a college education or more.

“Republicans are clearly not moved by a change in terminology,” noted Redlawsk. “This suggests that their opposition to legalizing same-sex marriage is deep and unlikely to change easily. Likewise, those with some college education, who are already pretty supportive of gay marriage, do not become more so simply because the words change.”

Young People: Why is this even an issue?

Garden State adults under 30 have a very different view of same-sex marriage than do many of their older neighbors. While majorities of those 30 to 64 years old now support same-sex marriage no matter what it is called, 70 percent under 30 support legalizing gay marriage and 75 percent favor the concept of marriage equality.

“I suspect a lot of young people are really responding ‘why is this even an issue?’ Redlawsk said. “The millennial generation has clearly moved on to other issues while their grandparents continue to hold traditional views on same-sex couples.”

Respondents who don’t know gays or lesbians favor marriage equality

Nearly a quarter of New Jerseyans have a gay or lesbian family member. More than half have a gay or lesbian friend or acquaintance. About 60 percent of each group supports legal recognition of gay marriage. Using the term marriage equality makes no significant difference to either group but increases support by 11 points to 62 percent among those without a gay or lesbian family member or friend. Respondents without a gay or lesbian friend or acquaintance are even more affected: support climbs 16 points from 43 percent for gay marriage to 59 percent for marriage equality.

“Again we see those with likely greater knowledge on the issue are less influenced by changing the language,” said Redlawsk. “But those who have less contact with gay and lesbian people most likely are less connected to the issue and thus more easily moved by changing its frame.”

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QUESTIONS AND TABLES BEGIN ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

**Rutgers-Eagleton Poll October 6-9, 2011
Questions and Tables**

The questions covered in the release of October 28, 2011 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are New Jersey adults.

[SAME SEX MARRIAGE SPLIT BALLOT: 1/2 ASSIGNED TO VERSION A; 1/2 TO VERSION B]

Q [VERSION A] On another topic, some people say gay marriage should be legal in New Jersey. Others oppose legalizing gay marriage. What is your position? Do you: [READ options 1-2]

		<i>Trend</i>	
		Aug 11	Nov 09
		RV	Adults
Support gay marriage	52%	52%	46%
Oppose gay marriage	36%	28%	40%
Support civil unions/ But oppose gay marriage (vol)	3%	4%	2%
DK	9%	16%	12%
Unwght N	451	576	888

Q [VERSION B] On another topic, some people support marriage equality in New Jersey. Others oppose marriage equality. What is your position? Do you: [READ options 1-2]

Support marriage equality	61%
Oppose marriage equality	25%
Support civil unions/ but oppose marriage equality (vol)	2%
Not familiar with term "marriage equality" (vol)	3%
DK	9%
Unwght N	429

[VERSION A: GAY MARRIAGE]

	Party ID			Ideology			Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Middle	Con	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Support	59%	52%	36%	75%	49%	32%	41%	49%	60%	63%
Oppose	33%	34%	51%	15%	38%	56%	47%	39%	30%	24%
Supp CU/Opp GM	2%	3%	4%	2%	3%	6%	2%	3%	3%	2%
DK	5%	10%	10%	7%	11%	6%	10%	9%	7%	10%
Unwght N	134	230	78	104	247	90	122	128	111	89

[VERSION B: MARRIAGE EQUALITY]

	Party ID			Ideology			Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Middle	Con	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Support	69%	67%	36%	84%	59%	44%	66%	52%	63%	64%
Oppose	16%	23%	51%	9%	25%	43%	23%	34%	23%	19%
Supp CU/Opp ME	2%	3%	1%	0%	4%	1%	3%	1%	2%	4%
Not familiar w/ term	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%	1%	4%	4%
DK	10%	5%	9%	5%	9%	9%	7%	13%	8%	8%
Unwght N	151	184	82	94	226	97	110	114	112	92

**Same-Sex Marriage, October 2011
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

[VERSION A: GAY MARRIAGE]

	Employment				Race		Age			
	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Empl	White	Black	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Support	55%	58%	38%	53%	53%	34%	69%	52%	53%	32%
Oppose	34%	32%	46%	36%	35%	55%	26%	36%	31%	53%
Supp CU/Opp GM	4%	0%	2%	4%	3%	1%	0%	4%	4%	4%
DK	7%	11%	14%	7%	9%	11%	5%	8%	12%	11%
Unwght N	204	51	99	92	325	41	61	194	107	81

[VERSION B: MARRIAGE EQUALITY]

	Employment				Race		Age			
	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Empl	White	Black	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Support	64%	71%	47%	60%	64%	49%	75%	62%	57%	49%
Oppose	23%	18%	35%	25%	26%	25%	13%	25%	30%	33%
Supp CU/Opp ME	3%	0%	3%	1%	2%	6%	2%	2%	4%	2%
Not familiar w/ term	1%	1%	5%	3%	3%	5%	0%	2%	3%	6%
DK	8%	10%	10%	10%	5%	15%	10%	9%	6%	10%
Unwght N	197	57	74	97	321	59	66	196	99	65

[VERSION A: GAY MARRIAGE]

	Income				Gender		Religion		Born	Religious Service Attend.			
	<50K	50K-100K	100K-150K	150K+	Male	Female	Cath	Prot	Evang	Again/ week+	Once/ weekly	Almost Once/ month	Less Often
Support	47%	47%	61%	67%	47%	56%	49%	42%	18%	31%	54%	61%	61%
Oppose	42%	39%	29%	23%	42%	31%	32%	52%	74%	54%	41%	24%	29%
Supp CU/Opp GM	3%	4%	1%	3%	3%	4%	6%	1%	0%	5%	0%	6%	2%
DK	9%	10%	8%	7%	8%	9%	12%	5%	9%	10%	5%	10%	8%
Unwght N	111	121	65	62	204	247	175	120	52	115	47	59	219

[VERSION B: MARRIAGE EQUALITY]

	Income				Gender		Religion		Born	Religious Service Attend.			
	<50K	50K-100K	100K-150K	150K+	Male	Female	Cath	Prot	Evang	Again/ week+	Once/ weekly	Almost Once/ month	Less Often
Support	58%	61%	70%	67%	63%	59%	63%	47%	41%	45%	44%	62%	71%
Oppose	26%	29%	23%	21%	26%	24%	27%	29%	33%	38%	25%	32%	18%
Supp CU/Opp ME	2%	2%	0%	2%	1%	3%	3%	5%	8%	3%	5%	1%	2%
Not familiar	2%	2%	3%	4%	2%	3%	1%	5%	5%	3%	4%	2%	2%
DK	12%	6%	3%	6%	7%	11%	6%	12%	14%	11%	22%	3%	8%
Unwght N	125	119	70	52	218	211	174	97	52	97	36	80	206

Q Do either of the following apply to you?

First, you have someone in your family who is gay or lesbian.

Yes	24%
No	74%
DK	2%
Unwght N	893

You have a friend or close acquaintance who is gay or lesbian.

Yes	53%
No	46%
DK	1%
Unwght N	891

Same-Sex Marriage, October 2011
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

Gay Marriage Position	Gay Family Member		Gay Friend	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Support	60%	51%	59%	43%
Oppose	34%	37%	28%	46%
Support CU/Oppose GM (vol)	1%	3%	2%	4%
DK	6%	9%	10%	7%
Unwght N	99	338	237	207

Marriage Equality Position	Gay Family Member		Gay Friend	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Support	57%	62%	63%	59%
Oppose	25%	25%	23%	28%
Support CU/Oppose ME (vol)	4%	1%	4%	0%
Not familiar (vol)	1%	3%	2%	3%
DK	13%	8%	8%	10%
Unwght N	108	310	230	192

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll October 6-9, 2011
New Jersey Statewide Poll

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone from October 6-9, 2011 with a scientifically selected random sample of 903 New Jersey adults. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, using gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity matching to US Census Bureau data. All results are reported with these weighted data. This telephone poll included 723 landline respondents supplemented with 180 cell phone respondents, 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 903 adults is +/-3.3 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 46.7 and 53.3 percent (50 +/-3.3) had all New Jersey adults 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. 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 analysis was 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				
903 New Jersey Adults				
34% Democrat	49%	Male	17% 18-29	66% White
48% Independent	51	% Female	43% 30-49	11% Black
17% Republican	22%		50-64	14% Hispanic
1			7% 65+	9% Asian/Other/Multi