

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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For more commentary from Professor Redlawsk see
<http://eagletonpoll.blogspot.com>

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Questions and tables are available at the end of this release

NEW JERSEY CATHOLICS SUPPORT GAY MARRIAGE, PROTESTANTS OPPOSE

Weekly church-goers are strong opponents while those who attend less often are supporters

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – Despite opposition from the Catholic Church, New Jersey Catholics generally support legalizing gay marriage, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll released today. Among Catholics, 48 percent support gay marriage, while 40 percent oppose and 12 percent are undecided. Protestants hold the opposite view, with only 34 percent supporting and 55 percent opposing gay marriage, and 11 percent undecided. Jewish respondents support gay marriage, 56 percent to 40 percent and 4 percent undecided, while those with no preference are the most supportive, at 85 percent to only 10 percent opposed with 5 percent undecided.

The poll of 903 New Jersey adults was fielded November 6-10 and has a margin of error of +/-3.3 percentage points. Half the respondents also had been interviewed before the Nov. 3 elections. The gay marriage questions were asked only after Election Day.

Religion and Support for Gay Marriage in New Jersey

Catholics, 46 percent of all respondents, generally support same-sex marriage and 53 percent believe that if the Legislature approves a gay marriage bill, it should be accepted. But they do not see the issue as one of the most important facing the state – 46 percent say the issue is “not at all important.”

“As with several social issues, many Catholics support a more liberal public policy than does the Church itself,” said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. “Given that Catholics comprise the single largest religious group in the state, this makes a difference in overall support for gay marriage in New Jersey, especially since a majority of Protestants – many of whom are Evangelicals – oppose the bill.”

Strong opposition from Evangelicals drives much Protestant opposition to same-sex marriage – 67 percent of those who call themselves “born-again” or “Evangelical” Christians oppose gay marriage, while only 24 percent support it with 9 percent undecided. Among non-

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Evangelical Protestants, 47 percent support gay marriage and 37 percent oppose it, while 16 percent are undecided.

“The one religious group strongly opposed to gay marriage is Evangelical Christians, whether they consider themselves Protestant or Catholic,” said Redlawsk. “This group comprises 20 percent of all respondents. The other 80 percent of respondents support gay marriage by margins of 12 to 40 points depending on their religious preference.”

Attendance at Religious Services makes a Difference

Poll results suggest that frequency of attendance at religious services is more important than a particular religious tradition in structuring attitudes towards gay marriage. Only 27 percent of those who attend services at least weekly support gay marriage, compared to 43 percent of those who attend monthly and 62 percent of those who seldom or never attend services. Overall, 29 percent of respondents say they attend services once a week or more often, 30 percent at least monthly, and 41 percent say they attend “seldom” or “never.” One third of Catholics say they attend services at least once a week, and this group opposes gay marriage 57 to 37 percent.

“The gay marriage issue is being framed as one of civil rights for gays and lesbians versus strong religious traditions favoring marriage between a man and a woman,” said Redlawsk. “Of the demographic differences between supporters and opponents, the clearest is based on religiosity – the frequency of attendance at services. While those who attend most often are most opposed, they represent a small share of all New Jersey residents. Every other group shows more support than opposition, regardless of the particular religion.”

Who cares about the issue?

Though Evangelical Christians strongly oppose gay marriage, they do not consider it an important issue in New Jersey, paralleling the views of other religious groups. Only 2 percent of Evangelicals call gay marriage the “most important” issue, while another 14 percent say it is “very important” and 34 percent “somewhat important.” The same is true of all other religious groups in the survey. “While the issue matters to a very small but passionate group on both sides, by far, most New Jerseyans of all stripes think there are more critical issues that need to be addressed,” Redlawsk said. “This suggests that regardless how a legislator votes, at the next election, this vote will be far less important to potential re-election than most other issues the Legislature will deal with.

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**Rutgers-Eagleton Poll November 6-10, 2009
Questions and Tables**

The questions covered in the release of December 8, 2009 are list below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. All percentages are of New Jersey adults.

Some people say gay marriage should be legal in New Jersey. Others oppose legalizing gay marriage. What is your position? Do you: [READ first two options]

N=888

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>ALL CATHOLIC</u>	<u>ALL PROTESTANT</u>
Support gay marriage	46%	48%	34%
Oppose gay marriage	40%	37%	53%
Support civil unions and oppose gay marriage (VOL)	2%	3%	1%
Don't Know (Vol)	12%	12%	11%
N	888	401	283

	Non Evangelical				
	Evangelical	Catholic	Protestant	Jewish	Other
Support gay marriage	24%	49%	47%	56%	64%
Oppose Gay Marriage	66%	37%	35%	38%	20%
Support Civil Unions, Oppose Gay Marriage (VOL)	1%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Don't Know	9%	12%	16%	4%	15%
N	172	364	153	45	131

	How often do you attend religious services		
	At least once a week	At least once a month	Seldom or Never
Support gay marriage	27%	43%	62%
Oppose gay marriage	62%	38%	26%
Support civil unions, oppose gay marriage (VOL)	2%	3%	1%
Don't Know	10%	17%	10%
N	252	264	364

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How often do you attend religious services?	Support or Oppose Gay Marriage	Evangelical	Non-Evangelical			
			Catholic	Protestant	Jewish	Other
At least once a week	Support gay marriage	8%	37%	44%	22%	20%
	Oppose gay marriage	85%	54%	38%	78%	40%
	Support civil unions, oppose gay marriage	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%
	Don't Know	6%	7%	19%	0%	40%
	N	84	112	32	9	10
At Least Once a Month	Support gay marriage	27%	46%	44%	67%	48%
	Oppose gay marriage	52%	35%	37%	17%	24%
	Support civil unions, oppose gay marriage	2%	3%	2%	8%	0%
	Don't Know	19%	16%	16%	8%	28%
	N	52	127	43	12	25
Seldom or Never	Support gay marriage	54%	64%	51%	63%	73%
	Oppose gay marriage	43%	23%	32%	38%	17%
	Support civil unions, oppose gay marriage	0%	2%	3%	0%	1%
	Don't Know	3%	11%	15%	0%	9%
	N	37	124	76	24	96

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Same-sex civil unions are currently legal in New Jersey. Now, the legislature is considering legalizing gay marriage. If the legislature does this, how should New Jersey citizens respond? They should: [ROTATE OPTIONS 1-3 and READ]

N=884

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>ALL CATHOLIC</u>	<u>ALL PROTESTANT</u>
Accept the decision and allow gay marriage in New Jersey	52%	53%	43%
Amend the state Constitution to ban gay marriage but still allow civil unions	23%	25%	28%
Amend the state Constitution to ban both gay marriage and civil unions	17%	16%	23%
Don't Know (Vol)	8%	7%	6%
N	884	401	280

	Non Evangelical				
	Evangelical	Catholic	Protestant	Jewish	Other
Accept the decision and allow gay marriage in New Jersey	33%	53%	56%	60%	70%
Amend the state Constitution to ban gay marriage but still allow civil unions	32%	24%	22%	16%	11%
Amend the state Constitution to ban both gay marriage and civil unions	31%	16%	13%	22%	8%
Don't Know (Vol)	4%	7%	9%	2%	11%
N	173	364	149	45	132

	How often do you attend religious services?		
	At least once a Week	At least once a month	Seldom or Never
Accept the decision and allow gay marriage in New Jersey	33%	52%	66%
Amend the state Constitution to ban gay marriage but still allow civil unions	34%	21%	16%
Amend the state Constitution to ban both gay marriage and civil unions	26%	16%	12%
Don't Know (Vol)	6%	11%	6%
N	250	264	363

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Of the issues facing New Jersey, how important is gay marriage? Is it the most important issue, one of a few very important issues, somewhat important, or not at all important?

N=902

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>ALL CATHOLIC</u>	<u>ALL PROTESTANT</u>
Most important	2%	2%	2%
One of a few very Important	15%	15%	16%
Somewhat Important	37%	35%	38%
Not at all important	44%	46%	43%
Don't Know	1%	2%	0%

	Non-Evangelical				
	Evangelical	Catholic	Protestant	Jewish	Other
Most important	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%
One of a few very Important	14%	15%	18%	13%	16%
Somewhat Important	34%	36%	40%	29%	48%
Not at all important	46%	47%	40%	56%	35%
Don't Know	4%	1%	0%	0%	1%
N	173	371	156	45	133

	How often do you attend religious services?		
	At least once a week	At least once a month	Seldom or Never
Most important	4%	0%	2%
One of a few very Important	17%	14%	15%
Somewhat Important	32%	39%	40%
Not at all important	46%	45%	42%
Don't Know	2%	2%	1%
N	255	269	369

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The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted from November 6-10, 2009 with a scientifically selected random sample of 903 New Jersey adults. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, including gender, age, race, education, and Hispanic ethnicity. All results are reported with these weighted data.

This Poll included two samples. One was a random sample of 452 New Jersey adults, selected via random digit dialing of landline telephones in the state. The second sample was collected through call backs to a randomly selected 451 respondents from the 903 respondents in the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll of October 15-20, 2009. The original sample was randomly selected via random digit dialing of landlines in New Jersey. The two samples are combined for this report and weighted to reflect the demographics of the State of New Jersey as described above.

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 903 adults is +/-3.3 points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adults favored a particular position, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 45.9 and 54.1 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.

Weighted Sample Characteristics (n=903)			
37% Dem	48% Male	31% 18-34	68% White
40% Independent	52% Female	40% 35-54	11% Black
22% Republican		29% 55+	13% Hispanic
			6% Asian
			2% Other