

THURSDAY, NOV. 15, 2018

Media Contact: Ashley Koning, akoning@rutgers.edu, 848-932-8940 office, 908-872-1186

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll on Gov. Murphy's First Year: Verdict Still Out for Many New Jerseyans, But Gov. Does Well on Economy, Education, Transportation

Greater positivity about state's direction continues, though New Jerseyans still see taxes as top problem

New Brunswick, N.J. (Nov. 15, 2018) – A sizeable number of New Jerseyans still have yet to form an opinion of Gov. Phil Murphy after his first year in office – but among those who have made a judgment, the governor garners more positive than negative ratings, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

A plurality of residents are still unsure what to think about Murphy when it comes to his likeability, but they continue to be positive about the overall job he is doing: 43 percent approve to 28 percent disapprove.

“New Jerseyans’ continued uncertainty toward Gov. Murphy one year into his tenure is somewhat of a new phenomenon compared to past New Jersey governors,” said Ashley Koning, assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPIP\)](#) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). “This indecision on Murphy is an especially stark contrast to Chris Christie – a governor about which virtually everyone had an opinion. Residents are in fact more uncertain about Murphy’s job performance and likeability than they have ever been about almost any other governor besides Governors DiFrancesco and Florio.”

Residents are also more likely to approve than disapprove of Murphy’s job on several key issue areas:

- The economy and jobs (44 percent approve to 35 disapprove)
- Education and schools (44 percent approve, 31 percent disapprove)
- Crime and drugs (40 percent approve, 29 percent disapprove)
- Transportation and infrastructure (46 percent approve, 28 percent disapprove)
- Health care (37 percent approve, 30 percent disapprove).

Murphy does not fare as well when it comes to financial matters in the state, however: just 26 percent approve of his handling of the state pension fund, 28 percent approve of his job so far on taxes, and 30 percent approve of how he is doing with the state budget.

Taxes continue to reign as the top issue in New Jersey: 28 percent cite taxes as the number one problem in the state, and another 9 percent specifically mention something about property taxes. Nevertheless, residents continue to have a more positive outlook on the state than they have in years past. Those who say New Jersey is headed in the right direction (46 percent) just surpass those who say it is on the wrong track (45 percent) for the first time in over four years.

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,006 adults contacted by live callers on landlines and cell phones from Oct. 12-19. The sample has a margin of error of +/-3.6 percentage points. Interviews were done in

English and, when requested, Spanish.

Murphy's ratings depend on who you ask, what you ask about

Murphy's ratings among all New Jerseyans have held pretty steady throughout the last year, as a significant number continue to remain undecided about him personally (42 percent) and about his performance as governor (29 percent). This pattern continues when residents are asked how Murphy is doing in specific issue areas: Murphy does not receive majority approval on any issue due to residents' high uncertainty. Most New Jerseyans are already certain about their feelings toward Murphy when it comes to taxes, however – just over half (53 percent) disapprove of the job he is doing, while 28 percent approve and another 18 percent are unsure.

Views on Murphy are also deeply driven by partisanship. Sixty-four percent of Democrats approve of the job he is doing, and 52 percent have a favorable impression of him. Republicans, on the other hand, are just the opposite (22 percent approve, 15 percent favorable), while independents are more split (37 percent approve to 26 percent disapprove, 27 percent favorable to 25 percent unfavorable).

These divisions extend to individual issues, as well. A majority of Democrats approve of the job Murphy is doing on the economy and jobs (59 percent), transportation and infrastructure (59 percent), health care (57 percent), crime and drugs (55 percent), and education and schools (53 percent); a plurality also approve of the governor's performance on taxes and the state budget (each at 46 percent) but are more uncertain than anything else about the state pension fund (45 percent).

A plurality of independents approve of Murphy on many of these same issues, though to a much lesser extent. Murphy garners his lowest approval ratings from independents on taxes (24 percent), the state budget (24 percent), and the state pension fund (22 percent). As expected, more Republicans disapprove than approve of Murphy in each issue area, with an overwhelming number disapproving of Murphy on taxes, in particular (86 percent disapprove, 8 percent approve).

"These partisan divisions are no surprise given the hyper-partisanship that has taken hold of the country," said Koning. "In this era, it is hard to find much on which partisans of all stripes agree, including their governor."

Taxes still a problem, but residents continue positive state outlook

An enduring top concern throughout the years, residents once again overwhelmingly name taxes (37 percent), including property taxes (9 percent specifically mention this subcategory), as the state's most important problem. New Jerseyans – though to a far lesser extent – also name jobs and employment issues (11 percent), crime and drugs (9 percent), transportation and infrastructure (8 percent), and education and schools (7 percent) as important issues. While taxes are the top problem for all partisans, Republicans are especially likely to name this as their foremost concern (51 percent).

Nevertheless, residents continue their streak of positivity about the direction in which the Garden State is headed: 46 percent think the state is going in the right direction, while 45 percent feel it is off on the wrong track. This positivity began right after Murphy's reelection last November, with views of the state dramatically improving in his first six months alone. This better outlook in the past year has of course been driven by Democrats (69 percent say right direction, 24 percent say wrong track). Republicans feel the exact opposite (19 percent say right direction, 72 percent say wrong track), while independents are more split (41 percent right direction, 47 percent wrong track).

New Jersey Ratings November 2018
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

“Even before Murphy took office last January, New Jerseyans began to have a more positive outlook about the state at the end of 2017,” noted Koning. “Not only did Murphy’s election signal the end of Chris Christie but also a change in party leadership. Only time will tell if Murphy can continue to foster more positivity about the state now that he is well into his first term.”

Find the full press release, including the poll questions and tables at <http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu/NJ-ratings-Murphy-November2018> or click [here](#).

All Rutgers-Eagleton poll press releases can be found at <http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu> or click [here](#).

Follow the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/RutgersEagletonPoll> and Twitter [@EagletonPoll](#).

###

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-Eagleton 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. 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: eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu. You can also visit our [extensive data archive](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).

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. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Phil Murphy is handling his job as governor?

Approve	43%
Disapprove	28%
Don't know (vol)	29%
Unwght N=	998

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Approve	64%	37%	22%	43%	43%	37%	53%	46%	43%	42%	43%
Disapprove	10%	26%	60%	31%	24%	35%	15%	12%	26%	35%	33%
Don't know (vol)	27%	36%	18%	26%	33%	28%	32%	42%	31%	23%	25%
Unwght N=	348	414	227	523	475	683	294	155	215	306	306

Q. Is your general impression of Phil Murphy favorable or unfavorable, or do you not have an opinion about him?

Favorable	33%
Unfavorable	24%
No opinion	40%
Don't know person (vol)	2%
Unwght N=	1003

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Favorable	52%	27%	15%	31%	35%	34%	33%	29%	28%	39%	37%
Unfavorable	5%	25%	55%	29%	20%	32%	12%	9%	21%	34%	29%
No opinion	43%	44%	28%	38%	43%	32%	53%	59%	48%	26%	32%
Don't know person (vol)	1%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%
Unwght N=	347	417	230	528	475	687	295	154	215	309	309

Q. Now, I am going to list some specific areas where I would like you to tell me if you approve or disapprove of the job Phil Murphy is doing as Governor. First [SPLIT SAMPLE]:

**New Jersey Ratings November 2018
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

[VERSION A – RANDOMIZE ORDER]

	New Jersey's Economy/Jobs	Education and Schools	The State Budget	Taxes
Approve	44%	44%	30%	28%
Disapprove	35%	31%	41%	53%
Don't know (vol)	21%	25%	29%	18%
Unwght N=	493	493	492	495

[VERSION B – RANDOMIZE ORDER]

	Crime and Drugs	Transportation and Infrastructure	Health Care	The State Pension Fund Situation
Approve	40%	46%	37%	26%
Disapprove	29%	28%	30%	31%
Don't know (vol)	31%	27%	33%	43%
Unwght N=	500	504	502	504

New Jersey's Economy/Jobs

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non- wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Approve	59%	43%	25%	43%	46%	44%	46%	49%	43%	47%	39%
Disapprove	21%	33%	57%	39%	31%	36%	31%	27%	33%	41%	33%
Don't know (vol)	19%	24%	18%	19%	23%	20%	23%	24%	25%	11%	28%
Unwght N=	176	190	122	242	251	340	144	71	95	151	168

Education and Schools

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non- wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Approve	53%	47%	25%	46%	42%	43%	46%	54%	38%	42%	45%
Disapprove	24%	29%	46%	32%	31%	31%	31%	21%	36%	35%	28%
Don't know (vol)	23%	24%	29%	22%	27%	26%	24%	25%	26%	23%	27%
Unwght N=	176	189	123	241	252	340	143	71	96	149	169

The State Budget

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non- wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Approve	46%	24%	15%	29%	31%	24%	40%	39%	24%	30%	33%
Disapprove	23%	46%	60%	46%	37%	47%	30%	22%	47%	46%	41%
Don't know (vol)	31%	30%	25%	26%	32%	28%	30%	39%	30%	24%	26%
Unwght N=	177	189	121	240	252	339	143	70	95	151	168

New Jersey Ratings November 2018
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

Taxes

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Approve	46%	24%	8%	27%	30%	24%	37%	31%	26%	32%	25%
Disapprove	33%	53%	86%	58%	50%	57%	46%	46%	56%	55%	54%
Don't know (vol)	21%	23%	6%	16%	20%	19%	18%	23%	18%	13%	21%
Unwght N=	178	190	122	242	253	341	144	71	96	152	168

Crime and drugs

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Approve	55%	35%	24%	43%	36%	36%	46%	46%	35%	43%	40%
Disapprove	16%	32%	45%	31%	27%	31%	25%	29%	30%	30%	28%
Don't know (vol)	29%	33%	31%	26%	36%	32%	29%	25%	35%	27%	32%
Unwght N=	168	221	107	282	218	339	150	83	117	153	140

Transportation and infrastructure

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Approve	59%	45%	22%	48%	44%	38%	56%	58%	41%	46%	43%
Disapprove	15%	27%	52%	29%	26%	32%	21%	20%	27%	33%	26%
Don't know (vol)	26%	28%	26%	24%	30%	30%	23%	22%	33%	21%	30%
Unwght N=	169	224	107	282	222	342	151	83	117	155	141

Health care

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Approve	57%	31%	17%	36%	39%	31%	46%	46%	38%	35%	33%
Disapprove	13%	33%	49%	30%	30%	32%	25%	27%	26%	39%	27%
Don't know (vol)	30%	35%	34%	35%	31%	37%	29%	27%	36%	27%	40%
Unwght N=	168	224	106	282	220	339	151	83	117	155	139

The State Pension Fund Situation

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Approve	37%	22%	16%	26%	26%	25%	27%	39%	16%	29%	27%
Disapprove	18%	33%	48%	32%	29%	32%	27%	20%	34%	36%	27%
Don't know (vol)	45%	46%	37%	42%	45%	42%	46%	41%	50%	34%	47%
Unwght N=	169	224	107	283	221	341	152	84	117	156	139

New Jersey Ratings November 2018
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

Q. In general, would you say the state of New Jersey is currently going in the right direction, or has it gone off on the wrong track?

Right direction	46%
Wrong track	45%
Don't know (vol)	10%
Unwght N=	999

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Right direction	69%	41%	19%	45%	47%	40%	57%	58%	43%	42%	46%
Wrong track	24%	47%	72%	46%	43%	51%	34%	31%	46%	51%	44%
Don't know (vol)	8%	12%	8%	9%	10%	9%	9%	11%	11%	7%	10%
Unwght N=	346	414	230	525	474	682	295	155	213	306	309

Q. In just a word or two, please tell me what the most important problem is in New Jersey today. [OPEN ENDED - RECORD VERBATIM]

Taxes	28%
<i>Property taxes</i>	9%
Jobs, employment, and wages	11%
Crime/gun control	9%
Infrastructure and transportation	8%
Education/schools	7%
Healthcare	4%
State government finances	3%
Gov't/Phil Murphy	2%
Immigration	2%
Housing	2%
Corruption	1%
Climate change	1%
Other	11%
No problems	1%
Unwght N	963

New Jersey Ratings November 2018
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

	Party ID			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non- wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Taxes	20%	28%	42%	26%	30%	33%	20%	16%	21%	38%	33%
Property taxes	10%	8%	9%	10%	7%	10%	7%	2%	13%	6%	11%
Jobs, employment, and wages	13%	12%	8%	12%	11%	9%	15%	17%	16%	8%	4%
Crime/gun control	12%	9%	5%	8%	10%	7%	12%	14%	8%	8%	10%
Infrastructure and transportation	9%	8%	5%	8%	8%	9%	7%	8%	6%	9%	11%
Education/schools	10%	6%	4%	4%	10%	4%	11%	17%	7%	4%	3%
Healthcare	6%	4%	1%	3%	5%	3%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%
State government finances	2%	4%	4%	4%	2%	4%	2%	0%	3%	4%	3%
Gov't/Phil Murphy	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%	2%	3%
Immigration	1%	2%	6%	4%	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%	1%	3%
Housing	2%	3%	0%	1%	3%	1%	4%	5%	2%	1%	1%
Corruption	0%	2%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%
Climate change	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other	11%	11%	10%	12%	9%	10%	11%	12%	9%	11%	12%
No problems	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Unwght N	334	393	227	500	463	665	276	137	208	301	301

Methodology

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live callers October 12 to 19, 2018, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,006 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. The sample contains a subsample of 896 registered voters and 496 likely voters; the latter is comprised of those determined to have a strong likelihood of voting in the November election based on a series of questions assessing their past voting behavior, voting intention, interest in politics, and attention to the campaign. 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 451 adults reached on a landline phone and 555 adults reached on a cell phone, all acquired through random digit dialing. Distribution of household phone use in this sample is:

Cell Only:	30%
Dual Use, Reached on Cell:	25%
Dual Use, Reached on LL:	43%
Landline Only:	2%

The data were weighted to be representative of New Jersey adults. The weighting balanced sample demographics to 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 2016 American Community Survey PUMS data. The phone use parameter was derived from estimates provided by the National Health Interview Survey Early Release Program.¹²³ 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. The second stage of weighting balanced sample demographics to match target population parameters. 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.

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.

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, July-December 2017. National Center for Health Statistics. June 2018.

**New Jersey Ratings November 2018
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

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 1,006 New Jersey adults is +/-3.1 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 1.36, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.6 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 46.4 and 53.6 percent (50 +/- 3.6) 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 Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was fielded by Braun Research, Inc. with sample from Survey Sampling International (SSI). The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house by the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP). Dr. Cliff Zukin, Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Public Policy and Senior Survey Advisor to ECPIP, assisted with this questionnaire and analysis. William Young assisted with analysis and preparation of this report. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll is paid for and sponsored by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, a non-partisan academic center for the study of politics and the political process. Full questionnaires are available on request, and can also be accessed through our archives at eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu. For more information, please contact poll@eagleton.rutgers.edu.

**Weighted Sample Characteristics
1,006 New Jersey Adults**

Male	49%	Democrat	34%	18-29	18%	HS or Less	32%	White	60%
Female	51%	Independent	45%	35-49	31%	Some College	29%	Black	13%
		Republican	21%	50-64	30%	College Grad	24%	Hispanic	17%
				65+	21%	Grad Work	15%	Other	11%