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Rutgers-Eagleton Poll: Murphy Ratings Soar Amid Pandemic

Governors, Local Officials Outperform Trump, CDC among New Jerseyans

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (May 6, 2020) – Gov. Phil Murphy’s leadership during the coronavirus pandemic has catapulted him to one of the most liked governors in New Jersey history, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Echoing the highs reached by governors Thomas Kean, Christine Todd Whitman and Chris Christie, Murphy’s favorability rating is almost touching the 60% mark (59% favorable to 20% unfavorable). This represents a 16-point increase for Murphy since this time last year. The governor also now beats Christie’s Sandy-fueled job approval high: 77% of New Jerseyans currently approve of the overall job Murphy is doing (a 25-point leap since last year), while 21% disapprove.

Murphy gets high marks from residents specifically on his handling of the coronavirus outbreak. Almost three-quarters give Murphy an ‘A’ (39%) or ‘B’ (33%). Murphy is bested only slightly by his counterpart across the Hudson, Gov. Andrew Cuomo: 51% of Garden Staters give the New York governor an ‘A’ and 25% a ‘B.’ Local officials in New Jersey also receive solid grades from New Jerseyans, with two-thirds awarding their local policymakers an ‘A’ (30%) or ‘B’ (37%).

“Like a number of other governors during this pandemic, Governor Murphy is experiencing a rally ‘round the flag effect that we sometimes see emerge with leaders in times of crisis,” said Ashley Koning, assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPiP\)](#) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). “After two years of middling ratings, Murphy’s visibility and leadership have propelled his overall numbers to something we have not seen the likes of since Governor Christie after Hurricane Sandy. What remains to be seen is how long this overwhelming support for Murphy will last as the economic impact of the outbreak becomes increasingly dire and as we approach summer.”

Among federal officials, Anthony Fauci garners the highest grades from New Jerseyans for his

handling of the pandemic. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director gets an 'A' from 44% of New Jerseyans and a B from 31%. New Jerseyans' grades for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are mostly concentrated in the 'B' to 'C' range. President Donald Trump receives the worst marks of all on his handling of the pandemic: 42% of New Jerseyans give him a failing grade, while the rest are somewhat evenly dispersed among the other letter grade options.

"President Trump has been one of the few politicians handling this crisis who hasn't benefited from any type of rally 'round the flag bump, which has really carved a path for more localized leaders – like governors – to shine," Koning said.

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,502 adults contacted by live callers on landlines and cell phones from April 22 – May 2. The full sample has a margin of error of +/-2.9 percentage points; the subsamples of 747 and 755 adults each have a margin of error of +/-4.1 percentage points. Interviews were done in English and, when requested, Spanish.

Bipartisan support fuels Murphy's ratings

Much like the across-the-aisle support Chris Christie received in Sandy's aftermath, Democrats, independents, and Republicans alike applaud Murphy both in general and for his handling of the pandemic.

Eight in ten Democrats, just over half of independents, and even a third of Republicans have a favorable impression of Murphy. Murphy receives even stronger bipartisan support when it comes to the overall job he is doing as governor: 92% of Democrats, 76% of independents, and 47% of Republicans approve of him. More than half of almost every demographic is positive about the governor, both in terms of favorability and approval.

On Murphy's handling of the coronavirus outbreak, almost nine in ten Democrats give him an 'A' (53%) or 'B' (35%), as do two-thirds of independents (33% 'A,' 35% 'B'), and almost half of Republicans (22% 'A,' 27% 'B').

"Crises such as the current pandemic require governors to assure citizens that they have the situation under control and console those who are suffering," said Kristoffer Shields, assistant research professor and historian at the [Eagleton Center on the American Governor](#). "Governor Murphy has taken a number of bold steps during the coronavirus response, a show of leadership that has thus far garnered widespread support, including from some groups that are typically not in his corner."

Local officials in New Jersey, the CDC, and Fauci all receive solid grades on both sides of the political aisle in terms of their handling of the pandemic. As for Trump, however, his grades are divided among familiar partisan lines. Sixty-eight percent of Democrats give Trump an 'F'; independents are more spread out, with a plurality giving him a failing grade (36%) and another four in ten a 'C' (22%) or 'D' (15%). Republicans in the Garden State, on the other hand, are mostly supportive of Trump: three-quarters give the president an 'A' (47%) or 'B' (31%).

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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.

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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. Now in its 48th year and with the publication of over 200 polls, 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, published research, and data archive, please visit our website: eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu. You can also visit our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

ABOUT THE EAGLETON CENTER ON THE AMERICAN GOVERNOR (ECAG)

The Eagleton Center on the American Governor seeks to promote research and discussion on the varied roles, powers, and legacies of governors in the United States in order to inform present and future state executive leadership and enhance historical knowledge and perspective. Visit: governors.rutgers.edu.

ABOUT THE EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

The Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling is a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. The Eagleton Institute studies how American politics and government work and change, analyzes how the democracy might improve, and promotes political participation and civic engagement. The Institute explores state and national politics through research, education, and public service, linking the study of politics with its day-to-day practice. To learn more about Eagleton programs and expertise, visit eagleton.rutgers.edu.

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 of New Jersey adults; all percentages are of weighted results. Interpret groups with samples sizes under 100 with extreme caution.

Q. Now I'd like to ask you about some people. Please tell me if your general impression of each one is favorable or unfavorable, or if you do not have an opinion. If you do not know the person, just say so. First:

Phil Murphy

Favorable	59%
Unfavorable	20%
No opinion	18%
Don't know person (vol)	2%
Unwght N=	1497

	Party ID			Gender		Race/ethnicity				Age				Income			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	<\$50K	<\$100k	<150k	\$150k+
Favorable	81%	53%	32%	56%	62%	58%	70%	58%	63%	55%	58%	61%	64%	59%	62%	58%	58%
Unfavorable	4%	22%	49%	25%	15%	26%	6%	16%	9%	15%	20%	24%	19%	16%	18%	23%	26%
No opinion	13%	23%	16%	15%	21%	14%	20%	24%	24%	28%	19%	15%	13%	22%	17%	18%	15%
Don't know person	3%	2%	3%	4%	1%	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%	3%	0%	5%	4%	2%	1%	1%
Unwght N=	587	552	303	723	774	1006	174	198	98	185	472	541	289	300	429	269	355

	Education				Region			
	High school or less	Some college	College grad	Graduate work	Urban	Suburban	Exurban	Phil/South Shore
Favorable	52%	55%	66%	72%	76%	59%	56%	58%
Unfavorable	22%	23%	18%	14%	10%	18%	25%	24%
No opinion	21%	19%	14%	14%	13%	19%	18%	14%
Don't know person	4%	2%	1%	0%	0%	3%	2%	4%
Unwght N=	260	366	475	392	250	537	198	268

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

Approve	77%
Disapprove	21%
Don't know (vol)	3%
Unwght N=	741

	Party ID			Gender		Race/ethnicity		Age				Income			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	<\$50K	\$50k- <\$100k	\$100k- <150k	\$150k+
Approve	92%	76%	47%	74%	78%	69%	86%	86%	74%	75%	76%	81%	80%	72%	74%
Disapprove	6%	22%	52%	24%	18%	28%	11%	12%	23%	22%	21%	17%	15%	27%	23%
Don't know (vol)	2%	3%	2%	1%	4%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%	5%	1%	2%
Unwght N=	279	270	148	343	398	499	233	89	256	255	133	151	213	141	166

	Education				Region				
	High school or less	Some college	College grad	Graduate work	Urban	Suburban	Exurban	Phil/South Shore	
Approve	76%	76%	77%	79%	91%	80%	68%	71%	70%
Disapprove	22%	21%	21%	18%	7%	17%	29%	27%	29%
Don't know (vol)	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	4%	4%	2%	1%
Unwght N=	123	183	246	186	131	246	104	132	128

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Q I'm going to read you a list of some people and groups. Please rate how each is handling the coronavirus outbreak, using a grading scale from A to F. You can give any full letter grade – A, B, C, D, or F. First:

	Donald Trump	Dr. Anthony Fauci	CDC	Your local elected officials	Phil Murphy	Andrew Cuomo
A	16%	44%	19%	30%	39%	51%
B	15%	31%	36%	37%	33%	25%
C	16%	15%	30%	20%	15%	13%
D	11%	4%	8%	6%	6%	6%
F	42%	6%	6%	8%	7%	6%
Unwght N=	740	681	724	657	733	695

Donald Trump

	Party ID			Gender		Race/ethnicity		Age					Income		
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	<\$50k	\$50k- <\$100k	\$100k- <150k	\$150k+
A	2%	12%	47%	18%	15%	24%	5%	13%	7%	18%	31%	18%	16%	14%	14%
B	6%	16%	31%	20%	10%	18%	10%	17%	16%	15%	14%	12%	17%	20%	11%
C	12%	22%	15%	15%	18%	12%	23%	22%	20%	15%	7%	22%	8%	12%	23%
D	12%	15%	2%	10%	11%	9%	14%	18%	12%	8%	8%	10%	13%	8%	11%
F	68%	36%	5%	37%	46%	36%	49%	30%	45%	44%	41%	37%	46%	46%	41%
Unwght N=	289	272	156	362	378	500	230	85	213	285	151	150	215	130	172

	Education				Region					
	High school or less	Some college	College grad	Graduate work	Urban	Suburban	Exurban	Phil/South Shore		
A	29%	12%	10%	10%	8%	12%	21%	21%	24%	
B	17%	17%	14%	9%	14%	13%	22%	13%	17%	
C	17%	18%	14%	15%	14%	17%	14%	15%	19%	
D	5%	15%	12%	13%	10%	11%	15%	10%	9%	
F	32%	38%	49%	54%	53%	47%	29%	41%	32%	
Unwght N=	133	169	242	192	115	271	99	140	115	

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Dr. Anthony Fauci

	Party ID			Gender		Race/ethnicity		Age				Income			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	<\$50K	\$50k- <\$100k	\$100k- <150k	\$150k+
A	53%	41%	36%	44%	45%	44%	44%	42%	37%	46%	52%	36%	46%	45%	53%
B	31%	32%	29%	35%	28%	34%	27%	41%	33%	26%	31%	28%	33%	33%	29%
C	11%	16%	21%	13%	17%	14%	16%	10%	18%	18%	10%	25%	14%	11%	10%
D	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%	5%	0%	4%	5%	2%	5%	3%	6%	1%
F	1%	9%	9%	5%	7%	5%	7%	7%	8%	5%	4%	7%	4%	6%	7%
Unwght N=	263	253	146	342	339	466	206	67	193	276	141	129	200	122	166

	Education				Region				
	High school or less	Some college	College grad	Graduate work	Urban	Suburban	Exurban	Phil/South Shore	
A	30%	30%	49%	56%	38%	45%	35%	35%	33%
B	24%	33%	29%	23%	27%	26%	34%	29%	24%
C	15%	16%	10%	9%	15%	9%	12%	21%	15%
D	7%	2%	1%	2%	6%	3%	5%	2%	0%
F	5%	8%	4%	3%	4%	5%	6%	5%	8%
Don't know	19%	11%	7%	7%	10%	12%	8%	9%	19%
Unwght N=	135	174	244	191	116	274	100	141	117

The Federal Centers for Disease Control, also known as the CDC

	Party ID			Gender		Race/ethnicity		Age				Income			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	<\$50K	\$50k- <\$100k	\$100k- <150k	\$150k+
A	19%	18%	20%	18%	20%	20%	18%	23%	12%	21%	24%	19%	21%	12%	23%
B	41%	32%	34%	38%	35%	38%	33%	44%	38%	34%	31%	34%	37%	42%	33%
C	28%	33%	31%	29%	31%	29%	32%	27%	30%	30%	34%	34%	31%	27%	29%
D	9%	8%	9%	8%	9%	7%	11%	6%	12%	7%	7%	9%	6%	11%	11%
F	2%	9%	6%	6%	5%	6%	6%	1%	7%	7%	5%	5%	5%	8%	3%
Unwght N=	284	268	149	360	364	486	227	86	210	281	142	143	213	129	171

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	Education				Region				
	High school or less	Some college	College grad	Graduate work	Urban	Suburban	Exurban	Phil/South Shore	
A	22%	17%	17%	21%	17%	18%	20%	14%	28%
B	28%	38%	42%	40%	33%	36%	48%	35%	31%
C	34%	28%	31%	26%	33%	33%	16%	36%	27%
D	8%	12%	6%	8%	7%	9%	11%	8%	8%
F	8%	6%	4%	5%	10%	5%	5%	6%	6%
Unwght N=	125	168	240	188	113	265	96	138	112

Your local elected officials

	Party ID			Gender		Race/ethnicity		Age					Income		
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	<\$50K	\$50k- <\$100k	\$100k- <150k	\$150k+
A	36%	27%	17%	24%	34%	32%	26%	27%	30%	27%	34%	21%	34%	31%	32%
B	37%	35%	39%	37%	36%	37%	36%	41%	39%	35%	31%	36%	35%	37%	40%
C	16%	22%	24%	22%	17%	20%	19%	17%	21%	21%	16%	21%	22%	23%	15%
D	5%	8%	4%	5%	7%	4%	8%	10%	4%	5%	7%	7%	5%	4%	5%
F	6%	7%	15%	11%	6%	6%	11%	5%	6%	11%	11%	16%	4%	5%	7%
Unwght N=	264	231	133	310	347	435	216	86	231	226	110	126	189	125	164

	Education				Region				
	High school or less	Some college	College grad	Graduate work	Urban	Suburban	Exurban	Phil/South Shore	
A	19%	23%	29%	39%	27%	26%	30%	23%	23%
B	31%	34%	35%	26%	29%	36%	23%	33%	31%
C	19%	18%	13%	17%	16%	12%	22%	17%	25%
D	7%	5%	6%	2%	9%	3%	4%	4%	8%
F	10%	8%	4%	6%	7%	10%	4%	9%	3%
Don't know	14%	12%	13%	10%	12%	12%	16%	13%	10%
Unwght N=	126	191	232	200	135	261	99	127	127

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Phil Murphy

	Party ID			Gender		Race/ethnicity		Age				Income			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	<\$50K	\$50k- <\$100k	\$100k- <150k	\$150k+
A	53%	33%	22%	34%	44%	38%	41%	34%	39%	37%	48%	39%	46%	35%	39%
B	35%	35%	27%	35%	32%	31%	37%	44%	35%	30%	25%	39%	26%	37%	32%
C	7%	17%	24%	15%	14%	16%	13%	15%	12%	18%	15%	11%	15%	16%	15%
D	3%	7%	8%	5%	6%	7%	3%	5%	5%	5%	7%	5%	8%	6%	3%
F	2%	8%	19%	11%	4%	9%	5%	2%	8%	10%	6%	6%	5%	6%	11%
Unwght N=	293	266	143	349	384	496	229	95	251	252	131	143	206	138	180

	Education				Region				
	High school or less	Some college	College grad	Graduate work	Urban	Suburban	Exurban	Phil/South Shore	
A	37%	37%	39%	46%	46%	43%	33%	36%	33%
B	28%	34%	42%	31%	36%	32%	34%	34%	33%
C	18%	16%	9%	13%	12%	11%	24%	14%	17%
D	6%	5%	5%	6%	2%	5%	4%	8%	8%
F	10%	8%	5%	3%	3%	8%	6%	8%	10%
Unwght N=	123	182	231	197	131	256	98	123	125

Andrew Cuomo

	Party ID			Gender		Race/ethnicity		Age				Income			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	<\$50K	\$50k- <\$100k	\$100k- <150k	\$150k+
A	68%	45%	25%	44%	57%	49%	53%	42%	53%	49%	57%	48%	54%	49%	53%
B	23%	27%	26%	26%	24%	25%	26%	35%	24%	22%	24%	23%	26%	29%	25%
C	7%	16%	18%	14%	11%	13%	12%	17%	12%	12%	11%	18%	11%	12%	7%
D	0%	8%	13%	7%	4%	5%	5%	4%	6%	8%	3%	5%	5%	5%	7%
F	2%	5%	18%	8%	4%	7%	4%	2%	5%	9%	5%	6%	4%	4%	7%
Unwght N=	280	250	138	338	357	477	212	80	237	244	130	130	195	131	177

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	Education				Region				
	High school or less	Some college	College grad	Graduate work	Urban	Suburban	Exurban	Phil/South Shore	
A	37%	44%	55%	55%	52%	46%	41%	47%	42%
B	20%	25%	24%	24%	18%	25%	31%	18%	22%
C	16%	11%	9%	7%	13%	10%	17%	10%	11%
D	8%	5%	2%	4%	5%	6%	3%	3%	7%
F	8%	5%	4%	2%	2%	6%	6%	4%	8%
Don't know	11%	10%	5%	7%	9%	7%	2%	16%	9%
Unwght N=	126	191	233	201	135	263	99	127	127

Methodology

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live callers April 22 to May 2, 2020, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,502 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. 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 452 adults reached on a landline phone and 1050 adults reached on a cell phone, all acquired through random digit dialing. Distribution of household phone use in this sample is:

Cell Only:	43%
Dual Use, Reached on Cell:	27%
Dual Use, Reached on LL:	29%
Landline Only:	1%

The data were weighted to be representative of the non-institutionalized adult population of New Jersey. The weighting balanced sample demographics to target 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 2018 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. This first stage weight was applied to the entire sample which included all adults. The second stage of the weighting balanced sample demographics to match target population benchmarks. 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. 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 1,502 New Jersey adults is +/-2.5 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect⁴ is 1.31, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 2.9

¹ NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2014-2018; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016; and infoUSA.com consumer database, 2013-2018.

² Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, January-June 2018. National Center for Health Statistics. December 2018.

³ Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, July-December 2018. National Center for Health Statistics. June 2019.

⁴ Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. We calculate the effects of these design features so that an appropriate adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using these data. The so-called "design effect" or *deff* represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from a disproportionate sample design and systematic non-response.

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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 47.1 and 52.9 percent (50 +/- 2.9) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a sample.

Sampling error does not consider 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 Dynata. The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house by the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP). Dr. 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
1,502 New Jersey Adults

Male	48%	Democrat	40%	18-34	26%	HS or Less	31%	White	59%
Female	52%	Independent	39%	35-49	24%	Some College	29%	Black	12%
		Republican	21%	50-64	30%	College Grad	22%	Hispanic	19%
				65+	21%	Grad Work	18%	Other	10%