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Rutgers-Eagleton Poll: Slight Majority Support Voting by Mail for New Jersey’s July Primary, Most Unaware of New Primary Date

Biden leads Trump by double digits in 2020 match-up

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (May 14, 2020) – Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 54% of registered voters in New Jersey agree that the state should replace its July primary election – usually an in-person endeavor – entirely with voting by mail, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. Forty-two percent, on the other hand, believe the state should not cancel in-person voting. Opinions are starkly divided by partisanship: 70% of Democrats and 56% of independents support voting by mail, while 72% of Republicans oppose it.

“While we have seen bipartisan agreement on many aspects of the coronavirus pandemic, how to move forward with voting in the midst of the outbreak is not one of them,” said Ashley Koning, assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPiP\)](#) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). “Voting by mail – always a politically charged topic – has become one of the most polarizing issues at the intersection of politics and COVID-19, pitting the health and safety of poll workers and voters against questions of security and accuracy of voting by mail.”

However New Jerseyans may vote in the upcoming primary, almost all are unaware that Gov. Murphy in April changed its date. Just 6% of voters know the election will now be held on July 7, while another 10% say “sometime in July.” Almost a quarter think the election will still be held in June. Another quarter believe the election takes place during another month, and more than two-thirds simply say they are unsure of when it is.

Nevertheless, most voters say they will definitely (53%) or probably (26%) vote in the July primary.

“Primary elections traditionally have notoriously low turnout – typically in the single or low

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double digits – so do not expect an overwhelming turnout just because voters say they will show up,” said Koning. “2019’s primary did see a sizeable boost in turnout, however, and this was due in part to easing restrictions on voting by mail. Who’s at the top of the ballot, how people are able to vote, and the status of the pandemic in July will all affect turnout.”

Looking ahead to 2020, former Vice President and presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden dominates among New Jersey voters in a head-to-head match-up against Donald Trump – 56% to 33%. Yet Biden’s favorability rating is somewhat mixed among voters: 45% are favorable, 37% are unfavorable, and 18% are unsure. Trump’s favorability and overall job approval ratings continue to be stagnant in New Jersey – 31% favorable to 59% unfavorable and 37% approve to 63% disapprove.

“Partisans take familiar sides with these 2020 candidates, while those politically in the middle are more torn,” noted Koning. “While independents go for Biden in a head-to-head with Trump by double digits, their personal impressions of the two men are similar. Independents give both Biden and Trump net negative ratings when it comes to favorability, with the former garnering more uncertainty and the latter slightly more unfavorable impressions.”

Even during these times, most New Jersey voters have an interest in politics right now. Forty-three percent say they have a great deal of interest, and another 35% have a fair amount. This is one area where partisans of all stripes agree.

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 New Jersey adult sample has a margin of error of +/-2.9 percentage points, and the full registered voter subsample of 1,364 self-identified registered voters has a margin of error of +/-3.0 percentage points; the subsample of 698 self-identified registered voters specifically asked about the elections has a margin of error of +/-4.2 percentage points. Interviews were done in English and, when requested, Spanish.

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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.

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

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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. 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 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:

Donald Trump

	Overall	Party ID (RV)			
		RV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Favorable	31%	31%	4%	30%	82%
Unfavorable	58%	59%	90%	54%	13%
No opinion	11%	10%	6%	17%	6%
Unwght N=	1496	1358	552	494	293

Joe Biden

	Overall	Party ID (RV)			
		RV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Favorable	44%	45%	76%	32%	11%
Unfavorable	37%	37%	8%	44%	79%
No opinion	20%	18%	16%	24%	10%
Unwght N=	1488	1352	553	490	290

Q. And overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president of the United States?

	Overall	Party ID (RV)			
		RV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Approve	37%	37%	7%	38%	86%
Disapprove	63%	63%	93%	62%	14%
Unwght N=	714	669	282	234	145

Q. Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics right now?

Party ID (RV)

	Overall	RV	Dem	Ind	Rep
A great deal	40%	43%	46%	38%	44%
A fair amount	33%	35%	36%	35%	33%
Only a little	17%	15%	13%	16%	18%
No interest at all	9%	7%	5%	11%	5%
Unwght N=	747	698	288	253	149

Q. To the best of your knowledge, when are primary elections being held in New Jersey this year?

Party ID (RV)

	Overall	RV	Dem	Ind	Rep
June 2	3%	3%	5%	3%	1%
Sometime in June	19%	21%	22%	26%	12%
July 7	6%	6%	8%	5%	4%
Sometime in July	10%	10%	12%	9%	7%
Some other date	23%	23%	22%	21%	29%
Don't know (vol)	39%	37%	32%	36%	46%
Unwght N=	746	697	287	253	149

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Q. Due to the coronavirus outbreak, Governor Murphy recently postponed the June 2nd primary election in New Jersey to July 7th. Do you think you will definitely vote, probably vote, probably not vote, or definitely not vote in the July primary?

	Overall	Party ID (RV)			
		RV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Definitely will vote	49%	53%	63%	43%	53%
Probably will vote	26%	26%	26%	24%	28%
Probably will not vote	12%	11%	8%	16%	10%
Definitely will not vote	10%	8%	1%	15%	7%
Don't know (vol)	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Unwght N=	746	697	288	253	149

Q. Due to the current coronavirus outbreak, state officials may consider cancelling in-person voting and replacing it entirely with voting by mail for the July primary. Some people say that voting by mail [ROTATE: would protect voters and poll workers by reducing in-person contact and associated health risks in the midst of the outbreak]. Others say that voting by mail [would lead to election fraud, lost ballots, and increased ballot errors]. What about you? Do you think the state should or should not cancel in-person voting and replace it entirely with voting by mail for the July primary?

	Overall	Party ID (RV)			
		RV	Dem	Ind	Rep
It should	54%	54%	70%	56%	24%
It should not	42%	42%	25%	40%	72%
Don't know (vol)	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%
Unwght N=	745	697	287	253	149

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Q. If the 2020 presidential election were held today and the candidates were Democrat Joe Biden and Republican Donald Trump for whom would you vote?

	Overall	Party ID (RV)			
		RV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Joe Biden	55%	56%	91%	48%	7%
Donald Trump	32%	33%	4%	30%	86%
Neither (vol)	5%	4%	1%	7%	3%
Someone else (vol)	1%	1%	0%	3%	0%
Don't know (vol)	7%	7%	4%	11%	4%
Unwght N=	736	689	286	248	149

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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.

The simple sampling error for all 1,364 self-identified registered voters is +/-2.7 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 1.30, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.0 percentage points.

The simple sampling error for the 698 self-identified registered voters who were asked the election battery is +/-3.7 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 1.30, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 4.2 percentage points.

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%	18-29	17%	HS or Less	31%	White	59%
Female	52%	Independent	39%	30-49	32%	Some College	29%	Black	12%
		Republican	21%	50-64	30%	College Grad	22%	Hispanic	19%
				65+	21%	Grad Work	18%	Other	10%

**Weighted Sample Characteristics
1,364 New Jersey Self-identified Registered Voters**

Male	48%	Democrat	41%	18-29	15%	HS or Less	27%	White	60%
Female	52%	Independent	37%	30-49	32%	Some College	31%	Black	13%
		Republican	22%	50-64	31%	College Grad	24%	Hispanic	17%
				65+	22%	Grad Work	19%	Other	10%

**Weighted Sample Characteristics
698 New Jersey Self-identified Registered Voters**

Male	50%	Democrat	40%	18-29	16%	HS or Less	28%	White	61%
Female	50%	Independent	37%	30-49	29%	Some College	29%	Black	13%
		Republican	23%	50-64	32%	College Grad	24%	Hispanic	17%
				65+	24%	Grad Work	19%	Other	9%