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Rutgers-Eagleton Poll: New Jersey Voters Largely Support States Making Mail-in Voting Easier; Three Quarters Have Already Voted or Plan to Vote by Mail
Secure drop boxes are most popular mode of voting by mail; majority confident votes will be counted accurately

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (October 30, 2020) – Despite pandemic-driven changes to voting procedures, New Jersey voters are highly supportive of the expansion of mail-in voting and most have used, or plan to use, this method to cast their ballot, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. Seven in 10 voters support efforts to make it easier to vote by mail or absentee ballot instead of voting in person at a polling place.

“New Jersey voters mirror national trends when it comes to support for mail-in voting,” said Ashley Koning, assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPIP\)](#) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). “This support fluctuates, however, depending on whether or not voting by mail is put within the context of the pandemic. In the overall numbers, views are similar, but when we break down the data by partisanship, a number of Democrats – as well as a few Republicans – are more likely to support voting by mail when the pandemic is explicitly mentioned, whereas independents become slightly more mixed.”

As of the time of this survey, three-quarters say they have already voted or plan to vote by mail, while a quarter say they will vote in person on Election Day. Among those who have not yet voted, half say they plan to use a mail-in ballot, while half will physically go to the polls.

“These numbers in New Jersey reflect the unprecedented numbers across the country of those voting early and voting by mail,” noted Koning.

Both support for and usage of mail-in ballots are deeply divided by partisanship, however. Nearly all Democrats and a majority of independents support efforts by states to make mail-in

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voting easier; about four in 10 Republicans feel the same. Over half of Republicans, on the other hand, take the opposite stance.

Likewise, while a majority of Democrats, independents, and Republicans say they have voted or will vote by mail, they say this to varying degrees. About three-quarters of Democrats and independents have done or will do so, compared to two-thirds of Republicans.

“Partisan division on vote by mail attitudes and behaviors is no surprise,” said Koning. “The issue has become highly politicized during the pandemic, pitting Democrats’ emphasis on possible health risks of in-person voting against Republicans’ concerns that mail-in voting could lead to increased ballot errors and voter fraud.”

For those who have or will vote by mail, a secure drop box is far and away the method of choice. Fifty-one percent of likely voters say that they have delivered or will deliver their mailed ballot to a secure drop box in their county. Thirty-four percent have sent or will send it by mail. Just 13 percent have dropped or plan to drop off their ballot at their county’s board of elections office. Among those who have voted or plan to vote by mail, partisans of all stripes share similar preferences when it comes to returning their mailed ballot.

As for those planning to vote in person on Election Day, just over half of likely voters (53 percent) plan to vote by provisional ballot at their polling place; another 28 percent plan to drop off their completed ballot, and 19 percent are unsure.

Even in the face of new voting systems and the pandemic, most New Jersey voters feel confident that votes across the country will be accurately counted in this year’s election. Thirty percent of likely voters say they are “very confident,” and another 39 percent are “somewhat confident”; 18 percent are “not too confident,” and 12 percent are “not at all confident.”

Once again, attitudes toward this election issue are highly polarized: among likely voters, independents (63 percent) and especially Democrats (84 percent) feel much more confident about the accuracy of the vote count than Republicans (52 percent).

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,001 adults contacted by live callers on landlines and cell phones from October 18 – 24. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.8 percentage points; the subsample of 972 registered voters has a margin of error of +/- 3.8 percentage points, and the subsample of 872 likely voters has a margin of error of +/- 4.0 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 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 New Jersey adults; all percentages are of weighted results. Interpret groups with samples sizes under 100 with extreme caution.

[SPLIT SAMPLE – VERSION A]

Q. Do you support or oppose states making it easier for all voters to vote by mail or absentee ballot instead of voting in person at a polling place?

	RV	LV
Support	69%	69%
Oppose	28%	27%
Don't know (VOL)	4%	4%
Unwght N	476	430

[SPLIT SAMPLE – VERSION B]

Q. Do you support or oppose states making it easier for all voters to vote by mail or absentee ballot instead of voting in person at a polling place due to the coronavirus pandemic?

	RV	LV
Support	69%	71%
Oppose	27%	26%
Don't know (VOL)	4%	3%
Unwght N=	482	436

Q. Thinking about the upcoming election, do you think you might vote by [ROTATE: mail] or [in person]?

[HAVE NOT YET VOTED]

	RV	LV
Mail	50%	50%
In person	45%	46%
Don't know (VOL)	5%	4%
Unwght N=	495	430

[COMBINED WITH ALREADY VOTED]

	RV	LV
Mail	74%	75%
In person	24%	23%
Don't know (VOL)	2%	2%
Unwght N=	962	870

[IF VOTING BY MAIL]

Q. Do you think you might mail in your ballot, return your ballot through a secure drop box, drop off your ballot to your county's Board of Elections office, or are you not sure yet?

[NOTE: IF LV1=5 ASK THIS INSTEAD:] Did you mail in your ballot, return your ballot through a secure drop box, or drop off your ballot to your county's Board of Elections office?

[HAVE NOT YET VOTED]

	RV	LV
Mail in ballot	31%	31%
Return ballot through a secure drop box	41%	44%
Drop off ballot to county's Board of Elections office	18%	20%
Don't know/not sure	10%	5%
Unwght N=	252	222

[ALREADY VOTED]

	RV	LV
Mailed in ballot	35%	35%
Returned ballot through a secure drop box	54%	54%
Dropped off ballot to county's Board of Elections office	9%	9%
Don't know (VOL)	1%	1%
Unwght N=	468	441

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[COMBINED]	RV	LV
Mail in ballot	34%	34%
Return ballot through a secure drop box	50%	51%
Drop off ballot to county's Board of Elections office	13%	13%
Don't know (VOL)	3%	2%
Unwght N=	719	662

[IF VOTING IN PERSON]

Q. Do you think you might drop off your already completed ballot or vote by provisional ballot when you go in person to your polling place on Election Day, or are you not sure yet?

	RV	LV
Drop off completed ballot	24%	28%
Vote in person by provisional ballot	57%	53%
Don't know/not sure	19%	19%
Unwght N=	218	190

Q. How confident are you that, across the country, the votes will be accurately counted in this year's election – very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

	RV	LV
Very confident	27%	30%
Somewhat confident	37%	39%
Not too confident	20%	18%
Not at all confident	15%	12%
Don't know (VOL)	1%	1%
Unwght N=	482	432

Methodology

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live callers October 18 to 24, 2020, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,001 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 400 adults reached on a landline phone and 601 adults reached on a cell phone, all acquired through random digit dialing. Distribution of household phone use in this sample is:

Cell Only:	40%
Dual Use, Reached on Cell:	20%
Dual Use, Reached on LL:	38%
Landline Only:	2%

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, by form, to match parameters for sex, age, education, region, race/ethnicity 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.¹ Weighting was done in two stages. The first stage of weighting corrected for different probabilities of selection among the RDD samples 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.² The second stage of weighting balanced sample demographics, by form, 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 survey estimates. 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.

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.

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 1,001 New Jersey adults is +/-3.1 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect³ is 1.5, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.8

¹ NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2014–2018; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013–2018.

² Buskirk, T. D., & Best, J. (2012). Venn Diagrams, Probability 101 and Sampling Weights Computed for Dual Frame Telephone RDD Designs. *Journal of Statistics and Mathematics*, 15, 3696-3710.

³ 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

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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 46.2 and 53.8 percent (50 +/- 3.8) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a sample. The simple sampling error for 972 New Jersey registered voters is +/-3.1 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 1.5, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.8 percentage points. The simple sampling error for 872 New Jersey likely voters is +/-3.3 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 1.5, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 4.0 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. Kyle Morgan 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

1,001 New Jersey Adults

Male	48%	Democrat	41%	18-34	26%	HS or Less	29%	White	58%
Female	52%	Independent	36%	35-49	25%	Some College	30%	Black	12%
		Republican	23%	50-64	29%	College Grad	22%	Hispanic	18%
				65+	20%	Grad Work	19%	Other	12%

972 New Jersey Registered Voters

Male	48%	Democrat	42%	18-34	25%	HS or Less	29%	White	59%
Female	52%	Independent	34%	35-49	25%	Some College	30%	Black	12%
		Republican	24%	50-64	29%	College Grad	22%	Hispanic	17%
				65+	20%	Grad Work	19%	Other	11%

872 New Jersey Likely Voters

Male	48%	Democrat	44%	18-34	21%	HS or Less	26%	White	60%
Female	52%	Independent	31%	35-49	25%	Some College	30%	Black	12%
		Republican	25%	50-64	31%	College Grad	24%	Hispanic	16%
				65+	23%	Grad Work	21%	Other	11%

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.