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Rutgers-Eagleton Poll: About Four in Ten New Jerseyans Say They Won't Get COVID-19 Vaccine

Most still concerned about someone in their household getting the coronavirus, believe life won't return to normal for a while

NOTE: This poll was conducted prior to the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election.

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (November 17, 2020) – Between 36 percent and 47 percent of New Jerseyans say they will “probably” or “definitely” not get vaccinated against COVID-19, with response rates varying depending on how the question is asked, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Among individuals reluctant to get vaccinated, 80 percent cite a concern about side effects, and 82 percent cite the need for more information about how the vaccine works as “major reasons” for their resistance. Fewer respondents cite not feeling they need it (a major reason for 25 percent, and minor reason for 23 percent) or the potential cost (a major reason for 15 percent and minor reason for 22 percent).

“With the recent positive news from Pfizer and Moderna, it is likely that public opinion on immunization will continue to shift and evolve,” said Ashley Koning, assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPIP\)](#) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). “But right now, a large portion of New Jerseyans are still wary, which makes any future messaging encouraging vaccination that much more important.”

The proportion of those who say they would “definitely” or “probably” get vaccinated varies depending on how the vaccine is described. When framed as a “first-generation” vaccine, 17 percent say they would “definitely” and 32 percent say they would “probably” get vaccinated. The numbers increase to 20 percent “definitely” and 33 percent “probably” when asked simply about a “vaccine.” Respondents are most enthusiastic – 36 percent “definitely” and 24 percent

“probably” – when it is described as “safe and effective.”

“We know that how something is worded or framed makes a difference in how people respond,” noted Koning. “The more the vaccine is described with some sense of certainty, the more agreeable residents are to getting it.”

Vaccine or no vaccine, New Jerseyans do not see the Garden State returning to normal anytime soon. Forty-two percent feel New Jersey will not be back to normal until 6 months to a year from now. Another 30 percent feel it will take longer. Twenty-three percent, on the other hand, believe things will be better within the next six months.

Sixty-six percent of New Jerseyans say they know someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, up a few points since the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll first asked this question in [May](#). Seventy-one percent are worried (30 percent “very,” 41 percent “somewhat”) that they or someone in their household will get sick from the coronavirus, though this is down from last spring (41 percent “very,” 38 percent “somewhat”).

Assessed prior to the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election, President Donald Trump continues to receive a failing grade from half of New Jerseyans for his handling of the pandemic, up a few points from May. The vast majority of Democrats (81 percent) and a plurality of independents (41 percent) give Trump an ‘F.’ Republicans, however, are overwhelmingly behind their president: 49 percent give him an ‘A,’ and another 31 percent give him a ‘B.’

Grades for both how one’s local elected officials and Governor Phil Murphy are handling the pandemic are slightly down, each taking a double-digit hit in the number who assign them an ‘A’; 22 percent now give local officials an ‘A’ (down from 30 percent), and 26 percent now give the same to Murphy (down from 39 percent).

Murphy’s overall job approval and favorability have also declined, though both are still in positive territory. Sixty-two percent now approve of the overall job Murphy is doing as governor, while 33 percent disapprove. Fifty-four percent now have a favorable impression of the governor (down from 59 percent); 28 percent have an unfavorable impression (up from 20 percent).

“Despite this decrease, Murphy’s current favorability rating is still one of the all-time highest for a governor in New Jersey, next to Governors Kean, Whitman, McGreevy, and Christie, who have all passed the 50-percent mark,” said Koning. “But it seems the Governor’s rally ‘round the flag moment from last spring is dissipating as the pandemic continues on and as decisions regarding public health and the economy grow tougher.”

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.

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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.

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	54%
Unfavorable	28%
No opinion	15%
Don't know person (vol)	3%
Unwght N=	496

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

Approve	62%
Disapprove	33%
Don't know (vol)	5%
Unwght N=	499

Q. Please rate how each of the following is handling the coronavirus pandemic, using a grading scale from A to F. You can give any full letter grade – A, B, C, D, or F. First:

	Donald Trump	Your local elected officials	Phil Murphy
A	16%	22%	26%
B	15%	31%	33%
C	10%	27%	17%
D	9%	10%	9%
F	50%	9%	15%
Unwght N=	977	906	963

Q. Do you personally know someone who has tested positive for coronavirus?

Yes	66%
No	34%
Unwght N=	991

[SPLIT SAMPLE]

[VERSION A]

QA. If a vaccine to prevent COVID-19 were available today, would you ...

[VERSION B]

QB. If a first-generation vaccine to prevent COVID-19 were available today, would you ...

[VERSION C]

QC. If a “safe and effective” vaccine to prevent COVID-19 were available today, would you ...

	“Vaccine”	“First-generation Vaccine”	“Safe and Effective Vaccine”
Definitely get the vaccine	20%	17%	36%
Probably get the vaccine	33%	32%	24%
Probably not get the vaccine	24%	23%	19%
Definitely not get the vaccine	16%	24%	17%
Don’t Know	7%	4%	4%
Unwght N=	333	331	333

[IF PROBABLY OR DEFINITELY NOT GETTING VACCINE]

Q. Please tell me whether each of the following is a major reason, minor reason, or not a reason for why you would [probably/definitely (based on above)] NOT get a vaccine to prevent COVID-19?

	You are concerned about the side effects	You do not think you need it	It would cost too much	You want to know more about how well it works
Major reason	80%	25%	15%	82%
Minor reason	11%	23%	22%	8%
Not a reason	8%	49%	61%	9%
Don’t know	1%	3%	3%	1%
Unwght N=	384	381	384	384

Q. How worried are you that you or someone in your household will get sick from the coronavirus – very worried, somewhat worried, not very worried, or not worried at all?

Very worried	30%
Somewhat worried	41%
Not very worried	17%
Not worried at all	12%
Unwght N=	996

Q. How long do you think it will take before New Jersey is back to normal, again, given the current coronavirus pandemic? Will it be:

Within the next month	3%
In 2-3 months	6%
In six months	14%
Between six months and a year	42%
Or longer than that?	30%
Already back to normal (VOL)	0%
Never (VOL)	1%
Don't know (VOL)	4%
Unwght N=	997

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

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.

**COVID-19 Vaccine November 2020
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

percent confidence interval. The design effect³ is 1.5, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.8 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.

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%

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 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.