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Most New Jerseyans Support Fully Reopening Public Schools in Fall, Requiring Vaccinations for Healthcare Workers; About Six in Ten Support Vaccine Passports and Employer- and College-Required Vaccination

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (June 4, 2021) – As vaccination rates increase and prospects of normal life return more than a year into the coronavirus pandemic, New Jerseyans differ on various aspects of this “new normal” and how comfortable they feel, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Almost all New Jerseyans support (63 percent “strongly,” 24 percent “somewhat”) fully reopening public schools with in-person instruction in the fall. Seven in 10 residents say they also support (54 percent “strongly,” 18 percent “somewhat”) healthcare institutions requiring all their workers to be vaccinated to remain at or return to work.

Views are more mixed on other aspects of life requiring vaccination, although support is stronger than opposition. Sixty-six percent support (46 percent “strongly,” 20 percent “somewhat”) colleges and universities requiring all of their students to be vaccinated to remain at or return to campus. Sixty-one percent of residents support (39 percent “strongly,” 22 percent “somewhat”) establishing a credential, certification or vaccine “passport” that proves immunization. Similar numbers support (35 percent “strongly,” 26 percent “somewhat”) employers requiring all of their employees to be vaccinated to remain at or return to work.

“While solid majorities either strongly or somewhat support these actions, there are stark partisan differences when it comes to requiring vaccinations in certain circumstances and establishing vaccine passports,” said Ashley Koning, an assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPIP\)](#) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). “Like with many aspects of the pandemic, Republicans are in opposition to such requirements, while Democrats are in favor, and independents lie somewhere in between. Vaccination status has also become another dividing line, with those at least one dose in much more amenable than those who have yet to receive a dose.”

A majority of New Jerseyans have been masking up all or most of the time indoors in public spaces (62 percent, 17 percent), outdoors in crowded spaces (45 percent, 16 percent), and when around people not in their household (35 percent, 21 percent). Residents say they have worn masks outdoors in uncrowded spaces to a much lesser extent (22 percent “most of the time,” 11 percent “some of the time”).

New Jersey is now one week into the mask mandate being lifted, but two-thirds of residents say they will definitely (36 percent) or probably (30 percent) keep wearing a mask; 16 percent say they will probably not continue to wear a mask, and 18 percent say they definitely will not.

“Vaccinated individuals are just as likely as unvaccinated individuals to say they will ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ continue to wear a mask,” Koning noted. “Unvaccinated residents are almost twice as likely as vaccinated residents, however, to say they will ‘definitely’ not wear a mask going forward.”

New Jerseyans are more comfortable with some activities than others as life returns to some kind of normal. Almost all are comfortable with outdoor dining at a restaurant (70 percent “very,” 20 percent “somewhat”) or gathering in-person with friends or family outdoors (69 percent “very,” 23 percent “somewhat”) or indoors where everyone is vaccinated (69 percent).

Similarly, residents are mostly fine with working in-person at their place of employment (64 percent “very,” 24 percent “somewhat”); shopping in a retail store (59 percent “very,” 34 percent “somewhat”); going to a performance, movie, sporting event or concert outdoors (54 percent “very,” 25 percent “somewhat”); going to a hair salon, barbershop or spa (50 percent “very,” 34 percent “somewhat”); or dining inside a restaurant (50 percent “very,” 30 percent “somewhat”).

To a slightly lesser extent, a majority of New Jerseyans are also comfortable at some level with attending an in-person gathering with friends or family indoors regardless of vaccination status (38 percent “very,” 31 percent “somewhat”); going to a performance, movie, sporting event or concert indoors (35 percent “very,” 29 percent “somewhat”); or flying in an airplane or using another form of mass transit (32 percent “very,” 29 percent “somewhat”).

Half of New Jerseyans (51 percent) say the state is moving at the right pace in lifting restrictions and reopening businesses; another 18 percent say it is moving too quickly and 31 percent say too slowly.

Residents are split on whether they feel the pandemic is over, particularly whether we are almost there or have a long way to go: 8 percent say it is completely over, 35 percent say it is mostly over, 34 percent say halfway over and 24 percent say far from over.

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,004 adults contacted by live interviewers on landlines and cell phones from May 21–29. 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 John Cramer at john.cramer@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 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. Please tell me if you would feel very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, not very comfortable, or not at all comfortable doing with each of the following right now, regardless of whether or not you have recently done it? First:

	Dining outside at a restaurant	Attending an in-person gathering with friends or family outdoors	Attending an in-person gathering w/ friends/family indoors where everyone is vaccinated	Working in person at your place of employment
Very	70%	69%	69%	64%
Somewhat	20%	23%	22%	24%
Not very	5%	5%	5%	8%
Not at all	5%	3%	5%	4%
Unweighted N=	496	502	498	548

	Shopping in a retail store	Going to a theatrical performance, movie, sporting event, or concert outdoors	Going to a hair salon, barbershop, or spa	Dining inside a restaurant
Very	59%	54%	50%	50%
Somewhat	34%	25%	34%	30%
Not very	5%	11%	11%	11%
Not at all	3%	11%	5%	9%
Unweighted N=	498	493	491	498

	Attending an in-person gathering w/ friends/family indoors regardless of everyone's vaccination status	Going to a theatrical performance, movie, sporting event, or concert indoors	Flying on an airplane or using some other form of mass transit
Very	38%	35%	32%
Somewhat	31%	29%	29%
Not very	17%	21%	20%
Not at all	15%	15%	18%
Unweighted N=	502	492	492

Q. How often are you wearing a mask in each of the following scenarios:

	Indoors in public spaces	Outdoors in crowded spaces	When you're around other people not in your household	Outdoors in uncrowded spaces
All of the time	62%	45%	35%	22%
Most of the time	17%	16%	21%	11%
Some of the time	12%	13%	19%	15%
Rarely	4%	8%	10%	17%
Never	5%	17%	14%	35%
Unweighted N=	993	974	990	999

Q. As you may have heard, the CDC recently updated their recommendations for mask usage, stating that fully vaccinated people can stop wearing them both indoors and outdoors in most settings, while unvaccinated people should continue wearing them in most settings. New Jersey will fully follow CDC guidelines starting on May 28th. When this happens, will you definitely keep wearing a mask inside public spaces or in crowded settings, probably keep wearing a mask, probably not keep wearing a mask, or definitely not keep wearing a mask?

Definitely keep wearing a mask	36%
Probably keep wearing a mask	30%
Probably not keep wearing a mask	16%
Definitely not keep wearing a mask	18%
Never worn a mask	1%
Unweighted N=	980

Q. Please tell me whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following. First:

	Fully reopening public schools with in-person instruction in the fall	Health care institutions requiring all their workers to be vaccinated before they can remain at or return to work at their facilities	Colleges and universities requiring all of their students to be vaccinated before they can remain at or return to campus	Establishing some sort of credential, certification, or vaccine “passport” that proves an individual has been vaccinated against the coronavirus	Employers requiring all their employees to be vaccinated before they can remain at or return to work
Strongly support	63%	54%	46%	39%	35%
Somewhat support	24%	18%	20%	22%	26%
Somewhat oppose	10%	10%	11%	11%	12%
Strongly oppose	3%	18%	24%	28%	27%
Unweighted N=	977	986	985	979	982

Q. What do you think of the speed at which New Jersey is moving to lift restrictions and reopen businesses? Is New Jersey moving too quickly, too slowly, or is it moving at just the right pace?

Too quickly	18%
Too slowly	31%
Moving at just the right pace	51%
Unweighted N=	977

Q. Do you feel the pandemic is completely over, mostly over, halfway over, or far from over?

Completely over	8%
Mostly over	35%
Halfway over	34%
Far from over	24%
Unweighted N=	968

Methodology

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live interviewers May 21-29, 2021, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,004 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 poll included 435 adults reached on a landline phone and 569 adults reached on a cell phone, all acquired through random digit dialing; 101 of the cell phone completes were acquired through one-to-one SMS text messaging by live interviewers that led respondents to an online version of the survey. Distribution of phone use in this sample is:

	Individual	Household
Cell Only	29%	29%
Dual Use	27%	27%
Dual Use, Reached on LL	41%	41%
Landline Only	3%	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. The so-called "design effect" or *deff* represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from a disproportionate sample design and systematic non-response.³

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between

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 The composite design effect for a sample of size *n*, with each case having a weight, *w*, is computed as $deff = n \sum w^2 / (\sum w)^2$.

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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 1,004 New Jersey adults is +/-3.1 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval.⁴ This means that in 95 out every 100 samples using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 3.8 percentage points away from their true values in the population. The design effect⁵ is 1.48, 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, David Martin, and Panktiben Patel 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
1,004 New Jersey Adults**

Male	48%	Democrat	42%	18-34	26%	HS or Less	29%	White	57%
Female	52%	Independent	36%	35-49	23%	Some College	31%	Black	13%
		Republican	23%	50-64	30%	College Grad	22%	Hispanic	18%
				65+	21%	Grad Work	19%	Other	12%

⁴ The survey's maximum margin of error is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample – one around 50%.

⁵ 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.