RUTGERS
Eagleton Center for
Public Interest Polling

Eagleton Institute of Politics
Rutgers University–New Brunswick
191 Ryders Lane
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-8557

eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu
poll@eagleton.rutgers.edu
848-932-8940
Fax: 732-932-6778

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CONTACT:
Ashley Koning, Director
Office: 848-932-8940
Cell: 908-872-1186
akoning@rutgers.edu

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Governor Murphy at 50% Job Approval; Maintains High Marks on Pandemic, Lowest Marks on Taxes

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (Nov. 3, 2021) – As Governor Phil Murphy enters the final months of his first term, half of New Jersey residents approve of the overall job he is doing, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. Fifty percent approve – down from 55 percent last spring – while 39 percent disapprove, (down a point from 40 percent); 11 percent are unsure.

"While Governor Murphy's ratings have eased from their early pandemic highs, he nevertheless has the highest job approval rating of any Democratic governor in the poll's 50-year history," said Ashley Koning, an assistant research professor and director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP) at Rutgers University–New Brunswick.

On his final first term report card, Murphy remains a 'C' student, on average. When it comes to grading him overall, 13 percent of New Jerseyans give him an 'A,' 30 percent a 'B,' 18 percent a 'C,' 13 percent a 'D,' and 22 percent an 'F.' The governor's overall grade has moved only slightly since May.

As for individual issues areas, Murphy, far and away, continues to get his highest marks on his handling of the pandemic – albeit a 'C+' average: 30 percent of New Jerseyans give him an 'A,' 19 percent a 'B,' 13 percent a 'C,' 10 percent a 'D,' and 22 percent an 'F.' After an initial drop-off between October 2020 and May 2021, his pandemic grade has changed little from last spring.

Murphy gets his next highest grades on education and schools (16 percent 'A,' 24 percent 'B'), followed by transportation and infrastructure (12 percent 'A,' 24 percent 'B'), the economy and jobs (12 percent 'A,' 24 percent 'B'), and climate change (14 percent 'A,' 21 percent 'B'). His average grade in each of these areas is a 'C,' with about one-in-five residents giving him failing marks.

Murphy gets lower grades on crime and drugs (10 percent 'A,' 21 percent 'B') and the state

budget (9 percent 'A,' 22 percent 'B'); a quarter of residents fail him in each of these areas, making him a 'C-' student on these issues, on average.

The Governor's lowest marks come from his handling of taxes, for which residents, on average, give him a 'D+': just 6 percent give him an 'A,' 16 percent a 'B,' 19 percent a 'C,' 13 percent a 'D,' and 38 percent an 'F.'

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,008 adults contacted by live interviewers on landlines and cell phones from Oct. 21–27. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.9 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.

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.

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

Approve	50%
Disapprove	39%
Don't know	11%
Unweighted N=	992

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Approve	84%	40%	17%	46%	55%	44%	68%	61%	55%	51%	49%	47%	54%
Disapprove	9%	46%	72%	44%	34%	47%	20%	24%	34%	30%	42%	48%	37%
Don't know	7%	14%	11%	10%	11%	9%	11%	15%	12%	18%	9%	5%	10%
Unwt N=	352	368	253	483	500	641	102	114	73	266	270	255	186

	Income				Region					Education			
	<$50K	$50K-<$100K	$100K-<$150K	$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/ South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Approve	52%	56%	54%	48%	62%	52%	52%	45%	39%	50%	41%	53%	65%
Disapprove	32%	31%	43%	49%	26%	38%	39%	42%	54%	34%	46%	40%	31%
Don't know	16%	13%	3%	3%	12%	11%	10%	13%	7%	15%	13%	6%	4%
Unwt N=	214	295	163	196	143	351	143	176	177	154	302	296	229

Murphy Ratings November 2021
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

Q. Please give Phil Murphy a grade for the overall job he is doing as governor throughout his first term using a grading scale from A to F. You can give him any full letter grade, A, B, C, D, or F.

A	13%
B	30%
C	18%
D	13%
F	22%
Don't know	4%
Unweighted N=	997

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
A	28%	4%	3%	10%	15%	11%	22%	17%	9%	12%	12%	11%	17%
B	49%	27%	8%	29%	31%	27%	42%	30%	42%	34%	31%	25%	31%
C	13%	23%	18%	16%	19%	19%	14%	19%	17%	21%	17%	19%	13%
D	5%	14%	22%	14%	12%	16%	11%	6%	7%	11%	7%	13%	20%
F	4%	23%	47%	27%	18%	26%	5%	18%	18%	15%	25%	30%	18%
Don't know	2%	8%	1%	4%	4%	2%	6%	10%	5%	8%	7%	1%	1%
Unwt N=	355	367	255	483	505	642	103	117	75	269	272	257	184

Murphy Ratings November 2021
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

	Income				Region					Education			
	<$50K	$50K-< $100K	$100K-<$150K	$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/ South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
A	11%	17%	12%	14%	26%	13%	8%	10%	6%	13%	9%	11%	21%
B	34%	31%	34%	27%	31%	31%	31%	28%	28%	30%	26%	32%	36%
C	20%	20%	14%	13%	15%	18%	22%	17%	18%	17%	20%	20%	12%
D	11%	10%	17%	12%	13%	13%	14%	12%	10%	12%	14%	15%	8%
F	18%	16%	23%	31%	11%	22%	20%	26%	34%	21%	28%	18%	19%
Don't know	7%	7%	0%	3%	5%	4%	3%	7%	4%	6%	4%	3%	3%
Unwt N=	213	297	164	198	144	353	143	177	178	154	301	301	230

Q. I am now going to list some specific areas and ask you to give Phil Murphy a grade for the job he is doing as governor on each using a grading scale from A to F. You can give him any full letter grade, A, B, C, D, or F.

[NOTE: SPLIT SAMPLE—HALF OF RESPONDENTS RECEIVED VERSION A AND HALF RECEIVED VERSION B]

	Coronavirus Pandemic	**Education and Schools**	**NJ Economy and Jobs**	**Transportation and Infrastructure**	**Climate Change**	**Crime and Drugs**	**State Budget**	**Taxes**
A	30%	16%	12%	12%	14%	10%	9%	6%
B	19%	24%	24%	24%	21%	21%	22%	16%
C	13%	17%	20%	24%	18%	21%	19%	19%
D	10%	17%	13%	18%	12%	14%	15%	13%
F	22%	19%	24%	14%	17%	26%	25%	38%
Don't know	5%	8%	7%	8%	17%	8%	11%	8%
Unweighted N=	489	469	488	472	457	471	490	491

Methodology

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live interviewers October 21-27, 2021, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,008 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 308 adults reached on a landline phone and 700 adults reached on a cell phone, all acquired through random digit dialing; 475 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:

Cell Only	46%
Dual Use, Reached on Cell	20%
Dual Use, Reached on LL	49%
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 2019 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 three stages. The first stage of weighting corrects for different probabilities of selection across 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 involved running a propensity score model on all cell sample. A logit model was used to predict the propensity of cell respondents to respond by text, and the inverse of the predicted probability was used as propensity score adjustment for the text respondents. The independent variables in the model included sample demographics plus a handful of substantive questions.

The third and final stage of weighting balances 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

[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.

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 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 1,008 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 3.1 percentage points away from their true values in the population. The design effect[5] is 1.59, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.9 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 46.1 and 53.9 percent (50 +/- 3.9) 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). Jessica Roman and 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
1,008 New Jersey Adults

Male	47%	**Democrat**	38%	**18-34**	29%	**HS or Less**	30%	**White**	57%
Female	53%	**Independent**	37%	**35-49**	22%	**Some College**	30%	**Black**	14%
		Republican	26%	**50-64**	28%	**College Grad**	22%	**Hispanic**	17%
				65+	21%				
						Grad Work	18%	**Other**	12%

[3] The composite design effect for a sample of size n, with each case having a weight, w, is computed as deff=nw2w2.
[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.