RUTGERS

Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling

CONTACT:

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

All news releases are available at https://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu/press_releases/. Follow the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll on Facebook and Twitter.

Two-thirds of New Jerseyans agree with lifting school mask mandate, most comfortable returning to normal; half think NJ has done "just right" on pandemic

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (March 7, 2022) – As masks officially come off today for teachers and children, a majority of New Jerseyans agree with lifting the childcare and school settings mask mandate, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. Forty-six percent "strongly agree" with Governor Murphy's decision to end the mandate, 22 percent "somewhat agree," 12 percent "somewhat disagree," and 18 percent "strongly disagree."

"The school mask mandate is one of the last visible public health emergency measures in the Garden State, and its end is a welcomed one for many New Jerseyans, according to our numbers," said Ashley Koning, an assistant research professor and director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP) at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. "Parents especially agree with ending the mandate, as do partisans of all stripes, though to varying degrees. Nevertheless, disagreement is sizable and reflects the debate surrounding the issue of masking that often pits politics and public health against one another."

Agreement with ending the mask mandate coincides with a shift in New Jerseyans' views about the pandemic overall. Concern over COVID-19 remains at an all-time low since last June: 14 percent are currently "very worried" they or someone in their household will get sick from the coronavirus, 28 percent are "somewhat worried," 26 percent "not very worried," and another 32 percent "not worried at all." Concern is now half of what it was at the start of the pandemic two years ago.

Likewise, 60 percent of New Jerseyans feel they have less risk contracting COVID-19 now, compared to Spring 2020, while 33 percent feel they have the same risk, and just 7 percent feel they are more at risk.

As cases decline and the state fully opens up, 54 percent feel "very comfortable" returning to some sense of normal in their daily life right now, 33 percent feel "somewhat comfortable," 11 percent "not very," and just 3 percent "not at all."

Residents are even loosening their own mask usage: 35 percent now say they are masking indoors in public spaces "all the time" (down from 62 percent in June), 22 percent "most of the time," 17 percent "some of the time," 11 percent "rarely," and 15 percent "never."

Despite these lightened attitudes, residents are still split on whether they feel the pandemic is over, particularly whether we are almost there or have a long way to go: 12 percent say it is "completely" over, 30 percent say it is "mostly" over, 21 percent say "halfway over," and 29 percent say "far from over"; 6 percent believe it will never end, and 2 percent are unsure. This is little changed from June 2021.

"Over half of New Jerseyans think that the pandemic is not technically over, but they are mentally and emotionally ready for it to be," Koning noted. "Many New Jerseyans are reentering life and returning to normal despite knowing the pandemic will be around for a while."

On the heels of Murphy's final COVID briefing, just under half (49 percent) of New Jerseyans think the measures the New Jersey state government took to deal with the virus since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic were "just right" when they look back on the past two years. Thirty-two percent say the state went "too far," and 17 percent say "not far enough."

When it comes to handling the COVID-19 pandemic going forward, a similar pattern emerges. Forty-nine percent of New Jerseyans think the state should keep doing exactly what it has been doing in terms of mask mandates and COVID-19 vaccine requirements, 34 percent think the state should be doing less, and 16 percent think the state should be doing more.

"The pandemic has become yet another divisive issue that has political ramifications for local, state, and federal elections in the near future," said Koning. "Views on how the state has handled the pandemic have grown more divided since the start of all this two years ago."

Most New Jerseyans (81 percent) are vaccinated against COVID-19; just over half of New Jerseyans (52 percent) are vaccinated and boosted. Among the currently unvaccinated (16 percent), only twelve percent say they "definitely" (4 percent) or "probably" (8 percent) will get vaccinated; 19 percent say they "probably will not" get it, on the other hand, and 64 percent say they "definitely will not" get it.

Over half of those vaccinated (55 percent) would probably be willing to get a COVID-19 vaccine booster if public health officials recommend it about every six months; 38 percent say they would not be willing, and 7 percent are unsure.

Among those with children over the age of five, almost half (46 percent) have vaccinated their child. Among those with children of any age under 18, almost three in 10 who have yet to vaccinate their child say they will "definitely" (18 percent) or "probably" (11 percent) get their child vaccinated; one third, on the other hand "probably" (11 percent) or "definitely" (23 percent) will not.

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,044 adults contacted by live interviewers on landlines and

cell phones from February 25 – March 4. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points.

# # #

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.

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.

C1. **Please tell me which of the following best describes your current status: You are partially vaccinated – that is, you received one dose out of a two-dose vaccine; you are fully vaccinated; you are fully vaccinated and have also received a booster shot; you are not yet vaccinated.**

Partially	3%
Fully	29%
Fully + booster	52%
Not vaccinated	16%
Unweighted N=	973

C2. **Looking ahead, if public health officials recommend getting a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot about every six months, do you think you would probably be willing or unwilling to do so?**
Note: This question was only asked of respondents who are at least partially vaccinated.

Willing	55%
Unwilling	38%
Don't know (VOL)	7%
Unweighted N=	841

C3. **Thinking about the COVID-19 vaccines that are currently available, do you think you will: Definitely get a COVID-19 vaccine, probably get it, probably not get it, or definitely not get it?**
Note: This question was only asked of respondents who are not yet vaccinated.

Definitely get	4%
Probably get	8%
Probably not get	19%
Definitely not get	64%
Don't know (VOL)	4%
Unweighted N=	150

C4A. **Now that a COVID-19 vaccine is available for your child's age group, do you think you will: Definitely get them vaccinated, probably get them vaccinated, probably not get them vaccinated, definitely not get them vaccinated, or have you already vaccinated your child?**
Note: This question was only asked of respondents who are the parent or guardian of a child between 5 and 17 living in their household.

Definitely get	15%
Probably get	4%
Probably not get	10%
Definitely not get	23%
Already vaccinated	46%
Child not eligible	0%
Don't know (VOL)	2%
Unweighted N=	210

C4B. **Once there is a COVID-19 vaccine authorized and available for your child's age group, do you think you will: Definitely get them vaccinated, probably get them vaccinated, probably not get them vaccinated, or definitely not get them vaccinated?**

Note: This question was only asked of respondents who are the parent or guardian of a child under age 5 living in their household.

Definitely get	28%
Probably get	28%
Probably not get	13%
Definitely not get	24%
Already vaccinated (VOL)	3%
Don't know (VOL)	4%
Unweighted N=	81

C7. **How often are you wearing a mask indoors in public spaces?**

All of the time	35%
Most of the time	22%
Some of the time	17%
Rarely	11%
Never	15%
Unweighted N=	1032

C10. New Jersey's statewide mask mandate for students and employees at K-12 schools and childcare settings is set to end on March 7th. Individual school districts may choose to continue requiring masks. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with this decision to end the statewide mask mandate?

Strongly agree	46%
Somewhat agree	22%
Somewhat disagree	12%
Strongly disagree	18%
Don't know (VOL)	1%
Unweighted N=	1032

C11A. How worried, if at all, 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?

Note: This question was part of a split sample. Half of respondents received C11A and half received C11B.

Very worried	14%
Somewhat worried	28%
Not very worried	26%
Not worried at all	32%
Unweighted N=	516

C11B. Do you personally feel like you have a [ROTATE: greater risk, less risk,] or the same level of risk of contracting the coronavirus now, compared to in Spring 2020?

Note: This question was part of a split sample. Half of respondents received C11A and half received C11B.

Greater risk	7%
Less risk	60%
About the same level of risk	33%
Unweighted N=	512

C12A. Looking back on the past two years since the COVID-19 pandemic first started, do you think the measures the New Jersey state government took to deal with the virus went too far, did not go far enough, or were just right?

Note: This question was part of a split sample. Half of respondents received C12A and half received C12B.

Too far	32%
Not far enough	17%
Just right	49%
Don't know (VOL)	2%
Unweighted N=	521

C12B. When it comes to handling the COVID-19 pandemic at this time, do you think New Jersey should be doing more in terms of increasing mask mandates and COVID vaccine requirements, doing less, or doing exactly what it has been doing?

Note: This question was part of a split sample. Half of respondents received C12A and half received C12B.

More	16%
Less	34%
Exactly as is	49%
Don't know (VOL)	1%
Unweighted N=	518

C13A. Do you feel the pandemic is completely over, mostly over, halfway over, or far from over?

Note: This question was part of a split sample. Half of respondents received C13A and half received C13B.

Completely over	12%
Mostly over	30%
Halfway over	21%
Far from over	29%
Will never be over	6%
Don't know (VOL)	2%
Unweighted N=	520

C13B.   How comfortable are you returning to some sense of normal in your daily life right now? Very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, not very comfortable, or not comfortable at all?

Note: This question was part of a split sample. Half of respondents received C13A and half received C13B.

Very comfortable	54%
Somewhat comfortable	33%
Not very comfortable	11%
Not comfortable at all	3%
Unweighted N=	512

Methodology

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live interviewers February 25 – March 4, 2022, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,044 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. This poll included 255 adults reached on a landline phone and 789 adults reached on a cell phone, all acquired through random digit dialing; 393 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 residential adult population of New Jersey. The weighting balances 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 two 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 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.

A series of weight variables was computed. One weight for estimates based on the total sample (weight), plus separate weights for each of the different split samples.

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

---

[1] NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2017–2019; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017–2019.

[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.

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 1,044 New Jersey adults is +/-3.0 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 3.0 percentage points away from their true values in the population. The design effect[5] is 1.30, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.5 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 46.5 and 53.5 percent (50 +/- 3.5) 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. The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house by the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP). Jessica Roman 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
1,044 New Jersey Adults

Male	48%	**Democrat**	32%	**18-34**	27%	**HS or Less**	30%	**White**	57%
Female	52%	**Independent**	44%	**35-49**	25%	**Some College**	29%	**Black**	12%
		Republican	24%	**50-64**	28%	**College Grad**	22%	**Hispanic**	19%
				65+	21%				
						Grad Work	19%	**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.