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Governor Murphy’s Job Approval Stays Steady, Favorability Falls at Start of Second Term; Governor Maintains High Marks on Pandemic, Lowest Marks on Taxes and Affordability

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (March 8, 2022) – About half of New Jerseyans (49 percent) continue to approve of the overall job Governor Phil Murphy is doing as he proceeds with his second term, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. Forty-six percent disapprove of his job performance; just 5 percent are unsure. Murphy’s job approval rating has essentially held steady from November 2021, with just a minor bit of movement.

Murphy’s favorability, on the other hand, has taken a double-digit hit since his re-election: 33 percent now have a favorable impression of the governor (down from 50 percent in November 2021), while 38 percent have an unfavorable one.

“This marks the first time since Governor Murphy took office that more New Jerseyans are unfavorable toward him than favorable,” said Ashley Koning, an assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPIP\)](#) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). “His current job approval and favorability numbers are reminiscent of the start of his first term, marking a clear end to his pandemic-induced ratings bump as both the state and politics attempt to return to some sort of normal.”

On his first report card of his second term, Murphy remains a ‘C’ student, on average. When it comes to grading him overall, 11 percent of New Jerseyans give him an ‘A,’ 28 percent a ‘B,’ 24 percent a ‘C,’ 15 percent a ‘D,’ and 19 percent an ‘F.’ This is relatively unchanged from November 2021.

As for individual issue areas, Murphy continues to get his highest marks on his handling of the pandemic – albeit a ‘B-’ average: 30 percent of New Jerseyans give him an ‘A,’ 22 percent a ‘B,’ 13 percent a ‘C,’ 10 percent a ‘D,’ and 25 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 grade on education and schools (20 percent ‘A,’ 30 percent ‘B’), earning him a ‘C+’ on this issue, on average.

Murphy also earns solid marks for health care (18 percent 'A,' 23 percent 'B'), the environment (15 percent 'A,' 26 percent 'B'), the economy and jobs (12 percent 'A,' 26 percent 'B'), crime and safety (10 percent 'A,' 28 percent 'B'), mental health and addiction (10 percent 'A,' 22 percent 'B'), and transportation and infrastructure (9 percent 'A,' 26 percent 'B'). His average grade in all but one of these areas is a 'C'; New Jerseyans give him a 'C-' for mental health and addiction.

Murphy gets lower grades on the state budget (6 percent 'A,' 22 percent 'B'); one in five New Jerseyans fail him in this area, making him a 'C-' student on this issue, on average.

The Governor earns his lowest marks on his handling of taxes and cost of living and affordability. When it comes to taxes, New Jerseyans, on average, give him a 'D+': just 4 percent give him an 'A,' 15 percent a 'B,' 21 percent a 'C,' 15 percent a 'D,' and 41 percent an 'F.' Similarly, residents give him a 'D,' on average, when it comes to cost of living and affordability: just 4 percent give him an 'A,' 15 percent a 'B,' 20 percent a 'C,' 15 percent a 'D,' and 45 percent an 'F.'

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.

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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.

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 statewide polling operations in the United States. Now celebrating its 50th 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

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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.

NJ13. Is your general impression of Phil Murphy favorable or unfavorable, or do you not have an opinion about him?

Note: This question was part of a split sample. Half of respondents received NJ13 and half received NJ14.

Favorable	33%
Unfavorable	38%
No opinion	29%
Don't know person	0%
Unweighted N=	516

NJ14. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Phil Murphy is handling his job as governor?

Note: This question was part of a split sample. Half of respondents received NJ13 and half received NJ14.

Approve	49%
Disapprove	46%
Don't know person	5%
Unweighted N=	488

NJ15. 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	11%
B	28%
C	24%
D	15%
F	19%
Don't know	3%
Unweighted N=	1037

NJ16. 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: This question was part of a split sample. Half of respondents received NJ16. Within NJ16, half received the first six items and half received the second six items. All respondents who received NJ16 were asked about the COVID-19 pandemic.

VERSION A

	NJ Economy and Jobs	Taxes	State Budget and Spending	Education and Schools	Crime and Safety
A	12%	4%	6%	20%	10%
B	26%	15%	22%	30%	28%
C	26%	21%	22%	21%	28%
D	16%	15%	20%	11%	12%
F	14%	41%	21%	15%	18%
Don't know	5%	4%	8%	4%	5%
Unwt N=	249	248	251	248	252

VERSION B

	Transportation and Infrastructure	Cost of Living and Affordability	Health Care	Mental Health and Addiction	Environment
A	9%	4%	18%	10%	15%
B	26%	15%	23%	22%	26%
C	27%	20%	21%	18%	25%
D	14%	15%	8%	17%	12%
F	18%	45%	24%	23%	16%
Don't know	6%	1%	5%	10%	6%
Unwt N=	261	260	258	260	259

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COVID-19 Pandemic	
A	30%
B	22%
C	13%
D	10%
F	25%
Don't know	1%
Unweighted N=	510

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	51%	51%
Dual Use	25%	25%
Dual Use, Reached on LL	23%	23%
Landline Only	2%	1%

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 effect⁵ 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 $deff = \frac{1}{n} \sum w^2$.

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.

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