

MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2022

CONTACT:

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

All news releases are available on ECPIP's [website](#). Follow the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Half of New Jerseyans Say State is On the Wrong Track

Most satisfied with state's handling of education and schools, least satisfied with cost of living and taxes

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (March 21, 2022) – Fifty-two percent of New Jerseyans say the Garden State is off on the wrong track compared to 38 percent who say it is headed in the right direction, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

The latest numbers continue a downward trend first seen in October 2021 after a much brighter outlook in June 2021.

“New Jerseyans have a slightly better outlook on the state’s future nowadays than when the Murphy administration first took over in 2018, but pessimistic views still outweigh optimistic ones,” said Ashley Koning, an assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPIP\)](#) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). “Residents have been more negative about the Garden State since March 2014, a streak broken only temporarily in June 2021 in the wake of Governor Murphy’s pandemic-induced high ratings, COVID-19 vaccine availability, and the state opening up after a year of pandemic restrictions.”

But which direction the state is headed in depends on who you ask. Democrats are twice as likely as independents and five times more likely than Republicans to say the state is going in the right direction (64 percent versus 33 percent and 13 percent, respectively). Democrats’ optimism is outperformed by Republicans’ pessimism, however: 82 percent of Republicans say the state has gone off on the wrong track. Over half of independents (55 percent) share this negative sentiment.

White residents (57 percent) have a more negative outlook on the state’s future than Black residents (33 percent) or Hispanic residents (41 percent). Millennials are the least pessimistic (38 percent) – and the most optimistic (48 percent) – age group. Those with a high school degree or less schooling are the least optimistic (31 percent say “right direction”) compared to those with higher levels of education, as are shore residents (29 percent).

When asked how satisfied they are with the New Jersey state government's handling of various services, residents' ratings depend on the particular service, ranging from widespread positivity to strong pessimism.

Nothing upsets New Jerseyans more than how their state government has handled financial areas like affordability and taxes. When it comes to the cost of living and affordability, eight in 10 are dissatisfied at some level – 51 percent “very,” 29 percent “somewhat” – with how the government manages the issue. On the other hand, 17 percent are “somewhat” satisfied, and just 3 percent are “very” satisfied. Similarly, three-quarters are dissatisfied (50 percent “very,” 26 percent “somewhat”) with how the state is handling taxes, compared to one in five who are satisfied (3 percent “very,” 18 percent “somewhat”).

Just over half express some level of dissatisfaction with how the state government is handling the budget and government spending (32 percent “very” dissatisfied, 23 percent “somewhat”), while over a third are more positive on this issue (6 percent “very” satisfied, 30 percent “somewhat”).

New Jerseyans are more split on how the state is doing regarding mental health and addiction (36 percent satisfied, 47 dissatisfied) and transportation and infrastructure (48 percent satisfied, 48 dissatisfied), with most responses residing somewhere in the middle.

Over half are satisfied with how the state is doing on the handling of the pandemic (54 percent satisfied, 45 percent dissatisfied), economy and job market (55 percent satisfied, 44 dissatisfied), crime and safety (57 percent satisfied, 43 dissatisfied), and the environment (58 percent satisfied, 38 dissatisfied).

New Jerseyans are the most satisfied when it comes to how the state government is handling health care (16 percent “very,” 45 percent “somewhat”) and education and schools (25 percent “very,” 40 percent “somewhat”). While over six in 10 say they are satisfied with the state's education system and schools, just around three in ten are dissatisfied – the lowest level of dissatisfaction seen on any issue.

“Satisfaction with how the New Jersey state government is handling a range of issues has changed little in the past four years despite the change in administration in 2018,” noted Koning. “Taxes and affordability are issues that have continually plagued the state, at least in the past five decades that we have been polling, while education has always been viewed as a strong point.”

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 Megan Schumann at megan.schumann@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

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.

NJ11. In general, would you say the state of New Jersey is currently going in the right direction, or has it gone off on the wrong track?

Going in right direction	38%
On the wrong track	52%
Don't know	10%
Unweighted N=	1031

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Right direction	64%	33%	13%	36%	40%	35%	50%	43%	44%	48%	32%	34%	40%
Wrong track	26%	55%	82%	52%	51%	57%	33%	41%	49%	38%	57%	58%	52%
DK	10%	12%	5%	12%	9%	7%	17%	16%	7%	14%	11%	8%	8%
Unwt N=	337	422	228	501	507	569	115	188	96	229	237	327	220

	Income				Region					Education			
	<\$50K	\$50K- <\$100K	\$100K- <\$150K	\$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurba n	Phil/ South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Right direction	39%	38%	39%	41%	47%	41%	35%	35%	29%	31%	37%	44%	45%
Wrong track	51%	49%	53%	53%	35%	50%	53%	59%	61%	58%	50%	49%	46%
DK	10%	13%	8%	7%	18%	8%	12%	6%	10%	11%	13%	7%	9%
Unwt N=	219	282	166	217	173	361	144	173	180	176	290	283	268

**New Jersey Government 2022
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

NJ17. I am now going to list some specific areas where I would like you to tell me if you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with how they are being handled by the New Jersey state government. **First:** *Note: This question was part of a split sample. Half of respondents received NJ16 and half received NJ17. Within NJ17, 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
Very satisfied	12%	3%	6%	25%	18%
Somewhat satisfied	43%	18%	30%	40%	39%
Somewhat dissatisfied	27%	26%	23%	14%	23%
Very dissatisfied	17%	50%	32%	16%	20%
Don't know	1%	2%	9%	5%	0%
Unwt N=	255	257	255	258	255

VERSION B

	Transportation and Infrastructure	Cost of Living and Affordability	Health Care	Mental Health and Addiction	Environment
Very satisfied	10%	3%	16%	6%	9%
Somewhat satisfied	38%	17%	45%	30%	49%
Somewhat dissatisfied	29%	29%	19%	24%	28%
Very dissatisfied	19%	51%	16%	23%	10%
Don't know	5%	1%	4%	18%	3%
Unwt N=	262	263	261	261	262

ALL RESPONDENTS

COVID-19 Pandemic

Very satisfied	22%
Somewhat satisfied	32%
Somewhat dissatisfied	19%
Very dissatisfied	26%
Don't know	1%
Unweighted N=	518

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. 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.

In question NJ17, the Version A subsample has a margin of error of +/- 7.5 percentage points; the Version B subsample has a margin of error of +/- 6.8 percentage points.

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, MPP, 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 $deff = \frac{\sum w^2}{n}$.

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.