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.

New Jersey Schools Get Mixed Marks on Performance, High Marks on Safety
Residents say guns and school shootings are the biggest safety issues facing public schools in their community

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (September 13, 2023) – While New Jersey residents gave mixed reviews on their local schools based on where they live, most believe the schools are safe, even though guns and school shootings are the biggest safety concerns, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. The Poll was conducted toward the end of the 2022-2023 academic year in partnership with Project Ready, a nonprofit organization devoted to protecting and expanding high-quality education in urban communities in New Jersey.

"New Jersey is known for having some of the best public schools in the country, but it also has some of the most underserved and segregated, so it is no surprise that we have seen mixed views on overall public school performance throughout our 50 years of polling," said Ashley Koning, an assistant research professor and director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. "Even though residents on the whole give more positive than negative ratings, perceptions of the state's public schools are greatly impacted by who one is and where they live."

Slightly more than half of residents said public schools in their local community were doing an excellent (18 percent) or good (35 percent) job; a quarter said their local public schools were doing only a fair job (26 percent) and 15 percent said the schools are doing a poor job. Six percent were unsure of how to rate the job their local public schools are doing.

New Jerseyans were more unified regarding school safety – more than three-quarters felt public schools in their community were very (32 percent) or somewhat (46 percent) safe. Ten percent said their local public schools were not very safe and 8 percent said the schools were not safe at all. Four percent were unsure.

Partisanship colored views on overall performance. Democrats were more than twice as likely

to rate their local public schools as excellent (27 percent), compared with independents (14 percent) and Republicans (12 percent).

Parents and guardians rated their schools' overall performance similarly to nonparents, though the former was more likely to say the schools were doing a poor job (21 percent) compared with the latter (12 percent). Those who had completed graduate work also were more likely to rate their schools as excellent (25 percent) compared with those with less education.

When it comes to safety, partisan and racial divisions emerged. Democrats (34 percent) and independents (36 percent) were more likely to say public schools in their community were very safe compared with Republicans (25 percent). Black residents were less likely to label their local public schools as very safe (20 percent) compared with white (34 percent) and Hispanic (31 percent) residents.

There was no statistically significant difference in parents' and guardians' feelings on safety compared with nonparents.

"While most residents say their schools are safe to some degree, when we look beneath the surface, we see that our education system remains a tale of two cities," said Shennell McCloud, chief executive officer of Project Ready. "When Black and Hispanic residents are more than twice as likely as white residents to say their schools are not safe, we are letting our children down. Our communities deserve better and must be integral partners in forging solutions, drawing from their wealth of knowledge and experiences."

When asked what they felt was the biggest safety issue facing public schools in their community, New Jerseyans placed guns or school shootings at the top of the list (20 percent), followed by a lack of school security measures (18 percent). Six percent said bullying, another 6 percent said violence or weapons other than guns and 4 percent said drugs; 27 percent gave some other answer. Three percent said no safety issues came to mind and 15 percent were uncertain.

Partisan differences emerged on the question of top safety issues: Democrats pointed to guns and school shootings as the top issue (31 percent), while Republicans said their top issue was school security measures (25 percent). Independents were torn between these two issues, with 20 percent saying school security and 18 percent saying school shootings.

Residents 65 and older said school shootings were the top issue (29 percent) more often than their younger counterparts.

Parents and guardians put school security measures as the top safety issue (20 percent), followed by school shootings (16 percent). Nonparents placed shootings (22 percent) slightly ahead of school security (17 percent).

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,002 adults contacted by live interviewers on landlines and

cell phones from April 27 to May 5. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.6 percentage points.

# # #

Broadcast interviews: Rutgers University–New Brunswick has broadcast-quality television and radio studios available for remote live or taped interviews with Rutgers experts. For more information, contact Patti Zielinski at patti.zielinski@rutgers.edu

ABOUT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY–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
Home of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (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 in its 52nd year and with the publication of over 200 polls, ECPIP's mission is to provide scientifically sound, nonpartisan 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.

ABOUT PROJECT READY
Project Ready works to close the opportunity gaps and improve life outcomes by powering communities to demand social justice through civic engagement. The organization grows the base of voters and substantially increases voter turnout while also reshaping policies that disenfranchise vulnerable communities. For more information visit www.projectreadynj.org.

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.

ED1.   How would you rate the overall job public schools are doing in your local community?

Excellent	18%
Good	35%
Only fair	26%
Poor	15%
Don't know	6%
Unweighted N=	998

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Excellent	27%	14%	12%	19%	17%	21%	10%	17%	16%	14%	19%	16%	23%
Good	38%	34%	36%	35%	36%	36%	34%	35%	32%	34%	33%	39%	35%
Only fair	20%	29%	29%	27%	25%	22%	30%	29%	30%	28%	27%	24%	25%
Poor	10%	17%	18%	16%	14%	13%	19%	17%	16%	19%	14%	17%	7%
DK	6%	7%	5%	4%	9%	8%	6%	2%	7%	6%	7%	4%	9%
Unwt N=	352	382	231	501	487	602	141	144	77	233	288	275	202

	Income				Region					Education			
	<$50K	$50K-<$100K	$100K-<$150K	$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Excellent	15%	18%	15%	24%	18%	19%	19%	18%	13%	16%	16%	16%	25%
Good	31%	34%	42%	32%	28%	35%	53%	30%	34%	33%	32%	41%	37%
Only fair	27%	21%	25%	27%	28%	26%	18%	26%	30%	26%	28%	26%	22%
Poor	18%	20%	11%	13%	19%	16%	4%	17%	15%	16%	18%	12%	12%
DK	9%	7%	6%	4%	7%	3%	6%	9%	9%	9%	6%	4%	4%
Unwt N=	160	258	187	279	156	342	145	180	175	138	277	319	257

	Parent	
	Parent/Guardian	Not parent/guardian
Excellent	18%	18%
Good	31%	37%
Fair	27%	25%
Poor	21%	12%
DK	3%	8%
Unwt N=	309	685

ED2. **And how safe do you feel public schools are in your community?**

Very safe	32%
Somewhat safe	46%
Not very safe	10%
Not safe at all	8%
Don't know	4%
Unweighted N=	998

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Very safe	34%	36%	25%	33%	31%	34%	20%	31%	34%	30%	33%	35%	29%
Somewhat safe	45%	44%	53%	49%	44%	47%	47%	45%	43%	45%	47%	44%	51%
Not very safe	10%	11%	8%	9%	11%	8%	17%	14%	7%	15%	7%	10%	8%
Not safe at all	8%	7%	8%	7%	10%	5%	14%	10%	12%	9%	7%	10%	7%
Don't know	3%	2%	5%	3%	4%	5%	3%	1%	4%	2%	6%	2%	5%
Unwt N=	350	384	230	498	490	601	143	143	77	233	288	274	203

	Income				Region					Education			
	<$50K	$50K-<$100K	$100K-<$150K	$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Very safe	26%	30%	34%	39%	25%	35%	41%	32%	25%	29%	25%	36%	43%
Somewhat safe	47%	45%	52%	43%	42%	47%	45%	46%	52%	48%	49%	46%	41%
Not very safe	13%	11%	10%	6%	18%	7%	6%	12%	10%	13%	11%	9%	6%
Not safe at all	12%	9%	2%	10%	11%	9%	6%	8%	6%	6%	11%	6%	8%
Don't know	3%	5%	2%	3%	4%	2%	1%	3%	8%	5%	4%	3%	2%
Unwt N=	159	259	186	280	158	341	143	181	175	138	277	318	258

	Parent	
	Parent/Guardian	Not parent/guardian
Very safe	30%	33%
Somewhat safe	46%	46%
Not very safe	10%	10%
Not safe at all	11%	7%
Don't know	2%	4%
Unwt N=	310	684

ED3. In just a few words, when it comes to safety, what – if anything – do you think is the biggest safety issue facing public schools in your community?

Guns/school shootings	20%
(Lack of) school security measures/able to get in too easily	18%
Bullying	6%
Violence/weapons (guns NOT mentioned)	6%
Drugs	4%
None	3%
Other	27%
Don't know	15%
Unweighted N=	982

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Guns	31%	18%	10%	19%	22%	24%	19%	15%	16%	17%	19%	18%	29%
Security	10%	20%	25%	17%	18%	20%	14%	19%	9%	15%	18%	22%	16%
Bullying	6%	6%	4%	5%	7%	5%	4%	6%	11%	7%	7%	5%	6%
Violence	7%	6%	4%	5%	7%	5%	7%	5%	6%	7%	6%	4%	6%
Drugs	2%	5%	6%	5%	4%	5%	2%	4%	4%	7%	2%	5%	3%
None	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%	2%	7%	4%	3%	1%	5%	3%	4%
Other	23%	28%	32%	29%	26%	26%	30%	31%	25%	27%	25%	32%	25%
DK	17%	14%	15%	17%	14%	13%	16%	16%	26%	19%	18%	12%	13%
Unwt N=	346	379	226	493	479	596	139	140	74	228	286	267	201

	Income				Region					Education			
	<$50K	$50K-<$100K	$100K-<$150K	$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Guns	15%	23%	24%	19%	20%	22%	15%	22%	20%	16%	18%	21%	28%
Security	20%	15%	19%	16%	14%	18%	17%	21%	16%	18%	19%	19%	14%
Bullying	4%	4%	5%	10%	5%	6%	7%	7%	6%	4%	5%	9%	6%
Violence	7%	7%	5%	3%	8%	6%	5%	6%	5%	5%	8%	4%	6%
Drugs	7%	2%	4%	5%	1%	3%	9%	4%	7%	2%	5%	5%	6%
None	2%	3%	3%	6%	5%	3%	4%	1%	4%	7%	1%	2%	2%
Other	30%	29%	23%	30%	35%	24%	27%	25%	30%	33%	26%	25%	26%
DK	14%	18%	17%	12%	12%	19%	14%	15%	12%	14%	18%	14%	13%
Unwt N=	155	255	185	274	153	333	143	180	173	136	268	315	256

	Parent	
	Parent/Guardian	Not parent/guardian
Guns	16%	22%
Security	20%	17%
Bullying	10%	5%
Violence	5%	6%
Drugs	4%	4%
None	3%	3%
Other	30%	26%
DK	13%	17%
Unwt N=	302	677

Methodology

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live interviewers April 27 to May 5, 2023, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,002 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 telephone poll included 304 adults reached on a landline phone and 698 adults reached on a cell phone, all acquired through random digit dialing; 250 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	45%
Text to Web	25%
Landline	30%

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 and overall, to match parameters for sex, age, education, race/ethnicity, region and phone use. The sex, age, education, race/ethnicity, and region parameters were derived from 2021 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 telephone 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 final stage of weighting balances sample demographics, overall and 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.

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 1,002 New Jersey adults is +/-3.1 percentage points at a 95

---

[1] NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2018–2020; 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.

percent confidence interval. The design effect[3] is 1.36, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.6 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 46.4 and 53.6 percent (50 +/- 3.6) 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). The questions in this release were developed in collaboration with Project Ready. Jessica L. 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 Demographics
1,002 New Jersey adults 18+
Overall Margin of Error = +/- 3.6 percentage points

Please note: Totals may equal slightly more or less than 100% due to rounding.

		deff	MOE			deff	MOE
Man	48%	1.36	+/- 5.1%	**White**	55%	1.34	+/- 4.6%
Woman	52%	1.36	+/- 5.2%	**Black**	12%	1.32	+/- 9.4%
				Hispanic	20%	1.26	+/- 9.2%
18-34	26%	1.31	+/- 7.3%	**Other**	13%	1.16	+/- 12.0%
35-49	25%	1.37	+/- 6.7%				
50-64	27%	1.36	+/- 6.9%	**<50K**	24%	1.31	+/- 8.9%
65+	22%	1.37	+/- 8.0%	**50K-<100K**	31%	1.39	+/- 7.1%
				100K-<150K	19%	1.32	+/- 8.2%
Democrat	35%	1.35	+/- 6.1%	**150K+**	26%	1.26	+/- 6.6%
Independent	40%	1.35	+/- 5.8%				
Republican	25%	1.38	+/- 7.6%	**Urban**	17%	1.36	+/- 9.1%
				Suburb	35%	1.36	+/- 6.2%
HS or Less	27%	1.12	+/- 8.8%	**Exurban**	14%	1.35	+/- 9.5%
Some College	31%	1.23	+/- 6.5%	**Phil/South**	17%	1.41	+/- 8.7%
College Grad	23%	1.17	+/- 5.9%	**Shore**	17%	1.31	+/- 8.5%
Grad Work	19%	1.17	+/- 6.6%				

---

[3] 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.