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New Jerseyans Are Divided On Whether Firearms Increase Protection From Intruders in the Home

Residents also are divided whether the presence of these arms raises the risk of suicide or an unintentional shooting, despite research showing clear increase

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (April 17, 2024) – When it comes to firearms in the home, New Jerseyans are divided on how helpful they perceive them to be for protection compared to the risks they pose, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll in partnership with the New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center.

Thirty-two percent of residents polled in December 2023 think storing a firearm in one's home as a tool doesn't lower the risk of an intruder coming in and hurting someone in their household, 18 percent think it only slightly lowers the risk, 20 percent think it moderately lowers the risk, and 25 percent think it greatly lowers the risk. Five percent are unsure.

New Jerseyans are mixed not only on how much protection a firearm in the home offers, but on how risky it is for the household members who live in a residence where a gun is present. Thirty-three percent say a firearm in one's home doesn't increase the risk at all that someone in their home will die by suicide or unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else with that firearm, 23 percent say it slightly increases the risk, 13 percent say it moderately increases the risk, and 25 percent say it greatly increases the risk. Six percent are unsure.

“Although opinions may be divided about the risks involved in having firearms in the home, the [data](#) is clear on this issue,” said [Michael Anestis](#), an associate professor in urban-global public health at the [Rutgers School of Public Health](#) and executive director of the [New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center](#). “Having a firearm in the home dramatically increases the risk of suicide for all members of the household, while also increasing risk for unintentional shootings and fatal domestic violence. If firearm owners are not aware of this, they may not be taking the necessary precautions to help avoid those outcomes, like storing the firearm securely in the home and storing it legally away from home during times of stress. If a firearm is kept at home

to keep people safe, firearm owners should make sure they are actually doing what is necessary to accomplish that goal.”

“There is a mismatch here between perception and reality,” said [Ashley Koning](#), an assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPIP\)](#) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#). “Public opinion alone tells a misleading story that departs from the actual statistics associated with suicide and unintentional shootings in homes with firearms, but what it does importantly tell us is the need to further educate the public on this matter.

Views on the benefits and risks of firearms in the home are divided by familiar demographic lines. Feelings on whether firearms lower the risk of a household member getting hurt by an intruder are highly partisan; two-thirds (65 percent) of Democrats believe it either slightly lowers the risk or doesn’t lower the risk at all, while two-thirds (62 percent) of Republicans believe the opposite. Women (55 percent), people in the highest income bracket (57 percent), and those who completed some type of graduate work (64 percent) are all more likely than their counterparts to believe a firearm in the home does little to nothing lower the risk of an intruder harming someone in the household.

Those with a firearm in the home are more than one-and-a-half times more likely than those without one to say a firearm moderately or greatly lowers the risk of an intruder harming someone in their household (66 percent to 37 percent, respectively). Nearly half of residents with a firearm in the home (48 percent) believe a firearm greatly lowers the risk of harm done by an intruder, with Republicans coming in a close second (46 percent).

Similar patterns emerge when it comes to how much of a risk a firearm in a home is to household members, whether because of suicide or an unintentional shooting. Once again, partisans are on opposite sides – Republicans believe a firearm in the home minimally or doesn’t increase risk (78 percent). Democrats feel the opposite, with over half (55 percent) saying a firearm “moderately” or “greatly” increases this risk; Democrats are more divided than those across the aisle, however. Independents are somewhere in the middle, with 59 percent saying a firearm poses minimal or no risk.

Men (62 percent); people 50 to 64 years old (62 percent); residents living in the exurban (60 percent), southern (61 percent), or shore regions (63 percent); and those with lower levels of education (62 percent for those with a high school education or less and 61 percent for those with some college education) all say a firearm in the household minimally or doesn’t increase risk of harm to household members. Residents with a firearm in the household are the most adamant – 88 percent say this, compared with 46 percent of residents who don’t have a firearm in the household.

Nineteen percent of New Jerseyans report that one or more firearms are typically stored in or around their home. Firearms in the household are more common among Republicans (37 percent), men (26 percent), white residents (23 percent), middle-aged residents (21 percent of

those 35 to 49 and 25 percent of those 50 to 64), those in higher income brackets (28 percent of those earning \$100 to under \$150 thousand and 26 percent of those earning \$150 thousand or more), exurbanites (27 percent), those living near the shore (29 percent), and those with some college education (23 percent) or a four-year college degree (23 percent).

“Gun permits are rising in the Garden state, and our numbers within the past year have certainly reflected this,” Koning said. “Those reporting a firearm in or around their home has increased by almost 50 percent compared to the last time we polled this question prior to the pandemic.”

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,657 adults contacted through multiple modes, including by live interviewer on landline and cell phone, MMS text invitation to web and the probability-based [Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel](#) from Dec. 13 to Dec. 23. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 2.8 percentage points. The registered voter subsample contains 1,451 registered voters and has a margin of error of +/- 3.0 percentage points.

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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 Jessica Ronan-Frisch at jronan@eagleton.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 THE RUTGERS-EAGLETON/SSRS GARDEN STATE PANEL

[The Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel](#) is a probability-based panel of New Jersey adults age 18 or older. Members are recruited randomly based on statewide representative ABS (Address Based Sample) design. The ABS sample is drawn from the Delivery Sequence File (DSF) maintained by the U.S. Postal Service. Population coverage of the DSF is in the 98%-99% range. During the recruitment process, full demographic information on panelists is collected. This data is stored securely and used to determine eligibility for specific studies (if needed). The Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel is a multi-mode panel. Internet households participate via web while all non-internet households (including those who have internet but are unwilling to take surveys online) participate via phone. Panelists also have the option of taking surveys in their preferred language (English or Spanish).

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.

G3 To what extent do you see storing a firearm in your home as a tool for lowering the risk of someone coming in and hurting you or anyone in your household?

Note: The order in which respondents received G3 and G4 rotated at random in fielding.

Does not lower the risk at all	32%
Slightly lowers the risk	18%
Moderately lowers the risk	20%
Greatly lowers the risk	25%
Don't know	5%
Unweighted N=	1649

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Not lower	45%	28%	20%	26%	38%	38%	29%	25%	26%	23%	31%	36%	41%
Slightly lower	20%	18%	13%	19%	17%	16%	20%	20%	22%	23%	18%	16%	14%
Mod. lower	18%	23%	16%	20%	20%	17%	16%	23%	28%	22%	21%	18%	17%
Greatly lower	12%	25%	46%	32%	19%	25%	30%	28%	17%	26%	24%	26%	23%
DK	4%	6%	4%	3%	7%	4%	6%	4%	8%	6%	6%	4%	4%
Unwt N=	600	655	381	851	786	1072	158	212	180	438	358	454	398

	Income				Region					Education			
	<\$50K	\$50K- <\$100K	\$100K- <\$150K	\$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/ South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Not lower	27%	31%	31%	39%	37%	31%	35%	29%	33%	21%	34%	34%	45%
Slightly lower	20%	17%	18%	18%	14%	20%	17%	18%	18%	19%	16%	17%	19%
Mod. lower	17%	26%	15%	18%	19%	21%	19%	20%	17%	24%	17%	19%	17%
Greatly lower	26%	24%	32%	23%	26%	22%	24%	27%	29%	27%	29%	26%	16%
DK	10%	2%	5%	2%	4%	6%	5%	7%	3%	9%	4%	4%	2%
Unwt N=	331	455	297	422	223	617	254	284	271	380	391	409	466

	Firearm In/Around Home	
	Yes	No
Not lower	18%	38%
Slightly lower	13%	20%
Mod. lower	18%	20%
Greatly lower	48%	17%
DK	2%	6%
Unwt N=	311	1228

G4 To what extent do you see storing a firearm in your home as increasing the risk that someone in your home will die by suicide or unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else with that firearm?

Note: The order in which respondents received G3 and G4 rotated at random in fielding.

Does not increase the risk at all	33%
Slightly increases the risk	23%
Moderately increases the risk	13%
Greatly increases the risk	25%
Don't know	6%
Unweighted N=	1646

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Not increase	18%	37%	52%	39%	27%	33%	41%	34%	23%	27%	32%	39%	35%
Slightly increase	21%	22%	26%	23%	23%	24%	13%	26%	21%	26%	22%	23%	19%
Mod. increase	16%	14%	8%	13%	14%	14%	12%	15%	13%	17%	11%	11%	13%
Greatly increase	39%	21%	9%	20%	29%	25%	24%	19%	34%	23%	30%	23%	24%
DK	6%	6%	5%	5%	7%	4%	9%	6%	9%	7%	4%	4%	9%
Unwt N=	601	652	380	849	785	1071	158	212	179	439	356	454	395

	Income				Region					Education			
	<\$50K	\$50K- <\$100K	\$100K- <\$150K	\$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/ South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Not increase	34%	34%	35%	29%	30%	31%	37%	35%	35%	38%	38%	29%	25%
Slightly increase	21%	24%	23%	25%	16%	21%	23%	26%	28%	24%	23%	22%	22%
Mod. increase	14%	14%	11%	14%	14%	13%	13%	12%	15%	13%	14%	13%	13%
Greatly increase	21%	25%	26%	30%	32%	28%	22%	19%	19%	17%	21%	29%	37%
DK	9%	4%	5%	2%	7%	6%	5%	8%	3%	9%	4%	6%	3%
Unwt N=	333	454	292	423	224	614	254	285	269	380	390	407	466

	Firearm In/Around Home	
	Yes	No
Not increase	62%	24%
Slightly increase	26%	22%
Mod. increase	5%	16%
Greatly increase	5%	32%
DK	2%	6%
Unwt N=	310	1228

G1 Are one or more firearms typically stored in or around your home?

Yes	19%
No	76%
Don't know	4%
Unweighted N=	1615

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Yes	11%	18%	37%	26%	14%	23%	15%	18%	10%	14%	21%	25%	18%
No	88%	76%	58%	70%	82%	73%	81%	77%	87%	79%	75%	72%	80%
DK	1%	6%	5%	4%	4%	3%	5%	6%	4%	7%	4%	3%	2%
Unwt N=	598	634	374	827	776	1048	157	210	178	433	356	441	384

	Income				Region					Education			
	<\$50K	\$50K- <\$100K	\$100K- <\$150K	\$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/ South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Yes	14%	16%	28%	26%	12%	14%	27%	22%	29%	16%	23%	23%	17%
No	81%	80%	68%	73%	84%	82%	70%	73%	66%	79%	73%	72%	80%
DK	5%	5%	5%	1%	4%	4%	3%	5%	5%	4%	4%	5%	3%
Unwt N=	328	448	289	418	223	603	248	277	264	376	380	400	456

Methodology

This Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted from December 13 to 23, 2023 with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,657 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. Three samples were used for this study – a dual-frame RDD landline and cell samples, a separate cell RDD sample, and sample from the [Rutgers-Eagleton/Garden State Panel](#).

The Rutgers-Eagleton/Garden State Panel is a probability-based panel of New Jersey adults age 18 or older. Members are recruited randomly based on statewide representative ABS (Address Based Sample) design. ABS sample is drawn from the Delivery Sequence File (DSF) maintained by the U.S. Postal Service. Population coverage of the DSF is in the 98%-99% range. During the recruitment process, full demographic information on panelists is collected. The Rutgers/SSRS Garden State Panel is a multi-mode panel. For this poll, only Internet households were invited to participate via web; non-internet households were not included.

This study employed three recruitment methods: calling with live interviewers (n=521), one-to-one push-to-web texting (n=532), and web recruitment (n=604). Distribution of recruitment method in this sample is:

Call	31%
Text-to-Web	22%
Web	37%

Each of the three samples was base weighted and calibrated separately. The three samples were also combined and calibrated together, overall and by form.

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 2022 American Community Survey PUMS data. The phone use parameter was derived from estimates provided by the National Health Interview Survey Early Release Program.¹

The base weight for the dual-frame RDD sample 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

Base weights for the Garden State Panel were the base weights associated with the initial recruitment sampling and the sampling from the panel for this particular data collection. The base weights for the RDD cell sample were set to 1.0.

The final stage of weighting calibrates sample demographics, overall and by form, to match target population benchmark distributions. This weighting was accomplished using SPSSINC RAKE, an SPSS

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.

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. The so-called "design effect" or *deff* represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from a disproportionate sample design and systematic non-response. The total sample design effect for this survey is 1.39.

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 1,657 New Jersey adults is +/-2.4 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect³ is 1.39, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 2.8 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 47.2 and 52.8 percent (50 +/- 2.8) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a sample.

Sampling error is only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Sampling error does not consider other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as selection bias, non-response bias, question wording, context effects, or reporting accuracy, which may contribute additional error.

This Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was fielded by SSRS through the Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel, Braun Research, Inc., using live interviewers, and Response Now using one-to-one push-to-web texting. Sample was provided by Dynata. 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.

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.

Weighted Demographics
1,657 New Jersey Adults 18+
Overall Margin of Error = +/- 2.8 percentage points

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

		deff	MOE			deff	MOE
Man	49%	1.38	+/- 3.9%	White	55%	1.34	+/- 3.5%
Woman	51%	1.39	+/- 4.1%	Black	12%	1.32	+/- 8.9%
				Hispanic	20%	1.28	+/- 7.6%
18-34	27%	1.45	+/- 5.6%	Other	14%	1.28	+/- 8.3%
35-49	24%	1.32	+/- 5.9%				
50-64	27%	1.39	+/- 5.4%	<50K	25%	1.38	+/- 6.3%
65+	22%	1.36	+/- 5.7%	50K-<100K	31%	1.42	+/- 5.5%
				100K-<150K	19%	1.37	+/- 6.7%
Democrat	36%	1.41	+/- 4.7%	150K+	25%	1.35	+/- 5.5%
Independent	42%	1.37	+/- 4.5%				
Republican	22%	1.38	+/- 5.9%	Urban	16%	1.36	+/- 7.6%
				Suburb	35%	1.38	+/- 4.6%
HS or Less	32%	1.27	+/- 5.7%	Exurban	14%	1.39	+/- 7.2%
Some College	26%	1.36	+/- 5.8%	Phil/South	18%	1.38	+/- 6.8%
College Grad	20%	1.35	+/- 5.6%	Shore	17%	1.39	+/- 7.0%
Grad Work	22%	1.32	+/- 5.2%				