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Ciattarelli Leads Republican Pack in Governor Race, While Democratic Side Is a Toss-Up

New Jersey voters remain largely unaware of gubernatorial hopefuls with weeks to go until primaries

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (April 25, 2025) – With more than a month to go until New Jersey’s June 10 primary, registered Republicans and Republican-leaning independents seem to be coalescing around Jack Ciattarelli, while registered Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents are more divided among the six candidates in their race, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

About a third of each partisan group are still unsure of who they prefer.

“We currently have a tale of two primaries,” said [Ashley Koning](#), an assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling](#) (ECPIP) at [Rutgers University-New Brunswick](#). “On the Republican side, a leading candidate is coming into focus, while on the Democratic side, there is no clear frontrunner, given that most of the Democratic candidates are within striking distance of one another.”

When asked to think about the upcoming primary, 42% of New Jersey registered Republicans and Republican-leaning independents surveyed say they prefer former assemblyman and 2021 Republican gubernatorial nominee Jack Ciattarelli. Former radio host Bill Spadea comes in a distant second, with 12%. Four percent of Republicans say they prefer state Sen. Jon Bramnick, 3% chose Justin Barbera, and no one chooses Mario Kranjac. Four percent say they prefer none of these candidates.

When asked who their second choice would be, it is a toss-up between Spadea (16%), Bramnick (12%), and Ciattarelli (12%) – all within the margin of error.

Republicans and Republican-leaning independents are split as to whether an endorsement from President Trump would make them more likely to vote for a Republican candidate (46%) or if it would have no effect on their vote (46%); 7% say it would make them less likely to vote for the

endorsed candidate.

The Democratic side is more complicated. Seventeen percent of registered Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents prefer U.S. Rep. Mikie Sherrill, followed by Jersey City Mayor Steve Fulop at 12% - a difference within the margin of error. Next is New Jersey Education Association president Sean Spiller at 10%, followed by U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer and Newark Mayor Ras Baraka each at 9%, and then former state Senate President Steve Sweeney at 7%. Four percent say they prefer none of these candidates.

When asked who their second choice would be, Gottheimer (16%) and Sherrill (15%) top the list, followed by Baraka (13%), Spiller (12%), and Fulop (11%) – all within the margin of error. Six percent pick Sweeney as their second choice.

“All of the candidates have made some progress since the fall in terms of voters knowing who they are, but they haven’t made noticeable gains in favorability,” Koning said. “Though not necessarily unusual at this stage in the game, candidates on both sides of the aisle still lack name recognition from a notable number of voters, and no candidate on either side of the aisle is viewed favorably by more than one in five voters.”

On the Democratic side, 20% of all voters view Sherrill favorably, 14% unfavorably and 22% have no opinion; 44% still don’t know who she is. Gottheimer is at 18% favorable versus 19% unfavorable, with 25% having no opinion; 38% still don’t know who he is. Fifteen percent view Baraka favorably, 16% unfavorably and 24% have no opinion; 46% still don’t know who he is. Thirteen percent of voters view Sweeney favorably, 21% unfavorably, 33% have no opinion and 34% still don’t know who he is. Fourteen percent view Sean Spiller favorably, another 17% unfavorably and 26% have no opinion; 42% still don’t know who he is. Twelve percent of voters are favorable toward Fulop, 12% are unfavorable, 30% have no opinion and 46% still don’t know who he is.

It’s a similar picture on the Republican side among the top contenders: Eighteen percent view Ciattarelli favorably, 24% unfavorably, 26% have no opinion and 32% still don’t know him. Eight percent view Spadea favorably, 18% unfavorably, 24% have no opinion and 51% still don’t know who he is. Six percent give Bramnick a favorable rating, 8% unfavorable and 21% have no opinion; 65% still don’t know who he is.

Fifty-five percent of voters claim they are “very likely” to vote in the June primary and another 22% say “somewhat likely”; 11% say they are “not very likely” and 9% say “not at all likely.”

“This kind of turnout in an off-cycle election is unlikely, particularly given New Jersey’s history of low primary turnout,” said [Jessica Roman](#), director of data management and analysis at ECPIP. “Turnout is generally much lower in off-cycle, off-year, and primary elections. This June will be about who candidates get to turn out and how many.”

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,058 adults contacted through the probability-based

[Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel](#) from April 1 to April 10. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 4.1 percentage points. The registered voter subsample contains 966 registered voters and has a margin of error of +/- 4.3 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 Kiana Miranda at kiana.miranda@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 [X](#) (formerly 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

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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 who self-reported being registered to vote unless otherwise noted; all percentages are of weighted results. Interpret groups with samples sizes under 100 with extreme caution.

NJ1. We'd like to ask you about some people. Please indicate if your general impression of each one is favorable or unfavorable, or if you do not have an opinion or do not know the person.

Note: There was a split sample used in this question. Half of respondents received one half of the subitems, and half of respondents received the other half.

Steve Sweeney

Favorable	13%
Unfavorable	21%
No opinion	33%
Don't know person	34%
Unweighted N=	482

Steve Fulop

Favorable	12%
Unfavorable	12%
No opinion	30%
Don't know person	46%
Unweighted N=	482

Mikie Sherrill

Favorable	20%
Unfavorable	14%
No opinion	22%
Don't know person	44%
Unweighted N=	482

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Sean Spiller

Favorable	14%
Unfavorable	17%
No opinion	26%
Don't know person	42%
Unweighted N=	482

Josh Gottheimer

Favorable	18%
Unfavorable	19%
No opinion	25%
Don't know person	38%
Unweighted N=	481

Ras Baraka

Favorable	15%
Unfavorable	16%
No opinion	24%
Don't know person	46%
Unweighted N=	482

Jack Ciattarelli

Favorable	18%
Unfavorable	24%
No opinion	26%
Don't know person	32%
Unweighted N=	484

Jon Bramnick

Favorable	6%
Unfavorable	8%
No opinion	21%
Don't know person	65%
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Unweighted N=	484

Bill Spadea

Favorable	8%
Unfavorable	18%
No opinion	24%
Don't know person	51%
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Unweighted N=	484

G1. How likely are you to vote in the New Jersey primaries this June?

Very likely	55%
Somewhat likely	22%
Not very likely	11%
Not at all likely	9%
Don't know	3%
Unweighted N=	966

G2A. Thinking ahead to the Republican primary for New Jersey governor this June, which one of the following candidates do you prefer?

**Note: This question was only asked of self-reported registered voters who considered themselves Republican or Republican-leaning.*

Jack Ciattarelli	42%
Bill Spadea	12%
Jon Bramnick	4%
Justin Barbera	3%
Mario Kranjac	0%
Someone else	<1%
None of them	4%
Don't know	34%

| Unweighted N= | 258 |

G2B. Thinking ahead to the Republican primary for New Jersey governor this June, which one of the following candidates do you prefer?

**Note: This question was only asked of self-reported registered voters who considered themselves Republican or Republican-leaning. Respondents' first choice from G2A was removed when asked about their second choice.*

Bill Spadea	16%
Jon Bramnick	12%
Jack Ciattarelli	12%
Justin Barbera	6%
Mario Kranjac	4%
Someone else	0%
None of them	14%
Don't know	36%

| Unweighted N= | 161 |

G2C. Would an endorsement from President Donald Trump make you more likely to vote for a candidate, less likely to vote for a candidate, or have no effect on your vote?

**Note: This question was only asked of self-reported registered voters who considered themselves Republican or Republican-leaning.*

More likely	46%
Less likely	7%
No effect	46%
Don't know	1%
Unweighted N=	258

G3A. Thinking ahead to the Democratic primary for New Jersey governor this June, which one of the following candidates do you prefer?

**Note: This question was only asked of self-reported registered voters who considered themselves Democrat or Democrat-leaning.*

Mikie Sherrill	17%
Steve Fulop	12%
Sean Spiller	10%
John Gottheimer	9%
Ras Baraka	9%
Steve Sweeney	7%
Someone else	<1%
None of them	4%
Don't know	32%
Unweighted N=	556

G3B. Thinking ahead to the Democratic primary for New Jersey governor this June, which one of the following candidates do you prefer?

**Note: This question was only asked of self-reported registered voters who considered themselves Democrat or Democrat-leaning. Respondents' first choice from G3A was removed when asked about their second choice.*

Josh Gottheimer	16%
Mikie Sherrill	15%
Ras Baraka	13%
Sean Spiller	12%
Steve Fulop	11%
Steve Sweeney	6%
Someone else	1%
None of them	4%
Don't know	22%
Unweighted N=	338

Methodology

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted using the [Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel](#) from April 1 to 10, 2025, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,058 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. Analysis is based on a registered voter subsample including 966 New Jersey adults, 18 or older, who are self-reported registered voters. The Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel is a probability-based panel of New Jersey adults aged 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. Sample drawn was stratified by county, age, gender, race and ethnicity, and education to ensure adequate representation of each demographic group. Only panelists who complete surveys by web in English were eligible for selection for this study.

Data were weighted to represent the adult population of New Jersey. Weighting was done by applying a base weight, making an adjustment to account for the oversampling of Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino respondents and calibrating sample demographic distributions to match target population benchmarks.

The first step in the weighting was to apply a base weight, d_0 , that accounts for the recruitment sampling probabilities and respondent selection.

A composite adjustment was applied to combine the panel base sample and the panel oversamples of African Americans and Hispanics. This adjustment brought the proportion of the two targeted groups in the combined sample to equal the proportion of the main Garden State Panel sample.

The final base weight is the product of the initial base weight and the composite adjustments. The final base weight was standardized overall to sum up the number of interviews.

With the base weight applied, the data were weighted to balance the demographic profile of the sample to target population parameters.

Data were calibrated by raking sample distributions to target population distributions using iterative proportional fitting. This procedure balances each calibration variable to target benchmarks individually and iteratively. The entire set of calibration variables is cycled through until the weights converge across all dimensions.

Data were weighted to distributions of sex by age, sex by education, gender by race, age by race, age by education, detailed education, race/ethnicity, region, home tenure, number of adults per household, civic engagement, internet use frequency and 2024 recalled vote. Missing data in the raking variables were imputed using hot decking. Hot deck imputation replaces the missing values of a respondent randomly with another similar respondent without missing data. Hot decking was done using an SPSS macro detailed in 'Goodbye, Listwise Deletion: Presenting Hot Deck Imputation as an Easy and Effective Tool for Handling Missing Data' (Myers, 2011).

Table 1 shows the data sources used for calibration totals.

Table 1. Calibration Variable Sources

Dimension	Source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex • Age • Education • Race • Hispanic nativity • Number of adults in household • Home tenure 	Current Population Survey 2024 ¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Region 	American Community Survey 2023 ²
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic engagement • Internet frequency 	Modeled from SSRS Opinion Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 Presidential recalled vote 	National Election Pool

Weights were trimmed at the 4th and 96th percentiles to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on survey-derived estimates.

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 1.81. Design effect for the registered voter subsample is 1.82.

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 1,058 New Jersey adults is +/-3.0 percentage points at a 95% confidence interval. The design effect³ is 1.81, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 4.1 percentage points. Thus, if 50% of New Jersey adults in this sample favor a particular position, we would be 95% sure that the true figure is between 45.9 and 54.1% (50 +/- 4.1) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Among the registered voter subsample (n=966), the simple sampling error is +/- 3.2 percentage points. Design effect for the registered voter subsample is 1.82, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 4.3 percentage points.

¹ Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles, J. Robert Warren, Daniel Backman, Annie Chen, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, Megan Schouweiler, and Michael Westberry. IPUMS CPS: Version 12.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2024.

<https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V12.0>

² U.S. Census Bureau. "Age and Sex." American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0101, 2023.

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.

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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. 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.

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**Weighted Demographics
966 New Jersey Registered Voters
Overall Margin of Error = +/- 4.3 percentage points**

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

		deff	MOE			deff	MOE
Man	47%	1.78	+/- 6.4%	White, Non-Hisp	58%	1.63	+/- 5.6%
Woman	53%	1.86	+/- 5.7%	Non-White	42%	2.08	+/- 6.5%
18-34	23%	1.93	+/- 8.9%	<50K	23%	1.97	+/- 8.8%
35-49	24%	1.83	+/- 8.5%	50K-<100K	27%	1.96	+/- 8.5%
50-64	29%	1.75	+/- 8.0%	100K-<150K	26%	1.71	+/- 9.2%
65+	24%	1.79	+/- 8.7%	150K+	24%	1.59	+/- 8.7%
Democrat	40%	1.84	+/- 6.4%	Urban	16%	1.72	+/- 11.0%
Independent	36%	1.83	+/- 6.9%	Suburb	34%	1.72	+/- 7.4%
Republican	23%	1.65	+/- 9.6%	Exurban	14%	1.97	+/- 11.1%
HS or Less	30%	1.60	+/- 8.9%	Phil/South	19%	2.12	+/- 9.8%
Some College	21%	1.95	+/- 8.7%	Shore	18%	1.65	+/- 10.0%
College Grad	24%	1.68	+/- 8.1%				
Grad Work	25%	1.77	+/- 7.8%				