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Nearly Half of New Jerseyans Say the State Is on the Wrong Track, Citing Taxes, Affordability and Cost of Living

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (June 27, 2025) – New Jerseyans continue to give a somewhat split assessment on the direction of the Garden State, and pocketbook issues top the list of residents’ biggest concerns, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Forty-eight percent of residents say New Jersey is on the wrong track, compared with 39% who say it is headed in the right direction; 14% are unsure.

“The latest numbers on where New Jerseyans think the state is headed continue a trend we’ve seen in the past few years of a divided outlook that has often been more negative than positive,” said [Ashley Koning](#), an assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling](#) at [Rutgers University-New Brunswick](#). “The current gap between right track and wrong direction is now at its widest since March 2022. And much like everything else in today’s political climate, views on the state’s future are heavily influenced by partisanship.”

Nearly two-thirds of Democrats (63%) say the state is headed in the right direction, while three-quarters of Republicans (77%) say it’s headed off on the wrong track, according to the poll conducted in mid-June. Independents somewhat mirror the population as a whole: 32% say the state is headed in the right direction versus 48% saying it is on the wrong track. White residents and those in higher income brackets are all more likely than their respective counterparts to have a negative view.

When asked to name the most important problem in New Jersey, 36% of residents cite something to do with taxes and 22% say something to do with affordability and cost of living. No other issue comes close. Housing and the economy are tied for a distant third (each at 8%). Issues such as crime and safety, immigration, education and infrastructure were all in the 2%-to-3% range; 9% said something else unrelated to any of these categories.

Right/Wrong Track and Most Important Problem Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

“Economic concerns are front and center for New Jerseyans, making pocketbook issues a critical focus for both gubernatorial candidates in this year’s election,” said Koning. “But exactly which pocketbook issues to focus on depends on who you ask, with traditionally more Democratic-leaning voting blocs focused on affordability and cost of living, while traditionally more Republican-leaning voting blocs are focused on high taxes.”

While taxes are the most important problem across the board, Republicans are especially likely to say this (44% compared to 34% of independents and 31% of Democrats), while Democrats and independents are more likely than Republicans to mention something about affordability and cost of living. Crime is more likely to be reported as a problem by Republicans (9%) than Democrats or independents (each at 1%).

White respondents are more likely than nonwhite respondents to cite something about taxes as the most important issue facing the state (44% to 25%), as are older respondents compared with younger respondents. Nonwhite respondents are more likely than white respondents to say the economy is the most important problem in New Jersey today (13% to 4%).

“To chart a path to victory, both Jack Ciattarelli and Mikie Sherrill will need to confront New Jersey’s high taxes and lack of affordability head-on,” said Koning. “The problem is that these are long-standing issues with no simple solutions, so the real test for these nominees will be convincing voters this fall that they can actually make a difference.”

Results are from a statewide poll of 621 adults contacted through the probability-based [Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel](#) from June 13 to June 16. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 5.4 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 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 [Bluesky](#).

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.

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.

QUESTIONS AND TABLES START ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

**Right/Wrong Track and Most Important Problem
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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 unless otherwise noted; all percentages are of weighted results. Interpret groups with samples sizes under 100 with extreme caution.

NJ4. In general, would you say the state of New Jersey [ROTATE: is currently going in the right direction], [has gone off on the wrong track]?

Right direction	39%
Wrong track	48%
Don't know	14%
Unweighted N=	620

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-White	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Right direction	63%	32%	17%	42%	36%	32%	47%	39%	42%	32%	43%
Wrong track	24%	48%	77%	47%	48%	55%	39%	44%	43%	58%	44%
Don't know	12%	20%	6%	11%	16%	13%	14%	17%	14%	11%	13%
Unwt N=	273	215	132	286	332	383	235	138	155	174	153

	Income				Education			
	<\$50K	\$50K- <\$100K	\$100K- <\$150K	\$150K+	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Right direction	39%	45%	33%	35%	34%	32%	46%	44%
Wrong track	45%	41%	53%	54%	51%	54%	39%	45%
Don't know	16%	14%	14%	12%	15%	14%	15%	11%
Unwt N=	138	166	126	149	139	149	154	178

NJ2. In just a word or two, what is the most problem facing the state of New Jersey?

Note: This question was originally asked in an open-ended format.

Taxes	36%
Affordability/cost of living	22%
Economy (incl. inflation)	8%
Housing, housing affordability	8%
Infrastructure (incl. transportation infrastructure)	3%
Immigration (incl. pos/neg/neutral stances)	3%
Crime and safety	3%
Trump/federal govt/MAGA ideology	3%
Education	2%
Overdevelopment/congestion/overpopulation	1%
None	0%
Other	9%
Don't know	1%
Unweighted N=	605

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	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-White	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Taxes	31%	34%	44%	36%	35%	44%	25%	26%	17%	46%	50%
Affordability	23%	24%	18%	23%	22%	20%	25%	26%	30%	22%	10%
Economy	8%	8%	7%	10%	6%	4%	13%	12%	7%	6%	7%
Housing	11%	7%	5%	7%	9%	5%	11%	12%	7%	5%	7%
Infrastructure	2%	7%	0%	5%	2%	3%	5%	6%	3%	3%	1%
Immigration	4%	3%	3%	2%	5%	3%	4%	4%	2%	4%	3%
Crime	1%	1%	9%	4%	2%	4%	1%	3%	3%	2%	4%
Trump	4%	3%	0%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	4%	1%	4%
Education	4%	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	1%	4%	2%	3%
Congestion	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%
None	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	10%	8%	10%	7%	11%	8%	10%	6%	16%	6%	9%
Don't know	0%	3%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	6%	0%	0%
Unwt N=	266	208	131	278	325	375	228	132	151	170	152

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	Income				Education			
	<\$50K	\$50K- <\$100K	\$100K- <\$150K	\$150K+	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Taxes	28%	36%	35%	35%	40%	39%	40%	23%
Affordability	18%	21%	27%	29%	17%	19%	27%	27%
Economy	12%	12%	4%	4%	11%	8%	7%	4%
Housing	6%	8%	10%	9%	3%	7%	8%	14%
Infrastructure	4%	4%	0%	4%	3%	1%	4%	6%
Immigration	6%	4%	1%	1%	6%	3%	1%	2%
Crime	4%	4%	3%	1%	5%	4%	2%	1%
Trump	3%	3%	3%	2%	0%	3%	1%	7%
Education	2%	4%	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%	3%
Congestion	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%
None	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	12%	5%	11%	11%	11%	10%	6%	9%
Don't know	2%	0%	4%	0%	0%	3%	0%	3%
Unwt N=	134	159	124	148	133	145	153	174

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Methodology

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted using the [Rutgers-Eagleton/Garden State Panel](#) from June 3 to 16, 2025, with a scientifically selected random sample of 621 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. 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 residential adult population of New Jersey. Weighting was done by applying a base weight, making an adjustment to account for sampling only panelists who prefer to be contacted via web, and calibrating sample demographic distributions to match target population benchmarks.

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, age by education, detailed education, race/ethnicity, region, home tenure, voter registration, number of adults per household, civic engagement, internet use frequency and 2024 presidential 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 variables used in the calibration and the sources of the target distributions.

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Table 1. Calibration Variable Sources

Calibration Variables	Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex • Age • Education • Race • Hispanic nativity • Number of adults in household • Home tenure 	2024 Current Population Survey ¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Region 	American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0101, 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic engagement • Internet frequency 	Modeled from SSRS Opinion Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voter registration 	CPS 2024 Voting and Registration Supplement ²
<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 1.85.

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 621 New Jersey adults is +/-3.9 percentage points at a 95% confidence interval. The design effect is 1.85, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 5.4 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 44.6 and 55.4% (50 +/- 5.4) 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

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 11.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2023.

² Current Population Survey, November 2024: Voting and Registration Supplement [machine-readable data file] conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. - Washington: Bureau of the Census [producer and distributor], 2024.

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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). Ashley Koning and Jessica Roman led analysis and preparation of this release, with assistance from David Martin and Kyle Morgan. 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
621 New Jersey Adults
Overall Margin of Error = +/- 5.4 percentage points**

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

		deff	MOE			deff	MOE
Democrat	34%	1.96	+/- 8.3%	<50K	27%	1.83	+/- 11.2%
Independent	40%	1.81	+/- 9.0%	50K-<100K	31%	1.83	+/- 10.3%
Republican	26%	1.57	+/- 10.7%	100K-<150K	19%	1.90	+/- 12.0%
				150K+	23%	1.75	+/- 10.6%
Man	49%	1.88	+/- 7.9%	HS or Less	32%	1.61	+/- 10.5%
Woman	51%	1.82	+/- 7.3%	Some College	22%	1.92	+/- 11.1%
White, Non-Hisp	56%	1.76	+/- 6.6%	College Grad	22%	1.72	+/- 10.3%
Non-White	44%	1.89	+/- 8.8%	Grad Work	24%	1.96	+/- 10.3%
18-34	25%	1.90	+/- 11.5%				
35-49	24%	2.07	+/- 11.3%				
50-64	27%	1.77	+/- 9.9%				
65+	24%	1.64	+/- 10.1%				