



CONTACT:

Ashley Koning, Director
Office: 848-932-8940
akoning@rutgers.edu

All news releases are available at https://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu/press_releases/. Follow the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll on [Facebook](#) and [Bluesky](#).

New Jersey Voters Say Finding Quality, Affordable Child Care Is Difficult and a Major Barrier for Working Parents

Majority of voters think the issue has a large impact on the state's economy, according to Rutgers-Eagleton poll

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (Oct. 31, 2025) – A sizeable majority of voters, regardless of political party identification, say that finding quality, affordable child care is difficult in New Jersey and a significant barrier to parents' employment with effects on the state's businesses and economy, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll in collaboration with [Start Strong NJ](#).

"When voters talk about affordability in this election, child care is part of that story," said [Ashley Koning](#), an assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling](#) at [Rutgers University-New Brunswick](#). "While it's not always discussed explicitly, child care is inextricably intertwined with economic well-being and opportunity for many voters."

"These survey results won't surprise hardworking parents in New Jersey who struggle to balance economically supporting their families and giving their children the strong start they need in life," said Atiya Weiss, executive director of the [Burke Foundation](#) in Princeton, N.J., which helps fund Start Strong NJ. "The findings should convince policymakers that child care is essential infrastructure, just like roads, schools, broadband, power lines, and many other things we invest in as a society for the well-being of communities and the state's economic health."

Nearly 7 in 10 likely voters say it is "very" (34%) or "somewhat" (34%) difficult to find quality and affordable child care in New Jersey. A majority of voters, regardless of partisanship, gender, race and ethnicity, age, income, and education, feel it is at least somewhat difficult to find care. Nonparents and parents alike agree, though parents are more likely to say it is difficult (77%) than nonparents (65%).

Slightly more than 6 in 10 voters say finding quality, affordable child care in the state poses a "major barrier" for parents who want to work (61%). Twenty percent say this is a "minor barrier" and 5% say it is "not a barrier at all."

A plurality of voters, regardless of partisanship, gender, race and ethnicity, age, income, and education, say finding quality, affordable care is a “major barrier” for working parents. There is no statistically significant difference between parents and nonparents.

Seven in 10 voters think the lack of quality, affordable child care in New Jersey has a “great deal” of (31%) or “some” (39%) impact on the state’s businesses and economy. Ten percent say it impacts the economy “only a little” and 6% say “not at all.”

Again, a majority of voters regardless of partisanship, gender, race and ethnicity, age, income and education, say the lack of quality, affordable care has at least some impact on the state’s economy. There is no statistically significant difference between parents and non-parents.

Among those for whom the questions were applicable, 51% say they or someone they know has had difficulty finding quality child care in the past five years and 63% say they or someone they know has had difficulty affording quality child care in the past five years.

There is a sizeable 15-point-or-more gap between knowing and not knowing someone who has had difficulty finding child care across all demographic groups, with the exception of Republicans and voters ages 65 and older. In the case of Republicans, 42% know someone who has had difficulty and 34% don’t. Thirty-nine percent of those 65 and older know someone who has had difficulty and 30% don’t.

A majority of voters regardless of partisanship, gender, race and ethnicity, age, income, and education, say they or someone they know has had difficulty affording care. Parents (73%) are more likely than nonparents (58%) to say they or someone they know has had difficulty affording care.

“What’s striking about these findings is how broad the consensus is – for once, this isn’t a partisan issue, it’s a practical one,” Koning said. “Voters recognize that when child care isn’t accessible or affordable, it limits opportunity for parents and affects the state’s economic health – themes that have defined much of this campaign.”

Results are from a statewide poll of 795 voters contacted via live calling and texting from Oct. 3 to Oct. 17. The likely voter sample has a margin of error of +/- 4.7 percentage points. The registered voter sample has a margin of error of +/- 4.6 percentage points.

###

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

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.

ABOUT START STRONG NJ

[Start Strong NJ](#) is a statewide campaign to put affordable, high-quality child care within reach of all New Jersey families. Inclusive and nonpartisan, Start Strong NJ recognizes that child care is an economic imperative for New Jersey rather than a problem that individual families can solve on their own. Led by [Advocates for Children of New Jersey](#) and [New Jersey Association of the Education of Young Children](#), Start Strong NJ brings together child care educators, parents, business leaders, policy experts, and others concerned about giving every child the strong start needed for lifelong health and well-being and helping New Jersey's families, communities, and economy thrive. View Start Strong NJ's compelling video [here](#) and follow Start Strong NJ on [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [X](#) to learn how you can get involved.

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 likely voters unless otherwise noted; all percentages are of weighted results. Interpret groups with samples sizes under 100 with extreme caution.

R1. To what extent do you believe it is easy or difficult to find quality, affordable childcare in New Jersey?

	LV	RV
Very easy	3%	3%
Somewhat easy	9%	9%
Somewhat difficult	34%	34%
Very difficult	34%	34%
Don't know	20%	20%
Unweighted N=	795	795

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Non-Hispanic white	Nonwhite	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Very easy	1%	4%	4%	2%	4%	1%	5%	4%	4%	3%	1%
Smwht easy	6%	11%	9%	10%	8%	8%	9%	6%	8%	9%	12%
Smwht diff	35%	36%	32%	36%	33%	39%	27%	27%	33%	39%	37%
Very diff	38%	36%	28%	32%	36%	29%	45%	42%	42%	24%	30%
Don't know	21%	13%	27%	21%	18%	23%	14%	22%	12%	25%	19%
Unwt N=	252	315	228	430	349	582	186	169	209	189	228

**Child Care Impact
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

	Income		Education		Parent/Guardian	
	<\$100K	\$100K+	Some college or less	4-year college degree +	Yes	No
Very easy	2%	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%
Smwht easy	9%	8%	10%	8%	12%	8%
Smwht diff	34%	37%	38%	31%	30%	35%
Very diff	34%	36%	30%	39%	47%	30%
Don't know	22%	16%	20%	19%	9%	24%
Unwt N=	303	428	328	466	215	573

R2. In the past five years, have you or someone you know had difficulty with either of the following in New Jersey?

Finding quality childcare

	LV	RV
Yes, had difficulty	51%	51%
No, did not have difficulty	25%	26%
Don't know	24%	23%
Unweighted N=	529	529

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Non-Hispanic white	Nonwhite	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Yes	59%	52%	42%	44%	58%	48%	57%	56%	56%	52%	39%
No	16%	26%	34%	28%	22%	25%	25%	23%	27%	21%	30%
Don't know	25%	22%	24%	28%	20%	27%	18%	21%	17%	28%	31%
Unwt N=	161	227	141	283	235	369	144	120	168	122	119

	Income		Education		Parent/Guardian	
	<\$100K	\$100K+	Some college or less	4-year college degree +	Yes	No
Yes	58%	50%	54%	48%	57%	48%
No	22%	27%	24%	26%	27%	25%
Don't know	21%	23%	22%	26%	16%	27%
Unwt N=	207	286	224	305	183	342

R2. In the past five years, have you or someone you know had difficulty with either of the following in New Jersey?

Affording quality childcare

	LV	RV
Yes, had difficulty	63%	62%
No, did not have difficulty	16%	17%
Don't know	21%	21%
Unweighted N=	553	553

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Non-Hispanic white	Nonwhite	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Yes	67%	63%	58%	55%	70%	60%	69%	66%	70%	62%	53%
No	11%	17%	22%	21%	13%	16%	18%	16%	17%	13%	20%
Don't know	22%	20%	21%	23%	18%	24%	13%	19%	14%	25%	27%
Unwt N=	171	234	148	294	246	389	148	127	173	128	125

	Income		Education		Parent/Guardian	
	<\$100K	\$100K+	Some college or less	4-year college degree +	Yes	No
Yes	65%	64%	61%	65%	73%	58%
No	15%	17%	19%	14%	19%	16%
Don't know	21%	19%	20%	21%	9%	26%
Unwt N=	223	294	232	320	187	361

R3. How much of a barrier, if at all, do you think finding quality, affordable childcare in New Jersey is for parents who want to work?

	LV	RV
Major barrier	61%	61%
Minor barrier	20%	19%
Not a barrier at all	5%	5%
Don't know	15%	15%
Unweighted N=	794	794

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Non-Hispanic white	Nonwhite	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Major	77%	58%	47%	52%	68%	56%	70%	63%	66%	54%	60%
Minor	12%	23%	24%	23%	17%	22%	16%	21%	18%	24%	16%
Not barrier	0%	6%	9%	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	5%	4%	6%
Don't know	11%	13%	20%	19%	10%	18%	9%	13%	11%	18%	17%
Unwt N=	252	314	228	430	349	582	186	169	208	189	228

	Income		Education		Parent/Guardian	
	<\$100K	\$100K+	Some college or less	4-year college degree +	Yes	No
Major	68%	57%	57%	64%	67%	58%
Minor	16%	24%	20%	19%	16%	21%
Not barrier	3%	4%	6%	4%	7%	4%
Don't know	13%	15%	17%	12%	9%	17%
Unwt N=	303	428	328	465	215	573

R4. How much, if at all, do you think the lack of quality, affordable childcare in New Jersey affects the state's businesses and economy?

	LV	RV
A great deal	31%	31%
Some	39%	39%
Only a little	10%	9%
Not at all	6%	6%
Don't know	14%	14%
Unweighted N=	790	790

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Non-Hispanic white	Nonwhite	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Great deal	39%	37%	18%	28%	35%	28%	39%	29%	40%	30%	27%
Some	43%	33%	43%	38%	41%	42%	35%	41%	31%	40%	44%
Little	6%	10%	14%	12%	8%	10%	10%	9%	15%	8%	8%
Not at all	1%	7%	8%	7%	5%	6%	4%	2%	8%	5%	9%
Don't know	12%	13%	16%	15%	12%	15%	12%	19%	7%	16%	12%
Unwt N=	251	313	226	427	348	579	185	168	207	188	227

	Income		Education		Parent/Guardian	
	<\$100K	\$100K+	Some college or less	4-year college degree +	Yes	No
Great deal	31%	33%	28%	35%	37%	29%
Some	43%	37%	41%	37%	32%	42%
Little	8%	12%	9%	11%	14%	8%
Not at all	5%	5%	6%	5%	7%	5%
Don't know	12%	13%	15%	12%	9%	15%
Unwt N=	303	426	326	463	214	570

Methodology

The Rutgers–Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live interviewers October 3-17, 2025, with a random sample of New Jersey likely voters (n=795). Likely-voter status was modeled at the respondent level: Each self-identified voter received an individual turnout probability based on past voting history and reported likelihood of voting. That probability was then incorporated into the post-stratification weights described below. This poll included 140 adults reached through live calling and 655 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 call	13%
Landline call	4%
Text to web	82%

The data were weighted to represent the population of registered voters in New Jersey. A base weight was not applied, as the sample was selected with equal probability from records that included a phone number. Table 1 outlines the variables used in the calibration process and identifies the sources of the benchmark distributions.

The calibration was accomplished using iterative proportional fitting (IPF). 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. 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.

Table 1. Calibration Variable Definitions and Benchmark Sources

Variable (categories)	Source
Sex (M, F)	L2 voter file
Age (18-34, 35-49, 50-64, 65+)	L2 voter file
Education (HS grad or less, some college / Assoc degree, 4-yr college grad, graduate degree)	CPS 2024 Voting and Registration Supplement PUMS data ¹
Race (White~Hispanic, Black~Hispanic, Hispanic, Asian~Hispanic, Other/mixed~Hispanic)	CPS 2024 Voting and Registration Supplement PUMS data
Region (urban, suburb, exurban, Phila/south, shore)	L2 voter file
2024 recalled vote (Harris, Trump, other, did not vote) ²	The American Presidency Project, UC Santa Barbara ³

Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. SSRS calculates 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 U.S. Census Bureau. *Current Population Survey, November 2024: Voting and Registration Supplement [Public Use Microdata Sample]*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce. Released April 21, 2025. Available at [Census.gov](https://www.census.gov).

² The 2024 vote distribution pulled from The American Presidency Project was adjusted so that the proportion of voters who reported not voting matched the unweighted percentage in the survey data.

³ <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/statistics/elections/2024>.

Child Care Impact Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

sample design and systematic non-response. The total sample design effect for the likely voter sample is 1.83. The total sample design effect for the registered voter sample is 1.78.

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. The survey's margin of error is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample — the one around 50%. In this poll, the simple sampling error for 795 New Jersey likely voters is ± 3.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence interval. Sampling error should also be adjusted to recognize the effect of weighting the data to better match the population. The design effect is 1.83, making the adjusted margin of error ± 4.7 percentage points. Thus, if 50% of New Jersey voters in this sample favor a particular position, we would be 95% sure that the true figure is between 45.3% and 54.7% (50 ± 4.7) if all New Jersey voters had been interviewed, rather than just a sample. The simple sampling error for registered voters is $\pm 3.5\%$ and the adjusted margin of error with the 1.78 design effect is $\pm 4.6\%$.

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 of greater or lesser magnitude.

This Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was fielded by Braun Research, Inc. and Rumble Up with sample from L2 Data and Marketing Systems Group (MSG). Special thank you to Siena Research Institute for consultation on likely voter modeling and weighting. 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. 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.

**Child Care Impact
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

**Weighted Demographics
795 New Jersey Likely Voters
Overall Margin of Error = +/- 4.7 percentage points**

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

		deff	MOE			deff	MOE
Democrat	31%	1.83	+/- 8.4%	<100K	49%	1.78	+/- 7.5%
Independent	37%	1.92	+/- 7.6%	100K+	51%	1.82	+/- 6.4%
Republican	32%	1.73	+/- 8.5%				
				Some college or Less	50%	1.78	+/- 7.2%
Man	48%	1.79	+/- 6.3%	4-Yr College Degree or More	50%	1.76	+/- 6.0%
Woman	52%	1.80	+/- 7.0%				
Non-Hispanic white	64%	1.78	+/- 5.4%				
Nonwhite	36%	1.65	+/- 9.2%				
18-34	25%	1.77	+/- 10.0%				
35-49	24%	1.94	+/- 9.4%				
50-64	26%	1.73	+/- 9.4%				
65+	26%	1.85	+/- 8.8%				