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What Do New Jerseyans Want Mikie Sherrill to Focus on First? Taxes.

The governor-elect will start her term with comparable ratings to past incoming governors

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (Jan. 16, 2026) – A new governor may be heading to Trenton, but New Jerseyans’ top priority for Mikie Sherrill is a familiar one, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Residents think Sherrill should focus first and foremost on taxes, a problem that has taken the top spot for New Jerseyans for 15 years straight.

Twenty-eight percent say Sherrill should tackle taxes, with poll responses heavily dominated by residents specifically mentioning property taxes. Another 19% say Sherrill should focus first on affordability or cost of living in the state, though the umbrella theme of affordability pervaded other topics, too, such as housing and health care.

“While affordability was the all-encompassing buzzword of the 2025 governor’s race, taxes remain New Jerseyans’ No. 1 priority,” said [Ashley Koning](#), an assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers University-New Brunswick](#). “Taxes topped the list at the start of both Gov. Christie’s and Gov. Murphy’s first terms, and they’re still at the top because the problem hasn’t gone away. Taxes have consistently ranked as one of the most important issues for decades, and, much like her predecessors, Sherrill faces a challenge that may prove difficult – if not impossible – to solve.”

Other issues don’t come close. Nine percent say she should focus on utility costs, 7% say housing and housing affordability, 5% say the economy, including inflation and jobs, and 4% say health care and associated costs. Three percent each point to education and government issues, including inefficiency, corruption and spending. Two percent say Sherrill should focus on combating President Donald Trump administration’s agenda and actions and another 2% mention immigration. Twelve percent point to different issues.

“New Jerseyans overwhelmingly want Sherrill to zero in on Jersey-centric, everyday issues that directly affect their lives, many of which fall under the umbrella of affordability,” said Koning. “While anti-Trump sentiment resonated on the campaign trail, governing will require balancing any national-level actions with tangible progress on critical state concerns.”

Sherrill starts her first term with a net favorable rating, with numbers similar to those of other recent New Jersey governors when they first started out.

New Jerseyans are more favorable (40%) than unfavorable (22%) toward Sherrill, 32% have no opinion and 6% say they don’t know who she is. This is a marked difference from October 2025, when, weeks before the gubernatorial election, 42% of voters held a favorable view of Sherrill, and 45% held an unfavorable view. At that time, 11% said they didn’t have an opinion.

“With the heat of the election now cooled, a notable portion of New Jerseyans – and, in fact, the largest we’ve seen since tracking Sherrill’s ratings – are currently undecided about the governor,” Koning said. “This could work in Sherrill’s favor as she begins her first term, suggesting many residents are open to what she brings to the table. But it also poses a challenge: She’ll need to deliver tangible results to turn that uncertainty into positive sentiment.”

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,570 New Jersey adults contacted through the [Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel](#) from Dec. 29, 2025, to Jan. 6, 2026. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.6 percentage points.

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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](#).

**Murphy Final Grades and Ratings
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

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

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.

MS1. Overall, is your general impression of Mikie Sherrill favorable, unfavorable, or do you not have an opinion about her?

Favorable	40%
Unfavorable	22%
No opinion	32%
Don't know person	6%
Unweighted N=	1569

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Favorable	70%	27%	12%	39%	42%	39%	53%	41%	33%	45%	36%	38%	43%
Unfavorable	3%	20%	60%	27%	17%	30%	7%	16%	13%	15%	20%	27%	24%
No opinion	22%	44%	23%	28%	34%	28%	35%	31%	42%	28%	36%	31%	30%
DK person	4%	9%	5%	6%	7%	3%	5%	11%	12%	11%	8%	4%	3%
Unwt N=	693	625	249	661	900	797	227	294	250	295	455	394	425

	Income				Region					Education			
	<\$50K	\$50K- <\$100K	\$100K- <\$150K	\$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/ South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Favorable	33%	41%	44%	45%	43%	39%	44%	40%	37%	29%	39%	42%	49%
Unfavorable	16%	18%	26%	23%	13%	17%	26%	30%	29%	19%	28%	21%	19%
No opinion	39%	34%	26%	27%	37%	36%	25%	24%	30%	44%	27%	30%	27%
DK person	12%	6%	4%	5%	7%	9%	4%	6%	4%	7%	6%	7%	5%
Unwt N=	330	413	265	377	212	441	309	373	232	211	375	418	565

MS2. In just a word or two, what issue do you think Mikie Sherrill should focus on FIRST as governor of New Jersey after her inauguration on January 20, 2026?

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

Taxes	28%
Affordability	19%
Electric/utility costs	9%
Housing/housing affordability	7%
Economy (incl. inflation, jobs)	5%
Healthcare/healthcare costs	4%
Education	3%
Govt. issues (incl. inefficiency, corruption, spending)	3%
Combat Trump/federal govt. agenda	2%
Infrastructure (incl. NJTRANSIT)	2%
Immigration (incl. pos/neg/neutral stances)	2%
Other	12%
None	1%
Don't know	3%
Unweighted N=	1562

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	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity				Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	Wht	Blk	Hisp	Other	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Taxes	20%	29%	42%	30%	26%	32%	21%	21%	30%	11%	24%	44%	33%
Affordability	25%	17%	10%	21%	16%	20%	11%	17%	22%	27%	18%	10%	19%
Utilities	10%	7%	10%	9%	9%	11%	6%	7%	4%	3%	8%	12%	13%
Housing	9%	8%	4%	7%	8%	5%	17%	9%	4%	15%	6%	4%	5%
Economy	6%	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%	11%	7%	5%	4%	5%	6%	7%
Healthcare	5%	4%	1%	3%	5%	3%	5%	5%	4%	3%	3%	4%	5%
Education	4%	3%	2%	1%	6%	3%	8%	2%	1%	7%	5%	1%	1%
Govt. issues	1%	3%	5%	4%	2%	3%	3%	1%	3%	<1%	4%	4%	3%
Trump/fed	3%	1%	<1%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	3%	1%	2%
Infrastruct.	1%	3%	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%	<1%	4%	3%	4%	<1%	<1%
Immigration	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	4%	<1%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Other	11%	12%	15%	11%	12%	11%	9%	16%	14%	14%	13%	11%	10%
None	<1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	<1%
Don't know	2%	5%	1%	1%	5%	2%	3%	6%	6%	7%	5%	1%	0%
Unwt N=	692	622	246	659	896	795	226	291	249	294	454	393	421

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	Income				Region					Education			
	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$150K	\$150K+	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Grad work
Taxes	15%	30%	31%	34%	17%	30%	33%	30%	28%	22%	32%	31%	27%
Affordability	13%	19%	25%	16%	17%	16%	19%	17%	29%	17%	17%	20%	20%
Utilities	11%	8%	11%	9%	4%	6%	11%	14%	11%	8%	11%	10%	6%
Housing	15%	8%	4%	3%	11%	8%	6%	6%	6%	12%	7%	6%	6%
Economy	7%	7%	5%	3%	8%	7%	5%	5%	2%	8%	5%	6%	3%
Healthcare	3%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	5%	2%	3%	5%
Education	8%	1%	3%	3%	5%	3%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	1%	5%
Govt. issues	2%	1%	3%	5%	6%	2%	3%	3%	1%	3%	1%	3%	4%
Trump/fed	1%	<1%	3%	4%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	<1%	2%	2%
Infrastruct.	1%	2%	1%	3%	4%	2%	1%	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%	3%	4%
Immigration	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%
Other	16%	11%	6%	12%	15%	12%	11%	11%	9%	9%	14%	10%	14%
None	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	<1%	1%	1%	1%
Don't know	6%	3%	2%	3%	3%	6%	1%	1%	2%	6%	3%	3%	1%
Unwt N=	324	413	265	376	212	439	306	370	233	205	374	418	565

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Methodology

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted using the [Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel](#) from Dec. 29, 2025, to Jan. 6, 2026, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,570 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, households were invited to participate via web or live calling. 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 phone or 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 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 • Number of adults in household • Home ownership 	2025 Current Population Survey ¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Region 	U.S. Census Bureau. "Age and Sex." American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0101, 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic engagement 	2023 CPS Civic Engagement Supplement ²
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet frequency 	Modeled from SSRS Opinion Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voter registration 	CPS 2024 Voting and Registration Supplement Population Survey ³
<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 2.16.

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

¹ Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Daniel Backman, Grace Cooper, Julia A. Rivera Drew, Stephanie Richards, Renae Rodgers, Jonathan Schroeder, and Kari C.W. Williams. IPUMS USA: Version 16.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V16.0>

² September 2023 CPS Volunteering and Civic Life Supplement data; Civically engaged respondents are defined as those who have volunteered in the past 12 months or who talk to / spend time with their neighbors daily: Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles, J. Robert Warren, Daniel Backman, Annie Chen, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, Megan Schouweiler, and Michael Westberry (2024). Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 12.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V12.0>

³ 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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this poll, the simple sampling error for 1,570 New Jersey adults is +/- 2.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence interval. The design effect is 2.16, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.6 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 46.4 and 53.6% (50 +/- 3.6) 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. 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
1,570 New Jersey Adults
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	
Democrat	38%	2.26	+/- 5.6%	<50K	23%	2.43	+/- 8.4%
Independent	43%	2.20	+/- 5.8%	50K-<100K	31%	2.23	+/- 7.2%
Republican	19%	1.76	+/- 8.2%	100K-<150K	21%	2.12	+/- 8.8%
				150K+	25%	1.89	+/- 6.9%
Man	48%	2.04	+/- 5.4%				
Woman	52%	2.24	+/- 4.9%	Urban	16%	1.96	+/- 9.4%
				Suburb	35%	1.89	+/- 6.4%
White	54%	2.03	+/- 4.9%	Exurban	14%	2.52	+/- 8.8%
Black	13%	2.42	+/- 10.1%	Phil/South	18%	2.32	+/- 7.7%
Hispanic	17%	2.46	+/- 9.0%	Shore	16%	2.10	+/- 9.3%
Other	16%	2.06	+/- 8.9%				
				HS or Less	22%	1.79	+/- 9.0%
18-34	24%	2.08	+/- 8.2%	Some College	26%	2.09	+/- 7.3%
35-49	26%	2.20	+/- 6.8%	College Grad	25%	2.09	+/- 6.9%
50-64	24%	2.05	+/- 7.1%	Grad Work	27%	2.13	+/- 6.0%
65+	26%	2.18	+/- 7.0%				