

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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NEW JERSEYANS ON HOMOSEXUAL PARTNERSHIPS: "NO" TO MARRIAGE, "YES" TO CIVIL UNIONS

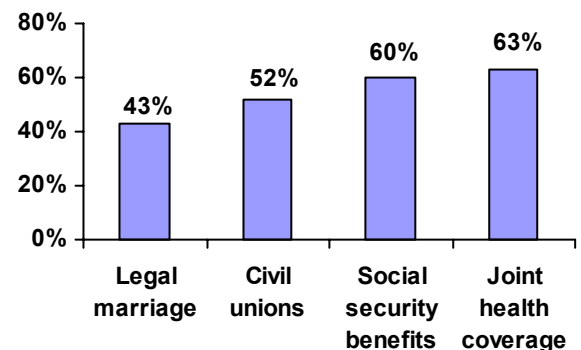
New Jerseyans are of two minds when it comes to giving legal recognition to gays and lesbians in committed relationships. While the public narrowly opposes giving full marital status to homosexual couples, a majority would support a "civil union" concept that confers many of the same rights and benefits as marriage.

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* found that 43 percent of New Jersey residents would allow gay and lesbian couples to marry legally compared to 50 percent who oppose this and 7 percent who have no opinion. On the other hand, 52 percent would favor allowing homosexual couples to form civil unions. Forty percent oppose even this form of legal recognition and 7 percent register no opinion.

New Jerseyans also show support for extending specific benefits to gay and lesbian couples. The poll found that 6-in-10 residents favor:

- Allowing same-sex couples to share the health insurance coverage from one partner's job (63%)
- Allowing a surviving partner to receive social security when the other partner dies (60%)

Support of Rights/Benefits for Homosexual Couples



The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll • Eagleton Institute of Politics

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“When it comes to the legal status of homosexual partnerships, New Jerseyans tend to be more progressive than the nation as a whole, particularly with regard to the idea of civil unions,” commented Patrick Murray, the poll’s associate director. A national poll conducted by ABC News this month found that 37 percent support legalizing gay and lesbian marriage – 6 percentage points lower than in the Garden State. And New Jerseyans are even more supportive than other Americans when it comes to civil unions. The national poll found that more people oppose (51%) than support (40%) the concept of civil unions for homosexual couples – which is the exact reverse of the New Jersey finding (52% support and 40% oppose).

There is a deep divide in the state on this issue, though, when it comes to age. A large majority of young adults age 18 to 29 support both civil unions (68% to 23% oppose) and legal marriage (64 to 31%). Those age 30 to 49 tend to support civil unions (57 to 38%) but are split on full legal marriage (49 to 47%). However, older residents age 50 and over register disapproval to both civil unions (40% support to 52% oppose) and legal marriage (27 to 64%) for gay and lesbian couples.

A large majority of those New Jerseyans who attend religious services on a weekly basis object to any legal recognition for homosexual partnerships – 71 percent oppose legal marriage and 58 percent oppose civil unions. Those who attend services less regularly or never generally support both civil unions and full recognition of homosexual marriages. The poll also found that Protestants in the state are slightly less likely than either Catholics or adherents to other faiths to support the legal recognition of homosexual unions.

Murray remarked, “Catholics make up nearly half of New Jersey’s population. And with the Pope calling on political leaders to actively work against legal status for homosexual relationships, it may surprise some to see the state’s Catholics more supportive of same-sex unions than are other Christians. However, the demographics of the Protestant population in New Jersey tend to be skewed toward older adults. And it is the age-based disparity in opinion on gay marriage that we are seeing in these denominational results.”

While most New Jerseyans do not support allowing full legal marriage for homosexual couples in the state, they do feel that New Jersey should recognize the status of same-sex couples who get married in other states. Currently no state in the U.S.

allows full legal marriage for gays and lesbians, but a majority of Garden State residents (53%) say that if a homosexual couple were to be legally married in another state and later move to New Jersey, that marriage should be recognized here as well. Another 36 percent disagree with this and 10 percent offer no opinion.

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* was conducted by telephone with 802 adults and has a sampling error of ± 3.5 percent. The poll noted that 7-in-10 New Jerseyans report personally knowing someone who is homosexual. This includes 3-in-4 residents age 18 to 49 and somewhat fewer – 60 percent – of those age 50 and older.

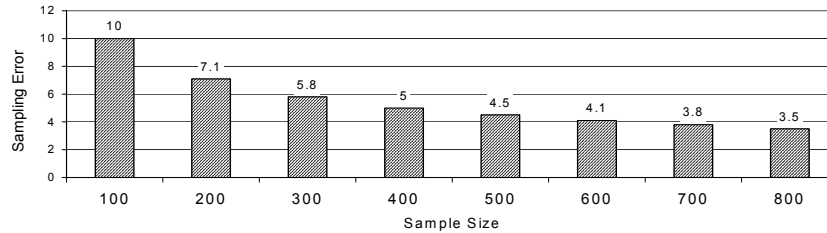
The poll also asked residents about their opinion on the ordination of gay bishops. The Episcopal Church recently made headlines by appointing an openly gay man to become the bishop of New Hampshire. New Jerseyans, regardless of faith, are split on this action. Overall, 42 percent approve of this move and 47 percent disapprove, with the remainder having no opinion.

 **AUDIO COMMENTARY ON THE** 
MOST RECENT POLL IS AVAILABLE
BY DIALING 732-932-9384 ext. 302

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP144-6) September 29, 2003

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted by telephone from September 2 to 8 with a scientifically selected random sample of 802 New Jersey adults. The figures in this release are based on this sample size. 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 sampling error is ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to be less likely to agree with a statement, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent (50 ± 3.5) had all New Jersey residents been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported for residents of North, Central and South Jersey, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error.

Sample Size and Sampling Error



Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects. The verbatim wording of all questions asked is reproduced in this background memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

“Now, I’m going to read you some proposals about the legal rights of gay and lesbian couples in New Jersey. For each, please tell me whether you would favor or oppose it.”

“Would you favor or oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?” [G1A]

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	43%	50%	7%	100%	(802)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	40	55	6	101	(386)
--Female	45	47	8	100	(416)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 to 29	64	31	5	100	(105)
--30 to 49	49	47	4	100	(326)
--50 and older	27	64	10	101	(344)
<u>Religion</u>					
-- Catholic	43	51	6	100	(351)
-- Protestant	32	61	6	99	(149)
-- Other	45	46	9	100	(210)
<u>Religious Attendance</u>					
-- Weekly	20	71	8	99	(249)
-- Monthly	52	41	6	99	(176)
-- Less often/never	55	40	5	100	(363)
<u>Know Gay/Lesbian Person</u>					
-- Yes	50	46	4	100	(580)
-- No	26	62	13	101	(222)

NATIONAL SURVEYS

<u>ABC News Poll</u>					
--September 2003	37	55	7	99	(1028)

* Wording: Do you think it should be legal or illegal for homosexual couples to get married?

“Would you favor or oppose allowing gays and lesbians to form a civil union that would give them many of the same rights and benefits as a married man and woman?” [G1B]

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	52%	40%	7%	99%	(802)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	52	43	6	101	(386)
--Female	53	38	9	100	(416)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 to 29	68	23	9	100	(105)
--30 to 49	57	38	5	100	(326)
--50 and older	40	52	8	100	(344)
<u>Religion</u>					
-- Catholic	52	41	8	101	(351)
-- Protestant	46	49	5	100	(149)
-- Other	54	38	9	101	(210)
<u>Religious Attendance</u>					
-- Weekly	31	58	10	99	(249)
-- Monthly	58	36	6	100	(176)
-- Less often/never	65	30	5	100	(363)
<u>Know Gay/Lesbian Person</u>					
-- Yes	61	34	5	100	(580)
-- No	33	54	13	100	(222)

NATIONAL SURVEYS

ABC News Poll *

-- September 2003 40 51 9 100 (1028)

* Wording: “Do you think homosexual couples should or should not be allowed to form legally recognized civil unions giving them the legal rights of married couples in areas such as health insurance, inheritance and pension coverage?”

Methodological Note:

A common practice in survey research is to randomize or rotate the order that questions are asked in a poll. This acts to balance any contextual effects that may occur because of the order in which items are presented to a survey respondent. In the current survey, the “legally marry” and “civil unions” questions were rotated. Half the sample was asked the civil union question after the legally marry question and half the sample was asked the two questions in reverse order. This ordering had minimal impact on responses to the first question about legal marriage – 43 percent favor this regardless of whether it was asked before or after the civil union question. However, there was a small effect on the civil union question. Those who were asked the civil union question first tended to be slightly less favorable than those who were asked after the “legally marry” question by a difference of 50 to 54 percent (which averages to 52%). This numerical difference does not affect the overall interpretation of the results.

“Would you favor or oppose allowing same-sex couples to share the health insurance coverage from one partner’s job?” [G2A]

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	63%	31%	6%	100%	(802)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 to 29	78	18	4	100	(105)
--30 to 49	68	30	2	100	(326)
--50 and older	51	39	10	100	(344)
<u>Know Gay/Lesbian Person</u>					
-- Yes	72	25	3	100	(580)
-- No	43	45	13	101	(222)

“Would you favor or oppose allowing same-sex couples to get social security benefits when one partner dies?” [G2B]

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	60%	34%	6%	100%	(802)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 to 29	81	16	4	101	(105)
--30 to 49	64	32	4	100	(326)
--50 and older	47	44	9	100	(344)
<u>Know Gay/Lesbian Person</u>					
-- Yes	68	28	4	100	(580)
-- No	42	46	12	100	(222)

“If a homosexual couple is legally married in another state and later moves to New Jersey, should that marriage be legally recognized here or not?” [G3]

	<u>Should be recognized</u>	<u>Should not be recognized</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	53%	36%	10%	99%	(802)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	48	46	7	101	(386)
--Female	58	28	13	99	(416)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 to 29	71	22	8	101	(105)
--30 to 49	59	35	6	100	(326)
--50 and older	39	47	14	100	(344)
<u>Religion</u>					
-- Catholic	55	37	8	100	(351)
-- Protestant	46	44	10	100	(149)
-- Other	53	33	14	100	(210)
<u>Religious Attendance</u>					
-- Weekly	34	50	16	100	(249)
-- Monthly	57	37	6	100	(176)
-- Less often/never	65	27	8	100	(363)
<u>Know Gay/Lesbian Person</u>					
-- Yes	61	31	8	100	(580)
-- No	36	50	15	101	(222)

“Recently, the Episcopal church became the first Christian church in the United States to appoint an openly gay man to be a bishop. Do you approve or disapprove of this action?” [G4]

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	42%	47%	12%	101%	(802)
<i><u>Religion</u></i>					
-- Catholic	44	46	11	101	(351)
-- Protestant	34	58	9	101	(149)
-- Other	44	41	15	100	(210)
<i><u>Religious Attendance</u></i>					
-- Weekly	25	62	12	99	(249)
-- Monthly	46	47	7	100	(176)
-- Less often/never	52	36	12	100	(363)
<i><u>Know Gay/Lesbian Person</u></i>					
-- Yes	48	43	9	100	(580)
-- No	26	55	19	100	(222)

“Do you personally know anybody who is a homosexual – that is gay or lesbian, or not?” [G5]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2003	70%	28%	2%	100%	(802)
<i><u>Gender</u></i>					
--Male	66	32	2	100	(386)
--Female	73	25	2	100	(416)
<i><u>Age</u></i>					
--18 to 29	74	23	2	99	(105)
--30 to 49	77	22	1	100	(326)
--50 and older	60	38	3	101	(344)
<i><u>Religion</u></i>					
-- Catholic	69	29	2	100	(351)
-- Protestant	70	28	2	100	(149)
-- Other	70	27	3	100	(210)
<i><u>Religious Attendance</u></i>					
-- Weekly	69	29	2	100	(249)
-- Monthly	68	30	2	100	(176)
-- Less often/never	72	26	1	99	(363)