

STOCKTON UNIVERSITY

# Election distrust persists for a third of state voters, Hughes Center poll finds

By [Access Network news report](#) | Thursday, October 3, 2024



f X e in

One-third of all New Jersey voters still doubt the legitimacy of the 2020 election for U.S. president, according to a poll released Thursday by the Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

As many as 24 percent of state voters disagreed strongly and 9 percent disagreed somewhat that the 2020 election for president was fair and secure. The rate remains steady from a March 2021 Stockton poll that found 34 percent of New Jerseyans disagreed, at least to some extent, that the 2020 election was fair.

Election distrust persists in 2024.

Nearly one-third (31 percent) said they have little (18 percent) to no confidence (13 percent) that votes will be accurately cast and counted in next month's election.

The poll showed 63 percent agree at least somewhat that the 2020 election was fair. Sixty-eight percent are at least somewhat confident that the result will be accurate this year.

There is a clear split in election doubt and distrust along party lines.

"The poll goes to show that years after Jan. 6 and the election turmoil of 2020, election distrust is pretty much baked in among a certain group of voters," said Alyssa Maurice, the center's director of research. "Despite the lack of evidence of widespread fraud, this skepticism is not budging."

The poll of 630 registered voters was released by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy and has a margin of error of +/- 3.9 percentage points.

With distrust looming over the electoral process, more than one-third (36 percent) of voters say they have little (26 percent) to no confidence (10 percent) that there will be a smooth and peaceful transition of leadership after the election when a new president is sworn into office.

About 1 in 5 (22 percent) are very confident in a smooth transition of power, while 36 percent are at least somewhat confident and 6 percent are not sure.

Voters' trust in other democratic institutions, like a free press, is also low with less than half (45 percent) saying they are very (12 percent) or somewhat (34 percent) confident that journalists will report news related to the election fairly and accurately. One in five are not too confident and one-third are not at all confident.

[The Hughes Center recently hosted an event with Peter Baker, chief White House correspondent for The New York Times, on journalistic ethics and challenges in the current media landscape, including declining trust.](#)

The poll showed 62 percent of voters are very concerned about the spread of misinformation this election season and 28 percent are at least somewhat concerned. Less than 10 percent are not too worried about it.

A little more than half (53 percent) are very concerned about political violence in the U.S. and nearly one-third (32 percent) are somewhat concerned. A total of 14 percent were not too concerned or not at all worried.

Consensus was found in denouncing political violence.

An overwhelming majority of 90 percent said political violence is never justified, while small minorities felt it was sometimes warranted to achieve political goals or were not sure (9 percent).

Republicans and Democrats were equally concerned about misinformation and political violence at rates ranging from 87 to 95 percent but differed drastically on trust in the media and the electoral process.

	Democrats	Republicans
Agree that the 2020 election for U.S. president was fair and secure	96%	25%
Confident that votes will be accurately cast and counted in this year's election	96%	38%
Confident that journalists will report news related to the election accurately and fairly	79%	15%

## Other findings

The top issues cited by voters in this year's election are the economy or inflation at 33 percent, followed by border security at 13 percent, abortion rights at 12 percent, and foreign policy and preserving democracy, which tied at 5 percent.

When it comes to the presidential ticket, Kamala Harris had the highest favorability rating of all the candidates at 50 percent (31 percent very favorable and 19 percent somewhat favorable).

But 49 percent had a somewhat (7 percent) or very (42 percent) unfavorable impression of her.

Donald Trump's favorability rating is 43 percent (31 percent favorable, 12 percent somewhat favorable). A majority of 54 percent of voters have a very (46 percent) or somewhat (8 percent) unfavorable impression of him.

Trump's favorability among New Jersey voters has improved since an October 2020 Stockton poll. According to that poll before the last presidential election, his rating was 37 percent favorable and 60 percent unfavorable.

Vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz prevailed over J.D. Vance in favorability ratings with 44 percent viewing him positively and 36 percent saying they have an unfavorable impression.

One in five voters were not sure or unfamiliar with Walz. Vance was viewed favorably by 34 percent of voters and unfavorably by 50 percent, while 16 percent were not sure or unfamiliar.

Data was collected for this survey before the vice-presidential debate took place Tuesday.

A majority of 78 percent said the vice-presidential candidate impacts their vote choice for president greatly (22 percent) or somewhat (56 percent), while 21 percent said the nominees for vice president do not influence their vote at all.

However, at the time of this poll, the overwhelming majority of voters were already certain (82 percent) or somewhat certain (8 percent) of their choice for president, while only 9 percent saying they are still deciding.

Most voters were unfamiliar with both candidates for the U.S. Senate race in New Jersey. The vast majority of 81 percent were unfamiliar or unsure about Curtis Bashaw, while a slimmer majority of 55 percent were unfamiliar with Andy Kim.

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Not sure/Unfamiliar
Kamala Harris	50%	48%	1%
Donald Trump	43%	54%	2%
J.D. Vance	34%	50%	16%
Tim Walz	44%	36%	20%
Curtis Bashaw	9%	7%	81%
Andy Kim	27%	17%	55%

Read the full results of the poll [here](#).

## Methodology

The poll of New Jersey registered voters was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy from Sep. 27-Oct. 1, 2024. Stockton University students texted cell phones with invitations to take the survey online and Opinion Services supplemented the dialing portion of the fieldwork, which consisted of cell and landline telephone calls.

Overall, 93 percent of interviews were conducted on cell phones and 7 percent on landline phones. In terms of mode, 63 percent were reached via dialing and 37 percent were reached via text-to-web. A random sample of 630 New Jersey registered voters were interviewed. Both cell and landline samples consisted of random digit dialing (RDD) and voter list sample from MSG. Data are weighted based on U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2023 data for the citizen voting age population in New Jersey on variables of age, race, education level and sex.

The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.9 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets. Sampling error does not account for other potential sources of bias in polls such as measurement error or nonresponse.

AUTHOR

[Access Network News Report](#)

MORE NEWS STORIES

[GOVERNMENT](#)