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## Sandy 'Wreaked Havoc' on 65 Percent of NJ, Poll Says

One in five residents said they felt forced out of their homes by the storm.

By [Ariana Cohn-Sheehan](#) | [Email the author](#) | November 20, 2012



Superstorm Sandy made an impact on approximately two-thirds of the state, according to results from a [Rutgers-Eagleton Poll](#) released Tuesday.

An even higher percentage (94 percent) of the 1,228 polled New Jersey residents reported that they lost power at some point during or after the storm. About 65 percent of those polled said they remained without power for at least five days.

"Two-thirds of New Jersey residents were affected when Superstorm Sandy wreaked havoc on the Garden State three weeks ago," a press release about the poll said.

Approximately one in five residents said they were forced out of their homes by the storm, with about 6 percent of residents telling pollsters they were still not able to permanently return.

"We already knew Sandy had a wide impact," David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers, said in the release. "What we get from these numbers is a clearer sense of its disruptive effects on nearly all New Jerseyans, whether near the shore or much further inland."

Pollsters called participants (adults only) on both landlines and cell phones between Nov. 14 and Nov. 17. Some regions of the state reported a stronger impact than others, [particular Jersey Shore areas](#), as the poll indicated 79 percent of the region was impacted. But 69 percent of residents in Essex and Hudson counties reported direct effects from the storm and approximately 73 percent of residents in other suburban counties reported an impact.

For the most part, residents surveyed seemed mostly pleased with the response of electric companies, with between 73 percent and 88 percent of those asked saying their respective electric companies handled the response "somewhat" or "very well." More than 90 percent of residents surveyed were [without power during the height of the damage](#), but in the southern part of the state and Philadelphia area, 78 percent of residents lost power at that time. Few residents in south Jersey told pollsters that their power was out for more than five days.

However, [not all residents were so pleased with their electric company's response](#). Only about 61 percent of residents surveyed in more urban counties felt the companies responded well. Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G) customers were more pleased with their company's response than Jersey Central Power & Light (JCP&L) customers by a 42 percent to 29 percent margin.

"Given the severity of the storm, it is not surprising that it took the power companies a long time to return some sense of normalcy," Redlawsk said. "And it seems that most residents, as frustrated as they might be, recognized the difficulty the companies faced. Even so, there is a clear difference with JCP&L getting clearly lower ratings from its customers."

About half of residents felt the state was prepared enough for Sandy, while about 15 percent of residents felt the state was as prepared as possible, given the severity of the storm.

"Another 3 percent are fatalistic, saying nothing could have been done to be prepared for Sandy," the press release said.

Residents in the northeastern part of the state were the least likely to believe New Jersey was well-prepared (26 percent), while 45 percent of residents in the south Jersey and Philadelphia region felt the state was as prepared as could be.

As relief and clean-up efforts continue, the poll found that the majority of residents in the hardest-hit areas have not requested assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or others yet. Only 15 percent of affected residents in shore counties have sought assistance; 14 percent of Essex and Hudson County residents have sought assistance; and approximately 9 percent of residents in northwestern New Jersey have reached out for help.

Only about 20 percent of residents who sustained damage to their homes have filed claims with FEMA or the American Red Cross, the poll found, and about 10 percent of residents who saw general property damage filed claims with the agencies.

Political affiliation was also considered in the poll, with 75 percent of Democrats surveyed saying they feel FEMA has done a good job with assistance. About 63 percent of Independents and 55 percent of Republicans agreed. As for the American Red Cross, about 83 percent of Democrats felt the organization performed "well" or "somewhat well" and 71 percent of Independents and 73 percent of Republicans agreed.

"FEMA is an arm of the federal government, so it is perhaps unsurprising that Republicans – who generally view the federal government less favorably – are less positive about it," Redlawsk said. "This perception is probably not driven by specific facts on the ground, since Republicans and Democrats are equally likely to have been victims of the storm."

*What do you think about the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll results? Participate in our poll about the state's preparedness below and let us know your thoughts in the comments.*

Do you feel New Jersey was well-prepared for Superstorm Sandy?

- Yes
- No
- The state was as prepared as possible, given the nature of the storm.

Total votes: **47**

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*Your vote will only count once. This is not a scientific poll.*

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