

*A report of the Eagleton New Jersey Project  
Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University  
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**Television Coverage of the 2005 New Jersey Election: An Analysis of the Nightly  
News Programs on Local New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia Stations**

*How Much You See Depends on What Stations You Watch*

Summary

How well – or how poorly – television stations as a whole and individually covered the most recent New Jersey election is the subject of this report. An analysis of 664 half-hour news programs found that:

- Almost half (48 percent) of the total 259 New Jersey-focused stories aired on two New Jersey based stations (public television's New Jersey Network and cable outlet News 12), which draw smaller audiences than the broadcast stations in the study.
- Residents of northern New Jersey received twice as much New Jersey election coverage as residents of southern New Jersey did. In fact, New York's market leader in terms of New Jersey election coverage (WNBC) aired almost as many New Jersey focused election stories (33) as all four Philadelphia stations combined (38).
- WWOR, the only broadcast station licensed in New Jersey, had a total of 13 election stories, 10 of them focused on New Jersey (the other 3 were on the NYC mayor's race).
- The vast majority of attention focused on the gubernatorial race, with down-ballot elections covered very little, almost entirely on NJN and News12.
- About half of the New Jersey election stories captured from New York and Philadelphia stations aired during the final week of the campaign.
- Overall, 68 percent of the New Jersey election stories focused on campaign strategy or "horse race," while just 22 percent focused on substantive campaign issues.
- The New Jersey gubernatorial race was widely recognized as a particularly nasty and vicious campaign, reflected in the fact that not a single New Jersey focused story was characterized as having an overall positive tone. In fact, almost one in every three stories (32 percent) were coded as having an overall negative tone.

The full report can be found at [www.eagleton.rutgers.edu](http://www.eagleton.rutgers.edu).

**Table Two from the Report: Total election coverage focused on New Jersey Elections**

Market	Total Stories	Stories focused on New Jersey Elections	Stories focused on New York Elections	Stories focused on other states
<b>New Jersey</b>				
CN8	8	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
News 12	66	65 (99%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
NJN	59	59 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
WWOR	13	10 (67%)	3 (33%)	0 (0%)
<b>Market totals</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>142 (97%)</b>	<b>4 (3%)</b>	<b>0 (0%)</b>
<b>New York</b>				
WABC	38	18 (47%)	20 (53%)	0 (0%)
WCBS	55	21 (38%)	34 (62%)	0 (0%)
WNBC	79	33 (42%)	46 (58%)	0 (0%)
WNYW	21	7 (33%)	14 (67%)	0 (0%)
<b>Market totals</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>79 (41%)</b>	<b>114 (59%)</b>	<b>0 (0%)</b>
<b>Philadelphia</b>				
KYW	8	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
WCAU	10	7 (70%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)
WPVI	19	15 (79%)	0 (0%)	4 (21%)
WTFX	9	8 (89%)	0 (0%)	1 (11%)
<b>Market Totals</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>38 (82%)</b>	<b>0 (0%)</b>	<b>8 (8%)</b>
<b>Overall Totals</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>259 (67%)</b>	<b>118 (31%)</b>	<b>8 (2%)</b>

**Information about the Report**

What does New Jersey (population 8.5 million) have in common with North Platte, Nebraska (population 25,000)? Each has just one commercial broadcast television station located within its borders. If potential voters rely on television news to learn about elections, New Jersey is uniquely dependent on network affiliates outside its own boundaries, with the northern and central parts of the state viewing New York stations and those in the south

watching Philadelphia stations. Fortunately, New Jersey voters can access their own public television and cable stations for news about their own state, but network stations still draw the biggest audiences.

New Jersey's lively "off-year" elections, featuring a combative gubernatorial race and several competitive Assembly contests had little competition for media attention beyond the New York mayoral race, whose result was never in doubt. Thus, the Garden State races might have been expected to command substantial coverage. However, as the study results show that was not the case.

Commissioned by the Eagleton New Jersey Project, the study was conducted by Dr. Matthew Hale of Seton Hall University working with the University of Wisconsin News Lab to analyze the highest-rated nightly news programs shown 30 days before the election on 12 stations serving New Jersey. Funding was provided by the Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation.