

• **2019 New Jersey primary election: What you need to know**

But here’s the thing: Stockton similarly polled New Jerseyans in 2015, and respondents then were equally as likely as those in 2019 to say they had participated in specific activities.

“You have a core group of people who are active, who volunteer, who do the work. And that probably has pretty much stayed the same,” said John Froomjian, interim executive director of the university’s William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy, which conducted the poll. “It doesn’t appear that a large number of more people are doing these kinds of things.”

What is “civic engagement”?

The pollsters asked 852 adults — randomly sampled across the state, regardless of voter registration status — whether they had participated in one of the following activities over the last year:

- Worked or volunteered in a political campaign.
- Contributed money to a political candidate or campaign.
- Attended an organized protest.
- Written a letter to a newspaper or an elected representative, either online or on paper.
- Served on a local government board.
- Worked with fellow residents to solve a problem in their community.
- Signed a petition seeking a change in policy or some governmental action.

Poll of N.J. Adults: In the Last Year, Have You...

Stockton University polls conducted in 2015 and 2019 find that adult New Jersey residents are about as likely to participate in specific civic engagement activities today as they were four years ago.

	2015	2019
Worked/volunteered in political campaign	6.3%	9.0%
Contributed to candidate or campaign	22.8%	19.4%
Attended a protest	5.8%	9.1%
Written to a newspaper or representative	26.3%	25.1%
Served on local government board	5.2%	4.0%
Worked to solve community problem	37.4%	33.1%
Signed petition seeking change or action	37.9%	34.5%

Chart: Jonathan Lai • Source: [Stockton University poll](#)

Respondents were then asked to compare their likelihood to participate in those activities today vs. 2015.

More than half, 56.7 percent, said there was no difference between 2015 and today; 32.1 percent said they are more likely to participate now; and 9.6 percent said they are less likely.

So how come people overall aren’t actually taking these actions?

Froonjian thinks it's related to the overall political environment. Recent elections — especially the fall midterms — had high turnout, and a steady drumbeat of news dominates attention. So people are voting more and might be more tuned in, even if they're not taking other actions.

“Many people may feel they're more engaged now because they're voting, because they're talking about it more, because they're seeing the news,” he said. “People feel like they're more engaged because maybe they're paying attention more, even if they're not going out knocking on doors or making calls for somebody.”

Why people said they're more engaged: Trump and civic duty

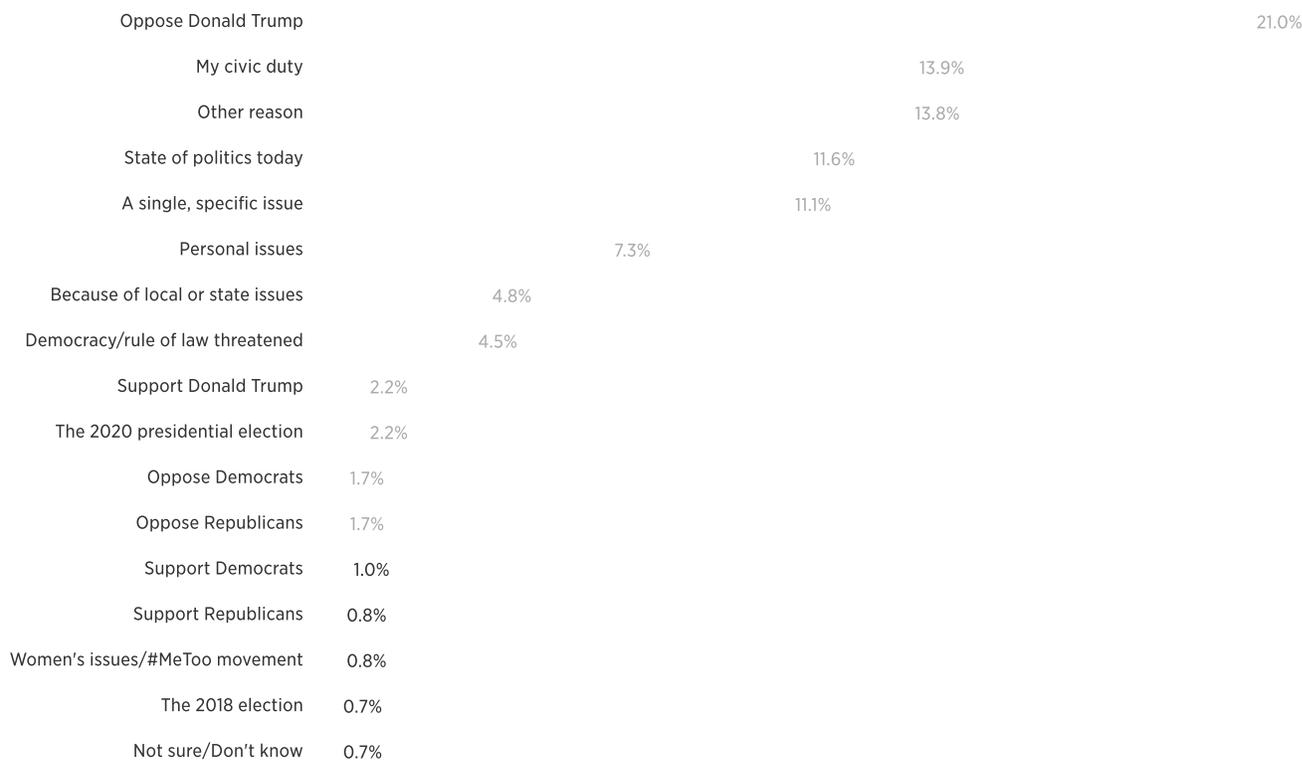
Of the one-third of respondents who said they're more civically engaged than before Trump's election, Democrats and women stood out.

Those respondents were then asked an open-ended question: “Please tell me in your own words why you are more likely to participate in political or civic engagement activities today than you were four years ago.”

New Jersey leans heavily blue and in 2016 voted 55.5 percent for Hillary Clinton and 41.4 percent for Trump.

N.J. Adults Who Are More Civically Engaged: Why?

Residents who said they are more civically engaged today than before Trump was elected were asked why. Opposition to Trump was the most common response to the open-ended question.



Respondents could give more than one answer.

Chart: Jonathan Lai • Source: [Stockton University poll](#)

The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.4 percentage points, meaning there is a 95 percent chance that the true responses of the entire population would fall within 3.4 percentage points of the poll's responses.



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