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GALLOWAY — Democrats have been quicker to return their mail-in ballots in New Jersey and Democratic candidates, Joe Biden and Cory Booker, appear to be cruising to wins in the state's races for presidential electors and U.S. Senate, according to a Stockton University poll released Friday.

The poll of 721 New Jersey adults carried out Oct. 7 to 13 found that only one in five Republican poll respondents have voted already, while more than half of the Democrats who participated already mailed in their ballots.

Former Vice President Biden leads Republican incumbent President Donald Trump by 20%, or 56% to 36% among likely voters polled.

Among poll respondents who already have voted, Biden leads by a massive 49%, according to the poll. Among those who have not yet voted — which is the majority of respondents — Biden leads by 13 points, or 53% to 40%.

The results did follow a Garden State geographic divide, comparing northern NJ counties to the eight southernmost counties.

In North Jersey, Biden overwhelmingly leads Trump 61% to 30%, the poll finds. But in South Jersey (Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Ocean and Salem counties), Biden leads by just two points, 47%-45%, a statistical tie, according to the Stockton poll.

There also is a north-south difference in how the president is viewed, according to poll participants.

In North Jersey, 32% have a somewhat or very favorable view of Trump. In South Jersey, nearly half, at 47%, hold favorable views.

Biden also is viewed favorably by 47% of poll respondents in South Jersey but by 61% in North Jersey.

Among all respondents statewide, Biden is viewed favorably by 56% and unfavorably by 39%. Meanwhile, only 37% of all poll respondents hold positive views of Trump, and 60% view him unfavorably.

More than half of voters statewide gave Trump a poor rating on his job performance as president, while 22% gave him an excellent rating.

Incumbent Democratic U.S. Sen. Cory Booker holds a commanding 25-point statewide lead over Republican challenger Rik Mehta, 57% to 32%, and even among the majority who have not voted yet, Booker leads 52% to 35%, according to the poll.

"With more Democrats voting early than Republicans, the eventual election result will likely to be closer to the 13-point spread," according to John Froomjian, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University, which operates the Polling Institute.

Froomjian also said that the House races in the 2nd and 3rd Congressional Districts, both in South Jersey, are seen as competitive among likely voters polled.

He said many voters see this election as a referendum on the president, and that dynamic affects races in the north differently than in the south, where the "Trump brand is not as toxic and where opinion is more evenly split," according to a poll press release.

The statewide results have a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points.

When New Jersey voters polled were asked to identify their top issue in this election, 18% named the economy while 13% cited the coronavirus pandemic and 12% named health care.

With New Jersey COVID-19 infections remaining fairly controlled in October – but growing in recent weeks – Gov. Phil Murphy is viewed favorably by those polled 53% and unfavorably by 39%.

The poll also showed overwhelming support for a ballot question on legalizing marijuana, with 66% of voters saying they support a constitutional amendment to do so in New Jersey while only 23% oppose. Ten percent were not sure or undecided.

Previous Stockton polls have shown that the margins in actual election results for ballot questions are typically less than found in the polls.

Stockton Polling Institute Research Associate, Alyssa Maurice said that the reason may be that the number of voters who actually cast votes at the end of the ballot, where public questions are placed, are generally fewer than at the top of the ballot.

Maurice noted the marijuana question is on the back of the mail-in ballot that includes the presidential race, and some voters may just miss it.



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