## N．J．adults say they are more civically engaged than before Trump＇s election，but．．．

by Jonathan Lai，Updated：June 4，2019－4：13 PM


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About one in three adults in New Jersey，particularly women and Democrats，say they are more civically engaged than before President Donald Trump＇s election，according to a Stockton University poll released Tuesday，primary election day in the Garden State．

Those residents who say they are more engaged are more likely than the general population to have taken action such as volunteering for a political campaign，making a political donation，or writing a letter to the editor．

## - 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 Froonjian, 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 Univ |  |  |

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.

Oppose Donald Trump

My civic duty

Other reason
State of politics today
A single, specific issue
Personal issues
Because of local or state issues 4.8\%

Democracy/rule of law threatened 4.5\%

Support Donald Trump $\square$
The 2020 presidential election 2.2\%

Oppose Democrats
1.7\%

Oppose Republicans $\quad 1.7 \%$
Support Democrats1.0\%

Support Republicans 0.8\%
Women's issues/\#MeToo movement 0.8\%

The 2018 election0.7\%

Not sure/Don't know

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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