



The Muslim Vote: New Jersey Muslims' First Choice for the 2025 Governor's Race

Introduction

On June 10, 2025, New Jersey voters will head to the polls and vote for their party's nominee to advance in the fall General Election. Although a reliable Democratic state in Presidential Elections, the 2024 Presidential Election showed Democratic candidate Kamala Harris beating Republican candidate Donald Trump by five percentage points – the smallest margin of victory for a Democrat in decades. Additionally, New Jersey is a historical swing state in the Governor Election, which makes every community's vote critical – especially if turnout is low.

New Jersey is home to one of the largest Muslim communities in the United States and the most number of Muslim elected officials in the country. With the last Governor's election showing approximately 80,000 vote gap between Democratic candidate Phil Murphy and Republican candidate Jack Ciattarelli – with over 176,000+ registered voters, the Muslim community could be an influential factor in deciding who is the party's nominee for Governor and who will ultimately win the General Election.

There are twelve candidates who are running for Governor.

Democratic Candidates:

- Mayor Ras Baraka (D-Newark)
- Mayor Steven Fulop (D-Jersey City)
- Congressman Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ 5)
- Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ 11)
- New Jersey Education Association President Sean Spiller (D)
- Former NJ State Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-LD 3)

Republican Candidates:

- Justin Barbera (R)
- State Senator Jon Bramnick (R- LD 21)
- Former Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli (R-LD 16)
- Former Mayor Mario Kranjac (R-Englewood Cliffs)
- Bill Spaeda (R)

Green Candidates:

- Stephen Zielinski (G)

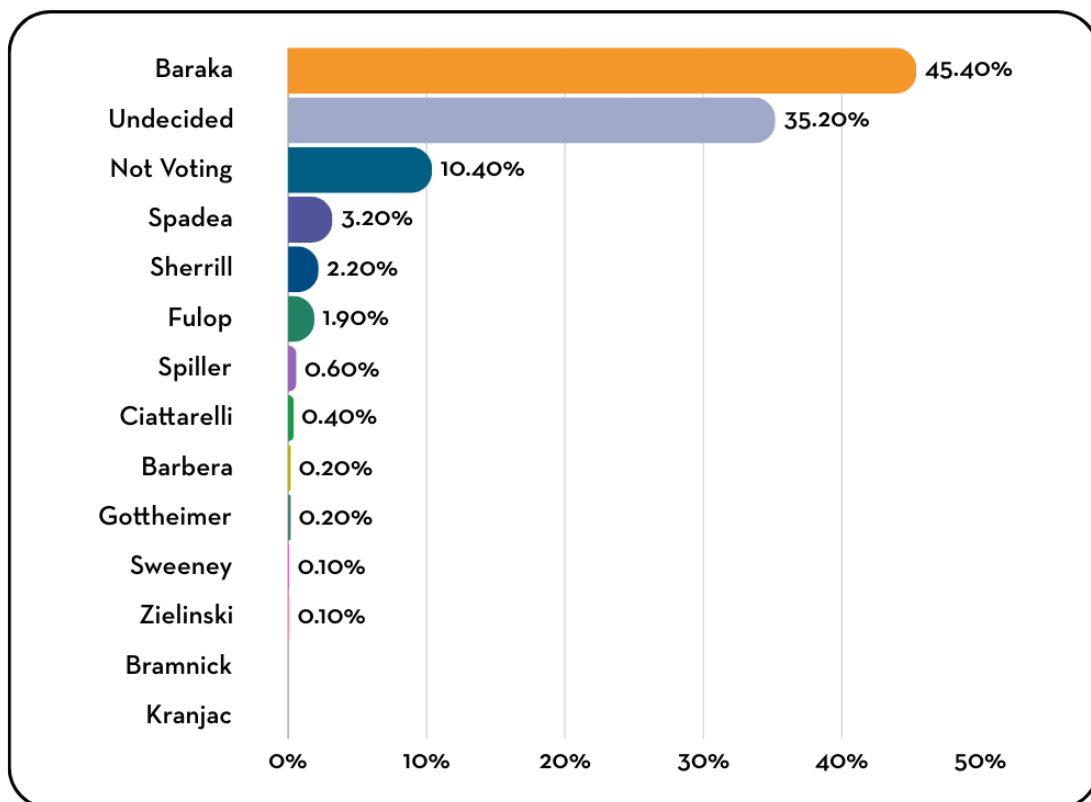


Independent Candidates:

- Geraldo Cedrone (I)

To better understand who the Muslim Community is supporting for Governor, CAIR Action launched a poll between April 16 - 17, 2025 asking registered voters who are likely to be Muslim for their choice for Governor.

Who is your first choice to become the next Governor of New Jersey?



A total of 835 registered voters, likely Muslim, participated in the poll.

Figure 1



This analysis includes both weighted and unweighted results based on country, gender, and age. Figure 1 shows the overall weighted results and that Mayor Ras Baraka (D-Newark) enjoys the most support, indicating that he has the most name recognition and a broad base of support with the Muslim community. However, undecided Muslim voters make up a significant share of results, which indicates room for other candidates to grow their support with the Muslim community.

Baraka is the most selected option, followed by Undecided, Mayor Steven Fulop (D-Jersey City), Not Voting, and Congresswoman Mikie Sherill (D-NJ 11) in descending order of frequency. However, when applying the weights, the distribution shifts significantly. Baraka still holds the highest weighted sum followed by Undecided, but the difference in the distribution becomes more nuanced.

Methodology

Survey Audience:

The survey was conducted among 176,118 registered voters who are likely to be Muslim in the state of New Jersey. A random sample of 58,226 voters with cell phones were selected to receive the survey. A total of 834 respondents participated in the survey.

Survey Methodology:

The survey was conducted through a Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS). Respondents were selected from a voter file, ensuring a representative sample of the population. The survey was distributed over a period of two days, and the response rate was approximately 1.4%.

Survey Script Initial Text:

Salaam! This is Ali with the Unity & Justice Fund. We're conducting a survey to see the Muslim community's choice for NJ Governor. This is the FIRST TIME an effort like this has been undertaken in our state to mobilize the Muslim community.

Who is your first choice to become the next Governor of New Jersey? CHOOSE ONE and please respond with the corresponding number.

1. Mayor Ras Baraka (D-Newark)
2. Mayor Steven Fulop (D-Jersey City)
3. Congressman Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ 5)
4. Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ 11)
5. New Jersey Education Association President Sean Spiller (D-Montclair)
6. Former NJ Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-LD 3)
7. Justin Barbera (R)
8. State Senator Jon Bramnick (R-LD 21)
9. Former Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli (R-LD 16)



10. Former Mayor Mario Kranjac (R-Englewood Cliffs)
11. Bill Spadea (R)
12. Stephen Zielinski (G)
12. Geraldo Cedrone (I)
14. Undecided
15. Not Voting

Thanks for participating in our poll!

To support our work, click here: <https://secure.anedot.com/unityandjusticefund/donate>

Reply STOP to opt out.

Survey Script Follow-Up Text:

Salaam, this is Ali with the Unity & Justice Fund kindly reminding you to respond to our NJ Muslim Community Governor survey.

Who is your first choice to become the next Governor of New Jersey? CHOOSE ONE and please respond with the corresponding number.

1. Mayor Ras Baraka (D-Newark)
2. Mayor Steven Fulop (D-Jersey City)
3. Congressman Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ 5)
4. Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ 11)
5. New Jersey Education Association President Sean Spiller (D-Montclair)
6. Former NJ Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-LD 3)
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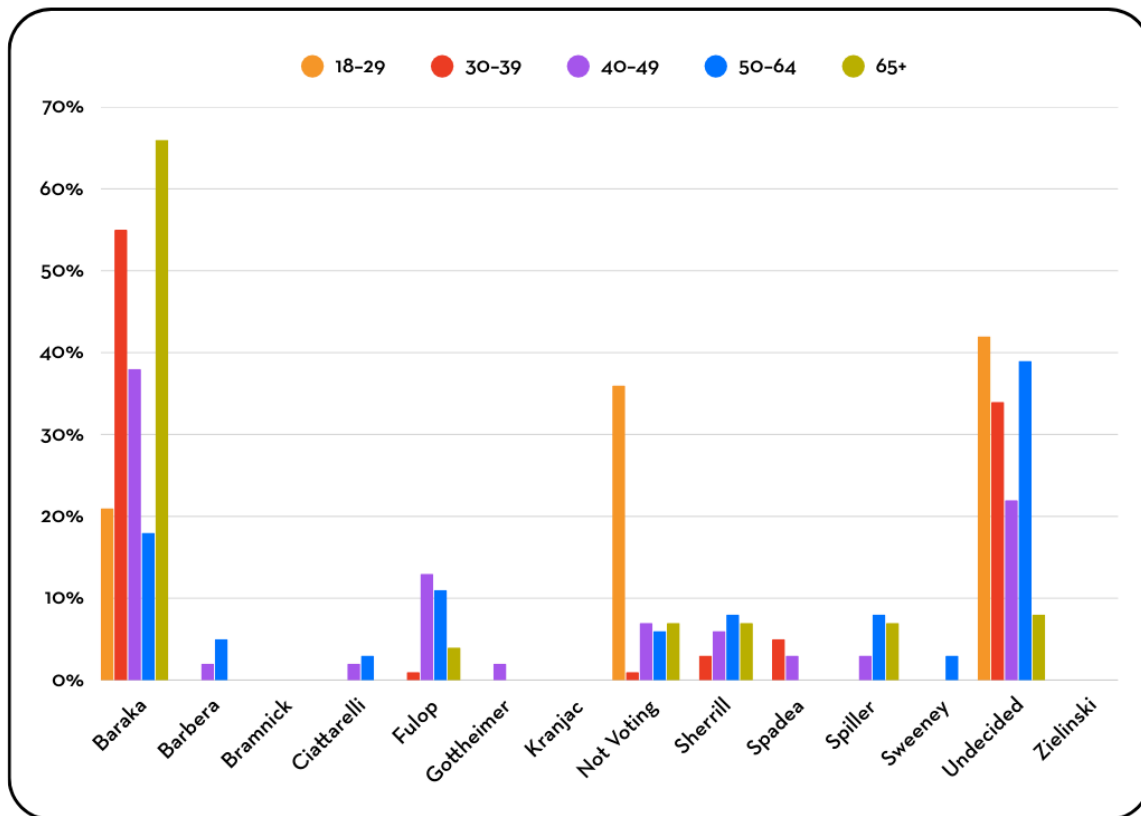
Acknowledgement: There was a typing error when the first text message where Stephen Zielinski and Geraldo Cedrone were both listed as "12." This was clarified when the number

was chosen and respondents gave the appropriate response. This error was also fixed when the second text message was sent.

Detailed Analysis

The analysis of vote choice by age and gender group show varying influences on voters' preferences.

NJ Gubernatorial Vote Choice by Age



A total of 835 registered voters, likely Muslim, participated in the poll.

Figure 2

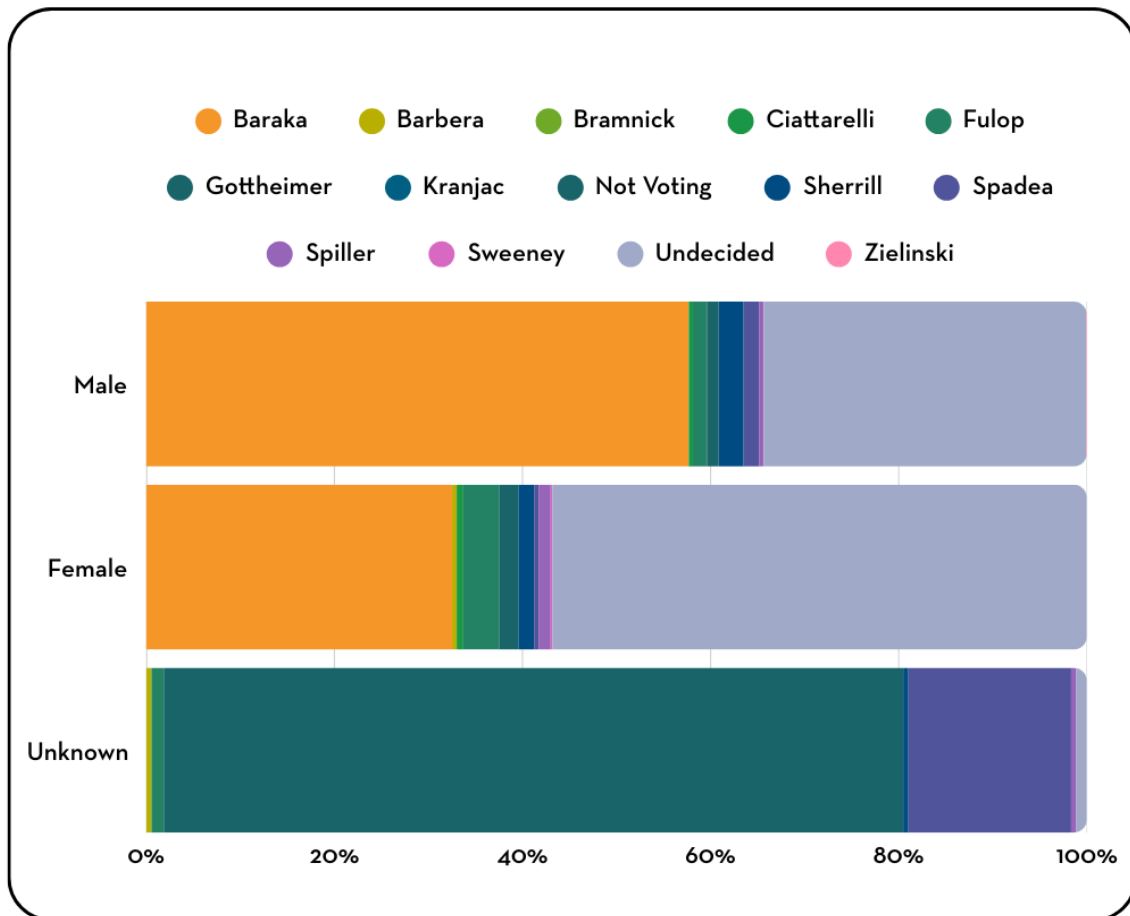


Figure 2 shows the age breakdown of likely Muslim voters' first choice for the Governor's election. Baraka enjoys support from all age groups but is not the first choice in the 18-29 and 55-64 age brackets. Likely Muslim voters in the 18-29 age bracket show they are either undecided, not voting, or they are supporting Baraka with no candidate hitting above a percentage point in that category. It is worth mentioning that this age bracket has the highest percentage of Muslims voters not voting at 36% while the second highest percentage is tied between 45-54 and 65+ at 7%.

A majority of likely Muslim voters in the 30-44 and 65+ age brackets support Baraka at 55% and 66% respectively, while Undecideds make up a larger share with the 30-44 year olds at 34% but not as large with 65+ at 8% – the lowest of any age bracket. The 45-54 and 55-64 age bracket shows support for Baraka but not as much support for the Newark Mayor as the 30-44 and 65+ age brackets. However, between the two age brackets, 45-54 year olds support Baraka more at 38% while 55-64 year olds support Baraka at 18%.

Additionally, Mayor Steve Fulop cracks above 10% in these age brackets, showing that he is a competitor to grow his support among the Muslim community with undecided voters. Bill Spadea, who has the second largest share of weighted support among likely Muslim voters, is getting his support from Muslims in the 30-44 and 45-54 age bracket. Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill who has the third largest share of weighted and unweighted support among candidates has support among likely Muslims voters in the 30+ age brackets.

NJ Gubernatorial Vote Choice by Gender



A total of 835 registered voters, likely Muslim, participated in the poll.

Figure 3

Figure 3 shows choices by gender, where a majority of men are in support of Baraka while a majority of women are undecided. A deeper analysis shows that Sherrill supporters are significantly male while Fulop and Spiller are significantly female. Among Spadea supporters and not voting respondents, there isn't enough data to determine the gender breakdown.



Overall, these findings suggest that outreach strategies to the Muslim community should consider age and gender.

Recommendations

For Candidates: Although the poll shows overall support for Baraka, there is a significant portion of the population who are undecided where gubernatorial candidates can still pitch their campaigns. Muslim voters in age brackets 18-29, 30-39, and 50-64 along with Muslim women have the largest share of undecided voters and are lower-hanging fruit to gain their support. It's important to note that while 18-29 year old Muslim voters are the most undecided age group, they also have the largest share of people not voting. This doesn't mean no effort should be spent in reaching out to young voters, but it reflects the challenges to expect in reaching out to young voters. Candidates will need to make compelling arguments as to why voting in this election is important while simultaneously validating their apathy.

To effectively engage this voting group, candidates must go beyond general outreach and deliver specific, actionable commitments on issues that matter to the Muslim community. These include combatting Islamophobia, ensuring civil rights protections, supporting equitable education funding, addressing religious accommodations, and standing for justice in global affairs such as the occupation of Palestine. Campaigns should also prioritize direct engagement. Attending forums at mosques and Islamic centers, sitting for interviews with Muslim media outlets, and meeting with Muslim civic and faith leaders will signal genuine interest. The community is highly engaged and organized, and voter education efforts are underway—meaning messages and platforms will be scrutinized closely.

Importantly, the Muslim electorate is not monolithic and should not be taken for granted. Messaging must reflect respect, authenticity, and understanding, not tokenism. Candidates who fail to meaningfully engage risk ceding this pivotal segment to better-prepared opponents. In a competitive field, the 35% of undecided Muslim voters—and their potential influence in mobilizing broader networks—could prove decisive. Candidates who demonstrate real commitment, inclusion, and respect will have the best chance to earn their support and turn it into votes.

For Muslim Community Leaders and Members: Community leaders should prioritize robust political education and active engagement initiatives to underscore that the Muslim vote is not a guaranteed bloc, but rather an influential constituency that must be actively courted and earned. Support for Mayor Baraka, or any other political candidate, should not be seen as unconditional; it must be contingent upon explicit policy commitments that address the needs and concerns of the Muslim community.

To achieve this, grassroots mobilization efforts must be intensified, encouraging active participation in the political process and fostering a sense of collective agency. Additionally, strategic voting practices, where the community votes as a cohesive bloc for candidates



who demonstrate a genuine commitment to their concerns, can significantly amplify Muslim political influence within New Jersey.

Limitations and Next Steps: This is the first poll to survey the New Jersey Muslim community to better understand how the community plans to vote in a gubernatorial election. However, the limitations to this poll include lack of additional questions to verify respondents' identity, lack of additional questions to understand voter knowledge about the upcoming election, lack of different methods to survey respondents, and limited number of respondents. Despite the limitations, the poll gives insight into how Muslim community members are likely to be in the upcoming primary elections. Next steps should be to conduct another poll close to the election to see if undecided voters have chosen a candidate, ask additional questions if they are or plan to get involved, and if the outcome of the primary will affect how they plan to vote in the general election.