



StimSight Research

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Rutgers University's Image in New Jersey



The Viewpoint of State Residents and Businesses

January 2026

Stimulus – something that motivates a person or group to act

Insight – a deep understanding of a person or group

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Study methodology

Survey of New Jersey Residents

- Representative sample of 1,005 adult New Jersey residents (age 18+) drawn from a combination of random digit dialing and listed sample.
- Conducted December 6 to 16, 2025; live phone interviews (n=200 landline and n=225 cell phone) and self-administered online via text-to-web invitation link (n=580).
- Full sample is weighted for age, gender, race, education and region based on U.S. Census data from the American Community Survey.
- Sampling margin of error is ± 3.6 percentage points (accounting for design effects).

Demographics (weighted sample)

- **Rutgers alumni:** 14% self, 18% immediate family member, 68% neither
- **Sex:** 48% men, 51% women, 1% non-binary
- **Age:** 28% 18-34, 26% 35-49, 22% 50-64, 24% 65 or older
- **Race:** 55% White non-Hispanic, 20% Hispanic, 13% Black, 12% Asian (AAPI)/other
- **Education:** 35% high school, 24% some college, 20% BA/BS, 21% graduate degree
- **Income:** 46% <\$100,000, 30% \$100-199,000, 17% \$200,000+, 8% refused
- **Region of state:** 16% Northeast (Bergen/Passaic), 16% Urban Core (Essex/Hudson), 20% Route 1 Corridor (Mercer/Middlesex/Union), 11% Central Hills (Hunterdon/Somerset/Morris), 14% Northern Shore (Monmouth/Ocean), 14% Delaware Valley (Burlington/Camden/ Gloucester), 9% Garden Core (Atlantic/Cape May/Cumberland/Salem/Sussex/Warren)

Survey of New Jersey Businesses

- Sample of 301 owners, executives or senior managers of businesses and non-profit organizations that employ at least 25 people in New Jersey, drawn to be broadly representative of non-government industry sectors.
- Survey conducted December 5, 2025 to January 9, 2026. including live phone interviews (n=212) and self-administered online surveys (n=89).
- The sample was screened for business representatives with at least some awareness of Rutgers University. As such, the survey was not designed to be a probability sample of all employers in the state and there is no associated sampling error calculated for the survey results.

Demographics (unweighted)

- **Industry sector:** 24% retail/sales, 24% hospitality/service, 24% construction/manufacturing, 18% IT/professional services, 7% health field, 4% other
- **Business offices:** 67% are headquartered in NJ, 46% have multiple locations in NJ, 45% have locations in other states and/or countries
- **State location:** 14% Middlesex/Somerset, 18% Essex/Hudson, 13% Camden/Gloucester/Burlington, 22% other northern counties, 15% other central counties, 7% other southern counties, 11% statewide/every county
- **Number of employees in NJ:** 38% less than 50, 28% 50-99, 33% 100 or more
- **Rutgers grads employed:** 32% none, 33% 1-5, 11% 6-10, 10% >10, 14% unsure
- **Rutgers affiliation of interviewees:** 16% alumni, 17% other affiliation, 67% no Rutgers affiliation



New Jersey Residents: Rutgers' Image and Awareness

Rutgers is top-of-mind when New Jerseyans think of higher education institutions in the region

Thinking of tri-state area colleges and universities, which are the first that come to mind?

Rutgers (64%)

Princeton (27%)

NYU (20%)

Penn State (18%)

UPenn (16%)

Rowan (14%)

Columbia (12%)

Montclair State (12%)

TCNJ (10%)

NJIT (9%)

Seton Hall (8%)

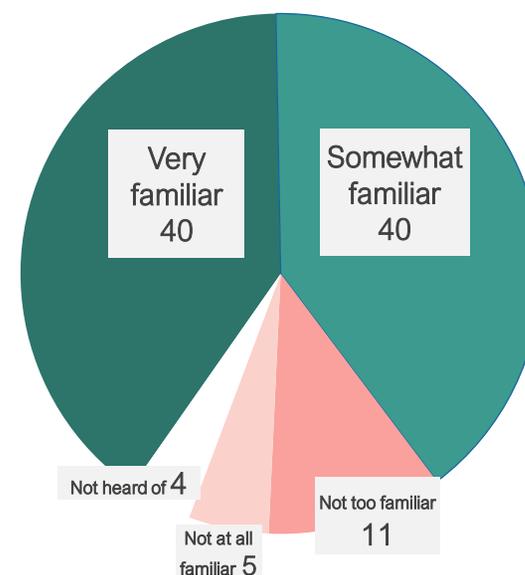
Temple (6%)

Drexel, Kean, Stockton (5%)

Rider, William Paterson, Monmouth (4%)

NJCU, FDU, Stevens Institute, Villanova, Fordham (3%)

80% are familiar with Rutgers University

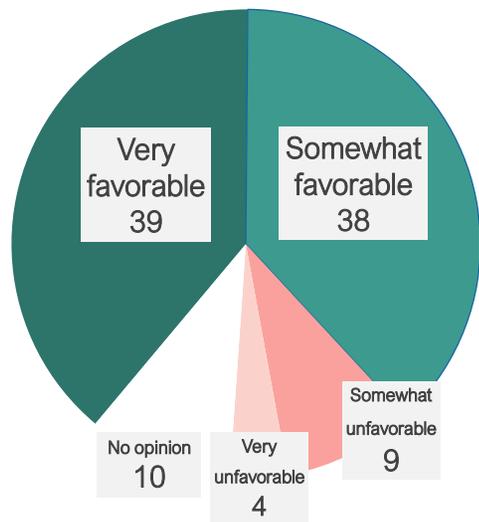


78% know that Rutgers is the State University of New Jersey



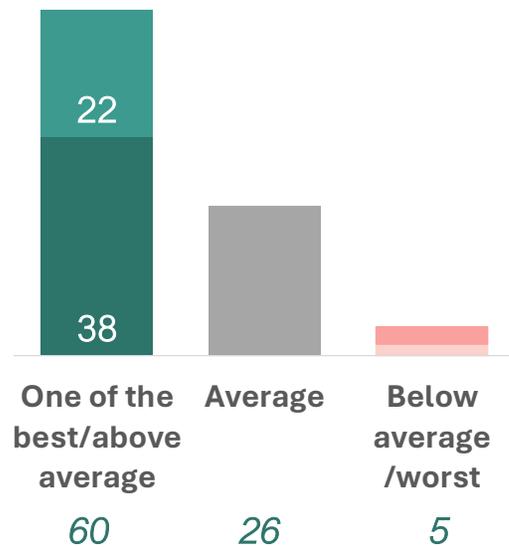
New Jersey residents express broad-based positive opinions of Rutgers University

77% have a favorable view of Rutgers University

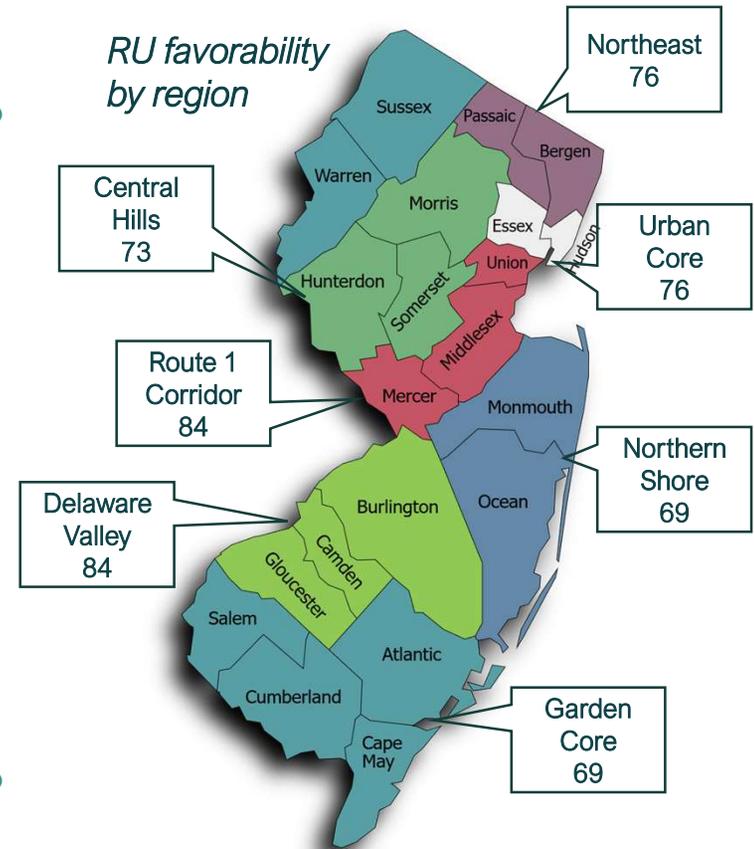


90% of RU alumni/family have a favorable opinion

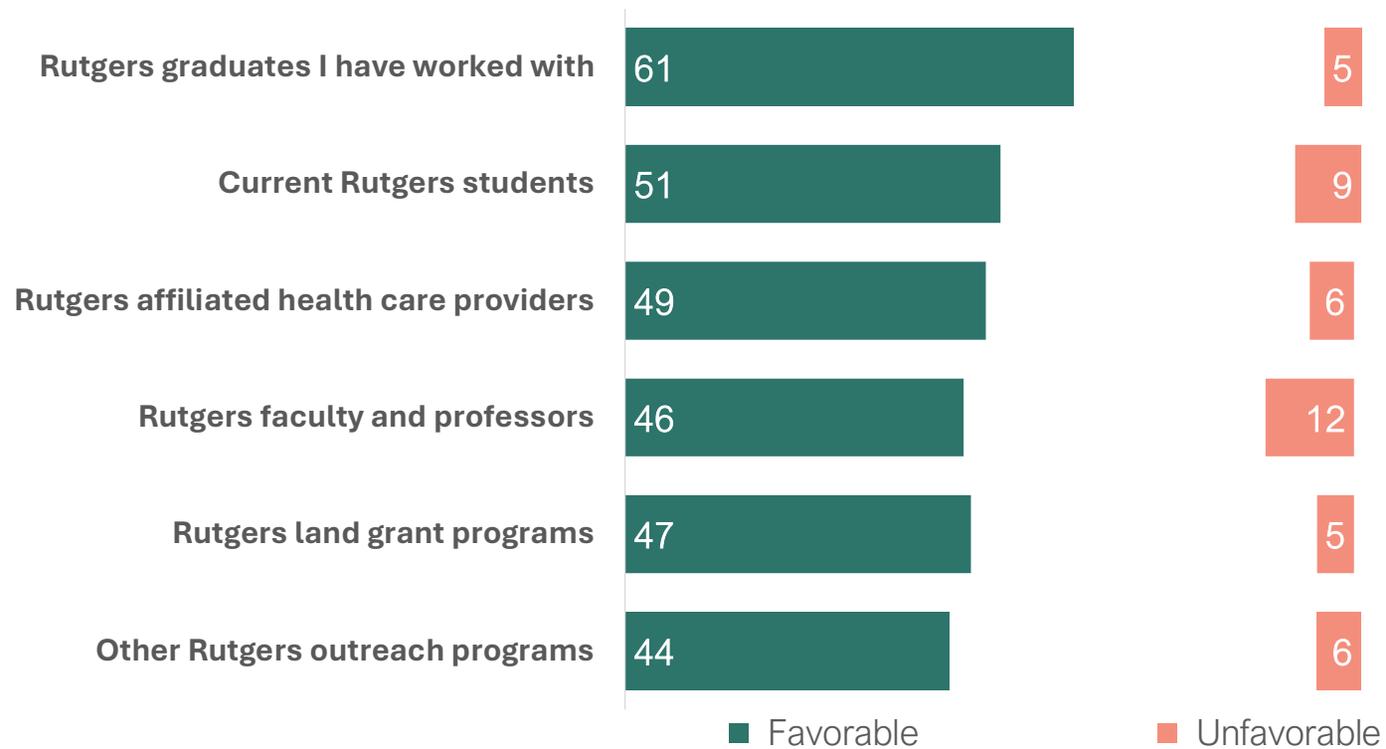
60% rank Rutgers above its peers



RU favorability by region

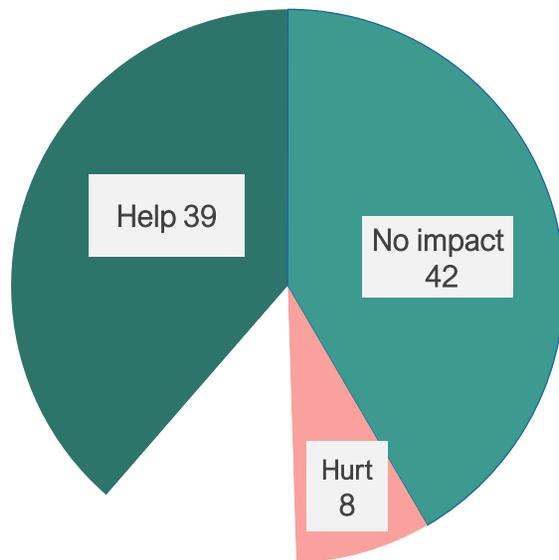


Rutgers people and programs are viewed positively



Rutgers University in the Big Ten Conference

Big Ten impact on Rutgers' reputation for high-quality education



Rutgers' membership in the Big Ten Conference has more of a positive than negative impact on the university's academic reputation. Overall, 39% of all New Jerseyans say being part of the Big Ten helps the university's reputation for providing a high-quality education while just 8% think it hurts the university. Another 42% say it has no impact on Rutgers' reputation.

There are few notable differences in this view either regionally or by demographic group.

Rutgers image and awareness: key findings

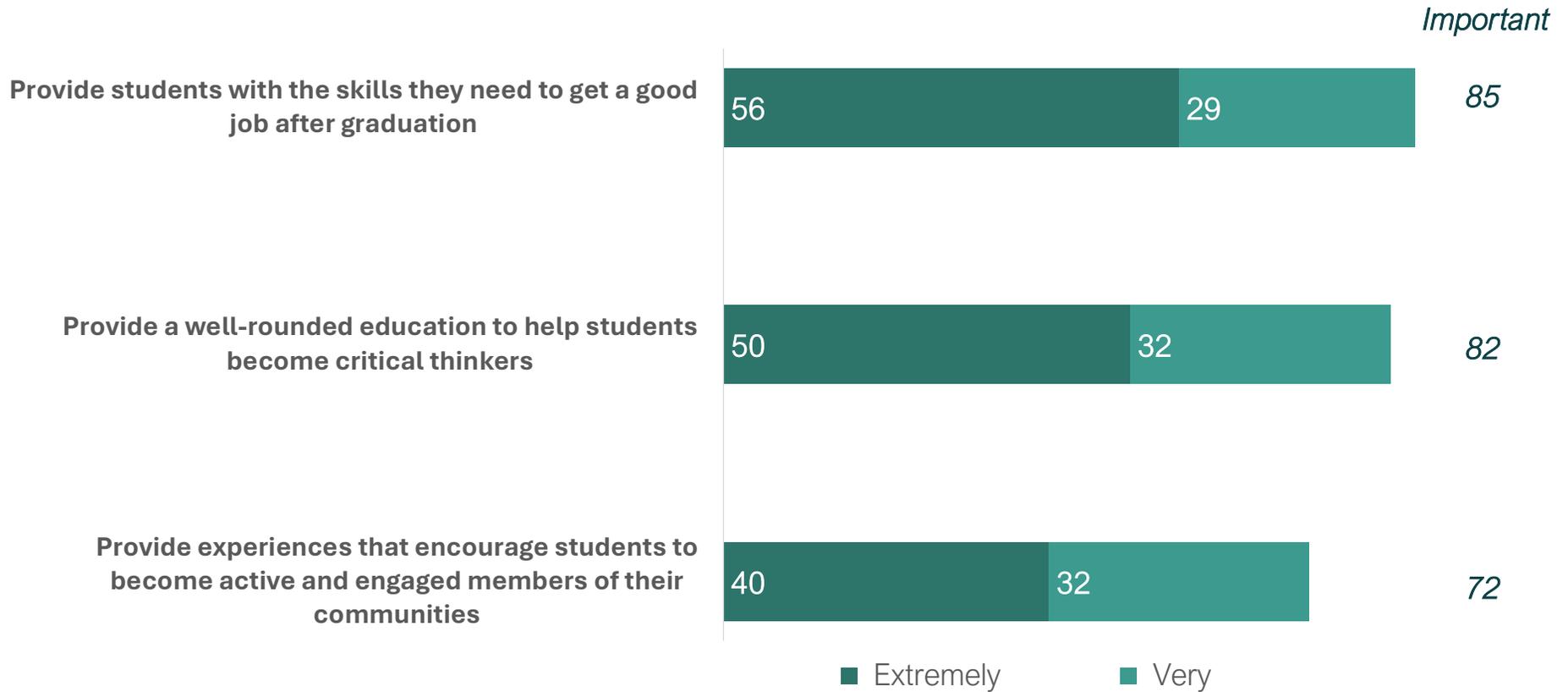
- **Rutgers is clearly “top of mind”** when New Jerseyans think about higher education institutions; with 8 in 10 saying they have at least some familiarity with their state university.
- More than **3 in 4 residents have a favorable view of Rutgers** and 6 in 10 rank the university above its peers.
- **New Jerseyans have high regard for the people and programs of Rutgers.** Among those who are familiar with these different attributes, positive opinion ratios run from 4:1 for faculty to 12:1 for Rutgers alumni they have personally worked with.
- There is no single image that defines “Rutgers” in the minds of a majority of state residents. Instead, the **university evokes a wide range of impressions and connections** – from its location to athletics to academic programs to its prestige.
- **Proximity to Rutgers matters.** Having a personal affiliation with the university or living close to one of the campuses correlates with even higher regard for the university (i.e., more likely to give a top rating of *very favorable* or rank it *as one of the best* universities).



New Jersey Residents: Importance of Rutgers' Mission



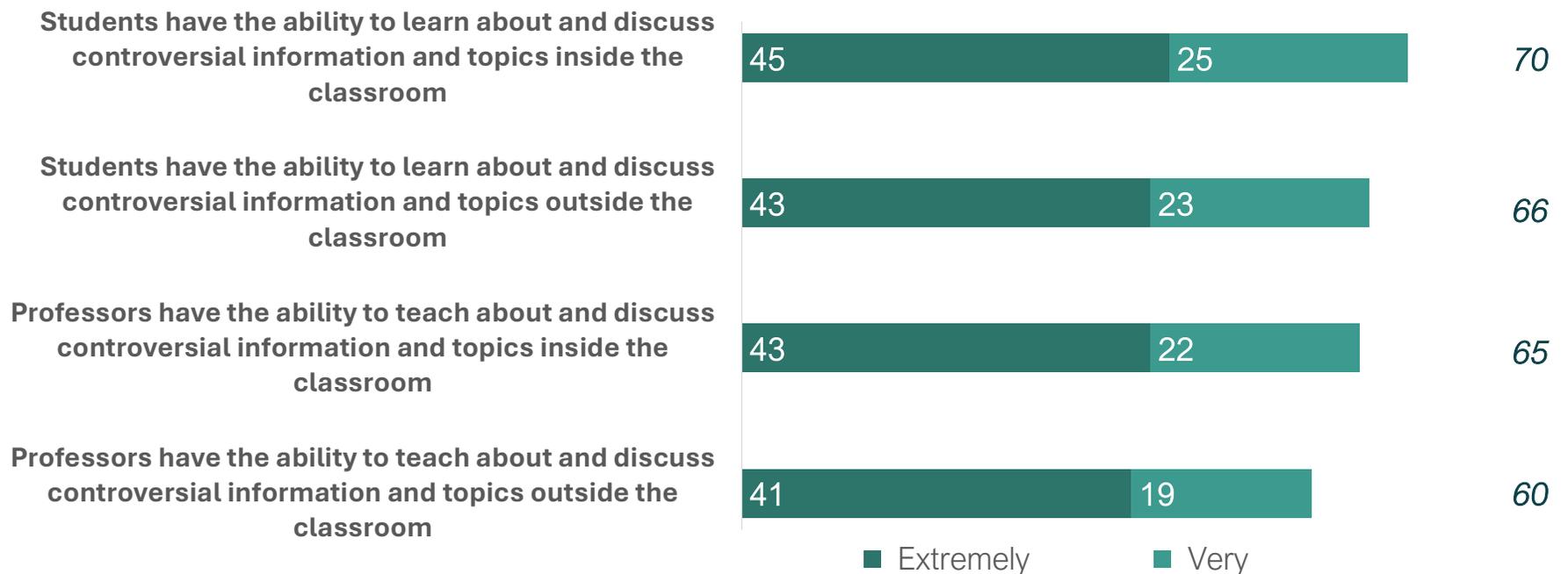
Important to Rutgers' Mission: Student Experience



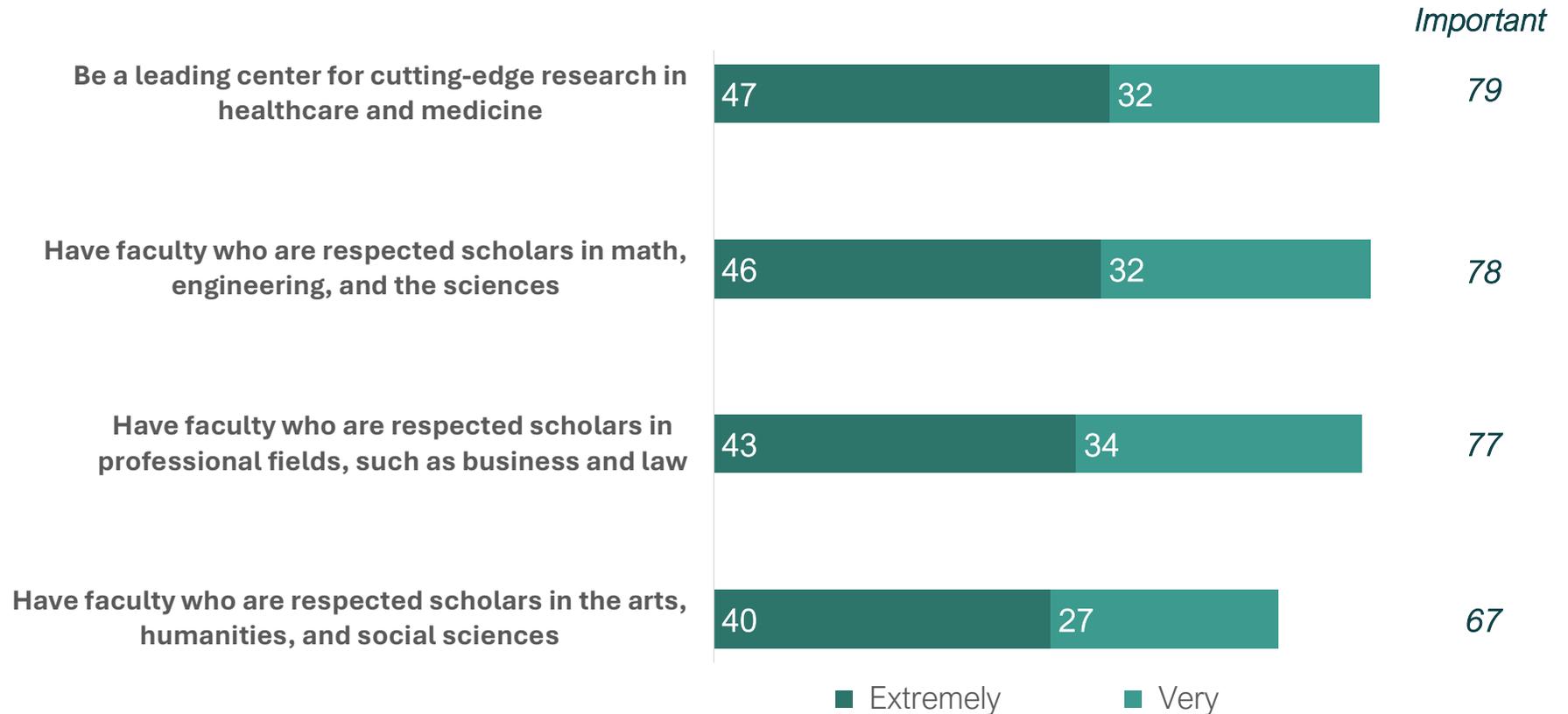
Clear majority of New Jerseyans say it is important for Rutgers to foster exploration of controversial topics

It is important for Rutgers University to be a place where...

Important



Important to Rutgers' Mission: Teaching and Research



Important to Rutgers' Mission: Access and Opportunity

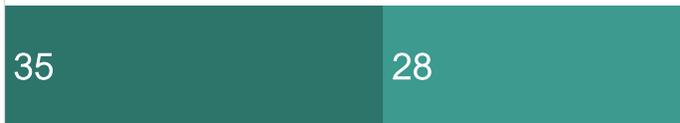
Important

Provide the opportunity for students from families with limited resources to earn a college degree



74

Undertake recruitment efforts geared toward first-generation students who come from communities where attending college is not always an option

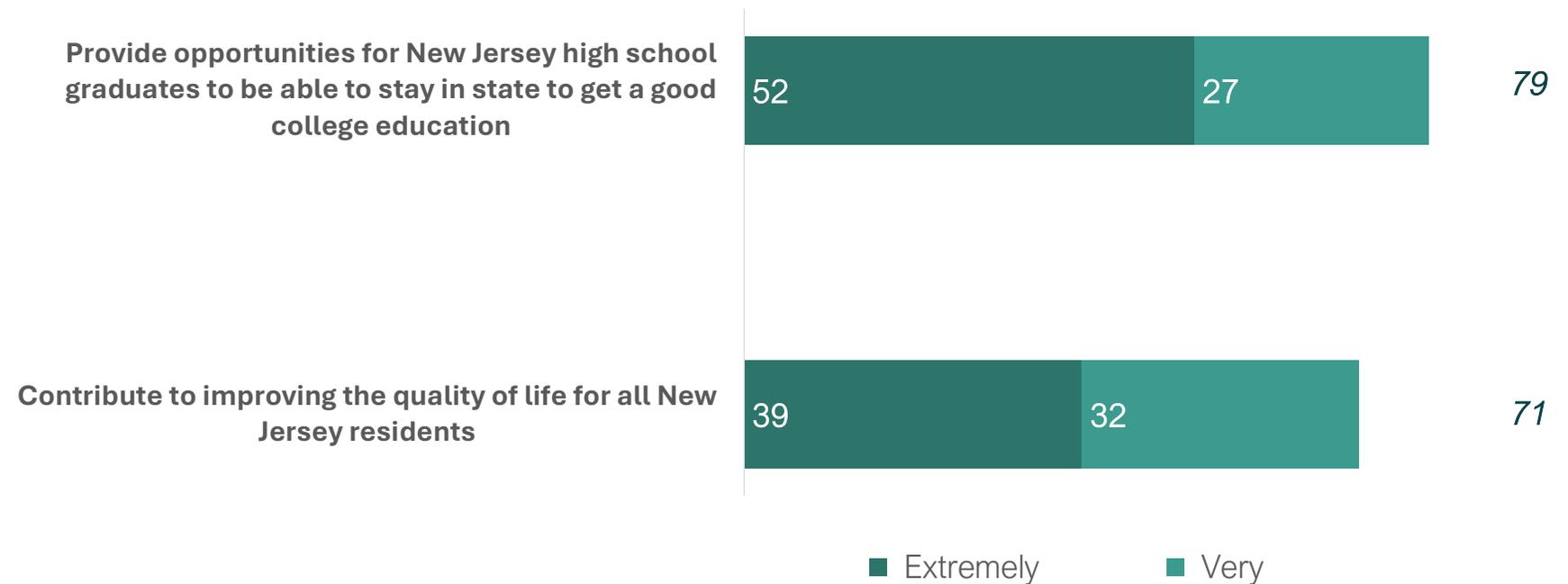


63

■ Extremely ■ Very

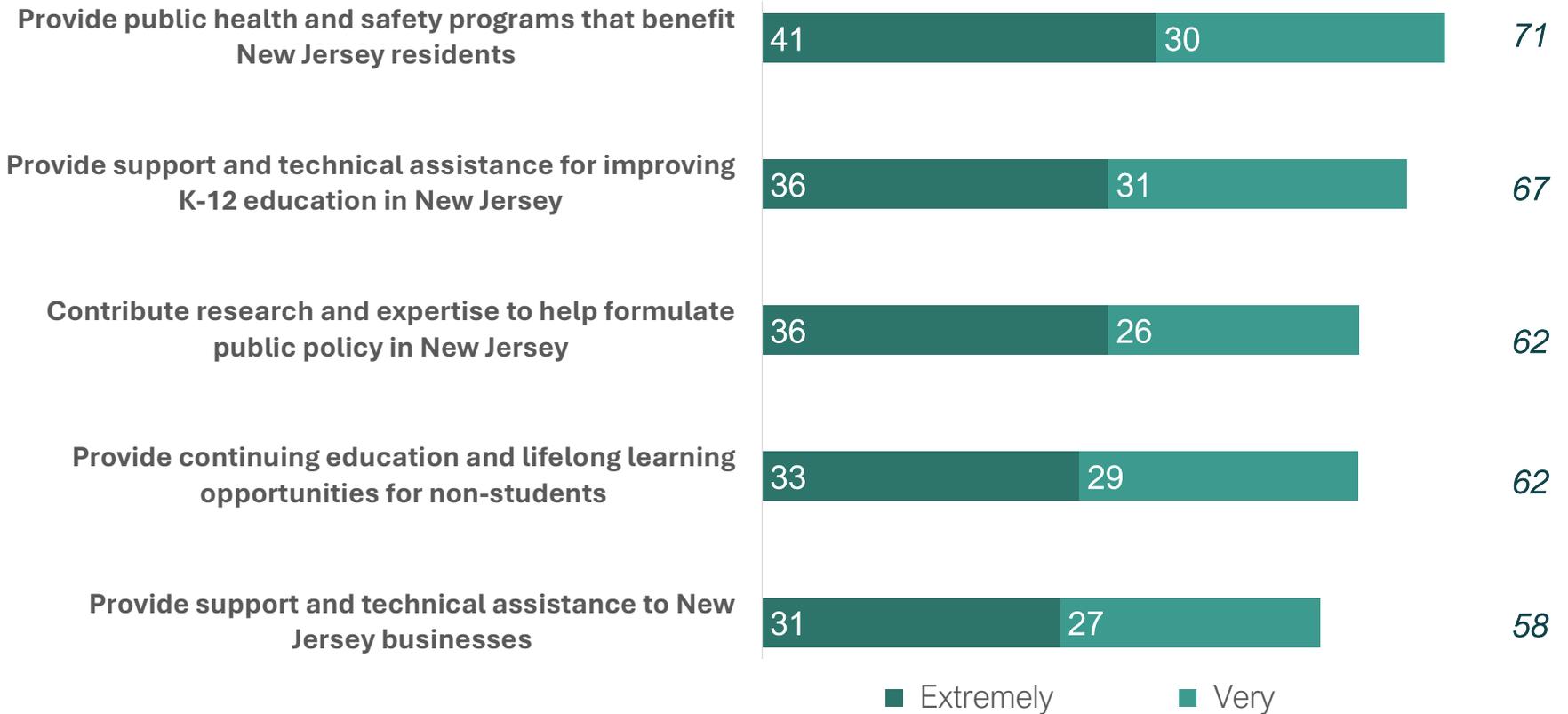
Important to Rutgers' Mission: New Jersey Focus

Important



Important to Rutgers' Mission: Public Service

Important



Rutgers' mission priorities: key findings

- Rutgers' value as The State University of New Jersey is felt **both inside and outside the classroom**. Each of the mission-related activities covered in the survey are considered *extremely important* or *very important* by clear majorities of the general public.
- The highest priority items involve Rutgers' core mission of teaching students: specifically, providing the **skills needed for their career** and providing a well-rounded education that **helps students think critically**. Rutgers' leadership in research and scholarship, particularly in the healthcare and STEM fields also ranks slightly above other priorities.
- New Jersey residents also say efforts to **keep high school students in state** for their college experience is very important. Related to this is the high priority placed on providing educational **opportunities for students with limited resources**. While Rutgers is not the only institution that can serve this end, its standing as the state's flagship university places a high public priority on Rutgers facilitating this objective.
- The next tier of priorities for Rutgers' mission, as viewed by the general public, includes having highly respected faculty in **professional fields and the liberal arts**, fostering **civic engagement** among its students, and providing **public health and safety** programs that serve all of New Jersey.

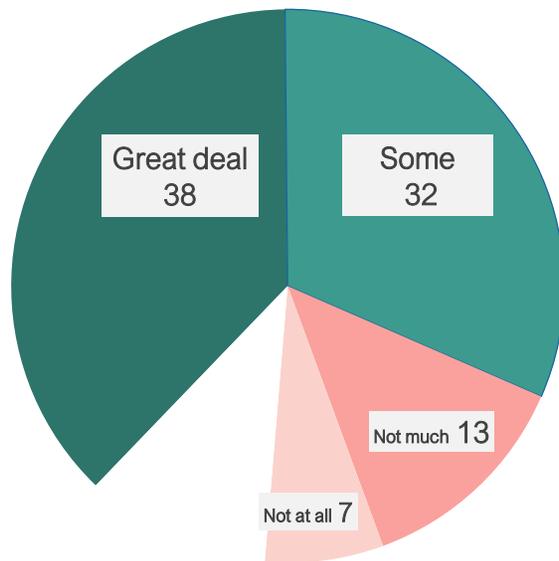


New Jersey Residents: Rutgers as a State Asset

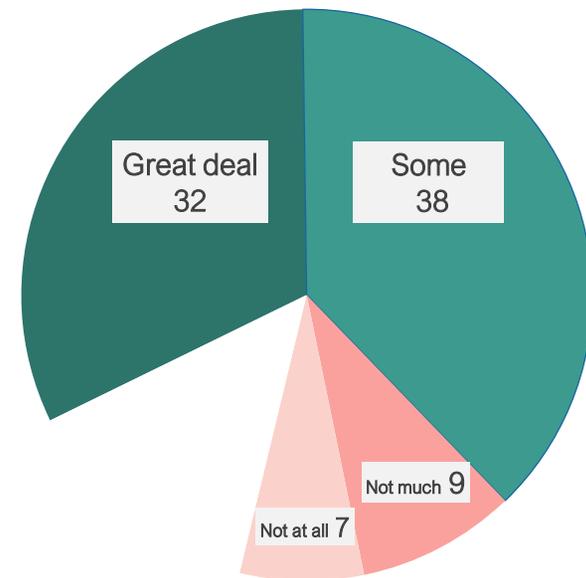


Rutgers makes New Jersey a better place to live

70% say Rutgers contributes to the state's quality of life

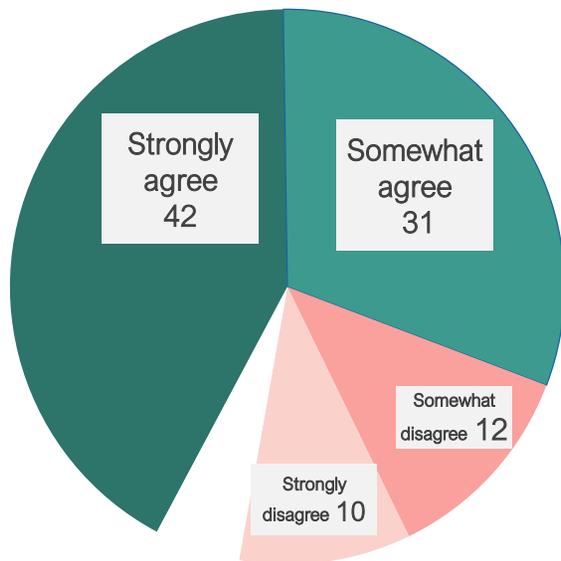


70% say Rutgers contributes to the state's economic vitality

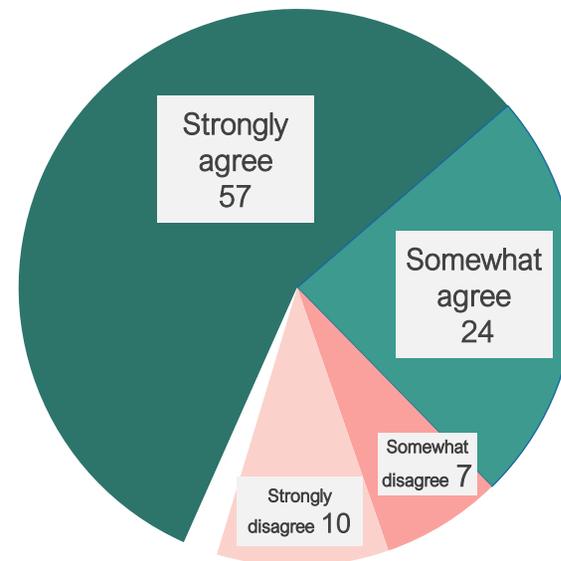


New Jerseyans want state to invest in Rutgers

73% agree that state government investments in Rutgers pay dividends for all of New Jersey



81% agree that state government should financially support Rutgers to retain New Jersey students



Rutgers as a state asset: key findings

- New Jersey residents are clear: Rutgers **provides value to the Garden State** and deserves **financial support to fulfill its mission**. This value is recognized whether there is an affiliation with Rutgers or not. However, proximity – either via personal connection such as attending the university or living in the vicinity of the campuses – enhances the university’s value prospect.
- The fact that **Rutgers is seen as multidimensional**, rather than being known primarily for one or two programs or activities, is a **strength for the university** when it comes to public opinion. The name “Rutgers” conjures a wide variety of associations by which New Jerseyans feel a connection with the university. This extends to its multiple campus locations.
- Most state residents (67%) say they primarily focus on the main New Brunswick campus when they think about Rutgers, but for 13% of the public Rutgers means Newark and for 8% it means Camden. Another 1% name Rutgers Health as their main framework for thinking about the university. Those who think of Newark and Camden first tend to live in closer proximity to those campuses. As such, they tend to see Rutgers as serving a vital community role in their region of the state.

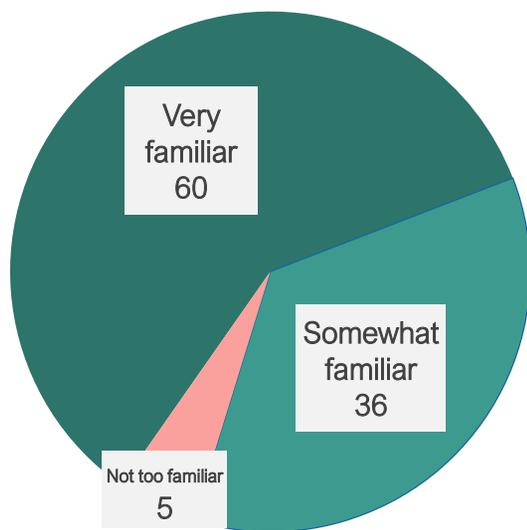


New Jersey Businesses: Rutgers' Image and Mission



Business owners/managers familiar with Rutgers have a broad range of images, similar to the public at large, and they mention very few negatives

60% are very familiar with Rutgers University

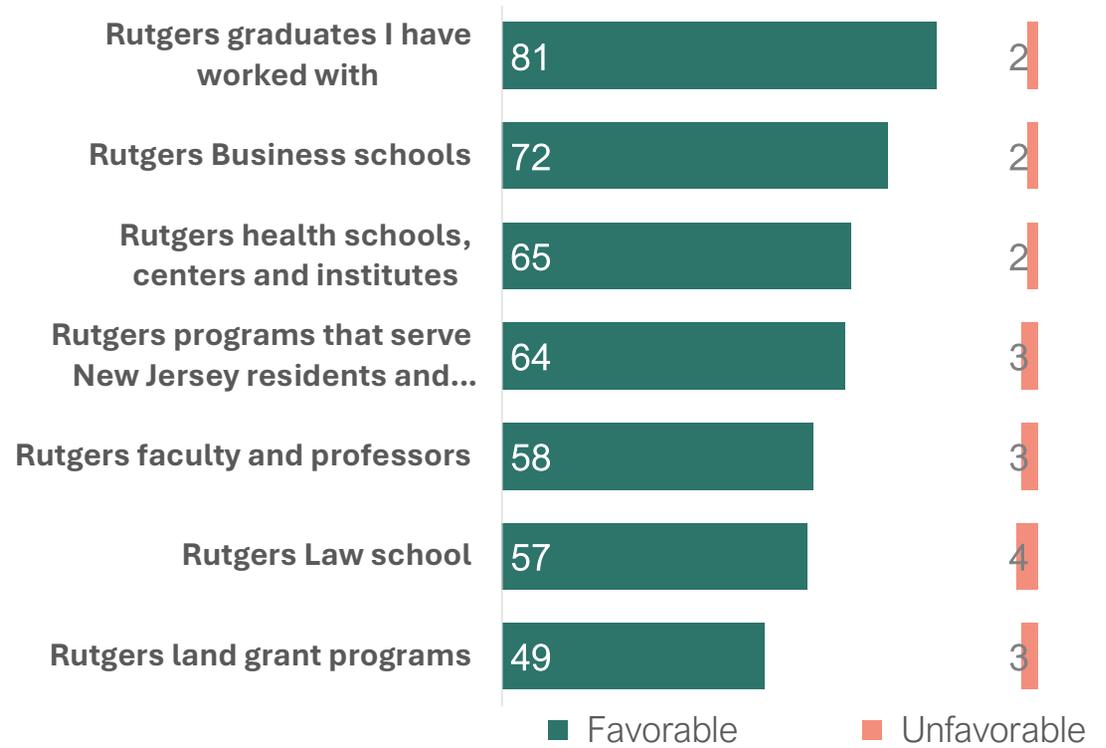
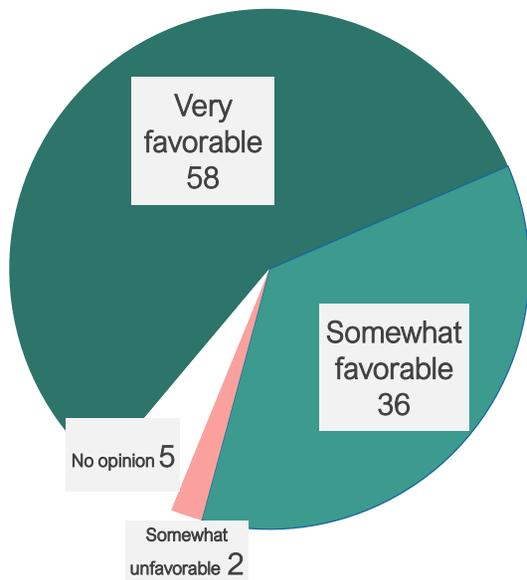


When you hear the name Rutgers University, what is the first word or phrase that comes into your mind?

- 20 General ID, location
- 22 Sports
- 19 High regard
- 20 Educational institution
- 6 Specific programs
- 7 Misc. aspects
- 3 Cost
- 1 Negative

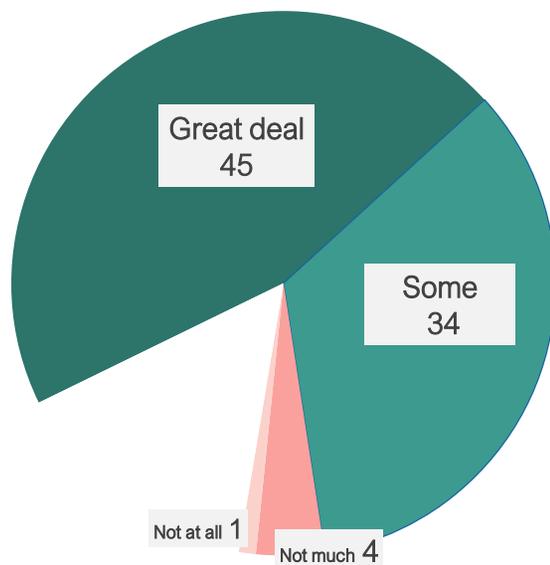
Views of Rutgers and its programs are overwhelmingly positive among New Jersey businesses familiar with them

94% of businesses have a favorable view of Rutgers



New Jersey businesses see Rutgers as a significant economic driver in the state

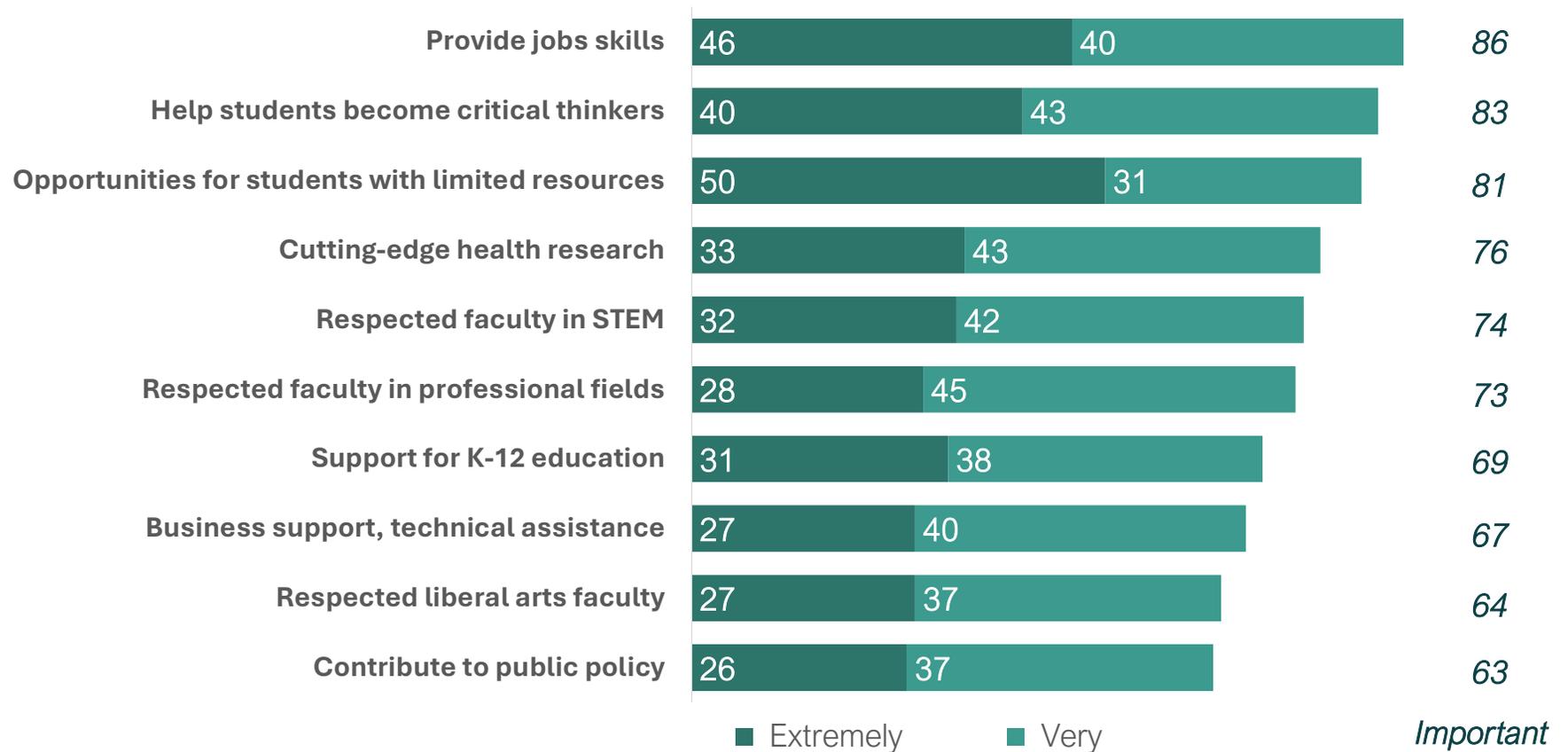
79% of businesses say Rutgers contributes to the state's economic vitality



Opinion of Rutgers' impact on the state is *even higher* among New Jersey businesses than it is with the general public.

Among different industry sectors, professional services and IT businesses are the most likely to say Rutgers contributes a great deal (66%) to New Jersey's economic vitality.

New Jersey businesses see Rutgers' mission as important



New Jersey Businesses: Interaction with Rutgers



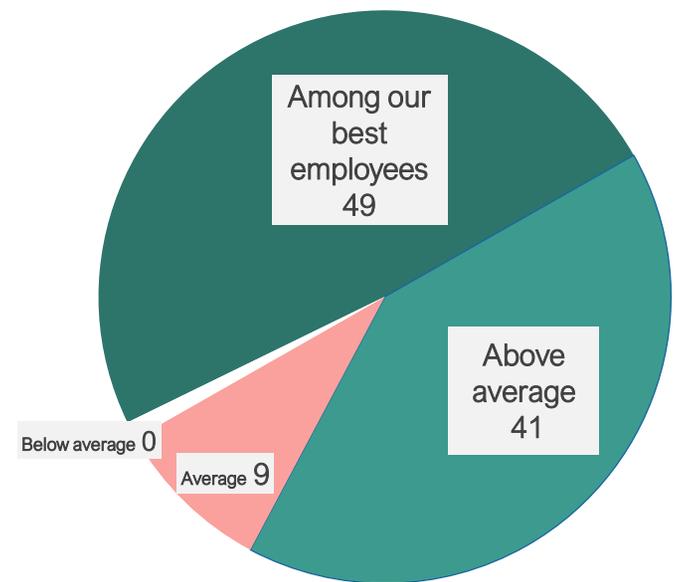
Businesses that employ Rutgers graduates rate them among the best in their workforce

Six in 10 businesses surveyed report having employed Rutgers graduates, including 32% who currently do so and 27% who have done so in the past. The professional services and IT sector is most likely to report having Rutgers alumni in their workforce.

Nine in 10 business with Rutgers graduates currently on staff rate them above average among their employees – including half who rate RU alumni among the best.

Among businesses who currently employ Rutgers graduates, more than 8 in 10 say the following attributes describe them a great deal: conscientious about getting the job done (85%), trained with the skills needed for the job (82%), and ready to do what is asked of them (82%); and 7 in 10 say the same about thinking critically to solve problems (70%).

90% say Rutgers graduates in their workforce stand out



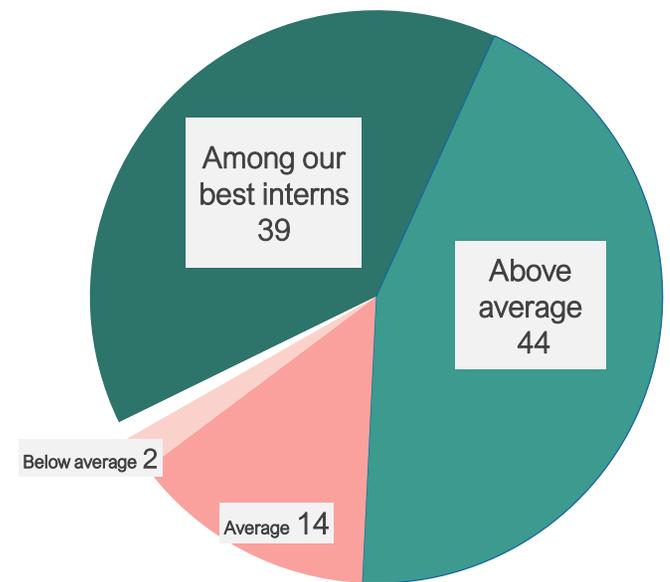
Businesses that engage Rutgers students as interns or student workers are pleased with their performance

Nearly 4 in 10 businesses surveyed (38%) report having engaged a Rutgers student as a worker or intern in the past five years.

The professional services and IT sector is most likely to report engaging Rutgers students.

More than 8 in 10 business that have engaged Rutgers students as workers or interns in the past 5 years rate them above average – including 4 in 10 who rate them among the best.

83% say their Rutgers student workers and interns stand out



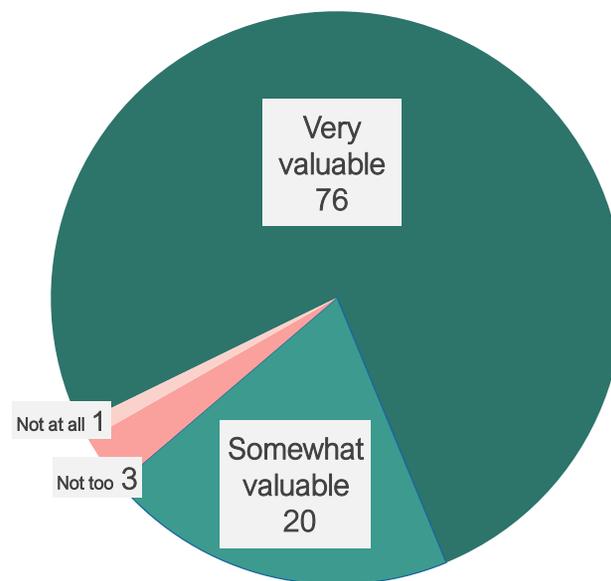
Businesses that have drawn on Rutgers faculty expertise say the experience has been very valuable

One third (35%) of businesses surveyed report having experience with faculty expertise, guidance or technical assistance through their business or industry.

Nearly all say this experience was valuable to their business, including 76% who say it was *very valuable*.

The types of assistance provided include business solutions and subject matter expertise (31%), mentoring or professional development (22%), hiring of students or graduates (10%), and other personal experiences or relationships (21%).

96% rate their experience working with Rutgers faculty as valuable



Businesses that have experience with Rutgers external programs say it has been very valuable

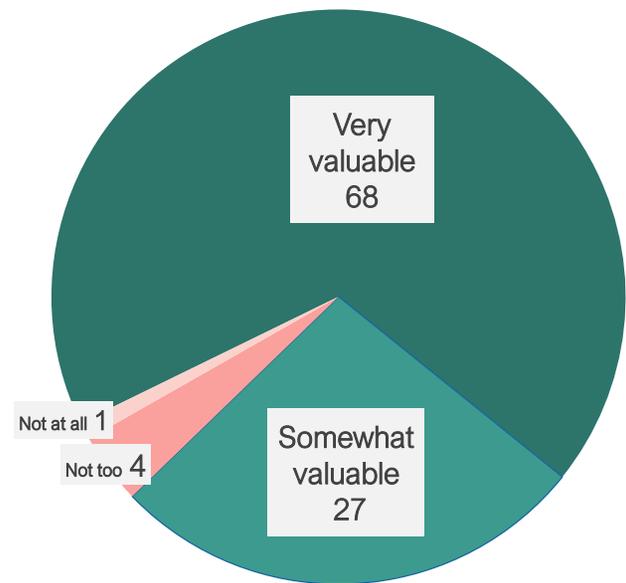
Just over 1 in 4 (27%) businesses surveyed report having experience with Rutgers external outreach programs, services or research that have contributed to their business or industry.

Nearly all say this experience was valuable to their business, including 68% who say it was *very valuable*.

Businesses with a statewide presence (39%) and those closest to the Newark campus (38%) are most likely to report engaging with a Rutgers outreach program, followed by those near the New Brunswick campus (30%) and those near the Camden campus (21%).

The types of programs encountered include business programs (18%), HR and recruiting (16%), health (14%), agriculture (8%) and legal (3%) programs.

95% rate their experience with Rutgers external programs as valuable



Rutgers NJ business survey: key findings

- New Jersey businesses hold Rutgers in **high regard** and are even more likely than the general public to say it plays an **important role in the state's economic vitality**.
- The **most critical aspects** of Rutgers' mission for New Jersey businesses are: **providing job skills, helping students become critical thinkers, and providing opportunities for students with limited resources**. These are the same top priorities identified by state residents.
- New Jersey businesses that **interact with Rutgers** – either by hiring graduates, engaging student interns, drawing on faculty expertise, or participating in outreach programs – are **overwhelmingly positive about those experiences**. This correlates with an even higher overall regard for Rutgers University.
- Businesses engaged in **professional services** (e.g., legal, finance, etc.) and **information technology** are the most likely to report having direct interactions with Rutgers people or programs and are also the most likely to express a favorable opinion of the university.



New Jersey Residents & Businesses: Summary of Key Findings



How New Jersey Residents and Businesses View Rutgers

- **New Jersey residents and businesses hold their state university in high regard.** 77% of the general public and 94% of business owners/executives have a favorable view of Rutgers.
- Both the general public and the business community see Rutgers as a contributor to New Jersey's economic vitality, and **3 in 4 residents say state government investment in Rutgers pays dividends for all of New Jersey.**
- Both the general public and the business community have very positive views of the Rutgers' people and programs with which they are familiar. For both groups, **the more they interact with Rutgers people and programs, the more positive they feel.**
- The top priorities for Rutgers' mission among both residents and businesses are providing **skills needed for graduates' working life**, helping **students become critical thinkers**, and providing **college opportunities for students with limited resources.**
- **Rutgers having respected faculty across all disciplines and in health sciences research** as well as **providing statewide public health and safety programs** are seen as important by large majorities of New Jersey residents and businesses.



Thank you!

Patrick Murray

Principal

StimSight Research

