

TSA security earns limited state approval

By [Reena Diamante](#)

Correspondent

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A recent Rutgers-Eagleton poll reveals that the more N.J. adults know about Transportation Security Administration security measures, the more concerned they are about the agency's policies.

Still, respondents were interested in feeling that they are safe and secure and to some degree, willing to sacrifice a certain amount of privacy to feel protected, said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton poll.

Two controversial measures to detect contraband and illegal weapons are the full-body scan and enhanced pat-downs, Redlawsk said. The full-body scan produces a nude image, which a TSA employee inspects in a closed-off area. Those who refuse to go through a scanner are subsequently patted down all over the body.

"Just saying, 'Are these measures going too far?' More people say they [are not], but when you ask the same question after asking questions about specific measures — scans or the pat-downs — people are far more likely to say some measures go too far," Redlawsk said.

The way the Rutgers-Eagleton poll conducted the survey allowed pollsters to look at what happens if people are asked about security measures in a vacuum, without additional information, he said.

Although N.J. adults do not directly oppose the measures, they do think about the possibility that the government might violate their privacy even further, he said.

"People are clearly more likely to think that the pat-downs are invasive and too much without adding a lot of security," Redlawsk said.

When adults were asked about the full-body scans, 30 percent said they were too intrusive. Forty-one percent felt the same about the pat-downs, according to an Eagleton Institute of Politics press release.

The scanner is less invasive to respondents because someone else's hands are not actually touching them, Redlawsk said.

Some University students reflected the sentiments expressed in the poll and preferred going through a full-body scan.

"I think that the body scan should be in effect," said Inbarasi Sathiyamoorthy, a School of Arts and Sciences junior. "I think when they do the pat-down you feel a little violated. It's a little too personal. It feels creepy and weird."

Taylor Lampton, a School of Arts and Sciences junior, is an out-of-state student and flies frequently. She said the full-body pat-downs may lead to employees abusing their power and believed body scans are the more effective choice.

"Every time you walk into a store and there are security cameras, you're putting yourself up for privacy reasons," Lampton said. "It just has to do with whether or not you think the risk weighs out the benefits."

Upon considering the past several years and issues regarding airplane security, she said measures, although unsettling at times, are important.

"I'd rather be a little uncomfortable and go through something that's annoying to me and be safe on the flights," Lampton said.

Like some other students at the University, School of Arts and Sciences junior David Feinblum understood that certain rights need to be given up in order for protection. He did not see the problem with the TSA trying to protect people from the possibility of attacks.

"I just think it's more on the individual level that there is an issue," he said. "The individual employees need to be held more accountable for what they do."

Other University students did not think the new TSA measures are an invasion of privacy, since sacrificing privacy for some is necessary when trying to protect the population as a whole.

"Slipped under the measures before, a lot of people have suffered from poor security," said Alan Slaughter, a Livingston College senior. "If it's that big of a deal you should just drive your personal vehicle, if you don't want to be subjected to [policies] necessary for security."

Some students see the full-body scan as a more efficient technology.

"It's a lot quicker than having somebody pat me down," said Michael Zamzam, a School of Arts and Sciences junior. "[A major factor is] definitely the time. I just want to be on the plane sitting."

Slaughter agreed that he preferred going through a scan, not because another individual would not touch him, but for effectiveness.

"I think scans are better at detecting certain things that even a pat-down can't," he said. "I don't know

how thorough the pat-down is. I would prefer the scan. It's faster and probably more accurate."

The poll of 906 N.J. adults was conducted from Dec. 2 to Dec. 6, according to the press release. The margin of error for the survey was +/- 3.3 percentage points.

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