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E-GOVERNMENT IN NEW JERSEY

Internet the preferred method for local government information

So where do New Jerseyans go to learn about their local government, what their taxes are, or when the trash will be picked up? The preferred means of communication appears to be the internet, according to the *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll*.

While 55% of Garden State residents say they made a personal visit to town hall in the past year, just as many – 58% – looked up information about their town on the internet. These activities are more prevalent than phoning town hall (34%), sending an email (17%), or writing a letter (12%).

When asked what they would do *first* to get information about government services, 36% would visit to their town's website, followed by 25% who would walk into town hall. Just 1-in-10 residents say their first action would be to telephone town hall (8%) or a local official (3%). More than 4-in-10 residents under the age of 55 say their first stop would be the town's website, compared to just 2-in-10 older residents who say the same. On the other hand, those age 55 years and older (36%) are twice as likely as younger adults (19%) to say they would first pay a visit to town hall if they needed information or services.

Overall, two-thirds (66%) of residents say they are aware of their town's official government website and 43% have paid it a visit in the past year. New Jerseyans who visit their town's website do so for a variety of reasons. These include "web surfing" for general information (20%), getting information about trash or recycling pick-up (16%), finding phone numbers and contact information (10%), council or board meeting information (8%), tax information (7%), and permit or code information (7%).

Among those who have paid a visit to their town's website, 42% say they were entirely successful in their search and 32% say they found most of what they needed. Another 25% of town website visitors say they were able to accomplish little or nothing of what they set out to do.

Overall, 38% of New Jerseyans say they would be very interested in getting more information about their municipal government and services online and another 34% would be somewhat interested. Just over 1-in-4 (28%) would not be interested in finding out about their town online. The types of local government information residents would like to be able to find on the internet include general town information and contact lists (13%), activity schedules (9%), official meeting information (9%), municipal budgets (8%), trash/recycling information (7%), crime statistics (7%), schools information (5%), and information about other services (5%).

“New Jerseyans are turning to the internet to check on their local government. They currently report being able to find most of what they need there. But as demand for online information increases, municipalities will be pressed to create websites that have more content and are easier to navigate,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

The poll also found that a small but significant number of New Jerseyans are using the internet to interact with government at the state and national levels as well. Specifically, 30% report having renewed their driver’s license or vehicle registration online in the past year. Just under half (45%) have used the internet to find out about specific government services and a similar number (45%) have searched for public policy or issue information online.

In general, New Jerseyans are plugged in to the worldwide web at a somewhat greater rate than the rest of the country. Only 18% of New Jerseyans report never having used the internet, compared to 23% of American adults.

A majority (52%) of Garden State residents use email or the internet several times a day, 14% go online about once a day, and 15% go online less often. By comparison, less than half (46%) of U.S. adults use the internet multiple times a day. About 6-in-10 residents under the age of 55 go online several times a day compared to 37% of older New Jerseyans.

Internet Use	NJ	US *
Internet User	82%	77%
<i>Several times a day</i>	52%	46%
<i>Once a day</i>	14%	12%
<i>Less often</i>	16%	19%
Use social networking sites	50%	47%
Use Twitter	15%	9%

* Source: Pew Internet and American Life Project, December 2010

Half of the Garden State public uses social networking sites like Facebook or instant communication services like Twitter. This includes 15% who use both social networking sites and Twitter and 35% who use social networking only. While the statewide use of social networking sites is

on a par with nationwide reports, New Jerseyans are more likely than other Americans to use Twitter – 15% to 9%.

One-in-ten (9%) New Jersey adults update their status or post a “tweet” at least once a day – including 20% of those age 18 to 34. Another 12% of state residents post updates at least once a week, 18% do so less often, and 11% report that they read the posts of other *netizens* but don’t post themselves.

The *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* was conducted by telephone with 801 New Jersey adults from February 2 to 7, 2011. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute and originally published by the New Jersey Press Media newspaper group (Asbury Park Press, Courier-Post, Courier News, Daily Journal, Daily Record, and Home News Tribune).

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. If you needed information about your town government or local services, where would you go to find that information? What would you do first?

	TOTAL	INTERNET USE			VISIT TOWN SITE PAST YEAR		AGE			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		Frequent	Once a day or less	Never	Yes	No	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
Visit town website	36%	50%	27%	10%	55%	21%	41%	44%	21%	37%	35%	36%
Visit town hall in person	25%	19%	26%	38%	19%	29%	18%	19%	36%	23%	27%	23%
Call town hall	8%	6%	8%	13%	8%	7%	5%	8%	10%	9%	7%	7%
Visit other website	5%	7%	5%	0%	6%	5%	9%	4%	4%	4%	5%	7%
Ask friends/neighbors	4%	2%	6%	9%	2%	6%	4%	3%	6%	6%	4%	3%
Community newsletter	4%	4%	3%	8%	3%	6%	2%	6%	4%	3%	3%	6%
Local media	4%	4%	4%	3%	2%	6%	4%	5%	3%	3%	5%	4%
Call town official	3%	1%	5%	2%	1%	4%	3%	2%	3%	3%	1%	4%
Library/Senior center	2%	2%	4%	2%	1%	4%	4%	2%	1%	4%	2%	2%
Send email	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%
Call police	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	3%	1%
Other	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	3%	5%	12%	0%	9%	4%	5%	7%	5%	6%	5%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	444	225	132	389	412	125	351	310	152	314	316

2. Have you done any of the following in the past year? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Percent saying "yes"	TOTAL	INTERNET USE			VISIT TOWN SITE PAST YEAR		AGE			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		Frequent	Once a day or less	Never	Yes	No	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
A. Called your town hall	34%	37%	31%	30%	47%	24%	18%	38%	42%	26%	40%	34%
B. Visited your town hall in person	55%	60%	52%	47%	70%	44%	40%	57%	64%	47%	59%	56%
C. Sent an e-mail to your town or a town official	17%	26%	11%	1%	33%	4%	17%	21%	12%	11%	19%	19%
D. Written a letter to your town or a town official	12%	16%	11%	2%	23%	4%	12%	12%	12%	14%	13%	10%
E. Attended a council or public board meeting	25%	28%	24%	17%	38%	14%	15%	26%	30%	17%	29%	25%
F. Looked up information about your town on the internet	58%	77%	52%	15%	90%	34%	66%	64%	43%	55%	62%	58%
Unwtd N	801	444	225	132	389	412	125	351	310	152	314	316

3. Does your town have an official government website or not, or don't you know whether it does? Have you ever visited your town's official government website? [If YES: Was this in the past year, past five years, or longer ago?]

	TOTAL	INTERNET USE		AGE			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		Frequent	Once a day or less	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
Visited past year	43%	60%	36%	36%	51%	38%	38%	46%	45%
Visited past five years	6%	8%	7%	6%	7%	5%	5%	8%	5%
Visited longer ago	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Never visited	16%	9%	18%	5%	14%	27%	13%	15%	19%
Town does not have website	2%	3%	1%	3%	1%	3%	3%	1%	2%
Do not know if town has website	32%	19%	36%	48%	25%	27%	41%	28%	29%
Unwtd N	801	444	225	125	351	310	152	314	316

[Question 4 was asked only of those who have visited their town's website, n=452, moe= ±4.6%]

4. When you visited your town's website, what were you trying to do or what were you looking for? [Note: Results add to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted]

General info\curiosity	20%
Phone\contact info	10%
Trash\recycling schedule	10%
Recycling info\rules	6%
Snow\emergency issues	3%
Services-general\other	4%
Activity schedules	5%
Crime rates\info	2%
School information	6%

Permits\ordinance information	7%
Fees\licenses	1%
Taxes & utilities, payment\info	2%
Tax info\rates	5%
Meeting schedules	6%
Meeting records	2%
Other	7%
No answer	11%

[Question 5 was asked only of those who have visited their town's website, n=452, moe= ±4.6%]

5. How much of what you were trying to do on the website were you able to do – everything you were trying to do, most of it, only some of it, or none of it?

	TOTAL	INTERNET USE		VISIT TOWN SITE PAST YEAR		AGE			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		Frequent	Once a day or less	Yes	No	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
Everything	42%	45%	32%	45%	25%	36%	42%	49%	26%	49%	44%
Most of it	32%	33%	30%	31%	37%	36%	33%	22%	32%	30%	32%
Only some of it	18%	15%	25%	16%	24%	19%	17%	17%	31%	12%	16%
None of it	7%	5%	11%	7%	9%	6%	6%	10%	10%	7%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	2%	2%	5%	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	3%
Unwtd N	452	327	116	389	63	65	228	148	74	198	170

6. In general, how interested would you be in getting information or services from your town on a website – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all interested?

	TOTAL	INTERNET USE		VISIT TOWN SITE PAST YEAR		AGE			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		Frequent	Once a day or less	Yes	No	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
Very interested	38%	54%	28%	61%	21%	33%	46%	33%	31%	44%	37%
Somewhat interested	34%	32%	44%	28%	38%	41%	34%	25%	41%	32%	30%
Not too interested	8%	4%	12%	3%	11%	8%	6%	10%	6%	7%	8%
Not at all interested	20%	10%	16%	8%	29%	18%	13%	31%	21%	17%	23%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Unwtd N	801	444	225	389	412	125	351	310	152	314	316

[Question 7 was asked only of those who are interested in online information about their town, moe= ±3.8%]

7. What information or services would you like to see on your town's website? [Note: Results add to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted]

	TOTAL	INTERNET USE		VISIT TOWN SITE PAST YEAR		AGE			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		Frequent	Once a day or less	Yes	No	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
General information	10%	9%	12%	11%	10%	15%	9%	8%	9%	12%	9%
Phone\contact info	3%	4%	2%	5%	2%	3%	4%	2%	2%	3%	6%
Trash\recycling schedule	4%	5%	3%	5%	3%	3%	4%	6%	2%	5%	5%
Recycling info\rules	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	1%	5%	1%	4%	1%
Snow\emergency issues	3%	4%	2%	4%	2%	4%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%
Services-general\other	5%	6%	3%	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%	3%	6%	6%
Activity schedules	9%	10%	9%	9%	9%	10%	7%	10%	3%	11%	10%
Jobs\employment info	3%	2%	5%	1%	5%	3%	4%	1%	7%	3%	0%
Crime rates\info	7%	4%	13%	5%	9%	10%	7%	4%	16%	5%	3%
School information	5%	6%	3%	7%	3%	7%	5%	3%	10%	4%	2%
Permits\ordinance information	2%	3%	1%	4%	1%	1%	4%	2%	0%	4%	3%
Taxes & utilities, payment\info	1%	2%	0%	2%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%
Tax info\rates	4%	3%	5%	3%	4%	4%	3%	4%	6%	4%	2%
Meeting schedules	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%	2%	5%	4%
Meeting records	5%	7%	3%	7%	4%	2%	7%	7%	3%	8%	5%
Budget info	8%	8%	8%	7%	8%	5%	10%	8%	5%	8%	9%
Other	5%	6%	4%	4%	6%	6%	3%	7%	7%	4%	5%
No answer	33%	30%	33%	31%	35%	29%	32%	36%	32%	29%	38%
Unwtd N	656	411	191	366	290	107	311	224	123	268	248

8. In the past 12 months, have you [READ ITEM]?

Percent saying "yes"	TOTAL	INTERNET USE		VISIT TOWN SITE PAST YEAR		AGE			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		Frequent	Once a day or less	Yes	No	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
A. Renewed a driver's license or auto registration online	30%	46%	21%	45%	19%	30%	37%	22%	20%	34%	33%
B. Looked for information about a public policy or issue of interest to you online	45%	64%	38%	71%	25%	43%	50%	39%	35%	49%	48%
C. Looked up what services a government agency provides online	45%	64%	38%	68%	27%	42%	54%	35%	37%	46%	49%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	444	225	389	412	125	351	310	152	314	316

9. About how often do you use the internet or email from home or at work – several times a day, about once a day, 3 to 5 days a week, 1 to 2 days a week, every few weeks, less often or never?

	TOTAL	VISIT TOWN SITE PAST YEAR		AGE			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		Yes	No	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
Several times a day	52%	72%	36%	60%	57%	37%	41%	55%	56%
About once a day	14%	13%	15%	21%	12%	11%	20%	10%	13%
3 to 5 days a week	5%	6%	4%	3%	5%	6%	4%	5%	5%
1 to 2 days a week	5%	3%	6%	3%	8%	3%	5%	5%	5%
Every few weeks	2%	0%	4%	1%	2%	4%	1%	4%	2%
Less often	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%	4%	5%	2%	2%
Do not use at home/work	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	3%	0%
Never use internet	18%	2%	29%	6%	14%	33%	21%	15%	18%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	389	412	125	351	310	152	314	316

10. Do you ever use a social networking site like MySpace, Facebook or LinkedIn.com? Do you ever use Twitter or another service to share updates about yourself or to see updates about others?

	TOTAL	INTERNET USE		VISIT TOWN SITE PAST YEAR		AGE			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		Frequent	Once a day or less	Yes	No	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
Use social networking and Twitter	15%	20%	15%	21%	10%	29%	15%	4%	23%	13%	13%
Use social networking only	35%	50%	32%	42%	30%	44%	35%	28%	28%	41%	34%
Use neither	32%	31%	53%	35%	30%	21%	37%	35%	28%	31%	35%
Never use internet	18%	0%	0%	2%	29%	6%	14%	33%	21%	15%	18%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	444	225	389	412	125	351	310	152	314	316

11. How often, if ever, do you post updates about yourself on a social networking site like, MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter – several times a day, about once a day, 3 to 5 days a week, 1 to 2 days a week, every few weeks, less often, or never?

	TOTAL	INTERNET USE		VISIT TOWN SITE PAST YEAR		AGE			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		Frequent	Once a day or less	Yes	No	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
Several times a day	4%	5%	2%	4%	3%	9%	1%	1%	4%	3%	3%
About once a day	5%	7%	5%	7%	4%	11%	4%	2%	9%	4%	4%
3 to 5 days a week	4%	6%	3%	4%	4%	4%	7%	0%	4%	5%	4%
1 to 2 days a week	8%	12%	6%	8%	8%	13%	7%	5%	7%	8%	9%
Every few weeks	8%	11%	8%	12%	5%	11%	9%	5%	10%	9%	6%
Less often	10%	15%	8%	17%	5%	13%	11%	8%	9%	12%	10%
Never	11%	13%	14%	10%	12%	10%	11%	12%	8%	12%	12%
Do not use social networking	32%	31%	53%	35%	30%	21%	37%	35%	28%	31%	35%
Never use internet	18%	0%	0%	2%	29%	6%	14%	33%	21%	15%	18%
Unwtd N	801	444	225	389	412	125	351	310	152	314	316

The *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on February 2-7, 2011 with a statewide random sample of 801 adult residents. Sampling and live telephone interviewing services were provided by Braun Research, Inc. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)			
35% Dem	49% Male	28% 18-34	65% White
22% Rep	51% Female	40% 35-54	12% Black
43% Ind		32% 55+	15% Hispanic
			8% Asian/Other

It is the Monmouth University Polling Institute's policy to conduct surveys of all adult New Jersey residents, including voters and non-voters, on issues that affect the state. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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