

Contact:

PATRICK MURRAY

732-263-5858 (office)

732-979-6769 (cell)

pdmurray@monmouth.edu

Released:

Thursday, April 15, 2010

*Please attribute this information to:
Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll*

For more information:
Monmouth University Polling Institute
West Long Branch, NJ 07764
www.monmouth.edu/polling

NEW JERSEY UNDER STRESS ON INCOME TAX DAY; BUT PROPERTY TAXES STILL A BIGGER PROBLEM

Today is Tax Day: never an enjoyable time, but particularly unwelcome during an economic downturn. The latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* finds that most New Jerseyans are still under financial stress from the recession. And although today's focus is on income taxes, Garden State homeowners say their property tax bills present the bigger burden.

Overall, 71% of New Jerseyans say their finances are basically OK right now, but only 8% are willing to say their family's financial situation is in "very good" shape. This compares to 28% who say their current economic circumstances are in bad shape. These findings are similar to polls conducted in both 2008 and 2009.

While most New Jerseyans may be staying afloat financially, they are struggling. More than 4-in-10 (43%) self-described middle class residents say they are struggling to remain in the middle class. This compares to half (50%) who feel that their socio-economic status is stable and just 6% who say they are moving up beyond the middle class. These findings are nearly identical to a national ABC News poll released last month.

New Jersey middle-class residents who earn less than \$50,000 (57%) are more likely to say they are struggling to remain in the middle class, when compared to those earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (40%) or more than \$100,000 (34%).

Fully 6-in-10 state residents report that current economic conditions are causing them personal stress. This includes 31% who are under serious stress and 30% who are under some stress. Another 39% say that the economy is causing no real stress in their own lives. These findings are just slightly improved from a poll conducted last year.

New Jerseyans under serious stress include 38% of families earning less than \$50,000 a year, 27% in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 bracket, and 28% of those earning more than \$100,000.

“New Jerseyans are feeling the same economic stresses as families all across the country. The one thing that sets us apart, though, is the burden of property taxes,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

The poll asked New Jersey homeowners which of their tax bills is actually higher, their property tax or state income tax. Nearly two-thirds (65%) say they pay more in local property taxes, while just 18% say they pay more in state income taxes. These findings are fairly consistent across all income groups.

It’s not surprising, then, that 8-in-10 (80%) homeowners say, if given the choice, they would rather have their property tax bill reduced before their state income tax (17%). Even a majority (54%) of those who currently pay more in state income taxes say that lowering their property tax bill is the bigger priority.

“It makes you wonder if the Tea Party movement could have more success in New Jersey if it concentrated on reducing local property taxes rather than on national issues,” said Murray.

The poll also found that 53% of New Jerseyans say they would like to move out of New Jersey at some point, compared to 43% who would prefer to remain in the state for the rest of their lives. The number who want to move out represents a slight tick up from 50% in 2009 and 49% in 2007. These past polls indicated that the state’s high property tax burden is the main reason people want to flee New Jersey. Nearly half (47%) of all New Jerseyans in the poll describe themselves as being in the middle class. Another 37% say they are working class or lower and 14% say they are upper middle class or higher. These numbers are similar to the recent ABC News poll. Being middle class is in the eye of the beholder, as this self-designation is made by 42% of those earning less than \$50,000 a year, 48% of those in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 bracket, and 47% of those earning over \$100,000.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 804 New Jersey adults from April 7 to 11, 2010. 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 Gannett New Jersey 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. How would you rate the financial situation in your household these days – is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Very good	8%	6%	9%	9%	7%	7%	10%	9%	5%	12%
Fairly good	63%	68%	59%	62%	71%	59%	61%	49%	68%	71%
Fairly bad	20%	19%	22%	20%	16%	23%	21%	26%	21%	14%
Very bad	8%	6%	9%	7%	5%	11%	7%	16%	5%	3%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Unwt'd N	804	269	316	199	139	349	301	197	266	250

TREND:	April	May	May
	2010	2009	2008
Very good	8%	8%	12%
Fairly good	63%	60%	61%
Fairly bad	20%	22%	19%
Very bad	8%	7%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	2%	2%
Unwtd N	804	803	803

2. Would you describe yourself as working class, middle class, upper middle class, or better off than that?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Working class	36%	35%	42%	27%	42%	37%	28%	46%	42%	17%
Middle class	47%	48%	42%	51%	45%	44%	53%	42%	48%	47%
Upper middle class	11%	10%	10%	13%	7%	14%	10%	1%	4%	31%
Better off than that	3%	2%	3%	3%	5%	2%	1%	3%	2%	4%
(VOL) Less than working class	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	1%	4%	0%	1%	6%	6%	1%	1%
Unwtd N	804	269	316	199	139	349	301	197	266	250

[The following question was asked only of those who said "middle class" to Q2, moe= ± 5.0%]

3. Would you say you are struggling to remain in the middle class, comfortable in the middle class, or moving up beyond the middle class?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Struggling to remain in the middle class	43%	44%	41%	40%	41%	42%	46%	57%	40%	34%
Comfortable in the middle class	50%	50%	49%	54%	52%	47%	50%	38%	55%	56%
Moving up beyond the middle class	6%	6%	8%	4%	8%	9%	2%	4%	4%	9%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Unwtd N	386	127	146	100	62	154	162	87	140	112

4. Is the current economic situation a cause of stress in your life, or not? [If YES: Is it a cause of serious stress, or stress, but not serious?]

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Yes, serious	31%	30%	32%	30%	32%	34%	27%	38%	27%	28%
Yes, but not serious	30%	29%	31%	31%	33%	32%	25%	27%	32%	32%
No stress	39%	41%	37%	39%	34%	34%	48%	35%	41%	40%
(VOL) Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unwtd N	804	269	316	199	139	349	301	197	266	250

TREND:	April	May
	2010	2009
Yes, serious	31%	31%
Yes, but not serious	30%	36%
No stress	39%	32%
(VOL) Don't know	0%	1%
Unwtd N	804	803

5. As things stand now, would you like to move out of New Jersey at some point or would you like to stay here for the rest of your life?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Move out of NJ	53%	49%	59%	52%	56%	64%	37%	52%	50%	60%
Stay in NJ	43%	47%	39%	42%	40%	33%	59%	46%	45%	36%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	2%	6%	4%	3%	4%	2%	5%	3%
Unwtd N	804	269	316	199	139	349	301	197	266	250

TREND:	April 2010	September 2009	October 2007
Move out of NJ	53%	50%	49%
Stay in NJ	43%	43%	44%
(VOL) Don't Know	4%	7%	7%
Unwtd N	804	900	801

[THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE ASKED OF HOMEOWNERS ONLY, *moe*= ± 3.8%].

6. Which is higher – your annual property tax payments or your annual New Jersey state income tax bill?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Property tax payments	65%	63%	68%	64%	62%	67%	67%	61%	70%	63%
NJ state income tax bill	18%	21%	16%	18%	23%	18%	15%	20%	15%	22%
(VOL) They are about the same	3%	3%	3%	2%	0%	4%	2%	1%	3%	3%
(VOL) Don't know	14%	13%	14%	15%	15%	12%	16%	18%	12%	11%
Unwtd N	654	202	259	176	79	300	261	125	222	229

7. If you could reduce the amount of just one of your tax bills, which would it be – property tax or state income tax?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Property tax	80%	80%	80%	80%	79%	80%	82%	81%	84%	76%
State income tax	17%	16%	17%	18%	17%	18%	14%	14%	15%	21%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	4%	3%	2%	4%	2%	4%	5%	1%	3%
Unwtd N	654	202	259	176	79	300	261	125	222	229

The Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on April 7-11, 2010 with a statewide random sample of 804 adult residents. Sampling and 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)			
40% Dem	48% Male	28% 18-34	65% White
38% Ind	52% Female	42% 35-54	13% Black
22% Rep		30% 55+	14% 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.

###