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## **BIG DROP IN GARDEN STATE QUALITY OF LIFE**

### *Sandy-hit regions show largest decline*

In its regular tracking of residents' satisfaction with life in New Jersey, the *Monmouth University Poll* finds the current Garden State Quality of Life Index stands at +21. This is down significantly from other post-Superstorm Sandy readings, including +29 in February and +30 in December. In fact, the current score matches the prior low from December 2010, when Monmouth first introduced the index.

A major factor in the index score is residents' overall rating of the state as a place to live. Currently, more than 6-in-10 say New Jersey is either an excellent (15%) or good (46%) place to call home, compared to nearly 4-in-10 who rate it as only fair (27%) or poor (11%). This 61% positive rating is down by 7 points from the February poll and by 11 points from a decade-high 72% recorded in December just after Superstorm Sandy hit the state.

The decline in state ratings is accompanied by a drop in local evaluations. Specifically, 67% of New Jerseyans currently rate their town or city positively, down from 73% in February. This marks the lowest result for hometown evaluations in more than 30 years. The last time fewer than 7-in-10 New Jersey residents viewed their hometown positively was in 1980, when the number was also 67%.

Another area that shows a downturn in residents' perceptions is the local school rating. Currently, 59% of New Jerseyans give their local schools a thumbs up, down 5 points since February. On the other hand, ratings of local environmental quality stayed stable at 70% positive and views of neighborhood safety actually went up by 3 points to 66% positive.

"The feelings of goodwill that permeated the state after Sandy have disappeared, even wiping out positive gains made prior to the storm. New Jerseyans are once again looking at the state's quality of life with a more critical eye," said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

The Garden State Quality of Life Index score declined for nearly every demographic group when compared to February's results, with the exception of those earning over \$100,000 a year for whom it remained fairly steady at +35. Regionally, the index score registered double digit drops in Urban Core counties (+4), the Route 1 Corridor (+19), and the Northern Shore (+22). The index stayed relatively

more stable in areas not as affected by Sandy, including the Central Hills (+38), the Northeast (+31), the Garden Core counties (+21), and the Delaware Valley (+21). In fact, the Delaware Valley region, which suffered the least impact from Sandy, registered the most stable Quality of Life ratings for the period six months before Sandy hit to six months after, ranging narrowly from +21 to +26 during that time.

The Garden State Quality of Life Index was created by the Monmouth University Polling Institute to serve as a resident-based indicator of the quality of life offered by the state of New Jersey. The index is based on five separate poll questions: overall opinion of the state as a place to live – which contributes half the index score – and ratings of one’s hometown, the performance of local schools, the quality of the local environment, and feelings of safety in one’s own neighborhood. The index can potentially range from -100 to +100.

<b>GARDEN STATE QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX</b>											
	<b>NJ TOTAL</b>	<u>GENDER</u>		<u>AGE</u>			<u>RACE</u>		<u>INCOME</u>		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/ Hispanic	<\$50K	\$50- 100K	>\$100K
April 2013	<b>+21</b>	+19	+24	+19	+19	+27	+29	+3	+12	+19	+35
February 2013	<b>+29</b>	+28	+30	+30	+27	+31	+36	+12	+20	+30	+36
December 2012	<b>+30</b>	+31	+29	+30	+30	+30	+36	+14	+17	+33	+38
September 2012	<b>+24</b>	+28	+20	+16	+21	+32	+30	+5	+10	+23	+37
July 2012	<b>+27</b>	+26	+29	+21	+31	+30	+32	+16	+16	+31	+37
April 2012	<b>+31</b>	+33	+28	+25	+30	+37	+36	+19	+24	+28	+42
February 2012	<b>+25</b>	+20	+30	+25	+24	+26	+29	+13	+17	+23	+38
October 2011	<b>+24</b>	+24	+24	+23	+21	+29	+31	+7	+15	+25	+31
August 2011	<b>+22</b>	+25	+19	+27	+19	+21	+26	+9	+9	+22	+32
May 2011	<b>+23</b>	+24	+22	+23	+22	+23	+26	+14	+15	+22	+32
December 2010	<b>+21</b>	+20	+23	+23	+20	+23	+26	+13	+15	+21	+31

<b>GARDEN STATE QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX</b>											
	North east	Urban Core	Route 1 Corridor	<u>REGION</u>				Garden Core	<u>COMMUNITY TYPE</u>		
				Central Hills	Northern Shore	Delaware Valley	Urban		Stable Town	Growing Suburb	
April 2013	+31	+4	+19	+38	+22	+21	+21	-3	+30	+27	
February 2013	+31	+17	+35	+37	+36	+25	+23	+11	+33	+36	
December 2012	+36	+18	+26	+47	+40	+21	+31	+9	+37	+37	
September 2012	+29	+14	+17	+45	+33	+26	+13	-1	+27	+31	
July 2012	+37	+12	+30	+37	+34	+22	+18	+8	+34	+34	
April 2012	+38	+26	+27	+44	+34	+22	+28	+20	+35	+36	
February 2012	+33	+17	+27	+35	+29	+19	+22	+11	+31	+29	
October 2011	+31	+6	+22	+45	+35	+18	+23	-1	+31	+34	
August 2011	+24	+16	+21	+38	+27	+26	+6	+4	+29	+25	
May 2011	+28	+17	+16	+41	+29	+22	+20	+6	+29	+28	
December 2010	+26	+15	+22	+38	+23	+14	+17	+12	+23	+27	

The latest *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone with 806 New Jersey adults from April 11 to April 14, 2013. This sample has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.5$  percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, New Jersey.

**DATA TABLES**

*The questions referred to in this release are as follows:*

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

1. Overall, how would you rate New Jersey as a place to live – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

TREND:	Excellent/ Good	Excellent	Good	Only Fair	Poor	(VOL) Don't know	(n)
April 2013	61%	15%	46%	27%	11%	0%	(806)
February 2013	68%	18%	50%	24%	7%	1%	(803)
December 2012	72%	20%	52%	21%	5%	1%	(816)
September 2012	65%	15%	50%	23%	11%	0%	(805)
July 2012	69%	17%	52%	23%	8%	0%	(803)
April 2012	70%	20%	50%	23%	7%	0%	(804)
February 2012	62%	15%	47%	26%	11%	1%	(803)
October 2011	67%	15%	52%	24%	8%	0%	(817)
August 2011	57%	14%	43%	31%	11%	1%	(802)
May 2011	59%	14%	45%	29%	11%	0%	(807)
December 2010	63%	17%	46%	26%	10%	1%	(2864)
October 2007	63%	17%	46%	25%	12%	1%	(1001)
August 2004	68%	22%	46%	21%	10%	1%	(800)
May 2003	72%	20%	52%	23%	5%	0%	(1002)
April 2001	76%	23%	53%	19%	4%	1%	(802)
March 2000	76%	25%	51%	17%	6%	0%	(800)
May 1999	76%	22%	54%	19%	5%	0%	(800)
February 1994	71%	18%	53%	22%	7%	0%	(801)
March 1990	68%	21%	47%	25%	6%	1%	(800)
February 1988	78%	27%	51%	17%	4%	1%	(800)
February 1987	84%	31%	53%	11%	4%	0%	(800)
May 1985	81%	29%	52%	14%	3%	1%	(500)
October 1984	80%	29%	51%	15%	4%	1%	(1000)
January 1981	66%	16%	50%	26%	7%	1%	(1003)
July 1980	68%	18%	50%	23%	7%	2%	(1005)

2. How would you rate your town or city as a place to live – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

TREND:	Excellent/ Good	Excellent	Good	Only Fair	Poor	(VOL) Don't know	(n)
April 2013	67%	29%	38%	25%	8%	0%	(806)
February 2013	73%	30%	43%	20%	7%	0%	(803)
December 2012	74%	32%	42%	17%	9%	0%	(816)
September 2012	72%	33%	39%	19%	9%	0%	(805)
July 2012	74%	32%	42%	18%	7%	1%	(803)
April 2012	76%	34%	42%	17%	7%	0%	(804)
February 2012	74%	33%	41%	21%	5%	0%	(803)
October 2011	73%	26%	47%	20%	8%	0%	(817)
August 2011	76%	28%	48%	18%	6%	0%	(802)
May 2011	73%	33%	40%	20%	7%	0%	(807)
December 2010	73%	27%	46%	20%	8%	0%	(2864)
May 2003	74%	29%	45%	19%	7%	0%	(1002)
April 2001	73%	28%	45%	21%	6%	0%	(802)
May 1995	70%	30%	40%	21%	8%	0%	(802)
June 1994	72%	31%	41%	19%	9%	0%	(801)
September 1988	72%	26%	46%	18%	9%	1%	(500)
October 1984	71%	30%	41%	21%	7%	1%	(999)
June 1980	67%	23%	44%	24%	9%	0%	(1005)
May 1977	66%	25%	41%	24%	10%	0%	(1005)

[QUESTIONS 3, 4 AND 5 WERE ROTATED]

3. How would you rate the quality of the environment in the area where you live – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

TREND:	Excellent/ Good	Excellent	Good	Only Fair	Poor	(VOL) Don't know	(n)
April 2013	70%	27%	43%	22%	7%	0%	(806)
February 2013	71%	26%	45%	24%	4%	2%	(803)
December 2012	73%	25%	48%	20%	7%	1%	(816)
September 2012	72%	30%	42%	20%	7%	0%	(805)
July 2012	74%	30%	44%	19%	7%	1%	(803)
April 2012	75%	30%	45%	18%	6%	1%	(804)
February 2012	77%	29%	48%	17%	5%	0%	(803)
October 2011	72%	25%	47%	19%	9%	0%	(817)
August 2011	79%	31%	48%	16%	5%	0%	(802)
May 2011	79%	33%	46%	15%	6%	0%	(807)
December 2010	66%	14%	52%	25%	9%	0%	(2864)
April 2001	70%	27%	43%	22%	7%	1%	(402)
September 1988	53%	10%	43%	31%	15%	1%	(500)

4. How would you rate the job your local schools are doing – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

TREND:	Excellent/ Good	Excellent	Good	Only Fair	Poor	(VOL) Don't know	(n)
April 2013	59%	21%	38%	27%	9%	5%	(806)
February 2013	64%	24%	40%	20%	7%	9%	(803)
December 2012	61%	21%	40%	23%	7%	9%	(816)
September 2012	61%	27%	34%	21%	10%	8%	(805)
July 2012	61%	22%	39%	20%	11%	8%	(803)
April 2012	63%	23%	40%	21%	7%	8%	(804)
February 2012	68%	26%	42%	16%	8%	8%	(803)
October 2011	60%	21%	39%	20%	13%	7%	(817)
August 2011	63%	19%	44%	26%	6%	5%	(802)
May 2011	63%	24%	39%	22%	10%	6%	(807)
December 2010	64%	24%	40%	23%	8%	5%	(2864)
August 2004	61%	24%	37%	17%	12%	9%	(800)
April 2001	64%	21%	43%	21%	6%	9%	(802)
September 1999	62%	18%	44%	21%	9%	8%	(802)
September 1998	62%	20%	42%	23%	9%	7%	(804)
February 1996	60%	20%	40%	20%	11%	9%	(804)
September 1993	52%	16%	36%	29%	14%	5%	(801)
January 1992	53%	15%	38%	26%	15%	5%	(800)
October 1987	60%	14%	46%	23%	6%	11%	(500)
October 1986	55%	15%	40%	26%	10%	9%	(800)
October 1983	59%	16%	43%	23%	10%	8%	(802)
May 1978	52%	12%	40%	25%	12%	11%	(1003)

5. How safe do you feel in your neighborhood at night – very safe, somewhat safe, or not at all safe?

TREND:	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Not at all safe	(VOL) Don't know	(n)
April 2013	66%	28%	6%	0%	(806)
February 2013	63%	30%	6%	1%	(803)
December 2012	64%	29%	6%	1%	(816)
September 2012	65%	25%	6%	0%	(805)
July 2012	60%	32%	7%	1%	(803)
April 2012	64%	31%	5%	1%	(804)
February 2012	62%	32%	5%	0%	(803)
October 2011	62%	31%	7%	0%	(817)
August 2011	63%	31%	6%	0%	(802)
May 2011	68%	27%	5%	0%	(807)
December 2010	59%	35%	6%	0%	(2864)
February 1993	42%	44%	13%	0%	(801)
October 1987	51%	36%	11%	2%	(499)
October 1984	53%	36%	9%	2%	(500)
May 1981	43%	43%	13%	1%	(497)

[Note: All trend results prior to 2005 come from Rutgers University's Eagleton Poll.]

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from April 11 to 14, 2013 with a statewide random sample of 806 adult residents, including 606 contacted on a landline telephone and 200 on a cell phone. Live interviewing services were provided by Braun Research, Inc. and the telephone sample was obtained from Survey Sampling International. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. 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.

<i>POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)</i>			
<i>39% Dem</i>	<i>48% Male</i>	<i>28% 18-34</i>	<i>64% White</i>
<i>39% Ind</i>	<i>52% Female</i>	<i>38% 35-54</i>	<i>12% Black</i>
<i>22% Rep</i>		<i>34% 55+</i>	<i>15% Hispanic</i>
			<i>9% Asian/Other</i>

Region is defined by county boundaries: Northeast (Bergen, Passaic), Urban Core (Essex, Hudson), Route 1 Corridor (Mercer, Middlesex, Union), Central Hills (Hunterdon, Morris, Somerset), Northern Shore (Monmouth, Ocean), Delaware Valley (Burlington, Camden, Gloucester), and Garden Core (Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, Salem, Sussex, Warren).

*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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