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## **JOB WORRIES CREATE STRESS IN JERSEY**

*Anxiety increases among all income levels since last year*

Fully 2-in-3 New Jerseyans say the current economic situation is causing stress in their lives. The latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* also found that lack of job security leads the list of their economic concerns.

Overall, 31% of New Jerseyans say the economic downturn has caused serious stress in their lives and another 36% say it has caused them stress, although not serious. Just 32% say that the current situation causes them no stress at all. These findings are similar to a national *ABC News/Washington Post Poll* taken in March, which found that 61% of Americans felt stress from the economy, including 33% with serious stress. Two-thirds of New Jersey residents at all income levels feel at least some stress due to the economy – including under \$50,000 (67%), \$50,000 to \$100,000 (71%), and over \$100,000 (65%).

The poll also asked New Jersey residents to place themselves on a ladder of life satisfaction, where step “10” represents the best possible life for them and step “0” represents the worst possible life. The average New Jerseyan places himself or herself between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> steps – 5.7 to be exact. This is a full step below the average satisfaction rating of 6.8 that New Jerseyans gave themselves just two years ago. Overall, residents in all income levels and age groups have moved down a step on the life satisfaction ladder since April 2007.

Specifically, only 1-in-5 (19%) residents currently place themselves on the top three steps (i.e. 8, 9, or 10), which is down from 39% two years ago. By comparison, nearly half (47%) put themselves on the lowest rungs (0 through 5), which is nearly double the 25% who said the same in an April 2007 poll.

While they are now less satisfied with their lives, 2-in-3 New Jerseyans (68%) continue to say their household's financial situation is basically good, compared to 29% who say it is in bad shape. Positive evaluations are down only slightly from last year, when a May 2008 poll found that 73% of state residents regarded their family's finances as good.

"It appears that most New Jerseyans are doing what they need to do to keep their household budgets solvent, but it's putting a strain on their quality of life," said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. "The biggest cause of anxiety seems to be not so much what's happening to them now, but fear of what may be coming down the line."

When asked to name their main economic concerns right now, 30% of Garden State resident say they worry about potential unemployment and another 20% say they are worried about what's happened to their retirement accounts or other investments. About 1-in-5 say meeting their mortgage (14%) or rent (4%) payment is a primary concern, 18% say it is college tuition or school costs, 16% say it is healthcare costs, and 5% say it is taxes. Another 21% report that paying "everyday bills" is their main economic worry.

Among New Jerseyans who are currently employed, nearly half (46%) feel less secure in their present job compared to a couple of years ago. In a poll taken in May 2008, just 30% said they felt less job security. Currently, only 19% of employed New Jerseyans feel more secure in their jobs and 35% feel about the same job security as they did a couple of years ago. Just last year, 27% of working Garden State residents felt more secure in their jobs and 42% felt as secure as they had in the past.

The poll also found that heightened anxiety about unemployment extends to the entire household. When asked about job loss potentially affecting their family, 44% of New Jerseyans say they are very concerned that someone in their household might be out of work in the next 12 months. Another 25% are somewhat concerned that this might happen and just 30% are not at all concerned. Just one year ago, only 33% were very concerned about this, while 42% were not at all concerned.

Currently, half of Garden State residents whose household income is less than \$50,000 (52%), or who are under age 35 (50%), are very concerned about a job loss in their household in the coming year. Last year, these numbers stood at 41% for lower income families and 39% for younger adults. Concern about potential job loss has increased for higher income earners as well. Currently, 42% of those earning \$50,000 to \$100,000 are very concerned (up from 34% last year)

and 33% of those earning more than \$100,000 are very concerned (up from 25% last year) about someone in their home being out of work in the coming year.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 803 New Jersey adults from April 23 to 27, 2009. This sample has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.5$  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.)

- For this question, please think about a picture of a ladder. Suppose that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom represents the worst possible life for you. If the top step is "10" and the bottom step is "0", on which step of the ladder do you feel you personally stand at the present time?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
High, 8-10	19%	19%	18%	22%	16%	20%	22%	14%	18%	32%
Medium, 6-7	32%	30%	32%	35%	38%	32%	25%	18%	39%	42%
Low, 0-5	47%	49%	49%	41%	46%	47%	50%	67%	43%	24%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	3%	1%	0%	1%
<b>Average</b>	<b>5.7</b>	5.6	5.5	6.0	5.6	5.8	5.6	5.0	5.8	6.5
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	299	287	193	182	353	263	237	261	203

TREND:	May 2009	April 2007
High, 8-10	19%	39%
Medium, 6-7	32%	34%
Low, 0-5	47%	25%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%
<b>Average</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>6.8</b>
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	<b>801</b>

- 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%	10%	5%	8%	9%	6%	10%	4%	7%	15%
Fairly good	60%	57%	59%	68%	63%	61%	57%	52%	64%	71%
Fairly bad	22%	23%	27%	15%	21%	25%	20%	30%	21%	11%
Very bad	7%	7%	8%	7%	5%	7%	9%	11%	7%	3%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%	4%	3%	0%	0%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	299	287	193	182	353	263	237	261	203

TREND:	May 2009	May 2008
Very good	8%	12%
Fairly good	60%	61%
Fairly bad	22%	19%
Very bad	7%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	<b>803</b>

3. Is the current economic situation a cause of stress in your life, or not? [If YES, ASK: 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	<b>31%</b>	30%	29%	36%	28%	39%	26%	35%	32%	26%
Yes, but not serious	<b>36%</b>	38%	38%	30%	41%	36%	32%	32%	39%	39%
No stress	<b>32%</b>	31%	33%	33%	31%	25%	41%	32%	29%	35%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>1%</b>	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	299	287	193	182	353	263	237	261	203

4. What is your biggest personal economic concern right now? [Note: Results add to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted]

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Everyday bills	<b>21%</b>	15%	26%	23%	17%	26%	21%	24%	19%	18%
Mortgage payment	<b>14%</b>	14%	15%	12%	13%	19%	9%	15%	17%	13%
Rent	<b>4%</b>	4%	5%	5%	7%	4%	2%	8%	3%	2%
Healthcare costs	<b>16%</b>	17%	17%	15%	8%	18%	23%	19%	13%	14%
Retirement savings/investments	<b>20%</b>	19%	17%	25%	11%	23%	26%	17%	19%	28%
Food, grocery bills	<b>12%</b>	11%	13%	9%	7%	12%	16%	16%	8%	9%
College tuition, school costs	<b>18%</b>	20%	16%	16%	24%	21%	7%	13%	21%	23%
Loss of job, unemployment	<b>30%</b>	28%	32%	30%	40%	32%	16%	34%	29%	24%
Property taxes	<b>3%</b>	2%	3%	6%	1%	3%	6%	4%	2%	4%
Other taxes	<b>2%</b>	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%	2%
Other	<b>5%</b>	5%	7%	5%	3%	6%	5%	4%	5%	8%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>6%</b>	6%	5%	7%	5%	5%	8%	5%	6%	3%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	299	287	193	182	353	263	237	261	203

5. How concerned are you that in the next 12 months you or someone else in your household might be out of work or looking for a job – very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not concerned at all?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Very concerned	<b>44%</b>	46%	44%	37%	50%	47%	31%	52%	42%	33%
Somewhat concerned	<b>25%</b>	24%	25%	28%	25%	27%	22%	18%	24%	35%
Not concerned at all	<b>30%</b>	29%	30%	33%	24%	26%	44%	29%	33%	32%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>1%</b>	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%	0%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	299	287	193	182	353	263	237	261	203

TREND:	May 2009	May 2008
Very concerned	44%	33%
Somewhat concerned	25%	23%
Not concerned at all	30%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	2%
Unwtd N	803	803

6. Are you currently employed, temporarily out of work, not in the market for work at all, or retired?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Employed	51%	57%	49%	48%	60%	61%	29%	32%	59%	73%
Out of work	17%	18%	20%	13%	25%	19%	7%	25%	14%	13%
Not in labor market	10%	6%	10%	16%	11%	13%	4%	9%	11%	6%
Retired	21%	19%	20%	24%	3%	8%	60%	33%	16%	8%
(VOL) Other/Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unwtd N	803	299	287	193	182	353	263	237	261	203

TREND:	May 2009	May 2008
Employed	51%	56%
Out of work	17%	8%
Not in labor market	10%	9%
Retired	21%	26%
(VOL) Other/Don't know	0%	1%
Unwtd N	803	803

[NOTE: The following question was asked only of those who were EMPLOYED: moe=+/-4.8%]

7. In the past couple of years, would you say you have felt MORE secure and confident that you can continue in your job as long as you want, or LESS secure and confident, or has there been no change?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			INCOME		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
More secure/confident	19%	19%	18%	24%	23%	19%	14%	17%	23%	22%
Less secure/confident	46%	45%	46%	46%	43%	48%	45%	39%	44%	46%
No change	35%	36%	36%	30%	34%	34%	41%	44%	33%	31%
(VOL) Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unwtd N	420	170	149	93	113	223	83	73	145	153

TREND:	May 2009	May 2008
More secure	19%	27%
Less secure	46%	30%
No change	35%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	0%	1%
Unwtd N	420	438

The Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll was conducted and analyzed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute research staff. The telephone interviews were collected by Braun Research on April 23-27, 2009 with a statewide random sample of 803 adult residents. 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.

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 which affect the state. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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