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## **PLANS FOR THE JERSEY SHORE**

*On beach maintenance, many feel the state should pick up the cost*

New Jersey residents' opinion of their state as a vacation destination has been declining for more than a decade, according to the latest **Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll**. Still, 6-in-10 Garden State residents plan on making an excursion down the Jersey Shore this year, although paying beach fees remains a sticking point for most.

Half of New Jerseyans say that their home state is either an excellent (13%) or good (37%) place to take a vacation. Another 34% rate New Jersey as only a fair vacation destination and 14% say it is poor. This marks a continued decline in views of the state as a vacation spot. The 50% who rate New Jersey positively for its vacation potential is nine points lower than it was in 2003 (59%). This was also down from 65% in 1998 and 71% in 1994. Regionally, just under half of North Jersey and Central Jersey residents rate the state positively as a place to take a vacation – 48% in the north, down 6 points from 2003; and 46% in the central region, down 9 points from 2003. Positive ratings among South Jersey residents at 55% are slightly higher than in the northern and central regions, but this is still 16 points lower than the 2003 poll.

Despite lower opinion of the state as a vacation destination, New Jerseyans plan on spending about the same number of days down the shore this summer as they did back in a 1995 poll. The typical New Jersey resident plans on spending an average of 17 days down the Jersey Shore this summer. This includes 11% who will spend basically the entire summer (at least 60 days) down the shore, 25% who will spend more than a week (8 to 60 days), and 31% who will stay a total of seven or fewer days. Another 29% report they will not spend any time down the shore this summer. The 17 day average shore visit is identical to the 17 day average measured

in a 1995 poll. However, this does not mean the patterns are exactly the same. For example, the current survey's average is higher because there are now more people who live down the shore year round. Back in 1995, there were more people who planned on taking a vacation of more than two weeks than there are today. In other words, New Jerseyans today are spending less of their total vacation time down the shore than they did a decade ago.

Regionally, North Jersey residents will spend an average of 7 days down the shore, Central Jerseyans 22 days, and South Jerseyans 31 days. The higher central and southern numbers are due in large part to the number of people in those regions who live down the shore year round.

After excluding year round residents from the results, the poll found income differences in projected shore visits. Overall 68% of those earning over \$100,000 and 63% of those in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 bracket are planning some time down the shore, compared to 54% of those earning less than \$50,000.

“In recent years, the relative cost of taking a vacation out of state has made the shore a less attractive destination,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “However, rising fuel prices may prompt people to stay closer to home this summer, as long as the worsening economy doesn't wipe out their vacation plans entirely.”

One unique cost factor associated with a Jersey Shore vacation is the necessity to buy beach tags or pay a fee to gain access to many of the state's beaches. Among those residents who say they plan on going to the shore this summer, 45% say they usually go to a beach where a fee is required, while 39% usually go to a fee-free beach and 8% go to both types of beaches equally. Free beaches can be interpreted to include state and national park areas which require a parking fee, but not a beach access fee, as well as private beach clubs. Residents of South Jersey – which has a greater number of free beach options than the northern coastline – are somewhat less likely than other New Jerseyans to say they usually go to a beach with a fee. It's important to note that only 12% of New Jersey shore visitors say they have *never* been to a pay beach.

The poll found that 1-in-5 shore visitors (20%) report having gone onto a Jersey beach without paying the required fee. Another 65% say they always pay the required fee. Among those who have not paid for beach access, 36% say they make a point of evading the fee, while 32% say there are simply no tag inspectors to collect the fee where they go.

“More than 30 years after beach tags began popping up in shore towns, access fees have become a way of life in New Jersey. But that doesn't mean we like paying them,” said Murray.

Only 30% of all New Jerseyans think that beachgoers should have to pay a fee to use New Jersey’s beaches, while 65% disagree with this policy. Among shore visitors who generally spread their blanket on a pay beach, 46% agree with the beach fee policy compared to a nearly equal 47% who do not. Among those who seek out fee-free beaches, only 21% agree with the beach tag policy, while 73% disagree.

One source of this opposition to beach fees could be a suspicion that these revenues are not being used for their stated purpose – to maintain a local town’s beaches. Only 36% of New Jersey residents believe these funds are being used for beach maintenance, while 42% think the money is being used primarily to pay for other local services.

About half (49%) of New Jersey residents say that the state as a whole should pick up most of the cost to maintain Jersey beaches, compared to 33% who feel that local towns should shoulder the burden for their own piece of the coastline. Another 12% say the cost should be shared equally between state and local governments.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 803 New Jersey adults from April 24 to 28, 2008. 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.)

- Overall, how would you rate the state of New Jersey as a place to take a vacation – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

	TOTAL	AGE			CHILDREN UNDER 18		INCOME			RACE		REGION		
		18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	Yes	No	<\$50K	\$50K to \$100K	>\$100K	White	Black Hispanic	North	Central	South
Excellent	<b>13%</b>	10%	14%	16%	13%	14%	13%	13%	15%	17%	8%	13%	12%	15%
Good	<b>37%</b>	31%	39%	41%	35%	38%	37%	39%	37%	40%	34%	35%	34%	40%
Only fair	<b>34%</b>	39%	32%	32%	34%	34%	29%	33%	38%	32%	35%	36%	39%	28%
Poor	<b>14%</b>	19%	14%	9%	18%	12%	19%	15%	9%	11%	22%	15%	14%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>1%</b>	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	165	349	279	235	561	203	265	229	635	135	359	195	214

TREND:	May 2008	May 2003*	June 1998*	June 1994*
Excellent	13%	18%	24%	28%
Good	37%	41%	41%	43%
Only fair	34%	28%	26%	22%
Poor	14%	11%	7%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	1%	2%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	803	501	602	801

\* Source: Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

2. Will you visit the Jersey shore this summer? If yes, will you stay for a week or more?

	TOTAL	AGE			CHILDREN UNDER 18		INCOME			RACE		REGION		
		18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	Yes	No	<\$50K	\$50K to \$100K	>\$100K	White	Black Hispanic	North	Central	South
For a week or more	<b>26%</b>	31%	21%	28%	25%	27%	25%	27%	27%	27%	27%	29%	23%	26%
For less than a week	<b>34%</b>	35%	38%	27%	36%	33%	29%	36%	41%	32%	37%	35%	37%	31%
No	<b>29%</b>	22%	29%	37%	28%	30%	37%	23%	25%	29%	33%	33%	27%	24%
(VOL) Live down shore	<b>7%</b>	8%	7%	7%	8%	7%	8%	11%	4%	9%	1%	0%	12%	16%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>3%</b>	3%	4%	1%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	165	349	279	235	561	203	265	229	635	135	359	195	214

TREND:	May 2008	May 2007
For a week or more	26%	23%
For less than a week	34%	37%
No	29%	31%
(VOL) Live down shore	7%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	4%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	803	804

3. There are about 100 days between Memorial Day and Labor Day. About how many of these days do you plan on spending at the Jersey shore?

	TOTAL	AGE			CHILDREN UNDER 18		INCOME			RACE		REGION		
		18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	Yes	No	<\$50K	\$50K to \$100K	>\$100K	White	Black Hispanic	North	Central	South
No days	<b>29%</b>	22%	29%	37%	28%	30%	37%	23%	25%	29%	33%	33%	27%	24%
1 to 7 days	<b>31%</b>	34%	30%	31%	28%	33%	32%	32%	36%	31%	36%	34%	34%	27%
8 to 60 days	<b>25%</b>	30%	27%	19%	29%	23%	18%	28%	29%	23%	25%	29%	22%	22%
Whole summer (60+ days)	<b>11%</b>	11%	10%	11%	12%	11%	12%	13%	7%	14%	4%	1%	16%	24%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>3%</b>	3%	4%	1%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%
Average days	<b>17</b>	19	17	16	18	17	17	20	15	20	10	7	22	31
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	165	349	279	235	561	203	265	229	635	135	359	195	214

TREND:	May 2008	May 1995*
No days	29%	22%
1 to 7 days	31%	34%
8 to 60 days	25%	35%
Whole summer (60+)	11%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%
Average days	17	17
<i>Unwtd N</i>	803	802

\* Source: Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

[NOTE: Question 4 and 5 were asked only of those who were said they planned to spend time down the shore: moe=+/-4.2%]

4. Do you usually go to a beach where you are supposed to pay a fee, or do you usually go to a free beach?

	SHORE VISITORS	AGE			CHILDREN UNDER 18		INCOME			RACE		REGION		
		18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	Yes	No	<\$50K	\$50K to \$100K	>\$100K	White	Black Hispanic	North	Central	South
Beach with a fee	<b>45%</b>	37%	50%	48%	45%	45%	36%	50%	48%	49%	36%	48%	49%	38%
Free beach	<b>39%</b>	48%	36%	33%	41%	38%	47%	37%	35%	35%	44%	39%	39%	39%
(VOL) Both equally	<b>8%</b>	10%	7%	5%	11%	6%	6%	6%	9%	7%	10%	5%	6%	12%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>8%</b>	6%	8%	13%	3%	11%	11%	8%	8%	8%	10%	8%	7%	11%
Unwtd N	<b>537</b>	116	238	176	167	366	123	189	167	432	83	224	136	159

5. Have you ever gone onto a New Jersey beach WITHOUT paying the required fee or do you always pay the fee?

	SHORE VISITORS	AGE			CHILDREN UNDER 18		INCOME			RACE		REGION		
		18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	Yes	No	<\$50K	\$50K to \$100K	>\$100K	White	Black Hispanic	North	Central	South
Yes, have NOT paid	<b>20%</b>	24%	18%	17%	14%	22%	27%	14%	17%	19%	21%	20%	16%	23%
No, ALWAYS pay	<b>65%</b>	59%	69%	65%	71%	62%	50%	69%	76%	66%	58%	64%	70%	59%
(VOL) Never go to a beach with a fee	<b>12%</b>	14%	9%	13%	10%	13%	18%	12%	6%	12%	16%	11%	11%	16%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>4%</b>	4%	4%	4%	5%	3%	4%	5%	2%	4%	6%	5%	4%	2%
Unwtd N	<b>537</b>	116	238	176	167	366	123	189	167	432	83	224	136	159

[NOTE: Questions 6 and 7 were asked only of those who were said they had gone on a New Jersey beach WITHOUT PAYING THE FEE: moe=+/-9.7%]

6. How often do you go onto the beach without paying the fee – all the time, most of the time, or just occasionally?

	TOTAL
All of the time	23%
Most of the time	15%
Occasionally	57%
(VOL) Don't know	5%
Unwtd N	102

7. Does this generally happen because there are no tag inspectors around or do you make a point of trying to avoid the fee?

	TOTAL
No tag inspector	32%
Make a point not to pay	36%
(VOL) Both	5%
(VOL) Don't know	27%
Unwtd N	102

8. Do you think beachgoers should or should not have to pay a fee to use New Jersey beaches?

	TOTAL	AGE			CHILDREN UNDER 18		INCOME			RACE		REGION		
		18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	Yes	No	<\$50K	\$50K to \$100K	>\$100K	White	Black Hispanic	North	Central	South
Should	<b>30%</b>	31%	31%	30%	31%	30%	28%	29%	37%	31%	29%	32%	28%	29%
Should not	<b>65%</b>	63%	65%	65%	66%	64%	66%	66%	58%	65%	65%	62%	66%	68%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>5%</b>	6%	4%	6%	3%	6%	6%	5%	5%	4%	6%	6%	6%	3%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	165	349	279	235	561	203	265	229	635	135	359	195	214

TREND:	May 2008	May 2006
Should	30%	26%
Should not	65%	70%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%
Unwtd N	803	803

9. In your opinion, are towns that charge beach fees using these funds primarily to maintain their beaches or primarily to pay for other local services?

	TOTAL	AGE			CHILDREN UNDER 18		INCOME			RACE		REGION		
		18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	Yes	No	<\$50K	\$50K to \$100K	>\$100K	White	Black Hispanic	North	Central	South
Maintain beaches	<b>36%</b>	33%	31%	47%	31%	39%	39%	31%	42%	38%	38%	38%	27%	41%
Pay for other services	<b>42%</b>	49%	44%	33%	47%	40%	42%	46%	37%	36%	48%	39%	53%	39%
(VOL) Both about equally	<b>5%</b>	5%	6%	3%	6%	5%	3%	6%	6%	6%	3%	4%	6%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>17%</b>	13%	19%	17%	16%	17%	16%	17%	15%	19%	11%	19%	14%	15%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	165	349	279	235	561	203	265	229	635	135	359	195	214

10. Who should pay for most of the cost to maintain Jersey beaches – the state as a whole or the local shore towns themselves?

	TOTAL	AGE			CHILDREN UNDER 18		INCOME			RACE		REGION		
		18 to 34	35 to 54	55 or over	Yes	No	<\$50K	\$50K to \$100K	>\$100K	White	Black Hispanic	North	Central	South
State as a whole	<b>49%</b>	58%	46%	45%	48%	50%	52%	49%	47%	47%	55%	52%	55%	41%
Local shore towns	<b>33%</b>	28%	35%	34%	36%	32%	35%	30%	35%	33%	34%	32%	30%	35%
(VOL) Both equally	<b>12%</b>	10%	12%	16%	12%	13%	10%	14%	11%	14%	8%	10%	10%	17%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>6%</b>	4%	7%	6%	5%	6%	3%	7%	7%	5%	3%	6%	4%	6%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	165	349	279	235	561	203	265	229	635	135	359	195	214

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 24-28, 2008 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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