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HALF OF NEW JERSEY WOULD LEAVE IF THEY COULD

Most say property taxes, cost of living driving them out

Hot on the heels of an economic report detailing the negative impact of taxpayer flight from New Jersey over the past few years, the latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* indicates that this trend is only likely to worsen – and sooner rather than later. If given the choice, half of all New Jerseyans say they would leave the state, with property taxes and other costs being the main factor behind their desire to get out.

The poll found that 49% of New Jersey adults would like to move out of the state at some point, compared to 44% who would prefer to live out their lives here and 7% who are unsure. Moreover, 51% of those who want to leave the state say they are in fact very likely to make good on that wish. Another 36% say they are somewhat likely to eventually leave New Jersey and 10% are not too or not at all likely.

In light of last week's Rutgers Regional Report on the economic impact of state-to-state migration, some observers have suggested that this exodus is mainly due to the retiring population. However, the poll finds that a majority of those who want to leave and are likely to make good on that desire are younger workers in higher tax brackets.

Those most likely to want to leave include adults under the age of 50 (54%) and those earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (59%). Those least likely to leave include adults age 50 and over (42%) and those earning below \$50,000 (38%). Residents in the highest income

category, greater than \$100,000, are divided – 50% want to leave compared to 45% who want to stay in New Jersey.

Among all state residents under the age of 50, about 3-in-10 (31%) say they are very likely to move out of New Jersey, regardless of their current income. On the other hand, for residents age 50 and over, income dictates their actual likelihood of leaving – 44% of residents in this age group who also earn six figures are very likely to go, compared to just 23% of those with \$50,000 to \$100,000 incomes and 15% of those below \$50,000.

The poll found that most aspiring emigrants don't want to wait until retirement to leave – 53% say they want to get out of the state before they end their work careers compared to 40% who say they would wait for retirement. In measured time, that translates to nearly half (46%) who want to leave New Jersey in the next 5 years, 26% in the next 6 to 10 years, and 21% more than 10 years from now.

“These results indicate that the trends noted in the report by Hughes and Seneca are only going to get worse,” remarked Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “The poll points to a real possibility that active working adults and higher earning retirees will leave the state in greater numbers, leaving behind a generally low-income senior population. This could put added demand on public services, but with a diminished tax base to carry the costs.”

One of the questions last week's economic report did not address are the reasons why residents are leaving the state. The poll asked those wanting to leave the state to name their top reason why and found that property taxes (28%) are the most common factor, followed by the high cost of living in New Jersey (19%). In fact, when these responses are added to those who name other state taxes (5%) and housing costs (6%), nearly 6-in-10 (58%) of those who want to leave the state cite an issue related to the financial burden of living in New Jersey as the main reason behind their desire to move elsewhere. Those earning over \$100,000 (42%) are most likely to cite property taxes as the single most important reason for wanting to leave New Jersey, outpacing the importance of that issue for those earning \$50,000 to \$100,000 (26%) or below \$50,000 (20%).

Other top reasons for wanting to leave New Jersey include the weather (8%), environment (3%), and a longing for a change of scenery (4%); over-development (4%) and congestion (3%); and corruption (6%).

And where will those who want to leave New Jersey end up? Most would follow the sun. Fully half (50%) say they want to move to the southeastern portion of the country, with Florida (15%) and North Carolina (14%) being the two most popular states. Another 15% would like to move directly west or north to either Pennsylvania (8%), New York (3%) or New England (4%). Another 8% want to move to a western state and 3% would like to go to a different country entirely. The remaining 1-in-4 (24%) are not sure where they want to end up, just as long as it's not New Jersey.

“Many say that the most pressing issues in New Jersey will not change unless the public takes a stand. Well, it appears that the public has decided to vote with their feet,” said Murray.

Of course not everyone can or would leave the state. Among those who say they are not likely to move out of New Jersey, half (51%) say that they wouldn't leave because their family is here. About a third mention some emotional attachment to the state as to why they are not likely to leave, including that they like the state (17%), they were born here or have lived their lives here (11%), and the proximity of New Jersey to big cities and cultural opportunities (5%). Another 5% say they are not likely to leave because of their job, including 20% of those earning over \$100,000.

Overall, most residents (63%) would give the Garden State's quality of life a generally positive grade, though only 11% would offer the top rating of “excellent.” Another 36% say life in New Jersey is only fair or poor. The poll found that perceptions of the state's quality of life depend at least partially on how much money you have. Positive ratings range from 73% of those earning six figures or more, to 62% of those in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 bracket, and 56% of those below \$50,000.

In an interesting side note, the poll found little native-born loyalty in who wants to stay and who wants to leave New Jersey. The poll found no differences in the desire to leave when comparing the results of residents who were born in the Garden State (49%) versus those who have moved here from another state or country (49%).

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 801 New Jersey adults from September 27 to 30, 2007. 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, Home News Tribune, and Ocean County Observer).

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

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

1. For how many years have you lived in New Jersey, or have you lived here all your life?

	TOTAL	AGE		INCOME			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		18-49	50+	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
5 years or less	5%	8%	2%	6%	6%	3%	1%	8%	5%
6 to 10 years	5%	8%	2%	2%	6%	9%	7%	5%	5%
11 to 20 years	10%	11%	5%	8%	8%	14%	15%	7%	7%
20 years or more	30%	24%	41%	29%	33%	27%	34%	28%	31%
All My Life	50%	49%	50%	54%	48%	47%	43%	52%	51%
Unwtd N	801	363	420	225	262	183	140	301	338

2. How would you rate the overall quality of life in New Jersey – is it excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

	TOTAL	AGE		INCOME			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		18-49	50+	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
Excellent	11%	9%	13%	6%	11%	15%	8%	14%	8%
Good	52%	53%	53%	50%	51%	58%	40%	52%	61%
Only fair	29%	31%	26%	31%	31%	25%	40%	27%	25%
Poor	7%	8%	7%	12%	7%	2%	11%	8%	5%
(VOL) Don't Know	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Unwtd N	801	363	420	225	262	183	140	301	338

3. 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	AGE		INCOME			COMMUNITY TYPE		
		18-49	50+	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb
Move out of New Jersey	49%	54%	42%	38%	59%	50%	51%	45%	52%
Stay in New Jersey	44%	38%	54%	53%	36%	45%	43%	47%	42%
(VOL) Don't Know	7%	8%	4%	9%	5%	5%	6%	8%	6%
Unwtd N	801	363	420	225	262	183	140	301	338

4. To what state would you like to move?

<i>Among those who want to leave NJ</i>	TOTAL	AGE			INCOME		
		18-49	50+	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K	
New England	4%	3%	4%	1%	3%	10%	
New York	3%	3%	1%	6%	1%	0%	
Pennsylvania	8%	7%	8%	10%	7%	10%	
Delaware / Maryland	6%	5%	8%	6%	6%	3%	
Virginia	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	1%	
North Carolina	14%	14%	16%	18%	16%	14%	
South Carolina	5%	4%	6%	4%	6%	3%	
Georgia	4%	4%	3%	6%	3%	2%	
Florida	15%	14%	17%	16%	15%	17%	
Other southern state	3%	3%	2%	1%	2%	3%	
Southwest (AZ,NM,NV)	3%	2%	5%	1%	2%	4%	
Mountain west state	2%	3%	2%	4%	1%	3%	
West Coast (CA)	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%	5%	
Hawaii	1%	0%	3%	1%	2%	0%	
Other state	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%	
Out of country	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%	
(VOL) Don't Know	24%	28%	17%	17%	27%	19%	
Unwtd N	380	197	173	83	141	90	

5. What is the top reason you want to move out of New Jersey?

Among those who want to leave NJ	TOTAL	AGE			INCOME	
		18-49	50+	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Property taxes	28%	23%	38%	20%	26%	42%
Other taxes	5%	4%	7%	3%	6%	7%
High housing costs	6%	6%	5%	8%	6%	3%
Cost of living in general	19%	21%	16%	19%	21%	18%
Weather	8%	7%	10%	6%	6%	13%
Environment/health	3%	3%	2%	1%	5%	1%
Change of scenery	4%	6%	1%	10%	2%	0%
Corruption	6%	6%	6%	11%	6%	2%
Congestion/overcrowded	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%
Over-development	4%	4%	3%	2%	6%	3%
Bad place to raise family	2%	2%	0%	4%	0%	2%
Schools	2%	3%	0%	0%	5%	0%
Be near family	2%	1%	4%	3%	1%	1%
Economic opportunity/job	2%	4%	0%	6%	1%	3%
Other	5%	5%	4%	3%	5%	2%
(VOL) Don't Know	2%	3%	1%	0%	2%	1%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	380	197	173	83	141	90

6. When would you like to move, when you retire or before then?

Among those who want to leave NJ	TOTAL	AGE			INCOME	
		18-49	50+	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
At retirement	40%	32%	55%	31%	38%	47%
Before then	53%	65%	33%	60%	56%	51%
(VOL) Don't Know	7%	3%	13%	8%	6%	2%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	380	197	173	83	141	90

7. Is that right now, within the next five years, within the next ten years, within the next twenty years, or later than that?

Among those who want to leave NJ	TOTAL	AGE			INCOME	
		18-49	50+	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Right now	10%	8%	12%	9%	11%	8%
Next 5 years	36%	32%	43%	48%	27%	37%
Next 10 years	26%	29%	20%	18%	28%	33%
Next 20 years	15%	18%	8%	5%	20%	14%
Later than that	6%	10%	0%	10%	7%	7%
(VOL) Don't Know	8%	3%	17%	11%	7%	2%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	380	197	173	83	141	90

[ASKED OF EVERYONE:]

8. Regardless of whether you want to leave New Jersey, how likely is it that you will actually move out of state at some point in your life – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all likely?

	TOTAL	AGE		INCOME			COMMUNITY TYPE			WANT TO LEAVE NJ	
		18-49	50+	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No
Very likely	28%	31%	23%	23%	28%	37%	26%	24%	33%	51%	4%
Somewhat likely	32%	39%	21%	29%	37%	26%	36%	35%	28%	36%	23%
Not too likely	16%	15%	18%	12%	18%	18%	18%	16%	14%	6%	26%
Not at all likely	23%	14%	36%	33%	15%	19%	19%	24%	23%	4%	46%
(VOL) Don't Know	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%	0%
Unwtd N	801	363	420	225	262	183	140	301	338	380	376

[IF NOT TOO OR NOT AT ALL LIKELY TO LEAVE, ASK:]

9. What is the main reason you would remain in New Jersey?

Among those not likely to leave NJ	TOTAL	AGE			INCOME		
		18-49	50+	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K	
Family is here	51%	51%	50%	41%	63%	39%	
Like the state	17%	16%	19%	24%	12%	17%	
Born here, lived my life here	11%	12%	10%	18%	8%	4%	
Culture, close to New York / Philly	5%	6%	4%	4%	6%	6%	
Job is here	5%	8%	3%	1%	2%	20%	
Age, too old, home paid off	5%	3%	6%	5%	2%	9%	
Weather, change of seasons	2%	1%	3%	2%	4%	3%	
Can't afford to move	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	1%	
Other	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%	1%	
(VOL) Don't Know	1%	0%	2%	2%	0%	1%	
Unwtd N	346	111	225	116	100	71	

The *Monmouth University/Gannett NJ Poll* was designed and analyzed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute research staff. The telephone interviews were conducted by Braun Research on September 27-30, 2007 with a statewide random sample of 801 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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