



# The Garden State's Quality of Life

*A survey of New Jersey residents*

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## Acknowledgments

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Special appreciation goes to Jules Plangere, Jr. for his unwavering support of the Monmouth University Polling Institute in this and other endeavors. At the Polling Institute, Tina Johnsen ably kept the process on course and former staff member Tim MacKinnon conducted the bulk of the archival research for this project. Many thanks also to the 2,864 New Jerseyans who kindly shared their time and thoughts with our telephone interviewers and made this survey possible.

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## Plangere Foundation







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## Table of Contents

	page
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Public Opinion Trends</b> .....	<b>4</b>
State Overview .....	4
Economic Factors .....	5
Quality of Government.....	8
Education.....	10
Crime and Safety .....	12
Transportation .....	13
Environment .....	14
Health Care and Social Services .....	16
Diversity .....	16
Recreation and Culture.....	18
Civic Engagement .....	18
Social Connections.....	19
<b>Quality of Life Index</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Quality of Life for New Jersey Population Clusters .....	21
Satisfied Urban Dwellers .....	22
Dissatisfied Urban Dwellers.....	24
Neighborhoodly Middle-Aged .....	26
Disengaged Middle-Aged .....	27
Top Earners .....	28
Young Suburbanites .....	30
Southern Workforce .....	31
Young Born and Bred .....	32
White Seniors .....	33
<b>Appendices</b>	
Survey Methodology .....	37
Survey Instrument .....	39
About the Polling Institute .....	58





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## Introduction

How does one describe New Jersey to the casual observer? It is not an easy state to pin down. One of the wealthiest states in the country, it also carries one of the heaviest middle class tax burdens. At the same time, it has significant pockets of poverty and need. It is also a state of great variety. New Jerseyans are among the most ethnically and culturally diverse populations in the country.

Even among its own residents, the concept of “New Jersey” may encompass a reality that extends only 10 or 20 miles from one’s home. Beyond that limited radius lies an entirely different view of the Garden State. That’s quite remarkable for such a state! But with nearly 9 million people crammed into its borders, New Jersey is always going to be a state with a multitude of interests and concerns.

This complexity makes it difficult to answer the question of whether New Jersey offers a good quality of life for its residents. Certainly, many observers have attempted to quantify “Quality of Life” by looking at aggregate measures, such as income and employment indices, home values, open space preservation, health statistics, and the like. Unfortunately, those gross indicators tend to mask the diversity of New Jersey’s population. They cannot tell the whole story.

The purpose of this project is to find out what drives New Jersey’s quality of life by going right to the source that knows best – the state’s residents. The public opinion data detailed in this report is the outcome of a comprehensive process of information gathering. It started with stakeholder meetings to determine the range of factors that contribute to quality of life and was followed by an exhaustive search of 40 years worth of Garden State polling data. This resulted in a final survey with more than 100 question items covering a dozen different facets of life quality. These questions were then put to a scientific sample of more than 2,800 adult residents across the entire state of New Jersey.

In the end, we found that quality of life lies in the eye of the beholder. And New Jersey has millions of pairs of eyes with nearly as many perspectives on what contributes to a good life. Among inner city residents, suburban homeowners, Wall Street bankers, Jersey Shore denizens, and Pine Barrens farmers alike, there are significant numbers who love the Garden State,

significant numbers who hate it, and significant numbers who are simply indifferent to the state they call home.

Translated into the aggregate, those extreme views get boiled down to an average outlook for New Jersey as a state. For example, when it comes to overall life satisfaction and achievement, Garden State residents are distributed across the spectrum. On a scale ranging from zero to ten, 36% give their lives a high score of 8 to 10, 34% a medium score of 6 or 7, and 28% a low score of 0 to 5.

While life satisfaction has much to do with one's personal circumstances, the state we live in does play a role in shaping those perceptions. Poring through the results of this survey, we can start identifying those areas where New Jerseyans seem to be of two minds. For example, 51% say they would like to move out of the state at some point, while 44% prefer to stay in the Garden State for the rest of their lives. At the same time, 3-in-4 residents give the state positive marks as a place to raise a family – 26% saying it is excellent and 48% good.

New Jerseyans tell us there is a lot that is great about the Garden State, but there are areas that could use significant improvement as well. Residents generally agree more on what's wrong than what's right. For example, when New Jerseyans are asked to name what they like most about living here, responses tend to run the gamut. More than 1-in-10 cite its proximity to the shore (14%) and to major cities, especially New York (15%). But other responses range from the seasons and climate (6%), to the presence of friends and family (5%), job opportunities (4%), access to education (3%), shopping (2%), and more.

There is significantly more agreement, though, when asked to name what they dislike most about the state. That would be taxes (46%). There is little question that the present economic climate and government finances color New Jersey residents' perceptions of their home state's quality of life.

The purpose of this and future reports is to come to terms with what makes New Jersey tick – to build on the positive aspects and remedy the negative ones. Hopefully, New Jersey policymakers and stakeholders will find this and subsequent tracking reports to be a useful tool in gauging how we are doing as a state and where we need to go.

This report focuses on trends at the statewide level. Many of the metrics included in this survey have time series data going back to the 1980s, with some going as far back as the early 1970s. As already mentioned, though, group and individual differences on quality of life measures can be lost in these aggregate statistics. Neighbors with similar economic, cultural, and personal profiles may have widely differing views on what New Jersey is like as a place to live.



While this report focuses on trends in quality of life measurements over many decades, the analysis also includes an effort to sort the public into groups based on their satisfaction with life in the Garden State. These results can be found in the final section of this report. While the analysis was able to sort New Jerseyans into nine different classifications related to their overall quality of life, we found that opinion of their home state was rarely the defining factor in their own personal view of life satisfaction. Future reports, to be issued in the coming months, will focus in greater detail on differences by race and ethnicity, age, economic status, and region (with breakdowns for all 21 counties).

At the same time, the analysis found significant differences among some groups on how well New Jersey is doing at providing the framework for residents' quality of life. This led to the development of the Garden State Quality of Life Index. This index is intended as a shorthand metric for gauging satisfaction with life in New Jersey. This index will not only be used to compare differences among demographic groups, but will also be tracked over time to provide a straightforward indicator of the direction New Jersey is heading. Future reports and surveys will build on the work contained in the present report.

# The Garden State's Quality of Life

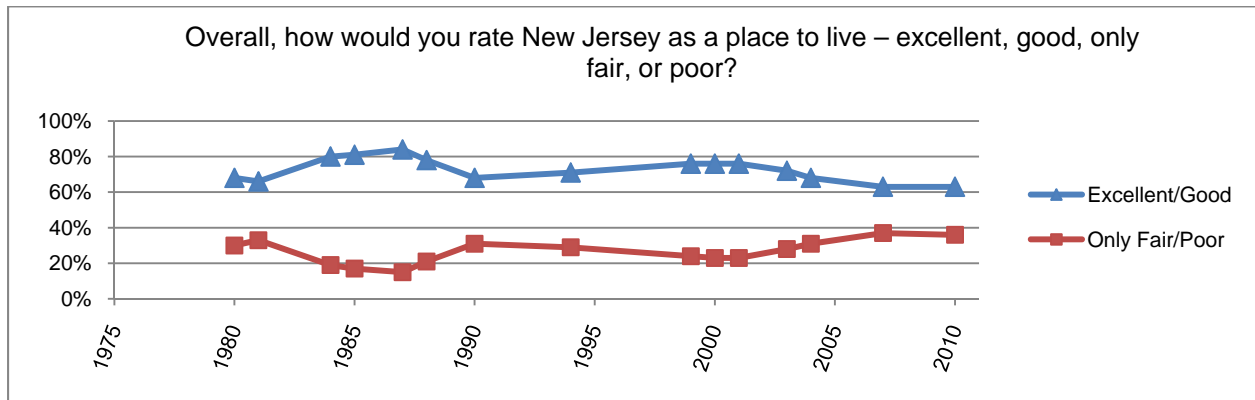
A survey of New Jersey residents

## Public Opinion Trends

### State Overview

Perhaps the most basic measure of New Jersey's quality of life is residents' overall view of the state as a place to live. Currently, 17% rate it as excellent and 46% say it is a good place to live. Another 26% say it is only fair and 10% say it is poor. The combined 63% who say the state is at least a good place to live represents a clear majority of residents, but it is also the lowest positive reading in 30 years of polling on this question, matching the 2007 result.

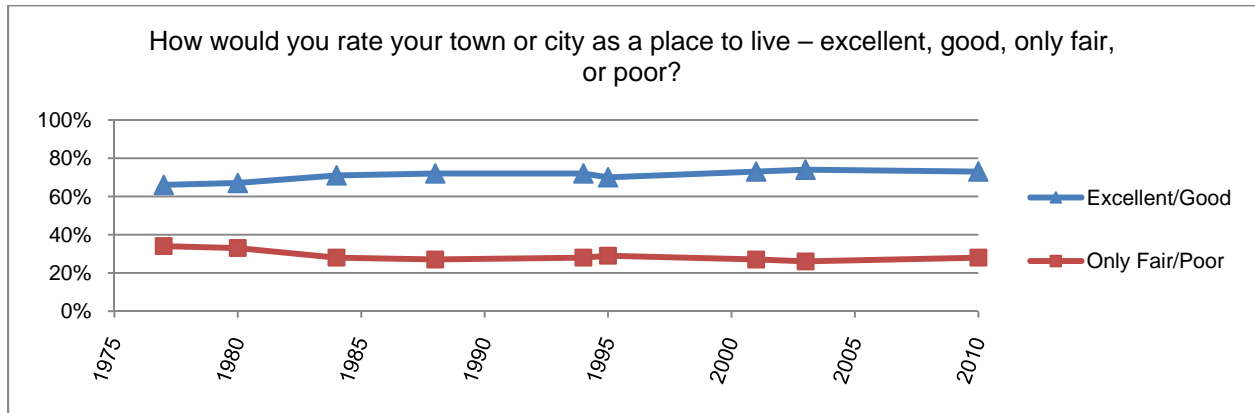
The highest reading on this metric was 84% in 1987. In fact, the mid to late 1980s was the high water mark for this measure. Even so, New Jerseyans have never offered a fully unqualified endorsement of the state. The highest rating of "excellent" topped out at 31% in 1987. The current high rating of 17% excellent is similar to results from 2007, 1994, and the early 1980s. It's important to note that all those readings occurred during times of national economic instability.



	1980	1981	1984	1985	1987	1988	1990	1994	1999	2000	2001	2003	2004	2007	2010
Excellent	18%	16%	29%	29%	31%	27%	21%	18%	22%	25%	23%	20%	22%	17%	17%
Good	50%	50%	51%	52%	53%	51%	47%	53%	54%	51%	53%	52%	46%	46%	46%
Only Fair	23%	26%	15%	14%	11%	17%	25%	22%	19%	17%	19%	23%	21%	25%	26%
Poor	7%	7%	4%	3%	4%	4%	6%	7%	5%	6%	4%	5%	10%	12%	10%
Don't know	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%

While ratings of the state have fluctuated over the past three decades, Garden State residents have held fairly stable opinions of their hometowns. Currently, 27% say their own New Jersey town or city is an excellent place to live and 46% say it is good. Another 20% rate their town as only fair and 8% say it is a poor place to live. The combined 73% who rate their hometown

positively is basically identical to other poll results this past decade. Positive opinions of New Jersey hometowns were similar from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s, ranging from 70 to 72%, but slightly lower in the early 1980s (67%) and late 1970s (66%).

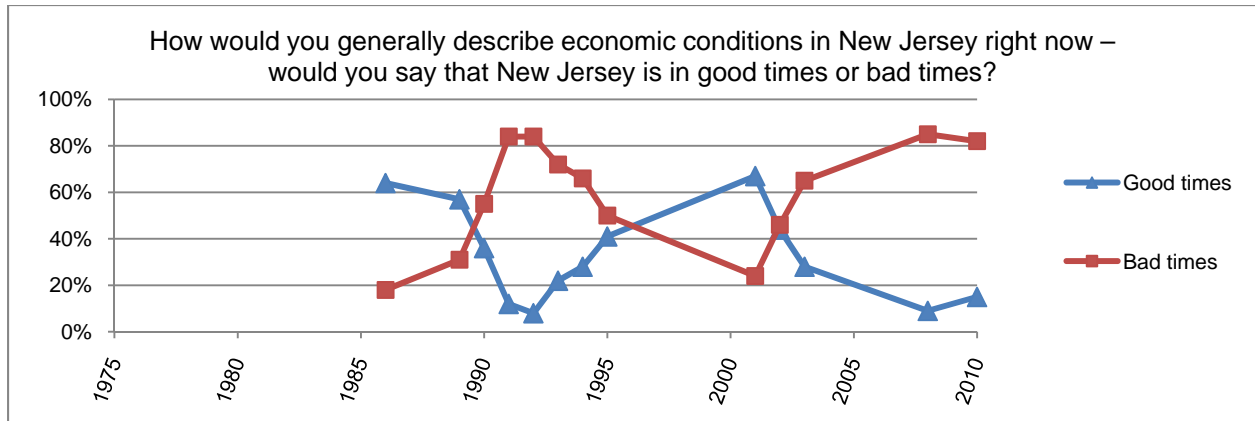


	1977	1980	1984	1988	1994	1995	2001	2003	2010
Excellent	25%	23%	30%	26%	31%	30%	28%	29%	27%
Good	41%	44%	41%	46%	41%	40%	45%	45%	46%
Only Fair	24%	24%	21%	18%	19%	21%	21%	19%	20%
Poor	10%	9%	7%	9%	9%	8%	6%	7%	8%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

There are some interesting dynamics when comparing state and town ratings on a year by year basis. New Jerseyans’ ratings of their state and hometown were very similar in the 1990s through the early 2000s. The ratings of New Jersey as a state were actually *higher* than ratings of one’s own town during the mid to late 1980s. However, the current survey is the first time in more than 30 years when significantly fewer residents have a positive opinion of their state (63%) than do of their hometown (73%).

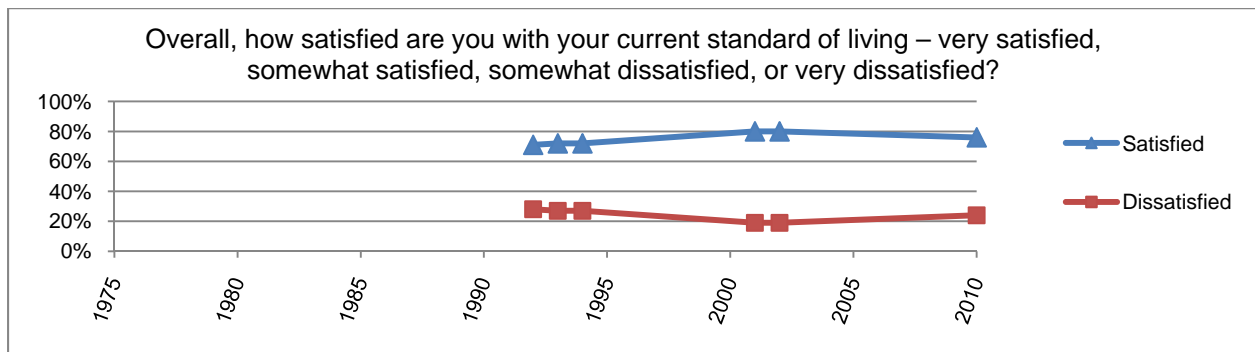
## Economic Factors

New Jerseyans’ views of the state’s economic conditions have swung widely over the past three decades. Positive opinion topped out at about two-thirds of residents who said the state was experiencing good economic times in 2001 and 1986, to fewer than one-fifth who feel that way today. The current survey finds just 15% of Garden State residents saying the state is in good economic times compared to 82% who say times are bad. These results were similarly low in 2008 and the very early 1990s. As the following chart indicates, residents’ opinion on the state’s economy has truly been a rollercoaster ride.



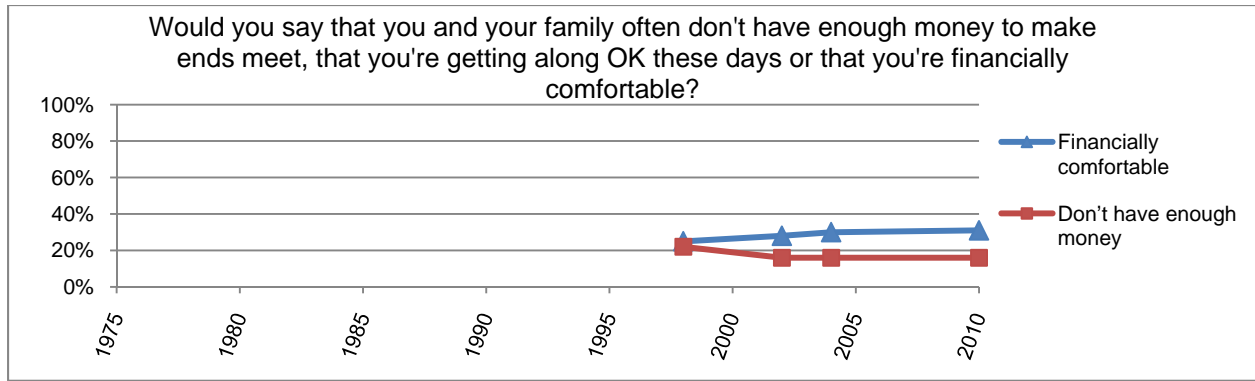
	1986	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	2001	2002	2003	2008	2010
Good times	64%	57%	36%	12%	8%	22%	28%	41%	67%	44%	28%	9%	15%
Bad times	18%	31%	55%	84%	84%	72%	66%	50%	24%	46%	65%	85%	82%
Don't know	17%	12%	8%	4%	7%	6%	5%	10%	9%	10%	7%	6%	3%

Most New Jerseyans are satisfied with their current standard of living, although fewer consider themselves to be financially comfortable. Currently, 26% are very satisfied and 50% are somewhat satisfied with their standard of living. This is down just slightly from readings in the early 2000s, but somewhat higher than polls taken in the early 1990s.



	1992	1993	1994	2001	2002	2010
Very satisfied	21%	19%	23%	32%	30%	26%
Somewhat satisfied	50%	53%	49%	48%	50%	50%
Somewhat dissatisfied	19%	20%	19%	14%	13%	18%
Very dissatisfied	9%	7%	8%	5%	6%	6%
Don't know	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%

While 74% of New Jerseyans say that their household financial situation is basically good, only 31% feel financially comfortable. Another 51% say they are getting along OK. On the other hand, 16% say they do not have enough money to make ends meet. These results have been fairly stable over the past decade. Furthermore, about 1-in-3 New Jerseyans say that they find themselves awake at night worrying how to make ends meet, including 15% who strongly feel this way and 19% who agree somewhat with this.



	1998	2002	2004	2010
Financially comfortable	25%	28%	30%	31%
Getting along	49%	54%	53%	51%
Don't have enough money	22%	16%	16%	16%
Don't know	4%	1%	1%	1%

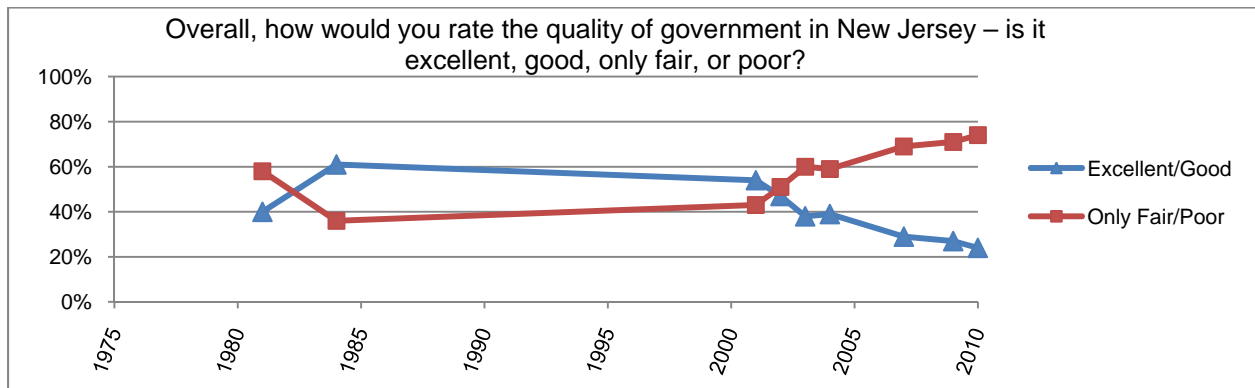
On the job front, nearly half of New Jersey households (45%) have more than one income earner. Also, 11% say at least one person in the family holds down more than one job. Only 35% say their family gets by on a single income, with another 12% reporting that all adults in the household are either retired or not working. In the current environment, 38% of Garden State residents are very concerned that someone in their household will be out of work in the coming year. This is down from 44% in 2009, but higher than the 33% recorded in 2008. Another 29% are somewhat concerned about this and 32% are not concerned. Currently, only 1-in-3 residents rate the availability of good-paying jobs in their part of the state as excellent (5%) or good (27%), compared to 34% who say local job opportunities are only fair and 29% who call them poor. There are no prior results for this question, but it will be interesting to track these results as the economy improves.

On the housing front, two-thirds of New Jerseyans own the home they live in, although technically 46% actually have a mortgage. Only 21% own their home outright. Few residents say that the availability of affordable housing in their part of the state is either excellent (4%) or good (27%). Another 36% say it is only fair and 29% say it is poor. Specifically, only 31% say that they could afford to purchase a house in their current town if they were searching for their first home today. This is nearly identical to the 33% who said the same in 2003.

Most New Jerseyans (85%) have high speed Internet access in their homes and just over half (55%) have at least two computers. Nearly one-third (31%) own three or more cars, and just over 1-in-10 have paid housekeeping help (12%) or a second home or vacation property (11%).

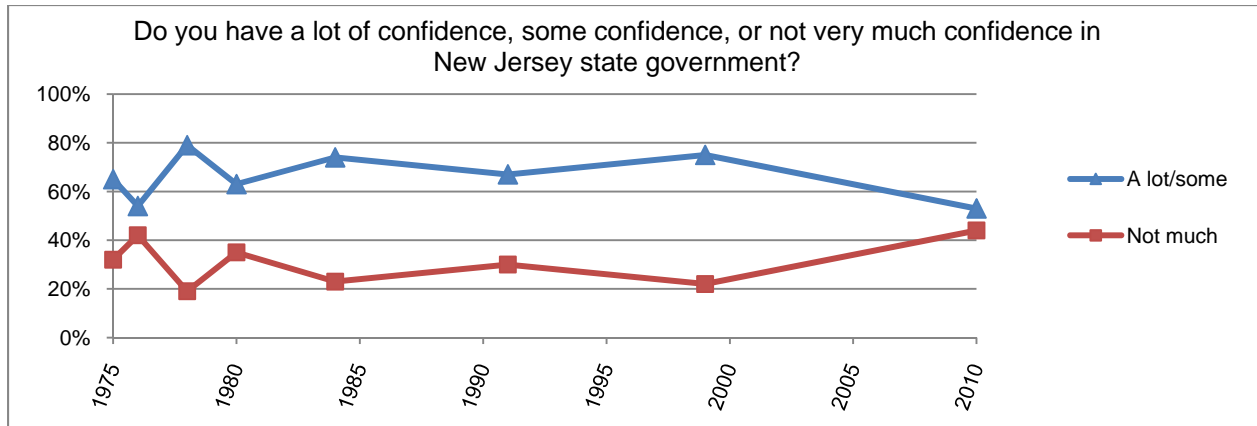
## Quality of Government

Views on the overall quality of government have grown increasingly negative over the past 10 years. Currently, just 24% say New Jersey government is excellent or good, while 74% say it is only fair or poor. The last time these state government ratings were in net positive territory was 2001 at 54% excellent/good to 43% only fair/poor. Since that point, negative ratings have steadily increased a few points each year. There are two readings on this question prior to 2001. In 1984, New Jersey ratings of their state government were generally good at 61% positive to 36% negative. A few years prior to that, though, in 1981, the ratings were negative at just 40% excellent/good to 58% only fair/poor.



	1981	1984	2001	2002	2003	2004	2007	2009	2010
Excellent	4%	8%	5%	4%	1%	2%	1%	2%	3%
Good	36%	53%	49%	43%	37%	37%	28%	25%	21%
Only Fair	48%	31%	37%	42%	44%	47%	44%	41%	43%
Poor	10%	5%	6%	9%	16%	12%	25%	30%	31%
Don't know	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%

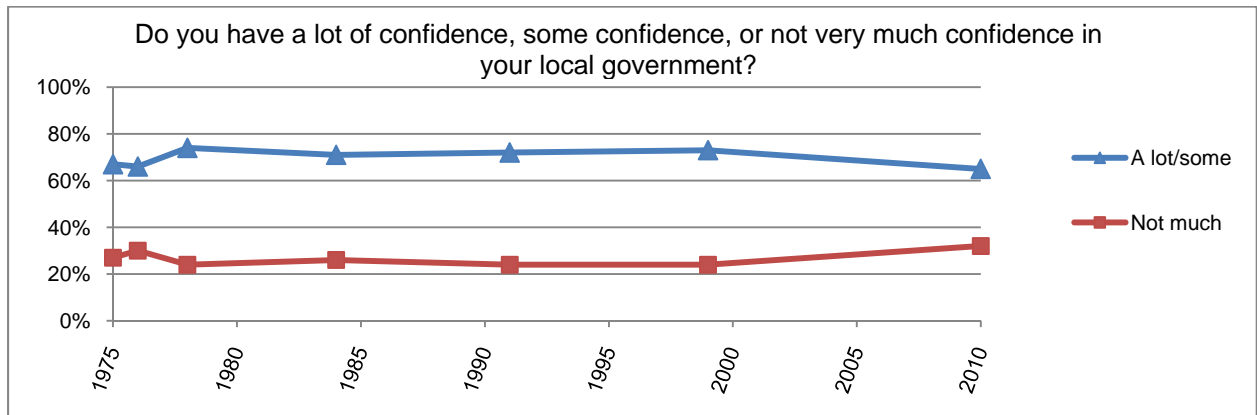
Currently, just 11% of New Jerseyans have a lot of confidence in their state government and 42% have some. However, 44% of residents say they do not have much confidence in Trenton. That marks the highest negative reading on this question in polls going back to 1974, when only 16% had little faith in state government. The current reading surpasses the prior highest negative point of 42% in 1976.



	1974	1975	1976	1978	1980*	1984	1991	1999	2010
A lot	19%	14%	9%	18%	10%	15%	10%	15%	11%
Some	57%	51%	45%	61%	53%	59%	57%	60%	42%
Not much	16%	32%	42%	19%	35%	23%	30%	22%	44%
Don't know	9%	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%

\* Asked February 1980 in the wake of Abscam

Local governments fare slightly better in the court of public opinion. Seventeen percent of Garden State residents say they have a lot of confidence in their local government and 48% have some, while 32% say they do not have very much confidence in their municipal government. These numbers have been fairly stable in polling since 1974, although the current results are slightly more negative than in any prior poll.

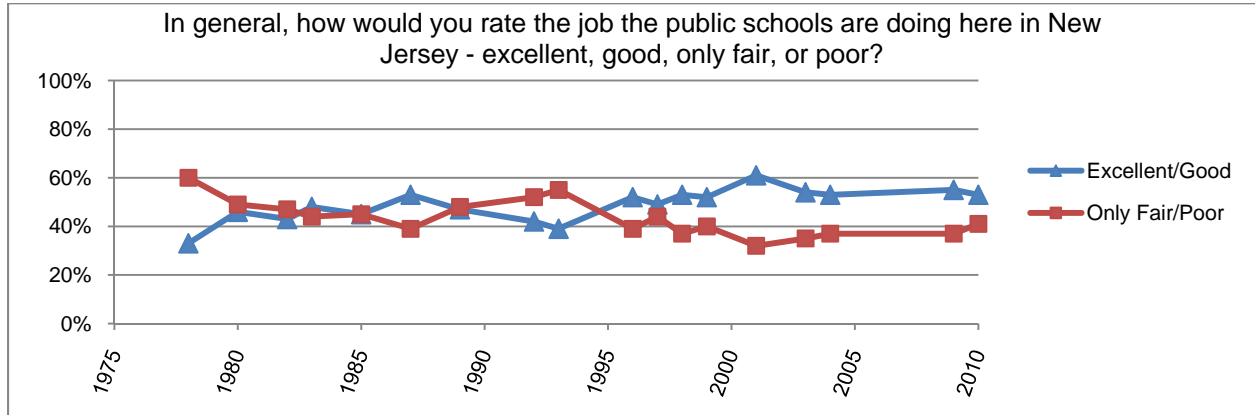


	1974	1975	1976	1978	1984	1991	1999	2010
A lot	25%	25%	24%	22%	16%	18%	20%	17%
Some	47%	42%	42%	52%	55%	54%	53%	48%
Not much	22%	27%	30%	24%	26%	24%	24%	32%
Don't know	7%	6%	4%	2%	3%	3%	4%	3%

Despite the higher level of confidence in local governments compared to state government, only 33% of New Jerseyans feel that the quality of their local services is worth what they pay in taxes. The vast majority, 64%, feel they are not. There are no prior tracking points for this question.

## Education

Ratings of New Jersey’s public school system have been generally positive for the past 15 years, although prior readings were mixed. The current rating stands at 12% excellent and 41% good versus 31% only fair and 10% poor. The combined 53% positive to 41% negative is similar to ratings since 2003, although the negative number is a few points higher than in recent years. The prior high point on this question came in 2001, when 61% of New Jerseyans gave the state’s school system a positive rating and 32% rated it negatively. The lowest rating for this question came in 1978, when only 33% of residents held a positive view of the state’s school system compared to fully 60% who viewed it negatively. Public opinion of the state school system was changeable throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, sometimes a few points positive, sometimes a few points negative. Since the mid 1990s, though, ratings have been generally more positive than negative.

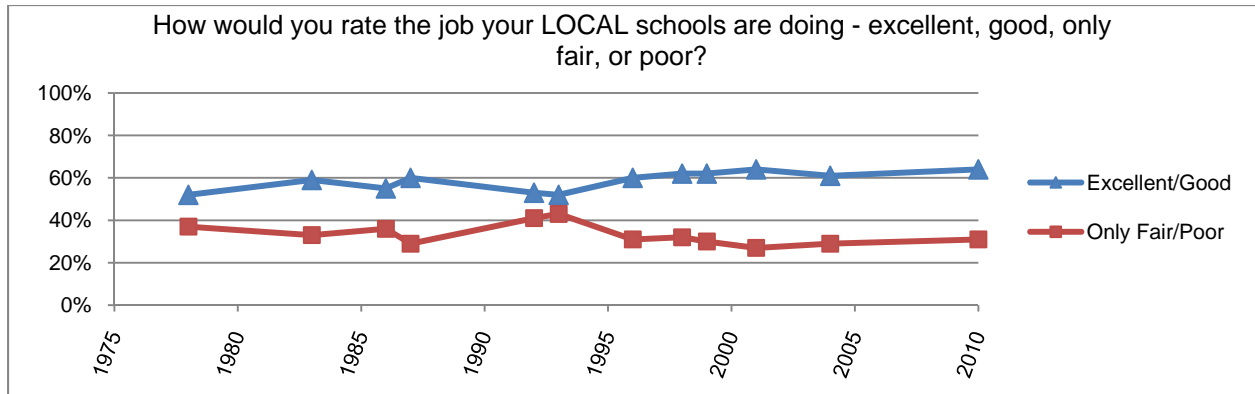


	1978	1980	1982	1983	1985	1987	1989	1992	1993	1996	1997*	1998	1999	2001	2003	2004	2009	2010
Excellent	6%	8%	8%	8%	9%	11%	7%	9%	7%	10%	10%	11%	11%	12%	15%	13%	12%	12%
Good	27%	38%	35%	40%	36%	42%	40%	33%	32%	42%	39%	42%	41%	49%	39%	40%	43%	41%
Only Fair	30%	39%	34%	32%	31%	29%	34%	32%	33%	28%	30%	28%	31%	25%	25%	24%	27%	31%
Poor	30%	10%	13%	12%	14%	10%	14%	20%	22%	11%	14%	9%	9%	7%	10%	13%	10%	10%
Don't know	7%	5%	9%	8%	11%	8%	5%	6%	6%	9%	7%	9%	9%	7%	11%	10%	7%	5%

\* Registered voters only

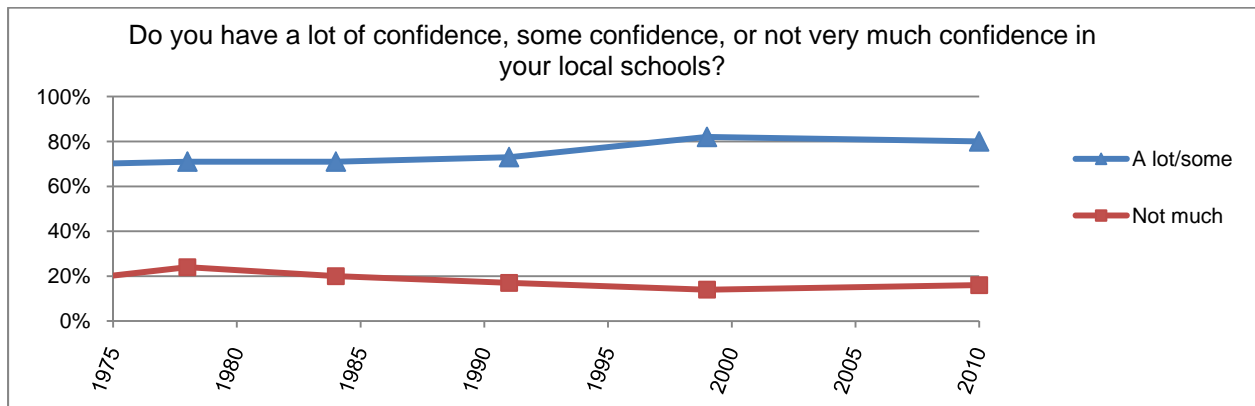
Garden State residents are somewhat more positive about their local schools than they are about the statewide educational system. Nearly 2-in-3 give their own schools a rating of excellent (24%) or good (40%), while just 23% say they are only fair and 8% say they are doing a poor job. Positive ratings for residents’ local schools have been topping the 60% positive mark since the late 1990s. Prior ratings, while always in net positive territory, were slightly lower, dipping as low as 52% in both 1978 and 1993.





	1978	1983	1986	1987	1992	1993	1996	1998	1999	2001	2004	2010
Excellent	12%	16%	15%	14%	15%	16%	20%	20%	18%	21%	24%	24%
Good	40%	43%	40%	46%	38%	36%	40%	42%	44%	43%	37%	40%
Only Fair	25%	23%	26%	23%	26%	29%	20%	23%	21%	21%	17%	23%
Poor	12%	10%	10%	6%	15%	14%	11%	9%	9%	6%	12%	8%
Don't know	11%	8%	9%	11%	5%	5%	9%	7%	8%	9%	9%	5%

Currently, 44% of New Jersey residents say they have a lot of confidence in their local schools, matching the prior high reading of 44% in 1999. Another 36% say they have some confidence in their local schools and just 16% say they do not have much confidence.

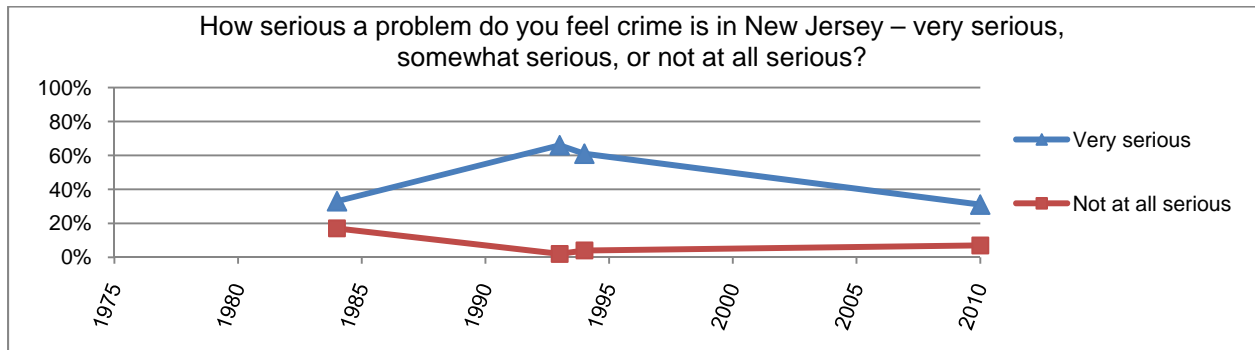


	1973	1974	1978	1984	1991	1999	2010
A lot	36%	31%	36%	30%	34%	44%	44%
Some	33%	39%	35%	41%	39%	38%	36%
Not much	21%	19%	24%	20%	17%	14%	16%
Don't know	9%	11%	5%	9%	10%	4%	4%

The current poll also found that the state's higher education community gets decidedly positive reviews, with 20% saying these institutions are doing an excellent job and 51% rating them as good. Also, 2-in-3 New Jerseyans rate the state as either an excellent (23%) or good (43%) place to obtain lifelong training and education. There are no prior tracking points for these two ratings.

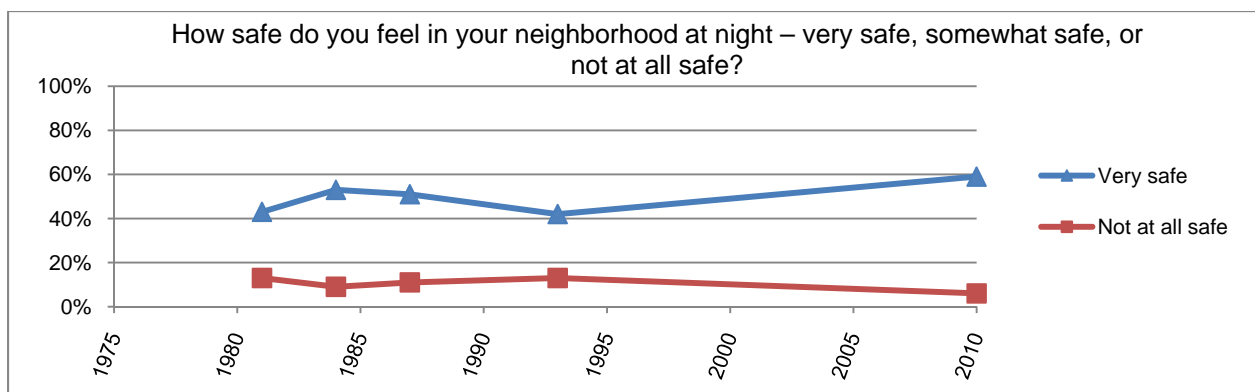
## Crime and Safety

Just 31% of New Jerseyans feel that crime is a very serious problem in the state. Another 60% feel it is somewhat serious and 7% say it is not a serious issue. The current result is much more positive than polls taken in the early 1990s. In 1993, 66% said crime was a very serious problem. In 1984, though, only 33% said crime was very serious, similar to the current results. However, residents in 1984 were also somewhat more likely to feel that there were no real crime issues in the state – 17% then compared to 7% today.



Very serious	1984	1993	1994	2010
Somewhat serious	45%	31%	33%	60%
Not at all serious	17%	2%	4%	7%
Don't know	5%	1%	2%	2%

Closer to home, 59% of New Jerseyans say they feel very safe in their own neighborhoods at night. Another 35% feel somewhat safe and just 6% say they do not feel safe at all going out in their own neighborhood after dark. Feelings of personal safety are fairly high compared to past surveys. In 1993, only 42% felt very safe in their neighborhood at night. That number was just above half in the mid 1980s, but lower (43%) in 1981.



Very safe	1981	1984*	1987	1993	2010
Somewhat safe	43%	36%	36%	44%	35%
Not at all safe	13%	9%	11%	13%	6%
Don't know	1%	2%	2%	0%	0%

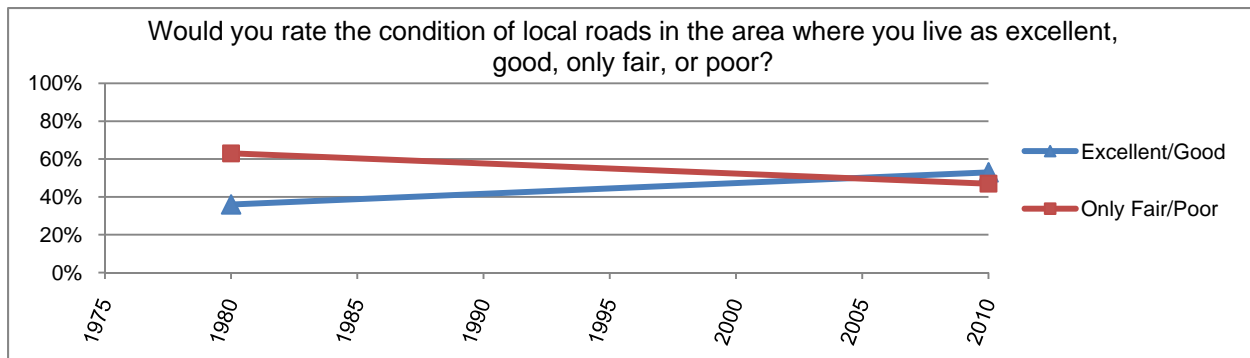
\* Question wording 1984: "How safe is your neighborhood at night"

Overall, most New Jerseyans give positive ratings to personal safety in their part of New Jersey, with 23% saying it is excellent and 47% saying it is good. Just 20% rate local safety as only fair and 10% say it is poor. There are no prior tracking polls on this question.

Feelings of personal security may correlate with how favorably New Jerseyans view their first responders. Fully 61% of New Jerseyans have a lot of confidence in their local police, 28% have some, and just 9% say they do not have very much confidence. Even more, 78%, have a lot of confidence in their local fire and rescue department, 18% have some, and just 3% have no confidence. There are no prior tracking points for these two ratings.

## Transportation

Opinions on the condition of local roads in New Jersey is split, with 53% of residents giving a positive rating of excellent (9%) or good (44%) and 47% giving a negative rating of only fair (30%) or poor (17%). The only prior reading on this question, way back in 1980, was worse – 36% positive to 63% negative.



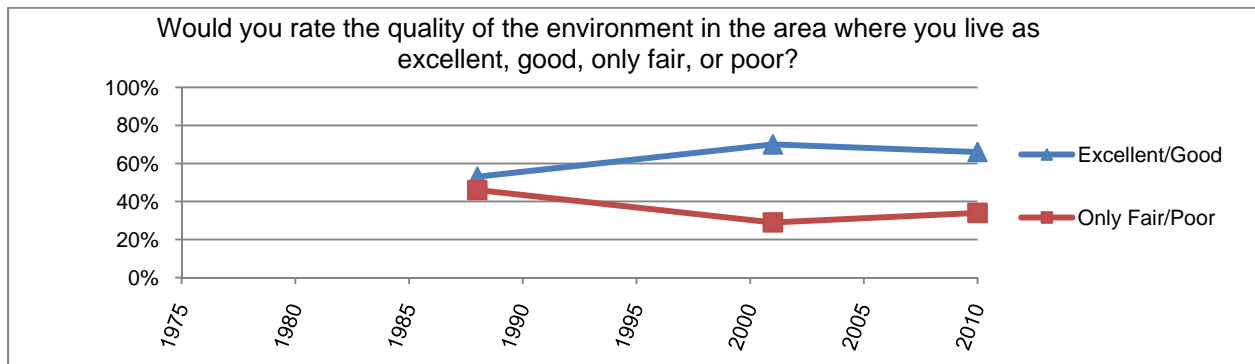
	1980	2010
Excellent	4%	9%
Good	32%	44%
Only Fair	38%	30%
Poor	25%	17%
Don't know	1%	0%

Traffic conditions generate even worse ratings. Just 1-in-3 residents view local traffic condition as excellent (5%) or good (29%), while 33% say they are only fair and 32% call them poor. Nearly 4-in-10 residents (38%) say they get stuck in a traffic jam at least several times a week, which is virtually identical to a 2006 poll. New Jerseyans say they spend an average of 100 minutes in their car each day. This is down slightly from 110 minutes in 2006. There are no other previous results for these questions.

Most residents say that access to public transportation in their area is excellent (21%) or good (37%), compared to 22% who say it is only fair and 18% who say it is poor. However, very few New Jerseyans report using public transportation on a regular basis. Just 14% say they use it several times a week or more, 34% use it occasionally, 11% rarely, and 41% never. There are no prior tracking points for these two questions.

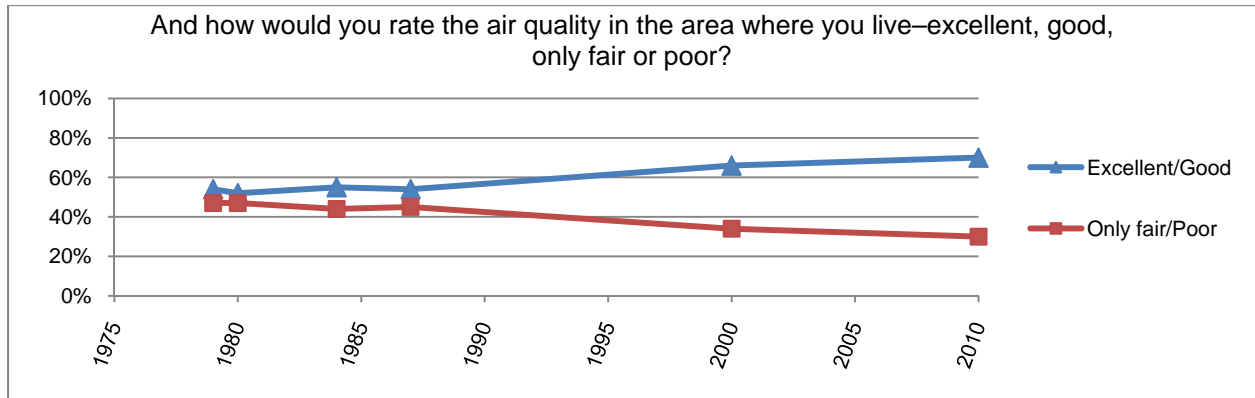
## Environment

Tracking data on the state of New Jersey’s natural environment are limited. Currently, 14% of New Jerseyans rate the quality of the environment where they live as excellent and 52% rate is as good. Another 25% say their local environment is only fair and 9% call it poor. The 66% who rate their environment positively is down from 70% in 2001, which included 27% who gave the top rating of excellent. However, it is higher than the prior reading of just 53% positive in 1988.



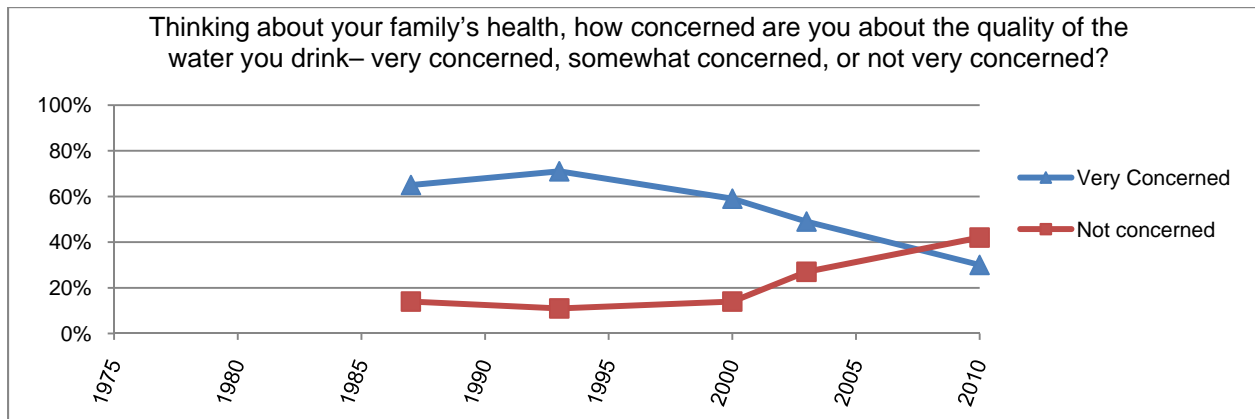
	1988	2001	2010
Excellent	10%	27%	14%
Good	43%	43%	52%
Only Fair	31%	22%	25%
Poor	15%	7%	9%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%

Currently, 7-in-10 New Jerseyans give their local air quality a positive rating of excellent (21%) or good (49%), while 23% say it is only fair and 7% say it is poor. This marks a high point for air quality ratings going back to 1979. In the late 1970s and 1980s, just a little more than half of state residents felt positively about their local air quality.



	1979	1980	1984	1987	2000	2010
Excellent	15%	11%	9%	10%	17%	21%
Good	39%	41%	46%	44%	49%	49%
Only fair	32%	33%	32%	33%	26%	23%
Poor	15%	14%	12%	12%	8%	7%
Don't know	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%

Just 30% of New Jersey residents are very concerned about the quality of their drinking water, while 28% are somewhat concerned and 42% are not at all concerned. This marks a positive high point on water quality perceptions in polling going back to 1987. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, about two thirds were very concerned about their drinking water. This dipped to 6-in-10 in 2000 and 5-in-10 in 2003. It now stands at 3-in-10.



	1987	1993	2000	2003	2010
Very concerned	65%	71%	59%	49%	30%
Somewhat concerned	18%	18%	26%	24%	28%
Not very concerned	14%	11%	14%	27%	42%
Don't know	3%	1%	1%	0%	1%

New Jerseyans are split on how their local area has been developed. Just under half rate the amount of building and development in their part of the state as excellent (8%) or good (39%) while a similar number say it has been only fair (32%) or poor (18%). However, the vast majority of residents are satisfied with the availability of parks and open space in their area –

46% very satisfied and 39% somewhat satisfied. There are no prior tracking polls on these questions.

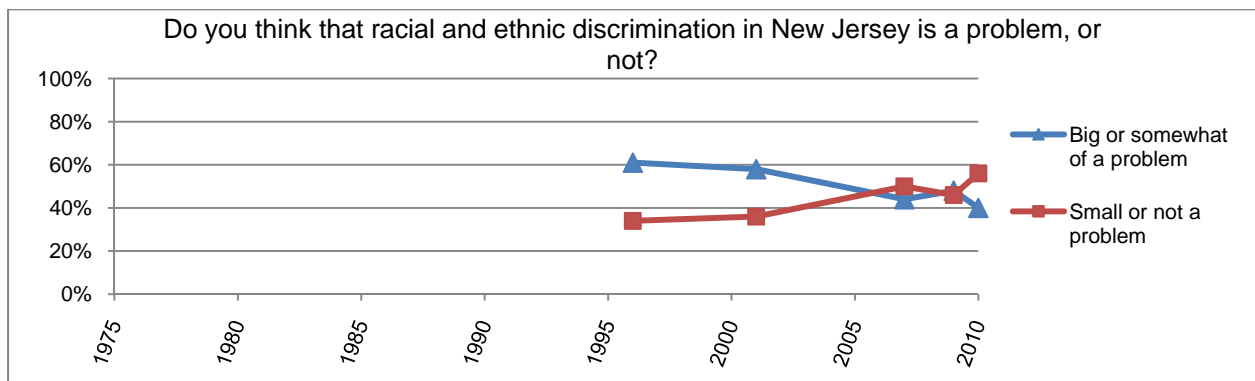
## Health Care and Social Services

Fully 8-in-10 New Jerseyans report that their family’s overall health and well-being is either excellent (33%) or good (47%) and more than 2-in-3 New Jerseyans say access to health care in their part of the state is either excellent (22%) or good (47%). Another 19% say such access is only fair and 10% say it is poor. In terms of rating their own medical services, 47% are very satisfied and 38% are somewhat satisfied with the health care they receive. However, 22% say that someone in their household did not seek needed medical care in the past five years because they could not afford it. This compares to 28% in 1994 and 23% in 1992 who said the same. There are no other previous tracking polls on these questions.

Just under half of Garden State residents say programs for the needy in their part of the state are either excellent (10%) or good (39%), while 4-in-10 say that such services are only fair (28%) or poor (13%) in the area where they live. There are no prior tracking polls on this question.

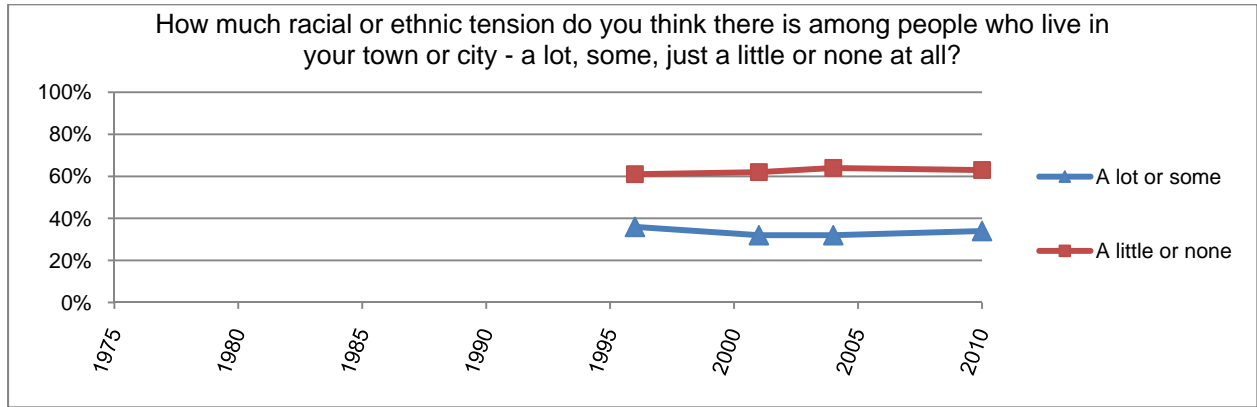
## Diversity

Currently, 40% of New Jersey residents think that racial and ethnic discrimination is at least somewhat of a problem in New Jersey. The majority, 56%, say it is either just a small problem or no problem at all. This is the most positive result on this metric since the question was first asked in 1996. Fifteen years ago, 61% said discrimination was at least somewhat of a problem.



	1996	2001	2007	2009	2010
Yes, big problem	21%	27%	14%	21%	12%
Yes, somewhat of a problem	40%	31%	30%	27%	28%
Yes, small problem	6%	7%	11%	9%	7%
No, not a problem	28%	29%	39%	37%	49%
Don't know	5%	6%	6%	6%	4%

Closer to home, 1-in-3 New Jerseyans feel there is a lot (9%) or at least some (25%) racial tension among the people who live in their own town compared to 37% who say there is just a little and 26% who say there is none. This finding is similar to results in previous polls going back to 1996.



	1996	2001	2004	2010
A Lot	9%	7%	10%	9%
Some	27%	25%	22%	25%
Just a little	32%	29%	35%	37%
None at all	29%	33%	29%	26%
Don't know	4%	5%	4%	2%

Two-thirds of New Jerseyans have generally positive opinions about the state of race relations in their part of New Jersey, with 12% saying local race relations are excellent and 55% calling them good. Another 22% say race relations in their area are only fair and 7% say they are poor. There are no prior tracking polls on this question.

Turning to immigration, 34% of Garden State residents say that immigration into the state has been good for the state and 32% say it has been bad. Another 21% say it has had no impact.

Overall, 43% of residents say that the state's racial and ethnic diversity is good for New Jersey's quality of life while only 16% say it is a bad thing. Another 31% say that the Garden State's diversity has no impact on its quality of life. There are no prior tracking polls on this question.

## Recreation and Culture

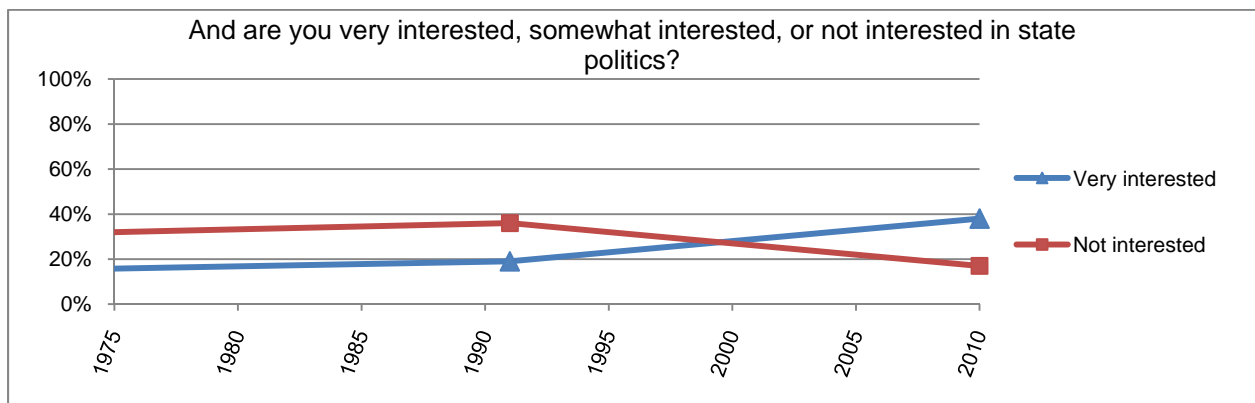
Nearly 2-in-3 New Jerseyans say their local area is an excellent (21%) or good (43%) place for cultural and recreational activities. Another 21% say the availability of such activities is only fair and 14% say it is poor. There are no prior tracking polls on this question.

In the past year, nearly all New Jerseyans (98%) say they have gone shopping in the state. More than two-thirds have also strolled through a New Jersey downtown area (77%) or taken a drive through the Garden State countryside (69%). About half have attended a concert or play in state (53%), visited one of the state’s historic sites (52%), or visited a Garden State farm (50%). Just over 4-in-10 have visited a New Jersey amusement park (44%) or took an in-state vacation (41%) in the past year. One-third have gone to a ball game in New Jersey (36%) or visited a museum in the state (36%).

## Civic Engagement

Just under half of state residents feel they can make a notable difference in their community, including 12% who feel that they can make a great deal of difference and 33% who can make some difference. Another 28% say they can make a little difference, while 25% feel they cannot make any difference at all. Just over 1-in-5 residents (22%) report that they have actively been involved in solving a community issue during the past year.

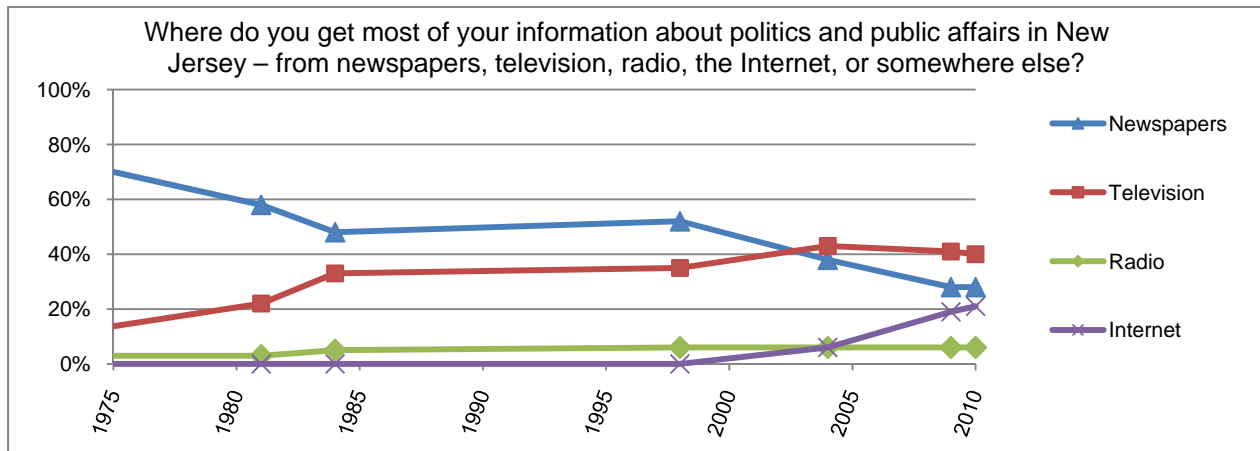
Currently, 38% of New Jerseyans say they are very interested in state politics, 44% are somewhat interested, and 17% are not interested at all. Interest levels are significantly higher now than they were in two prior Garden State polls from 1991 and 1971.



	1971	1991	2010
Very interested	15%	19%	38%
Somewhat interested	53%	43%	44%
Not interested	31%	36%	17%
Don't know	2%	1%	0%



The past four decades have witnessed a significant shift in how New Jerseyans learn what’s going on in Garden State politics and public affairs. In a state with no statewide commercial broadcast television station, TV is the primary information source for 40% of the public, followed by newspapers at 28%. The internet is the primary source of news about New Jersey politics for 21% of state residents, up from 6% in 2004. Prior to the electronic information age, newspapers were the first source of political news for a majority of residents. However, this was on the decline even before the advent of the Worldwide Web, dropping from a high of 74% in 1973 to 52% in 1998 and 28% today.



	1973	1981*	1984*	1998*	2004	2009	2010
Newspapers	74%	58%	48%	52%	38%	28%	28%
Television	11%	22%	33%	35%	43%	41%	40%
Radio	3%	3%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Internet	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6%	19%	21%
(VOL) Word of mouth/other	9%	15%	13%	0%	7%	5%	4%
Don't know	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%

*Prior questions asked about: "New Jersey government and politics" (1981), "state government and politics" (1984), and "what is going on in New Jersey" (1998)*

## Social Connections

Family connections may be one of the key reasons people stay in New Jersey. Among those who report that at least one of their parents is still living, a majority (57%) say they see or talk to their parents nearly every day or more frequently.

Just over half (52%) strongly agree that they have enough time to spend with their family and another 27% agree somewhat. Within their own households, many try to spend time together at traditional activities. Specifically, 4-in-10 (41%) New Jerseyans say that their family eats dinner together every night and 17% do so 5 or 6 days a week. But more than 1-in-3 (35%) say their family eats dinner together no more than 4 times a week, if at all.

Turning to broader social connections, most New Jerseyans feel comfortable in their current communities. A majority (51%) strongly agree that they feel like they belong in their community and another 33% somewhat agree with this feeling. Only 14% disagree. However, a majority also find themselves wishing that they could live somewhere else (28% strongly and 24% somewhat). This probably has more to do with their personal situation or even the state itself than it does with the particular community they find themselves in.

A majority of residents agree that their neighbors are trustworthy (51% strongly and 32% somewhat). That marks a slight uptick from a poll taken in 1999. At least 2-in-3 feel that a neighbor would pick up their garbage can if it fell over (45% strongly and 27% somewhat), which is also a few points higher than it was in 1999. A similar number say they could easily ask a neighbor to run an errand for them (40% strongly and 27% somewhat). Somewhat fewer would feel comfortable with more personal interactions, though, including confiding in a neighbor if they were sad (31% strongly and 25% somewhat).

Just over half feel that their neighbors are always in a hurry (25% strongly and 29% somewhat). That's 10 points higher than the number who said the same about their neighbors in 1999. But a similar number say that they still interact with their neighbors every day (28% strongly and 30% somewhat).



# The Garden State's Quality of Life

*A survey of New Jersey residents*

## Quality of Life Index

A key objective of this project has been to provide stakeholders with an easy to use reference on what quality of life means to New Jersey residents, where it has been, and where it currently stands. Looking forward, it is important to have a measurement that will help keep track of how the state is doing at providing a framework whereby its residents can enjoy a good quality of life. To that end, the Monmouth University Polling Institute created a Garden State Quality of Life Index that can be used to track future trends in this important metric.

The index is based on five items from this survey: overall opinion of the state as a place to live – which contributes to half the index score – and local measures on 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. A reliability analysis of various questions from the survey indicates that these five items encapsulate the range of components that contribute to New Jersey's quality of life.

The initial Garden State Quality of Life Index stands at +21 (on a scale from -100 to +100). That means for the state as a whole, the state's quality of life is more positive than negative, but only slightly more so. The following sections of this report will examine how quality of life draws together different groups of New Jerseyans.

### Quality of Life for New Jersey Population Groups

There is no question that quality of life may mean something different for each and every New Jerseyan. There are, however, some factors that cause different groups of residents to “cluster” together. Without imposing a definition for quality of life, the Monmouth University Polling Institute used factor analysis to find if there are common elements that bring together different groups of New Jersey's diverse society in evaluating their quality of life. Based on responses to approximately 70 different questions in the survey, we were able identify nine different groups of Garden State residents whose quality of life is influenced by similar factors. Each group represents just over one-tenth of the total New Jersey adult population.

<b>Garden State Quality of Life Index</b>	
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>+21</b>
Satisfied Urban Dwellers	+54
Dissatisfied Urban Dwellers	-30
Neighborly Middle-Aged	+36
Disengaged Middle-Aged	+15
Top Earners	+31
Young Suburbanites	+38
Southern Workforce	+9
Young Born and Bred	+17
White Seniors	+16

Some of these groups are brought together by financial or employment circumstances, others by geography, or stages of life. These groups vary in how successful they have been in life and how much they like or dislike the state and their hometown. One very interesting finding is that financial and educational success does not always translate into greater affection for their home state where that success takes place. On the other hand, being less successful financially does not necessarily translate into a poor opinion of New Jersey.

These nine groups demonstrate how difficult it is to talk about “Quality of Life” in New Jersey. The concept is mostly a perception of quality of life that is not necessarily bound by income or education levels or the state of the economy. New Jersey is one of the most demographically diverse states in the country, but demographics alone are generally not enough to pinpoint a person’s perceived quality of life. The bottom line is that there is no simple formula to enhance New Jersey’s quality of life. Based on the current analysis, any measures to improve the state’s quality of life must take into account the differential impact on various groups of New Jerseyans.

*[Note: The tables at the end of this chapter detail some of the key question response differences among these nine groups.]*

## **The Urban Cluster**

The Urban Cluster includes two groups with many similarities, the Satisfied and Dissatisfied Urban Dwellers. They mostly hail from New Jersey’s northern urban areas and are racially more diverse than the state as a whole. Compared to the state averages, their educational achievement and income levels are lower. There are some key differences in their age profile. The most interesting difference, though, is that despite having similar backgrounds, one group reports enjoying a very high quality of life and the other reports having a very low quality of life.

### **Urban Cluster: Satisfied Urban Dwellers (11% of population)**

Satisfied Urban Dwellers have the highest Garden State Quality of Life Index score (+54) of all the groups. They are content with almost every aspect of their lives. The group trends older and has the second highest concentration of retirees. The group’s education and salary levels are lower than New Jersey averages. However, with 4-in-10 members of this group being retired, the impact of salary and education on a person’s lifestyle might be more limited.

Almost half of the group is from urban areas of New Jersey, although they are more likely to hail from smaller urban areas than the state's largest cities. This group is racially diverse, with black and Hispanic New Jerseyans being overrepresented. The age profile is interesting, with about half of the group being aged 55 and older, at the same time 3-in-10 are younger than 35.

They truly like both New Jersey as a state and their own hometowns. The share of people rating New Jersey as a state or their own hometown as an excellent place to live is far above state averages and the highest among all nine groups. The Satisfied Urban Dwellers have the highest percentage (30%) of all groups who simply do not dislike anything.

The group's personal outlook on life is good. Hardly any of them are struggling financially. Rating their lives on a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 being the best possible life, the average for this group is 6.9, among the highest of all groups.

This is particularly interesting since the group's demographic profile does not suggest that they are doing particularly well financially. About half of them have household incomes below \$25,000 a year and 4-in-5 are making less than \$50,000. A majority of them only have a high school diploma or less and very few have finished four year degrees.

The employment profile is also slightly worse than the state average. About 1-in-6 (17%) in this group are temporarily out of work, compared to 12% statewide. About 1-in-3 (33%) say that they are very concerned that they or someone in their household might lose their job in the next 12 months, which is slightly lower than the 38% who say the same statewide.

Only 33% are homeowners, which is less than half of the state average (68%), and almost no one (8%) could afford a house in their neighborhood right now. This compares to the 31% across New Jersey that could afford one in their town. On the most local level, their own neighborhood, this group is doing a little better than the rest of New Jersey. Most of them have a good relationship with their neighbors.

Not only do they really like the state and their hometowns, they also have a lot of confidence in their institutions. Many in this group (40%) have lot of confidence in their local government, compared to only 17% who say the same across New Jersey. Even the state government fares much better in this group, 33% express a lot of confidence in the state government, compared to only 11% of all New Jerseyans. They truly believe in their local schools with 70% expressing a lot of confidence, compared to 44% across New Jersey. More than 3-in-4 (76%) have a lot of confidence in their local police department, compared to 61% who say the same statewide. They are the only group with a solid majority (70%) stating that they get their money's worth for their local taxes. This more than twice the statewide number of 33% who share that opinion.

The Satisfied Urban Dwellers' interest in politics is surprisingly low considering how loyal they are to the state and their hometowns. Only 17% are very interested in local politics, 21% in state politics, and 37% in national politics, and only 31% vote in every election.

This group has the largest number of people rating the state or their hometown as excellent. The 40% who rate New Jersey as an excellent place to live is more than twice the statewide result (17%). Nearly half (44%) consider their hometown as an excellent place to live, significantly more than the 27% saying the same across New Jersey. Happy with almost every aspect of their life and with what New Jersey and their hometown offers them, only 23% of Satisfied Urban Dwellers want to leave New Jersey at some point, compared to 51% who say the same statewide.

### **Urban Cluster: Dissatisfied Urban Dwellers** *(10% of population)*

As the name might suggest, Dissatisfied Urban Dwellers score the lowest on the Garden State Quality of Life Index (-30) and are the only group with a result in negative territory. They express discontent with almost every aspect of their life. The group is dominated by younger, lower income, urban New Jerseyans. Blacks and Hispanics are overrepresented in this group. Many of them are struggling financially. They are more likely to be out of work as well as very concerned with someone in their household losing their job over the next 12 months. They are currently renting and they could not afford to buy a house in their hometown. They do not have a good relationship with their neighbors and they do not have a lot of confidence in state or local institutions. They think that they are not getting their money's worth for their local taxes. Not surprisingly, they consider neither their hometown nor New Jersey an excellent place to live and they are more likely than any other group to say that they want to leave New Jersey eventually.

When asked specifically what they like about New Jersey, not much comes to mind for this group. The largest group of all (28%) cannot think of a single positive thing to say, the highest percentage of all groups.

The number of people (30%) who are very dissatisfied with their standard of living in this group is five times higher than the New Jersey average (6%). Almost 4-in-10 (37%) think their household finances are very bad compared to 7% in the state. When rating their lives on a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 being the best possible life, the average for this group is 5.0, the lowest of all groups and almost 1.7 points below the New Jersey average.

The Dissatisfied Urban Dwellers' employment profile is the worst of all groups with 32% stating that they are temporarily out of work, compared to about 12% across the state. More than 1-in-4

of the state's unemployed are in this group. Their job outlook is the worst of all groups with 73% being very concerned that they or someone in their household will lose their job in the next 12 months. This is 35 points higher than the New Jersey average and by far the highest of all groups.

The household income of almost half of the group is below \$25,000 a year and 4-in-5 make less than \$50,000. The majority of them only have a high school diploma or less and very few have finished four year degrees.

This group trends a little younger and is racially diverse. Hispanics (34%) are the largest group, followed by blacks (33%), this is more than twice the state's average for each group.

Only 28% currently own a home (compared to 68% in New Jersey), virtually the entire group (97%) state that they could not afford a house in their hometown with their current income (compared to 69% statewide).

Even on the most local level, their own neighborhood, they are not doing well. Only 16% strongly agree that their neighbors are trustworthy, compared to 51% of people saying the same statewide. Only 13% strongly agree that they would feel comfortable asking a neighbor to run an errand, compared to 40% saying the same across New Jersey.

Virtually no one (1%) in this group expresses a lot of confidence in their local or state government, which is considerably lower than the already low state average (17% for the local and 11% for the state government). Other local institutions that generally enjoy higher levels of confidence across the state also rank very low in this group. Only 16% express a lot of confidence in their local police department, compared to 61% statewide. The same goes for schools where 16% express a lot of confidence, compared to 44% statewide.

Only 5% in this group think of New Jersey as an excellent place to live and only 2% think of their local area as an excellent place to live. Almost half of the people who rate their own town as "poor" find themselves in this group. With seemingly everything working against them, 79% of the Dissatisfied Urban Dwellers want to leave New Jersey at some point.

## **The Middle-Aged Cluster**

The Middle-Aged cluster includes two groups dominated by New Jerseyans between the ages of 35 and 54. They are mostly white suburbanites from the northern part of the state. Members of both groups enjoy higher than average educational achievement and income, although very few



have earned postgraduate degrees or reached the highest levels of income. The main difference between these demographically similar groups is their level of engagement in the community. The Neighborly Middle-Aged have a lot of contact with their neighbors and many of them are very interested in politics on all levels. They are content with the state and their hometowns and the majority want to stay for the rest of their lives. The Disengaged Middle-Aged have little contact with their neighbors and few are very interested in politics, particularly on the local level. They perceive a lower quality of life than their Neighborly counterparts and most of them want to leave New Jersey eventually.

### **Middle-Aged Cluster: Neighborly Middle-Aged** *(11% of population)*

The Neighborly Middle-Aged score +36 on the Garden State Quality of Life Index, which is somewhat above the statewide average. People in this group are mostly from older towns and suburbs and have a very good relationship with their neighbors.

The group has the second highest unemployment rate of all groups and they are very concerned that they or someone in their household might lose their job in the next year. They do, however, like both New Jersey and their hometown and the majority believe that they will stay in New Jersey for the rest of their lives.

The current financial situation of the Neighborly Middle-Aged mirrors New Jersey averages. Rating their lives on a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 being the best possible life, the average for this group is 6.7, exactly the same as New Jersey as a whole (6.7).

The group has a tendency to avoid extremes, in both income and education. Only 9% make less than \$25,000 and only 6% make \$150,000 or more. Both are considerably lower than the New Jersey average. There are fewer people holding only high school diplomas or less (29%) as well as fewer postgraduates in this group (9%) than in New Jersey overall.

The employment situation for the Neighborly Middle-Aged is somewhat more tense than for most other groups. At 18%, the unemployment rate is considerably higher than the state average (12%) and the second highest among all groups. They also have one of the most fearful outlooks. More than 4-in-10 (42%) are very concerned that they or someone in their household will lose their job in the next 12 months.

The group is predominately white (82%) and only the representation of Hispanics (11%) is close to the state average. While the state splits evenly between older (36%) and growing suburban



areas (35%), this group is dominated by people from older towns and suburbs (49%), rather than residents from growing towns and suburbs (16%).

Potentially driven by the fact that half of the group hails from older towns and suburbs, this group is very connected to their own neighborhood. A significant majority (71%) agree that their neighbors are trustworthy, which ties for the highest result of all groups. A majority (63%) would also strongly agree that they have no problem asking a neighbor to run an errand for them, the highest result of all groups. Finally, almost half (48%) talk to their neighbors on a daily basis, which is the second highest of all groups. All of these results are about 20 points higher than New Jersey averages.

While the Neighborly Middle-Aged have a lot of trust in their neighbors, confidence in local and state institutions is very much in line with state averages, as is interest in politics in general.

Among the Neighborly Middle-Aged only 21% think of New Jersey as an excellent place to live, while 35% think of their hometown as an excellent place to live. This 14 point difference is tied for the largest difference among all groups. When asked specifically what they like about New Jersey, the top answer is the beaches (17%). Underscoring how active this group is, 10% mention being “close to everything” and 8% being close to the mountains and skiing, both are the highest percentage of all.

Only 45% of the Neighborly Middle-Aged believe that they will leave New Jersey eventually. This is several points lower than the state average and among the lowest of all groups.

### **Middle-Aged Cluster: Disengaged Middle-Aged** *(11% of population)*

The Disengaged Middle-Aged group scores +15 on the Garden State Quality of Life Index, slightly below the statewide average. This group is dominated by New Jerseyans between 35 and 54 living in older towns and suburbs, mostly in northern New Jersey. Most of them own their own home, however, unlike the Neighborly Middle-Aged, the Disengaged Middle-Aged are not as close to their neighbors.

New Jersey does not really work for them. The majority are worried that they or someone in their household will lose their job in the next year. Very few rate New Jersey as an excellent place to live and a majority want to leave New Jersey eventually. They do not care much about politics, least of all local politics.

The outlook on life of the Disengaged Middle-Aged is somewhat less positive than that of the Neighborly Middle Aged. When rating their lives on a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 being the best possible life, the average for this group is 6.3, the second lowest of all groups.

Part of the reason could be their demographic profile. While their income profile is very similar to New Jersey as a whole, they have a considerably lower education profile. About half (46%) of them only hold high school diplomas or less, which is 10 points more than the state average.

More than half (52%) of the Disengaged Middle-Aged are very worried that they or someone in their household might lose their job in the next 12 months. This is the second highest percentage of all groups. Currently only 13% are unemployed though, just one point over the state average and several points under the unemployment rate of the Neighborly Middle-Aged (18%).

Almost the entire group (87%) own their homes, which is the second highest homeownership rate of all groups and almost 20 points over the New Jersey average. If they had to buy their home today though, only 33% could afford to buy a house in their hometown right now on their current income.

The Disengaged Middle-Aged have a decent relationship with their neighbors, in line with the state average, however, it is not nearly as good as the relationship the Neighborly Middle-Aged have, for example, only 30% talk to their neighbors daily compared to 48% of the Neighborly Middle-Aged.

The group's confidence in local and state political institutions is very much in line with state averages and politics is not a particularly important topic for this group. Only 13% are very interested in local politics, 23% in state politics, and 33% in national politics. All three numbers are significantly lower than state averages.

Very few of the Disengaged Middle-Aged (8%) think of New Jersey as an excellent place to live and even the 22% who think of their hometown as an excellent place to live is lower than the New Jersey average. It is therefore not surprising that 66% want to leave New Jersey eventually, the second highest percentage among all groups.

### **Top Earners** (*11% of population*)

The Top Earners score a slightly above average +31 on the Garden State Quality of Life Index. They mostly live in the northern and central parts of the state. They include the most successful New Jerseyans when it comes to education and income. Almost half of them have postgraduate

degrees and the group's income levels are far above average. Virtually all of them are satisfied with their standard of living and almost no one has trouble making ends meet in this group. Hardly any of them are unemployed and while there is still some fear that they or someone in their household might lose their job in the next 12 months, the level of fear is considerably lower than in New Jersey in general.

Interestingly though, all that success does not translate into very strong feelings for the state of New Jersey or their hometowns. It seems that New Jersey works for them but they are not too attached to the state, with a majority thinking they will leave eventually.

Going along with the image that New Jersey works for them without being too involved in the state's affairs, the group's top answer for what they like most about New Jersey is its proximity to New York City (24%).

Top Earners enjoy a lot of success in their life. Rating their lives on a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 being the best possible life, the average for this group is 7.4, which is the highest of all nine groups. The positive outlook is clearly based on actual financial success. More than 1-in-3 (35%) have household incomes of \$150,000 a year or more, significantly more than across New Jersey and by far the highest percentage of all groups. Another 24% have incomes between \$100,000 and \$150,000 bringing the total percentage of people with household incomes in excess of \$100,000 to 59%.

The group also enjoyed a lot of success regarding educational achievement. More than 4-in-10 (44%) hold postgraduate degrees, compared to only 14% statewide. Another 30% graduated from four year colleges, compared to 18% statewide. That means overall, about 3-in-4 people in this group are at least four year college graduates.

The Top Earners have the strongest employment profile of all groups. Only 5% are temporarily out of work, less than half the state's average (12%) and the second lowest percentage of all groups. Even in this group, almost 1-in-4 (23%) are very concerned that they or someone in their household might lose their job in the next year. This is, however, 15 points lower than the state average of 38% and the lowest of all groups.

The group is racially diverse with black (21%), Hispanic (18%), and Asian (15%) residents being overrepresented in regards to state averages. White residents are the largest group (46%), but that number is significantly lower than the 60% statewide average. Northern New Jerseyans are overrepresented in this group.

While actual homeownership (74%) is only slightly higher than the New Jersey average this is one of only two groups where a majority (54%) state that they could afford to buy a house in their hometown on their current income. It is the only group dominated by people from northern and central New Jersey who feel that way.

Regarding their own neighborhoods, a certain degree of indifference can be found. More than half (56%) strongly agree that their neighbors are trustworthy, a few points higher than the 51% of people saying the same statewide. However, only 32% strongly agree that they would feel comfortable asking a neighbor to run an errand (40% statewide) and only 19% talk to their neighbors on a daily basis (28% statewide).

This group is very interested in politics on all levels. Almost half (46%) are very interested in local politics, 56% are very interested in state politics, and 73% are very interested in national politics. This is among the highest of all groups and significantly higher than state average for all three levels. Almost half (49%) of this group vote in every election.

Overall, 17% rate New Jersey as an excellent place to live and 29% think of their hometown as an excellent place to live. A majority (55%) of the Top Earners want to leave New Jersey eventually. These numbers are in line with state averages. It seems therefore that the group does not attribute their personal success to the state or their local area.

### **Young Suburbanites** (*11% of population*)

Young Suburbanites score +38 on the Garden State Quality of Life Index, the second highest scoring group after Satisfied Urban Dwellers. This group is dominated by New Jerseyans under the age of 35 living in the growing suburbs of central New Jersey. Fitting the image of people living in new growing suburbs they have no relationship with their neighbors. They are predominantly white but also include a higher than average percentage of Asians. They are doing a little better financially than the state overall and they are somewhat more educated.

When rating their lives on a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 being the best possible life, the average for this group is 6.6, about the same as New Jersey as a whole (6.7). They are doing well financially with 17% having a household income in excess of \$150,000, and another 21% have household incomes of \$100,000 to \$150,000. These shares are higher than the state averages. This group is also considerably more educated than New Jersey overall. About 2-in-3 have either graduated from four year colleges (30%) or at least have some college training (35%). The unemployment rate of 13% matches the state average of 12%. Only 27% are very concerned that they or

someone in their household might lose their job in the next year which is more than 10 points lower than the 38% statewide average.

The Young Suburbanites are less racially diverse than some other groups. The largest sub-groups, white residents (68%) and Asian residents (17%) are overrepresented compared to state averages.

Young Suburbanites are not very connected to their local neighborhoods. While many (43%) strongly agree that their neighbors are trustworthy, only 20% strongly agree that they would feel comfortable asking their neighbors to run an errand for them. This is half the statewide number of 40%. Only 14% talk to their neighbors on a daily basis, compared to 28% in the state.

Politics is not very important to the Young Suburbanites, particularly on the local level, only 8% are very interested in it. They have the lowest level of regular participation in elections among all groups, with only 20% stating that they vote in every election.

About 1-in-5 (19%) rate New Jersey as an excellent place to live and 32% think the same of their hometown. These numbers are in line with state averages. A majority (59%) of Young Suburbanites believe that they will leave New Jersey eventually. This is a few points higher than the state average, which is not surprising given the overrepresentation of young people in this group.

### **Southern Workforce** (*12% of population*)

The Southern Workforce scores +9 on the Garden State Quality of Life index, the second lowest score of all the groups. This group is heavily represented by residents from the southern part of the state and most of them are currently in the active workforce. This group has the lowest percentage of unemployed residents and only a very small number of retirees.

When looking at their own financial situation, they have a somewhat better outlook than the state as a whole. When rating their lives on a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 being the best possible life, the average for the Southern Workforce is 7.0. This is the second highest of all groups, just behind the Top Earners.

Income levels of this group are a little higher than the New Jersey average, particularly due to 26% making between \$100,000 and \$150,000, a considerably larger share than in New Jersey overall. The group is less educated than New Jersey overall. About 4-in-10 (43%) only have a

high school diploma or less, compared to 36% statewide. Compared to the state averages, fewer hold four year and postgraduate degrees.

The Southern Workforce's employment profile on the other hand is very good. With only 3%, they have the lowest unemployment rate of all groups, a full 9 points under the state average. About 1-in-3 (32%) are afraid that they or someone in their household will lose their job in the next 12 months. This is also several points lower than the state average. The group also includes very few retirees (7% compared to 20% statewide).

The group is racially diverse. While a majority (54%) are white, the proportion of black residents in this group (26%) is about twice the state average. The community-type profile closely matches the state with 21% hailing from the state's urban areas and 72% from the suburbs.

The Southern Workforce's perception of quality of life is in line with the state average, 13% think of New Jersey as an excellent state to live and 24% think of their hometown as an excellent place to live. Only 44%, the second lowest percentage of all groups, believe that they will leave the state eventually.

### **The Young Born and Bred** (*11% of population*)

The Young Born and Bred group scores a slightly below average +17 on the Garden State Quality of Life Index. People in this group are brought together by having lived in New Jersey their entire life. The people come from different walks of life and different areas in New Jersey, but they tend to be younger adults with more than half the group under the age of 35. However, the group also includes a substantial number of people over the age of 55 who have lived their whole lives in the Garden State. With the exception of age, the group's demographic profile very closely mirrors the state. They come from both urban and suburban areas, although few live in the state's growing suburbs and towns. While there is some racial diversity, white New Jerseyans are overrepresented. The Young Born and Bred are very interested in politics on all levels and participate actively in the political process.

The Young Born and Bred income profile trends higher than state averages. Very few (6%) have household incomes less than \$25,000, which is considerably lower than the average state share. A larger share (24%) earn between \$100,000 and \$150,000, which is in turn substantially larger than average the state share. The group is also more educated with fewer people only holding high school degrees or less while proportionally more have at least some college or graduated from four year institutions.

Their employment profile is better than the state's average. Only 8% are temporarily out of work and 29% are afraid that they or someone in their household will lose their job over the next 12 months. Both numbers are lower than average and among the best of all groups.

The group is racially diverse, although whites (77%) are overrepresented. A majority (73%) live in the suburbs, however, only 12% in this group come from growing suburbs, compared to 35% statewide.

More than half (55%) are younger than 35, at the same time 32% are 55 years or older. That means about 1-in-3 of the Young Born and Bred group have lived in New Jersey for well over 50 years. Also interesting is that despite trending very young, 83% are homeowners, which is considerably higher than the state average of 68% and the third highest homeownership rate among all groups.

When it comes to confidence in state institutions the group also trends a little lower than the state. Interestingly, despite not having as much confidence in several of the state and local institutions, 40% believe they get their money's worth when it comes to local taxes. That is 7 points higher than the New Jersey average.

Politics is very important to the New Jersey's Young Born and Bred. Almost half (47%) are very interested in local politics, 58% are very interested in state politics, and 71% are very interested in national politics. This is the highest number of people being very interested in local and state politics of all groups and the second highest for national politics. They are the most likely to vote in every election with 61% stating that they do. That is close to 20 points higher than the state average.

When it comes to rating the only state they ever lived in, 13% think of New Jersey as an excellent place to live, and 26% think of their hometown as an excellent place to live. This is in line with the state averages. A majority (57%) of Young Born and Bred plan to leave New Jersey eventually.

### **The White Seniors** (*12% of population*)

White Seniors score a slightly below average +16 on the Garden State Quality of Life Index. This group is almost entirely comprised of white New Jerseyans over the age of 55. Most of them are retired and almost all of them own their home. The group has a somewhat higher interest in politics on all levels and a majority state that they vote in every election. They



express the highest levels of trust in their neighbors and they believe they can rely on them. Interestingly the level of trust does not necessarily translate into daily contact with their neighbors.

The interest in politics and good relationships with their neighbors, however, does not translate into a higher affinity for the state of New Jersey or their towns. Overall, the attitudes of this group towards the state and their town are, for the most part, indistinguishable from overall New Jersey averages.

The White Senior's unique employment profile stands out from all other groups. More than 2-in-3 (69%) people in this group are retired, which is not surprising considering that 93% are over the age of 55. The high percentage of retirees can also explain why temporary unemployment, at 9%, is lower than the state average. Interestingly, 1-in-3 (33%) are still very concerned that they or someone in their household will lose their job over the next 12 months.

About half of the White Seniors (49%) live in southern New Jersey, the second highest concentration of residents from the southern part of the state. Almost the entire group lives in the suburbs. Almost all of them (96%) own their home, although only 27% state that they could afford to buy a home in their town today on their current income. This group cares about their duty to vote. Almost 6-in-10 (58%) state that they vote in every election, significantly more than the 42% who say the same statewide.

When rating the state and their towns, 13% consider New Jersey an excellent place to live and 24% consider their hometown an excellent place to live. Both are a few points lower than state averages. About 3-in-10 (29%) think they are getting their money's worth for their local taxes. This is in line with state averages. Interestingly, 44% of White Seniors think that they will leave New Jersey eventually. While that is below the state average, the group's higher age and high homeownership percentage would have suggested a lower rate.



	Total all NJ	Total among Groups+	Satisfied Urban Dwellers	Dissatisfied Urban Dwellers	Neighborhoodly Middle-Aged	Disengaged Middle-Aged	Top Earners	Young Suburbanites	Southern Workforce	Young Born and Bred	White Seniors
<b>Ladder of Happiness</b>											
Average	6.7	6.7	6.9	5.0	6.7	6.3	7.4	6.6	7.0	6.8	6.9
<b>New Jersey and Hometown: General Views</b>											
Rate New Jersey excellent	17%	16%	40%*	5%	21%	8%	17%	19%	11%	13%	13%
Rate hometown excellent	27%	26%	44%*	2%*	35%	22%	29%	32%	16%	26%	24%
Leave NJ eventually	51%	54%	23%	79%*	45%	66%	55%	59%	64%	57%	44%
Local services are worth the taxes	33%	35%	70%*	6%*	32%	30%	32%	38%	31%	40%	29%
<b>A lot of confidence in local and state institutions</b>											
Local schools	44%	45%	70%*	16%*	45%	53%	44%	54%	43%	39%	40%
Local government	17%	17%	40%*	1%	17%	17%	16%	11%	13%	17%	16%
State government	11%	10%	33%*	1%	7%	11%	7%	7%	10%	5%	8%
Local police	61%	62%	76%	16%*	72%	71%	59%	62%	63%	67%	69%
<b>Home ownership and affordability</b>											
Current homeowner	68%	70%	33%*	28%*	74%	87%*	74%	70%	80%	83%	96%*
Could afford home in their hometown	31%	32%	8%*	3%*	25%	33%	54%*	37%	59%*	34%	27%
<b>Household's financial situation</b>											
Temporarily out of work	12%	13%	17%	32%*	18%	13%	5%	13%	3%	8%	9%
Job loss within 1 year (very concerned)	38%	38%	33%	73%*	42%	52%*	23%*	27%	32%	29%	33%
Household finances (very bad)	7%	8%	7%	37%*	9%	8%	0%	3%	1%	2%	7%
Standard of living (very dissatisfied)	6%	6%	2%	30%*	7%	5%	1%	3%	4%	2%	6%
<b>Relationship with neighbors (strongly agree)</b>											
Neighbors are trustworthy	51%	53%	56%	16%*	71%*	59%	56%	43%	51%	44%	71%*
Comfortable going to a neighbor when sad	31%	31%	45%	11%*	47%	34%	23%	12%*	45%	12%*	43%
Could ask neighbors to run an errand	40%	41%	48%	13%*	63%*	42%	32%	20%*	57%*	31%	54%*
Talk to neighbors every day	28%	28%	36%	14%	48%*	30%	19%	14%	49%*	17%	27%
<b>Voting and political interest</b>											
Votes in every election	42%	42%	31%	34%	48%	32%	49%	20%*	45%	61%*	58%*
Local politics (very interested)	29%	29%	17%	27%	33%	13%*	46%*	8%*	32%	47%*	37%
State politics (very interested)	38%	38%	21%*	37%	38%	23%*	56%*	23%	42%	58%*	49%
National politics (very interested)	52%	52%	37%*	56%	46%	33%*	73%*	41%	46%	71%*	64%

+ Refusals and other non-responses were removed from the group analysis.

\* Denotes statistically significant difference.

	Total all NJ	Total among groups+	Satisfied Urban Dwellers	Dissatisfied Urban Dwellers	Neighborhoodly Middle-Aged	Disengaged Middle-Aged	Top Earners	Young Suburbanites	Southern Workforce	Young Born and Bred	White Seniors
<b>Age groups and retirement status</b>											
18-34	26%	28%	30%	35%	24%	9%*	20%	53%*	26%	55%*	0%*
35-54	38%	40%	19%*	45%	57%*	73%*	51%	40%	55%*	12%*	7%*
55+	33%	33%	51%*	20%	19%	18%*	29%	6%*	18%	32%	93%*
Retired	20%	19%	41%*	9%	8%	7%	8%	1%*	7%	20%	69%*
<b>Education groups</b>											
Less than high school	7%	7%	22%	16%	6%	4%	1%	2%	6%	4%	6%
High school graduate	29%	31%	41%	42%	23%	42%	11%*	21%	37%	17%	41%
Some college/vocational/technical	28%	29%	28%	30%	38%	21%	14%	35%	36%	39%	24%
College graduate (Bachelor's)	18%	19%	7%	10%	24%	18%	30%	30%	12%	23%	15%
Postgraduate degree	14%	14%	2%	2%	9%	15%	44%*	12%	10%	17%	13%
<b>Region</b>											
North	46%	47%	54%	53%	79%*	62%*	65%*	19%*	15%*	56%	21%*
Central	25%	25%	18%	20%	15%	13%	28%	43%*	22%	31%	30%
South	28%	29%	27%	27%	6%*	25%	6%*	38%	63%*	13%	49%*
<b>Community Type</b>											
Major urban	9%	9%	16%	31%*	5%	2%	13%	1%	12%	5%	1%
Other urban	16%	17%	28%	21%	26%	14%	23%	5%	9%	22%	3%*
Older towns & suburbs	36%	36%	31%	25%	49%	61%*	27%	18%*	22%	61%	32%
Growing suburbs & towns	35%	33%	21%	19%	16%*	19%*	35%	69%*	50%	12%*	53%*
Rural	5%	5%	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%	7%	7%	1%	11%
<b>Race</b>											
White	60%	63%	40%*	27%*	82%*	74%	46%*	68%	54%	77%	96%*
Black	13%	14%	21%	33%*	3%	4%	21%	7%	26%	10%	3%
Hispanic	15%	16%	33%*	34%*	11%	15%	18%	9%	15%	12%	0%*
Asian	8%	7%	6%	6%	4%	7%	15%	17%	5%	2%	1%
<b>Income</b>											
Under \$25K	14%	17%	49%*	48%*	9%	6%	5%	5%	7%	6%	18%
\$25 to under \$50K	18%	22%	34%	34%	22%	19%	12%	14%	16%	17%	33%
\$50 to under \$75K	16%	20%	13%	13%	25%	25%	11%	20%	23%	27%	22%
\$75 to under \$100K	12%	15%	3%	4%	21%	24%	13%	23%	18%	14%	14%
\$100 to under \$150	12%	15%	1%	2%	16%	10%	24%	21%	26%	24%	8%
\$150K+	8%	11%	0%	0%	6%	15%	35%*	17%	9%	13%	4%

+ Refusals and other non-responses were removed from the group analysis.

\* Denotes statistically significant difference.



# The Garden State's Quality of Life

*A survey of New Jersey residents*

## Survey Methodology

The project commenced with a review of documents related to quality of life and sustainability in New Jersey as well as other places in and outside the United States. These resources included aggregate statistics and expert views as well as public opinion data. The process also included a variety of roundtable discussions and stakeholder meetings with representatives of state and local government, non-profit organizations, academia, and public service in New Jersey.

This review culminated into 12 areas of inquiry related to the Garden State's Quality of Life – general satisfaction, economic factors (including cost of living and housing), quality of government, education, crime and safety, transportation, environment, health care and social services, diversity, recreation and culture, civic engagement, and social connections.

It became clear that understanding how New Jersey's quality of life currently stands requires knowing what it has been. This led to a review of state public opinion data. The Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling archive at Rutgers University contains New Jersey polling data going back to 1971. A significant number of questions used in this survey were drawn from that resource.

The final questionnaire for this survey was drafted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute research staff. Trend data included in this report are from two primary sources. For the period from 2005 to 2010, the data come from the Monmouth University Polling Institute archives. For time points prior to 2005, nearly all the trend data come from the Eagleton-Rutgers poll archive. The only exceptions are a few items on race and ethnicity from polls conducted for the American Conference on Diversity.

The questionnaire was programmed into a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system and the interviews were conducted by telephone December 1 to 15, 2010 by experienced professional interviewers at Braun Research, Inc.

A random probability sample of telephone exchanges covering the state was used to select New Jersey residents 18 years of age and older to participate in this study. Each working phone number was called a minimum of five times, at different times of the week, in an effort to reach people who were infrequently at home.

While the initial sample was drawn proportionately by region, smaller counties were oversampled so that the final survey included at least 100 survey respondents from each of New Jersey's 21 counties. Finally, racial and ethnic minorities were oversampled by screening for appropriate respondents in areas of minority population concentration. This resulted in sub-

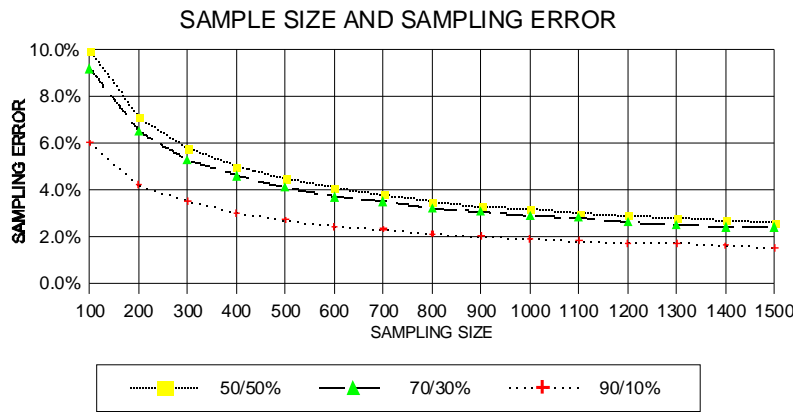
samples of 272 black respondents, 236 Hispanic respondents, and 210 Asian respondents. The total sample for this survey included 2,864 New Jersey adults.

While those interviewed in a survey ideally will have the same characteristics as the population they represent, samples may under-represent groups that are more difficult to interview, such as those with less than a high school education. Also, the final survey data needed to be adjusted for the county and minority oversamples. A statistical technique known as “weighting” was used to correct these imbalances.

The weighting procedure compared population figures for gender, age, education, race, and county from available census data with the demographics of the survey sample. The total sample was then weighted to more accurately reflect the New Jersey adult population. For example, if census figures show 39 percent of residents 18 years and older have a high school education, and the sample consists of 32 percent with a high school education, each respondent in this category would be counted as 1.22 persons to adjust for this difference.

The percentages obtained in a sample survey are estimates of what the distribution of responses would be if the entire population had been surveyed. “Sampling error” is a statistical term which describes the probable difference between interviewing everyone in a given population and a sample drawn from that population. For example, the sampling error associated with this survey’s total sample of 2,864 is  $\pm 2$  percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus, if 52 percent in this sample are found to agree with a particular statement, the percentage of agreement within the population from which the sample was drawn would be between 50 and 54 percent ( $52 \pm 2\%$ ) 95 times out of 100.

Sampling error increases as the sample size is reduced. For, example, if statements are made based on the sub-group of 272 blacks, the sampling error would be  $\pm 6$  percent. For percentages based on the smallest counties ( $n=100$ ), the sampling error is  $\pm 10$  percent. This factor must be kept in mind when comparing the responses of different groups within the total sample. Readers should note that sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error:





# The Garden State's Quality of Life

A survey of New Jersey residents

## Survey Instrument

Monmouth University Polling Institute  
Interviews conducted December 2010  
(n=2,864 New Jersey adults)

### THE STATE

A1. Overall, how would you rate New Jersey as a place to live – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

- 17% Excellent
- 46% Good
- 26% Only fair
- 10% Poor
- 1% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A2. How would you rate your town or city as a place to live – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

- 27% Excellent
- 46% Good
- 20% Only fair
- 8% Poor
- 0% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A3. What do you LIKE most about living in New Jersey? Just tell me the first thing that comes to mind. [Note: List was not read. Results add to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted]

- 11% Close to NY
- 1% Close to Philly
- 3% Close to major cities
- 13% Close to the beach/shore/ocean
- 1% Close to the beach and NY
- 1% Location-general
- 5% Close to everything
- 1% Access to everything
- 2% Convenience
- 1% Lot to do-general
- 1% AC/casinos
- 1% Sophisticated/cultural offerings
- 1% Parks
- 2% Mountains/ski/other recreation

- 2% Shopping
- 3% The people
- 3% Diversity
- 3% Family from here/lived here all life
- 5% Friends/family live here
- 3% Countryside/scenery
- 1% Location
- 1% Like local area/town
- 1% Like NJ/like area (not town spec)
- 3% Climate/weather
- 3% Seasons
- 3% Good schools/education
- 4% Work/career opportunities
- 1% Affordable/standard of living
- 1% Highways
- 1% Good (public) transport
- 4% Calm/slower pace
- 1% Safe
- 1% Family oriented
- 1% Open space
- 1% Everything
- 4% Negative comment
- 5% Other
- 10% No answer

A4. What do you DISLIKE most about living in New Jersey? Just tell me the first thing that comes to mind. *[Note: List was not read. Results add to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted]*

- 2% Nothing
- 31% Taxes-general/all
- 14% Property tax
- 1% Income tax
- 1% Car insurance
- 1% Insurance
- 11% Cost of living
- 1% High rent
- 2% No work
- 3% Politics/politicians
- 2% Corruption
- 3% Governor Christie
- 1% Education system
- 3% Weather/climate
- 2% Congestion
- 7% Traffic
- 4% Crowded

- 2% Pollution
- 2% Public transport
- 1% Bad roads
- 5% Crime
- 1% Local issue
- 1% Not enough to do
- 2% The people
- 1% Everything
- 5% Other
- 8% No answer

A5. 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?

- 51% Move out of New Jersey
- 44% Stay in New Jersey
- 5% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A6. Now, I'd like your opinion of some different aspects of life in the area where you live. For each one I read, please tell me whether you would rate it as excellent, good, only fair, or poor. *[ITEMS WERE ROTATED]*

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
A. The quality of the environment	14%	52%	25%	9%	0%
B. The amount of building and development	8%	39%	32%	18%	3%
C. The condition of local roads	9%	44%	30%	17%	0%
D. Traffic	5%	29%	33%	32%	1%
E. Access to public transportation	21%	37%	22%	18%	3%
F. The availability of good-paying jobs	5%	27%	34%	29%	5%
G. The availability of affordable housing	4%	27%	36%	29%	5%
H. The availability of cultural and recreational activities	21%	43%	21%	14%	2%
I. Personal safety and crime	23%	47%	20%	10%	1%
J. Race relations	12%	55%	22%	7%	4%
K. Providing programs for the needy	10%	39%	28%	13%	11%
L. Access to health care	22%	47%	19%	10%	2%
M. As a place to raise a family	26%	48%	16%	9%	1%

A7. How would you generally describe economic conditions in New Jersey right now – would you say that New Jersey is in good times or bad times?

- 15% Good times
- 82% Bad times
- 3% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A8. Overall, how would you rate the quality of government in New Jersey – is it excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

- 3% Excellent
- 21% Good
- 43% Only fair
- 31% Poor
- 2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A9. Do you feel the quality of your local services is worth the amount you pay in taxes, or not?

- 33% Yes, is worth
- 64% No, is not worth
- 3% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A10. I'd like to get some idea of how you feel about different organizations or institutions that exist to serve you and others. For each of the institutions or groups I mention, tell me whether you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, or not very much confidence in them. By confidence, I mean that you feel they are doing what they ought to be doing.

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not much</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
A. Your local schools	44%	36%	16%	4%
B. Your local government	17%	48%	32%	3%
C. New Jersey state government	11%	42%	44%	2%
D. Your local fire and rescue department	78%	18%	3%	2%
E. Your local police	61%	28%	9%	1%

A11. How would you rate the job your local schools are doing – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

- 24% Excellent
- 40% Good
- 23% Only fair
- 8% Poor
- 5% (VOL) Don't know/Refused



A12. In general, how would you rate the job the public schools are doing here in New Jersey – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

12% Excellent  
41% Good  
31% Only fair  
10% Poor  
5% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A13. How would you rate the job that colleges and universities are doing here in New Jersey – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

20% Excellent  
51% Good  
17% Only fair  
2% Poor  
9% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A14. How would you rate your own opportunities for obtaining further training or education in New Jersey if you wanted it – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

23% Excellent  
43% Good  
22% Only fair  
8% Poor  
4% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

Turning to another topic,

A15. Do you think that racial and ethnic discrimination in New Jersey is a problem, or not? [If "YES": Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or a small problem?]

12% Yes, big problem  
28% Yes, somewhat of a problem  
7% Yes, small problem  
49% No, not a problem  
4% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A16. How much racial or ethnic tension do you think there is among people who live in your town or city - a lot, some, just a little or none at all?

9% A lot  
25% Some  
37% Just a little  
26% None at all  
2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A17. Is the amount of racial and ethnic diversity in New Jersey good or bad for the state's quality of life, or does it have no impact?

- 43% Good
- 16% Bad
- 31% No impact
- 4% (VOL) Both good and bad
- 6% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

A18. Overall, do you feel that immigration into New Jersey has been good or bad for the state, or does it have no impact?

- 34% Good
- 32% Bad
- 21% No impact
- 6% (VOL) Both good and bad
- 7% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

### **PERSONAL**

Now, I'd like to ask some questions about your own household,

B1. How would you rate the financial situation in your household these days – is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

- 15% Very good
- 59% Fairly good
- 16% Fairly bad
- 7% Very bad
- 2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B2. Would you say that you and your family often don't have enough money to make ends meet, that you're getting along OK these days or that you're financially comfortable?

- 16% Don't have enough money
- 51% Getting along
- 31% Financially comfortable
- 1% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B3. Overall, how satisfied are you with your current standard of living – very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

- 26% Very satisfied
- 50% Somewhat satisfied
- 18% Somewhat dissatisfied
- 6% Very dissatisfied
- 1% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B4. 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?

38% Very concerned  
29% Somewhat concerned  
32% Not at all concerned  
2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B5. Say you were looking to purchase your first home today. On your current income, do you think you could afford to buy a house in your town right now or not?

31% Yes, could afford  
67% No, could not afford  
2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B6. How serious a problem do you feel crime is in New Jersey – very serious, somewhat serious, or not at all serious?

31% Very serious  
60% Somewhat serious  
7% Not at all serious  
2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B7. How safe do you feel in your neighborhood at night – very safe, somewhat safe, or not at all safe?

59% Very safe  
35% Somewhat safe  
6% Not at all safe  
0% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B8. Just your best estimate, on an average day, how much time would you say you spend in a car for all reasons, including work, school, errands, and leisure?

5% None  
8% Less than half hour  
15% 31 - 59 minutes  
33% 60 - 90 minutes  
22% 91 -179 minutes  
16% 180 minutes or more  
3% No Answer

- B9. How often do you, yourself, get stuck driving in traffic jams – every day, several times a week, several times a month, a few times a year, less often, or never?
- 15% Every day
  - 23% Several times a week
  - 23% Several times a month
  - 14% A few times a year
  - 9% Less often
  - 10% Never
  - 5% (VOL) Don't use car
  - 1% (VOL) Don't know/Refused
- B10. How often do you use public transportation such as buses or trains – every day, several times a week, several times a month, a few times a year, less often, or never?
- 8% Every day
  - 6% Several times a week
  - 9% Several times a month
  - 25% A few times a year
  - 11% Less often
  - 41% Never
  - 0% (VOL) Don't know/Refused
- B11. Now, how would you rate your immediate family's overall health and well-being right now – excellent, good, only fair or poor?
- 33% Excellent
  - 47% Good
  - 16% Only fair
  - 4% Poor
  - 0% (VOL) Don't know/Refused
- B12. How satisfied are you with the quality of the health care you receive – very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?
- 47% Very satisfied
  - 38% Somewhat satisfied
  - 8% Somewhat dissatisfied
  - 6% Very dissatisfied
  - 1% (VOL) Don't know/Refused
- B13. In the past five years, have you or anyone in your household needed health care and not gone for it because you felt you could not afford it?
- 22% Yes
  - 77% No
  - 1% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B14. Thinking about your family’s health, how concerned are you about the quality of the water you drink – very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not very concerned?

- 30% Very concerned
- 28% Somewhat concerned
- 42% Not very concerned
- 1% (VOL) Don’t know/Refused

B15. And how would you rate the air quality in the area where you live – excellent, good, only fair or poor?

- 21% Excellent
- 49% Good
- 23% Only Fair
- 7% Poor
- 0% (VOL) Don’t know/Refused

B16. How satisfied are you with the availability of open space and parks in the area where you live – very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

- 46% Very satisfied
- 39% Somewhat satisfied
- 10% Somewhat dissatisfied
- 5% Very dissatisfied
- 0% (VOL) Don’t know/Refused

B17. I’m going to read you some activities people may do in New Jersey. For each one, please tell me if you have done this in New Jersey in the past year or not? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
A. Attended a concert or play in New Jersey	53%	47%	0%
B. Gone shopping in New Jersey	98%	2%	0%
C. Gone to a ball game in New Jersey	36%	64%	0%
D. Visited a museum in New Jersey	36%	64%	0%
E. Gone to an amusement park in New Jersey	44%	55%	0%
F. Took a vacation in New Jersey	41%	59%	0%
G. Took a drive in the country in New Jersey	69%	31%	0%
H. Visited a historical site in New Jersey	52%	48%	0%
I. Visited a farm in New Jersey	50%	50%	0%
J. Strolled through a downtown area in New Jersey	77%	23%	0%

B18. Do you currently have any of the following at home: *[ITEMS WERE ROTATED]*

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
A. Three or more cars or vehicles	31%	69%	0%
B. Two or more computers	55%	44%	0%
C. Paid housekeeping help	12%	88%	0%
D. High speed internet access, such as DSL, cable, or wireless	85%	14%	1%
E. A second home, such as a vacation property	11%	88%	0%

B19. Where do you get most of your information about politics and public affairs in New Jersey – from newspapers, television, radio, the Internet, or somewhere else?

28% Newspapers  
 40% Television  
 6% Radio  
 21% Internet  
 2% Other  
 2% (VOL) Word of mouth\other people  
 1% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B20. How often do you vote – in every election, most of them, some, just once in a while, or don't you vote?

42% Every  
 26% Most  
 5% Some  
 4% Once in a while  
 2% Don't vote/never  
 19% Not registered  
 2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B21. I'd like to know how interested you are in politics at various levels of government. First, are you very interested, somewhat interested, or not interested in local politics?

29% Very interested  
 48% Somewhat interested  
 22% Not interested  
 1% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B22. And are you very interested, somewhat interested, or not interested in state politics?

38% Very interested  
44% Somewhat interested  
17% Not interested  
0% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B23. Are you very interested, somewhat interested, or not interested in national politics?

52% Very interested  
35% Somewhat interested  
12% Not interested  
1% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B24. Thinking about the problems you see in your community, how much difference do you believe you personally can make in working to solve problems you see – a great deal, some, a little, or no difference at all?

12% Great deal of difference  
33% Some difference  
28% A little difference  
25% No difference at all  
2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B25. Have you ever worked either alone or with a group to solve a problem in the community where you live, or have you not had the opportunity to do that? [IF "YES": Was this in the last 12 months or not?]

22% Yes, within last 12 months  
16% Yes, but not within last 12 months  
62% No, haven't done it  
0% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B26. I'd like to ask you a few questions about your neighborhood. For each one please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

	<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Somewhat agree</u>	<u>Somewhat disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
A. Most of the people in my neighborhood are trustworthy	51%	32%	6%	8%	4%
B. People in my neighborhood are always in a hurry	25%	29%	28%	14%	4%
C. If a garbage can fell in front of my home a neighbor would pick it up for me	45%	27%	10%	15%	3%
D. I feel comfortable going to a neighbor if I feel sad and need someone to talk to	31%	25%	17%	26%	2%
E. I can ask a neighbor if I need someone to run an errand for me	40%	27%	12%	19%	2%
F. I talk to my neighbors every day	28%	30%	22%	20%	1%

B27. During the past seven days, on how many days did you sit down to have dinner with your family?

8%	0 – No days
5%	1
6%	2
9%	3
7%	4
12%	5
5%	6
41%	7 – Every day
5%	(VOL) Live alone
1%	(VOL) Don't know/Refused

B28. Regarding your family, are your parents living?

18%	Yes, mother only
4%	Yes, father only
40%	Yes, both parents living
38%	No
1%	(VOL) Don't know/Refused

B28A. About how often do you usually see or talk to your parents – nearly every day or more, at least once a week, at least once a month, less often, or never?

36%	Nearly every day or more
18%	At least once a week
5%	At least once a month
3%	Less often
1%	Never
38%	Parents not living
1%	(VOL) Don't know/Refused



B29. 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?

- 36% High, 8-10
- 34% Medium, 6-7
- 28% Low, 0-5
- 3% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

B30. I'm going to read you a few statements. For each one please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.  
[ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

		Strongly <u>agree</u>	Somewhat <u>agree</u>	Somewhat <u>disagree</u>	Strongly <u>disagree</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
A.	I have enough time to spend with my family	52%	27%	10%	9%	2%
B.	I stay up at night worrying how to make ends meet	15%	19%	21%	43%	2%
C.	I find myself wishing I could live somewhere else	28%	24%	17%	29%	2%
D.	I feel like I belong in my community	51%	33%	7%	7%	2%

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Now just a few final questions so we can classify your answers.

D1. For how many years have you lived in New Jersey, or have you lived here all your life?

- 5% 5 years or less
- 7% 6 to 10 years
- 11% 11 to 20 years
- 29% 20 years or more
- 47% All my life
- 2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D1A. Have you ever lived outside New Jersey?

D1B. Was this as an adult or as a child, or both?

- 21% Yes, as an adult
- 14% Yes, as a child
- 23% Yes, both
- 41% Never lived outside NJ
- 2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D1C. Where did you live?

- 46% Other state
- 7% Other country
- 5% Other state & country
- 41% Never lived outside NJ
- 2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D2. For how many years have you lived in your current town, or have you lived here all your life?

- 18% 5 years or less
- 16% 6 to 10 years
- 18% 11 to 20 years
- 32% 20 years or more
- 15% All my life
- 2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D3. Are you currently registered to vote at the address where you now live or haven't you had a chance to register yet?

- 80% Registered
- 19% Not registered for any reason
- 1% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D4. In politics today, do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, independent, or something else?

- 34% Democrat
- 19% Republican
- 30% Independent
- 9% Something else/other
- 8% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D5. What was the last grade in school you completed?

- 2% 8<sup>th</sup> grade or less
- 5% High school incomplete (Grades 9, 10 and 11)
- 29% High school complete (Grade 12)
- 3% Vocational/technical school
- 16% Some college
- 9% Junior college graduate (2 year, Associates Degree)
- 18% 4 year college graduate (Bachelor's Degree)
- 14% Graduate school (Masters/law/medical school/etc.)
- 2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D6. What was your age on your last birthday?

- 18% 18 to 29
- 15% 30 to 39
- 20% 40 to 49
- 18% 50 to 59
- 13% 60 to 69
- 12% 70 or over
- 3% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D7. Are you married, living with a partner, never been married, widowed, divorced, or separated?

- 55% Married
- 5% Living with a partner
- 19% Never been married
- 7% Widowed
- 10% Divorced or separated
- 3% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D8. How many adults age 18 and older live in this household, including yourself?

D9. How many children under the age of 18 live in this household?

- 13% 1 adult, no kids
- 27% 2 adults, no kids
- 20% 3+ adults, no kids
- 3% 1 adult, with kids
- 20% 2 adults, with kids
- 13% 3+ adults, with kids
- 3% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D9A. Do any attend a public school?

D9B. Do any attend a private school?

- 24% Public
- 4% Private
- 2% Both
- 6% Neither
- 61% No kids
- 3% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D10. Are you currently employed, temporarily out of work, a student, homemaker, or retired?

- 53% Employed
- 12% Temporarily out of work
- 5% Student
- 6% Homemaker
- 20% Retired
- 1% Disabled
- 2% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D11. Do you have more than one income earner in your household or someone has more than one job?

- 39% Yes, more than one income earner
- 5% Yes, one person has more than one job
- 6% Yes, both
- 12% No, all adults retired or not working
- 35% No, one income only
- 3% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D12. Do you currently own or rent your home?

D12A. [If "OWN":] Are you currently paying a mortgage or other loan on this home?

- 46% Own with loan
- 21% Own outright
- 1% Own – no answer
- 25% Rent
- 3% Other
- 3% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D13. In what county do you live?

- |     |            |    |          |
|-----|------------|----|----------|
| 3%  | Atlantic   | 5% | Morris   |
| 10% | Bergen     | 7% | Ocean    |
| 5%  | Burlington | 6% | Passaic  |
| 6%  | Camden     | 1% | Salem    |
| 1%  | Cape May   | 4% | Somerset |
| 2%  | Cumberland | 2% | Sussex   |
| 9%  | Essex      | 6% | Union    |
| 3%  | Gloucester | 2% | Warren   |
| 6%  | Hudson     |    |          |
| 1%  | Hunterdon  |    |          |
| 4%  | Mercer     |    |          |
| 9%  | Middlesex  |    |          |
| 7%  | Monmouth   |    |          |

D14. And what is your zip code? (*recoded*)

- 9% Major urban centers
- 16% Other urban areas
- 36% Older towns & suburbs
- 35% Growing suburbs & towns
- 5% Rural areas

D15. How often do you usually attend religious services – at least once a week, 2 or 3 times a month, once a month, less than once a month, or never?

- 30% At least once a week
- 11% 2 or 3 times a month
- 9% Once a month
- 20% Less than once a month
- 25% Never
- 4% (VOL) Don't know/Refused

D16. Are you of Latino or Hispanic origin?

D17. Are you white, black or of Asian origin?

D19. What is your ethnic or national origin?

- 60% White
- 13% Black
- 3% Hispanic – Puerto Rico
- 3% Hispanic – Caribbean
- 5% Hispanic – Central-South America
- 4% Hispanic – unknown
- 3% Asian – South
- 1% Asian – East
- 4% Asian – unknown
- 1% Other
- 4% (VOL) No answer

D18. Were you born in the United States, or in another country?

- 79% Born in US
- 19% Born somewhere else
- 2% (VOL) No answer

D20. So that we can group all answers, is your total annual family income before taxes: Under \$25,000; from \$25,000 to just under \$50,000, from \$50,000 to just under \$75,000, from \$75,000 to just under \$100,000, from \$100,000 to just under \$150,000, from \$150,000 to just under \$200,000, or \$200,000 or more? Your best estimate is fine.

14%	Under \$25,000
18%	\$25,000 – \$49,999
16%	\$50,000 – \$74,999
12%	\$75,000 – \$99,999
12%	\$100,000 – \$149,999
4%	\$150,000 – \$199,999
4%	\$200,000 or more
5%	(VOL) Don't know
16%	(VOL) Refused

D21. Record respondent gender from observation:

48%	Male
52%	Female





# The Garden State's Quality of Life

*A survey of New Jersey residents*

## About the Monmouth University Polling Institute

Patrick Murray, Director  
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[www.monmouth.edu/polling](http://www.monmouth.edu/polling)

The **Monmouth University Polling Institute** is a full service research center that conducts surveys and focus group research for federal, state, and local agencies, as well as other organizations that cover social, political, and related issues of public policy. This is in addition to our mission of conducting public interest polls to track opinion on vital issues of the day.

The Polling Institute was established to be a leading center for the study of public opinion on important state, regional, and national issues. In its inaugural year, the institute was named a "Winner" by *New Jersey Politifax* for the accuracy of its polling in the 2005 gubernatorial election and was recently named Pollster of the Year by *Politickernj.com*. The institute's 2010 Congressional District polling in five different states was also found to be among the most accurate in the nation.

The Polling Institute conducts and disseminates public opinion research to foster greater public accountability by ensuring that the voice of the public is part of the policy discourse. The Polling Institute strives to go beyond the headlines to cover quality of life issues that affect residents in their daily lives.

The Polling Institute's activities include research services for government agencies and private organizations that assist with policy planning and assessment. The institute also collaborates with faculty and students to enhance research and training opportunities in survey research. The Polling Institute's research capabilities include: large and small-scale survey projects; telephone, mail, and in-person interview designs; quantitative data analysis; and qualitative research techniques such as focus group facilitation and analysis.

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