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## **AGE IMPACTS VIEWS ON JERSEY'S QUALITY OF LIFE**

### ***Older and younger adults give higher ratings than middle-aged residents Parental status not a factor***

Age matters when New Jersey residents evaluate the state's quality of life. But it's not a straightforward relationship. Young adults join senior citizens in giving generally higher ratings to their home state when compared to the views of middle-aged residents. This fifth installment in a *Monmouth University Poll* series on the Garden State's Quality of Life also found that gender and parental status hold little sway over residents' view of their home state.

A key indicator for how well New Jersey is doing is the Garden State Quality of Life Index designed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute. The index is a combined evaluation of the state, residents' hometowns, local schools, the environment, and crime. Overall, there are few differences between men and women in how they view New Jersey's quality of life. Women have a slightly higher (+23) index score than men (+20), but both are close to the statewide average of +21. There is even less of a difference between parents with children under the age of 18 (+21) and those who currently do not have any minor children (+22). This similarity holds regardless of the parent's gender.

Age is a key factor, though, in assessing the state's quality of life. The oldest and youngest New Jersey adults tend to give answers that score high on the Garden State Quality of Life Index. Among the youngest adults, those between 18 and 29, the index stands at +27 and among those over the age of 70, it stands at +32.

The Garden State Quality of Life Index score is below the state average for both 30 to 49 year olds (+19) and 50 and 69 year olds (+17).

<b>Garden State Quality of Life Index</b>	
<b>All New Jerseyans</b>	<b>+21</b>
<b>By Gender</b>	
Male	+20
Female	+23
<b>By Age</b>	
18-29	+27
30-49	+19
50-69	+17
70+	+32
<b>Parents with Children under 18</b>	
Yes	+21
No	+22
<b>Parents with Children under 18 by gender</b>	
Father	+20
Mother	+22
Male, no <18 child.	+20
Female, no <18 child	+23

“It’s interesting that having a child at home does not significantly impact how residents view their state. The stresses of raising a child in a high-cost state like New Jersey may be offset by the many advantages their home state offers,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “Perhaps even more interesting is the role that age plays in assessing New Jersey’s quality of life. Younger adults start off with a relatively more positive view, which dips through their middle-age years, only to rebound considerably as they enter retirement.”

When it comes to a desire to stay in New Jersey for the rest of their lives or hope to eventually leave the state, the survey finds significant differences among the age groups. More than half of those under 70 are hoping to leave New Jersey eventually, while only 20% of those over the age of 70 say the same. Having children under the age of 18 also increases the likelihood that a person would like to leave New Jersey eventually. Among New Jerseyans with children under the age of 18, 59% would like to leave the state eventually, while only 46% of those without children say the same. While parents tend to be younger adults, age does not fully explain the higher desire of parents to leave the state. Across all age categories, New Jersey parents under 70 are 5% to 8% more likely to say that they would like to leave the state someday.

The survey also asked residents to rate their local area as a place to raise a family. Overall, 26% of New Jerseyans rate their area as excellent, 48% as good, 16% as only fair, and 9% as poor. There is no difference on this question between parents of minor children (26% excellent and 47% good) and those who do not have children under the age of 18 (26% excellent and 48% good).

A majority of parents and non-parents alike give the state’s schools a positive rating, but parents of children under the age of 18 (69%) are slightly more likely than non-parents (61%) to say that their local schools are doing an excellent or good job.

Age makes a small difference when it comes to confidence in local and state government, although it is low among every age group. Among those under 70 years old, only 13% to 17% express a lot of confidence in their local government, but among the 70+ generation, 30% express a lot of confidence. Similarly, between 7% and 14% of 18 to 69 year olds express a lot of confidence in the state government, while 21% of those 70 years and older say the same.

Confidence in the local police department consistently goes up with age. Just over half (55%) of 18 to 29 year olds have a lot of confidence in their local police, which increases to 60% among those 30 to 49, 63% among those 50 to 69, and finally 71% among those 70 years and older. Age does not impact confidence in the local fire and rescue departments.

The survey included questions on Garden State residents’ financial situation. When asked directly if their family often has trouble making ends meet, the survey finds no differences between residents with children under the age of 18 and those who do not have minor children. The only

difference is regarding age. Overall, fewer than 1-in-5 New Jerseyans report frequent problems making ends meet, with both the youngest and oldest residents being less likely than middle-aged residents to experience this. Among those 18 to 29 years old, 11% say they often have trouble making ends meet and among those age 70 or older, 9% say the same. Residents between 30 and 49 (19%) as well as 50 to 69 (18%) are somewhat more likely to experience that situation.

When New Jerseyans are asked how satisfied they are with their standard of living, again age makes a difference. Among those 70 or older, 41% are very satisfied, but among those 50 to 69 only 25% say the same, and the number drops further to 19% for 30 to 49 year olds. The number goes back up to 29% for New Jersey's youngest adults between 18 and 29 years old.

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A more comprehensive description of the survey results with details for each life stage group can be found in the full Monmouth University Polling Institute report, available at:

[http://www.monmouth.edu/polling/admin/polls/NJQualityofLife\\_AgeParent\\_Sept2011.pdf](http://www.monmouth.edu/polling/admin/polls/NJQualityofLife_AgeParent_Sept2011.pdf)

Funding for the Garden State Quality of Life project was provided by the Plangere Foundation, New Jersey Resources, First Energy Corporation, and sanofi-aventis.

**Survey Methodology:** The *Garden State Quality of Life* survey was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from December 1 to 15, 2010 with a statewide random sample of 2,864 adult residents. Sampling and live telephone interviewing services were provided by Braun Research, Inc. Smaller counties were oversampled so that the final survey included at least 100 survey respondents from each of New Jersey's 21 counties. Racial and ethnic minorities were also oversampled by screening for appropriate respondents in areas of minority population concentration. The survey results were then weighted to accurately reflect the New Jersey adult population for gender, age, education, race, and county.

For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 1.8 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. The sampling error for the subgroups discussed in this report ranges from  $\pm 2.3\%$  to  $\pm 8.9\%$  depending on the size of the subgroup. When splitting the age groups further into parents and non-parents, error can be as much  $\pm 8.9\%$ . In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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# The Garden State's Quality of Life

*A survey of New Jersey residents*

## New Jersey's Quality of Life Varies by Life Stages

by Thomas Lamatsch, Assistant Director

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### Introduction

It should come as no surprise that both having children in the house and getting older can have a significant impact on a person's quality of life or at the very least affect their perspective on how they view the quality of life offered by their home state. This is why this fifth report on the Garden State's Quality of Life is taking a closer look at age and parental status.

A key indicator for how well New Jersey is doing is the Garden State Quality of Life Index designed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute. The index is a combined evaluation of the state, residents' hometowns, local schools, the environment, and crime that ranges from (-100) to (+100). Overall, there are few differences between men and women in how they view New Jersey's quality of life. Women have a slightly higher (+23) index score than men (+20), but both are close to the statewide average of +21. There is even less of a difference between parents with children under the age of 18 (+21) and those who currently do not have any children under the age of 18 (+22).

It is interesting that looking separately at mothers (+22) and other adult women (+23) produces no real difference in assessing New Jersey's quality of life. This remains generally true throughout the survey. Similarly, there is no difference at all between fathers (+20) and male New Jerseyans without children under 18 (+20). In other words, any gender differences noted in the survey are not impacted by parental status.

<b>Garden State Quality of Life Index</b>	
<b>All New Jerseyans</b>	<b>+21</b>
<b>By Gender</b>	
Male	+20
Female	+23
<b>By Age</b>	
18-29	+27
30-49	+19
50-69	+17
70+	+32
<b>Parents with Children under 18</b>	
Yes	+21
No	+22
<b>Parents with Children under 18 by gender</b>	
Father	+20
Mother	+22
Male, no <18 child.	+20
Female, no <18 child	+23

Age is a key factor, though, in assessing the state’s quality of life. The oldest and youngest New Jerseyans tend to give answers that score high on the Garden State Quality of Life Index. Among the youngest adults, those between 18 and 29, the index stands at +27 and among those over the age of 70, it stands at +32. The Garden State Quality of Life Index score is below the state average for both 30 to 49 year olds (+19) and 50 and 69 year olds (+17).

**Overall Rating of the State**

When it comes to rating New Jersey as a place to live, 7-in-10 residents under 29 (71%) and over 70 (71%) think of it as excellent or good, while 62% of those between 30 and 49 and 57% of those 50 to 69 say the same. There is no difference between parents of children under the age of 18 (63%) and New Jerseyans without underage children (62%).

<i>Those saying excellent or good:</i>	<b>Rate NJ as a Place to Live</b>	<b>Rate Your Hometown</b>
Male	60%	72%
Female	66%	73%
18-29	71%	73%
30-49	62%	73%
50-69	57%	71%
70+	71%	76%
Parent	63%	73%
Nonparent	62%	72%

When it comes to their own hometown, there are only minor differences among the different age groups. About 3-in-4 think of their town as an excellent or good place to live across all age groups. However, those over 70 years old are the most likely to rate their town as excellent (35%). There are no differences in hometown ratings between men and women as well as between New Jerseyans with children under 18 and those who do not currently have children under the age of 18.

The survey asked specifically how residents rate their area as a place to raise a family. Overall, 26% of New Jerseyans rate their area as excellent, 48% as good, 16% as only fair, and 9% as poor. There is no difference on this question between parents of minor children (26% excellent and 47% good) and those who do not have children under the age of 18 (26% excellent and 48% good). There is a slight difference on age, with those over 70 (32% and 48% good) slightly more likely than other age groups to say their area is a positive place to raise a family. This opinion is in line with the overall opinion of their town.

When it comes to a desire to stay in New Jersey for the rest of their lives or hope to eventually leave the state, the survey finds major differences among the age groups. More than half of those under 70 are hoping to leave New Jersey eventually, while only 20% of those over the age of 70 say the same. Having children under the age of 18 also increases the likelihood that a person would like to leave New Jersey eventually. Among New Jerseyans with children under the age of 18, 59% would like to leave the state eventually, while only 46% of those without children say the same. While parents tend to be younger adults, age does not fully explain the higher desire of parents to leave the state. Across all age categories, New Jersey parents under 70 are 5% to 8% more likely to say that they would like to leave the state someday.

Would Like to Move Out of NJ	
Male	53%
Female	48%
18-29	54%
30-49	57%
50-69	54%
70+	20%
Parent	59%
Nonparent	46%

### Local Area Rating and Neighborliness

The Monmouth University Polling Institute created a Local Area Index based on a variety of issues ranging from safety to economic opportunities to the availability of cultural programs and health care (see appendix). The index shows that residents between 18 and 29 (44% high) and residents 70 and over (46% high) are more likely to give answers that lead to a higher local area index score. There are no significant differences between parents of minor children (41% high) and residents without children in that regard (37% high).

Local Area Rating Index			
	Low	Moderate	High
Male	40%	21%	40%
Female	39%	23%	38%
18-29	36%	21%	44%
30-49	37%	25%	38%
50-69	46%	20%	34%
70+	35%	20%	46%
Parent	36%	23%	41%
Nonparent	42%	21%	37%

The Monmouth University Polling Institute also created a Neighborliness Index based on a variety of questions on how New Jerseyans interact with their neighbors (see appendix). Older residents think more highly of their neighbors. Those 70 and older are more likely to give answers that result in a high score on the index (45%). Only 33% of 30 to 49 years and 50 to 69 year olds score high and only 21% of 18 to 29 year fall in the same category. Having children under the age of 18 makes no difference for this index.

Neighborliness Index			
	Low	Moderate	High
Male	21%	47%	32%
Female	24%	44%	32%
18-29	35%	44%	21%
30-49	23%	44%	33%
50-69	18%	49%	33%
70+	12%	43%	45%
Parent	23%	44%	33%
Nonparent	23%	46%	32%

## Opinions on Institutions

One interesting finding regarding local institutions is that the opinion of parents is only slightly different from non-parents when it comes to confidence in local schools. Among those with children under 18, 47% express a lot of confidence in local schools. Among those without underage children, 42% express a lot of confidence.

When asked specifically to rate both local and state schools, a majority of New Jerseyans rate both as either excellent or good. All demographic groups discussed in the report rate their local school higher than New Jersey’s public schools in general.

Parents of minor children are slightly more likely to say that local schools are doing an excellent or good job (69%) compared to non-parents (61%). Parents are also somewhat more likely to say that

<i>Those saying excellent or good:</i>	<b>Rate Local Schools</b>	<b>Rate NJ Public Schools</b>
Male	64%	53%
Female	64%	54%
18-29	68%	59%
30-49	67%	55%
50-69	59%	49%
70+	65%	53%
Parent	69%	58%
Non-parent	61%	50%

public schools statewide are doing an excellent or good job (58%) compared to non-parents (50%). While both differences are small, they are statistically significant.

When it comes to evaluating New Jersey’s higher education system about 7-in-10 New Jerseyans think it is excellent or good (71%) and there are no differences between parents of under 18 year olds (72%) and New Jerseyans without underage children (71%). There are also no differences in gender.

Age does impact the opinions of New Jerseyans on higher education. State residents, age 18 to 29 are the most likely to rate New Jersey’s colleges and universities as excellent or good (80%). All other age groups still have a very high opinion, but the percentage of people saying excellent or good is about 10 points lower (70% age 30-49, 69% age 50-69, 70% age 70+).

Parental status makes no difference when it comes to confidence in other institutions, such as the state and local government, the police or fire and rescue departments. Residents’ age, however, makes a difference when it comes to confidence in local and state governments. Among those under 70 only 13% to 17% express a lot of confidence in their local government, but among the 70+ generation, 30% express a lot of confidence. Similarly, between 7% and 14% of 18 to 69 year olds express a lot of confidence in the state government, while 21% of those 70 years and older say the same.

Confidence in the local police department consistently goes up with age. Just over half (55%) of 18 to 29 year olds have a lot of confidence in their local police, which increases to 60% among those 30 to 49, 63% among those 50 to 69, and finally 71% among those 70 years and older. Age does not impact confidence in the local fire and rescue departments.

### **Financial Situation and Standard of Living**

The survey asked a number of questions about Garden State residents' financial situation. About 3-in-4 residents consider their household situation as either very good or fairly good. This varies slightly among men and women with men (79%) being more likely than women (71%) to say that their financial situation is very good or fairly good. It also varies slightly by age with the youngest New Jersey adults, those between 18 and 29 (79%), and the oldest, those over the age of 70 (81%), being more likely to say that their financial situation is very good or fairly good. Slightly fewer among those 30 to 49 (71%) and 50 to 69 (72%) say the same. Having children under the age of 18 does not change a person's perception on their financial situation, with 74% of parents and 75% of non-parents saying their situation is either very good or fairly good.

When asked directly if their family often has trouble making ends meet, the survey finds no differences between residents with children under the age of 18 and those who do not have minor children. The only difference is regarding age. The youngest and oldest residents are less likely to say they often have trouble making ends meet. Among those between 18 and 29, 11% say they often have trouble making ends meet and among those over 70, 9% say the same. Residents between 30 and 49 (19%) as well as 50 to 69 (18%) are somewhat more likely to experience that situation.

When New Jerseyans are asked about how satisfied they are with their standard of living, again age makes a difference. Among those over 70, 41% are very satisfied, among those 50 to 69 only 25% say the same, and the number goes down all the way to 19% for 30 to 49 year olds. The number goes back up to 29% for New Jersey's youngest adults between 18 and 29.

Parents of minor children (36%) are somewhat more likely to say that they could afford a house in their neighborhood on their current salary than those without kids (28%). Interestingly, although the household income of parents in New Jersey is higher than that of non-parents, this is not the main reason why they are more likely to say that they could afford a house. Among



parents with household incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000, 40% say they could afford a house and only 31% of non-parents with the same incomes say the same. Among residents with kids under 18 making more than \$100,000, 67% say they could afford a house while only 60% of those without kids in the same income bracket say the same.

Having kids under the age of 18 also makes a family somewhat more likely to have high speed internet at their home. While 94% of families with underage children have high speed internet, only 81% of those without children under 18 do. This is not just a function of age, parents in all age groups are slightly more likely to have high speed internet.

### Health and Well-Being

One interesting finding from the survey is that parents of minor children are more likely to say that they rate their immediate family’s overall health and well-being as excellent. This relationship holds true across different age groups. Among parents between the ages of 18 and 69, 41% to 42% rate their immediate family’s overall health and well-being as excellent while among non-parents, only 27% to 32% say the same. There is only a small difference between men (36%) and women (31%). In general, however, having children makes a big difference, particularly for men. Fathers (49%) are more likely to say that their family’s health and well-being is excellent compared to males without minor children (29%). The difference is not as large among women, with mothers (37%) being only 10 points more likely than female residents without children (27%) to say the same.

<b>Rate Family’s Health and Well-being</b>	
<i>Those saying excellent:</i>	
Male	36%
Female	31%
18-29	37%
30-49	38%
50-69	30%
70+	25%
Parent	42%
Nonparent	28%

Not surprisingly, when looking at age separately, older residents are less likely to say that their family’s health is excellent. Among those 18 to 29, 37% say their family’s health is excellent and 38% of those 30 to 49 say the same. The number goes down to 30% for 50 to 69 year olds and 25% for those 70 years of age and older.

### Recreation

Parents with children under the age of 18 tend to be more active in participating in events and visiting attractions the state has to offer. Examples include visiting a farm or going to ballgame, which parents are 12 percentage points more likely to. They are also 11 percentage

points more likely to visit museums. Being a parent of a child under 18 makes the biggest difference for visiting amusement parks: parents are 28 percentage points more likely to visit one than New Jerseyans without minor children.

	<b>Activities Participated in New Jersey</b>							
	Male	Female	18-29	30-49	50-69	70+	Parent	Nonparent
Strolled through a downtown	77%	76%	79%	80%	76%	68%	80%	75%
Took a drive in the country	71%	67%	58%	69%	75%	68%	66%	71%
Visited a historical site	56%	48%	51%	54%	54%	46%	53%	52%
Attended a concert or play	52%	54%	53%	55%	52%	48%	54%	52%
Visited a farm	51%	48%	45%	57%	48%	42%	57%	45%
Took a vacation	41%	41%	41%	43%	42%	34%	42%	40%
Gone to a ball game	42%	31%	38%	43%	32%	27%	44%	32%
Gone to an amusement park	44%	45%	55%	56%	34%	23%	62%	34%
Visited museum	37%	35%	37%	39%	34%	29%	43%	32%

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the survey finds that having children under 18 in the household has little impact on New Jerseyans’ perceptions of the quality of life their home state offers. There are some behavioral differences, such as parents being more likely to take advantage of activities and recreational offerings in the state. However, parents and non-parents have virtually identical perceptions of the kind of quality of life New Jersey as a state and their hometown offers to them. This is in stark contrast to large differences among different income groups or different ethnic and racial groups that were noted in previous reports in this series.

This report does show that age can have an impact on how New Jersey residents view their state’s quality of life. Interestingly, the opinions of the youngest New Jerseyans (ages 18 and 29) and the opinions of oldest New Jerseyans (those over 70) were often similar and higher than the perspectives of middle age residents (ages 30 to 69). One potential explanation is that many things that worry those between 30 and 69 do not worry the youngest residents yet and no longer worry the oldest residents. Further research would be necessary to confirm this theory.

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This report is the fifth in a series of Monmouth University Polling Institute reports on state residents' perceptions of New Jersey's quality of life.

The full set of survey results and methodology for the statewide sample can be found in the initial report, "**The Garden State's Quality of Life: A survey of New Jersey residents**," available at [http://www.monmouth.edu/polling/admin/polls/MonmouthU\\_NJQualityofLife\\_April2011.pdf](http://www.monmouth.edu/polling/admin/polls/MonmouthU_NJQualityofLife_April2011.pdf) .

Funding for the Garden State Quality of Life project was provided by the Plangere Foundation, New Jersey Resources, First Energy Corporation, and sanofi-aventis

## APPENDIX

**Survey Methodology:** The *Garden State Quality of Life* survey was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from December 1 to 15, 2010 with a statewide random sample of 2,864 adult residents. Sampling and live telephone interviewing services were provided by Braun Research, Inc. Smaller counties were oversampled so that the final survey included at least 100 survey respondents from each of New Jersey's 21 counties. Racial and ethnic minorities were also oversampled by screening for appropriate respondents in areas of minority population concentration. The survey results were then weighted to accurately reflect the New Jersey adult population for gender, age, education, race, and county.

For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 1.8 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. The sampling error for the subgroups discussed in this report ranges from  $\pm 2.3\%$  to  $\pm 8.9\%$  depending on the size of the subgroup. Specifically, among non-parents it is  $\pm 2.3\%$  and among parents it is  $\pm 3.3\%$ . The sampling error for men is  $\pm 2.6\%$  and for fathers is  $\pm 4.7\%$ , for women it is  $\pm 2.6\%$  and for mothers  $\pm 4.5\%$ . The following applies to age groups: 18-29 ( $\pm 5.8\%$ ), 30-49 ( $\pm 3.2\%$ ), 50-69 ( $\pm 2.9\%$ ), 70+ ( $\pm 4.7\%$ ). When splitting the age groups further into parents and non-parents, error can be as much  $\pm 8.9\%$ . In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

### Garden State Quality of Life Index:

- Overall, how would you rate New Jersey as a place to live – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?
- How would you rate your town or city as a place to live – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?
- How would you rate the quality of the environment in your area – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?
- How would you rate the job your local schools are doing - excellent, good, only fair, or poor?
- How safe do you feel in your neighborhood at night – very safe, somewhat safe, or not at all safe?

### Life Satisfaction Index:

- 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?
- 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.
  - I have enough time to spend with my family
  - I stay up at night worrying how to make ends meet
  - I find myself wishing I could live somewhere else
  - I feel like I belong in my community

### Local Area Index:

- How would you rate your town or city as a place to live - excellent, good, only fair, or poor?
- 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
  - The quality of the environment
  - The amount of building and development
  - The condition of local roads
  - Traffic
  - Access to public transportation
  - The availability of good-paying jobs
  - The availability of affordable housing
  - The availability of cultural and recreational activities
  - Personal safety and crime
  - Race relations
  - Providing programs for the needy
  - Access to health care
  - As a place to raise a family
  - The job your local schools are doing

### Neighborliness Index:

- 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.
  - Most of the people in my neighborhood are trustworthy
  - People in my neighborhood are always in a hurry
  - If a garbage can fell in front of my home a neighbor would pick it up for me
  - I feel comfortable going to a neighbor if I feel sad and need someone to talk to
  - I can ask a neighbor if I need someone to run an errand for me
  - I talk to my neighbors every day