

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

NEW JERSEYANS, SUMMER & SHORE FEATURES: A LONG-TERM LOOK

**JULY 3, 1998
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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Friday, July 3 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to *AThe Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*

THE SHORE--LOOKING UP (Save the Beach Passes)

ATLANTIC CITY--HEADING SOUTH

VACATIONS--GETTING OUT

The Shore--Looking Up

There has been a notable change for the better over the last decade in how New Jerseyans see one of their favorite features--the shore. They believe the shore is in better condition than five years ago and are less worried about ocean pollution. And, get this--more people would rather keep the current system of beach passes than favor opening the beaches to all.

There has also been a change, but not for the better, in how state residents see one of the most prominent activities in their state--casino gambling. The Atlantic City dream of becoming a general resort city is dying, with most residents foretelling its future as a gamblers-only Mecca.

And, there has been little change in the last few years about how New Jerseyans plan to spend their summer vacations. Seven-in-ten plan a vacation of one week or more this summer--most of them intend to go out of state.

These are some of the main findings of the most recent Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll, conducted by telephone between June 8 and 11 with a random statewide sample of 600 Garden

State residents. The poll has an overall margin of error of plus or minus four percentage points.

Answers to a number of questions in the survey suggest a positive change in residents' views of the shore. The 86 percent agreeing that the shore is one of New Jersey's best features is up about five points from surveys taken in 1995 and 1992, and up 10 percentage points since 1989. At that low point in 1989, 74 percent said the New Jersey shore was going downhill. Only 27 percent feel that way now. The current survey also finds 45 percent saying the shore is in better condition than it was five years ago, compared to just 15 percent who think it is in worse shape. The remainder say the shore is in the same condition or offer no opinion.

The Rutgers-based survey documents a startling decline in the number of New Jersey residents concerned about ocean pollution over the past decade. Ten years ago 73 percent described ocean pollution along the shore as a "very serious" problem. By five years ago the number had fallen to 50 percent. The current survey records another major drop to 32 percent of the general public.

Another finding of the survey is that most New Jerseyans prefer the current system where access is restricted to individuals who have purchased municipal beach passes to an alternative of making all beaches public and funding them through a slight increase in taxes that would go to shore towns. A slight majority (54 percent) favor the current system of beach passes, while 42 percent favor open access to all beaches, with the remaining four percent undecided.

Cliff Zukin, director of the poll, said he was surprised there was not more support for making beaches free to the public, as is common in many coastal states. "I think we may have scared many respondents off when we paired the benefit of open access with the cost of a slight increase in taxes. Many people who would like to have the beaches public may have responded negatively because they did not know how much their taxes would go up in order to compensate the shore towns for the loss of revenue from beach passes."

Atlantic City--Heading South

New Jerseyans are pessimistic that Atlantic City will ever develop into a general resort town, much the way Las Vegas has. Just over one-quarter of those interviewed (28 percent) say they think

Atlantic City will become a major convention and resort city centered around gambling. A clear majority of the state (63 percent) feel that AC will be known only for gambling in the years ahead. Zukin noted this sentiment also reflects a major change in citizens' views from the past. "When we first started asking this question in the early 1980s, slightly more felt Atlantic City would make it back as a major convention and resort area than not. Momentum against a full Atlantic City rebirth started slipping away in the mid-1980s. Most people have now given up that vision. They think of Atlantic City for casino gambling and little else."

Vacations--Getting Out

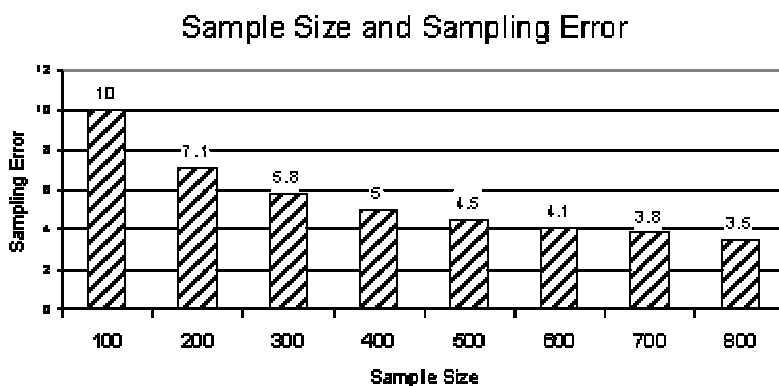
While 65 percent say New Jersey is an "excellent" or "good" place to take a vacation (with another 26 percent "only fair" and 7 percent "poor,") most vacationers are after more exotic places. Fully seven-in-ten New Jerseyans say they plan to take a vacation of a week or more this summer. Just over half--54 percent--say they will be taking a vacation outside of New Jersey, while one-third of all adults say they plan a major vacation somewhere in the state. An additional 14 percent have both types of vacations planned---at least a week both in and out of the state.

And, of course day trips to New Jersey spots remain staples in the summer diet of Garden State residents. Three-quarters of all those interviewed say they plan to take a day or two or a weekend off to go on a short trip somewhere in the state this summer. Many, 57 percent, also plan to take short trips outside the state, taking advantage of New Jersey's central location.

New Jersey residents are clearly a cosmopolitan lot. When asked to think back over their last vacation within the past 12 months, a mere 15 percent reported they had vacationed in New Jersey, while another 22 percent vacationed some other place in the Northeast. A robust 38 percent reported vacationing in some more distant part of the United States, and fully one-quarter of the respondents vacationed in a country outside the US.

BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP69-3 (EP119-3), SUNDAY, JULY 5, 1998

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between June 8 and 11, 1998, when a scientifically selected random sample of 602 New Jersey adult residents was interviewed by telephone. All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for the total sample size of 602 is just over ± 4 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jerseyans were found to have a favorable opinion of the Governor, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46 and 54 percent (50 ± 4) had all New Jerseyans been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported for men and women, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error.



Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects. The verbatim wording of all questions asked are reproduced in this background memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. Two versions of the questionnaire were used in this study. Not all questions were on both versions.

First, have you taken a vacation of a week or more away from home in the last 12 months? [V1]

	Yes	No	Total	(n)
June, 1998	53%	46%	99%	(602)

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1994	61	39	100	(801)
1982	53	47	100	(500)
1980	59	41	100	(601)
1978	58	42	100	(1002)

Did you spend your **last** vacation somewhere in New Jersey, another state in the Northeast, a different part of the country, or out of the country? [V2]

	New Jersey	Northeast	Other USA	Other Country	Other	Total	(n)
June, 1998	15%	22%	38%	24%	1%	100%	(343) *

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1994	17	20	41	23	--	100	(529)
1982	21	22	43	11	2	99	(263)
1980	29	24	33	13	1	100	(383)
1978	21	17	39	15	8	100	(753)

* This question was only asked to respondents who HAD taken a vacation away from home in the last 12 months.

Overall, how would you rate the state of New Jersey as a place to take a vacation--excellent, good, only fair or poor? [V3]

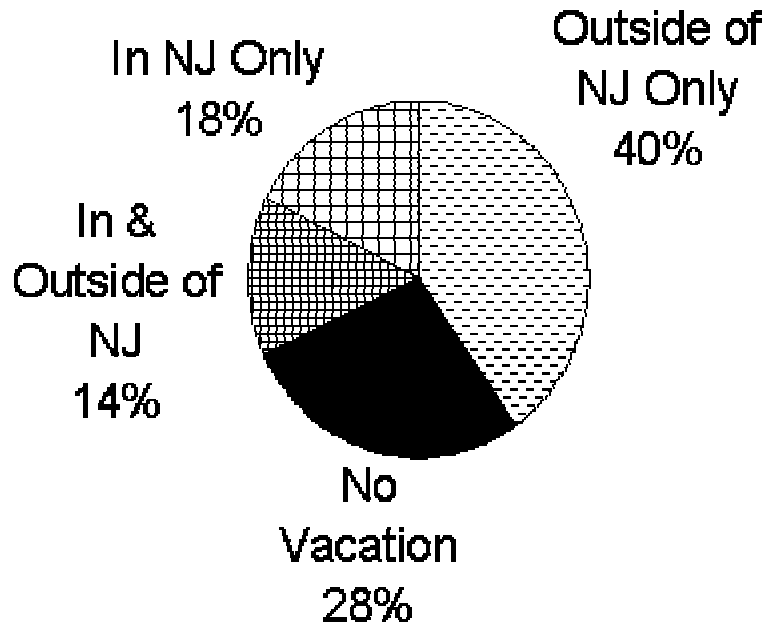
	Excellent	Good	Only Fair	Poor	Don't Know	Total	(n)
June, 1998	24%	41%	26%	7%	1%	99%	(602)
June, 1994	28	43	22	5	2	100	(801)

Now thinking about this upcoming summer. Do you think you will: [V4]

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total	(n)
a. Take a vacation of a week or more in New Jersey this summer					
June, 1998	32%	67%	1%	100%	(602)
June, 1994	36	59	4	99	(801)
b. Take a vacation of a week or more outside New Jersey					
June, 1998	54	45	1	100	(602)
June, 1994	54	42	4	100	(801)
c. Take a day or two or a weekend off to go on a short trip in New Jersey this summer?					
June, 1998	75	22	2	99	(602)
June, 1994	80	19	2	101	(801)
d. Take a day or two or a weekend off to go on a short trip outside of New Jersey this summer					
June, 1998	57	43	1	101	(602)
June, 1994	57	41	2	100	(801)

Combined Vacation Plans

(of a week or more)



Now just a few questions about the New Jersey shore. First, would you agree or disagree that the shore is one of New Jersey's best features? [V6]

	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know	Total	(n)
June, 1998	86%	10%	3%	99%	(602)
PAST SURVEYS					
May, 1995	81	15	3	99	(802)
April, 1992	82	13	4	99	(800)
June, 1989	76	20	4	100	(800)
November, 1984	87	9	4	100	(500)

This question was asked of half the sample on form A.

Do you think the New Jersey shore has been going downhill, getting better, or hasn't it really changed much over the years? [V7A]

	Downhill	Better	Same	Don't Know	Total	(n)
June, 1998	27%	27%	36%	9%	99%	(304)
PAST SURVEYS						
June, 1989	74	8	13	5	100	(800)
May, 1988	69	9	19	12	100	(800)
November, 1984	40	23	26	11	100	(500)

This question was asked of half the sample, on form B.

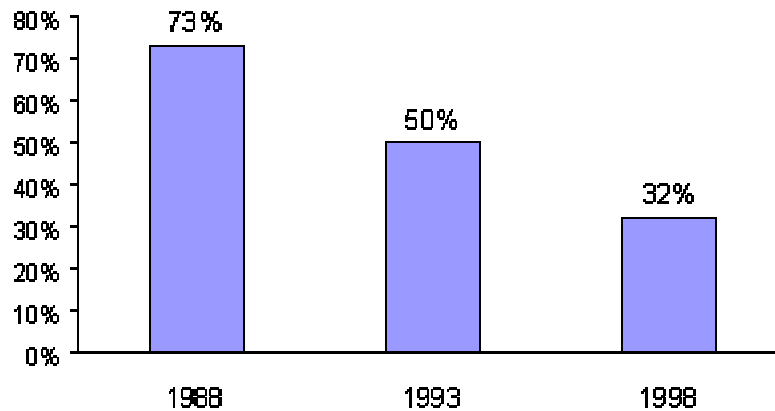
Do you think the New Jersey shore is in better condition, worse condition, or about the same condition as five years ago? [V7B]

	Better Condition	Worse Condition	Same Condition	Don't Know	Total	(n)
June, 1998	47%	15%	23%	15%	100%	(298)
July, 1995	45	17	27	10	99	(802)

From what you may have read or heard, how serious a problem is ocean pollution along the Jersey shore--would you say it is very serious, somewhat serious or not too serious? [V8]

	Very Serious	Somewhat Serious	Not too Serious	Don't Know	Total	(n)
June, 1998	32%	41%	22%	5%	100%	(602)
PAST SURVEYS						
June, 1993	50	33	13	3	99	(801)
April, 1992	58	31	10	1	100	(800)
June, 1989	73	20	6	1	100	(800)
May, 1988	73	19	4	4	100	(800)

People who consider Ocean Pollution Very Serious



As you probably know, almost all shore towns require people to buy beach passes to get on to the beach. This raises money for those communities while restricting access to those who pay. There has been some discussion about a proposal to make all the beaches public and open to the everyone, with shore towns being compensated by the state through a slight increase in taxes that all New Jersey residents would pay.

Which would you prefer--that beaches are restricted to people who pay individual fees to use them, or that beaches are open to all but funded from state tax dollars you and others pay? [V9]

	Beach Passes	Open to All	Don't Know	Total	(n)
June, 1998	54%	42%	4%	100%	(602)

Have you been to Atlantic City at any time in the last 12 months? [V10]

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total	(n)
June, 1998	50%	50%	--	100%	(602)

Do you think Atlantic City will become a major convention and resort city centered around gambling, or do you think in years to come it will be known ONLY for gambling? [V11]

	Resort Convention	Gambling Only	Don't Know	Total	(n)
June, 1998	28%	63%	9%	100%	(602)

Have you been to Atlantic city in the last year?

Yes	31	65	4	100	(294)
No	26	61	13	100	(307)

PAST SURVEYS

1984	41	47	12	100	(500)
1982	49	44	7	100	(500)