

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

WHITHER NEW JERSEY?

HOW THE PUBLIC EXPECTS THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE GARDEN STATE TO CHANGE OVER THE NEXT DECADE

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CONTACT: CLIFF ZUKIN (732) 932-9384, Ext. 247

A story based on this release will appear in the Sunday December 26th Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll."

This is the third of six releases from a November survey looking at New Jersey at the brink of a new century. The following releases will examine how New Jerseyans view their personal lives as they look ahead over the next decade, the use of technology in everyday life and the changing work environment.

Where is New Jersey heading at the turn of the century? What will the Garden State be like as a place to live, to get an education and a job, raise a family, settle down and retire? Will race relations improve or sour? Will the gap between the cities and suburbs grow? Will traffic and over-crowding become worse? Will the environment get better or worse? In short, What will New Jersey be like as a place to live in the next decade or so?

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers poll put these questions to its experts—a random sample of 802 New Jersey citizens interviewed in November—and found cautious optimism in most areas. About 4 out of every 10 residents feel the state will become a better place to live over the next ten years, while 3 think it will become worse, and 3 say it will stay about the same.

This overall view of where the state is heading masks some important differences in assessments of problems and opportunities facing the state. On the one hand, New Jerseyans view the state quite favorably as a place to get an education and find a good job. On the other, they view their home state quite unfavorably as an affordable place to live, and as a place to settle down and retire—particularly younger New Jerseyans.

The polling numbers suggest that the most upsetting problem confronting state residents has to do with traffic congestion and over-crowding. Better than four-in-five expect this condition to worsen over the next decade rather than stay as it is.

In other pessimistic assessments, New Jerseyans also expect that the gap between the cities and suburbs and between rich and poor will continue to increase, that the loss of

open space and farmland will continue rather than stabilize, and that health care will become less rather than more affordable.

However, there are a number of optimistic assessments as well. Majorities believe that the state's economy will continue to get stronger, its public education system will get better, the state's environmental quality will improve, and that race relations will also get better in the next 10 years.

State residents offer mixed assessments of whether the crime rate will get higher or lower, and whether conditions in NJ cities will get better or worse.

Cliff Zukin, director of the Poll commented, "The data suggest a painful choice that many New Jerseyans confront. On the one hand New Jersey offers its residents an excellent opportunity to build a good life with the raw material of its economic and educational systems. On the other hand, many are repulsed by some unpleasant aspects of the quality of life—the congestion and crowding, and high cost of living. A challenge to the state will be to keep bright, young New Jerseyans from leaving the state after they are educated."

Survey respondents offered their opinions of whether the state will become a better or worse place to live over the next 10 years in each of seven general quality-of-life areas:

- ☺ ☺ By a widespread margin of 51% to 9%, New Jerseyans expect the state to get better as a place to get an education. The remaining third say "the same" or offer no opinion.

- ☺ ☺ By a similarly large margin of 48% to 13% New Jerseyans expect the state to get better as a place to get a job.

- ☺ By a narrower, but still substantial margin of two-to-one, state residents expect New Jersey to improve "as a place to enjoy the outdoors and recreational activities"—40% better, 20% worse, 38% same.

- ☺ Just slightly more feel the state will get better (32%) than believe it will get worse (25%) as a place to raise a family. Moreover, it is younger New Jerseyans who are the most negative on this score.

- ☺ About the same number expect New Jersey to get worse (35%) and better (32%) "as a place to enjoy the natural environment."

☹ ☹ By a margin of better than 2-to-1, more feel New Jersey will get worse (47%) rather than better (21%) as a place "to settle down and retire." One-quarter expect it to stay the same and a small number (5%) offer no opinion.

☹ ☹ The majority of Garden State residents are worried about the cost of living. Some 57% feel the state will get worse "as a place that is affordable to live"; just 12% expect it to get better on this score.

The statewide sample, interviewed between November 16 and 24, was also confronted with pairs of statements about 11 issues facing the state and asked to gaze into their crystal balls to forecast how the state would change. Not all offered opinions on each one asked about.

FUTURE LOOKING BRIGHTER

↑ 68% say the state's economy will be stronger; 21% think it will be weaker.

↑ More think the public education system will improve (60%) than get worse (25%).

↑ New Jersey's environmental quality will: get better—51%; get worse—39%.

↑ Half see race relations improving (54%); one-third (32%) as getting worse.

FUTURE LOOKING DARKER

↓ Traffic Congestion and over-crowding will:
17% Stay as they are now (which ain't great)
81% Get worse (can you imagine)

↓ By a margin of 68% to 28% more think health care will get less, rather than more affordable

↓ Twice as many see the loss of farmland and open spaces in New Jersey to suburban sprawl will continue (64%) as believe it will stay as it is now (30%).

- ↓ Almost twice as many predict the gap in wealth between the state's cities and suburbs will continue to grow (57%) as believe it will get smaller (29%).
- ↓ Ditto the gap between rich and poor: 68% say this will grow; 21% say the wealth gap will narrow in the coming decade.

FUTURE HARD TO TELL

- ← → Conditions in New Jersey's cities will get: better (44%); worse (39%).
- ← → The crime rate will be: higher (47%); lower (38%).

The latest Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted between November 16 and 24 with a statewide sample of 802 adult New Jersey residents. To prevent respondent fatigue, the 14 questions were split-sampled, so that half of the questions were asked of two sub-samples of 400 each. The sampling error for both of these sub-samples is +5 percent. The exact text of questions asked and distribution of responses is shown on the last page.

Quality of Life Issues in New Jersey

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- 4 I'd like you to think about how things may change IN NEW JERSEY as we go into the new Millennium. Still thinking ahead over the next 10 years or so, please tell me whether you expect the state to be a better or worse place for each of the following. If you think it will stay the same or don't have an opinion on some just say so.

First, overall as a place to live, will New Jersey be better, worse, or the same.

- 38 Better
- 27 Worse
- 33 Stay the same
- 3 (VOL) Don't know/No Opinion/Refused
- 101% (N=802)**

5 Next, (RANDOMIZE)...**Better, Worse, or Stay the same.**

	Better	Worse	Stay the same	Don't Know	Total (N)
As a place to raise a family	32	25	37	5	99% (802)
As a place to find a good job	48	13	31	8	100% (402)
As a place to enjoy the natural environment	32	35	29	4	100% (402)
As a place to settle down and retire	21	47	26	5	99% (402)
As a place to enjoy the outdoors and recreational activities	40	20	38	2	100% (400)
As a place that's affordable to live	12	57	27	4	100% (400)
As a place to get an education	51	9	33	6	99% (400)

13 While the future is impossible to predict, as I read the following pairs, please tell me which is more likely to happen here in the New Jersey in the next 10 years. (First/Next), do you think . .

	Statement 1	Statement 2	Neither	Don't Know	Total (N)
1. The gap in wealth between the state's cities and suburbs will grow OR 2 The gap in wealth between New Jersey's cities and suburbs will get smaller	57	29	4	9	99% (402)
1. The State's economy will be stronger OR 2. The State's economy will be weaker	68	21	3	8	100% (402)
1. Race relations will improve OR	54	32	8	7	101% (402)

2. Race relations will get worse

	Statement 1	Statement 2	Neither	Don't Know	Total (N)
1. The loss of open space and farmland to suburban sprawl will continue OR 2. The loss of open space and farmland to suburban sprawl will stay as it is now	64	30	2	4	100% (402)
1. Health care will be MORE affordable OR 2. Health care will be LESS affordable	28	68	1	3	100% (402)
1. Traffic congestion and over-crowding will get worse OR 2. Traffic congestion and over-crowding will stay as they are now	81	17	--	1	99% (804)
1. The crime rate will be higher OR 2. The crime rate will be lower	47	38	8	7	100% (400)
1. The public education system will improve OR 2. The public education system will get worse	60	25	8	7	100% (400)
1. Conditions in New Jersey's cities will get better OR 2. Conditions in New Jersey's cities will get worse	44	39	7	9	99% (400)
1. New Jerseys' environmental quality will get better	51	39	6	5	101%

OR

(400)

2. The quality of the state's environment will get worse

1. The gap between rich and poor will grow

68

21

6

5

100%

OR

(400)

2. The gap between rich and poor will get smaller

How Will New Jersey Fare in the Next 10 Years in the Following Categories?

