

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

MY LIFE'S SO BRIGHT I'VE GOT TO WEAR SHADES!

NEW JERSEYANS FACE THE NEXT DECADE WITH OPTIMISM ABOUT BASIC QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES

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A story based on this release will appear in the Monday December 27th Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll."

This is the fourth of six releases from a November survey looking at New Jersey at the brink of a new century. The following two releases will examine the use of technology in everyday life and the changing work environment.

My job situation's gonna get better.

I'm going to make more money.



My housing situation will improve.

I'll have more free time.

Yep. Things look pretty good. The average New Jerseyan is decidedly optimistic about the future. Consider the following:

- For every person who thinks they and their family will have less money to spend, there are 13 who think they will have more to spend in the next 10 years or so.
- For every person who thinks their housing situation will get worse, there are 8 who expect theirs to get better.
- For every person who thinks their job situation will get worse, there are 7 who think theirs is going to improve in the next decade.
- For every person who thinks they will have less leisure time for doing the things he or she wants to do, there are 3 who think they will have more time.

The only ray of caution that shines in is a concern about the pace of life around where people live—here as many say things will get worse as say they expect things to get better over the next 10 years.

These are some of the findings of the most recent Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers poll conducted with a random sample of 802 state residents between November 16 and 24. The survey has a sampling error of ± 3.5 percent.

The fact that New Jersey residents are remarkably upbeat about the future does not mean that they do not have any concerns about the future. Parents are the most apprehensive: 63 percent say they worry "a lot" about whether their children will get a good quality education; 56 percent say they are similarly worried about raising their children safely.

The issue that seems to most threaten the broad base of New Jerseyans' feelings of wellbeing as they look ahead to the next decade is health care. Just over four-in-ten (43%) say they worry "a lot" about having good quality, affordable health care available to them; another 31 percent say they worry at least "some" about this.

And, as a health-related issue, three-in-ten of those with living parents over 55 years of age worry "a lot" about being able to take care of them, with another four-in-ten at least somewhat worried about this eventuality.

Economics appears to be less of a central concern to New Jerseyans as the state heads into the next decade. Buoyed by a robust economy, just one-quarter (27%) say they worry "a lot" about not having enough money to be able to live comfortably, and 33 percent say they worry this much about "having enough money to retire."

Just one-in-five worries "a lot" about being able to afford decent housing, and just 12 percent of those currently employed say they worry "a lot" about being able to keep up with the pace of change at their jobs.

The Sunshine Scale

Taken with how optimistic New Jerseyans seem, poll researchers created a "Sunshine Index," where respondents received a point if they said they expected each of the following to get better for them over the next four years: their income; their housing situation; the amount of leisure time available; the pace of life where they live. Scores could range from 0 (Gloomy) if nothing was expected to get better, to 4 (Euphoric) if all four areas were expected to improve in the coming decade. Here's how New Jerseyans fall out.

Sunshine Scale	Group Name	Size in the Population
☺ ☺ ☺	Euphoric	12 percent

😊 😊	Excited	21 percent
😊	Optimistic	26 percent
😞	Pessimistic	23 percent
😞 😞	Gloomy	18 percent

There are some major differences in New Jerseyans' outlook by race and age. For example, 59 percent of Blacks and Latinos are either excited or euphoric about the future, compared to just 25 percent of whites. And hopefulness about the future decreases with age: 48 percent of those under 30 are classified as either excited or euphoric, compared to 38 percent of those between 30 and 49, 26 percent of those between 50 and 64, and to only 14 percent of those over 65 years of age.

Respondent's Quality of Life Concerns

The latest Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted between November 16 and 24 with a statewide sample of 802 adult New Jerseyans. The sampling error for this sample size is ± 3.5 percent. Question 11A was asked only of the 585 New Jerseyans that are currently working. The sampling error for this subset is $+4.5$ percent. Question 12C was asked only of those 458 respondents with parents aged 55 and older. The sampling error for this subset is ± 4.5 . Questions 12E and 12F were asked only of the 303 parents with children 18 and under. The sampling error for these questions is ± 6 percent. The exact text of questions asked and distribution of responses is as follows:

11. Thinking about YOUR OWN situation over the next 10 years or so, please tell me whether you expect your life to get better, worse or stay the same. First (RANDOMIZE)...Better, worse, or the same? If some don't apply just say so.

	Better	Worse	Stay the same	Don't Know	Total (N)
Your job situation (** asked only of those with jobs)	58	8	31	3	100% (585)
The pace of life around where you live	30	29	39	3	101% (802)
Your housing situation	48	8	41	2	99% (802)
The income you and your family have	65	5	27	2	99% (802)
The amount of leisure time you have for doing things you want to do	44	16	39	2	101% (802)

12. Different people have different concerns as they look ahead over the next 10 years or so. Please tell me if you personally worry about each of the following a lot, some, or hardly at all.

First (RANDOMIZE)... Do you worry about this a lot, some, or hardly at all?

	A Lot	Some	Little	Total (N)
Not having enough money to live comfortably	27	39	32	98% (802)
Having good quality, affordable health care available	43	31	25	99% (802)
Being able to take care of your parents (**asked only of those with parents aged 55 and above)	29	39	31	99% (458)
Having enough money to retire	33	36	29	98% (802)
Making sure your children get a good quality education (*asked only of parents with children under 18 who live with them)	63	26	11	100% (303)
Being able to raise your children safely (*asked only of parents with children under 18 who live with them)	56	29	14	99% (303)
Being able to afford decent housing	20	28	51	99% (802)
Being able to keep up with the pace of change at your job	12	29	59	100% (585)