

# The Star-Ledger/**Eagleton-Rutgers Poll**

## THE FUTURE OF WORK LIFE IN NEW JERSEY: OPTIMISM LACED WITH CONCERNS

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This is the fifth of six releases from a November survey looking at New Jersey at the brink of a new century. The final release examines the use of technology in everyday life.

The work world is changing in dramatic fashion as we enter the new century. Looking ahead, New Jerseyans envision the future of work much as they have experienced the recent past--less job security and more stress, but more flexibility, and Thank God, computers and technological innovation.

When asked to compare their work experiences with those of their parents a generation ago, New Jerseyans describe their own jobs as being more flexible, more stressful and less secure. When asked to speculate about how their work experience might change in the next ten years, New Jerseyans paint a relatively rosy picture of the future of work life in New Jersey. They envision their jobs becoming more flexible, more interesting and more secure than they currently are.

These are some of the findings from the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* poll, conducted by telephone between November 16 and 24 with a statewide sample of 585 working adult residents of the Garden State. The sampling error for the subset of working adults is  $\pm 4.5$  percent.

### AMONG OTHER FINDINGS:

- Just half of all those employed say they expect to be working at the same job in ten years.
- Twice as many say they expect to be working out of their homes as is now the case.

- There is a consensus on the benefits of technology in the workplace.
- Time is short--half of employed New Jerseyans with children under 18 say they have difficulty balancing work and family life.

## **TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORK FORCE**

As we approach the 21<sup>st</sup> century, technology such as personal computers, the World Wide Web, voice mail and fax machines are increasingly becoming a part of New Jerseyans' everyday lives, both at home and at work. Sixty-five percent of working New Jersey residents report that they use a computer in their jobs. Moreover, a whopping 59% of New Jerseyans say that their jobs have changed "a great deal" in the last ten years due to "technology such as computers." Another 22% of New Jerseyans report that technology has changed their jobs "some." Remarkably, less than 20% of New Jerseyans believe that technology has changed their jobs "not much" or "not at all." In addition, more than eight-in-ten New Jerseyans consider technology a help to them in doing their job, while less than one-in-ten (7%) consider technology in the workplace a threat.

Despite the speed with which technology has recently renovated work life, people in New Jersey are not concerned that they will be left behind. Three quarters of working New Jerseyans say that the possibility of their job outgrowing them worries them not at all. Only 7% of respondents report worrying "a lot" about the pace of technology in the work force; an additional 16% say that the possibility that they "won't be able to keep up with the education and training" it takes to do their job well worries them "some."

## **THIS IS NOT YOUR PARENTS' JOB**

When asked whether they thought they themselves or their parents "had more flexibility in their job," a resounding 71% of New Jerseyans consider their own jobs more flexible, with only 23% saying that their parents held jobs with more flexibility a generation ago. The remaining 6 percent believe that there is no difference or offer no opinion. Along with more flexibility, however, come added stress and less job security. The majority (58%) of respondents say that they have "more stress in their job" than their parents, with just 32% of respondents considering their parents' jobs more stressful. In addition, a majority (52%) also believe that their parents had more job security than they do, with only 38% rating their own jobs as more secure.

When comparing their jobs with their parents' on other levels, such as being able to provide financially, respondents were more evenly divided. By a margin of 11 percentage points (48% to 37%), respondents consider themselves slightly "better able to provide for the family's financial needs," than their parents, but at the same time slightly more respondents (48% to 41%) believe their parents "had an easier time balancing the(ir) job with family life." Respondents were only slightly more likely to say that they worked more hours weekly than their parents (49% to 44%).

## **A LOOK AHEAD**

New Jerseyans are generally optimistic about how their work experiences may change over the next ten years. A majority of New Jerseyans (58%) expect their job situation to be better in the next ten years. And another third expect their situation to remain the same. Only 7%—less than one-in-ten—expect their job situation to get worse. A third of New Jerseyans expect to have more job security in the future, while another 51% believe they will have the same amount of job security. Only 13% of workers expect less job security over the next ten years.

While a large majority of New Jerseyans believe that their jobs will remain as secure or become more secure in the future, this does not mean that most expect to be staying where they are currently working. While a majority (51%) of New Jerseyans expect to be working where they are currently employed, 44% believe they will be somewhere else, and another 5% don't know where they will be in ten years. Younger people and those making less than \$35,000 a year are the least likely to say that they will be in the same place over the next ten years. Only a third of those aged 18-29 believe they will be working where they currently do, compared to over half (56%) of those aged 30-49 and 62% of those 50 and above. Perhaps not surprisingly, only 43% of those in a low income bracket (35K and below annually) expect to be at the same job in ten years, compared to 54% of those making over thirty-five thousand a year.

Yet, while the future of work life may be uncertain, that does not mean it will be unpleasant. New Jerseyans are hopeful about how interesting their jobs will be over the next ten years, with a majority (53%) expecting their jobs to be more interesting in the future, and another 11 percent expecting their jobs to stay as interesting as they are now. Only a third of respondents say that they do not expect to have a more interesting job in the future.

Given that flexibility is the one clear advantage that workers believe their jobs have over their parents' jobs, it is notable that a third of New Jerseyans expect even more flexibility from their jobs in the next ten years. Half of New Jerseyans expect their level of job flexibility to remain the same; only 11% believe they will have less flexibility in the future. Along these lines, 20% of New Jerseyans expect to be working out of their homes in the next ten years—more than double the amount currently working out of their homes (9%).

## **EXPECTATIONS DIFFER BY RACE**

If most New Jerseyans are confident about their work lives over the next ten years, minorities in New Jersey are even more so. While 53% of white New Jersey residents expect their job situation to be better in 10 years, an impressive 74% of black and Hispanic New Jerseyans expect their job situation to be better in the near future. Part of this hopefulness on the part of minorities may be tied to the fact that a majority (55%) of black and Hispanic New Jerseyans expect to be working somewhere else in the near future, while only 40% of white New Jerseyans expect to make such a change. And with this change of venue comes the expectation of more job security and a more interesting job. Nearly half (48%) of black and Hispanic New Jerseyans expect to have more job

security in the near future, compared to less than a third (29%) of white New Jerseyans. And while less than half (46%) of white New Jerseyans expect a more interesting job in the next ten years, nearly 3/4s (72%) of black and Hispanic New Jerseyans anticipate a more interesting job in their near future.

### THE GENDER DIVIDE—NOT SO DIVIDED

One surprising finding of the survey is that men and women hold almost identical views of work life. Despite the only recent avalanche of women into the workforce, men and women differ little in describing what they expect from their work lives over the next ten years. There is little difference between the two groups with respect to whether or not they expect to be working at the same job in the near future, the level of job security and flexibility they expect, or how interesting they anticipate their jobs will be over the next ten years. In addition, there is little difference between men and women when it comes to the possibility of working out of their homes, or how much trouble they have balancing their work and home lives.

### THE BALANCING ACT

Despite the optimism with which New Jerseyans view their future work lives, just over 40% of employed New Jerseyans do report that balancing work and family life is "somewhat" or "very difficult" for them. The groups having the toughest time keeping their lives in order are those in their 30s and 40s, those with children under 18, and those with lower incomes. Half of those aged 30-49 report difficulty balancing priorities in their lives, compared to a third of those aged 18-29 and slightly less than a third of those over 50. Half of respondents with children under 18 also report difficulty balancing their lives, compared to a third of those without children in the home. Over half (52%) of those making less than \$35,000 a year report difficulty in balancing their lives, compared to about 40% of those making over 35 thousand annually.

## The Future of Work Life in New Jersey

*The latest Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted between November 16 and 24 with a statewide sample of 585 working adult New Jerseyans. The sampling error for the sample size is ± 4.5 percent. The text of questions asked and distribution of responses is as follows:*

W1. I'd like to ask you some questions about work now, and begin by asking you to compare your job to kinds the jobs your parents had. To begin with, would you say it is you or your parents who (RANDOMIZE)... Is that you or your parents?

	Respondent	Parent	Both/No Difference	Other	Don't Know	Total (N)
Had more flexibility in their	71	23	3	2	1	100%

job						(585)
Had more stress in their job	58	32	7	2	1	100% (585)
Was better able to provide for the family's financial needs	48	37	11	3	1	100% (585)
Had an easier time balancing the job with family life	41	48	7	3	1	100% (585)
Had more job security	38	52	8	1	2	101% (585)
Who worked more hours in an average week	49	44	4	1	1	99% (585)

W2. Do you use a computer at work, or not?

65	Yes
35	No
<b>100%</b>	<b>(N=585)</b>

W3. In the past 10 years, how much would you say your job has been changed by technology such as computers--a great deal, some, not much, or not at all?

59	A Great Deal
22	Some
11	Not Much
7	Not at All
2	(VOL) Don't Know/Refused
<b>101%</b>	<b>(N=585)</b>

W4. Is technology more of a threat to your job or a help in doing it?

7	Threat
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84	Help
4	(VOL) Both
6	(VOL) Don't know/Refused
<b>100%</b>	<b>(N=585)</b>

W5. How much do you worry that your job might outgrow you—that you won't be able to keep up with the education and training you need to do it well—a lot, some, or is this not really a worry of yours?

7	A lot
16	Some
76	Not a worry
1	(VOL) Don't know/Refused
<b>100%</b>	<b>(N=585)</b>

W6. Please think about how your work experience might change over the next 10 years.  
**FIRST, (RANDOMIZE ITEMS 6A THROUGH 6F)**

A. Do you expect to have more job security, less, or the same amount?

34	More
13	Less
51	Same
1	(VOL) Don't know/Refused
<b>100%</b>	<b>(N=585)</b>

B. Do you expect to have a job at the same place you are now, or do you expect to be working somewhere else?

51	Same
44	Somewhere else

5 (VOL) Don't know/Refused  
**100% (N=585)**

C. Do you expect to have a more interesting job than now, or not?

53 Yes  
34 No  
11 Same  
3 (VOL) Don't know/Refused  
**101% (N=585)**

D. Do you expect to have more flexibility in your job, less or the same amount?

34 More  
11 Less  
54 Same  
2 (VOL) Don't know/Refused  
**101% (N=585)**

E. Do you expect to be working more hours a week, less or the same amount?

25 More  
22 Less  
53 Same  
**100% (N=585)**

F. Do you expect to be working from an office, or from your home?

64 Office

20	Home
11	Other/On road/sales
4	(VOL) Don't know/Refused
<b>99%</b>	<b>(N=585)</b>

W7. And do you now work at an office or from your home?

74	Office
9	Home
17	Other/On road/sales
<b>100%</b>	<b>(N=585)</b>

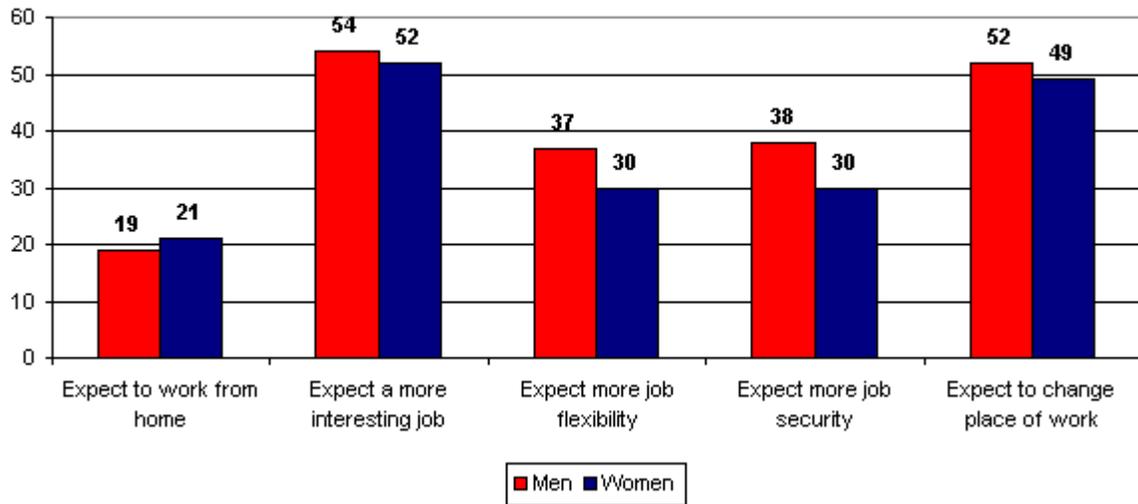
W9. How easy is it for you to balance work and home life—very easy, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult or very difficult?

24	Very easy
35	Somewhat easy
32	Somewhat difficult
9	Very difficult
<b>100%</b>	<b>(N=585)</b>

11. Thinking about YOUR OWN situation over the next 10 years or so, please tell me whether you expect your job situation to get better, worse or stay the same.

58	Better
7	Worse
31	Same
3	Not applicable/No opinion
<b>99%</b>	<b>(N=585)</b>

**Work Expectations Over the Next 10 Years by Gender**



**Work Expectations Over the Next 10 Years by Race**

