

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

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RELEASE: (EP125-4)

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Sunday, April 2 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll."

ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES IN NEW JERSEY:

TREADING (DIRTY) WATER

Attitudes about environmental conditions in New Jersey have changed little over the last 15 years. And that's not necessarily good news. The majority of state residents remain seriously concerned about the disposal of solid and toxic wastes, and about air and water quality.

One part of the environmental landscape that has changed is in the area of open space preservation and development. Concern here has increased in the last 10 years to where a majority now believe this a very serious problem facing the state.

These are some of the main findings of the most recent Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll. The current survey was conducted with a random sample of 800 New Jersey residents, interviewed by telephone between February 29 and March 9. Sampling error for the poll is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

Perhaps the most telling two findings about how concerned New Jerseyans are with the state of their environment are these:

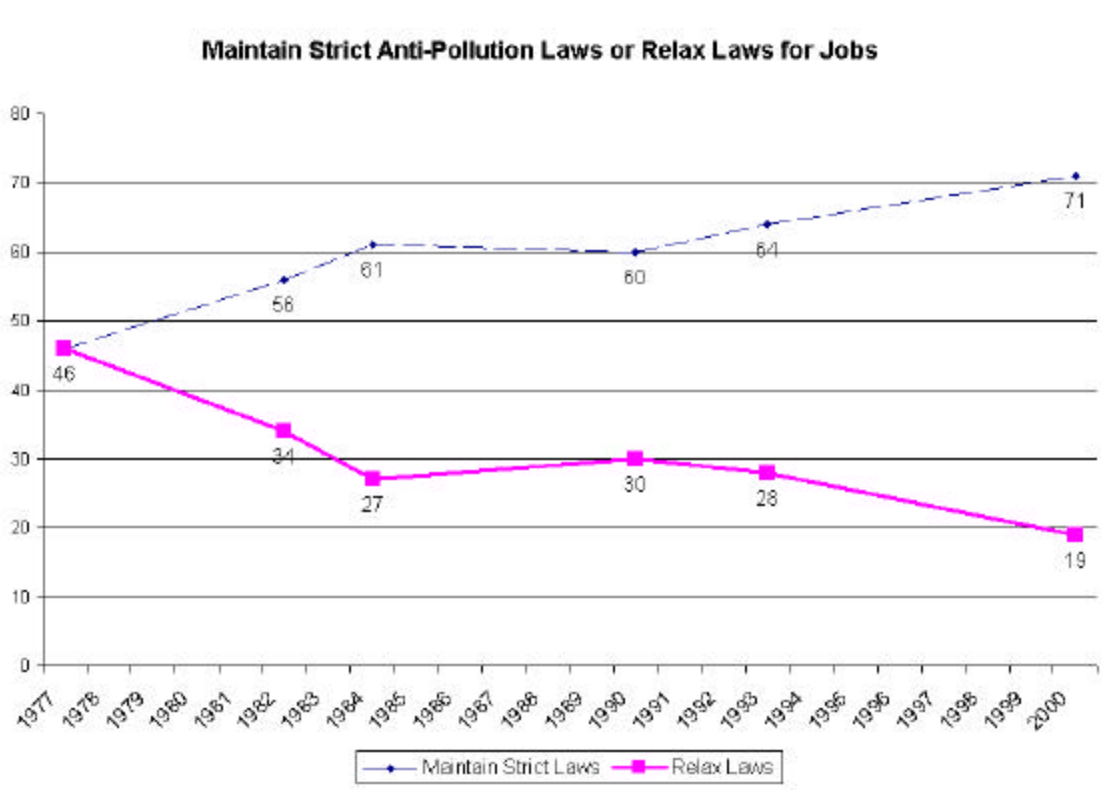
- Household use of bottled or filtered water ranges between 60 and 75 percent in New Jersey. Just one-quarter of New Jerseyans say they drink unfiltered water from the tap. Twice this number do so in the nation as a whole, according to a 1998 Gallup poll.
- When asked to choose between maintaining strict anti-pollution laws or relaxing those laws to create more jobs, the poll finds a consensus favoring environmental protection by 71% to just 19%. Today's good economy aside, when the question was first put to a statewide sample of New Jerseyans in 1977, the public was deeply divided, with 46% favoring each

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll • Eagleton Institute of Politics

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position. Support for environmental protection has grown steadily over the last quarter century in New Jersey.



A majority of Garden State residents voice serious concerns about environmental conditions in the state. In the recent poll, half or more of all New Jerseyans say each of five environmental conditions is a “very serious” problem. Here are the current numbers, along with the trend, if any:

Percent Saying “Very Serious”:

- 69%--Disposal of toxic wastes; no real change in the last 10 years, although concern has been higher at some points.
- 59%--Disposal of solid waste, or garbage in New Jersey; a slight decrease in concern over the last 13 years.
- 56%--Water pollution in New Jersey; no real change in the last 16 years.

- 55%--Air pollution in New Jersey; no real change in the last 16 years, although there has occasionally been less concern.
- 50%--The development of open spaces; concern is up quite a bit from the early 1990s.

Cliff Zukin, director of the poll commented, “We have been tracking environmental attitudes in New Jersey for about a quarter of a century now and felt it was time for a comprehensive check-in. Little has changed. New Jersey has long been an environmentally sensitive state, and clearly remains so. Environmental conditions remain a hot-button political issue in the state, as concern is greatest among the state’s large number of independent voters.”

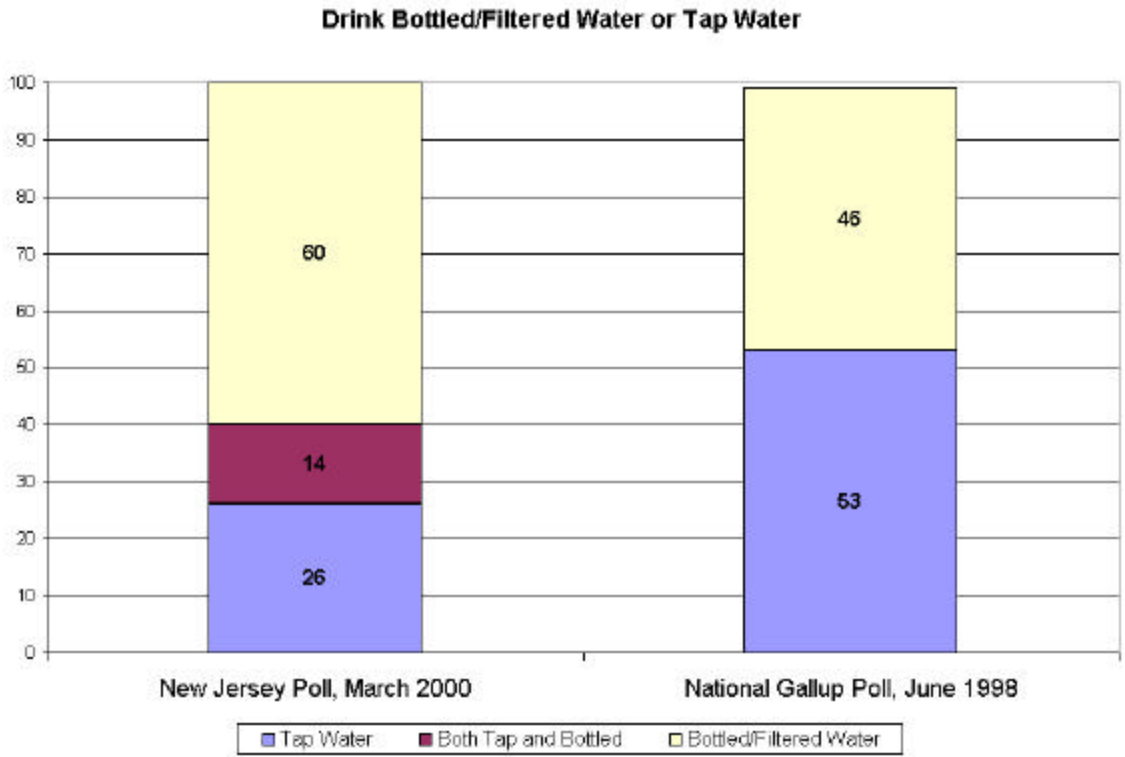
One positive change in environmental attitudes over the past two decades is that New Jerseyans see the air around them as getting cleaner. Now, two-thirds rate the air quality in the area where they live as excellent or good—about a 10 to 15 percentage point improvement from readings taken between 1979 and 1987.

Despite this improvement, half say they are very concerned about the air that they breathe in terms of their family’s health; another third are somewhat concerned and just 14 percent say they are not very concerned. While a majority, this concern has also dropped by about 10 percentage points from surveys taken in 1987 and 1993.

It is clear that for many New Jerseyans ‘the environment’ is also a health issue, as the poll finds significant concern about water quality too. Four-in-ten say the quality of tap water coming into their homes is either “poor” (16%) or “only fair” (24%); 59 percent say they are very concerned about their water quality in terms of their family’s health.

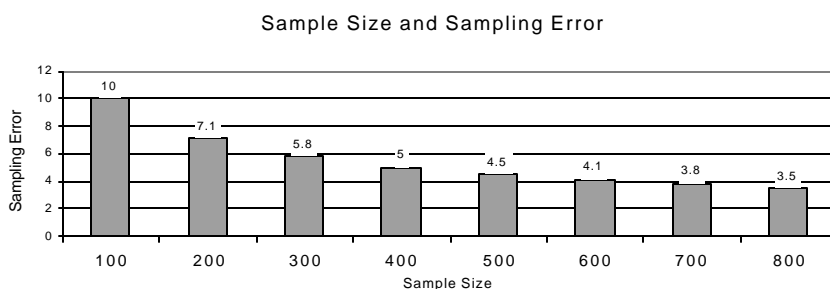
In addition, a remarkable 60 percent say they rely on bottled or filtered water for drinking. Just 26 percent say they drink water right out of their tap all the time, while another 14 percent volunteer they drink a mixture of unfiltered tap and bottled water. A national survey conducted

by the Gallup organization in 1998 found those drinking tap water outnumbered those drinking bottled or filtered water by a margin of 53 to 46 percent.



BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP125-4), SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 2000

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted between February 28 and March 9 with a scientifically selected random sample of 800 New Jersey adult residents 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 this survey is ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jerseyans rate the water quality of the tap water coming into their home as only fair or poor, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent (50 ± 3.5) 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 Republicans, Independents or Democrats, 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 is reproduced in this background memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age, gender and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

EN1 Now on a different subject... Overall, how serious do you think environmental problems are in New Jersey—very serious, somewhat serious, or not too serious?

	<u>Very serious</u>	<u>Somewhat serious</u>	<u>Not too serious</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
March 2000	54%	35%	9%	1%	99%	(800)
<u>By Party</u>						
Democratic	55	34	10	1	100	(247)
Independent	59	34	6	2	101	(320)
Republican	40	42	16	1	99	(184)

EN2 In the past 3 years, do you feel the overall natural environment in New Jersey has gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same?

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Stayed about the same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
March 2000	26%	30%	40%	4%	100%	(800)
<u>By Party</u>						
Democratic	24	26	45	5	100	(247)
Independent	23	39	34	3	99	(320)
Republican	34	19	44	4	101	(184)
<u>Past Surveys</u>						
June 1993	36	15	45	3	99	(801)

EN3 Some people say that anti-pollution laws discourage the growth of jobs and industry. If you had to choose between maintaining strict anti-pollution laws or relaxing those laws to create more jobs in New Jersey, which would you choose?

	<u>Maintain strict laws</u>	<u>Relax laws</u>	<u>Both/rejects choice</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
March 2000	71%	19%	3%	7%	100%	(800)
<u>Past Surveys</u>						
June 1993	64	28	3	5	100	(801)
November 1990	60	30	4	6	100	(800)
August 1987	69	19	5	7	100	(800)
November 1984	61	27	--	12	100	(500)
February 1984	49	37	--	14	100	(502)
September 1982	56	34	--	10	100	(502)
July 1977	46	46	--	8	100	(1004)

EN4 I'm going to read you a short list of environmental conditions in the state. For each please just tell me if you think it is a very serious, somewhat serious, or not too serious problem. First, (RANDOMIZE) Very, somewhat or not too serious?

EN4A	<u>Very serious</u>	<u>Somewhat serious</u>	<u>Not too serious</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Disposal of Toxic Waste	69%	19%	8%	5%	101%	(800)
<u>Past Surveys</u>						
June 1993	77	16	4	3	100	(801)
November 1990	72	17	7	3	99	(798)
EN4B	<u>Very serious</u>	<u>Somewhat serious</u>	<u>Not too serious</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Water pollution in New Jersey	56%	31%	11%	2%	100%	(800)
<u>Past Surveys</u>						
June 1993	55	29	13	3	100	(801)
November 1990	48	35	16	2	101	(800)
August 1987	61	24	11	3	99	(800)
October 1986	64	25	9	2	100	(800)
November 1984	55	27	13	5	100	(500)
February 1984	59	33	6	3	101	(804)

EN4C	<u>Very serious</u>	<u>Somewhat serious</u>	<u>Not too serious</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
The development of open spaces	50%	27%	16%	6%	99%	(800)
<u>Past Surveys</u>						
June 1993	31	36	27	7	101	(801)
November 1990	37	33	25	5	100	(799)

EN4D	<u>Very serious</u>	<u>Somewhat serious</u>	<u>Not too serious</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Air pollution in New Jersey	55%	32%	11%	2%	100%	(800)
<u>Past Surveys</u>						
June 1993	49	38	12	1	100	(801)
November 1990	46	35	19	1	101	(800)
August 1987	42	39	17	2	100	(800)
October 1986	58	33	9	1	101	(800)
February 1984	57	36	6	2	101	(804)

EN4E	<u>Very serious</u>	<u>Somewhat serious</u>	<u>Not too serious</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Disposal of solid waste or garbage in New Jersey	59%	26%	12%	3%	100%	(800)
<u>Past Surveys</u>						
June 1993	66	23	9	3	101	(801)
November 1990	64	23	11	2	100	(800)
August 1987	69	23	5	3	100	(800)
February 1987	67	23	6	3	100	(800)

EN5 And how would you rate the air quality in the area where you live—excellent, good, only fair or poor?

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
March 2000	17%	49%	26%	8%	1%	101%	(800)
<u>By Region</u>							
North	14	45	32	9	--	100	(336)
Central	17	52	24	6	1	100	(206)
South	22	54	20	5	--	101	(226)
<u>Past Surveys</u>							
August 1987	10	44	33	12	--	99	(800)
February 1984	9	46	32	12	1	100	(810)
May 1980	11	41	33	14	1	100	(1006)
April 1979	15	39	32	15	--	101	(1005)

EN6 Thinking about your family's health, how concerned are you about the quality of the air you breathe—very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not very concerned?

	<u>Very concerned</u>	<u>Somewhat concerned</u>	<u>Not very concerned</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
March 2000	53%	32%	14%	--	99%	(800)
<u>Area Where Live</u>						
Large City	64	26	8	2	100	(66)
Suburb	47	36	16	--	99	(224)
Small City/Town	53	34	13	--	100	(372)
Rural Area	58	23	19	--	100	(136)
<u>Past Surveys</u>						
June 1993	63	25	11	1	100	(801)
August 1987	61	28	10	--	99	(800)

EN7 And how would you rate the water quality of the tap water coming into your home—excellent, good, only fair or poor?

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
March 2000	16%	42%	24%	16%	3%	101%	(800)
<u>By Region</u>							
North	17	40	23	17	3	100	(336)
Central	15	44	26	13	2	100	(206)
South	16	44	24	14	2	100	(226)

EN8 Thinking about your family’s health, how concerned are you about the quality of the water you drink—very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not very concerned?

	<u>Very concerned</u>	<u>Somewhat concerned</u>	<u>Not very concerned</u>	<u>Don’t Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
March 2000	59%	26%	14%	1%	100%	(800)
<u>Past Surveys</u>						
June 1993	71	18	11	1	101	(801)
August 1987	65	18	14	3	100	(800)

EN9 Does your family use bottled or filtered water for drinking, or do you drink water right out of the tap?

	<u>Bottled/filtered</u>	<u>Tap water</u>	<u>Both/mixture</u>	<u>Don’t know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
March 2000	60%	26%	14%	1%	101%	(800)
<u>National Comparison</u>						
Gallup June 1998	46	53	--	1	100	(1000)

A Statistical Portrait of Environmental Concern*

Number of Five Conditions Rated as “Very Serious”

	<u>0-1</u>	<u>2-3</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Statewide, March 2000	25%	31%	44%	100%	(800)
<u>By Party</u>					
--Democrat	28	30	42	100	(247)
--Independent	21	31	48	100	(320)
--Republican	32	33	35	100	(184)
<u>By Ideology</u>					
--Liberal	16	27	58	101	(148)
--Moderate	27	32	42	101	(468)
--Conservative	29	34	37	100	(158)
<u>By Region</u>					
--North	26	30	44	100	(336)
--Central	27	29	44	100	(206)
--South	23	34	43	100	(226)
<u>By Race</u>					
--White	25	33	42	100	(591)
--Black and Hispanic	26	23	51	100	(146)
<u>By Area</u>					
--Large City	21	25	54	100	(66)
--Suburb	29	29	42	100	(224)
--Small City/Town	25	34	41	100	(372)
--Rural	21	31	48	100	(136)

* The five conditions are: disposal of solid waste, disposal of toxic waste, water pollution, air pollution, and development of open spaces.