

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

February 1, 2004
(Release 145-6)

CONTACT: ROBERT SULS
OR CLIFF ZUKIN
(732) 932-9384

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo appears in the Sunday, February 1, 2004 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

ALCOHOL IN NEW JERSEY:

1-in-5 Say Alcohol has Caused Problems in their Families; Drinking while Driving Down Dramatically

Superbowl Sunday is here—a great excuse for a party with friends and, for many, drinking a beer or two. But alcohol comes with a price: 20 percent of New Jerseyans say that drinking has been a cause of problems in their families. This sobering figure, which translates to 650,000 households in the state affecting about 1,700,000 people living in those households, is the estimate of the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*.

However, the survey also provides some very positive news on this subject. The number of residents who mix alcohol and gasoline has declined dramatically over the past two decades, and nowhere has the drop been more notable than among young people in the state. Where as 38 percent of those under 30 back in 1982 said they had had a drink while driving, just 7 percent of those under 30 today say they have done so.

Robert Suls, an analyst for the Rutgers-based poll commented, "Young people appear to have taken to heart the message that drinking while driving is dangerous, unlawful and that the penalties for doing so are great. Today, the youngest generation of New Jersey drivers is showing much better judgment than their peers of some 20 years ago."

Overall, 7-in-10 New Jersey residents say they drink, while 31 percent refer to themselves as abstainers. Based on survey results, the poll estimates that 1.1 million adults in New Jersey (17%) had a nip in the last day and an additional one million imbibed sometime in the last week (16%). Among drinkers, about one-in-seven (14%) admit that they sometimes drink more than they should.

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

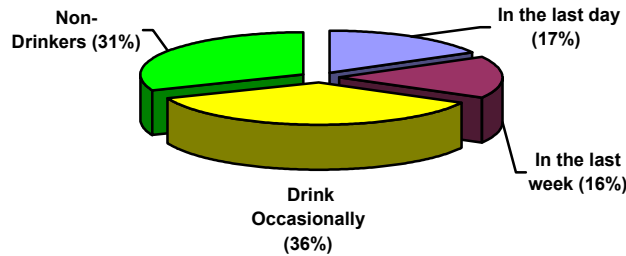
185 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Director: Cliff Zukin x247 • Associate Director: Patrick Murray x243

Graduate Research Assistants: Robert Suls • Allison Kopicki • Mike Schubert • x289

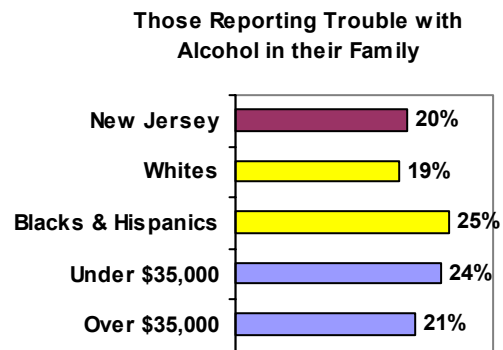
Phone: 732-932-9384 - Website: <http://slerp.rutgers.edu> - Fax: 732-932-1551

Drinking Habits of New Jersey Adults

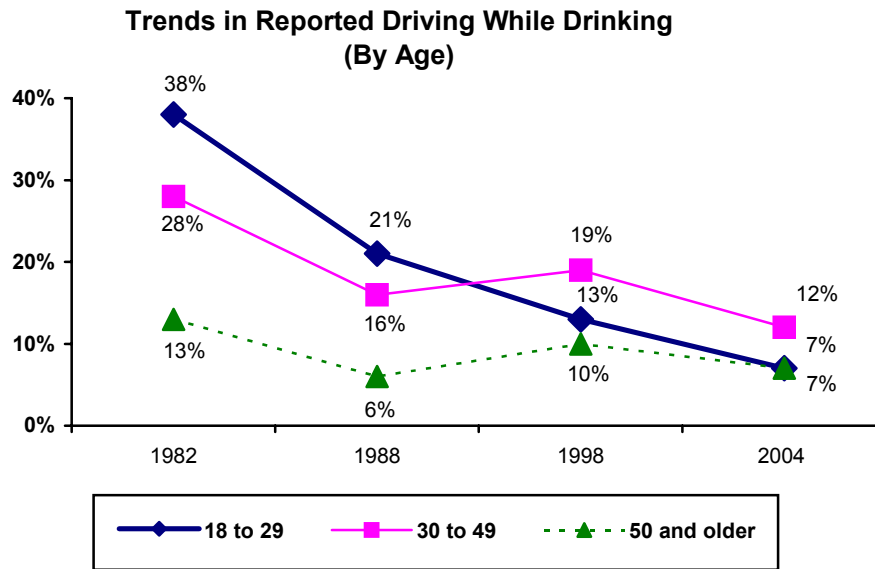


The number who say that drinking has been the cause of trouble in their family is a steady one-in-five across all demographic backgrounds, whether rich or poor and regardless of race. Roughly equal numbers of whites (19%), Blacks & Hispanics (25%); households with annual income below \$35,000 (24%) and those above \$35,000 (21%) report experiencing alcohol related problems in the family.

However, the poll also shows that the proportion of New Jerseyans who acknowledge having consumed alcohol while they were driving has fallen by more than half over the last two decades. Today, fewer than one-in-ten (9%) of New



Jersey adults admit to drinking while behind the wheel, a substantial decline from the 24 percent who admitted to doing so in 1982. And it is young adults who show the greatest improvement over this time frame. Among those 18 to 29 years old, just 7 percent report ever having had a drink while driving, down from close to 4-in-10 (38%) in 1982. The number of 30 to 49 year olds who admit drinking alcohol and driving declined albeit less dramatically, from 28 percent in 1982 to 12 percent today. Residents of New Jersey age 50 and older are stable with about one-in-ten who report having been drinking while behind the wheel.



The poll found some other interesting background differences in the state’s alcohol consumption patterns. Minorities and low income state residents are half as likely to say they drink as are white and affluent New Jersey residents. Half of Blacks and Hispanics in the state (50%) say that they never touch alcohol compared with one-in-four whites (26%). While one-half (48%) of those with total a household income less than \$35,000 report never drinking, only 23 percent of those earning \$35,000 to \$70,000 and 19 percent of those earning over \$70,000 say that they abstain entirely from alcohol.

The poll also asked drinkers what they prefer most among alcoholic beverages. Just under half (45%) of the state’s drinkers say their beverage of choice is a glass of wine, while another quarter prefer drinking beer (27%) and one-in-five are most fond of liquor. Female drinkers overwhelming prefer wine (58%) and men are evenly divided between beer first (40%) and wine a close second (31%).

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* was conducted by phone with a scientifically selected sample of 904 New Jersey adults 18 years and older. The survey, conducted between January 7 to 13 of this year has a sampling error of ± 3.9 percent.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP145-6) February 1, 2004

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted by telephone from January 7 to 13 with a scientifically selected random sample of 904 New Jersey adults. 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 is ± 3.9 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adult residents were found to disagree with a statement, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.1 and 53.9 percent (50 ± 3.9) had all New Jersey adult residents 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.

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 and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

“Do you have occasion to drink alcoholic beverages such as liquor, wine, or beer, or are you a total abstainer?” [AL1] “When did you last take a drink of any kind of alcoholic beverage?” [AL2]

	<u>In the last day</u>	<u>Over one day ago to one week ago</u>	<u>Over one week</u>	<u>Never Drink</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2004	17%	16%	36%	31%	100%	(904)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	24	16	33	26	99	(429)
--Female	12	15	38	35	100	(475)
<u>Age</u>						
18 to 29	13	9	48	30	100	(111)
30 to 49	17	21	39	23	100	(326)
50 and older	21	14	26	39	100	(440)
<u>Income</u>						
--Less than \$35,000	12	10	30	48	100	(149)
--\$35,000 to \$70,000	22	18	37	23	100	(222)
--More than \$70,000	21	20	40	19	100	(372)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	20	19	35	26	100	(716)
--Blacks & Hispanics	7	5	38	50	100	(127)

[Asked only of those who drink alcohol]

“Do you most often drink liquor, wine, or beer?” [AL3]

	<u>Liquor</u>	<u>Wine</u>	<u>Beer</u>	<u>Combi- nation</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2004	18%	45%	27%	8%	1%	99%	(648)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	16	31	40	13	--	100	(325)
--Female	21	58	15	4	2	100	(323)
<u>Income</u>							
--Less than \$70,000	24	36	33	6	1	100	(246)
--More than \$70,000	14	51	25	10	--	100	(301)

[Asked only of those who drink alcohol:]

“Do you sometimes drink more alcoholic beverages than you think you should?” [AL4]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2004	14%	85%	1%	100%	(648)
<i>Gender</i>					
--Male	19	80	1	100	(325)
--Female	10	89	1	100	(323)
<i>Income</i>					
--Less than \$70,000	12	88	1	101	(246)
--More than \$70,000	20	80	--	100	(301)
<i>Beverage of choice</i>					
--Liquor	16	82	2	100	(94)
--Wine	9	90	--	99	(338)
--Beer	21	79	--	100	(153)

[ASKED OF ALL SURVEY RESPONDENTS:]

“Has drinking ever been a cause of trouble in your family?” [AL6]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2004	20%	79%	1%	100%	(904)
<i>Gender</i>					
--Male	18	81	--	99	(429)
--Female	22	77	1	100	(475)
<i>Age</i>					
--18 to 29	26	74	--	100	(111)
--30 to 49	17	82	1	100	(326)
--50 and older	23	77	--	100	(440)
<i>Income</i>					
--Less than \$35,000	24	75	1	100	(149)
--\$35,000 to \$70,000	21	79	--	100	(222)
--More than \$70,000	21	79	--	100	(372)
<i>Race</i>					
--White	19	80	1	100	(716)
--Blacks & Hispanics	25	75	--	100	(127)
<i>Respondent drinks alcohol</i>					
--No	25	74	--	99	(250)
--Yes	19	81	--	100	(648)
<i>Beverage of choice</i>					
--Liquor	29	71	--	100	(94)
--Wine	18	81	--	99	(338)
--Beer	15	85	--	100	(153)

“While very few New Jerseyans drive while they are drunk, many tell us they occasionally drink while in their cars. Have you ever had a beer or other alcoholic beverage while you were driving?” [AL5] *

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No/ Doesn't drink</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2004	9%	90%	--	99%	(904)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	13	87	--	100	(429)
--Female	5	94	--	99	(475)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 to 29	7	93	--	100	(111)
--30 to 49	12	87	--	99	(326)
--50 and older	7	92	1	100	(440)
<u>Income</u>					
--Less than \$35,000	3	97	--	100	(149)
--\$35,000 to \$70,000	13	87	--	100	(222)
--More than \$70,000	13	87	--	100	(372)
<u>Race</u>					
--White	10	89	--	99	(716)
--Blacks & Hispanics	4	96	--	100	(127)
<u>Beverage of choice</u>					
--Liquor	14	86	--	100	(94)
--Wine	7	93	1	101	(338)
--Beer	24	76	--	100	(153)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
September 1998	14	86	--	100	(804)
--18 to 29	13	87	--	100	(117)
--30 to 49	19	81	--	100	(357)
--50 and older	10	90	--	100	(322)
May 1988	13	87	--	100	(800)
--18 to 29	21	79	--	100	(190)
--30 to 49	16	84	--	100	(328)
--50 and older	6	94	--	100	(267)
February 1986	20	80	--	100	(600)
--18 to 29	29	71	1	101	(171)
--30 to 49	25	74	1	100	(222)
--50 and older	10	90	--	100	(195)
August 1984	21	79	--	100	(805)
--18 to 29	37	62	1	100	(197)
--30 to 49	24	76	--	100	(273)
--50 and older	9	91	1	101	(302)
August 1982	24	76	--	100	(503)
--18 to 29	38	62	--	100	(141)
--30 to 49	28	72	--	100	(177)
--50 and older	13	87	--	100	(173)

* In 2004, this question was asked only of those who report drinking alcohol. Those who abstain are included in the “No” category in this table. In previous years, the question was asked of all adults or of all drivers. Non-drivers are included in the “No” category for all years.