

# The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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**CONTACTS:**

**MURRAY EDELMAN, (732) 932-9384, EXT. 240; (917) 968-1299 (cell)**  
**TIM VERCELLOTTI, (732) 932-9384, EXT. 285; (919) 812-3452 (cell)**

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo appears in the Wednesday, September 14, 2005 *Star-Ledger*. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to *"The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll."*

## **FEELING PAIN AT THE PUMP**

*New Jerseyans Cut Travel, Spending Because of High Gas Prices*

Motorists are driving less and reducing spending in other areas of their household budgets in response to the recent spike in gas prices, according to the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*. A statewide survey of 751 motorists, conducted Sept. 6-9, found that more than half (53 percent) said they are reining in spending in other areas as a result of gas prices. Close to half (49 percent) said they have cut down on vacation and weekend travel. And one-third said they attend entertainment or sports events less often.

"Higher gas prices have had a significant effect on motorists' behavior," said Murray Edelman, director of the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*. "People are cutting back on discretionary travel and are looking for other ways to reduce their use of gasoline."

If prices remain high, there may be long-term implications for the auto industry. One quarter of the sample said they are actively looking for a car or truck that gets higher gas mileage. This could be part of a broader signal to manufacturers that demand for fuel-efficient vehicles, including hybrid vehicles, will go up in response to high gas prices over the long haul.

Motorists also are looking for other means of transportation to get around. Fifteen percent of those surveyed said they are using mass transit more often, and 19 percent said they are car-pooling with others to work or school. Edeleman noted, however, that the

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185 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Director: Murray Edelman, ext. 240 or (917) 968-1299 (cell)

Assistant Director: Tim Vercellotti, ext. 285 or (919) 812-3452 (cell)

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

percentage turning to mass transit also could be influenced by the availability of mass transit in specific parts of the state.

A large number of New Jerseyans expressed suspicion about the cause of high gas prices. Only 17 percent said they personally feel there is a real shortage, while 68 percent said oil companies are holding back supply. The level of skepticism, however, is the same or lower than that expressed by survey respondents during previous gas shortages. The percentage saying that oil companies are holding back matches the results of a September 1980 survey conducted by the Eagleton Institute of Politics. Eagleton surveys from 1979 and 1974 showed citizens expressed suspicion to a greater extent during those shortages.

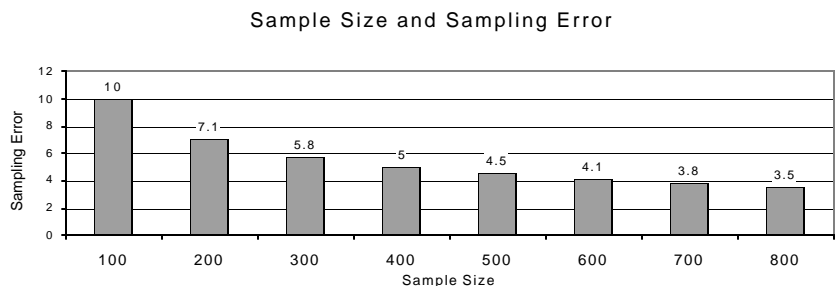
Breaking down the September 2005 data by demographic categories, Democrats were more skeptical than Republicans and Independents, as were nonwhites, those ages 18 to 29, and people with a high school education or less.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents said they are willing to shop around for the lowest gas prices. This was most pronounced for Democrats, nonwhites, those ages 18 to 49, and people with at least some college education.

**BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP 155-3) September 14, 2005**

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted from September 6 to 9 with a scientifically selected random sample of 865 New Jersey adults. The random sample of 865 New Jersey adults yielded 751 adult residents who said they have a car. All of the figures in this release are based on the statewide sample of those adults who said they have a car.

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 the statewide sample of 751 adults who said they have a car is  $\pm 3.6$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of those polled report having cut down on weekend or vacation travel by car because of gasoline prices, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.4 and 53.6 percent ( $50 \pm 3.6$ ) if all New Jersey adults who have a car had been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups 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 referred to in this release are as follows:

Has the price of gasoline prompted you to do any of the following recently? [ROTATE ALL BUT QUESTION G] (GP2)

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID "YES" TO HAVING A CAR IN GP1]

POLL 155 / Sept 2005	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	(n)
<b>All Adults</b>				
<u>A. Use mass transit more often</u>	15	84	1	(751)
<u>B. Cut down weekend or vacation travel by car</u>	49	50	1	(751)
<u>C. Carpool with others to work or school</u>	19	81	1	(751)
<u>D. Purchase items online more often</u>	17	83	---	(751)
<u>E. Actively look for a car or truck that gets higher gas mileage</u>	25	74	2	(751)
<u>F. Attend entertainment or sports events less often</u>	33	66	1	(751)
<u>G. Cut back household spending on other things</u>	53	47	---	(751)

Do you personally feel there is a real shortage of energy or do you think the oil companies are holding back on oil and gasoline? (GP3)

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID "YES" TO HAVING A CAR IN GP1]

		<u>Real shortage</u>	<u>Oil companies holding back</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
POLL 155 / Sept 2005							
<b>All Adults</b>		<b>17%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>n/a***</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>(751)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat		16%	73%	4%	n/a	8%	278
--Republican		20%	62%	6%	n/a	12%	179
--Independent		20%	65%	9%	n/a	6%	183
<u>Race</u>							
--White		17%	66%	7%	n/a	9%	591
--Nonwhite		15%	78%	3%	n/a	5%	144
<u>Age</u>							
--18-29		19%	72%	1%	n/a	7%	123
--30-49		18%	69%	6%	n/a	7%	329
--50-64		16%	67%	9%	n/a	8%	157
--65+		12%	62%	8%	n/a	17%	138
<u>Education</u>							
--High school and below		9%	74%	6%	n/a	10%	307
--Some college and above		22%	63%	7%	n/a	8%	442
<u>Region of State</u>							
--North		18%	69%	6%	n/a	8%	275
--Central		20%	66%	5%	n/a	9%	243
--South		13%	68%	8%	n/a	10%	218
		<u>Real shortage</u>	<u>Oil companies holding back</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>All Adults</b>		<b>23%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>600</b>
<b>All Adults</b>		<b>15%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1005</b>
<b>All Adults</b>		<b>11%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1005</b>
<b>All Adults</b>		<b>8%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1220</b>

\*\*\*The "neither" response only offered in Sept. 1980, Sept. 1979, and March 1979 polls.

These days, do you usually comparison shop between gas stations for the lowest price on gasoline, even if that means going out of your way, or do you usually buy gasoline from the stations that are most convenient to you, even if that means paying a bit more? (GP4)

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID "YES" TO HAVING A CAR IN GP1]

POLL 155 / Sept 2005	<u>Comparison</u>	<u>Most</u>			
<b>All Adults</b>	<b><u>shop</u></b>	<b><u>convenient</u></b>	<b><u>Both</u></b>	<b><u>DK/RF</u></b>	<b><u>(n)</u></b>
	<b>58%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>(751)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	63%	31%	3%	3%	278
--Republican	55%	41%	3%	1%	179
--Independent	56%	37%	5%	2%	183
<u>Race</u>					
--White	55%	40%	4%	2%	591
--Nonwhite	71%	25%	3%	1%	144
<u>Age</u>					
--18-29	64%	32%	---	5%	123
--30-49	64%	31%	5%	---	329
--50-64	52%	45%	3%	---	157
--65+	44%	46%	5%	5%	138
<u>Education</u>					
--High school and below	53%	40%	3%	4%	307
--Some college and above	61%	35%	4%	---	442
<u>Region of State</u>					
--North	55%	40%	4%	1%	275
--Central	60%	36%	2%	3%	243
--South	58%	35%	5%	1%	218