

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Sunday's *Star-Ledger*. Other newspapers may also use this information in their Sunday editions. Electronic media may release after 5:00 P.M. Saturday, February 15, 1992. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll."

NEW JERSEYANS CONTINUE TO FEEL THE BITE OF RECESSION

New Jerseyans' pessimism about economic conditions remains at the same low levels as one year ago, with more than 4-in-5 saying that New Jersey is in "bad times" economically, and 9-in-10 saying that the United States is in an economic recession.

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll, conducted by telephone between January 20 and 27, 1992 with 800 New Jersey adults, also finds that many residents are personally feeling the pinch of recession, with 6-in-10 saying they have been having a hard time trying to make ends meet over the past year. At the same time, however, 7-in-10 report being satisfied with their current standard of living.

Despite the rather bleak assessments of the current economic climate, 2-in-5 residents are optimistic that conditions in New Jersey will get better over the next year compared to only 14% who say things will get worse. However, fully 4-in-5 believe that the national recession will last at least another 6 months.

The survey also finds that 2-in-5 residents feel the federal government is most responsible for economic problems, whereas only 17% assign most responsibility to state government and 13% to private business and industry.

ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 5:00 P.M. on Saturday, February 15, 1992, from (908)932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

Stuck in Recession

New Jerseyans' assessments of economic conditions nationally and statewide are as low today as they were at the start of 1991. Eighty-four percent describe New Jersey's economy as in "bad times," the same percentage who offered that description one year ago. Ninety-two percent of state residents now say the United States is in an economic recession — up 5 points from the 87 percent who felt the nation was in recession a year ago.

Personal Economic Conditions

Nearly 3-in-5 New Jerseyans "strongly" (36%) or "mildly" (21%) agree that they have been having a hard time trying to make ends meet over the past year. Certain groups are more likely to report difficulty. For example, 73 percent of those with family incomes between \$20,000 and \$30,000 and 65 percent of those with family incomes under \$20,000 say they have had a hard time making ends meet. Also, two-thirds of those between 18 and 29 years old, and two-thirds of non-whites report having had trouble making ends meet over the last year.

Ken Dautrich, Associate Director of the Poll, noted "It's pretty clear that the negative effects of recession are being felt by a large number of New Jerseyans. The high level of pessimism in the economy is, for many, the result of personal fiscal problems rather than simply a lack of consumer confidence."

The poll also shows that while a majority (54%) of residents report that their own family's financial situation has stayed about the same over the past year, one-third say that their situation has gotten worse and only 13 percent say it got better. Those with annual family incomes of \$50,000 or less are more likely than those with higher incomes to say that their family's financial situation has deteriorated by a margin of 37 percent to 27 percent. Also, 40 percent of those 30 to 64 years of age say their situation got worse over the past year, compared to 30 percent of those 65 or older, and 21 percent of those under 30.

Despite rather pessimistic evaluations of economic conditions, a clear majority of New Jerseyans report being satisfied with their present living standard. Seven-in-ten are either "very" (21%) or "somewhat" (50%) satisfied with their current standard of living, compared to 28 percent

who are "very" (9%) or "somewhat" (19%) dissatisfied. Seventy-nine percent of those with family incomes over \$50,000 are satisfied with their current standard of living, compared to 69 percent of those earning between \$30,000 and \$50,000, 63 percent of those earning between \$20,000 and \$30,000, and 61 percent of those earning less than \$20,000 annually.

Will Conditions Improve?

Most New Jerseyans do not expect the recession to end soon. Fully 4-in-5 (82%) residents think that the economic recession will last either six more months to a year (35%) or more than one year (47%). Only 13 percent think the recession will end within the next six months, and only 1 percent think it will be over within three months.

In thinking about future economic conditions in New Jersey, however, residents are slightly more optimistic today than they were last year. Currently, 41 percent project that economic conditions statewide will "stay about the same," 40 percent say things will get "better," and 14 percent say the state's economy will get "worse." In a survey conducted one year ago only 31 percent thought conditions would get better over the next year.

New Jerseyans' optimism about their own personal financial situation, however, is the same as last year. In the current survey one-third of residents feel their family's financial situation will get "better," 11 percent think it will get "worse," and 52 percent say it will "stay about the same." These figures are virtually unchanged from the survey conducted one year ago.

Who is Responsible?

More residents (39%) feel the federal government is responsible for economic problems than blame state government (17%) or private business and industry (13%). Those with annual family incomes of more than \$50,000 (53%) are most likely to feel the federal government is primarily responsible for economic problems, compared to fewer than 2-in-5 in the lower income categories.

BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP37-3 (EP87-3), SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1992

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between January 20 and 27, 1992, when a random sample of 800 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of about ± 3.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are presented below. The location of each question on the actual questionnaire is in brackets.

"Right now, do you think the United States is in an economic recession or not?" [Q.7]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January, 1992	92%	6%	2%	100%	(800)

PAST SURVEYS

February, 1991	87	9	4	100	(800)
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Asked of those who say U. S. is in a recession:

"And about how much longer do you think the economic recession will last?" [Q.7A]

	<u>3 Months Or Less</u>	<u>3 to 6 Months</u>	<u>6 Months To 1 Year</u>	<u>Over 1 Year</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January, 1992	1%	12%	35%	47%	4%	99%	(745)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	2	5	34	56	3	100	(180)
--Independent	1	12	34	50	3	100	(328)
--Republican	1	21	35	35	9	101	(206)
<u>Age</u>							
--18 - 29	3	10	33	54	--	100	(145)
--30 - 49	1	12	32	52	4	101	(327)
--50 and older	1	13	39	39	8	100	(259)

"How would you generally describe economic conditions in New Jersey right now? Would you say that economically New Jersey is in good times or bad times right now?" [Q.8]

	<u>Good Times</u>	<u>Bad Times</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January, 1992	8%	84%	7%	99%	(800)
<i>Age</i>					
--18 - 29	8	89	4	101	(163)
--30 - 49	6	88	5	99	(344)
--50 - 64	6	86	9	101	(148)
--65 and older	15	71	15	101	(130)
<i>Family Income</i>					
--under \$20,000	14	73	13	100	(105)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	4	92	4	100	(101)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	5	91	4	100	(202)
--\$50,001 and over	8	85	7	100	(142)

PAST SURVEYS

February, 1991	12	84	4	100	(800)
March, 1990	36	55	8	99	(800)
September, 1989	57	31	12	100	(1,000)
October, 1986	64	18	17	99	(800)

"During the next year, do you think economic conditions in New Jersey will get better, get worse, or stay about the same?" [Q.9]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January, 1992	40%	14%	41%	5%	100%	(800)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	40	13	44	3	100	(163)
--30 - 49	31	17	50	2	100	(344)
--50 - 64	42	13	38	8	101	(148)
--65 and older	58	11	24	8	101	(130)
<i>Family Income</i>						
--under \$20,000	49	16	31	4	100	(105)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	42	7	45	5	99	(101)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	38	19	38	5	100	(202)
--\$50,001 and over	29	15	51	4	99	(142)

PAST SURVEYS

February, 1991	31	23	42	4	100	(800)
October, 1986	27	9	59	5	100	(798)

"Thinking about your family's financial situation over the last year, have things gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same?" [Q.10]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January, 1992	13%	33%	54%	--	100%	(800)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	20	21	58	1%	100	(163)
--30 - 49	15	40	45	--	100	(344)
--50 - 64	10	40	51	--	101	(148)
--65 and older	4	30	66	--	100	(130)
<i>Family Income</i>						
--under \$20,000	7	37	57	--	101	(105)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	5	36	57	2	100	(101)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	13	37	50	--	100	(202)
--\$50,001 and over	17	27	55	--	99	(142)

PAST SURVEYS

February, 1991	13	33	54	--	100	(800)
March, 1990	18	26	55	1	100	(800)
September, 1989	19	23	58	--	100	(1,000)
October, 1986	28	15	57	--	100	(800)
October, 1982	15	34	50	1	100	(1,097)

"And looking ahead, do you think that a year from now you and your family will be better off financially, worse off, or about the same as now?" [Q.11]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January, 1992	32%	11%	52%	5%	100%	(800)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	45	5	49	1	100	(163)
--30 - 49	34	13	50	3	100	(344)
--50 - 64	26	14	49	11	100	(148)
--65 and older	21	9	59	11	100	(130)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
February, 1991	33	11	53	4	101	(800)
March, 1990	31	19	44	6	100	(800)
September, 1989	36	12	46	6	100	(1,000)
October, 1986	37	12	48	3	100	(800)

"Overall, how satisfied are you with your current standard of living--very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?" [Q.12]

	<u>Very Satisfied</u>	<u>Somewhat Satisfied</u>	<u>Somewhat Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Very Satisfied</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January, 1992	21%	50%	19%	9%	--	99%	(800)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	17	53	22	8	--	100	(193)
--Independent	22	49	20	8	1%	100	(350)
--Republican	27	48	15	11	--	101	(225)
<i>Age</i>							
--18 - 29	20	53	22	5	--	100	(163)
--30 - 49	19	47	24	9	--	99	(344)
--50 - 64	27	40	16	16	--	99	(148)
--65 and older	22	61	9	8	--	100	(130)
<i>Race</i>							
--White	24	50	17	8	--	99	(649)
--Non-white	10	50	27	13	--	100	(139)
<i>Family Income</i>							
--under \$20,000	17	44	20	19	--	100	(105)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	8	55	27	9	1	100	(101)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	15	54	24	7	--	100	(202)
--\$50,001 and over	23	56	16	4	--	99	(142)

"Who do you think is most responsible for economic problems--state government, federal government, or private industry or business?" [Q.13]

	<u>State Government</u>	<u>Federal Government</u>	<u>Business Industry</u>	<u>Combination</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January, 1992	17%	39%	13%	21%	9%	99%	(800)
<i>Family Income</i>							
--under \$20,000	23	37	8	17	15	100	(105)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	20	33	23	14	10	100	(101)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	18	38	13	26	5	100	(202)
--\$50,001 and over	9	53	12	19	6	99	(142)

"Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Over the past year I have been having a hard time trying to make ends meet. (PROBE: Do you strongly or mildly (agree/disagree?)" [Q.24]

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Mildly Agree</u>	<u>Mildly Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January, 1992	36%	21%	25%	17%	2%	101%	(800)
<u>Age</u>							
--18 - 29	43	24	17	16	1	101	(163)
--30 - 49	39	23	25	13	--	100	(344)
--50 - 64	38	13	26	20	3	100	(148)
--65 and older	21	22	33	21	3	100	(130)
<u>Race</u>							
--White	33	22	26	17	2	100	(649)
--Non-white	49	18	19	13	--	99	(139)
<u>Family Income</u>							
--under \$20,000	44	21	20	10	4	99	(105)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	50	23	14	11	1	99	(101)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	40	18	31	11	1	101	(202)
--\$50,001 and over	26	24	25	25	--	100	(142)