

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, May 30, 1992. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

IMAGE OF THE NEW JERSEY SHORE IMPROVES

Fully eighty-two percent of state residents say that the shore is one of New Jersey's best features, representing a 6 point increase since 1989. And while many New Jerseyans continue to express concern about the condition of the Jersey shore, there are strong indications that the shore's image is improving. For example, less than half of residents now say that the shore has been going downhill compared to three years ago when three-quarters felt that way. Also, 58 percent now say that ocean pollution is a very serious problem at the shore, which is a 15 point drop since 1989.

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll, conducted by telephone from April 23 to 30, 1992 with 800 New Jersey adults, finds that about half of the residents are planning a vacation at a Jersey beach this summer, and three-quarters of residents plan to take at least a one day trip to a Jersey beach.

While a majority (59%) of residents now think that state government should be spending more to protect and improve the shore, 74 percent felt that way three years ago. However, about two-in-five residents continue to say they are willing to see a slight increase in their taxes to pay for increased protection and improvement of the shore.

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ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 5:00 P.M. on Saturday, May 30, 1992, from (908)932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

IMAGE OF THE SHORE

More than 4-in-5 New Jerseyans either "strongly" (64%) or "mildly" (18%) agree that the shore is one of New Jersey's best features. These assessments represent a 6 point increase from a June

1989 survey when about three-quarters "strongly" (59%) or "mildly" (17%) agreed that the shore is one of the state's best features.

New Jerseyans' assessment of the condition of the shore has improved significantly since 1989. Forty-six percent of state residents now say that the Jersey shore has been going downhill over the years, compared to one-quarter (24%) who say it has been getting better and one-quarter (24%) who feel it has not changed much. Three years ago 74 percent said that the shore was going downhill — fully 28 points higher than the current survey.

"While many residents continue to express concerns over the condition of New Jersey's beaches, there are some strong signs that public assessments of the shore are taking a turn for the better," commented Ken Dautrich, Associate Director of the Poll. "The strong negative feelings about the quality of Jersey's beaches have eased, and most residents continue to value the shore as an important state asset."

There has also been a change in perceptions of shore pollution. While a majority (58%) of residents now say that ocean pollution is a very serious problem along the Jersey shore, about three-quarters (73%) felt that way in June of 1989, representing a 15 point decline. Currently, 54 percent say there will be about the same number of pollution problems this year compared to last, while 30 percent say there will be fewer problems and 9 percent say there will be more.

USE OF THE BEACHES

Reported use of the New Jersey beaches increased 13 points from three years ago. In the current survey, 74 percent say they visited a New Jersey beach last summer compared to 61 percent who said that in 1989.

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In looking ahead to this summer, fully three-quarters of state residents say they are planning to take a day trip to a New Jersey beach, and nearly half (47%) say they will take a vacation of 3 days or more at the New Jersey shore. Those between the ages of 18 and 29 are more likely to say they will take a day trip (91%) and are also more likely to report they will take a vacation (61%) at the Jersey shore.

Fewer residents report that they will vacation at a beach outside of New Jersey during the summer. One-third of residents plan to take a vacation at a non-New Jersey beach, and about one-quarter (24%) say they will take a day trip at a beach outside of New Jersey over the summer months.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING ON BEACHES

While a majority (59%) of New Jerseyans continue to feel that state government should be spending more to protect and improve the Jersey shore, three years ago three-quarters (74%) of residents felt that the state should be spending more on the beaches. However, about four-in-ten residents continue to say that they would be willing to see a slight increase in their own taxes to help pay for improving and protecting the state's beaches (38% in the current survey compared to 42% in the 1989 survey).

BEACH DAMAGE FROM LAST FALL'S STORMS

Heavy storms in the fall of 1991 caused approximately \$100 million in damage to seawalls, jetties and sand erosion along the state's shoreline. The issue of who will provide funding to repair the damage has been discussed since the damage occurred. The poll asked New Jerseyans who they thought should be most responsible for paying to repair this damage. A plurality (37%) of residents feel that the federal government should be most responsible for funding the repair work, while three-in-ten think that state government should be most responsible. Another 14 percent say the local shore communities should fund the repairs, and 9 percent say people who use the beach should be most responsible for funding the repair.

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Nearly three-quarters of New Jersey residents say they have read or heard either a lot (41%) or some (32%) about the damage caused to New Jersey beaches from storms that occurred last fall.

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BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP38-5 (EP88-5), SUNDAY, MAY 31, 1992

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between April 23 and April 30, 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.

"I'm going to read a list of vacation activities in New Jersey. For each, please tell me if you plan to do that activity this summer. First, how about (START AT DESIGNATED POINT) -- do you think you will do that this summer or not?" [Q.31]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>Take a vacation at a New Jersey beach for 3 days or more</u>					
April, 1992	47%	52%	1%	100%	(800)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 - 29	61	39	--	100	(165)
--30 - 49	51	48	1	100	(313)
--50+	35	63	1	99	(310)
<u>Take a day trip to a New Jersey beach</u>					
April, 1992	75	23	1	99	(800)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 - 29	91	9	--	100	(165)
--30 - 49	82	16	2	100	(313)
--50+	60	38	1	99	(310)
<u>Take a vacation at a beach outside of New Jersey for 3 days or more</u>					
April, 1992	33	65	2	100	(800)
<u>Take a day trip to a beach outside of New Jersey</u>					
April, 1992	24	74	2	100	(800)

"Would you agree or disagree that the shore is one of New Jersey's best features? (PROBE: Do you agree/disagree strongly or mildly?)" [Q.32]

	<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>
April, 1992	64%	18%	6%	7%	4%	99%	(800)
<u>Age</u>							
--18 - 29	51	22	10	13	4	100	(165)
--30 - 49	63	20	7	8	2	100	(313)
--50+	73	15	4	3	5	100	(310)
<u>Region</u>							
--North	59	18	9	8	6	100	(388)
--Central	66	23	4	5	2	100	(210)
--South	71	15	4	8	2	100	(202)

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1989	59	17	11	9	4	100	(800)
November, 1984	\ /	87	\ /	9	4	100	(500)

"Do you think the Jersey shore has been going downhill, getting better, or hasn't it really changed much over the years?" [Q.33]

	<u>Going Downhill</u>	<u>Getting Better</u>	<u>Not Changed</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
April, 1992	46%	24%	24%	6%	100%	(800)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
June, 1989	74	8	13	5	100	(800)
May, 1988	69	9	10	12	100	(800)
November, 1984	40	23	26	11	100	(500)

"From what you may have read or heard, how serious is ocean pollution along the Jersey shore--would you say it is very serious, somewhat serious, or not too serious?" [Q.34]

	<u>Very Serious</u>	<u>Somewhat Serious</u>	<u>Not Too Serious</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
April, 1992	58%	31%	10%	1%	100%	(800)
<u>Age</u>						
--18 - 29	61	31	8	--	100	(165)
--30 - 49	60	33	7	--	100	(313)
--50+	53	31	15	2	101	(310)

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1989	73	20	6	1	100	(800)
May, 1988	73	19	4	4	100	(800)

"Do you think there will be more pollution problems at the Jersey shore this summer than there were last summer, fewer problems, or about the same amount as last summer?" [Q.35]

	<u>More</u>	<u>Fewer</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
April, 1992	9%	30%	54%	--	7	100%	(800)

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1989	16	43	38	--	3	100	(800)
May, 1988	23	18	45	2%	12	100	(800)

"Last summer did you visit the New Jersey shore or not?" [Q.36]

	<u>Yes, Visited</u>	<u>No, Did Not Visit</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
April, 1992	74%	26%	--	100%	(800)
<u>Region</u>					
--North	68	31	1%	100	(388)
--Central	78	22	--	100	(210)
--South	81	19	--	100	(202)

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1989	61	39	--	100	(800)
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"Do you think state government should be spending more, less, or about the same as it is now to protect and improve the Jersey shore?" [Q.37]

	<u>More</u>	<u>Less</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
April, 1992	59%	3%	33%	5%	100%	(800)

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1989	74	3	18	5	100	(800)
May, 1988	67	2	18	14	101	(800)

"Would you be willing to see a slight increase in your state taxes to help pay for this, or not?" [Q.38]

	<u>Yes, Willing</u>	<u>No, Not Willing</u>	<u>Depends/ Don't Know</u>	<u>Don't Spend More*</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
April, 1992	38%	19%	1%	41%	99%	(800)

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1989	42	29	2	26	99	(800)
May, 1988	42	20	4	33	99	(800)

"Have you read or heard anything about the damage caused to New Jersey beaches from storms that occurred last fall? (IF YES: How much have you read or heard--a lot, some, or a little?)" [Q.39]

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
April, 1992	41%	32%	13%	13%	1%	100%	(800)

Region

--North	34	35	14	17	1	101	(388)
--Central	42	29	13	15	1	100	(210)
--South	56	28	12	3	--	99	(202)

"These storms caused approximately 100 million dollars in damages to seawalls, jetties, and sand erosion. Who do you think should be most responsible for paying to repair this damage--the federal government, state government, the local shore communities, or people who use the beach?" [Q.40]

	<u>Federal Government</u>	<u>State Government</u>	<u>Local Shore Communities</u>	<u>User Fees</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
April, 1992	37%	30%	14%	9%	3%	6%	99%	(200)

* These respondents gave a response other than "more spending" to previous question.