

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, March 6, 1993. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

NEW JERSEYANS REPORT DIFFICULT ECONOMIC TIMES; SOME SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT ARE SEEN

A majority of New Jersey residents continue to express concerns over economic conditions in the state, with 72 percent describing New Jersey in bad economic times. This is, however, an improvement over one year ago when 84 percent felt the state was experiencing bad times economically.

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll, conducted by telephone between February 16 and February 24, 1993 with 801 New Jersey residents, indicates that the sluggish economy continues to affect many New Jerseyans. Fifty-five percent report that they have been having a hard time trying to make ends meet over the past year. Also, one-third indicate that an adult in their household has been out of work and actively looking for a job within the past 12 months.

Despite the rather bleak assessments of economic conditions over the past year, however, many residents are optimistic about what will happen over the next year. Four-in-ten feel that New Jersey's economy will improve compared to 15 percent who think it will get worse; and three-in-ten think their own financial situation will get better, while 18 percent say it will get worse.

The survey also shows that more than seven-in-ten New Jersey residents are satisfied with their current standard of living.

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ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN NEW JERSEY

Twenty-two percent of residents now feel that New Jersey is experiencing good times economically, while fully 72 percent describe the state as in bad times, and the remaining six percent have no opinion.

While those describing the economy as in bad times outnumber those describing it as in good times by a 3 to 1 margin, these evaluations represent a marked improvement from one year ago. A poll taken in January of 1992 showed that 84 percent described the economy as in bad times while only 8 percent described it as in good times, a margin of 10 to 1.

Evaluations of economic conditions in the state have fluctuated a great deal over the past six years. In 1986, 64 percent of residents said New Jersey was experiencing good times economically, dropping to 57 percent in 1989, 36 percent in 1990, 12 percent in 1991, and 8 percent in 1992. The current 22 percent who feel the state is in "good times," therefore, represents the first upswing in residents' evaluations of the state economy since 1986.

Ken Dautrich, Associate Poll Director commented, "The current survey shows that the six year trend in declining evaluations of the state's economy has bottomed out and now appears to be on the upswing. This is an indication that New Jerseyans' confidence in the economy is on the rise."

About three-in-ten residents in both the 18-29 (30%) and 65 or older (27%) age groups feel the New Jersey economy is experiencing good times compared to less than two-in-ten in the 30-49 (18%) and 50-64 (17%) age groups.

THE PERSONAL FINANCIAL SITUATION

While nearly six-in-ten (58%) residents claim that their own family's financial situation has stayed the same over the past year, more say it has gotten worse (28%) rather than better (13%).

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Those in the over \$50,000 annual household income category are divided as to whether their own financial situation has improved (20%) or deteriorated (20%), while about one-tenth of those with annual family incomes of under \$50,000 say their financial situation is better and about one-third say it is worse.

The current survey also shows that more than half of New Jersey residents agree strongly (34%) or mildly (21%) that they have had a hard time trying to make ends meet over the past year,

while 42 percent have not had this difficulty. Those most likely to report having a hard time making ends meet are residents with family incomes under \$20,000 per year (70%) and non-white residents (68%).

Despite these rather pessimistic evaluations of their personal financial situation, more than seven-in-ten residents report being either very satisfied (19%) or somewhat satisfied (53%) with their current standard of living.

OPTIMISM ABOUT ECONOMIC CHANGE

More residents are upbeat rather than pessimistic about economic prospects for the state in the next year. About four-in-ten (39%) expect the state economy to get better compared to 15 percent who say it will get worse. Forty-three percent do not expect economic conditions to change in the next year. New Jerseyans expressed about the same level of optimism in future economic conditions in the state in the poll conducted last year at this time.

Those who give President Clinton a positive job performance rating, and those who give Governor Florio positive grades, are much more likely to be optimistic about New Jersey's economic future. Fifty-one percent of those rating Clinton positively feel that economic conditions in the state will improve over the next year, compared to 26 percent of those who rate the President's performance negatively. Fifty-seven percent of those giving Florio a positive rating think conditions will improve, compared to 28 percent of those who give him a negative rating.

The segments of the population most likely to feel that economic conditions in New Jersey will improve over the next year are senior citizens (55%), those with family incomes of under \$20,000 annually (45%), and men (45%).

While about half (48%) of New Jerseyans feel that their personal financial situation will be about the same a year from now as it is today, those feeling it will improve outnumber those thinking it will get worse by a margin of 31 percent to 18 percent. The poll conducted a year ago showed that fewer residents thought their personal economic situation would get worse (11%), while about the same number thought it would improve (32%).

Residents giving higher job performance ratings to President Clinton and Governor Florio are more upbeat about their family's financial prospects over the next year. Forty-two percent of those giving Clinton positive marks feel their own financial situation will improve, compared to 22 percent

of those giving Clinton negative grades. Similarly, 41 percent rating Florio positively feel their own financial situation will improve, while 25 percent who give the Governor a negative rating anticipate being economically better off a year from now.

Dautrich commented, "Those more supportive of Clinton and Florio are more optimistic about the state's economic future and their own financial prospects. These may be people who are likely to feel that Clinton's proposed economic plan and Florio's economic policies in New Jersey will, in the long-term, be beneficial."

UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS

Unemployment has touched more than one in every three New Jersey households in the past year. Fifteen percent of residents say that an adult in their household was out of work and found a job in the past year, and another 19 percent say that an unemployed adult actively seeking work has not found a job.

More minority residents (35%) than non-minorities (14%) report that an adult in their household is out of work and has not been able to find a job.

Among state residents who are currently employed, four-in-ten say they are either very (22%) or somewhat (18%) concerned that they might become unemployed within the next year. This level of concern is about the same as in January of 1992 when 24 percent were very concerned and 19 percent were somewhat concerned about losing their job.

BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP42-2 (EP92-2), SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 1993

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between February 16 and February 24, 1993, when a random sample of 801 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.

"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.10]

	<u>Good Times</u>	<u>Bad Times</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1993	22%	72%	6%	100%	(801)
<i>Age</i>					
--18 - 29	30	67	3	100	(139)
--30 - 49	18	78	4	100	(342)
--50 - 64	17	77	6	100	(157)
--65 and older	27	62	11	100	(148)
<i>Family Income</i>					
--Under \$20,000	22	73	5	100	(141)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	21	77	2	100	(93)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	24	72	3	99	(226)
--\$50,001 and over	17	77	6	100	(111)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
January, 1992	8	84	7	99	(800)
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.11]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1993	39%	15%	43%	3%	100%	(801)
<i>Rating of President Clinton</i>						
--Positive	51	8	39	2	100	(350)
--Negative	26	23	47	4	100	(355)
<i>Rating of Governor Florio</i>						
--Positive	57	8	34	2	101	(293)
--Negative	28	19	49	4	100	(484)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	33	14	48	5	100	(139)
--30 - 49	32	18	46	3	99	(342)
--50 - 64	45	11	42	3	101	(157)
--65 and older	55	13	30	2	100	(148)
<i>Family Income</i>						
--Under \$20,000	45	15	37	3	100	(141)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	31	16	48	5	100	(93)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	37	12	46	5	100	(226)
--\$50,001 and over	36	15	48	1	100	(111)
<i>Gender</i>						
--Male	45	15	37	3	100	(401)
--Female	32	15	49	4	100	(400)

PAST SURVEYS

January, 1992	40	14	41	5	100	(800)
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.12]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1993	13%	28%	58%	1%	100%	(801)
<i>Family Income</i>						
--Under \$20,000	11	34	54	1	100	(141)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	11	36	53	--	100	(93)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	10	34	55	1	100	(226)
--\$50,001 and over	20	20	60	--	100	(111)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
January, 1992	13	33	54	--	100	(800)
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.13]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1993	31%	18%	48%	3%	100%	(801)
<u>Rating of President Clinton</u>						
--Positive	42	10	44	4	100	(350)
--Negative	22	27	50	2	101	(355)
<u>Rating of Governor Florio</u>						
--Positive	41	10	44	5	100	(293)
--Negative	25	22	51	2	100	(484)
<u>Age</u>						
--18 - 29	38	12	48	2	100	(139)
--30 - 49	34	18	46	2	100	(342)
--50 - 64	28	22	46	3	99	(157)
--65 and older	20	19	56	5	100	(148)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	28	19	50	3	100	(640)
--Non-white	42	11	42	5	100	(156)

PAST SURVEYS

January, 1992	32	11	52	5	100	(800)
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.14]

	<u>Very Satisfied</u>	<u>Somewhat Satisfied</u>	<u>Somewhat Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Very Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1993	19%	53%	20%	7%	1%	100%	(801)
<u>Race</u>							
--White	21	54	19	5	1	100	(640)
--Non-white	13	48	25	14	1	101	(156)
<u>Family Income</u>							
--Under \$20,000	11	47	24	16	1	100	(141)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	12	57	26	5	--	100	(93)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	15	58	20	6	--	99	(226)
--\$50,001 and over	21	57	18	4	--	100	(111)

PAST SURVEYS

January, 1992	21	50	19	9	--	99	(800)
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"In the last 12 months, has any adult in your household been out of work and actively looking for a job? Did that person find a job or not?" [Q.15A/Q.15B]

	<u>Unemployed and Found Job</u>	<u>Unemployed - Not Find Job</u>	<u>No One Unemployed</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1993	15%	19%	66%	100%	(801)
<i>Age</i>					
--18 - 29	19	24	57	100	(139)
--30 - 49	14	21	65	100	(342)
--50 - 64	20	20	61	101	(157)
--65 and older	8	8	84	100	(148)
<i>Race</i>					
--White	16	14	70	100	(640)
--Non-white	12	35	53	100	(156)
<i>Family Income</i>					
--Under \$20,000	15	27	58	100	(141)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	13	16	71	100	(93)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	18	20	62	100	(226)
--\$50,000 and over	21	11	68	100	(111)

PAST SURVEYS

January, 1992	15	21	64	100	(800)
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"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." [Q.16]

	<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>
February, 1993	34%	21%	30%	12%	3%	100%	(801)
<i>Income</i>							
--Under \$20,000	51	19	24	5	1	100	(141)
--\$20,001 - \$30,000	43	15	34	8	--	100	(93)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	34	25	29	9	2	99	(226)
--\$50,000 and over	25	30	30	15	1	101	(111)

Race

--White	30	21	31	14	4	100	(640)
--Non-white	47	21	25	7	--	100	(156)

PAST SURVEYS

January, 1992	36	21	25	17	2	101	(800)
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ASKED OF THOSE WHO ARE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED:

"How concerned are you that you might become unemployed within the next year?" [Q.XD7a]

	<u>Very Concerned</u>	<u>Somewhat Concerned</u>	<u>Not Too Concerned</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1993	22%	18%	61%	--	101%	(511)
<i>Race</i>						
--White	17	17	66	--	100	(388)
--Non-white	35	18	46	--	99	(120)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
January, 1992	24	19	56	--	99	(520)