

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

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE IN NEW JERSEY POSTS MODEST GAINS

While there are signs that consumer confidence in New Jersey is on the rise, the rate of improvement from a year ago may at best be described as modest, according to the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll's* annual survey of consumer confidence. Twenty-eight percent of residents currently say that economically the state is in good times, a 6-point improvement from one year ago, and two-thirds say economically the state is in bad times. In 1989, fully 57 percent described the state's economy as in good times.

Optimism about future economic conditions also continued to improve slightly with 46 percent saying that New Jersey's economy will be in better condition one year from now, which represents a 7 point increase from last year. Thirty-five percent think their own personal financial situation will be better one year from now, up 4 points from last year.

The poll, conducted with 801 New Jersey residents by telephone between February 10 and 16, 1994, also finds that nearly three-quarters of residents report being satisfied with their current standard of living; however, nearly 6-in-10 say that over the past year they have had a hard time trying to make ends meet.

ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 8:00 A.M. on Monday, March 14, 1994, from (908)445-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

Also, the survey finds that one-third of New Jerseyans report that an adult in their household has been out of work and actively seeking a job in the past year, which represents no change from a survey conducted one year ago.

NEW JERSEY'S ECONOMIC SITUATION

Twenty-eight percent of New Jerseyans say the state is currently in good times economically, while 66 percent say it is in bad times. This represents a 6-point improvement from last year when 22 percent felt the state was in good times and a 20-point improvement from two years ago when 8 percent felt it was experiencing good economic times. Positive evaluations of New Jersey's economy lag well behind the 57 percent who said the state was in good times in 1989.

Ken Dautrich, Associate Director of the Poll, commented, "Assessments of New Jersey's economic status fell hard between late 1989 and early 1992. Over the past two years we have seen some growth in consumer confidence — but the rate of growth over the past two years has been much slower than the rate of decline from the previous two years." He continued, "The modest upswing in confidence over the past year depicts the slow pace of the economic recovery."

The survey shows that consumer optimism about future economic conditions in New Jersey improved over the past year. Forty-six percent feel things will get better in the state over the next year, 38 percent think economic conditions will stay the same, and 11 percent predict things will get worse. At the beginning of 1992 and 1993, about 4-in-10 said economic conditions would get better, and in 1991 only about 3-in-10 felt that way.

In the current survey, the demographic groups most likely to think the state's economy will improve are men (53%) and whites (49%).

Overall, about half (52%) of New Jerseyans feel that their state is in about the same economic situation as other states, while 24 percent say New Jersey is better off than other states and 21 percent feel it is worse off. Residents of North (27%) and Central Jersey (24%) are more likely to feel the state is relatively better off than are South Jerseyans (18%).

ASSESSMENTS OF THE PERSONAL FINANCIAL SITUATION

Fifty-five percent of state residents say their own financial situation has stayed the same over the past year, 27 percent say it has gotten worse, and 17 percent report that it has gotten better. This

represents a modest improvement from last year when 58 percent said their financial situation stayed the same, 28 percent said it deteriorated, and 13 percent said it improved.

The demographic groups more likely to report an improvement in their own financial situation over the past year are those with family incomes over \$50,000 (23%), and those between the age of 18 to 29 (25%). Only 7 percent of those making under \$20,000 per year and 8 percent of those older than 64 say their personal financial situation improved in the past year.

Nearly 6-in-10 residents either strongly (33%) or mildly (24%) agree that they have been having a hard time trying to make ends meet over the past year. These figures remain virtually unchanged from surveys conducted in 1992 and 1993. More than three-quarters (77%) of those with family incomes under \$20,000 report having had a hard time trying to make ends meet.

In assessing what their personal financial situation might be like one year from now, 51 percent say it will be about the same, 35 percent predict it will get better, and 11 percent feel their own economic situation will get worse. This represents an improvement from last year's survey when 31 percent felt their financial situation would improve and 18 percent thought it would deteriorate.

In the current survey, younger residents are more likely to feel their personal economic situation will be better one year from now. Fifty-six percent of the 18 to 29 group and 38 percent of the 30 to 49 group say they will be better off one year from now, compared to 22 percent of those 50 to 64 and 14 percent of residents over 64 years of age.

UNEMPLOYMENT

More than one-third (35%) of state residents report that an adult in their household was out of work and actively seeking a job in the past year. This household unemployment indicator has remained virtually unchanged from surveys taken in early 1992 (36%) and 1993 (34%).

Fifteen percent of residents say that the unemployed adult job-seeker in their household found a job, while 20 percent say this person remains unemployed. These figures also remain virtually unchanged from the 1992 and 1993 surveys.

Non-white residents are more likely than white residents to report living in a household with an unemployed adult who looked for work in the past year, by a wide margin of 48 percent to 29 percent.

Dautrich commented, "The lack of movement in these indicators for household unemployment and the ability to find a job supports the idea that what we seem to be experiencing is a jobless economic recovery."

SATISFACTION WITH STANDARD OF LIVING

Despite the rather gloomy assessments of the state's economic situation and the ability of families to make ends meet, nearly three-quarters of residents say they are either very (23%) or somewhat (49%) satisfied with their current standard of living. The percentage saying they are satisfied with their standard of living was about the same in 1992 (71%) and 1993 (72%).

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BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP47-4 (EP97-4), SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 1994

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between February 10 and February 16, 1994, 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.13]

	<u>Good Times</u>	<u>Bad Times</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	28%	66%	5%	99%	(801)
<i>Age</i>					
--18 - 29	35	64	1	100	(154)
--30 - 49	25	72	4	101	(341)
--50 - 64	24	69	7	100	(151)
--65 or over	33	55	12	100	(140)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
February, 1993	22	72	6	100	(801)
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)

"And compared to other states, do you think economic conditions in New Jersey are better, worse, or about the same?" [Q.14]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	24%	21%	52%	4%	101%	(801)
<i>Region of State</i>						
--North	27	16	53	4	100	(379)
--Central	24	23	50	3	100	(211)
--South	18	26	51	4	99	(211)
<i>Gender</i>						
--Male	30	20	47	3	100	(401)
--Female	18	21	57	5	101	(400)

"During the next year, do you think economic conditions in New Jersey will get better, get worse, or stay about the same?" [Q.15]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	46%	11%	38%	5%	100%	(801)
<i>Race</i>						
--White	49	10	36	5	100	(620)
--Non-white	38	13	43	5	99	(162)
<i>Gender</i>						
--Male	53	8	36	2	99	(401)
--Female	39	13	40	7	99	(400)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
February, 1993	39	15	43	3	100	(801)
January, 1992	40	14	41	5	100	(801)
February, 1991	31	23	42	4	100	(800)

"Thinking of your family's financial situation over the last year, have things gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same?" [Q.16]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	17%	27%	55%	1%	100%	(801)
<i>Family Income</i>						
--Under \$20,000	7	36	54	3	100	(115)
--\$20,001 - \$30,000	16	26	58	--	100	(91)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	17	24	59	--	100	(232)
--Over \$50,000	23	24	53	--	100	(291)
<i>Race</i>						
--White	15	27	57	1	100	(620)
--Non-white	25	25	50	--	100	(162)
<i>Gender</i>						
--Male	23	25	51	2	101	(401)
--Female	12	28	59	1	100	(400)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	25	28	48	--	101	(154)
--30 - 49	20	29	50	--	99	(341)
--50 - 64	10	28	62	--	100	(151)
--65+	8	19	68	5	100	(140)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
February, 1993	13	28	58	1	100	(801)
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)

"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.17]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	35%	11%	51%	3%	100%	(801)
<i>Race</i>						
--White	33	12	53	3	101	(620)
--Non-white	43	7	46	3	99	(162)
<i>Sex</i>						
--Men	42	13	43	3	101	(401)
--Women	29	10	58	3	100	(400)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	56	5	38	1	100	(154)
--30 - 49	38	11	47	4	100	(341)
--50 - 64	22	17	58	3	100	(151)
--65 and over	14	12	70	4	100	(140)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
February, 1993	31	18	48	3	100	(801)
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)

"Overall, how satisfied are you with your current standard of living — very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?" [Q.18]

	<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, 1994	23%	49%	19%	8%	--	99%	(801)
<i>Family Income</i>							
--Under \$20,000	17	50	18	15	--	100	(115)
--\$20,001 - \$30,000	25	33	33	9	--	100	(91)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	20	53	21	5	--	99	(232)
--Over \$50,000	31	51	14	3	--	99	(291)
<i>Race</i>							
--White	26	51	17	5	--	99	(620)
--Non-white	15	43	26	16	--	100	(162)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
February, 1993	19	53	20	7	1%	100	(801)
January, 1992	21	50	19	9	--	99	(800)

"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? Do you (agree/disagree) strongly or mildly?" [Q.19]

	<u>Agree Strongly</u>	<u>Agree Mildly</u>	<u>Disagree Mildly</u>	<u>Disagree Strongly</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	33%	24%	25%	15%	2%	99%	(801)
<i>Family Income</i>							
--Under \$20,000	57	20	16	3	4	100	(115)
--\$20,001 - \$30,000	37	26	24	13	--	100	(91)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	29	26	29	14	2	100	(232)
--Over \$50,000	22	20	29	26	2	99	(291)
<i>Race</i>							
--White	30	23	28	17	2	100	(620)
--Non-white	45	27	18	11	--	101	(162)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
February, 1993	34	21	30	12	3	100	(801)
January, 1992	36	21	25	17	2	101	(800)

"In the past 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.20]

	<u>Unemployed— Found Job</u>	<u>Unemployed— Not Found Job</u>	<u>No One Unemployed</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	15%	20%	66%	101%	(801)
<i>Family Income</i>					
--Under \$20,000	19	23	57	99	(115)
--\$20,001 - \$30,000	14	29	57	100	(91)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	13	20	67	100	(232)
--Over \$50,000	11	14	74	99	(291)
<i>Race</i>					
--White	13	16	72	101	(620)
--Non-white	18	30	52	100	(162)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
February, 1993	15	19	66	100	(801)
January, 1992	15	21	64	100	(800)