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## One-third of N.J. residents think living in state will get better over next decade

By [The Star-Ledger Continuous News Desk](#)  
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Aristide Economopoulos/The Star-Ledger

Gov.-elect Chris Christie speaks with the media Monday after members of his transition team met with state budget officials to discuss the financial situation of New Jersey.

Only a little more than a third of New Jerseyans think living in the state will get better over the next decade, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton poll out today.

While 35 percent believed things would improve in the next 10 years, the poll found 41 percent believe conditions will stay the same and 19 percent think they will get worse.

Following Gov.-elect Chris Christie's Nov. 3 victory, 43 percent of Republicans are more optimistic about the state's future while 32 percent of Democrats and 34 percent of independents have positive outlooks. In 1999, New Jerseyans had similar feelings about the next

10 years when 38 percent thought things would be better and 27 percent thought they would worsen.

Pollsters asked 903 adults to evaluate the state's economic future and their their own economic, social and quality-of-life concerns for the next 10 years. A 1999 Rutgers-Eagleton poll posed similar questions. They found state residents worry more about economic issues than they 10 years ago, but that they are not more pessimistic overall.

The poll was conducted Nov. 6-10 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.3 percentage points for the full sample and plus or minus 4.6 percentage points for subsamples of about 450 respondents.

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"New Jerseyans are simply unsure about how good a place to live the state will be in 10 years," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. "Ten years ago, about 60 percent thought the state would either stay the same or get worse as a place to live. There is clearly a long-term lack of positive expectations about the future of New Jersey."

**Do you think living in New Jersey will improve over the next 10 years?**

- Yes
- No
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#### THE NEXT DECADE

New Jerseyans' outlook about living in the state the next 10 years is mixed: only 35 percent think conditions will get better, 41 percent say they will stay the same, and 19 percent think they will get worse. Following Gov.-elect Chris Christie's victory, 43 percent of Republicans are more optimistic about the state's future; 32 percent of Democrats and 34 percent of independents have positive outlooks. In 1999, New Jerseyans had similar feelings about the coming decade when 38 percent thought things would be better, while 27 percent thought they would worsen.

"New Jerseyans are simply unsure about how good a place to live the state will be in 10 years," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. "Ten years ago, about 60 percent thought the state would either stay the same or get worse as a place to live. There is clearly a long-term lack of positive expectations about the

future of New Jersey.”

When asked about the state’s economic strength, almost two-thirds of respondents said the economy will strengthen, but the that optimism does not include affordable living. Almost half believe the state will be less affordable in a decade, and 35 percent think it will be more affordable. Fifty-one percent of residents believe the state will be a worse place to retire, and only 19 percent think it will be better.

#### HEALTH AND WEALTH

Other economic concerns are health care and the wealth gap. Forty-five percent of the state’s residents think health care will be less affordable, and 65 percent think the gap between the rich and poor will grow.

Men feel more optimism about the state’s economic future than women, men by a 69 percent to 56 percent margin. When asked about the future of affordable health care, those earning \$50,000 to \$75,000 a year were the most pessimistic, with only 29 percent believing affordability would improve. A decade ago, 68 percent thought economic conditions would improve, while 57 percent anticipated a less affordable future, according to the poll. Pessimism about retiring in the state did not change in the 10-year period. “As bad as the economy is, most people see it having nowhere to go but up,” Redlawsk said. “At the same time, New Jerseyans are deeply pessimistic about affordability and New Jersey as a place to retire, and have been for years. There are few if any bright spots right now.”

#### RACE RELATIONS

The poll also delved into race relations, finding the state’s residents anticipate improvement, with 58 percent optimistic, compared with 52 percent in 1999, and only 19 percent pessimistic. Democrats (61 percent) and independents (58 percent) are more optimistic than Republicans (53 percent), the poll found, while Latinos (63 percent) are more hopeful than whites (61 percent) and blacks (46 percent).

#### NEW JERSEY CITIES

Forty percent of state residents say conditions in the cities will get worse, while 39 percent think they will improve. By comparison, those figures were 39 percent and 44 percent in 1999. Latinos are (59 percent) are the most positive, followed by blacks (44 percent) and whites (32 percent).

#### PERSONALLY PESSIMISTIC

State residents are more pessimistic about their own situations now than they were in 1999.

About half think their jobs and incomes will improve, compared with 58 percent and 65 percent, respectively, 10 years ago. Eighteen percent — more than three times as many as their predecessors — think their incomes will worsen.

#### HEALTH CARE

Thirty-four percent of state residents expect their access to quality health care to improve; 36 percent anticipate no change; and 25 percent think availability and quality will be worse. Nearly two-thirds of respondents in the 18- 34-year-old age group worry “a lot” about availability, compared with just over 50 percent of people who are older.

Overall, concerns about health care are up over the previous poll, when 43 percent of respondents worried “a lot” about health care. Today that figure is 56 percent today.

## THE FRET FACTOR

There is concern in New Jersey, with 46 percent worrying "a lot" about having enough money to live comfortably, 55 percent worrying about health care and 50 percent worryin sufficient retirement funds. Women are more negative about having enough money to live comfortably, retire and access quality health care.ew Jerseyans were less worried about their future in 1999. A decade ago, 27 percent worried "a lot" about having enough money to live comfortably and 33 percent worried about having sufficient retirement funds.

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