

PUMPING THE TAXPAYERS FOR MORE MONEY: NEW JERSEYANS TELL LEGISLATORS TO TAKE A HIKE

With gas prices below \$2 a gallon in some parts of the state, policymakers are considering raising the gas tax. Legislators say the additional revenue would go to fund much-needed bridge and road repairs in the state. However, the public isn't buying it. The most recent statewide survey from Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind finds respondents oppose the idea of additional taxes by a more than two-to-one margin, with many (31%) saying their opposition is driven by skepticism that the funds would be used as intended, and the belief that residents are already overburdened by taxes (45%).

Currently, 68 percent say they oppose raising the gas tax with 28 percent in favor. Opposition is universal, with partisanship no match for the widespread revulsion residents feel toward paying more taxes.

Opposition is down a bit from close to a year ago. In [March 2014](#), 72 percent of respondents said that despite the need for road and bridge projects, taxes should not be raised on gasoline to pay for road improvements. PublicMind asked a similar question about a gas tax increase in both 2010 and 2006. In [2010](#), 61 percent of registered voters opposed a tax hike and in 2006 opposition came in at 74 percent.

"New Jersey residents see the need for road repairs, but they want policymakers to find the revenue somewhere else, rather than their overtaxed wallets," said Krista Jenkins, professor of political science and director of PublicMind.

Even those who don't spend much time in their car each day, and who would feel fewer effects of an increase, reject paying more for road and bridge repairs. Over half of these people (63%) say no to more taxes. Although more time in the car contributes to more opposition, majorities of all groups are opposed to additional taxes (73% of those who drive 10-30 miles per day and 67% of those who drive 31 or more miles per day).

Proponents of a gas tax increase have pointed out that New Jersey enjoys a rate that's below the national average. Therefore, a modest increase would still allow residents to enjoy cheaper gas while contributing to the greater good in road and bridge construction projects.

About four-in-ten can correctly identify the New Jersey rate as below the national average (44%), with an equal number who are reportedly unsure (44%). The remainder believe incorrectly that New Jersey motorists pay more (12%).

Knowing that New Jerseyans don't pay as much as their neighbors in other states doesn't, however, predispose someone to support a tax hike. People who know N.J. residents have it good are less likely to oppose the gas tax as compared with those who are unsure or who believe Garden Staters already pay more than others. However, a clear majority in all categories say no to more taxes at the pump.

"Infrastructure improvements are likely to become a pressing item on the state's legislative agenda. Policymakers will have to look elsewhere for the money or risk alienating a majority of New Jersey residents," said Jenkins.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 803 New Jersey residents was conducted by telephone with both landline and cell phones from January 5 through January 11. The margin of error is +/- 3.5 percentage points.

Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>

Radio actualities at 201.692.2846

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Methodology

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from January 5 through January 11 using a randomly selected sample of 803 adults aged 18 and older in New Jersey. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of +/- 3.5 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a landline phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone respondents interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Tables

Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect: New Jersey needs to raise the gasoline tax because all of the current money is committed and without new revenue there cannot be any new road or bridge projects OR Regardless of the need, no new taxes should be imposed on gas for road and bridge improvements.

	PID				Gender		Race		Miles per day			Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	<10	10-30	31+	18-34	35-59	60+
Raise tax	28%	35	23	23	31	25	32	22	31	24	31	20	29	34
No tax increase	68%	62	70	73	67	69	63	76	63	73	67	77	69	60
DK/Ref (vol)	4%	3	6	4	3	5	5	2	6	2	3	3	2	6

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	Knowledge of NJ gas tax rate			
	All	Higher	Lower	Unsure
Raise tax	28%	20	36	23
No tax increase	68%	78	61	72
DK/Ref (vol)	4%	2	3	5

Which of the following reasons best explains why you are opposed to an increased gas tax? I don't believe the extra money will really be used for road improvements; Taxes in the state are already too high; Roads and bridges are fine and don't need improvements; I can't afford the added cost N = 547

	PID				Gender		Race		Miles per day			Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	<10	10-30	31+	18-34	35-59	60+
Doubt where money will go	31%	28	31	35	33	28	36	23	27	29	44	29	31	29
Taxes already too high	45%	45	40	43	45	45	41	50	45	46	41	45	48	39
Roads and bridges ok	2%	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	2	0	4
Can't afford added cost	20%	23	24	16	16	24	18	24	22	22	13	23	18	23
Other (vol)	2%	1	2	2	3	1	2	1	2	2	1	0	2	4
DK/Ref (vol)	1%	0	1	2	2	1	1	1	3	0	1	1	1	2

Exact Question Wording and Order

US1 and US2 withheld for future release

NJ1 and NJ2 released January 13

NJ3 through NJ5 released January 15

NJ6 and NJ7 released January 13

TAX1 Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect: New Jersey needs to raise the gasoline tax because all of the current money is committed and without new revenue there cannot be any new road or bridge projects OR Regardless of the need, no new taxes should be imposed on gas for road and bridge improvements.

- 1 Should raise the tax
- 2 Should NOT raise the tax [ASK TAX2]
- 8 DK/Both

TAX2 Which of the following reasons best explains why you are opposed to an increased gas tax?

- 1 I don't believe the extra money will really be used for road improvements
- 2 Taxes in the state are already too high
- 3 Roads and bridges are fine and don't need improvements
- 4 I can't afford the added cost
- 5 other (vol)
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

TAX3 As far as you're aware, is the current gas tax in New Jersey higher or lower than the national average, or are you unsure?

- 1 Higher
- 2 Lower
- 3 Unsure
- 8 Refused (vol)

D10 On average, how many miles would you say you drive each day?

- 1 Fewer than 10
- 2 11 to 20
- 3 21 to 30
- 4 31-40
- 5 41+

Weighted sample characteristics

		N = 803; MoE = +/- 3.5
Gender	<i>Male</i>	49%
	<i>Female</i>	51%
Age	<i>18-34</i>	25%
	<i>35-59</i>	44%
	<i>60+</i>	29%
Race	<i>Refused</i>	3%
	<i>White</i>	61%
	<i>African American</i>	13%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	15%
	<i>Asian</i>	6%
	<i>Other/Refused</i>	4%
Union household	<i>Self</i>	13%
	<i>Someone else</i>	8%
Party (with leaners)	<i>No</i>	79%
	<i>Dem</i>	45%
	<i>Ind/DK/Refused</i>	28%
	<i>Repub</i>	27%