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### NJ vs. US: WHERE IS LIFE BETTER?

**Fairleigh Dickinson University, June 6, 2018** – How does the Garden State rate against the nation across a host of important “quality of life” indicators? The most recent statewide survey of adults from the Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll finds opinion divided across a host of indicators, with race relations and the state’s public education system sitting pretty, while money and roads are clearly a thorn in the side of many across the state.

Sixty-one percent of adults believe the state’s children benefit from a public education system that’s better than what’s likely to be found across the nation. The same is true for race relations, as 61 percent believe harmony, or at least peaceful co-existence, is the norm in the Garden State even though the same can’t be said for race relations nationally. White and minority respondents responded in much the same way on the question of race relations.

“Property taxes are the perennial bane for homeowners. And yet, there seems to be some appreciation for how the money is spent given the clear consensus that the schools here are better than what you’d likely find nationally,” said Krista Jenkins, professor of political science and director the poll.

<b>Conditions in NJ better than in US</b>		<b>Conditions in NJ worse than in US</b>	
<i>Public education</i>	61%	<i>Cost of living</i>	85%
<i>Race relations</i>	61%	<i>State finances</i>	62%
<i>Labor market</i>	51%	<i>Road infrastructure</i>	61%
<i>Business climate</i>	49%	<i>Environment</i>	42%
<i>Economy</i>	48%	<i>Mass transit</i>	39%
<i>Environment</i>	43%	<i>Economy</i>	39%
<i>Mass transit</i>	40%	<i>Business climate</i>	32%
<i>Road infrastructure</i>	29%	<i>Labor market</i>	30%
<i>State finances</i>	18%	<i>Public education</i>	27%
<i>Cost of living</i>	10%	<i>Race relations</i>	22%

When it comes to areas where the state fares worse relative to the nation as a whole, look no further than money and roads. Opinions are more decisive on the cost of living, state finances, and road infrastructure. Eighty-five percent believe it’s costlier to live in the Garden State than in other places across the country, 62 percent believe the state’s finances are worse off than those of the nation; and 61 percent say the roads across the Garden State are in worse shape when compared with those nationally.

“Jersey wasn’t always a place of higher prices, inferior roads, and a shaky treasury. That’s an outcome we’ve worked hard at over decades,” said Jenkins. “Even Democrats and Republicans alike agree on how expensive it is to live here, and how bad our roads are, something we don’t see very often in public attitudes.”

Opinion is more divided over the remaining indicators. Around half rate the economy (48%), business climate (49%) and the labor market for job seekers (51%) better than the nation’s, with fewer numbers rating them as worse (39% economy; 32% business climate; 30% labor market for job seekers).

As for the environment and mass transit, it's an (almost) tie. Forty-three percent say the environment here is better than what's likely to be experienced outside of New Jersey, but 42 percent say things are likely to be worse here than there. Forty percent believe mass transit is better in the Garden State as compared with 39 percent who evaluate it worse relative to the nation.

With some exceptions, groups evaluate conditions in New Jersey relative to the nation in much the same way. As one would expect, partisanship often colors perceptions of how things are going based on who is in charge in Trenton, and Democrats are reliably more positive on, for example, the economy, the state's finances, the business climate, and mass transit.

The same poll finds Governor Murphy right side up with his constituents, with significantly more who approve of his job performance so far as disapprove. Right now, 41 percent say he's doing a good job and 28 percent disapprove. This is a considerable improvement over his numbers in January shortly after his inauguration (31% approve; 60% disapprove). The same is true for right direction/wrong track numbers, as 46 percent today evaluate the state positively as compared with 40 percent who believe it's moving in the wrong direction. In January, right direction/wrong track numbers were identical to those for Governor Murphy (31% versus 60%).

"Divided opinion over the state's health reflects what we found across many of the quality of life indicators," said Jenkins.

Across a number of quality of life indicators as well as in regard to Governor Murphy's job performance, minorities in the Garden State perceive life as better as do white respondents. Around one-in-three non-whites say the state's finances are better than those of the nation's (29%), while significantly fewer (11%) of whites say the same. Around a ten percentage point difference also separates the groups on questions concerning mass transit (44 versus 34%) and the environment (51 versus 40%). And, when it comes to Governor Murphy, half of minority respondents (50%) approve of his job performance, as compared with barely a third of white respondents (37%).

"The takeaway from all of these numbers is a sense that the state is generally doing ok, at least in comparison to perceptions of the health of the nation. Call Jeff Bezos at Amazon. New Jersey has lots to sell. Better schools, better race relations, a better labor market and a better business climate," said Jenkins.

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

*For more information, please call 201.692.7032*

**Methodology** - The Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone May 16-May 21, 2018 using a random sample of adults in New Jersey aged 18 and older (N = 926). Results have a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.5 percentage points, including the design effect.

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.

Interviews are conducted by Key Research Solutions of Provo Utah, 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.

The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, sex, and race. 372 interviews were conducted on landlines and 554 were conducted on cellular telephones.

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

*The Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll received an "A" rating from statistician Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight blog. The ratings measure both accuracy and bias for all major polling services in the United States, providing an update to similar research the poll watchers conducted in 2014. The Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll's "A" rating puts it in the top 14 of the more than 380 polling institutes reviewed and graded from A+ through F. The Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll was found to have a 94 percent accuracy rate for predicting election results, and is one of only two A-rated polling institutes with zero bias to their rankings.*

## Tables

Compared to the rest of the country, would you say that New Jersey's \_\_\_\_\_ is better or worse than the rest of the country?

<i>Economy</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	<b>48%</b>	57	44	31	48	42	45	45	43	47	49	43	43
Worse	<b>39%</b>	30	43	54	37	45	41	41	44	39	44	38	41
DK (vol)	<b>12%</b>	13	11	13	14	11	13	12	13	13	7	17	14
Ref. (vol)	<b>1%</b>	0	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	0	2	2

<i>State finances</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	<b>18%</b>	27	15	5	21	15	11	29	23	14	24	18	13
Worse	<b>62%</b>	48	68	78	63	57	67	49	57	62	45	63	70
DK (vol)	<b>19%</b>	23	15	14	14	26	19	22	18	22	30	15	16
Ref. (vol)	<b>1%</b>	2	2	3	1	3	3	0	2	2	1	3	1

<i>Mass transit system</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	<b>40%</b>	45	30	31	43	33	34	44	36	40	45	37	32
Worse	<b>39%</b>	36	44	44	37	41	43	33	40	39	38	35	45
DK (vol)	<b>19%</b>	17	22	22	19	22	19	23	22	20	17	23	21
Ref. (vol)	<b>2%</b>	2	4	3	1	4	4	0	3	2	0	4	2

<i>Road infrastructure</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	<b>29%</b>	30	28	28	30	28	27	34	29	28	36	32	20
Worse	<b>61%</b>	58	63	64	61	60	64	53	62	60	56	56	69
DK (vol)	<b>10%</b>	12	8	7	9	12	9	13	9	11	8	12	11
Ref. (vol)	<b>0%</b>	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1

<i>Business climate</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	<b>49%</b>	56	46	42	50	49	49	50	48	50	57	50	42
Worse	<b>32%</b>	23	34	46	35	29	33	30	33	31	26	32	37
DK (vol)	<b>19%</b>	21	18	12	16	21	18	20	18	19	18	17	20
Ref. (vol)	<b>1%</b>	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1

<i>Race relations</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	<b>61%</b>	69	55	53	63	58	62	60	60	62	65	65	54
Worse	<b>22%</b>	15	27	27	20	24	20	26	25	20	21	21	24
DK (vol)	<b>16%</b>	14	13	18	15	16	16	14	15	16	13	14	19
Ref. (vol)	<b>2%</b>	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	3

<i>Cost of living</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	<b>10%</b>	11	9	9	10	10	6	18	13	8	15	8	10
Worse	<b>85%</b>	85	86	87	86	85	90	76	81	88	83	89	84
DK (vol)	<b>4%</b>	5	3	3	4	4	3	6	5	3	3	3	6
Ref. (vol)	<b>1%</b>	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1

<i>Public education system</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	<b>61%</b>	68	58	57	62	61	64	57	54	67	62	66	58
Worse	<b>27%</b>	23	30	30	28	27	23	35	34	22	27	25	29
DK (vol)	<b>10%</b>	8	11	11	9	11	11	8	11	9	10	8	11
Ref. (vol)	<b>2%</b>	1	2	3	1	2	2	0	1	2	1	1	2

<i>Environment</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	<b>43%</b>	44	44	42	46	41	40	51	47	41	47	40	44
Worse	<b>42%</b>	43	39	42	41	43	44	38	41	43	39	46	41
DK (vol)	<b>14%</b>	13	15	14	13	14	15	11	12	15	13	14	13
Ref. (vol)	<b>1%</b>	1	2	1	1	2	2	0	1	2	1	1	2

<i>The labor market for job seekers</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	<b>51%</b>	56	46	47	52	50	52	49	50	52	53	54	46
Worse	<b>30%</b>	26	35	33	29	31	28	35	31	30	31	27	33
DK (vol)	<b>18%</b>	18	19	20	18	18	19	15	18	18	16	18	20
Ref. (vol)	<b>1%</b>	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1

<i>And turning to New Jersey, do you approve or disapprove [rotate] of the job Phil Murphy is doing as governor?</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Approve	<b>41%</b>	56	31	21	39	42	37	50	40	41	43	46	35
Disapprove	<b>28%</b>	8	36	58	30	25	35	13	30	26	13	27	39
DK (vol)	<b>28%</b>	33	29	18	28	28	25	33	27	28	40	23	23
Ref. (vol)	<b>4%</b>	4	4	3	3	5	4	4	3	5	4	5	3

<i>In your opinion, do you think things in New Jersey are moving in the right direction or are they on the wrong track [rotate]?</i>													
	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-54	55+
Right direction	<b>46%</b>	65	35	24	45	48	40	60	43	49	59	49	36
Wrong track	<b>40%</b>	21	51	68	44	37	46	28	45	37	27	39	51
DK (vol)	<b>13%</b>	14	13	7	10	14	12	11	12	12	14	11	12
Ref. (vol)	<b>1%</b>	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2

**Question wording and order**

*US1 and US2 withheld*

*NJ1. And turning to New Jersey, do you approve or disapprove [rotate] of the job Phil Murphy is doing as governor?*

- 1 Approve
- 2 Disapprove
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

	1/18	5/18
Approve	31	41
Disapprove	60	28

*NJ2. In your opinion, do you think things in New Jersey are moving in the right direction or are they on the wrong track [rotate]?*

- 1 Right direction
- 2 Wrong track
- 8 DK
- 9 Refused (vol)

	1/18	5/18
Right direction	31	46
Wrong track	60	40

*NJ3 Compared to the rest of the country, would you say that New Jersey's..... is better or worse than the rest of the country? [Rotate better/worse; Randomize NJ3 series]*

- NJ3A Economy
- NJ3B State finances
- NJ3C Mass transit system
- NJ3D Road infrastructure
- NJ3E Business climate
- NJ3F Race relations
- NJ3G Cost of living
- NJ3H Public education system
- NJ3I Environment
- NJ3J The labor market for job seekers

- 1 Better
- 2 Worse
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

### Weighted sample characteristics

Male	49%
Female	51%
Democrat (with leaners)	48%
Republican (with leaners)	31%
Independent	16%
18-34	28%
35-59	35%
60+	35%
White	64%
African-American	11%
Latino	15%
Asian	7%
Other/refused	4%