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'Jersey Shore' Helps Perceptions of Garden State

Despite concerns expressed by members of the New Jersey state Legislature, the MTV show "Jersey Shore" does not appear to hurt Americans' perceptions of the Garden State. According to the most recent national poll by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind™, respondents who have seen the show actually have a more positive view of New Jersey than those who haven't seen it.

Three of five (59%) of respondents who have seen the show have a favorable view of New Jersey, compared to just 44% of those who have not seen the show. One in five people who have seen the show (20%) has an unfavorable view of New Jersey and about one in five who has not seen the show (18%) has an unfavorable view of the state.

"While we can't be sure that 'Jersey Shore' is making people like New Jersey more, it certainly doesn't seem to be hurting," said Dan Cassino, a professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson University and a survey analyst for PublicMind. "It could be that people who already have a favorable view of New Jersey are simply more likely to watch the show, while those who don't like Jersey aren't going to watch the show anyway."

A clue to what underlies this difference may come from what people say comes to mind when they think of New Jersey. While responses like proximity to New York (8 percent of respondents) or Atlantic City and casinos (7 percent) are equally common among those who have and have not seen the show, people who say that they have seen the show are more likely to mention the shore, the ocean, the boardwalk, or related concepts (13 percent, versus 8 percent of non-viewers).

"New Jersey has been using ad campaigns to build awareness of the shore for years," said Cassino. "Legislators may not be happy with how the state is being portrayed, but the show links New Jersey to its beaches, which is a much better focus than the turnpike."

The survey does not, however, address other concerns about the program, such as the portrayal of ethnic stereotypes, the frequent use of the term "guido," which some Italian-Americans find offensive, or the portrayal of life in New Jersey.

"I don't think anyone would claim that the TV show has anything to do with the real New Jersey," said Cassino. "Still, the image it portrays doesn't seem to be hurting the state as some have feared."

Fairleigh Dickinson University's independent survey research group PublicMind conducted the poll of 1001 adults nationwide by telephone from Jan. 22, 2010, through Feb. 4, 2010. It has a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points.

Methodology, questions, and tables are available on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>
Radio actualities at 201.692.2846 For more information, please call 201.692.7032.

Methodology, Questions, and Tables

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from Jan. 22, 2010, through Feb. 4, 2010, with a randomly selected sample of 1001 permanently resident adults nationwide. The margin of error for a sample of 1001 randomly selected respondents is +/- 3 percentage points. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This random selection process gives every person with a land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected. RDD samples are typically purchased from Survey Sample International. Non-responding residential numbers and residential numbers with automated answering devices are called back up to a limit of six times and interviews are conducted over a length of time calculated to facilitate maximum coverage. All PublicMind interviews are conducted by professionally trained interviewers with a full complement of supervisors using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. The survey sample may be mathematically weighted to match known demographics such as gender, age, and race. 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.

Table 1

Question (open ended): What comes to mind when you think of New Jersey?

		2010		2007		2001	
Rank	Comes to Mind	Rank	Comes to Mind	Rank	Comes to Mind	Rank	Comes to Mind
1	Shore/coast/ocean	1	Next to New York/New York	1	Next to New York/New York	1	Next to New York/New York
2	Corruption/crime/Sopranos/Mafia	1	Shore/coast/ocean	2	Pollution/bad smell/industry	2	Pollution/bad smell/industry
3	Casinos/Atlantic City	3	Casinos/Atlantic City	3	Shore/coast/ocean	3	Shore/coast/ocean
4	Next to New York/New York	4	Farming/Garden State	4	Nice state to live in	4	Nice state to live in
5	Pollution/bad smell/industry	5	Overpopulated/crowded	5	Casinos/Atlantic City	5	Casinos/Atlantic City
6	Farming/vegetable/Garden State	6	Turnpike/highways	6	Overpopulated/crowded/	6	Overpopulated/crowded/
7	Various sports teams*	7	Pollution/bad smell/industry	7	Farming/Garden State	7	Farming/Garden State
8	Nice state to live in	8	Various sports teams*	8	Various sports teams*	8	Various sports teams*

Note: Only the 8 most frequent responses included for each sample. "Nothing" and "don't know" excluded from count.

*Includes: Jets, Giants, Yankees, Nets, Devils, Big East, etc.

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of New Jersey?										
	Total	Gender		Education			Age			
		Men	Women	HS or less	Some College	BA or more	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Favorable	47	47	48	44	45	51	54	50	49	42
Unfavorable	18	21	15	13	17	21	15	21	19	16
Mixed	7	9	5	2	7	9	6	4	7	9
Don't Know	28	23	31	42	31	19	24	25	24	33

Have you ever seen a TV show called "Jersey Shore" or have you not had the chance?							
		Opinion of New Jersey?					
		Total	Favorable	Unfavorable	Mixed	Don't Know	Total
Seen	22	59	20	4	17	17	100
Not Seen	78	44	18	7	31	31	100
Don't Know	0	67	0	0	33	33	100

Have you ever seen a TV show called "Jersey Shore" or have you not had the chance?										
What comes to mind when you think of New Jersey?										
		Next to NY	Shore/Ocean/Boardwalk	Atlantic City/Casinos	Pollution/Smell/Industry	Farming/Garden State	Nice to live in/Suburbs	Other	Don't Know	Total
Seen	22	6	13	6	1	2	4	54	13	100
Not Seen	78	8	8	7	4	2	2	46	23	100

Have you ever seen a TV show called "Jersey Shore" or have you not had the chance?											
Age											
		Gender		Education			Age				
		Total	Men	Women	HS or less	Some College	BA or more	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Seen	22	23	20	24	26	19	47	25	17	8	
Not Seen	78	76	79	75	74	81	53	75	82	91	
Don't Know	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	

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Question order and wording:

JS1. What comes to mind when you think of New Jersey?

[OPEN ENDED, PRE CODED]

Corruption
Cost of living/ Taxes
Farming/garden state
Highways/turnpike/exits
Next to New York
Nice state to live in/suburbs
Overpopulated/density/too many people
Pollution/bad smell/industry/refineries
Traffic
Shore/ocean/coast/beaches/boardwalk/boating/fishing
Atlantic city/casinos
Sports teams/giants/jets/nets/devils/big east teams
Other (specify)

[ROTATE ORDER OF JS2, JS3]

JS2. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of New Jersey?

Fav.
Unfav.
Mixed/DK [VOL]

JS3. Have you ever seen a TV show called "Jersey Shore" or have you not had the chance?

Seen
Not seen
DK

Demographics

Gender	
Male	48
Female	52

Age	
18-29	18
30-44	25
45-64	30
65+	25

In addition to being American, would you say you are...?

White	71
Black	14
Hispanic or Latino	8
Asian	2
Other	4