

# Rutgers - Eagleton Poll

**June 30, 2006**  
**(Release 159-5)**

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## **NEW JERSEYANS TAKE TO ROAD DESPITE HIGH GAS PRICES**

*Motorists look for savings, but stick to vacation plans*

New Jersey drivers say they are taking mass transit more often and shopping for vehicles that get better gas mileage, but there is little change in the percentage that are scaling back travel plans this summer in response to high gas prices.

The latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, conducted June 14-19, found that 52 percent of motorists said they are cutting down on weekend or vacation travel by car, only three percent higher than when the poll last asked the question in September 2005. The margin of error for the sub-sample of 734 motorists is plus or minus 3.6 percent.

At the same time, more than one-third of the 803 adults in the sample said they plan to take a vacation of a week or more in New Jersey this summer, and 52 percent of adults said they plan to vacation for a week or more outside of the state this summer. Both percentages are virtually unchanged from 2003, 1998, and 1994, when the poll asked the same questions of New Jerseyans.

“The consistency of travel plans across these many years of asking the questions

**Rutgers-Eagleton Poll • Eagleton Institute of Politics**

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suggests that while people say they are cutting back on vacation travel, these may not be very big cuts in the wake of higher gas prices,” said Murray Edelman, distinguished scholar at the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling.

Fuel costs have prompted an increase in other types of behavior aimed at reducing gas consumption, however:

-- 32 percent of motorists said they are actively looking for a car or truck that gets higher gas mileage, up seven percentage points since September 2005.

-- 26 percent said they are buying items online more often, a nine-point increase since September.

-- 20 percent said they are using mass transit more often, a five-point jump since September.

Half of motorists said they are cutting back household spending in other areas, but the percentage is roughly the same as it was in September.

“There is some evidence that gas prices are affecting behavior,” Edelman said. “But the areas where the greatest change has occurred in the last nine months involve no more than one-third of motorists. For all of the rhetoric surrounding higher gas prices, in many ways it is business as usual for New Jersey drivers.”

Fifty-five percent of motorists said they comparison shop between gas stations for the lowest price on gasoline, even when it means going out of their way, down three percent from September but still within the poll’s margin of error. Thirty-eight percent said they buy gas from stations that are most convenient to them, also virtually unchanged since September.

Some demographic groups were more likely than others to shop around. Women were more likely to comparison shop than men (58 percent to 52 percent). The same was true of

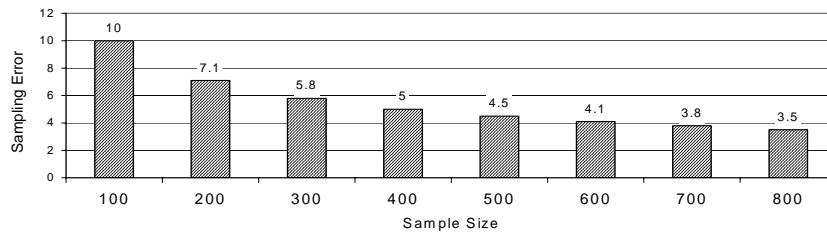
non-white respondents compared to white respondents (60 percent to 54 percent), and those with some college education or more compared to those with a high school education or less (58 percent to 51 percent).

**BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP 159-5) June 30, 2006**

The latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted June 14-19, 2006 with a scientifically selected random sample of 803 New Jersey adults. This sample yielded 734 adult residents who said they own a car. Figures in this release are based on the statewide sample of all adults and the sub-sample of those owning cars. Sampling and data collection were conducted by Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, Inc (SRBI).

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for a sample of 803 adults is  $\pm 3.5$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adults said they planned to take a vacation of a week or more in New Jersey this summer, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent ( $50 \pm 3.5$ ) had all New Jersey adults been interviewed, rather than just a sample. The margin of sampling error for 734 car owners is  $\pm 3.6$  percent. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects. This release contains the verbatim wording of all questions featured in the release.

Sample Size and Sampling Error



Has the price of gasoline prompted you to do any of the following recently? [ROTATE ALL BUT QUESTION G] (GP2)

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID "YES" TO HAVING A CAR IN GP1]

<u>Motorists</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>A. Use mass transit more often</u>				
June 2006	20%	80%	0%	734
September 2005	15%	84%	1%	751
<u>B. Cut down weekend or vacation travel by car</u>				
June 2006	52%	48%	0%	734
September 2005	49%	50%	1%	751
<u>C. Carpool with others to work or school</u>				
June 2006	20%	79%	1%	734
September 2005	19%	81%	1%	751
<u>D. Purchase items online more often</u>				
June 2006	26%	74%	0%	734
September 2005	17%	83%	0%	751
<u>E. Actively look for a car or truck that gets higher gas mileage</u>				
June 2006	32%	68%	0%	734
September 2005	25%	74%	2%	751
<u>F. Attend entertainment or sports events less often</u>				
June 2006	35%	64%	1%	734
September 2005	33%	66%	1%	751
<u>G. Cut back household spending on other things</u>				
June 2006	52%	48%	0%	734
September 2005	53%	47%	0%	751

These days, do you usually comparison shop between gas stations for the lowest price on gasoline, even if that means going out of your way, or do you usually buy gasoline from the stations that are most convenient to you, even if that means paying a bit more? (GP4)

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID "YES" TO HAVING A CAR IN GP1]

<u>Motorists</u>	<u>Comparison shop</u>	<u>Most convenient</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June 2006	55%	38%	5%	2%	734
September 2005	58%	37%	4%	2%	751

"Now thinking about this upcoming summer -- Do you think you will [READ ITEM]?"  
[RANDOMIZE] [V3]

<u>All Adults</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Take a vacation of a week or more in New Jersey this summer				
June 2006	36%	63%	1%	803
May 2003	34%	65%	1%	501
June 1998	32%	67%	1%	602
June 1994	36%	59%	4%	801
Take a vacation of a week or more outside New Jersey				
June 2006	52%	46%	2%	803
May 2003	54%	44%	1%	501
June 1998	54%	45%	1%	602
June 1994	54%	42%	4%	801
Take a vacation overseas this summer				
June 2006	10%	90%	0%	803
May 2003	13%	86%	1%	501