

THURSDAY MARCH 17, 2016

EDITOR'S NOTE: ATTENTION POLITICAL, ASSIGNMENT EDITORS, Poll Assistant Director Ashley Koning may be contacted at 908-872-1186 (cell), 848-932-8940 (office), or akoning@rutgers.edu. Poll Director David Redlawsk may be reached at 319-400-1134 (cell) or redlawsk@rutgers.edu. Questions and tables are available at: <http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu/rutgers-eagleton-NJ-gas-tax-Mar2016>. Find all releases at <http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu>, and visit our blog at <http://eagletonpollblog.wordpress.com> for additional commentary. Follow the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/RutgersEagletonPoll> and Twitter [@EagletonPoll](https://twitter.com/EagletonPoll).

NEW JERSEYANS CONTINUE TO OPPOSE GAS TAX HIKE; POSSIBLE ESTATE TAX TRADE-OFF DOES LITTLE TO BOOST SUPPORT

Over half favor dedicating all gas tax revenue to the Transportation Trust Fund

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – The Transportation Trust Fund is running on fumes, but replenishing it through a gas tax increase remains a non-starter with New Jerseyans, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. Fifty-six percent oppose a gas tax hike, virtually unchanged in the last 18 months; 42 percent support it.

This belies the fact that half of New Jerseyans feel the state is not spending enough money on road, highway and bridge maintenance.

A corresponding cut in estate and inheritance taxes, which is the aim of a bill advancing in the state Senate, does not make a gas tax hike much more appealing to residents. Thirty-seven percent (up six points since last October) would be more likely to support an increase if it were linked to a cut in estate taxes, but 49 percent (up five points) say this compromise would make them less supportive of a higher gas tax. Nine percent say it would make no difference, and 5 percent remain unsure.

“New Jerseyans have not budged in their opposition to a gas tax hike, no surprise given how unpopular the proposal has been since we first asked about it in the 1980s,” said Ashley Koning, assistant director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers University. “While there is less opposition than decades ago, residents nevertheless do not want to pay more at the pump.”

Despite opposition to a hike, New Jerseyans support dedicating all gas tax revenue to the Transportation Trust Fund – a question that will be on the ballot in November. Fifty-four percent are in favor of using the revenue for this purpose, versus 34 percent who are against it.

Results are from a statewide poll of 801 adults contacted by live callers on both landlines and cell phones from Feb. 18 to Feb. 23, 2016. The sample has a margin of error of +/-3.9 percentage points.

Interviews were done in English and, when requested, Spanish.

Few exceptions to majority opposition on hike

A majority of almost every demographic opposes a gas tax increase, with a few exceptions: Democrats (48 percent support to 50 percent oppose), senior citizens (49 percent support to 50 percent oppose), and those in households making between \$100,000 and \$150,000 (48 percent support to 50 percent oppose) are split down the middle on the issue.

In contrast, Republicans (at 63 percent), millennials (at 62 percent), shore residents (at 62 percent), and those in the lowest income bracket (at 61 percent) are most likely to oppose a hike.

Views differ little by driving habits: those who drive a car almost every day are slightly more likely to oppose an increase than those who drive less often.

But support for a hike is greatly influenced by one's perception of how much is being spent on road repairs. Residents who believe the state is spending either too much (29 percent support, 71 percent oppose) or just the right amount (30 percent support, 68 percent oppose) are much less likely to support an increase in the gas tax than those who say the state is not spending enough (52 percent support, 46 percent oppose).

Every demographic is more likely to support than oppose giving all gas tax revenue to the Transportation Trust Fund, though to varying degrees. Those who support a hike (72 percent), drive almost daily (56 percent), and believe the state is not spending enough on roads (62 percent) are all especially likely to favor investing gas tax revenue into the Fund.

Minor support for estate tax compromise

The idea of cutting estate and inheritance taxes to balance a gas tax hike is not very popular with any demographic; only residents in the most affluent households are slightly more likely to say an estate tax trade-off would make them more rather than less (46 percent to 44 percent) inclined to support a hike.

Republicans (40 percent more likely), moderates (40 percent), millennials (41 percent), and shore residents (41 percent) are more prone than others to support a gas tax increase with the trade-off, but none reaches a majority.

A bare majority of residents who support a gas tax increase (53 percent) is swayed by a corresponding estate tax decrease, while six in 10 (62 percent) of those who oppose a hike feel just the opposite about the compromise.

“An estate tax compromise is not the kind of ‘tax fairness’ that persuades most New Jerseyans to

support a gas tax hike,” said Koning. “Even among the estate tax’s usual opponents, like Republicans and affluent residents, support for a trade-off is lackluster.”

State transportation spending

New Jerseyans across the board feel the state does not spend enough money on roadway repairs, though there is some variation. Republicans are the least likely to feel this way, at 37 percent. Belief that spending is insufficient increases with age yet is lowest among those making under \$50,000 compared to more affluent households.

Sixty-four percent of residents who support a gas tax increase feel New Jersey does not spend enough on road and bridge repairs. Even a plurality of gas tax hike opponents (42 percent) says the same.

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QUESTIONS AND TABLES START ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Questions and Tables

The questions covered in the release of March 17, 2016 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are New Jersey adults; all percentages are of weighted results.

Q. How often do you drive a motor vehicle, regardless of whether it is for work or for personal use? Is it almost every day or more, a few days a week, a few days a month, a few days a year, or do you never drive?

Almost every day (or more)	74%
Few days a week	12%
Few days a month	3%
Few days a year	1%
Never	10%
Unwght N	801

Q. Do you think New Jersey is spending too much, not enough, or just the right amount of money on road, highway, and bridge repair and maintenance?

	Mar 2016	Trend ...		Driving Frequency		Gas Tax Increase	
		Oct 2015	Oct 2010	Almost daily	Less	Support	Oppose
Too much	13%	6%	10%	13%	13%	9%	16%
Not enough	51%	54%	36%	51%	53%	64%	42%
Just the right amount	30%	29%	38%	30%	29%	22%	37%
Don't know	6%	11%	15%	6%	5%	5%	5%
Unwght N	799	927	878	598	200	356	426

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Too much	13%	11%	17%	10%	14%	13%	11%	14%	11%	14%	16%	16%	12%	5%
Not enough	61%	50%	37%	63%	49%	44%	52%	51%	53%	50%	41%	48%	55%	61%
Right amount	22%	32%	40%	23%	30%	37%	32%	29%	31%	29%	36%	31%	27%	28%
Don't know	4%	7%	7%	4%	6%	7%	5%	7%	5%	7%	6%	5%	6%	6%
Unwght N	282	332	176	185	430	169	411	388	526	258	123	201	263	212

	Income				Region				
	<50K	50K- 100K	100K- 150K	>150K	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/ South	Shore
Too much	18%	13%	12%	8%	17%	10%	10%	13%	17%
Not enough	46%	53%	53%	53%	53%	58%	54%	43%	50%
Right amount	32%	29%	30%	33%	26%	25%	29%	41%	31%
DK	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	7%	7%	4%	2%
Unwght N	185	258	132	130	101	265	115	145	127

Q. Legislative leaders have proposed increasing New Jersey’s gasoline tax to pay for road maintenance and improvements. Do you support or oppose a gas tax increase?

	Mar 2016	Driving Frequency		Transportation Spending		
		Almost daily	Less	Too Much	Not Enough	Just Right
Support	42%	41%	43%	29%	52%	30%
Oppose	56%	57%	53%	71%	46%	68%
Don't know	2%	2%	4%	0%	2%	2%
Unwght N	799	599	199	86*	436	229

* Small N, results should be interpreted with caution

Trend ...

	Oct 2015*	Feb 2015	Dec 2014	Oct 2014*	Apr 2014	Feb 2014	Feb 2011*	Mar 2010*	Mar 2002*	Jun 1998*	Mar 1982*
Support	37%	39%	41%	38%	31%	27%	26%	25%	28%	49%	32%
Oppose	57%	56%	56%	58%	66%	68%	72%	72%	70%	47%	65%
DK	5%	5%	3%	4%	3%	6%	2%	2%	2%	5%	3%
N	300	390	371	837	809	418	912	956	402	602	1207

* Variation in question wording, results should be interpreted with caution

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Support	48%	39%	35%	53%	42%	27%	42%	41%	44%	40%	35%	38%	45%	49%
Oppose	50%	58%	63%	45%	55%	70%	57%	55%	54%	57%	62%	58%	54%	50%
Don't know	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	3%	2%	3%	3%	4%	1%	1%
Unwght N	283	331	176	185	430	169	410	389	526	258	123	201	262	213

	Income				Region					
	<50K	50K- 100K	100K- 150K	>150K	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/ South	Shore	
Support	37%	40%	48%	46%	50%	44%	39%	42%	36%	
Oppose	61%	57%	50%	54%	46%	53%	55%	58%	62%	
Don't know	2%	3%	2%	0%	4%	2%	5%	0%	2%	
Unwght N	186	258	132	130	101	265	114	145	128	

Q. Would you support or oppose amending the New Jersey state constitution to dedicate ALL revenue from the gas tax to the Transportation Trust Fund?

		Driving Frequency		Gas Tax Increase		Transportation Spending		
		Almost daily	Less	Support	Oppose	Too Much	Not Enough	Just Right
Support	54%	56%	49%	72%	42%	40%	62%	48%
Oppose	34%	33%	37%	21%	45%	42%	29%	38%
Don't know	12%	11%	14%	8%	13%	18%	9%	13%
Unwght N	800	600	199	356	427	86*	436	229

* Small N, results should be interpreted with caution

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Support	56%	54%	51%	59%	54%	49%	61%	48%	59%	49%	48%	55%	55%	59%
Oppose	31%	33%	41%	33%	32%	38%	32%	36%	30%	38%	41%	31%	37%	29%
Don't know	12%	13%	9%	7%	13%	13%	7%	16%	11%	13%	11%	15%	9%	13%
Unwght N	283	332	176	186	430	169	411	389	526	258	123	202	262	213

	Income				Region				
	<50K	50K-100K	100K-150K	>150K	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore
Support	46%	53%	66%	58%	54%	56%	50%	57%	53%
Oppose	44%	35%	21%	35%	27%	35%	39%	33%	36%
Don't know	10%	11%	13%	6%	19%	9%	11%	9%	11%
Unwght N	186	258	132	130	101	265	114	146	128

Q. There is talk about combining an increase in the gas tax with a decrease in estate and inheritance taxes. While the gas tax would go up, the amount of taxes paid on estates after death would go down. Would such an agreement make you more likely or less likely to support an increase in the gas tax?

	Mar 2016			Oct 2015		Dec 2014		Driving Frequency		Gas Tax Increase	
	Mar 2016	Oct 2015	Dec 2014	Almost daily	Less	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose		
More likely	37%	31%	37%	37%	39%	53%	26%	53%	26%		
Less likely	49%	44%	43%	49%	49%	32%	62%	32%	62%		
Neither/no difference (vol)	9%	16%	11%	9%	7%	11%	7%	11%	7%		
Don't know	5%	10%	9%	5%	4%	3%	5%	3%	5%		
Unwght N	800	913	733	599	200	356	426	356	426		

* Small N, results should be interpreted with caution

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Race		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Con	Male	Female	White	Non-wht.	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
More likely	37%	37%	40%	39%	40%	29%	37%	38%	41%	33%	41%	36%	37%	37%
Less likely	49%	51%	46%	50%	45%	58%	51%	47%	45%	54%	50%	48%	48%	50%
Neither	8%	8%	11%	7%	10%	7%	9%	8%	9%	9%	6%	11%	10%	6%
Don't know	6%	4%	3%	4%	5%	5%	3%	7%	6%	4%	3%	5%	5%	7%
Unwght N	283	333	175	186	431	168	412	388	527	257	123	202	262	213

	Income				Region				
	<50K	50K-100K	100K-150K	>150K	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore
More likely	32%	37%	37%	46%	37%	35%	37%	38%	41%
Less likely	55%	48%	48%	44%	46%	52%	46%	53%	46%
Neither	6%	11%	10%	9%	12%	7%	10%	7%	8%
Don't know	7%	3%	4%	1%	5%	7%	6%	2%	5%
Unwght N	186	258	132	130	101	265	114	146	128

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live callers February 18-23, 2016 with a scientifically selected random sample of 801 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. Respondents within a household are selected by asking randomly for the youngest adult male or female currently available. If the named gender is not available, the youngest adult of the other gender is interviewed. The poll was available in Spanish for respondents who requested it. This telephone poll included 451 landline and 350 cell phone adults, all acquired through random digit dialing using a sample obtained from Survey Sampling International. Distribution of household phone use in this sample is:

Cell Only:	19%
Dual Use, Reached on Cell:	24%
Dual Use, Reached on LL:	51%
Landline Only:	5%

Data were weighted to the demographics of adults in New Jersey. Weights account for the probability of being selected within the sample frame, adjusting for frame overlap, as well as the probability of being sampled within a household, based on the number of individuals living in the household for respondents reached via landline and on the number of adults sharing a phone for respondents reached via cell. The sample was weighted using a raking algorithm to several demographic variables reflecting the general population parameters of the state of New Jersey: gender, race, age, and Hispanic ethnicity. The final weights, which combined all of the parameters mentioned, were trimmed at the 5th and 95th percentile so as to not accord too much weight to any one case or subset of cases. All results are reported with these weighted data.

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. Sampling error should be adjusted to recognize the effect of weighting the data to better match the population. In this poll, the simple sampling error for the 801 adults is +/-3.5 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The sample weighting design effect is 1.3, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.9 percentage points for the adult sample.

Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adults in this sample favor a particular position, we would be 95 percent sure that the true figure is between 46.1 and 53.9 percent (50 +/-3.9) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a sample.

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 Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was fielded by Braun Research, Inc. The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll is paid for and sponsored by the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, a non-partisan academic center for the study of politics and the political process. Full questionnaires are available on request, and can also be accessed at the Eagleton Poll archive at eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu. For more information, please contact eagleton.poll@rutgers.edu.

Weighted Sample Characteristics			
801 New Jersey Adults			
37% Democrat	49% Male	27% 18-34	60% White
43% Independent	51% Female	24% 35-49	12% Black
21% Republican		30% 50-64	19% Hispanic
		19% 65+	9% Asian/Other/Multi