



IN A TOUGH SPOT:

JOBS, TAXES AND AFFORDABILITY ON LONG ISLAND

DECEMBER 2006

**LONG ISLAND
INDEX**



Report Prepared by
Stony Brook University Center for Survey Research

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INTRODUCTION

Since 2002, the Rauch Foundation, a Long Island-based family foundation focused on children and families, the environment, and leadership, has commissioned a series of public opinion surveys to assess the attitudes of Long Island's residents on the important issues facing them. As part of the Foundation's *Long Island Index* project, these surveys are intended to provide an awareness of the concerns and opinions of Long Island residents.

The current survey was undertaken to revisit local opinion on the economy, taxes, housing costs and services that has been monitored through the *Long Island Index* over the past several years. It was conducted by the Stony Brook University Center for Survey Research during the Fall of 2006. Telephone interviews were conducted with a randomly selected sample of 808 Long Island residents, and with randomly selected oversamples of 205 African-American and 100 Hispanic residents of Long Island. Further information on the methodology, as well as the questionnaire and responses, is available in the Appendix to the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings of the survey include the following:

STILL A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE, BUT DISSATISFACTION IS GROWING

- **Long Island Residents Identify with Their Region, and Consider it a Good Place to Live:** Accessibility to beaches and New York City, amenities and friends and family, all contribute to residents' connections to their "Island."
- **Fewer Long Islanders Believe Things are Going in the Right Direction:** Since 2002 there has been a slow, steady decline in the number of Long Islanders who say things are heading in the right direction in their county.
- **Schools Slipping, But Still Receive High Scores:** Perceptions of local public schools have slipped in the last few years. Nonetheless, Long Islanders remain relatively pleased with their public schools, express satisfaction with teachers, and rate highly the overall quality of local education.
- **Not All Served Well:** Although levels of satisfaction with local schools and services are generally high, they also vary tremendously across Long Island, with far greater dissatisfaction among residents of high-need school districts.

THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

- **Long Island Economy Not Improving:** A majority of Long Islanders perceive the local economy and job opportunities as either the same or worse than one year ago, and they do not expect significant improvement in the coming year.

THE TAX CRUNCH

- **Tax Woes:** Most Long Islanders continue to view the problem of high taxes as a very serious problem, and many cite it as THE major local problem.

UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING

- **Rising Housing Costs:** Concerns over housing affordability continue to plague the region.
- **Thinking of Leaving:** The number of Long Islanders who said they may leave in the next five years and move to an area with lower housing costs and property taxes increased dramatically between 2004 and 2005, and remained at this high level in 2006. For many, the decision to leave Long Island will be a difficult one.

HARD CHOICES ON SCHOOL FISCAL POLICY

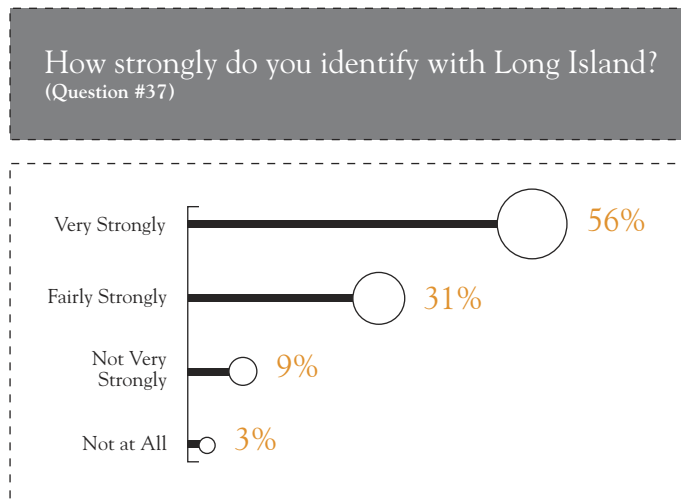
- **School Consolidation Divisive:** Long Islanders continue to be deeply divided over the consolidation of school districts as a way to cut school costs, although consolidation continues to be more popular among residents of high-need school districts.
- **Repairing Inequities; Sharing the Wealth:** A majority of Long Islanders support shifting some resources from wealthier to poorer school districts, and think that replacing part of the property tax with an income tax on higher income households is a good idea.

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STILL A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE, BUT DISSATISFACTION IS GROWING

Long Island Residents Identify with Their Region, and Consider it a Good Place to Live

The vast majority of residents (82%) consider Long Island to be an excellent or good place to live. 56% of residents identify very strongly and 31% somewhat strongly with Long Island. 78% of residents feel that there is a very or somewhat strong sense of community on the Island. When asked what they liked best about living on Long Island, 24% cited the beaches, parks and water activities. The proximity to New York City, as well as the natural beauty, were also high on the list of features that residents appreciate in their region.



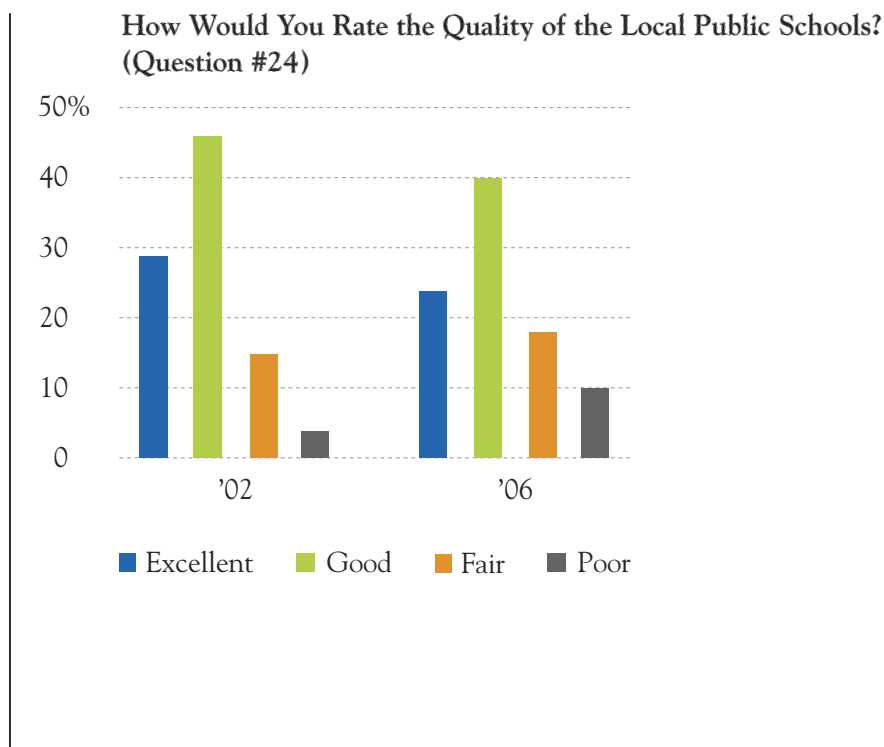
Fewer Long Islanders Believe Things Are Going in the Right Direction

Since the advent of the *Long Island Index* polls in 2002, there has been a slight decline in the number of Long Islanders who say things are heading in the right direction in their county. In 2002, 57% of Long Island residents thought that things in their county were headed in the right direction, compared with 48% in the current poll. Residents of Suffolk County are more likely to see things heading in the right direction (52%) than Nassau residents (43%).

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Overall, Schools Still Receive High Scores

Perceptions of local public schools have slipped in the last few years; 75% of local residents rated the quality of local schools as good or excellent in 2002 compared to 64% in the current poll. Nonetheless, Long Islanders are relatively satisfied with their public schools, expressing satisfaction with teachers (63% rated them as good or excellent) and the overall quality of education (65%). Parents of children in the public schools give especially high marks to teachers, with 78% rating them as good or excellent.



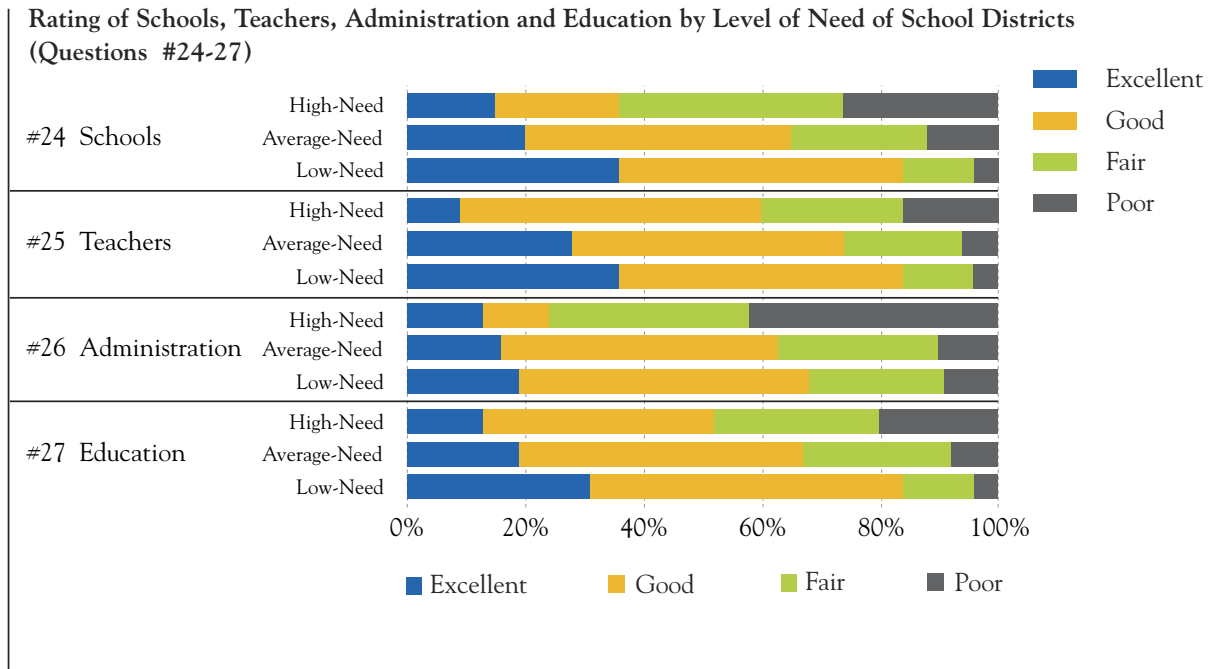
Dissatisfaction with schools is focused more on school leadership and governance, than on teachers or educational quality. Less than half (48%) of residents rated school administration as good or excellent, and only 42% of local residents felt that school board members could be trusted most or all of the time, an improvement over last year when only 34% believed this. When asked about trust in town officials, only 32% of Long Islanders believed that they could be trusted most or all of the time. This also represents an improvement over last year when only 23% believed town officials could be trusted most or all of the time.

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Not All Served Well

Although levels of satisfaction with local schools and services are generally high, they also vary tremendously across Long Island. Differences in rated satisfaction are especially pronounced across school districts designated as high- and low-need by the State Education Department (SED). High-need school districts are characterized by higher poverty rates and a much higher concentration of minority students than either average or low-need districts. (A further explanation of these designations is available in the Methodology section of this report.)

Residents of high-need districts elicit especially high levels of dissatisfaction with their schools. Only 33% of residents in high-need school districts rate their schools as excellent or good; 42% give the same rating to the quality of education in their school district (a slight increase over last year, when only 33% gave that rating). In stark contrast, 71% of residents in “low-need” districts rate their schools as excellent or good, and 58% give the same positive rating to the quality of education. In “average-need” districts, 59% of residents rate their schools as excellent or good, and 58% give that rating to the quality of education in their district. When asked about the value they receive for their schools in return for local taxes, only 21% of residents in high-need districts rate this as good or excellent compared to 55% of residents in low-need districts, and 47% in average-need districts. As was the case last year, residents of high-need school districts stand out as particularly dissatisfied with their schools.



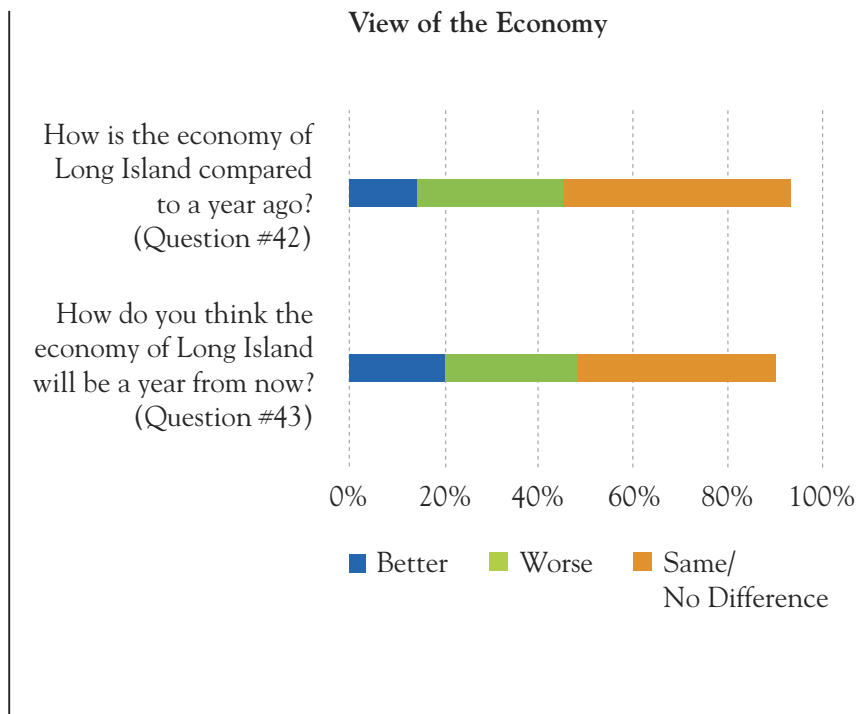
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LONG ISLAND'S ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Long Island's Economy Not Seen as Improving

In contrast to the overall picture, Long Island residents view the local economy as either stagnant or backsliding. Only 14% of residents rate the economy of their county as better than it was a year ago, 31% rate it as worse, and 48% see no difference. This translates into just under 8 in 10 (79%) of Long Island residents who rate the local economy as worse or the same as 12 months ago.

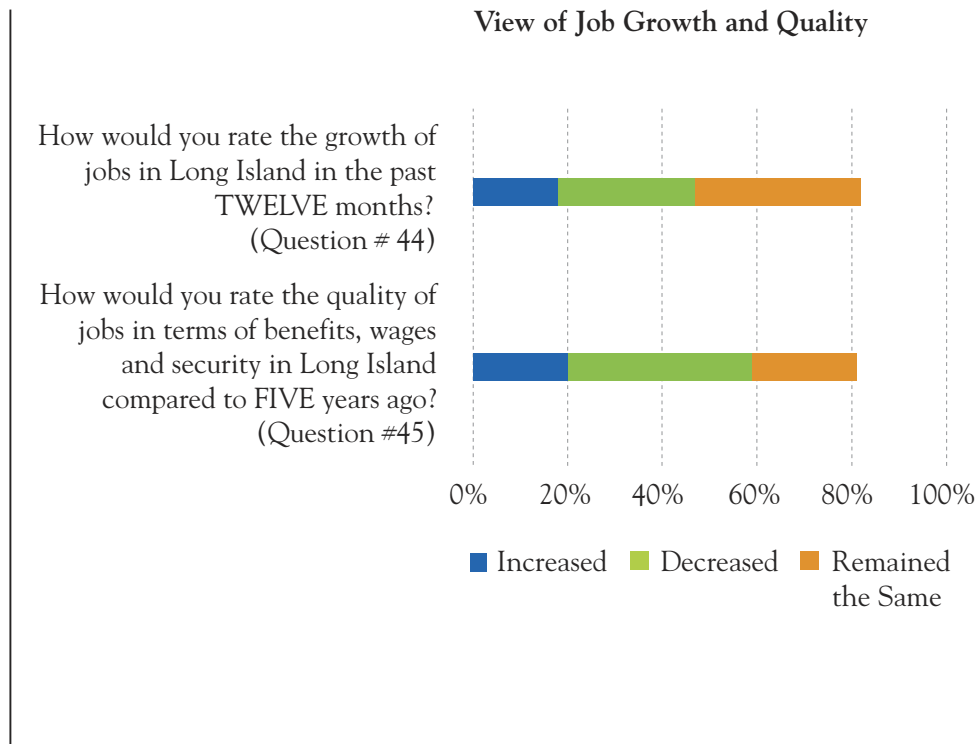
In looking ahead to a year from now, residents do not expect much improvement, with 20% expecting the local economy to be better, 28% expecting it to be worse, and 42% expecting no change. Once again, a majority (70%) see the economy as stagnant or deteriorating. The same level of pessimism emerges when analyses are confined to Long Islanders who are currently in the work force (employed or looking for work). There is slightly less pessimism about the local economy among lower income workers. Among those currently in the work force reporting household incomes of less than \$35,000, 42% expect the local economy to be better one year from now, 30% expect it to be worse, and 17% think it will remain unchanged. Nonetheless, even among this relatively optimistic group of workers, a near majority (47%) expect the economy to deteriorate or remain the same in the coming year. There are few other demographic differences, suggesting very broad-based pessimism about the local economy.



IN A TOUGH SPOT: JOBS, TAXES AND AFFORDABILITY ON LONG ISLAND

There is also widespread pessimism about local job opportunities. When asked whether the number of job opportunities in the county had increased, decreased, or remained the same, more residents thought opportunities had decreased in the past 12 months (29%) than increased (18%). Just over a third (35%) thought they had remained the same. When taken together, this means that just under two-thirds (64%) of Long Islanders believe the number of local jobs had stayed the same or decreased in the last year. Low income workers were again somewhat more positive about local job opportunities, however residents remained pessimistic overall. Among workers in households earning under \$35,000, 30% said that opportunities had increased, 39% said opportunities had decreased, and 29% felt that the situation had remained the same since last year.

Even more disturbing, when asked about the quality of local jobs, in terms of benefits, wages and security, Long Islanders held a decidedly negative view. Only 20% of Long Island residents thought that job quality had increased over the last five years, whereas 39% thought that it had decreased. Just under a quarter (22%) felt it had remained the same. These perceptions did not vary between those in and out of the workforce.



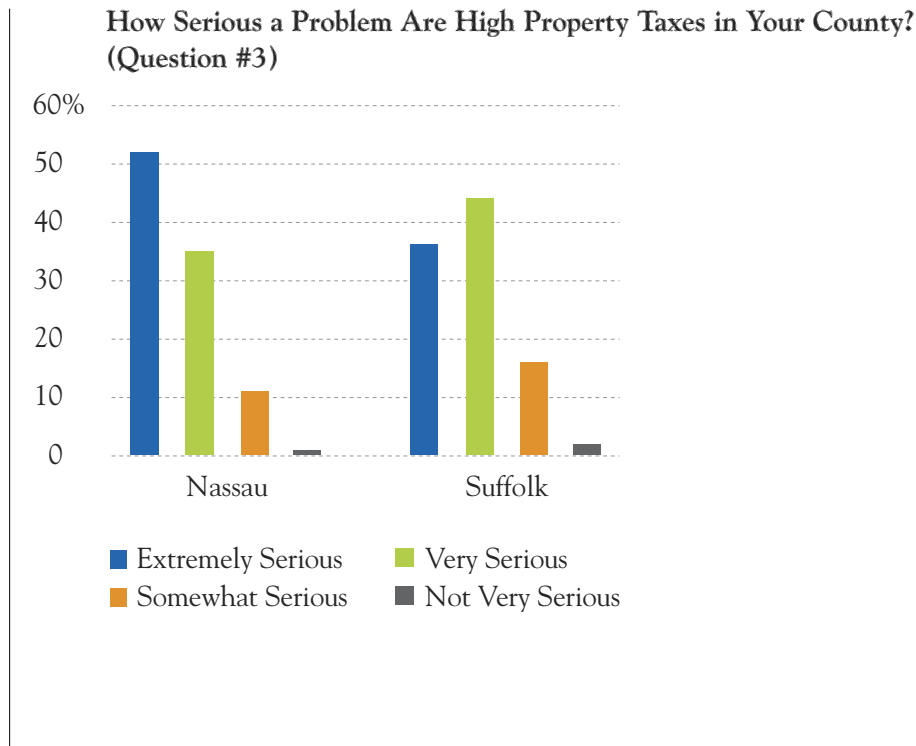
Overall, Long Islanders hold a dishearteningly negative view of the local economy.

IN A TOUGH SPOT: JOBS, TAXES AND AFFORDABILITY ON LONG ISLAND

THE TAX CRUNCH

Tax Woes

Local residents continue to express concern about property taxes. When asked to rate the severity of the tax problem, just over 84% of Long Island residents regard the problem of high property taxes as either an extremely serious or a very serious problem. This reflects a slight increase in concern since 2004 (at 77%). More Nassau county residents (52%) rated taxes as an extremely serious problem than did residents of Suffolk (34%).



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There were fewer differences in the perceived severity of the tax problem by socio-economic status, suggesting that all Long Island residents view taxes as a serious problem. Homeowners and non-homeowners were almost equally likely to rate taxes as an extremely serious or very serious problem (86% versus 84%). Concern about taxes among non-homeowners has increased since last year, when 70% rated it as an extremely or very serious problem. When asked directly, a large majority (87%) of homeowners rated their property taxes as much too high or somewhat too high and most (80%) knew how much they had paid in property taxes in 2005.

Long Island residents expressed concern over taxes in other ways as well. As was the case in the previous two *Long Island Index* regional polls¹, property taxes were cited by a plurality (45%) of Long Island residents as the single MOST important problem facing the two counties.

All residents view taxes as a serious problem but the severity or degree of the problem varies. Not surprisingly, taxes were cited as the most important local problem more often by homeowners (53%), although taxes still remained the most commonly mentioned problem even among non-homeowners.

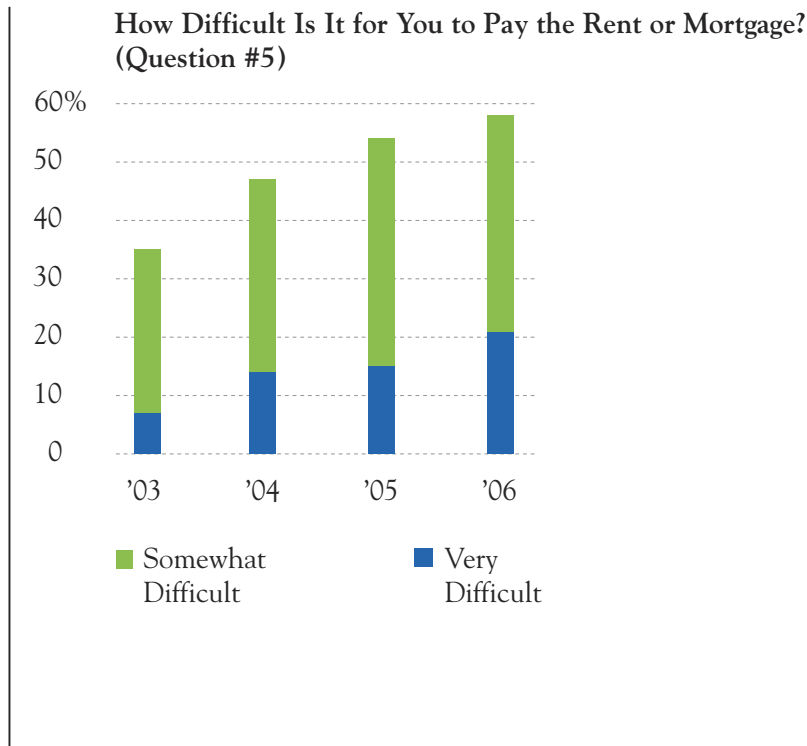
¹*Where Do We Grow From Here? Land Use on Long Island*, Rauch Foundation, Garden City, NY, 2004,
At the Breaking Point? Taxation and Governance on Long Island, Rauch Foundation, Garden City, NY 2005

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UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING

Rising Housing Costs

The percentage of residents who report that it is somewhat or very difficult to meet monthly rent or mortgage payments rose from 47% in 2004 to 54% last year, and increased again slightly this year to 58%. This figure has steadily increased since the 2003 Poll, when 35% of residents reported that it was either somewhat or very difficult to meet their monthly rent or mortgage payments, and affects people in all income categories. Over 60% of Long Islanders earning less than \$110,000 report having at least some difficulty meeting their monthly rent or mortgage payments, and 43% of those earning over \$110,000 report similar difficulty (a slight increase over last year).



Over the past several years an increasing number of homeowners have reported difficulty in meeting their housing costs. In 2004, 43% of homeowners said it was very or somewhat difficult; this increased to 51% in 2005, and held relatively steady at 53% this year. In contrast, renters experienced roughly the same level of difficulty in 2004 (70%), in 2005 (72%), and again this year (73%).

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Thinking of Leaving

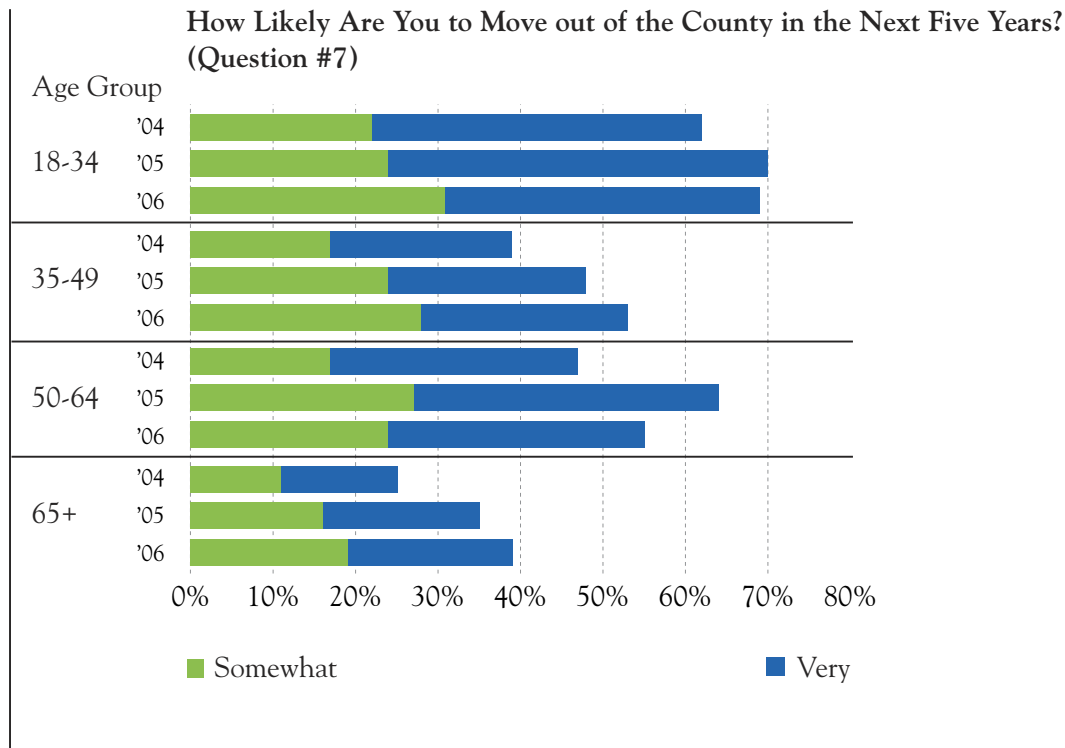
The high cost of living on Long Island produces pervasive concern over the possible flight of younger residents. As was true last year, just over three in four Long Islanders (78%) rate the possible departure of young adults from their county as an extremely or very serious problem. Concern is most pronounced among residents aged between 50 and 64, the group most likely to have young adult children. Among residents in this pre-retirement age group, fully 85% rated the departure of young people as an extremely or very serious problem compared to a more modest but still sizeable 66% of those aged between 18 and 34 (up slightly from last year's 61%). Pre-retirement age individuals voiced direct concern about the departure of their own family members: 56% said they were very concerned about members of their own families leaving the Island (a decline from last year's 70%), compared to only 34% of those aged 18–24 (again a decline from last year's figure of 44%) and 51% of those aged 65 or older (an increase from last year, when 45% of those 65 and over expressed this concern).

Overall, the percentage of Long Island residents who expressed concern about family members leaving the county has leveled off since last year. 70% of local residents were somewhat or very concerned about this in 2004; this increased to 81% in 2005, and dropped slightly to 76% in the current poll.

The percentage of local residents who said that they were somewhat or very likely to move in the next five years to an area with lower housing costs and property taxes increased from 45% in 2004 to 56% in 2005, representing a dramatic increase that was especially striking for a relatively short, one-year time period. Between last year and this year that figure has remained relatively constant, with 54% reporting that they were somewhat or very likely to move in the next five years. More than half of those Long Islanders who say that it is likely they will move (58%), say that making the decision to leave would be difficult.

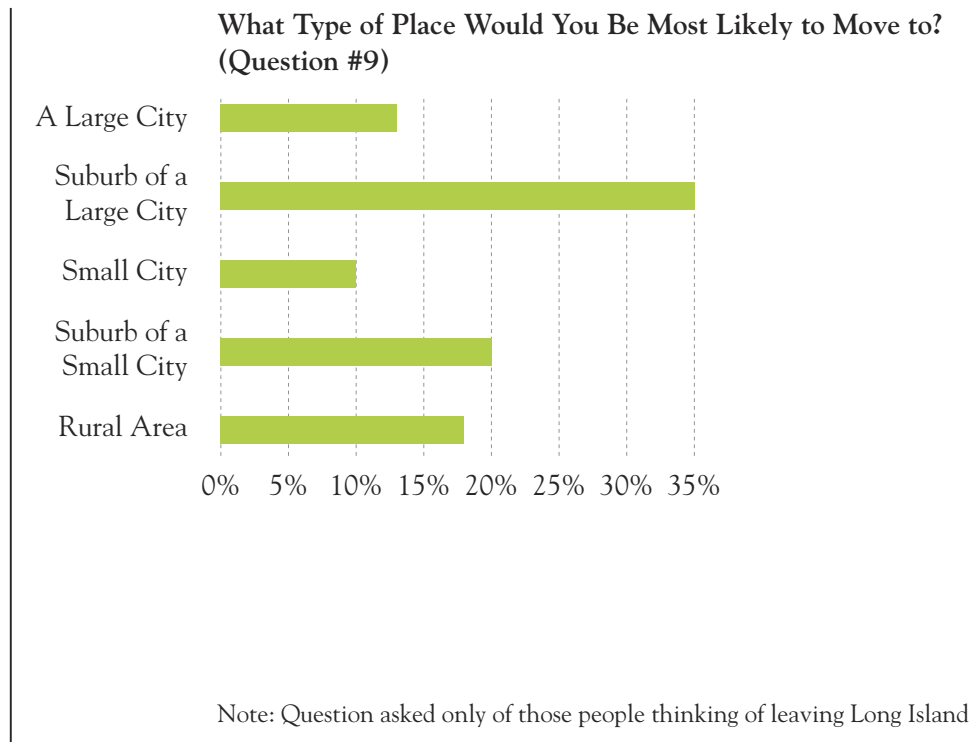
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When examined more closely, the desire to leave remains most common among younger people aged 18–34, 69% of whom say they are somewhat or very likely to leave in the next 5 years, and those in the pre-retirement age group (55%), a slight decrease since last year (64%). The desire to leave is also still more apparent among African-Americans, 73% of whom said last year and 69% this year that they are somewhat or very likely to leave.



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In thinking about moving, only 10% of Long Island residents plan to stay in New York state, another 17% plan to move to somewhere in the Northeast, and roughly a third (34%) contemplate moving farther away in the east to Florida and North Carolina. This produces a majority (61%) who plan to stay somewhere in the eastern section of the U.S. Of Long Islanders who plan to move, 48% say they would move to a large city or its suburbs, and an equal number are planning to move to a less populous location such as a rural area, a small city, or the suburbs of a small city.

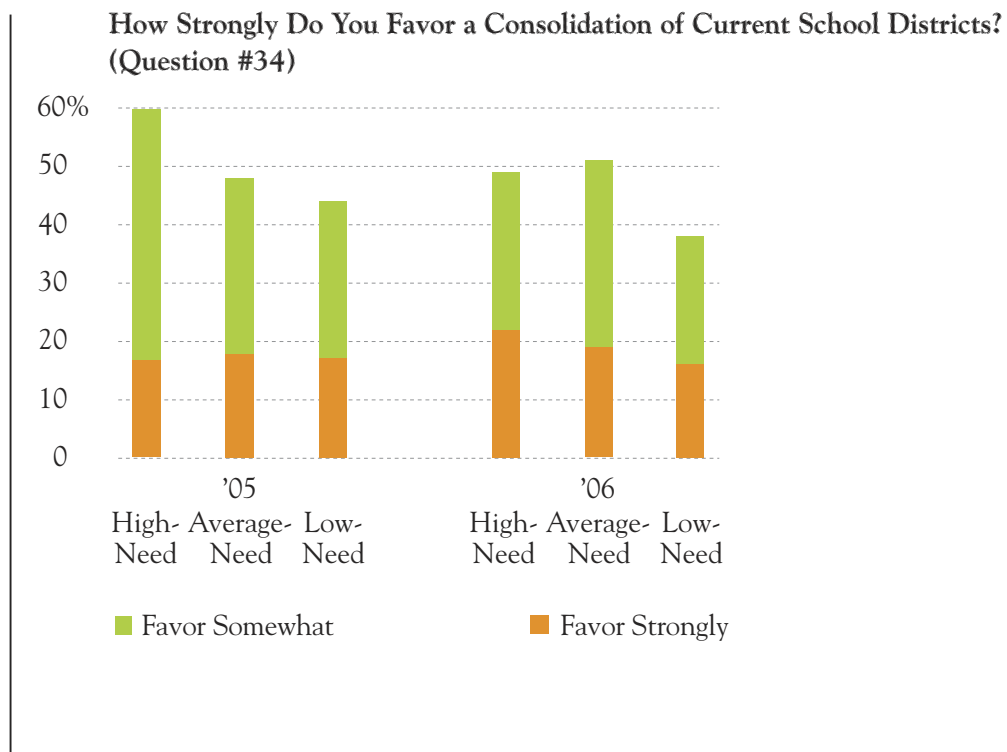


IN A TOUGH SPOT: JOBS, TAXES AND AFFORDABILITY ON LONG ISLAND

HARD CHOICES ON SCHOOL FISCAL POLICY

School Consolidation Divisive

Long Islanders face a central dilemma: how to maintain high-quality schools while keeping school costs at a reasonable level. School consolidation across school districts has been raised consistently as one way to economize on school costs. But opinion on consolidation continues to be deeply divided. When asked how strongly they favor or oppose a consolidation of current school districts, 45% of Long Islanders indicated support and 47% opposed the option of consolidation, figures that have changed very little over the past five years. However, among residents of high-need districts, consolidation is somewhat more popular, with 49% of residents expressing support, compared to 38% support in low-need districts.



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Repairing Inequities: Sharing the Wealth Gains Majority Support

Although very attached to their local districts, the poll does show some support among Long Islanders for alternatives to school funding where the goal is to provide more equal funding across school districts. Similar to last year's findings, a majority of Long Islanders (51%) support shifting some resources from wealthier to poorer school districts. This support is most pronounced in high-need school districts where it is favored by 65% of local residents. In contrast, the proposal is supported by only 43% of residents from low-need school districts.

When asked whether they thought it would be a good idea or a bad idea to fund public schools through a new income tax on higher income households which would reduce property taxes, 53% of Long Islanders thought it would be a good idea, and 39% say it was a bad idea. Again, the idea was more popular among residents of high-need school districts, where 64% thought it would be a good idea, than in average (54%) or low- (42%) need districts, a slight decrease from last year.

Overall, Long Islanders continue to express some support of change in wealth equalization and school funding policy. This support is especially strong among residents of high-need school districts. Of course, it is difficult to gauge how residents would react to a specific proposal in which costs were detailed with greater specificity. Poll respondents were simply asked about "shifting some resources" or "a tax on higher income households." Residents may be supportive of these changes in the abstract, but less supportive in response to a specific proposal. Nonetheless, in a region deeply concerned about taxes, the willingness of residents to consider these changes is noteworthy.

CONCLUSION

Long Island's challenge is to find creative ways to maintain the high quality of jobs and services that have long represented the region's strengths, while bringing under control the costs that threaten to uproot residents from the area. Overall, Long Islanders view economic conditions as stagnant or deteriorating. An increasing number of people report difficulty in meeting monthly housing costs, and continue to be concerned that they, or members of their family, may have to leave the Island for a more affordable area. Housing prices and taxes are rising at a more rapid rate than wages, making the dream of home ownership unattainable for many on Long Island.

The economic challenges facing Long Island have produced a population that may be willing to contemplate new solutions to economic problems. The poll provides some evidence of this in the area of school funding. A near majority (45%) of Long Islanders are willing to consider school consolidation as a way to reduce rising school costs, although the issue remains controversial. Half of Long Islanders (51%) are willing to consider alternatives to school funding if the goal is to provide more equal funding across school districts. A majority of Long Island residents (53%) support shifting some resources from wealthier to poorer districts.

The objective of this survey, together with the 2007 *Long Island Index*, is to provide an understanding of local residents' concerns and needs and a focus for future discussion of the issues. Strong leadership can help to insure that these difficult choices are made, so that the reasons the families of the 1940's and 50's settled on Long Island remain the reasons the families of the 21st century stay here.

APPENDIX—METHODOLOGY

The Stony Brook University Center for Survey Research conducted this survey by telephone between September and November 2006. A list-assisted method of random-digit-dialing (RDD) was used to obtain phone numbers in the sample. Within selected households, individuals 18 years and over were selected at random for participation. Up to 7 contact attempts were made at each household phone number. In order to assure a representative sample, all households and individuals who were initially unwilling to participate in the survey were contacted again, and an attempt was made to persuade them to participate. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish depending upon the preference of the respondent.

A total of 808 interviews were conducted in the general population of Long Island, with 405 completed interviews with residents of Nassau County and 403 completed interviews with residents of Suffolk County. In addition, two separate oversamples were drawn, and interviews were conducted with 205 African-American and 100 Hispanic residents of Long Island.

The results for Nassau and Suffolk Counties were tabulated both separately and jointly. The oversamples of African-American and Hispanic Long Island residents were included in all comparisons of responses by race and ethnicity.

Margin of error for the Long Island sample is +/- 3.4%.

The results were weighted on gender, age, educational attainment, Hispanic/Latino origin and race/ethnicity, based on the 2005 U.S. Census American Community Survey county level data. Weighting was done using an iterative process that has been developed to estimate joint weights for any number of demographic variables for which population percentages are known only individually, not jointly.

Level of school district need is calculated by dividing a district's estimated poverty percent by its combined wealth ratio. School districts are then divided into 6 categories, three of which are relevant to Long Island (high-need suburban, average-need, and low-need). Wealth statistics are based on a combination of property values and household income weighted by the number of pupils, which is also adjusted for students with special needs; poverty is based on the number of school-age children living below the federal poverty level (State Education Department 2004 *New York: The State of Learning. Statistical Profiles of Public School Districts*). There are nine high-need districts on Long Island (Hempstead, Roosevelt, Freeport, Westbury, Amityville, Wyandanch, William Floyd, Brentwood and Central Islip).

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is (Interviewer's name) and I am calling from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. We are conducting a study regarding several important local issues.

Your telephone number was randomly dialed by a computer. I would like to talk to the person in your household who is over 18 and had the most recent birthday.

This survey only takes about 10–15 minutes to complete. We will skip over any questions you don't want to answer, and all answers will be kept confidential. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to.

For your information, the study is funded by the Rauch Foundation. With your permission, let's begin.



Question Q01

For the first couple of questions we would like you to think about the **OVERALL** condition of your county. Generally speaking, do you think things in Nassau/Suffolk County today are headed in the right direction or in the wrong direction?

RESPONDENTS: 808	%
Right direction	48
Wrong direction	39
Don't know	12
Refused	2



Question Q02

Overall, what do you think is the **MOST** important problem facing residents of Nassau/Suffolk County today?

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

Economy/Cost of Living/Jobs/Poverty	10
Taxes/Property Taxes	45
Lack of Adequate and Affordable Housing	7
Environmental Issues	3
Roads/Traffic/Transportation	3
Education/Schools	3
Gangs/Violence/Crime/Law Enforcement/Safety	7
Overcrowding/Overpopulation/Overbuilding	4
Government/Governmental Corruption/Government Services	2
Immigrants/Illegal Aliens	4
Other	5
Don't know	7
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q03

In your view, how serious a problem are high property taxes in Nassau/Suffolk County?

Extremely serious	44
Very serious	40
Somewhat serious	14
Not very serious	2
Not at all serious	1
Don't know	0
Refused	0



Question Q04

In your view, how serious is the problem of young people moving away from Nassau/Suffolk County because of the high cost of living?

Extremely serious	38
Very serious	40
Somewhat serious	14
Not very serious	4
Not at all serious	2
Don't know	2
Refused	0



Question Q05

In an average month, how difficult is it for you and your family living with you to pay the rent or mortgage? Would you say it is...

Very difficult	21
Somewhat difficult	37
Not very difficult	18
Not at all difficult	21
Don't know	3
Refused	1

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q06

How concerned are you that the high cost of housing will force members of your family to move out of Nassau/Suffolk County?

Very concerned	50
Somewhat concerned	26
Not very concerned	10
Not at all concerned	13
Don't know	1
Refused	0



Question Q07

How likely is it that you will move out of Nassau/Suffolk County to an area with lower housing costs and property taxes in the next 5 years?

Very likely	28
Somewhat likely	26
Not very likely	18
Not at all likely	27
Don't know	1
Refused	0



Question Q08

If you did move, to which U.S. state would you be most likely to relocate?

[Asked only on respondents very or somewhat likely to move]

ALABAMA	0
ALASKA	0
ARIZONA	2
ARKANSAS	0
CALIFORNIA	3
COLORADO	1
CONNECTICUT	2
DELAWARE	0
FLORIDA	16
GEORGIA	3
HAWAII	1
IDAHO	0
ILLINOIS	0
INDIANA	0
IOWA	0
KANSAS	0
KENTUCKY	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE

LOUISIANA	0
MAINE	1
MARYLAND	1
MASSACHUSETTS	1
MICHIGAN	0
MINNESOTA	0
MISSISSIPPI	0
MISSOURI	0
MONTANA	0
NEBRASKA	0
NEVADA	1
NEW HAMPSHIRE	1
NEW JERSEY	2
NEW MEXICO	0
NEW YORK	10
NORTH CAROLINA	18
NORTH DAKOTA	0
OHIO	0
OKLAHOMA	0
OREGON	0
PENNSYLVANIA	7
RHODE ISLAND	1
SOUTH CAROLINA	3
SOUTH DAKOTA	0
TENNESSEE	0
TEXAS	3
UTAH	0
VERMONT	0
VIRGINIA	8
WASHINGTON	0
WASHINGTON, D. C.	1
WEST VIRGINIA	0
WISCONSIN	0
WYOMING	0
Don't Know or Refused	17

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q09

What type of place would you be most likely to move to?

A large city	13
Suburb of a large city	35
Small city	10
Suburb of a small city	20
Rural area	18
Don't know	3
Refused	0



Question Q10

What is the main reason why you would consider moving from Nassau/Suffolk County?

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

To improve your or your spouse's job and career opportunities	4
To lower family housing costs and property taxes	61
To be closer to family and friends	9
To live in an area with better weather	5
To live in a less crowded area with less traffic congestion	9
To move to a more exciting area, with more interesting things to do	5
Something else	8
Don't know	0
Refused	0



Question Q11

How easy or difficult would it be to make the decision to move from Nassau/Suffolk County?

Very easy	22
Somewhat easy	19
Somewhat difficult	33
Very difficult	25
Don't know	1
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q12

Do you own the home you are currently living in, are you renting, or do you have some other arrangement, such as living in a parent's home, a child's home, or somewhere else?

Own	69
Rent	22
Other	8
Don't know	0
Refused	0



Question Q13

Do you pay your property taxes directly to the town/county or are they included in your mortgage payment?

Pays directly to the town	50
Included in mortgage payment	48
Don't know	1
Refused	0



Question Q14

Do you know how much you paid in property taxes last year, in 2005?

[IF NECESSARY: We mean your total property tax bill including school and town taxes]

Yes	80
No	16
Don't know	0
Refused	4



Question Q15

How much was that [you paid for property taxes in 2005]?

[Asked only of respondents who knew how much they paid in property taxes in 2005]

\$5000 or less	21
\$5001 to \$7000	30
\$7001 to \$9000	24
Over \$9000	22
Refused	5

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q16

Would you rate your current property taxes as much too high, somewhat too high, about right, somewhat too low, or much too low?

Much too high	50
Somewhat too high	37
About right	11
Somewhat too low	0
Much too low	0
Don't know	1
Refused	1



Question Q17

Please think about the quality of services provided by your local government in return for property taxes. Would you say that the value local residents get back from property taxes in terms of the quality of local services is...

Excellent	3
Good	31
Fair	42
Poor	21
Don't know	4
Refused	0

[Note: The order of the answer options for Question Q18 was randomized.]



Question Q18

If you had to choose, which ONE of the following local services do you think should have the HIGHEST priority for increased funding in the coming year?

Local police	9
Local garbage collection and sanitation services	2
Local parks and gardens	5
Local roads and highways	18
Public libraries	2
Local public schools	45
Local Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	15
Don't know	5
Refused	1

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE

[Note: The order of the answer options for Question Q19 was randomized.]



Question Q19

If you had to choose, which ONE of the following local services do you think should have the LOWEST priority for increased funding in the coming year?

Local police	16
Local garbage collection and sanitation services	17
Local parks and gardens	32
Local roads and highways	5
Public libraries	11
Local public schools	7
Local Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	6
Don't know	5
Refused	2



Question Q20

Do you think local property taxes should remain at the same level as last year even if it means cutting back on local services, or would you prefer to see an increase in property taxes to keep local services at their current level?

[IF NECESSARY: Local property taxes that the residents of your town/county pay]

Taxes should remain the same	77
Taxes should increase to fund local services	15
Don't know	5
Refused	4



Question Q21

How much of the time do you think you can trust Nassau/Suffolk County government to do what is right?

All of the time	4
Most of the time	22
Some of the time	55
Almost never	17
Don't know	2
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q22

How much of the time do you think you can trust your TOWN government to do what is right?

All of the time	5
Most of the time	27
Some of the time	50
Almost never	15
Don't know	4
Refused	0



Question Q23

Overall, how favorable or unfavorable is your opinion of Nassau/Suffolk County government?

Very favorable	6
Somewhat favorable	58
Somewhat unfavorable	26
Very unfavorable	7
Don't know	3
Refused	0



Question 24

How would you rate the quality of the local public schools?

Excellent	24
Good	40
Fair	18
Poor	10
Don't know	8
Refused	1



Question Q25

How would you rate the quality of teachers in your local schools/school district?

Excellent	24
Good	38
Fair	13
Poor	4
Don't know	20
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q26

How would you rate the quality of school administration in your local schools/school district?

Excellent	14
Good	35
Fair	22
Poor	9
Don't know	20
Refused	0



Question Q27

How would you rate the quality of education received by students in your local schools/school district?

Excellent	21
Good	44
Fair	17
Poor	6
Don't know	13
Refused	0



Question Q28

How much of the time do you think you can trust school board members in your school district/county to do what is right?

All of the time	8
Most of the time	35
Some of the time	35
Almost never	11
Don't know	12
Refused	0



Question Q29

Please think about the quality of education provided by your local schools in return for the property taxes. Would you say that the value local residents get back from property taxes in terms of the quality of education is...

Excellent	11
Good	37
Fair	30
Poor	13
Don't know	10
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q30

Which of the following statements best describes the amount of government money spent on each student attending public school in Nassau/Suffolk County?

Roughly the same amount is spent on each child in the county	15
A little more money is spent on some and a little less on others	30
A lot more money is spent on some and a lot less is spent on others	33
Don't know	21
Refused	1



Question Q31

On average, do you think a child from a LOW-INCOME family in Nassau/Suffolk County receives better, worse, or the same quality of education in the local public schools as a child from a MIDDLE-INCOME family?

Better	5
Worse	35
The same	51
Don't know	9
Refused	1



Question Q32

The amount of money spent on public schools varies greatly across school districts because some communities are wealthier than others and have more tax dollars to spend on education. It has been proposed that some revenues from wealthier school districts be shifted to poorer districts in order to provide those places with more resources. That way roughly the same amount per student would be spent across school districts. To what extent do you favor or oppose this?

Strongly favor	19
Somewhat favor	32
Somewhat oppose	20
Strongly oppose	22
Don't know	6
Refused	1



Question Q33

One way to spend roughly the same amount on each student in a county would be to fund public schools through a NEW local income tax which would reduce property taxes. Under this plan, higher income households would likely end up paying more than at present, and lower income households would pay less. Overall, do you think that this is a good idea or a bad idea?

Good idea	53
Bad idea	38
Don't know	9
Refused	1

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q34

Economists have calculated that school property taxes could be reduced by a substantial amount if Long Island's 124 school districts were consolidated into larger ones. How strongly do you favor or oppose a consolidation of current school districts?

Favor strongly	18
Favor somewhat	26
Oppose somewhat	20
Oppose strongly	26
Don't know	8
Refused	1



Question Q35

How long have you lived in Nassau/Suffolk?

Under six months	1
Six months to a year	1
One year to two years	2
Between two and five years	6
Between five and ten years	9
Over 10 years	56
All my life	25
Don't know	0
Refused	0



Question Q36

Overall, how would you rate Long Island as a place to live?

Excellent	36
Good	46
Fair	14
Poor	4
Don't know	0
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q37

How strongly do you identify with Long Island?

Very strongly	56
Fairly strongly	31
Not very strongly	9
Not at all	3
Don't know	1
Refused	0



Question Q38

How strong a sense of community do you feel there is on Long Island? Is it...

Very strong	25
Somewhat strong	53
Not very strong	17
None at all	3
Don't know	1
Refused	0



Question Q39

How easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to feel at HOME living somewhere other than Long Island?

Very easy	22
Somewhat easy	32
Somewhat difficult	26
Very difficult	17
Don't know	3
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q40

What do you like BEST about living on Long Island?

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

Accessibility to city, location	14
Convenient to shopping, restaurants, recreational activities	7
Accessibility to beaches, water activities, parks	24
Environment, open space, peaceful, etc.	13
Friends, family, roots, born & raised in area	13
Climate, seasons	3
Proximity to work, jobs	2
Community, neighborhood	5
Diversity	1
Education, good schools	2
Quality of life, quality of services	6
Safety, security	1
Other	2
Don't know	6
Refused	1



Question Q41

What do you like LEAST about living on Long Island?

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

Expensive, high cost of living, economy	16
Taxes, property taxes	21
Lack of affordable housing, high housing costs	1
Traffic, commute, roads, distance to work	21
Overcrowding, urban sprawl, overdevelopment	13
Immigrants, diversity	1
Racism, discrimination, segregation	2
Government, local politics, services	1
Inadequate public transportation	1
Distance from city, lack of culture	2
Climate	2
Crime	4
Schools, education	1
Nothing bad	2
Other	5
Don't know	6
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q42

Would you say that the economy in Nassau/Suffolk County is BETTER, WORSE, OR THE SAME as it was a year ago?

Better	14
Worse	31
Same/No difference	48
Don't know	6
Refused	0



Question Q43

Now looking ahead, do you think that a year from now the economy of Nassau/Suffolk County will be better, worse, or the same as now?

Better	20
Worse	28
Same/No difference	42
Don't know	10
Refused	0



Question Q44

How would you rate the growth of jobs in Nassau/Suffolk County in the past TWELVE months? Would you say that the number of job opportunities has increased, decreased, or remained the same?

[IF NECESSARY: We're interested in how you view jobs overall, not a specific type of employment]

Increased	18
Decreased	29
Remained the same	35
Don't know	18
Refused	0



Question Q45

How would you rate the quality of jobs in terms of benefits, wages and security in Nassau/Suffolk County compared to FIVE years ago? Would you say that the quality of jobs has increased, decreased, or remained the same?

Increased	20
Decreased	39
Remained the same	22
Don't know	18
Refused	1

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q46

In general, when it comes to politics, do you think of yourself as a Liberal, Moderate, or Conservative?

Liberal	23
Moderate	32
Conservative	32
Don't know	9
Refused	4



Question Q47

In what year were you born?

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

18 to 34	24
35 to 49	32
50 to 64	24
65 or older	17
Don't know/Refused	4



Question Q48

How many children under the age of 18 are currently living in your household?

[Open-ended question: Interviewer types in the response]

None	56
One	15
Two	16
Three	8
Four	4
Five	1
Six	0
Don't know	0
Refused	1



Question Q49

[Only ask to those respondents with children under 18 in household]

Do any of these children attend the local public schools?

Yes	79
No	21
Don't know	0
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q50

How many people 18 years and older, including yourself, are currently living in your household?

[Open-ended question: Interviewer types in the response]

One	22
Two	45
Three	14
Four	16
Five	2
Six	0
Seven	1
Eight	0
Don't know	0
Refused	1



Question Q51

Do you have any children aged 18 or older currently living in Nassau/Suffolk County?

Yes	31
No	69
Don't know	0
Refused	1



Question Q52

How likely is it that one or more of your adult children will move away from Nassau/Suffolk County in the next five years?

Very likely	38
Somewhat likely	19
Not very likely	23
Not at all likely	16
Don't know	5
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q53

What is the highest grade of school, year of college, or highest degree that you have received?

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

Less than high school (<9th grade)	4
Some high school	6
High school graduate	29
Some college, no degree	17
Associate degree	8
Bachelor's degree	20
Graduate degree	15
Don't know/Refused	2



Question Q54

Are you currently...

Employed for wages full-time	46
Employed for wages part-time	13
Self-employed	9
Out of work for more than 1 year	1
Out of work for less than 1 year	1
Homemaker	6
Full-time student	2
Retired	19
Unable to work/permanently disabled	3
Don't know	0
Refused	0



Question Q55

[Asked only of employed respondents]

Would you say that the time you spend commuting to work each day has increased, decreased, or remained the same over the past twelve months?

Increased	29
Decreased	6
Remained the same	64
Don't know	1
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q56

Are you employed by the federal government, state government, local government, public school district, private employer, or a non-profit organization?

[Asked only of employed respondents]

[IF NECESSARY: A federal contractor works primarily with the federal government to provide supplies, services, or experimental, developmental, or research work.]

Federal government	2
State government	8
Local government	6
Public school district	10
Private employer	63
Non-profit organization	4
Something else	3
Don't know	1
Refused	2



Question Q57

What is/was your occupation?

[IF MORE THAN ONE JOB: Your main job]

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

Professional/Manager/Owner	29
Teacher/Librarian/Professor	10
Sales, Clerical or Service Worker	39
Skilled Laborer or Tradesman	11
Semi/Unskilled Labor	9
Don't know	1
Refused	3



Question Q58

Which of the following income categories best describes the total 2005 household income of all members of your family living there before taxes? Stop me when I reach your income group. Was it...

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

Less than \$35,000	23
\$35,000 to less than \$70,000	27
\$70,000 to less than \$110,000	25
\$110,000 and more	25
Don't know	0
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q59

Are you Hispanic or Latino/Latina?

[Recoded]

Hispanic	12
Not Hispanic	86
Don't know/Refused	2



Question Q60

Do you consider yourself White, Black, Asian or something else?

[IF NECESSARY: Because of the specific sample design of our study, I need to know your racial background to be sure that we have equal representation in each racial group].

White	77
Black	9
Asian	5
Other	5
Don't know/Refused	4



Question Q61

[Asked of respondents who considered themselves Hispanic]

Do you consider yourself White Hispanic, Black Hispanic, Asian Hispanic or something else?

[IF NECESSARY: Because of the specific sample design of our study, I need to know your racial background to be sure that we have equal representation in each racial group].

White Hispanic	25
Black Hispanic	5
Asian Hispanic	14
Something else	45
Don't know	12
Refused	0

FREQUENCY QUESTIONNAIRE



Question Q62

Are you married; not married but living with a partner; separated; divorced; widowed; or have you never been married?

Married	58
Not married, living with a partner	4
Separated	2
Divorced	7
Widowed	9
Never married	19
Don't know	0
Refused	2



Question Q63

Is your spouse/partner currently...

Employed for wages full-time	56
Employed for wages part-time	12
Self-employed	8
Out of work for more than 1 year	1
Out of work for less than 1 year	0
Homemaker	5
Full-time student	0
Retired	14
Unable to work/permanently disabled	2
Don't know	0
Refused	1



Question Q64

What is the respondent's gender?

[Recoded responses]

Female	51
Male	49