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A TALE OF TWO SUBURBS

Survey Report on Jobs, Taxes and
Governance on Long Island
and in Northern Virginia

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**This report is one of a three-part Case Study comparing
Long Island and Northern Virginia.**

The three reports are:

**A Case Study Comparing Governance, Taxes and Local Services on Long Island and in Northern Virginia:
Executive Summary**

A Comparative Analysis of the Cost of Local Governments on Long Island and in Northern Virginia

Survey Report on Jobs, Taxes and Governance on Long Island and in Northern Virginia

All three reports are available on www.longislandindex.org.

March 2007

A TALE OF TWO SUBURBS:

SURVEY REPORT ON JOBS, TAXES AND GOVERNANCE ON LONG ISLAND AND IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

In this survey, Long Island public opinion is placed in perspective through a comparison with the views of residents of Fairfax and Loudoun counties, VA. The *Long Island Index* identified Fairfax, VA as one of several “peer” counties to Suffolk and Nassau counties. Fairfax County has roughly similar population density, comparable housing prices, and similar percentages of black and Latino residents (see the Long Island Index, 2006). But there are some key differences between Fairfax, VA and Long Island that motivated the current survey. Fairfax, VA has many fewer municipalities (9 compared to 435 on Long Island) and substantially lower property tax rates per capita. The current survey was undertaken to better understand the consequences of a reduced number of municipalities in VA in terms of resident satisfaction with services, tax rates, and local government, and access to government officials. To effectively draw this comparison and obtain a comparably broad sample in Virginia and Long Island, the opinions of residents of Long Island were compared to those in metro Northern Virginia (NVA) which includes Fairfax County and Loudoun County¹.

This comparison yields a number of interesting results that are reported briefly below in an executive summary of survey findings.

TAXATION AND HOUSING COSTS A GREATER CONCERN ON LONG ISLAND

Long Islanders differ from the residents of northern Virginia in their local concerns. In NVA, roads and crowding problems loom larger than issues of housing costs and taxation. On Long Island, concerns about housing and taxation dominate.

- **Tax Woes on Long Island:** Most Long Islander’s view the problem of high taxes as extremely or very serious (84%), and a near majority (45%) cites it as THE major local problem. In contrast, only 45% of Northern Virginian residents rated taxes as an extremely or very serious problem and very few (7%) list it as the most important problem facing their county.
- **Long Islanders Rate Tax Bill as Too High.** Among homeowners, 80% of Long Islanders but only 55% of NVA residents knew how much they paid in property taxes in the last year. Moreover, a half of all Long Islanders but just over a quarter of NVA residents rated their property tax bill as much too high.
- **Traffic and Congestion Worries in NVA.** Northern Virginia has experienced rapid recent growth, and this tops the list of residents’ concerns. 44% of NVA residents list traffic as the single most important problem in their county compared to only 3% of Long Islanders. These concerns are reflected in longer commute times in NVA than on Long Island. 51% of currently employed

¹ The results for Nassau-Suffolk and Fairfax-Loudoun were tabulated both separately by county and jointly by region. The combined LI and NVA samples were weighted to reflect the true combined population, and thus in Virginia are dominated by numerically larger Fairfax County.

NVA residents have a commute that is longer than 30 minutes compared to only 38% of Long Islanders, and 40% of NVA residents, but only 29% of Long Islanders, say their commute time has increased in the past 12 months.

- **Housing Costs a Bigger Problem on Long Island:** Long Island residents report much greater difficulty in paying their mortgage than NVA residents. Fully 58% of Long Islanders, almost 6 in 10, find it somewhat or very difficult to pay their rent or mortgage. In contrast, just over a third (36%) of NVA residents report similar difficulty. It is important to note that the residents of NVA have higher household income than Long Islanders (in part because they are younger, on average, more likely to be working and more likely to have a working spouse). But Long Islanders still find it more difficult to pay housing costs than NVA residents even after controlling for their household income, education, and a number of other factors that might differ among residents of the two regions.²
- **No Regional Difference in Desire to Move:** A substantial number of residents in both regions said they may leave in the next five years and move to an area with lower housing costs and property taxes. 54% of Long Islanders (a dramatic increase over the past two years) and 51% of NVA residents said they might move in the next 5 years. However, since Long Islanders tend to move less than NVA residents, this is a much bigger shift for Long Islanders. (25% of Long Islanders have lived here their whole life compared to 8% of NVA residents.)

In both regions, the desire to leave is most common among younger people aged 18-34, 69% of whom say they are somewhat or very likely to leave Long Island, and 66% to leave NVA, in the next 5 years, and those in the pre-retirement age group (55% on Long Island, 53% in NVA). The desire to leave is also especially apparent among African-Americans in both regions, with 67% on Long Island and 66% in NVA saying they are somewhat or very likely to move.

- **Long Islanders Plan to Move Further.** There were modest differences in the location or type of place residents of the two region said they would move to. In thinking about moving, Long Island residents are more likely to contemplate moving farther away, with a third choosing Florida and North Carolina. If they contemplate relocating, Fairfax and Loudoun residents are more likely to think about moving to a different county within Virginia, although North Carolina is also a popular area. Overall, 48% of Long Islanders compared to 40% of NVA residents would like to move to a large city or its suburbs. A slightly higher percentage of NVA residents planned to stay within Virginia (17%) than the percent of Long Islanders who planned to stay in New York State (10%).
- **Housing Costs Dominate Desire to Move off Long Island.** Over 6 in 10 Long Islanders gave lower family housing costs as the major reason they would consider moving. In contrast, NVA residents note a more diverse set of motives, including lowered housing costs (36%), move to a less crowded area (22% compared to 9% on LI), and improve their job prospects (12% compared to 4% on LI).
- **Stronger Ties on Long Island.** A quarter of all Long Islanders have lived on the Island for their entire life compared to only 8% of NVA residents. Overall, 81% of Long Islanders and 55% of NVA residents have lived in their county for 10 years or more. Long Islanders have lived in their region longer and identify more strongly with their region than NVA residents. 56% of Long Islanders identify very strongly with Long Island compared to 31% of NVA residents. 43% of Long Islanders say it would be difficult to feel at home somewhere other than LI compared to only 29% of NVA residents. When asked what they liked best about living in their region, Long Islanders most often chose the beaches and parks, accessibility to New York City, while NVA residents cited location and proximity to the city, quality of life/quality of services.

² All county differences were examined in multivariate order probit analyses with controls for homeownership, age, length of county residence, political ideology, presence of school-age children, working for the federal government, household income, gender, education, and race and ethnicity. This ensures that any reported county differences are not due to other demographic differences among residents of the two regions.

SATISFIED ON LONG ISLAND, BUT GOVERNMENT SERVICES ARE BETTER IN VIRGINIA

Residents of Virginia see things going better in their area than do residents of Long Island. There are also somewhat higher levels of satisfaction with government services in NVA than on Long Island. Fairfax County residents in particular are more satisfied with their services overall, and report having a greater trust in their County government than Long Island or Loudoun County residents. Comparability in satisfaction with services suggests that having a more centralized form of local government does not compromise service quality.

- **Going in the Right Direction on LI:** More Long Islanders say things are heading in the right (48%) than wrong direction (39%) in their county, although feelings are more evenly mixed in Nassau than Suffolk County. This has declined slightly since 2005 when 53% of Long Islanders viewed things as heading in the right direction.
- **Going Better in Virginia:** An impressive 3 out of 4 Fairfax, VA residents say that things are going in the right direction in their county; residents of Loudoun also see things as going well with 57% saying that things are going in the right direction. Overall, residents of NVA are more positive than Long Islanders about their county's direction, especially when compared to residents of Nassau County. NVA residents also rate their county as a better place to live than do Long Islanders (82% of Long Islanders and 91% of NVA residents rate their counties as excellent or good places to live).
- **Greater Satisfaction with Local Services in NVA:** 88% of NVA residents rated the quality of local services as excellent or good compared to 75% of Long Island residents. Residents of Fairfax County were more satisfied overall (89%), but the residents of Loudoun County also expressed a higher level of satisfaction with local services (85%) than Long Islanders (75%).
- **More Satisfaction with Police, Schools and Parks in NVA than Long Island.** Residents of NVA were more satisfied than Long Islanders with the quality of their local police (84% in NVA compared to 75% of LI), schools (79% in NVA compared to 64% on LI), and parks and gardens (82% in NVA compared to 68% of LI). There was much less satisfaction with roads in Virginia overall, where only 55% rated their local roads and highways as excellent or good. But this was still higher than on Long Island where only 44% gave an excellent or good rating to roads.
- **Residents of Fairfax County Most Satisfied.** Greater satisfaction with government services in Virginia masks some differences between Fairfax and Loudoun counties. Residents of Fairfax were more satisfied than Loudoun residents with the police, local parks, public libraries, and local schools. But in no case were residents of Loudoun County less satisfied with the quality of local services than Long Islanders. This suggests that fewer governmental jurisdictions do not undermine the perceived quality of services provided by local government.
- **Taxes Seen as Better Value in NVA.** 62% of NVA residents rate the value of their property taxes in terms of what they receive in local services as excellent or good. In contrast, just over a third of Long Islanders (34%) rate their taxes as of similar good value. Moreover, a quarter of NVA residents think their property taxes should be increased in the coming year to fund services compared to only 15% of Long Islanders.

Access to Government Officials Seen as Comparable Across Regions

There is greater trust in county government in both Virginia counties than on Long Island. Trust in government, accessibility and overall rating of County government is higher in Fairfax County than in the other 3 counties [this is also similar to differences in satisfaction with school administration]

- **More Positive View of Local Government in NVA.** Just over a quarter (26%) of Long Islanders compared to a majority (51%) of NVA residents say they trust their county government all or most of the time. Trust in town governments is only slightly higher than trust in county government on Long Island: 32% say they trust their town government most or all of the time.

80% of Fairfax and 73% of Loudoun residents held a somewhat or very favorable view of their county government compared to 58% of Nassau and 69% of Suffolk residents.

- **Perceived Access to County Government Greatest in Fairfax:** 47% of the residents of Fairfax County said it would be somewhat or very easy to gain the assistance of a local county official, compared to 37% on Long Island and in Loudoun County. Long Islanders believe it would be slightly easier to gain assistance from an elected town than county official, with 43% saying this would be somewhat or very easy.

NVA Residents Give Higher Marks to Their Schools

NVA residents in both counties rate the quality to cost ratio of their services and schools more highly than Long Islanders, rate the overall quality of education provided by local schools as somewhat higher, see the school system as generally more equal, view their school board as roughly equally accessible, and are as well informed about school board decisions. There is no evidence here that a single county-wide school district worsens local residents' satisfaction or access to their schools. These findings are especially striking given the greater amount spent on schools on Long Island than in Northern Virginia.

- **Quality of Education Comparable Across Regions.** 65% of Long Islanders (68% in Nassau and 61% in Suffolk) rate the quality of local education as good or excellent compared to 75% of Fairfax and 67% of Loudoun residents. The rated quality of teachers is roughly comparable in all areas with 63% of Long Islanders and 67% of NVA residents rating the quality of teachers as excellent or good. Among parents of children currently attending the public schools, 78% of Long Island parents and 84% in NVA rated the quality of the teachers as excellent or good.
- **More Trust in School Officials in NVA.** Residents of NVA place greater trust in school officials than do residents of Long Island with 52% saying they trust officials most or all of the time compared to 43% of Long Islanders. School administrators also got slightly higher marks in NVA than on Long Island: 48% of Long Islanders rated administrators as good or excellent compared to 60% of NVA residents. Among parents of children in the public schools, 61% of Long Island respondents and 82% of NVA respondents rated the administrators as good or excellent.
- **Equal Access to School Officials.** There were few regional differences in how easy residents felt it was to access school officials. 49% of residents in Northern Virginia and Long Island felt it would be somewhat or very easy to make the School Board aware of a specific problem. Long Islanders reported feeling better informed about school decisions with 57% saying they were somewhat or very well informed compared to 49% of NVA residents. These differences disappear and actually reverse slightly among parents with children in the public schools, especially when it comes to information levels. 75% of NVA parents said they were somewhat or very well informed about school decisions compared to 59% on Long Island.
- **Schools Seen as Better Value in NVA.** 70% of NVA residents rate the value they get back in terms of what they pay in property taxes for quality education as excellent or good. This compared to only a much lower 48% on Long Island. This difference is striking given the greater amount of money spent on schools on Long Island.
- **Schools Rated as More Equal in NVA.** NVA residents their schools as more equal than do Long Islanders. 58% say that either roughly the same amount is spent on each child in public schools within their county or a little more is spent on some and a little less on others. In contrast, fewer (45%) feel that way on Long Island and a sizeable minority (33%) believe that a lot more is spent on some children than others. A larger percentage of NVA residents (62%) than Long Islanders (51%) also believe that children from low and middle-income families in their county receive the same quality of education.
- **Blacks Less Satisfied with Long Island Schools.** Black Long Islanders were consistently less satisfied with the overall quality of education in their local schools than white or Hispanic residents. On Long Island, 40% of blacks rated the quality of education in their local schools as good or excellent compared to 63% of whites and 68% of Hispanics. These racial differences

were absent in NVA where 73% of whites, 65% of blacks, and 72% of Hispanics rated the quality of local education as good or excellent. This fits with the views of Northern Virginian residents that children have access to a relatively equal education in their county. Overall, blacks were less satisfied with school quality on Long Island than in Northern Virginia.

- **Residents of High-Need Schools Districts on Long Island Less Satisfied with Schools.** Racial differences on Long Island mirror differences among residents living in school districts that vary in their level of need. In high need districts on Long Island (school districts designated by the state as high need areas which are characterized by a higher ratio of poverty to wealth), 43% viewed local education quality as good or excellent compared to 75% in low need districts.
- **Lower Income Residents Less Satisfied with Schools in Both Regions.** In both regions – Long Island and NVA – members of lower income households rate school quality as worse than residents of more affluent areas, and this effect emerges independently of respondent race. 57% of Long Islanders living in household earning less than \$35,000 and 64% of their counterparts in NVA rated the quality of local education as good or excellent (Q22). In contrast, 73% of those earning between \$70,000 and \$110,000 on Long Island and 90% of the same income group in NVA rated local education as good or excellent. This reflects a clear income gap on both Long Island and Northern Virginia in satisfaction with the quality of local education. There is no evidence that lower income NVA residents are less satisfied than lower income residents on Long Island with school quality. Hispanic residents on Long Island are satisfied with most local services, but are less content with schools in which educational achievement is much lower than in non-minority school districts.

LONG ISLAND ECONOMIC OUTLOOK LESS VIBRANT

The residents of NVA earn more, are better educated, are more likely to live in a household with two working adults, and are generally much more positive about the local economy than Long Islanders.

- **More Economic Optimism in NVA.** Just under a half of NVA and Long Island residents (48%) see the economy as the same as a year ago, but a greater percentage of NVA (30%) than Long Island (14%) residents see it as better. Just under a third of NVA residents but only 20% of Long Islanders think the economy in their county will be better in a year from now.
- **Better Jobs in NVA.** There is far greater perceived job growth in NVA than on Long Island. Almost a half (48%) of NVA residents believe job opportunities have increased in the past 12 months compared to only 18% of Long Islanders who hold the same view. Moreover, 43% of NVA residents say the quality of jobs has improved in the last five years compared to only 20% of Long Islanders who hold this view.

METHODOLOGY

The Stony Brook University Center for Survey Research conducted this survey by telephone between September 12 and December 7, 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 at various times of the day and week were made at each household phone number. In order to assure a representative sample, all households and individuals who initially were not willing 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.

The study was conducted in two regions, Long Island, New York (Nassau and Suffolk Counties) and Northern Virginia (Fairfax and Loudoun Counties).

- Long Island: 808 interviews in the general population of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, including 405 completed interviews with residents of Nassau County and 403 completed interviews with residents of Suffolk County. In addition, two oversamples were drawn separately, and interviews were conducted with 205 African-American and 100 Hispanic residents of Long Island.
- Northern Virginia: 605 interviews in the general population of Fairfax and Loudoun Counties, including 402 completed interviews with residents of Fairfax County and 203 completed interviews with residents of Loudoun County. In addition, two oversamples were drawn separately, and interviews were conducted with 101 African-American and 100 Hispanic residents of Fairfax County.

The results for each of the regions were tabulated separately. The oversamples of African-American and Hispanic residents were included in all comparisons of responses by race and ethnicity.

Margin of error for the two regional samples is as follows:

- Long Island: +/- 3.4%
- Northern Virginia: +/- 4.0%

The results were weighted on gender, age, educational attainment, and race/ethnicity, based on the 2005 U.S. Census American Community Survey county-level data. Weighting was done using an iterative raking process developed to estimate joint weights for any number of demographic variables for which population percentages are known only individually, not jointly. Percentages of respondents within categories of variables used for weighting in each of the three regional samples are presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Benchmark Demographic Characteristics by County (%)

	Nassau, NY	Suffolk, NY	Fairfax, VA	Loudoun, VA
Gender				
Male	49	49	50	50
Female	51	51	50	50
Age				
18-34	23	26	26	36
35-44	20	22	22	27
45-54	21	20	23	19
55-64	16	15	17	11
65 or older	19	16	12	7
Race				
White	77	86	70	76
Black	11	8	10	9
Asian	7	3	17	13
Other	6	5	5	5
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	12	13	13	9
Not Hispanic	88	87	87	91
Education				
Less HS (<9th grade)	5	4	4	2
Some HS	5	7	4	3
HS Graduate	27	32	14	16
Some College	16	18	15	15
Associate	8	9	5	8
Bachelor	22	17	31	37
Graduate Degree	18	14	27	19

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/Fairfax/Loudoun County today are headed in the right direction or in the wrong direction?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
RESPONDENTS	808	605
	%	%
Right direction	48	70
Wrong direction	39	22
Don't know	12	8
Refused	2	1

[Note: Due to rounding, the numbers may not add up to 100%]

Question Q02

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

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Economy/Cost of Living/Jobs/Poverty	10	3
Taxes/Property Taxes	45	7
Lack of Adequate and Affordable Housing	7	5
Environmental Issues	3	1
Roads/Traffic/Transportation	3	44
Education/Schools	3	3
Gangs/Violence/Crime/Law Enforcement/Safety	7	5
Overcrowding/Overpopulation/Overbuilding	4	13
Government/Governmental Corruption/Government Services	2	3
Immigrants/Illegal Aliens	4	4
Other	5	5
Don't know	7	7
Refused	0	0

Question Q03

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Extremely serious	44	18
Very serious	40	27
Somewhat serious	14	36
Not very serious	2	12
Not at all serious	1	4
Don't know	0	4
Refused	0	0

Question Q04

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Extremely serious	38	16
Very serious	40	21
Somewhat serious	14	25
Not very serious	4	23
Not at all serious	2	8
Don't know	2	7
Refused	0	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...

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very difficult	21	10
Somewhat difficult	37	26
Not very difficult	18	23
Not at all difficult	21	40
Don't know	3	1
Refused	1	1

Question Q06

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very concerned	50	25
Somewhat concerned	26	26
Not very concerned	10	19
Not at all concerned	13	28
Don't know	1	2
Refused	0	0

Question Q07

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very likely	28	32
Somewhat likely	26	19
Not very likely	18	19
Not at all likely	27	29
Don't know	1	1
Refused	0	0

Question Q08

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

If you did move, to which US state would you be most likely to relocate?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
ALABAMA	0	0
ALASKA	0	0
ARIZONA	2	3
ARKANSAS	0	0
CALIFORNIA	3	6
COLORADO	1	1
CONNECTICUT	2	0
DELAWARE	0	1
FLORIDA	16	6
GEORGIA	3	3
HAWAII	1	0
IDAHO	0	0
ILLINOIS	0	1
INDIANA	0	0
IOWA	0	0
KANSAS	0	0
KENTUCKY	0	0
LOUISIANA	0	0
MAINE	1	0
MARYLAND	1	6
MASSACHUSETTS	1	1
MICHIGAN	0	1
MINNESOTA	0	1
MISSISSIPPI	0	0
MISSOURI	0	1
MONTANA	0	0
NEBRASKA	0	0
NEVADA	1	2
NEW HAMPSHIRE	1	0
NEW JERSEY	2	1
NEW MEXICO	0	0
NEW YORK	10	5
NORTH CAROLINA	18	16
NORTH DAKOTA	0	0
OHIO	0	1
OKLAHOMA	0	0

OREGON	0	0
PENNSYLVANIA	7	2
RHODE ISLAND	1	0
SOUTH CAROLINA	3	3
SOUTH DAKOTA	0	0
TENNESSEE	0	0
TEXAS	3	3
UTAH	0	0
VERMONT	0	0
VIRGINIA	8	17
WASHINGTON	0	1
WASHINGTON, D. C.	1	1
WEST VIRGINIA	0	2
WISCONSIN	0	0
WYOMING	0	0
Don't Know or Refused	17	14

Question Q09

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
A large city	13	10
Suburb of a large city	35	30
Small city	10	21
Suburb of a small city	20	20
Rural area	18	16
Don't know	3	3
Refused	0	0

Question Q10

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

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
To improve your or your spouse's job and career opportunities	4	12
To lower family housing costs and property taxes	61	36
To be closer to family and friends	9	10
To live in an area with better weather	5	6
To live in a less crowded area with less traffic congestion	9	22
To move to a more exciting area, with more interesting things to do	5	5
Something else	8	11
Don't Know	0	0
Refused	0	0

Question Q11

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very easy	22	24
Somewhat easy	19	22
Somewhat difficult	33	33
Very difficult	25	20
Don't know	1	1
Refused	0	0

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?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Own	69	78
Rent	22	18
Other	8	4
Don't know	0	0
Refused	0	0

Question Q13

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Pays directly to the town	50	29
Included in mortgage payment	48	65
Don't know	1	4
Refused	0	2

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]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Yes	80	55
No	16	41
Don't Know	0	0
Refused	4	4

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

Question Q15

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

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
\$5000 or less	21	60
\$5001 to \$7000	25	18
\$7001 to \$9000	25	7
More than \$9000	25	6
Refused	5	9

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?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Much too high	50	28
Somewhat too high	37	41
About right	11	27
Somewhat too low	0	0
Much too low	0	0
Don't know	1	3
Refused	1	1

[Note: The question order for Questions Q17 – Q22 was randomized.]

Question Q17

I am going to read a list of services provided by your town or county and ask you to rate the quality of each one.

How would you rate the quality of the local police?

[IF NECESSARY: By local police, I mean the police in your town or county]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	27	41
Good	48	43
Fair	17	12
Poor	5	2
Don't know	3	3
Refused	0	0

Question Q18

How would you rate the quality of local garbage collection and sanitation services?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	33	29
Good	47	43
Fair	12	12
Poor	5	4
Don't know	2	10
Refused	1	4

Question Q19

How would you rate the quality of the local public parks and gardens?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	18	38
Good	50	44
Fair	23	12
Poor	6	2
Don't know	3	4
Refused	0	0

Question Q20

How would you rate the quality of the local roads and highways?

[IF NECESSARY: This includes the cost of maintenance, reconstruction, and so on]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	8	13
Good	36	42
Fair	37	29
Poor	18	16
Don't know	0	0
Refused	0	0

Question Q21

How would you rate the quality of the public libraries?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	40	46
Good	44	38
Fair	8	6
Poor	2	1
Don't know	5	9
Refused	0	0

Question Q22

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	24	41
Good	40	38
Fair	18	10
Poor	10	1
Don't know	8	9
Refused	1	0

Question Q23

Now thinking overall, how would you rate the quality of all of the local services we have discussed?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	12	29
Good	63	59
Fair	23	11
Poor	2	1
Don't know	1	0
Refused	0	0

Question Q24

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...

[IF NECESSARY: Please think about the services we have discussed: schools, parks, libraries, roads, police, and sanitation]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	3	12
Good	31	50
Fair	42	27
Poor	21	9
Don't know	4	2
Refused	0	0

[Note: The order of the answer options for Question Q25 was randomized.]

Question Q25

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?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Local police	9	9
Local garbage collection and sanitation services	2	1
Local parks and gardens	5	1
Local roads and highways	18	39
Public libraries	2	2
Local public schools	45	38
Local Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	15	7
Don't know	5	2
Refused	1	1

[Note: The order of the answer options for Question Q26 was randomized.]

Question Q26

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?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Local police	16	6
Local garbage collection and sanitation services	17	31
Local parks and gardens	32	31
Local roads and highways	5	4
Public libraries	11	14
Local public schools	7	5
Local Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	6	3
Don't know	5	6
Refused	2	1

Question Q27

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]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Taxes should remain the same	77	67
Taxes should increase to fund local services	15	25
Don't know	5	7
Refused	4	1

Question Q28

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
All of the time	4	5
Most of the time	22	46
Some of the time	55	39
Almost never	17	7
Don't know	2	3
Refused	0	0

[Note: Question Q28_LI was asked to participants residing in Nassau and Suffolk counties (Long Island) only.]

Question Q28_LI

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

	Nassau/Suffolk
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 Q29

If you had an issue that required the assistance of an elected Nassau/Suffolk/Fairfax/Loudoun County official, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to get the official or a member of their staff to consider your situation?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very easy	10	14
Somewhat easy	27	31
Somewhat difficult	38	29
Very difficult	19	13
Don't know	7	13
Refused	0	1

[Note: Question Q29_LI was asked to participants residing in Nassau and Suffolk counties (Long Island) only. Participants living in Fairfax and Loudoun counties went directly to Question Q30.]

Question Q29_LI

If you had an issue that required the assistance of an elected official in your TOWN, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to get the official or a member of their staff to consider your situation?

	Nassau/Suffolk
Very easy	10
Somewhat easy	33
Somewhat difficult	35
Very difficult	14
Don't know	7
Refused	0

Question Q30

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very favorable	6	20
Somewhat favorable	58	59
Somewhat unfavorable	26	14
Very unfavorable	7	4
Don't know	3	3
Refused	0	0

Question Q31

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

[FOR RESIDENTS OF FAIRFAX OR LOUDOUN: By local schools I mean the high school and feeder elementary and middle schools attended by children in your neighborhood]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	24	29
Good	38	38
Fair	13	9
Poor	4	2
Don't know	20	22
Refused	0	1

Question Q32

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

[FOR RESIDENTS OF FAIRFAX OR LOUDOUN: By local schools I mean the high school and feeder elementary and middle schools attended by children in your neighborhood]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	14	21
Good	35	39
Fair	22	13
Poor	9	4
Don't know	20	22
Refused	0	1

Question Q33

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

[FOR RESIDENTS OF FAIRFAX OR LOUDOUN: By local schools I mean the high school and feeder elementary and middle schools attended by children in your neighborhood]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	21	35
Good	44	38
Fair	17	10
Poor	6	3
Don't know	13	14
Refused	0	1

Question Q34

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
All of the time	8	7
Most of the time	35	45
Some of the time	35	28
Almost never	11	4
Don't know	12	15
Refused	0	1

Question Q35

As far as you know, how easy or difficult is it for a parent to make the School Board aware of a specific problem in the local schools/school district?

[FOR RESIDENTS OF FAIRFAX OR LOUDOUN: By local schools I mean the high school and feeder elementary and middle schools attended by children in your neighborhood]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very easy	19	16
Somewhat easy	30	33
Somewhat difficult	24	19
Very difficult	6	7
Don't know	21	25
Refused	1	1

Question Q36

How well informed are you about the decisions and actions taken by your School Board?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very well informed	18	15
Somewhat well informed	39	34
Not very well informed	20	22
Not at all well informed	14	19
Don't know	9	10
Refused	0	1

Question Q37

What percentage of your total town/county property tax bill do you estimate goes toward the school taxes?

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Less than 40%	19	25
40% to 60%	25	16
Greater than 60%	15	6
Don't know	40	51
Refused	1	2

Question Q38

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...

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	11	23
Good	37	47
Fair	30	16
Poor	13	4
Don't know	10	11
Refused	0	0

Question Q39

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Roughly the same amount is spent on each child in the county	15	28
A little more money is spent on some and a little less on others	30	31
A lot more money is spent on some and a lot less is spent on others	33	23
Don't know	21	17
Refused	1	2

Question Q40

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Better	5	8
Worse	35	20
The same	51	62
Don't know	9	9
Refused	1	1

[Note: Questions Q41_LI through Q43_LI are asked to participants residing on Long Island only]

Question Q41_LI

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?

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

Question Q42_LI

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?

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

Question Q43_LI

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?

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

Question Q44

How long have you lived in Nassau/Suffolk/Fairfax/Loudoun County?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Under six months	1	6
Six months to a year	1	2
One year to two years	2	4
Between two and five years	6	16
Between five and ten years	9	18
Over 10 years	56	47
All my life	25	8
Don't know	0	0
Refused	0	0

Question Q45

Overall, how would you rate Long Island/Fairfax County/Loudoun County as a place to live?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Excellent	36	47
Good	46	44
Fair	14	7
Poor	4	2
Don't Know	0	0
Refused	0	0

Question Q46

How strongly do you identify with Long Island/Fairfax County/Loudoun County?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very strongly	56	31
Fairly strongly	31	46
Not very strongly	9	17
Not at all	3	5
Don't know	1	2
Refused	0	0

Question Q47

How strong a sense of community do you feel there is on Long Island/in Fairfax County/in Loudoun County? Is it ...

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very strong	25	23
Somewhat strong	53	50
Not very strong	17	20
None at all	3	5
Don't know	1	2
Refused	0	0

Question Q48

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very easy	22	34
Somewhat easy	32	36
Somewhat difficult	26	20
Very difficult	17	9
Don't know	3	2
Refused	0	1

Question Q49

What do you like BEST about living on Long Island/in Fairfax County/in Loudoun County?

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Accessibility to city, location	15	22
Convenient to shopping, restaurants, recreational activities	8	9
Accessibility to beaches, water activities, parks	25	2
Environment, open space, peaceful, etc	14	10
Friends, family, roots, born & raised in area	14	9
Climate, seasons	4	0
Proximity to work, jobs	3	11
Community, neighborhood	5	6
Diversity	1	2
Education, good schools	2	10
Quality of life, quality of services	6	14
Safety, security	2	3
Other	3	4
Don't know	0	0
Refused	0	0

Question Q50

What do you like LEAST about living on Long Island/in Fairfax County/in Loudoun County?
[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Expensive, high cost of living, economy	16	9
Taxes, property taxes	21	5
Lack of affordable housing, high housing costs	1	2
Traffic, commute, roads, distance to work	21	44
Overcrowding, urban sprawl, overdevelopment	13	16
Immigrants, diversity	1	3
Racism, discrimination, segregation	2	2
Government, local politics, services	1	2
Inadequate public transportation	1	2
Distance from city, lack of culture	2	3
Climate	2	0
Crime	4	1
Lack of jobs	0	1
Schools, education	1	2
Nothing bad	2	3
Other	5	4
Don't know	6	4
Refused	0	0

Question Q51

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Better	14	30
Worse	31	16
Same/No difference	48	48
Don't know	6	7
Refused	0	0

Question Q52

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Better	20	32
Worse	28	15
Same/No difference	42	48
Don't know	10	4
Refused	0	1

Question Q53

How would you rate the growth of jobs in Nassau/Suffolk/Fairfax/Loudoun 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]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Increased	18	48
Decreased	29	8
Remained the same	35	31
Don't know	18	13
Refused	0	0

Question Q54

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Increased	20	43
Decreased	39	12
Remained the same	22	27
Don't know	18	17
Refused	1	0

Question Q55

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Liberal	23	24
Moderate	32	40
Conservative	32	29
Don't know	9	4
Refused	4	3

Question Q56

In what year were you born?

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
18 to 34	25	28
35 to 49	33	33
50 to 64	25	28
65 or older	17	11
Don't know/Refused	0	0

Question Q57

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
None [Go to Q61]	56	54
One	15	20
Two	16	19
Three	8	4
Four	4	2
Five	1	0
Six	0	1
Don't know	0	0
Refused	1	1

Question Q58

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

Do any of these children attend the local public schools?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Yes	79	77
No	21	22
Don't know	0	0
Refused	0	1

Question Q59

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
One	22	15
Two	45	62
Three	14	13
Four	16	4
Five	2	3
Six	0	2
Seven	1	0
Eight	0	0
Nine	0	0
Don't know	0	0
Refused	1	1

Question Q60

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Yes	31	21
No	69	78
Don't know	0	0
Refused	1	0

Question Q61

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Very likely	38	37
Somewhat likely	19	19
Not very likely	23	15
Not at all likely	16	23
Don't know	5	6
Refused	0	0

Question Q62

What is the highest grade of school, year of college, or highest degree that you have received?
[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
No High School	4	3
Some High School	6	4
High School Graduate	29	14
Some college, no degree	17	15
Associate's Degree	8	6
Bachelor's Degree	20	32
Graduate or Professional Degree	15	25
Don't know/Refused	2	1

Question Q63

Are you currently...

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Employed for wages full-time	46	56
Employed for wages part-time	13	5
Self-employed	9	11
Out of work for more than 1 year	1	1
Out of work for less than 1 year	1	2
Homemaker	6	8
Full-time student	2	5
Retired	19	12
Unable to work / permanently disabled	3	1
Don't know	0	0
Refused	0	1

Question Q64

[Asked only of employed respondents]

On a typical workday, do you commute to work in New York City/Washington D.C.?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Yes	21	23
No	79	78
Don't know	0	0
Refused	0	0

Question Q65*[Asked only of employed respondents]*

On a typical workday, how many minutes does it take you to commute each way to work?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Less than 15 minutes	32	18
Between 15 minutes and 30 minutes	28	31
Between 30 minutes and 45 minutes	13	26
Between 45 minutes and 1 hour	7	13
Between 1 hour and 2 hours	16	9
More than 2 hours	1	1
Don't know	1	2
Refused	0	1

Question Q66*[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?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Increased	29	40
Decreased	6	7
Remained the same	64	50
Don't know	1	3
Refused	0	1

Question Q67*[Asked only of employed respondents]*

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

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Federal government	2	18
State government	8	2
Local government	6	4
Public school district	10	5
Private employer	63	60
Non-profit organization	4	8
Something else	3	2
Don't know	1	0
Refused	2	1

[Note: The following question was asked of retired and unemployed respondents only.]

Question Q67_RET

For most of your working life, were you employed by the federal government, state government, local government, local public school district, a private employer, or a non-profit organization?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Federal government	3	24
State government	12	3
Local government	5	1
Local public school district	6	5
Private employer	62	53
Non-profit organization	2	8
Something else	9	4
Don't know	1	3
Refused	1	1

Question Q68

What is/was your occupation?

[IF MORE THAN ONE JOB: Your main job]

[Open-ended question, with recoded responses]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Professional/Manager/Owner	29	57
Teacher/Librarian/Professor	10	5
Sales, Clerical or Service Worker	39	26
Skilled Laborer or Tradesman	11	3
Semi/Unskilled Labor	8	4
Don't Know	1	3
Refused	3	2

Question Q69

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]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Less than \$35,000	23	12
\$35,000 to less than 70,000	27	21
\$70,000 to less than 110,000	25	27
\$110,000 and more	25	41
Don't know	0	0
Refused	0	0

Question Q70

Are you Hispanic or Latino/Latina?

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Yes	12	12
No	86	87
Don't know/Refused	2	1

Question Q71

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].

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
White	75	64
Black or African American	8	8
Hispanic or Latino	8	7
Asian	4	15
Pacific Islander	0	1
Native American or Alaskan Native	0	1
Black and another category	1	1
Don't know/Refused	4	3

Question Q72

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

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Married	58	68
Not married, living with a partner	4	3
Separated	2	1
Divorced	7	8
Widowed	9	3
Never married	19	16
Don't know	0	0
Refused	2	1

Question Q73

Is your spouse/partner currently...

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Employed for wages full-time	56	63
Employed for wages part-time	12	6
Self-employed	8	5
Out of work for more than 1 year	1	1
Out of work for less than 1 year	0	1
Homemaker	5	13
Full-time student	0	1
Retired	14	8
Unable to work / permanently disabled	2	1
Don't know	0	1
Refused	1	1

Question GENDER

[INTERVIEWER: WHAT IS THE RESPONDENT'S GENDER]

	Nassau/Suffolk	Fairfax/Loudoun
Female	51	50
Male	49	50