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SIENA COLLEGE, LOUDONVILLE, NY
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For information/comment: Dr. Don Levy: 518-783-2901

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Annual Statewide Poll of Holiday Spending Plans

53% of NY'ers Plan to Spend Less on Holidays This Year
Economy, Stock Market, Heating Concerns Slow Seasonal Shopping
Gas Prices, Family, Friends and Good Will Provides Some Holiday Cheer

Loudonville, NY – A majority of New York consumers plan to spend less on holiday gifts this season than they did last year. Fifty-three percent, up from 35% last year, intend to cut back on their spending according to a new statewide survey of consumers released today by the Siena Research Institute. Sixty percent will still buy gifts for the same number of people but nearly one-third plan to cut names off their shopping list and 42% intend to spend less on each recipient. Majorities of consumers blame the economy and stock market declines and 41% see concerns over winter heating bills having a negative effect on holiday spending plans.

“The economy isn’t stealing the holidays, but New Yorkers say they are going to slow their spending this season,” according to Dr. Don Levy, SRI’s Director. “Growing numbers of consumers say that their financial situation is worsening so it is no surprise that despite excitement over the holiday season, many say they intend to draw back the gift budget and enjoy each other’s companionship with fewer gifts. The cash registers will still ring, but according to consumers the volume will be down again this year.”

Forty-five percent of New Yorkers say that their financial situation has deteriorated since last holiday season as opposed to only 14% that say it has improved. While last year 54% of reporting consumers said they intended to spend less than \$600 on gifts at this point in the holiday season, this year 61% plan to hold spending under \$600. Last year, 33% of consumers planned to spend \$1000 or more on gifts, this year, 23% of all consumers, 30% of suburbanites but only 17% of Upstaters and 10% of low income consumers plan to spend \$1000 or more.

A majority of state residents (56%) blame the economy for negatively affecting their holiday spending plans. Nearly two-thirds of both suburbanites and New Yorkers earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 cite the negative effects of the economy. Fifty-three percent say that recent declines on the stock market are curtailing holiday spending while 41% cite both concerns over home heating costs as well as state budget worries.

Recent gas price reductions are having a positive spending effect for 51% of New Yorkers and the election of Barack Obama as President is seen as motivating spending by one-third of New Yorkers.

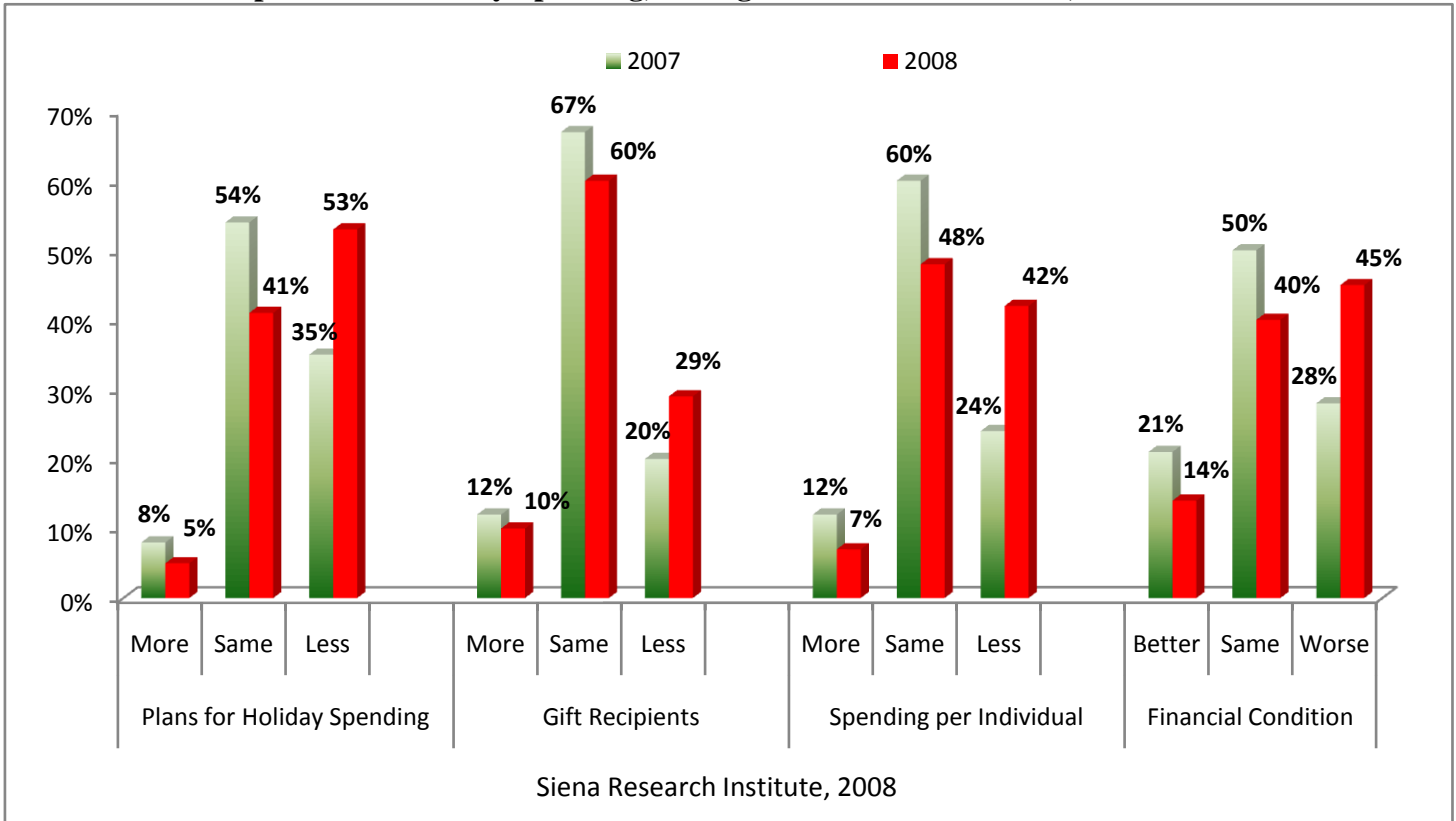
More New Yorkers, 48% this year as compared to 38% last year, plan to do at least some of their holiday shopping online. This year, 46% of consumers plan to purchase gift cards as compared with 44% last year.

Despite the difficult economic times, 63% of New Yorkers are either somewhat or very (24%) excited about the upcoming holiday season. Young people (72%) and upper income New Yorkers (75%) are most excited. Spending time with family and friends is the overwhelming favorite part of the holiday season cited by 74% of state residents. The commercialization of the holiday (33%) and “how hectic it is” (24%) are the least favorite parts.

New Yorkers again this year plan to make donations of money, food and gifts to charity during the holiday season. Seventy-seven percent will donate down just slightly from last year’s 79%. Volunteering plans are up this year with 37% saying they will help others this season compared with 34% in 2007.

The SRI survey of Holiday Spending Plans was conducted November 16-18 by random telephone calls to 623 New York State residents over the age of 18. SRI reports this data at a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of ± 3.9 points. For more information or comments, please call Dr. Don Levy, Director Siena College Research Institute, at 518-783-2901. Survey cross-tabulations and frequencies can be found at www.siena.edu/sri/resesearch

Comparison of Holiday Spending, Giving and Financial Outlook, 2007 to 2008



Comparison of Holiday Budgets 2007 and 2008

