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***Special New York State Survey: Community Participation and Involvement***

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***75% of NY'ers Give to Charity; 60% Volunteer***

***Citizens, Especially Young, Wary of Local Gov, Each Other; Seniors Most Trusting  
Majority Prefer Time with Friends to Meetings, Political Rallies or Clubs  
One-Third Attend Religious Services Weekly***

**Loudonville, NY** – Seventy-five percent of New Yorkers have over the last year contributed money or property to a local charity according to a new survey released today from the Siena (College) Research Institute (SRI). Just over 60% have volunteered at least once in the last year for some community organization, but only one in four volunteer at least once a month while 39% never volunteer. A majority of New York residents (52%) say that in dealing with other people, “You can’t be too careful” as opposed to 44% that believe that most people can be trusted.

Nearly 60% of residents have had friends over to their home over the last month and 53% have visited the homes of others. But 60% did not, over the last year, attend a public meeting discussing local issues, 71% did not attend a political meeting, and 45% did not go to any club or organization meeting last year. One-third of New Yorkers attend religious services at least weekly (4% nearly every day) while just under a quarter (22%) never go to a house of worship.

Thirty-one percent of all households give more than \$500 a year to charity. Sixty-one percent of households earning over \$100,000 donate at or above \$500, 32% of middle income (\$50k to \$100K) donate at that level and 22% of those earning less than \$50,000 contribute over \$500 annually. Only 10% of residents did not donate any items like food, blood, or clothing to the needy in their community over the past twelve months. Twenty-six percent overall volunteer for some community organization, charity or cause with older New Yorkers, religiously affiliated, rural and upstate residents, and high income citizens volunteering at higher rates.

“In these difficult economic times, some will read charitable giving and volunteering as half empty, others as half full,” according to SRI Director, Dr. Don Levy. “Many New Yorkers generously give of their dollars and time. Still it seems that when we look at ourselves and see that a majority seldom at most give time, a small donation or a check to help others, there is room for us to do more.”

While a majority of all New Yorkers and 62% of young people are more inclined to be wary of rather than trust others, in general, a majority of all residents do trust the people in their neighborhood or community, their local police and the people who work in their local stores either somewhat or a lot. But only 9% trust their local government a lot while 25% say only a little and 16% say not at all.

Residents are most inclined to trust in descending order: other members of their religious organization, the police, people in their neighborhood, store workers, and local government.

Seventy-six percent of all New Yorkers attend religious services at least a few times a year. While 22% never attend, 31% attend a few times a year, 13% attend once or twice a month, 28% weekly and 4% nearly every day. Religious attendance is greater among older residents, women, Catholics, Protestants, and Republicans. Twenty-eight percent of the young do not attend religious services at all.

“Historically, attendance at a place of worship has always been a major community connection. Today in New York, 53% of all residents, and over 40% of religiously affiliated citizens either do not attend at all or only attend a few times a year. Many New Yorkers may be finding new or different ways to be connected to one another”, Levy points out.

“New Yorkers are very social. Over 40% entertain more than once a month, and nearly that many visit friends’ homes just as often. About a third of all respondents have helped a neighbor with some project and the same number has spent casual social time with acquaintances at local hangouts. But when it comes to civic or political meetings fewer than ten percent show up regularly,” according to Levy.

Just under one fourth of New Yorkers are deeply committed to some club or organization. Twenty-two percent have during the last year served as a committee member or as an officer.

“New Yorkers may not join clubs or attend meetings in overwhelming numbers, but a majority say that they often talk to other members of their community about important local issues. Still, when asked where they get their information from, sixty-nine percent get it from the local newspaper and fifty-two percent say it comes from watching local television,” Levy says.

More residents indicate that they know the names of most of the people that live near them (54%) as say they do not (45%). Suburban and Upstate residents are most familiar with their neighbors. A similar majority, 56% as compared to 43%, say that they run into people they know when they are out on errands or conducting local business. Again, it is more true that people know their neighbors and see friends and acquaintances by chance in the course of an average day among suburbanites and upstaters as compared to urban or New York City residents.

Only 19% of all residents but 36% of young people say that they spend more time communicating with internet communities like Facebook than they do with local people and organizations.

“New Yorkers are guarded, but many do trust and help their neighbors. New York is home to many generous and giving people but while most keep informed about local concerns, few have time or inclination to attend meetings, join clubs or even attend religious services. Still, New Yorkers’ doors are open to entertain friends and enjoy one another’s company,” Levy notes.

**The Community Participation and Involvement Survey was conducted March 29 – April 20 and July 22 – August 3, 2009 by random telephone calls to 1515 New York State residents over the age of 18. Data was weighted to enhance representativeness. Results are reported with a margin of error of  $\pm 2.5$  points. For more information or comments, please call Dr. Don Levy, Director, Siena College Research Institute, at 518-783-2901 or [dlevy@siena.edu](mailto:dlevy@siena.edu). Survey cross-tabulations can be found at [www.siena.edu/sri/research](http://www.siena.edu/sri/research)**

