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## Special New York State Health Poll

### **44% of NY'ers Say, "I'm overweight"; 26% Dieting Nearly Half Describe Overall Health as Very Good or Excellent Less than 1/3 Very Physically Active; 43% Don't Get Enough Exercise One in Five Use Tobacco; 63% Consume Alcohol**

**Loudonville, NY.** Forty-four percent of New Yorkers describe themselves as either somewhat (39%) or very overweight (5%) and while twenty-six percent are currently trying to lose weight another forty-one percent are watching what they eat according to a new Siena College Research Institute Poll released today. Nearly half describe their health as either very good (33%) or as excellent (14%) but nineteen percent term their health as fair (16%) or poor (3%). Just under one-third (29%) describe themselves as very active while 50% say somewhat active and 21% indicate either not very (16%) or not at all active (5%) and when asked 43% say that they do not get as much physical exercise as they should during an average week. Nineteen percent of state residents use tobacco on a regular basis and 63% have had an alcoholic drink over the last year.

Over 90% of New Yorkers agree that obesity is a serious public health problem. More than three-quarters (76%) have all the information they need in order to eat a nutritious diet and 58% have had a doctor talk to them about diet, exercise or nutrition. Still, 44% describe themselves as overweight. More women (48%) than men (40%) consider themselves to be overweight. Currently two-thirds are focused on their weight with 26% actively dieting and 41% watching what they eat. Fifty-five percent of state residents have weighed themselves within the last week with 17% checking the scale on the day they were surveyed.

"When it comes to health, nutrition and exercise, knowing and doing just don't match up. Most New Yorkers have all the information they need, have medical advice, and say that in many cases they are making healthy life choices, but still only 28% of all residents report both that their health is great and their weight is about right," according to Dr. Don Levy, Director of the Siena College Research Institute.

Eighty-seven percent of all New Yorkers have a family doctor. Given five choices, 14% of citizens describe their overall health as excellent, 33% as very good, 34% as good, 16% as fair and 3% as poor. Of those that see their weight as about right, 56% say their health is very good or excellent but among those that acknowledge being overweight, only 37% describe their health as excellent or very good. Sixty-six percent of New Yorkers with a household income over \$100,000 report very good or excellent health while among those with an income below \$50,000 only 34% have very good or excellent health. Forty-one percent of New York households have at least one member currently taking medication for high blood pressure, 31% for high cholesterol, 20% for acid-reflux and 15% for depression or other emotional or psychological conditions.

Twenty-nine percent of New Yorkers describe their personal level of physical exercise and activity as very active, 50% as somewhat active, 16% as not very active and 5% as not at all active. Just over half say that they get as much physical exercise as they should but 43% admit to not getting the appropriate amount of exercise. Sixty-one percent of those with very good or excellent health feel they get the right amount of exercise while 58% of those with fair or poor health say that they do not get enough exercise. Ninety percent of New Yorkers with very good or excellent health describe themselves as either somewhat or very active while 42% of those with fair or poor health say that they are either not very or not at all active. Thirty-seven percent of all citizens report getting more than five hours of physical exercise per week but 10% of all New Yorkers and 21% of those with fair or poor health report getting no exercise at all.

“We can’t prove cause and effect with this survey, but New Yorkers that say their weight is about right tend to report better health and to have a more active lifestyle than those who say they are overweight. And those that describe their overall health as very good or excellent, are less likely to be overweight and more likely to be active than those with average, fair or poor health,” according to Levy.

Nineteen percent of New Yorkers use tobacco products on a regular basis. Nearly all (90%) of those tobacco users smoke cigarettes compared to 11% of tobacco users that smoke cigars and 4% of tobacco users that chew tobacco. Men are more likely to use tobacco at 22% as compared with women at 15%. Tobacco use declines with age and with income. Among New Yorkers with fair or poor health, twenty-seven percent use tobacco. Of those that smoke cigarettes, 47% smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day.

Sixty-three percent of New Yorkers report having consumed alcohol products including beer or wine in the last year. Men are more likely (70%) to consume alcohol than are women (56%). Young people are more likely to drink alcohol (75%) than are those age 35 – 54 (64%) or those that are age 55 and above (52%). Of those that drink, 46% have one or two drinks a week, while 21% average more than a drink a day. By 56% to 40%, New Yorkers agree that there is nothing wrong with having one or two drinks at the end of a day.

By greater than 2 to 1, New Yorkers (68% to 29%) do not think too many restrictions have been placed on where and when smokers can use tobacco products. Large majorities believe it would be a good idea to conduct free public workshops on fitness (92%) or on nutrition (90%), to offer public inexpensive weight loss programs (89%), to offer school facilities to the public for exercise and recreation (89%), and to display a simple nutritional score on food for sale in grocery stores (81%). In each case, a majority of New Yorkers that believe the idea is a good one say they would participate in these programs if they were available.

A plurality of New Yorkers oppose Governor Paterson’s proposal for an 18% sales tax on non-diet soda and fruit drinks with less than 70 percent natural fruit juice (47% to 23%).

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**This SRI survey was conducted January 29 - February 11, 2009 by telephone calls to 1005 New York State residents. It has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.0$  percentage points. Data was statistically weighted by respondent age, gender and region to ensure representativeness. For more information call Dr. Don Levy, SRI Director at 518.783.2901 or [dlevy@siena.edu](mailto:dlevy@siena.edu). For pdf of the release and cross tabulations, visit: [www.siena.edu/sri/research](http://www.siena.edu/sri/research).**