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Special New York State Coronavirus Crisis

62% Say Completely Opening Schools Runs Too Great a Risk; 32% Disagree
Two-Thirds Want Colleges to Deliver Remote Education
51% NY'ers Still Say Worst of Coronavirus Pandemic Yet to Come; 86%
Concerned NY Will Face Large Outbreak in Fall
Majorities NOT Comfortable Dining in Restaurants, Going to Gym, Theater, Bowling
Alley or Bar

Loudonville, NY – Sixty-two percent of New Yorkers say completely opening schools runs too great a risk of spreading the disease despite how hard not opening is on kids and families according to a new statewide survey of residents released today by the Siena College Research Institute (SCRI). Thirty-two percent say that we have to bring the children back to school and do our best to mitigate the risks. By 66-27 percent, New Yorkers say colleges should only deliver remote education and not bring students back to campus for the fall semester.

Just over half of state residents, 51 percent, down from 62 percent two months ago, think the worst of the coronavirus pandemic is still to come while 34 percent, up from 27 percent, think the worst is over. Eighty-six percent are somewhat or very concerned that New York will face another large outbreak of COVID-19 in the fall, and 80 percent, virtually unchanged from 78 percent in late June, are concerned that they or another member of their household will get sick with the virus.

As New York continues to reopen, large majorities are NOT comfortable with participating in 5 of 6 indoor activities. Fifty-eight percent are not comfortable with dining indoors in a restaurant, 72 percent with having a drink at a bar, 70 percent with working out at a gym, 73 percent with watching a movie at a theater and 65 percent with going to a bowling alley. New Yorkers are more comfortable with visiting a museum with 45 percent saying they are comfortable and 47 percent saying that they are not.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, 42 percent say that they have gained weight while 32 percent have lost weight. A majority, 51 percent, have reconnected with old friends or distant family, 41 percent have developed a new hobby and 13 percent have adopted a pet.

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Given three general approaches to public schools in the fall, 46 percent are in favor of keeping schools closed for now and providing remote instruction as best as teachers can to all students, 33 percent prefer providing instruction using a hybrid model where only some students come in each day and many students receive instruction some or all day online whether in the school building or at home, and 18 percent call to open schools for in person instruction for all students with precautions like social distancing and masks in place.

“As schools across New York grapple with whether to or how to open in the fall, by nearly two to one, New Yorkers say completely opening schools runs too great a risk,” according to SCRI Director, Don Levy.

“Despite recognizing how hard not opening is on kids and their families, only a third say that the negative effect on students is too great and that we have to bring the children back to school.”

“Offered a middle ground, the hybrid model in which only some students come in each day, class size is limited and online instruction is part of the education process, one-third of New Yorkers support a hybrid approach,” Levy said. “But even with the option of schools using a hybrid approach, 46 percent still support keeping the schools closed for now and providing remote instruction as best as teachers can to all students.”

“As many colleges across New York reopen and bring students to campus with health safety protocols in place, two-thirds of all New Yorkers, 70 percent of women, 72 percent of those 18-34 years of age, 73 percent of Democrats and a majority, 53 percent, of Republicans say that colleges should only deliver remote education and not bring students back to campus,” Levy said.

Unchanged from two months ago, 70 percent say the government’s priority should be to contain the spread of the coronavirus, even if it hurts the economy while 23 percent say the priority should be to restart the economy, even if it increases the risk to public health. New Yorkers continue to practice social distancing, wash their hands after touching any surface and wear masks as much as they can or completely at rates of at, or above, 90 percent.

The SCRI special Coronavirus Poll was conducted August 20 – 27, 2020 by random telephone calls to 343 New York adults via landline and cell phones and 402 responses drawn from a proprietary panel (Lucid) of New Yorkers. Telephone sampling was initiated by asking for the youngest person in the household. Telephone sampling was conducted via a stratified dual frame probability sample of landline and cell phone telephone numbers (land from ASDE Survey Sampler, cell from Dynata) from within New York State weighted to reflect known population patterns. Data from the telephone and web samples were blended and statistically adjusted by age, race/ethnicity, party and gender to ensure representativeness. SCRI reports this data at a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of ± 4.0 points including the design effects resulting from weighting. The Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in NYS. SCRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. For more information, call Dr. Don Levy, Director Siena College Research Institute, at 518-783-2901. For survey cross-tabs: www.Siena.edu/SCRI/research.

