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Special “Crime and Safety in New York Survey”

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61% Worry About Being Crime Victim; Half Worry About Their Safety in Public Places; 36% Felt Threatened by Stranger’s Behavior 40% Spent \$100+ on Safety including Security Systems, Personal Devices, Guns & Classes Nearly 1 in 10 Been Victim of Assault, Burglary, 38% Witnessed Violent or Threatening Behavior in Public; 41% Say ‘Never been this worried about safety’

Loudonville, NY – Sixty-one percent of New Yorkers are either very (21%) or somewhat (40%) concerned that they might be a victim of a crime according to a new survey of New York residents released today from the Siena College Research Institute (SCRI). Fifty-one percent of state residents have been concerned about their or their family’s safety in public places including schools, stores or houses of worship and over a third, 36%, of all New Yorkers have felt threatened over the past year in a public place by a stranger’s behavior.

Forty percent of state residents have spent \$100 or more in the last year on goods or services that make them feel safer or more protected from crime. Twelve percent have spent more than \$500. About a third have purchased home security cameras (34%) or security lights with motion sensors (32%). A quarter have hired a professionally monitored home security system. One out of every six New Yorkers has taken a self-defense class and 12% have purchased a firearm for self-defense.

Nearly 1 in 10 New Yorkers has over the past year been physically assaulted (9%) and similarly, 9% have been the victim of a burglary. Nearly 40% have witnessed violent or threatening behavior among others in a public setting. Forty-one percent say that they have “never been this worried about their personal safety as they are today” while a majority, 58%, say that they are no more worried about being the victim of a crime today than they have been in the past.

“Crime isn’t just something that happens to others far away according to New Yorkers,” said Don Levy, SCRI’s Director. “While 87% say crime is a serious problem in our state and 57% say it is a problem in their community, a disturbingly high 61% say that they are worried about it happening to them, a majority are concerned about themselves or their loved ones being safe in public places and many are taking steps to protect themselves as best they can.”

“Is this the worst it’s ever been? Forty-one percent of all New Yorkers with little variation across most demographic groups, say that they’ve never been this worried about their personal safety,” Levy said.

Percent of New Yorkers Taking Actions to Enhance their Safety over the Past Year						
Action	Total	Men	Women	NYC	Suburbs	Upstate
Purchased home security cameras	34%	39%	31%	39%	30%	31%
Purchased security lights with motion sensors	32%	35%	30%	33%	33%	30%
Purchased personal safety device other than a firearm such as a taser, pepper spray or related item	26%	26%	26%	35%	22%	16%
Purchased a professionally monitored home security system	24%	28%	21%	32%	23%	14%
Taken a self-defense class	16%	23%	11%	25%	11%	10%
Participated in a neighborhood watch program	16%	22%	11%	24%	9%	11%
Removed bumper stickers expressing personal beliefs	14%	19%	10%	22%	9%	9%
Moved out of residence to live in a safer area	13%	18%	9%	19%	9%	7%
Purchased a firearm for self-defense	12%	21%	5%	17%	8%	9%
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“New Yorkers across the entire state agree that crime is a serious problem but New York City residents are more likely to see crime as a serious problem in their community and as a threat to them personally compared to those that live in either the metro suburbs or upstate. And Gotham residents are two or more times more likely to have taken a self-defense class, joined a neighborhood watch, moved or purchased a gun in order to protect themselves than are residents of other parts of the state,” Levy noted.

Touched by Crime or the Threat of Crime

Nine percent of all residents but 16% of New York City residents have been physically assaulted over the last year. Similarly, 9% of New Yorkers and 16% of city residents have been the victim of a burglary over the past twelve months. Men are more likely than women to have been victimized and younger New Yorkers have been more affected than older New Yorkers. Sixteen percent have been the victim of identity theft over the last year with that crime hitting a quarter of New York City residents.

A full 38% have witnessed violent or threatening behavior among others in a public setting. Over half of those 18-34 have seen that type of behavior as have 46% of those 35-49 and city residents and 42% of men. Nearly as many, 36%, have felt threatened in a public place by a stranger’s behavior with that being true of half of young citizens and over 40% of city residents. Thirty-eight percent have felt threatened by the manner in which another person behaved in their car or other mode of transportation.

Percentage of New Yorkers Touched or Threatened by Crime							
	Total	NYC	Suburbs	Upstate	Under \$50K	\$50K-100K	Over \$100K
Concerned about safety in public places	51%	57%	41%	51%	50%	55%	52%
Concerned about safety after hearing about criminal activity in neighborhood	41%	53%	32%	31%	38%	42%	45%
Witnessed violent or threatening behavior	38%	46%	32%	31%	33%	36%	45%
Felt threatened by other’s behavior in car	38%	45%	31%	33%	32%	36%	45%
Concerned about safety due to behavior in neighborhood that you don’t condone	37%	48%	28%	28%	37%	35%	40%
Felt threatened by a stranger’s behavior in a public setting	36%	41%	30%	33%	38%	33%	38%
Been victim of identity theft	16%	24%	9%	11%	13%	15%	21%
Been victim of a burglary	9%	16%	6%	3%	6%	10%	11%
Been physically assaulted	9%	16%	4%	3%	8%	9%	10%
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“As sobering as the percentages are for having been actually victimized, or having witnessed threatening events, perhaps due to those numbers, even greater percentages are concerned that something may happen to them,” Levy said. “About forty percent are concerned about their safety due to hearing about things taking place in their neighborhood that they don’t condone and a similar percentage are worried due to criminal activity in their neighborhood.

“But more worrisome is that a majority of New Yorkers say that they are concerned about their or their family’s safety when thinking about being in public places, the places we all go, including schools, stores or religious institutions. Crime and the threat of crime is on the minds of many of us as we simply go through our everyday lives. Most say that they are no more worried than ever but over 40% say it’s the worst its ever been,” Levy said.

This Siena College Poll was conducted June 4 – 12, 2023 by random telephone calls to 382 New York adults via landline and cell phones and 420 responses drawn from a proprietary online panel of New Yorkers. Respondent sampling via phone was initiated by asking for the youngest person in the household. The overall results has an overall margin of error of +/- 3.7 percentage points including the design effects resulting from weighting. Telephone sampling was conducted via a stratified dual frame probability sample of landline (from ASDE Survey Sampler) and cell phone (from Dynata) telephone numbers 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, gender and party to ensure representativeness. 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 or comments, please call Dr. Don Levy at 518-783-2901. Survey cross-tabulations and buying plans can be found at www.siena.edu/scri/ci.