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Special “Optimism and Opportunity Survey”

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By 78-21%, New Yorkers More Optimistic Than Pessimistic

Compared to 50 Years Ago, Majorities Say More Opportunity to ‘Be Who You Are’ & Live a Healthy Life; Less Opportunity to Achieve Financial Security & Live in a Peaceful World

36% Spend More Time Each Day Being Happy, 28% More Time Worrying, 36% Equal Time Happy and Worried; Cost of Living, Politics & Health Lead to Worries, Daily Experiences, Interactions with Others Spur Happiness

Loudonville, NY –By 78-21% New Yorkers describe themselves more as optimistic than as pessimistic according to a new survey of New York residents released today from the Siena College Research Institute (SCRI). Asked whether there is more or less opportunity today than 50 years ago for people like them across a series of life attributes, majorities say there is more opportunity to ‘be who you are’ (58-19%), and to live a healthy life (52-28%) but 57% say there is less opportunity to live in a peaceful world and 50% say there is less opportunity to achieve financial security.

Thirty-six percent say that on most days they spend more time being happy or content while nearly as many, 28% say that they spend more time worrying. More than a third, 36% say that they spend about equal amounts of time both being happy and worrying. Asked whether each of seven things that many think about leads them to worry or to feel happy or content, large majorities say that politics and the state of the world (87%) and money and the cost of living (73%) make them worry. By 53-47% New Yorkers are more inclined to worry rather than to feel happy when thinking about their health or the health of those they love. Large majorities are more likely to feel happy not worried when thinking about their interactions with others (80%), things they may have said or done (72%) and things on their to-do list (61%).

“Despite politics, world affairs and pocketbook issues keeping large majorities of New Yorkers up at night, an overwhelming percentage of citizens call themselves optimists rather than pessimists,” said Don Levy, SCRI’s Director. “As a prying pollster, we asked people to describe the tone of their inner dialogue – left alone with their thoughts are they worrying, being happy or jumping back and forth? While more than a quarter admit to being worriers, over a third spend more time being happy and more than a third swing from worrying to smiling.”

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More, less or the same opportunity as 50 years ago			
	More	Less	The same
To be who you are	58%	19%	22%
To live a healthy life	52%	28%	19%
To pursue your dreams	42%	36%	21%
To have access to clean air and water	39%	38%	23%
To be free from threat of crime	28%	48%	24%
To achieve financial security	33%	50%	16%
To live in a peaceful world	23%	57%	19%
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“Although New Yorkers overwhelmingly say that they are optimistic rather than pessimistic, when asked whether thinking about money or the state of the world makes them feel worried or happy, between 73% and 87% say that those thoughts worry them,” Levy said. “Those earning less than \$50k admit that on most days they are more likely to spend time worrying rather than being happy.”

Percent saying when thinking about each of the following they are worried or happy		
	Worried or concerned	Happy or content
Politics, state of the world	87%	12%
Money, cost of living	73%	27%
Your health, health of loved ones	53%	47%
Your personal safety	40%	59%
Things on your to do list	37%	61%
Things you may have said or done	27%	72%
Interactions with others	19%	80%
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“When it comes to politics or the state of the world, 87% of us all with little or no difference by income or gender, are worried. However, what makes us smile are our interactions with others and our experiences,” Levy said.

“A plurality of New Yorkers say that technology including their phone, access to information and social media, improves rather than lessens their quality of life,” Levy said.

This Siena College Poll was conducted June 17 – June 29, 2024, among 806 New York State Residents. Of the 806 respondents, 423 were contacted through a dual frame (landline and cell phone) mode (100 completed via text to web) and 383 respondents were drawn from a proprietary online panel (Lucid). 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 +/- 3.9 percentage points including the design effects resulting from weighting when applied to buying plans and/or the perceived impacts of gas and food prices. As consumer sentiment is expressed as an index number developed after statistical calculations to a series of questions, “margin of error” does not apply to those indices. 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 region, 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.