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Capital Region Progress Report

68% Say Local Quality of Life Excellent/Good BUT Only 25% Think Things Improving, 38% Say Cap Region Getting Worse

Housing Availability & Affordability Top Challenges; 47% Say Cost of Living Worse Here than Elsewhere; Still, 70% Say Jobs Paying Living Wage Available

89% Feel Safe and Secure; Majorities Give Good Grades to Education and Healthcare; Mixed on Opportunities for Business and Young People

Cultural Assets – Performance Venues, Local Colleges, Recreational Opportunities, Airport Stand Out as Local Strengths

Loudonville, NY. The Capital Region Progress Report Survey, a new measurement of life in the area, shows that while over two-thirds of residents of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady say the quality of life is either excellent (11%) or good (57%), by 38-25% they think that as a place to live the area is getting worse. The Siena College Research Institute (SCRI) with sponsorship from Pioneer Bank conducted this survey to provide area citizens and stakeholders with data on how citizens view local affordability, livability, opportunity and cultural assets in order to establish benchmarks and support progress.

Seventy-five percent of resident negatively rate the availability of local affordable housing and residents are split, 48-49% whether it is likely or unlikely that a typical person in the area can afford quality housing. Nearly half, 47%, say the cost of living in the Capital Region is worse, rather than better (23%), than it is in other areas that they are familiar with. Still, 70% say that it is at least somewhat likely that a typical person in our area can get a job that provides them with a living wage and 69% say that affordable adult education is available.

“Despite dramatic concerns about affordability, residents feel as though job training and jobs can be had in the Capital Region,” said Siena College Research Institute Director Don Levy. “And true to our nickname – SmAlbany, many say that the sense of community is what they appreciate most about the area. Overwhelmingly they say they feel safe and secure in their homes and that the police are doing a good job protecting citizens.

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Eighty-nine percent say that residents feel safe and secure in their home and by 64-33% that the police are doing an excellent/good rather than only fair/poor job of keeping residents safe. A majority, 56-39% positively rate the quality of public education in the region but a larger majority, 65-31% negatively assess the responsiveness of local government.

“As far as livability is concerned, the Capital Region residents give the area high grades for healthcare both the quality of local hospitals and being able to obtain routine care,” Levy said. “On the other side of the ledger, traffic to some degree, how healthy and fit we are, public transportation and the weather detract from the local quality of life.”

“As a homegrown and locally headquartered institution dedicated to serving the Capital Region, we appreciate the expertise of the Siena College Research Institute in assessing the place we’re proud to call home,” said Tom Amell, President and CEO of Pioneer. “This report highlights the many strengths of our region, from quality of life and health care to cultural assets and a sense of community, while also noting areas we can improve, such as affordability. Importantly, it reinforces the need to work together to ensure a prosperous future for people, families, businesses throughout our region.”

Eighty-three percent think that it is likely that residents will receive a quality education for their children in the Capital Region and by 62-34% that it is an excellent/good rather than only fair/poor place to raise children. Over three-quarters, 77%, believe it is likely that a typical young person will graduate from high school. A small plurality, 46-41% say it is not likely that most residents that require it will be able to get quality affordable childcare.

“The Progress Report raises concerns for the future of young people in the region. Only 42% think it likely that a typical young person will be able to get a job with advancement possibilities and only 42% say it is likely that young people will be able to build a successful life here in the Capital Region,” Levy said. “Disturbingly, the same percentage, 42%, think it is likely that a typical local young person will end up abusing drugs or alcohol.”

“And despite the many strengths of the region – safety, education, healthcare – residents are evenly split, 48-48%, as to whether or not the Capital Region is a place right now where businesses can be successful,” Levy said.

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“While Capital Region residents express concerns over affordability and point to both positive and negative components of local livability and opportunities, when it comes to cultural assets, residents see many strengths,” Levy said.

Eighty-eight percent say that local performance venues like Proctors, The Egg, SPAC or the Palace Theatre enhance the quality of life here in the Capital Region. Similarly, nearly 90% say the local colleges and universities enhance the quality of life and at least 80% say the nearby recreational opportunities as well as the Albany Airport are strong local assets. About two-thirds also say that the MVP Arena as well as the Saratoga Race Track add to our region’s quality. Local parks are viewed favorably 69-30%.

Progress Report Scoring

In order to both establish benchmarks and to compare the Capital Region to the nation as a whole, we simultaneously consider all questions in the four different areas of the Report – affordability, livability, opportunity and cultural assets. We describe the composite scores for each area just as a teacher might when you attend a parent conference. Scoring ranges from excellent to good to only fair to poor. The appendix provides all questions in each area scored across those categories.

Capital Region		National
Low range of Only Fair	Affordability	High range of only fair
Good	Livability	Good
Low range of Good	Opportunity	Good
High range of Good	Cultural Assets	Not surveyed



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This Siena College Poll was conducted January 6 - 14, 2025, among 1,096 Capital Region Residents. Of the 1,096 respondents, 688 were contacted through a dual frame (landline and cell phone) mode (408 completed via MMS-to-web text). Telephone calls were conducted in English and respondent 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 weighted to reflect known population patterns. The landline telephone sample was obtained from ASDE and the cell phone sample was obtained from MSG. Interviews conducted online are excluded from the sample and final analysis if they fail any data quality attention check question. Duplicate responses are identified by their response ID and removed from the sample. Three questions were asked of online respondents including a honey-pot question to catch bots and two questions ask the respondent to follow explicit directions. The proprietary panel also incorporates measures that “safeguard against automated bot attacks, deduplication issues, fraudulent VPN usage, and suspicious IP addresses”. Coding of open-ended responses was done by a single human coder. Data from collection modes was weighted to balance sample demographics to match estimates for New York State’s population using data from the Census Bureau’s 2023 U.S. American Community Survey (ACS), on age, region, race/ethnicity, education, and gender to ensure representativeness. The sample was also weighted to match current patterns of party registration using data from the New York State Board of Elections. It has an overall margin of error of +/- 4.0 percentage points including the design effects resulting from weighting. Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error and there may be other unmeasured error in this or any other public opinion poll. 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. Donald Levy at (518) 783-2901. For survey crosstabs: <http://www.Siena.edu/SCRI>.

About Siena College Research Institute



Founded in 1980, the Siena College Research Institute conducts regional, statewide and national surveys on business, economic, political, voter, social, academic and historical issues. The surveys include both expert and public opinion polls.

About Pioneer



As a local financial institution for more than 135 years, Pioneer understands the importance of inspiring progress and building healthy communities. We’ve grown to become “More Than a Bank” with banking, insurance, employee benefits, and wealth management solutions across 22 Capital Region locations. Whether you’re an individual, a business, a municipality or public entity, Pioneer is willing to do what it takes to earn your business and help our neighborhoods and communities move All Together Forward.

The Siena College Research Institute and Pioneer is hosting an event on Siena College’s campus to present and interpret the results of the 2025 Capital Region Progress Report with stakeholders in the region. Promotional materials for the event will be available at <https://scri.siena.edu/2025-capital-region-progress-report/> at 4:00 PM.

Appendix – Scores for all Questions

Affordability				
Question Text	Capital Region		National	
	Score	Cluster	Score	Cluster
Overall Score	52	Only Fair	56	Only Fair
How likely for a typical person in your community is... having an affordable internet connection	67	Excellent	71	Excellent
How likely for a typical person in your community is... having access to affordable adult education, including job training	65	Good	64	Good
How likely for a typical person in your community is... being employed at a job that provides them with a living wage	61	Good	60	Good
Rate the following part of life in your community: the availability of affordable, high-quality fruits and vegetables	55	Only Fair	60	Good
How likely for a typical person in your community is... having access to affordable childcare if needed	48	Poor	58	Good
How likely for a typical person in your community is... being able to afford quality housing	48	Poor	52	Only Fair
Compared to other places that you've been, would you say your community is better or worse: the overall cost of living	41	Poor	47	Poor
Rate the following part of life in your community: the availability of affordable housing	28	Poor	39	Poor
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Livability I				
Question Text	Capital Region		National	
	Score	Cluster	Score	Cluster
Overall Score	61	Good	62	Good
How likely for a typical person in your community is... feeling safe and secure in their home	78	Excellent	74	Excellent
How likely for a typical person in your community is... being able to get routine medical care	74	Excellent	72	Excellent
How likely for a typical person in your community is... obtaining nutritious food at a convenient location	70	Excellent	70	Excellent
To what degree do you think each of the following improves quality of life in your community: our local hospitals	70	Excellent	-	-
To what degree do you think each of the following improves quality of life in your community: the quality of major highways in the Capital Region	65	Good	-	-
How likely for a typical person in your community is... having access to mental health or substance abuse treatment if it is needed	64	Good	66	Good
How likely do you think it is that a typical young person in your community will... be a victim of gun violence	63	Good	61	Good
Rate the following part of life in your community: the availability of the goods and services that meet your needs	62	Good	64	Good
How likely do you think it is that a typical young person in your community will... have access to good quality health care	60	Good	66	Good
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Livability II				
Question Text	Capital Region		National	
	Score	Cluster	Score	Cluster
Overall Score	61	Good	62	Good
Compared to other places that you've been, would you say your community is better or worse: the quality of the environment	59	Good	60	Good
Compared to other places that you've been, would you say your community is better or worse: traffic	57	Only Fair	54	Only Fair
Rate the following part of life in your community: the job done by the police to keep residents safe	57	Only Fair	60	Good
Rate the following part of life in your community: the availability of healthcare	56	Only Fair	61	Good
Rate the following part of life in your community: the quality of public education	54	Only Fair	59	Good
Compared to other places that you've been, would you say your community is better or worse: the health and fitness of most people that live here	49	Only Fair	56	Only Fair
Compared to other places that you've been, would you say your community is better or worse: the quality of public transportation	47	Poor	49	Only Fair
Compared to other places that you've been, would you say your community is better or worse: the weather	47	Poor	57	Only Fair
Rate the following part of life in your community: how responsive local government is to the needs of residents	37	Poor	48	Poor
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Opportunity				
Question Text	Capital Region		National	
	Score	Cluster	Score	Cluster
Overall Score	59	Good	60	Good
How likely for a typical person in your community is... receiving quality education for their children	74	Excellent	70	Excellent
How likely do you think it is that a typical young person in your community will... graduate from high school	74	Excellent	73	Excellent
How likely do you think it is that a typical young person in your community will... be in a gang	68	Excellent	66	Good
How likely do you think it is that a typical young person in your community will... get arrested for a felony	61	Good	56	Only Fair
How likely do you think it is that a typical young person in your community will... get a job with opportunities for advancement	58	Good	61	Good
How likely do you think it is that a typical young person in your community will... build a successful life in the Capital Region	58	Good	61	Good
Rate the following part of life in your community: as a place to raise children	57	Only Fair	62	Good
Rate the following part of life in your community: the ability of residents to obtain suitable employment	53	Only Fair	53	Only Fair
Rate the following part of life in your community: as place where businesses can be successful	48	Poor	58	Good
How likely do you think it is that a typical young person in your community will... abuse drugs or alcohol	41	Poor	45	Poor
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Cultural Assets				
Question Text	Capital Region		National	
	Score	Cluster	Score	Cluster
Overall Score	64	Good	-	-
To what degree do you think each of the following improves quality of life in your community: performance venues like Proctors, the Egg, SPAC or the Palace theatre	81	Excellent	-	-
To what degree do you think each of the following improves quality of life in your community: colleges and universities in the Capital Region	79	Excellent	-	-
To what degree do you think each of the following improves quality of life in your community: nearby recreational opportunities	73	Excellent	-	-
To what degree do you think each of the following improves quality of life in your community: Albany International Airport	72	Excellent	-	-
To what degree do you think each of the following improves quality of life in your community: the MVP Arena	65	Good	-	-
To what degree do you think each of the following improves quality of life in your community: Saratoga Race Course	62	Good	-	-
Rate the following part of life in your community: the condition of public parks, and other public recreational facilities	60	Good	63	Good
Compared to other places that you've been, would you say your community is better or worse: the quality of local restaurants	58	Good	59	Good
To what degree do you think each of the following improves quality of life in your community: local media outlets	56	Only Fair	-	-
To what degree do you think each of the following improves quality of life in your community: the presence of State Government here in Albany	53	Only Fair	-	-
Compared to other places that you've been, would you say your community is better or worse: having family entertainment attractions	49	Only Fair	52	Only Fair
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