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Special New York State Leisure Poll

NY'ers Low on Leisure Time; Men Have More than Women *Listening to Music, Watching TV, Talking on the Phone Top Pastimes* 60% Want to Be More Physically Active; Nearly ¼ Wish TV, Computer Were Off *Lack of Motivation, Household Chores, and Costs Biggest Obstacles*

Loudonville, NY. Thirty-eight percent of New Yorkers have less than two hours to spend in leisure during an average weekday according to a new poll released today by the Siena College Research Institute. Men have more time away from paid work or household responsibilities during the week with only thirty-one percent having less than two free hours as compared with nearly half (45%) of all women. New Yorkers listen to music, watch TV and talk to friends or family on the phone nearly every day, most among a list of twenty-three categories of leisure activities.

Physical activities including sports, the gym or walking finished seventh behind listening to music, watching TV, talking on the phone and also internet surfing, sitting and relaxing, and reading. But sixty percent of New Yorkers said they would like to be physically active more frequently. Nearly one in four said they would like to watch less television and spend less time on the internet. Over seventy percent of citizens agreed that often they just don't feel like doing anything and nearly that many cited costs (70%) and household responsibilities (68%) as why they cannot enjoy more recreation.

"Both during the week and on the weekend, men of all ages report having more free time than do women," according to Dr. Don Levy, SRI's Director. "While men and women engage in most activities including television and listening to music at about the same rates, when it comes to shopping, prayer, talking on the phone and playing cards, women lead while men much prefer video games, physical activities, sporting events, going to restaurants and bars or just sitting and relaxing."

The top ten leisure activities ranged from three being practiced by most New Yorkers on nearly a daily basis (listening to music, watching TV and talking on the phone) to four that many New Yorkers do more than several times a week (surfing the internet, sitting and relaxing, reading and physical activities) to three that most enjoy at least several times a month (emailing, spending time with friends and spending time in prayer or meditation). At the bottom of the frequency rankings across all residents were video games, going to sporting events, attending public meetings, lectures or clubs at an average rate of only about once a year.

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“New Yorkers say fun time is shrinking. While fifty percent continue to have as much time to rejuvenate as they had last year, nearly a third of all residents and nearly half of 18 – 34 year olds say they have less leisure time today than they did a year ago, ” according to Levy.

A majority of New Yorkers would like to engage more frequently in physical activities (60%), spending time with friends (50%), spending time outdoors in activities that include gardening, camping and boating (50%), as well as visiting museums and landmarks (63%) and attending cultural events (59%). Large pluralities would also like to increase time spent sitting and relaxing (43%), reading for pleasure (44%), visiting with relatives (48%), and working on crafts and hobbies (44%). The only pastimes that more New Yorkers would like to do less as opposed to more are watching television (22% to 9%), surfing the internet (23% to 11%), and playing video games (11% to 8%).

“Aside from staring at screens, New Yorkers wish they had more time to do the things they enjoy and those things that allow them to be the person they really feel they are. Over eighty percent use leisure to strengthen relationships, and about three in four say that leisure activities both bring out the best in them and allow them to express the true ‘me’. New Yorkers say they want to have more fun but don’t have enough time, energy or money given work commitments and family responsibilities,” according to Levy.

Seventy-five percent of all residents agree that sometimes they just don’t feel like doing anything and fifty-six percent do not engage in leisure activities because they are simply too tired. Sixty-eight percent of all New Yorkers, seventy-seven percent of married residents and eighty-six percent of respondents with children, agree that their household responsibilities prevent them from enjoying leisure activities. The high cost of some leisure activities keep seventy percent of New Yorkers from participating in those pastimes.

“While leisure time is in short supply during the week especially for married residents, households with children and employed New Yorkers, there continues to be reason to celebrate the weekend. Over half of all New Yorkers, sixty-two percent of men and forty-six percent of women devote more than four hours a day on Saturday and Sunday to their favorite pastimes. Nearly two-thirds of 18 – 34 year olds have four or more hours of fun on the weekends and although twenty-one percent of parents of young children still have less than two hours to themselves on the weekends, forty-five percent of New York parents enjoy four or more hours of recreation on the weekend,” according to Levy.

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This SRI survey was conducted March 11 - 25, 2009 by telephone calls to 623 New York State residents. It has a margin of error of ± 3.9 percentage points. Data was statistically adjusted by age, gender and geography to ensure representativeness. For more information, pdf of the release and cross tabulations, visit: www.siena.edu/sri/research.