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Siena College Poll shows quality of life rated high, yet affordability concerns persist

by **Michael Hallisey** — April 16, 2025 in albany Reading Time: 3 mins read



Local progress report smells rosy

LOUDONVILLE—A majority of Capital Region residents continue to view their quality of life favorably despite concerns over affordability and the local economy, according to a new Siena College Poll released Friday, April 11.

It's worth noting, however, that the survey was conducted in early January—before President Donald Trump took office and issued sweeping tariffs that many economists and world leaders have described as igniting a global trade war.

The inaugural Capital Region Progress Report, conducted by the Siena College Research Institute in partnership with Pioneer Bank, shows that 68% of residents in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties rate the region's quality of life as either excellent or good.

However, the report reveals a more complex picture when it comes to the area's trajectory, with 38% of respondents saying life in the region is getting worse, compared to just 25% who believe things are improving.

The survey of more than 1,000 residents highlights a growing concern over the availability and cost of housing. Three-quarters of respondents gave negative ratings to local affordable housing options, and nearly half believe the Capital Region's overall cost of living is worse than that of other areas they know. While opinions were nearly split on whether typical residents can afford quality housing, 70% said jobs that offer a living wage are at least somewhat accessible.

"Despite dramatic concerns about affordability, residents feel as though job training and jobs can be had in the Capital Region," said Don Levy, director of the Siena College Research Institute. He added that many respondents appreciated the sense of community, which remains a defining characteristic of the area.

Safety remains a strong point, with 89% of residents saying they feel safe and secure in their homes and 64% giving positive marks to local police. Public education also received favorable ratings, with 56% grading it as excellent or good, although fewer respondents felt local government was responsive to community needs.

Healthcare earned high marks, with a majority expressing satisfaction with both hospital care and routine medical access. Traffic, physical fitness, public transportation, and weather were identified as detracting factors from overall livability.

When asked about opportunities, particularly for younger residents, respondents were less optimistic. Forty-two percent said they believed a typical young person could build a successful life in the region, while the same number expressed concern that local youth are likely to struggle with substance abuse. Additionally, only 42% think it is likely that young people will secure jobs with room for advancement.

Opinions were evenly divided on whether the Capital Region currently offers a good environment for business, with 48% on each side. Meanwhile, access to quality childcare remains a challenge, with 46% saying it is unlikely that most residents who need such care can obtain it affordably.

Still, many cultural and community assets stood out as strengths.

Nearly 90% of respondents praised the impact of local colleges, performance venues such as SPAC, The Egg, and Proctors, and recreational amenities, including area parks and the Albany International Airport. Two-thirds of respondents said the MVP Arena and Saratoga Race Course add positively to regional life.

Pioneer Bank President and CEO Tom Amell said the report serves as both a reflection of current conditions and a roadmap for improvement.

"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," Amell said.

Siena College researchers hope the Progress Report will serve as a benchmark for future measurements across the four areas surveyed—affordability, livability, opportunity, and cultural assets.

Since the Siena College survey concluded on Tuesday, Jan. 14, the global economy has undergone significant upheaval, largely due to aggressive trade policies implemented by President Trump.

On April 2, President Trump declared "Liberation Day," announcing sweeping tariffs on imports from numerous countries. This included a universal 10% tariff on all imports, with higher rates for specific nations—China faced tariffs up to 145%.



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