

# NEW YORK RESIDENTS SPEAK OUT ON PUBLIC HEALTH

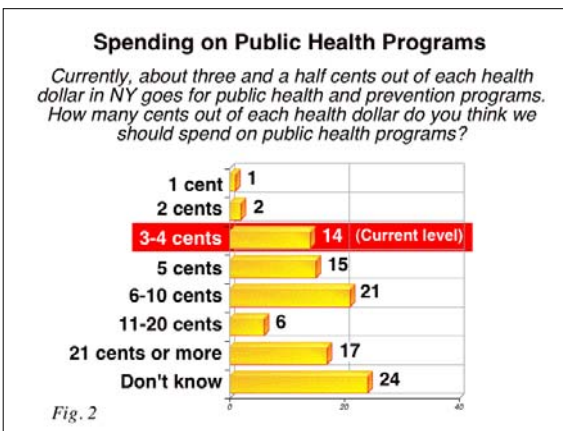
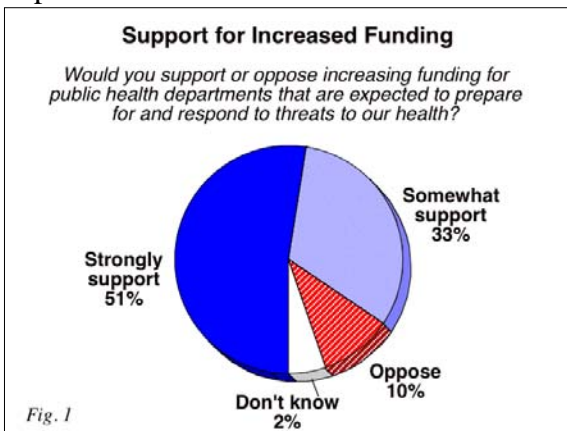
*A Public Opinion Study for Research!America*

*February 2006*

*Research!America has been gauging public opinion on people's attitudes toward medical, health and scientific research since 1992. Results of the recent poll in New York concerning public health show strong support for public health programs and increased funding for public health departments. This study was conducted among 800 New Yorkers statewide, yielding a margin of error of +/-3.5%.*

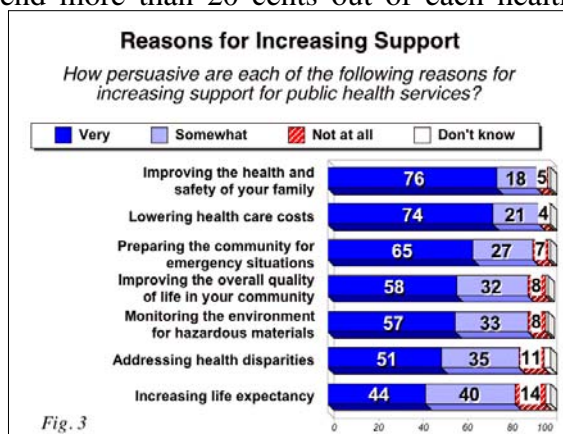
## NEW YORK RESIDENTS SUPPORT INCREASED FUNDING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Eighty-four percent of New York residents would support increased funding for public health departments that are expected to prepare for and respond to threats to our health (see figure 1). A majority of 51% *strongly* support the increase, while another 33% *somewhat* support. Just ten percent oppose an increase in funding for public health departments.



When told that about three and a half cents of each health dollar spent by New York goes for public health and prevention programs, 14% agreed this was about the right amount. However, 59% feel we should be spending more, with 21% saying we should spend six to ten cents and 17% saying we should spend more than 20 cents out of each health dollar. Just three percent think we should be spending less (see figure 2).

Improving the health and safety of one's family is the most persuasive reason for increasing support for public health departments. Seventy-six percent say this is a *very* persuasive reason and nearly all (94%) say it is very or somewhat persuasive. Lowering the cost of health care is seen as persuasive by 95%, and 74% say it is a *very* persuasive reason.



Preparing the community for emergency situations such as an outbreak of flu or a chemical spill from a local plant or on the highway is a persuasive reason for 92%. Four other reasons are also persuasive in increasing support among a strong majority of New Yorkers (see figure 3).

In addition, 94% of New York residents think it is important for the state to educate and train individuals qualified to serve as state and local public health officers and others responsible for protecting public health. Over two-thirds (69%) feel this is *very* important, while another 25% feel it is *somewhat* important. Just 2% feel it is unimportant, and 4% are unsure.

### PUBLIC HEALTH IS IMPORTANT TO NEW YORK RESIDENTS

Public health services that prevent disease and promote health are clearly important to New York residents (see figure 4). In fact, 96% of New York residents say public health services are an important priority for New York, with 76% saying they are *very* important.

By comparison, 99% of New Yorkers feel education is a priority for the state, followed by job creation at 97%. Public health ranks equally in importance to research to find cures for and to prevent disease, increased access to health care, and environmental protection, which are also seen as important priorities by 96% of New York residents.

When asked what comes to mind when residents think of public health, they offer a fairly broad range of associations (see figure 5). Disease prevention/sickness/ cures/safety, was the first mention among 16%. Thirteen percent mentioned health care for everyone/affordable/free, followed by generally positive responses (important/necessary/good/helping people at 11%), generally negative responses (inadequate/ poor/needs improvement 9%) and health care providers (clinics/hospitals/doctors/ nurses 8%).

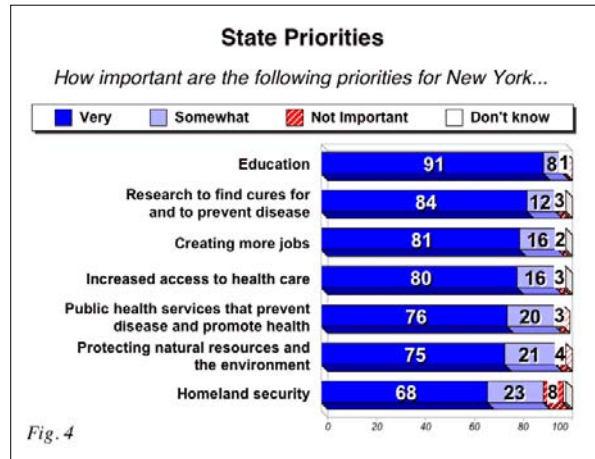


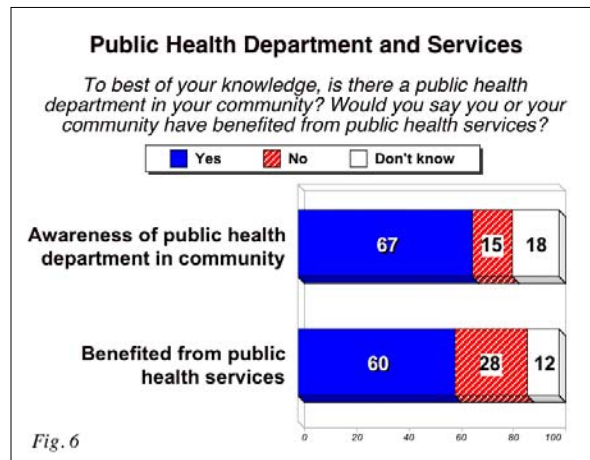
Fig. 4

Word/Phrase	First Mentions %	Total Mentions %
Disease prevention and control/Sickness/Cures/ Safety	16	20
Health care for everyone/Affordable/Free	13	18
Important/Necessary/Good/Helping people	11	12
Clinics/Hospitals/Doctors/Nurses	8	11
Inadequate/Poor/Needs improvement	9	10
Healthy living/Healthy environment	5	6
Medicare/Medicaid/Insurance	6	9
Waste of money/Costly/Expensive	4	6
Poor/Lower class people/Welfare	4	7
Government	2	4
Helping elderly people	2	3
Health services/More health care options	2	3
Educating the public/Programs/Information	2	5
Avian flu	1	1
Medicine/Prescriptions	1	2
Children	*	1
Nothing/None	5	5
Other	5	5
Don't know/Refused/No opinion	7	7

Fig. 5

## NEW YORKERS ARE AWARE OF PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS AND BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Sixty-seven percent of New York residents are aware that there is a public health department in their community (See figure 6). Fifteen percent believe there is not and 18% are unsure. African Americans and those in higher population areas are most likely to be aware of their local public health department. Younger residents (18-34 years) are less likely to be aware.

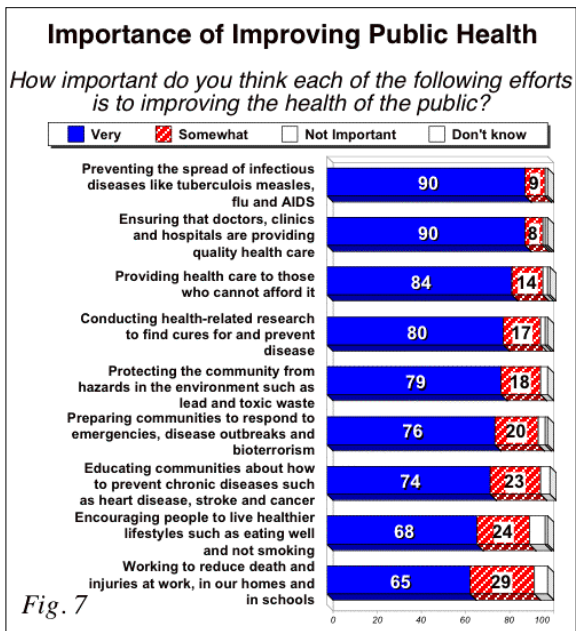


Furthermore, six in ten New Yorkers say they or their community have benefited from public health services. Twenty-eight percent believe they have not, while 12% don't know. African Americans are also most likely to be aware that public health services benefit their community.

## SPECIFIC PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS ARE SEEN AS VERY IMPORTANT

New Yorkers were asked about the importance of nine efforts in terms of improving the health of the public. Every effort tested was seen as important by at least 92% of residents (see figure 7). The most important effort is preventing the spread of infectious diseases like tuberculosis, measles, flu and AIDS (99%), followed by ensuring that doctors, clinics and hospitals are providing quality health care (98%), and providing health care for those who cannot afford it (98%).

Conducting health-related research to find cures for and prevent disease, protecting the community from hazards in the environment, and educating communities about how to prevent chronic diseases were all seen as important by 97%. Ninety-six percent believe that preparing communities to respond to emergencies, disease outbreaks and bioterrorism is important, followed by working to reduce death and injuries at work, in our homes and in schools (94%), and encouraging people to live healthier lifestyles such as eating well and not smoking (92%).



## METHODOLOGY

Charlton Research Company conducted a telephone survey among 800 adults in New York. The survey, fielded January 2-8, 2006, has a theoretical sampling error of +/-3.5%. Please note that much of the question text in this report has been paraphrased.

This poll was commissioned by Research!America, a not-for-profit, membership-supported national alliance of organizations and individuals dedicated to enhancing public education and advocacy for medical, health, and scientific research. For more information about the New York poll, including a list of sponsoring organizations, or for other questions about public attitudes towards scientific research, contact Research!America at: 1101 King Street, Suite 520, Alexandria, Virginia 22314 · Telephone: 703/739-2577 · Fax: 703/739-2372 · e-mail: [info@researchamerica.org](mailto:info@researchamerica.org) · [www.researchamerica.org](http://www.researchamerica.org).



Established in 1997, the New York State Community Health Partnership is a private-public partnership that serves as a catalyst and facilitator for community health improvement activities throughout New York State. Members: American Cancer Society; Cornell Cooperative Extension and Cornell University; Healthcare Association of New York State; Medical Society of the State of New York; New York Health Plan Association; New York State Association of County Health Officials; New York State Department of Health; New York State Nurses Association; New York State Public Health Association; Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. For more information contact JoAnn Bennison, NYSACHO, 518/456-7905.

