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Contact: Dale Curtis, 202-777-3530  
Amy Goffe, 202-589-0940

## **Lower Manhattan Residents Report More Health Problems Since September 11 Attacks**

### ***New Poll Shows Many Are Worried About Long-Term Health Effects, Support Health Tracking for All Who Live and Work in Area***

**New York, NY** – More than half of lower Manhattan residents report an increase in at least one physical ailment since the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, and many are worried about developing long-term health problems, a new poll says.

The public opinion survey, commissioned by the Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a health advocacy group, also reveals that residents of lower Manhattan have been more worried about the quality of the air they breathe than they have been about another terrorist attack.

To help prevent illnesses that might arise from the environmental effects of the attacks, these New Yorkers overwhelmingly support an effort to monitor the health of all who live and work in lower Manhattan, not just emergency responders.

The Mellman Group conducted the telephone survey of 500 residents living on or south of Manhattan's Canal Street from May 2-6, 2002. The statistical margin of error for the sample as a whole is +/- 4.4 percentage points; the margin of error for subgroups is larger.

### **More Coughing, Headaches and Stress**

When asked about their health in general terms, nearly one-third (32%) of those surveyed reported more health problems since September 11<sup>th</sup>. But when asked about specific symptoms, 58% reported an increase in at least one ailment, such as nose and throat irritation (35%), coughing (33%) and headaches (31%). Nearly four in 10 reported an increase in at least three symptoms.

The respondents also reported more symptoms of emotional stress. Thirty-five percent (35%) had more trouble sleeping, and 34% reported more anxiety. This correlates with other recent studies showing serious mental health impacts from the attacks.

In an interesting twist, the Manhattanites expressed more concern about air quality than they did about another terrorist attack. Fifty-nine percent (59%) said they were at least very concerned about the quality of outdoor air in Manhattan, with 21% saying it is one of the things that concerns them the most. In comparison, 51% said they were at least very concerned about the possibility of future terrorist attacks, with 18% saying it was one of the things that concerned them the most.

### **Overwhelming Support for Health Tracking**

Lower Manhattan residents also expressed concern about the risk of developing chronic diseases like cancer and asthma as a result of the environmental effects of the attacks. Almost half (47%) were at least very concerned about developing asthma and other respiratory problems, with 17%

saying it was something that concerned them the most. Thirty-seven percent (37%) were at least very concerned that they will develop cancer as a result of the attacks, with 12% saying it is something that concerned them the most.

Concern about the environmental health effects of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks translated into strong support for a system to monitor exposures to those threats and the incidence of chronic health problems like cancer, asthma and birth defects that may result from those threats. Overwhelming majorities support such a system for both relief workers (90% support, 76% support strongly) and those who live and work in lower Manhattan (90% support, 74% support strongly).

“In New York and across America, we don’t have the baseline health information we need to know which illnesses are occurring and where – or whether they can be linked to environmental factors,” said Dr. Shelley Hearne, executive director of Trust for America’s Health. “To understand the full health impact of the terrorist attacks and to prevent future illnesses, we need a comprehensive system to track chronic diseases and environmental exposures.”

### **Health Tracking Legislation**

Congress appropriated close to \$30 million in fiscal year 2002 for disease tracking and exposure monitoring, with \$12 million going to monitor the health of emergency workers at Ground Zero and \$17.5 million to the development of state-based pilot programs.

In another sign of support for health tracking, legislation sponsored in the Senate by Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Harry Reid (D-NV), and in the House by Reps. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Peter King (R-NY), Louise Slaughter (D-NY), and Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH) would create a *nationwide* health tracking network (S. 2054 and H.R. 4061).

“Today we face a variety of health threats, but we are ill-equipped to cover all the bases when it comes to protecting the public’s health,” said Dr. Phil Landrigan of Mt. Sinai Center for Children’s Health and the Environment. “Whether it’s the uncertainties of health impacts from terrorist attacks or an unexplained cluster of childhood cancer, a nationwide health tracking network would provide us with needed health information.”

In a separate nationwide survey of 1,000 voters conducted for TFAH last March by The Mellman Group and Public Opinion Strategies, 88% of Americans supported the creation of a Nationwide Health Tracking Network.

“It shocks most people to learn that the United States has no nationwide network for monitoring chronic diseases and environmental health risks,” Hearne said. “If we don’t look for that information, we’re not going to find it, and opportunities to prevent deadly and debilitating diseases will be missed.”

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Trust for America’s Health, [www.healthyamericans.org](http://www.healthyamericans.org)  
Mt. Sinai Center for Children’s Health and the Environment, [www.childrenenvironment.org](http://www.childrenenvironment.org)