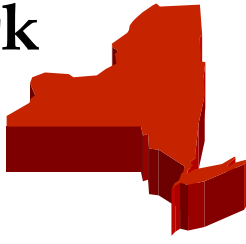


# New York Opinion Index



# Empire State Poll 2008

## Report 1: Introduction & Methodology

Prepared by Govind Acharya, Survey Research Institute

### Introduction

This report outlines the methodology used for the annual Empire State Poll (ESP), a general survey of New York State residents who are at least 18 years of age that is conducted by the Survey Research Institute (SRI). Since its inception in 1996, the Survey Research Institute has grown into a premier survey research facility and now comprises more than 60 staff and 15 Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) stations.

The ESP 2008 marks the sixth annual poll in an ongoing survey series that will probe residents' views on the workplace and on other social, political, and economic issues. The data derived from this yearly poll will be of particular interest to academics, government officials, business and labor leaders and journalists. The data also help guide policy making, raise issues for civic dialogue, and suggest avenues of future research.

The ESP 2008 contains two sections: the "core" survey of topics and questions that appear annually and a series of questions ("omnibus modules") that were developed by third parties.

### ESP Core Instrument

The core survey instrument is a mix of questions about the workplace, work organizations, communities, and governmental and economic issues that reflect the specific research focus of Cornell faculty and the general needs of policy makers and the news media. The core topics are broken down into the following categories:

- Media Use and Access
- Most Important Problem Facing the Community
- Community Satisfaction
- Political Behavior
- Economic Perceptions
- Trust in Institutions
- Demographics

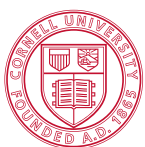
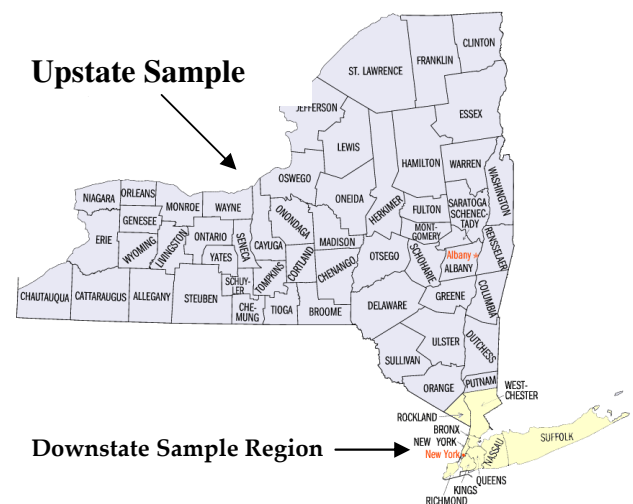
### ESP Omnibus Modules

The ESP is structured to allow for the inclusion of questions developed by Cornell University faculty and other researchers who are interested in surveying New York State residents on special topics. The SRI charges a nominal fee for this service. The data collected from these "omnibus" modules are not reported in the general statewide poll results. For more information on the omnibus section of the poll, please contact the SRI directly.

### Sampling Methodology

The ESP 2008 sample consisted of randomly selected households generated by random digit dial (RDD) sampling of all telephone exchanges within New York State and included all listed and unlisted households. Genesys Sampling of Fort Washington, PA (a widely used full-service sampling company that provides samples to survey research organizations) supplied the sample, which excluded known business telephone numbers, disconnected numbers, and non-household numbers. Both samples were proportional to the upstate-downstate population totals.

"Downstate" was defined as New York, Rockland, Kings, Richmond, Westchester, Suffolk, Queens, Nassau, and Bronx counties, with the remaining counties of the state defined as "upstate." Households from black and Hispanic neighborhoods were slightly over-sampled within both ballot samples to ensure proper representation in the final sample of respondents.



Cornell University  
Survey Research Institute

Survey Research Institute • Cornell University • (607) 255-3786 • Fax (607) 255-7118 • www.sri.cornell.edu

Selection of individual respondents came in two steps: a household was randomly selected and then a household member who was at least 18 years old was randomly selected from within the household using the “most recent birthday” selection method<sup>1</sup>. An additional eligibility requirement was that all respondents had to be residents of New York State.

These selection procedures ensured that every household with a telephone had an equal chance of being included in the survey; and once a household was selected, each adult in the household had an equal chance of being chosen for the ESP 2008.

<sup>1</sup> O'Rourke, D., Blair, J., “Improving Random Respondent Selection in Telephone Surveys,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. XX (November 1983), 428-32.

## ESP Data Collection

Telephone data collection commenced on February 1, 2008 and was completed March 27, 2008. The timing on the ESP data collection is the same every year, beginning interviews in February and ending in March. All interviews are conducted using a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software system, with the average interview length 24 minutes. The survey was administered in both English and Spanish.

SRI survey interviewers are employed throughout the year. All interviewers undergo rigorous training by the SRI training staff and then complete four weeks of probationary interviewing and follow-up training. For each survey project, including the ESP, interviewers are given a survey-specific orientation in addition to training on the survey instrument.

All interviewing staff are monitored and supervised at all times by a SRI supervisory team. The SRI employs a computer-based proxy system that allows for audio and video monitoring of all interviewer stations. All supervisors regularly monitor interviewers to maintain data collection quality, provide immediate feedback, and troubleshoot issues as they arise.

The SRI utilizes a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system called CASES (Computer-Assisted Survey Execution System). CASES is developed, distributed and supported by the Computer-Assisted Survey Methods (CSM) Program at the University of California, Berkeley and commissioned by the U.S. Census Bureau. For more than 20 years, CASES has been one of the most widely used interviewing systems by survey centers in the United States. The SRI employs programmers to support the CATI software and survey operations and to ensure data collection quality.

For the ESP 2008, two ballots were constructed with 800 respondents each. Core questions of the ESP 2008 and questions from the omnibus modules were administered to one of the two ballots, such that each set of questions had 800 responses each. Demographic information and community satisfaction responses

were collected on both ballots for all 1600 respondents.

Overall, the cooperation rate (which is often referred to as the response rate) was 71.1% and the American Association of Public Opinion Research definition of response rate was 26.2%. For ballot 1, the 800 respondents were chosen from a sample list of 3,461. The cooperation rate was 73.0% and the response rate was 30.0%. The 800 respondents from the second ballot were chosen from a sample list of 4,577. The cooperation rate was 69.3%, and the response rate was 23.3%.

These cooperation and response rates are consistent with those obtained by other research organizations such as the Pews Research Organization or CBS News, who regularly survey residents in New York State. Additional data are detailed below in Table 1.

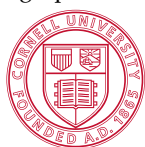
**Table 1** Final Sample Status for ESP 2008

	Ballot 1	Ballot 2	Pooled Ballots
Completed Survey	800	800	1600
Refusal	253	267	520
Active	1110	2189	3299
Physical/Language Problem	24	31	55
Ineligible/Not a Household	1274	1290	2564
<i>Total</i>	<i>3461</i>	<i>4577</i>	<i>8038</i>
Response Rate <sup>2</sup>	30.0%	23.3%	26.2%
Cooperation Rate <sup>2</sup>	73.0%	69.3%	71.1%

<sup>2</sup> American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) response rate and cooperation rate calculations. The response rate is the total number of survey completions divided by the total eligible sample (total sample minus all ineligible, non-households, and estimated proportion of households where eligibility was not determined). Cooperation rate is the total number of survey completions divided by the number of potential interviews (this includes all instances where contact was made with a properly selected person, but not including those instances where the respondent was incapable of cooperating due to language or physical limitations).

## Sampling Error

The sampling error for the ESP 2008 assumes the traditional 95% confidence level, which is equivalent to a “significance level” of .05. This means for questions with approximately 800 respondents there is no more than a one in twenty chance that variations in the respondent sample will cause the ESP 2008 results to deviate by more than 3.5 percentage points when respondents are asked yes/no questions and an even distribution of responses is assumed (i.e., 50% say “yes” and 50% say “no”). Furthermore, the sampling frame was split between upstate and downstate residents, allowing comparisons between the overall state and these geographic regions with a one in twenty chance of sampling error greater than 4.9 percentage points for samples of



approximately 400.

Sampling error is determined by the assumed distribution of responses and by the size of the sample. An extreme distribution of question responses has a smaller error range. If the distribution of responses were 80/20, for example, the sampling error would be 2.8% for the total sample of 800. See Table 2 for additional distributions and sampling error calculations. The size of the sample or subpopulation is also important because the margin of sampling error increases as the sample size decreases.

The margin of error from responses of demographically distinct subgroups within the ESP 2008 will vary depending on the size of the group in question. Again, Table 2 provides some standard sampling errors for different size groups.

**Table 2** Sampling Error Margins by Question Response Distribution and Sample Size<sup>3</sup>

		Size of Sample (N)				
		800	600	400	200	100
Question Response Distribution (%)	50/50	3.5	4.0	4.9	6.9	9.8
	60/40	3.4	3.9	4.8	6.8	9.6
	70/30	3.2	3.7	4.5	6.4	9.0
	80/20	2.8	3.2	3.9	5.5	7.8
	90/10	2.1	2.4	2.9	4.2	5.9

<sup>3</sup> Calculations made through the Survey System sample size calculator. <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>

Lastly, besides the possible sample error mentioned above, all public opinion polls may incur other sources of error associated with telephone data collection procedures, including the sampling error from the systematic exclusion of households without telephones, question wording, question order, and interviewer-induced bias.

## Respondent Demographics

The accuracy of the ESP 2008 can be evaluated by comparing selected characteristics of the survey respondents to data from the U.S. Census. A weighted variable was developed based on geography (upstate vs. downstate) in order to approximate actual population distribution within New York State. All substantive results described within any ESP 2008 report are weighted using this constructed variable.

Table 3 below compares the weighted distribution of all 1600 ESP 2008 respondents' characteristics with the actual statewide distributions based on the U.S. Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports.

**Table 3** Key Respondent Demographics for ESP 2008 (% reported)

Characteristics	Ballot 1* (n=800)	Ballot 2* (n=800)	Pooled Ballots* (n=1600)	US Census/ BLS
<i>Geography</i>				
Upstate	36	36	36	36
Downstate	64	64	64	64
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	48	47	48	48
Female	52	53	52	52
<i>Race</i>				
White	64	64	64	66
Non-white	36	36	36	34
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
Hispanic (any race)	16	14	15	16
Non-Hispanic	84	86	85	84
<i>Employment Status</i>				
In workforce	64	64	64	63
Not working	36	36	36	37
<i>Annual Household Income</i>				
Less than \$30,000	27	27	27	37
\$30,000-\$74,999	33	30	32	32
\$75,000 or more	40	43	41	31
<i>Education (25yrs+)</i>				
Less than Bachelor's Degree	58	59	59	69
Bachelor's Degree or higher	42	41	41	31

\*Note: weighting applied to match actual distribution of upstate vs. downstate.

### For More Information:

Yasamin Miller, Director  
Survey Research Institute at Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York 14853  
Email: [yd17@cornell.edu](mailto:yd17@cornell.edu), Web: [www.sri.cornell.edu](http://www.sri.cornell.edu)  
Phone: 607-255-0148, Fax: 607-255-7118

### Citing Results from the ESP:

The appropriate attribution language shall appear: "Copyright © 2008, Survey Research Institute, Ithaca, New York Reprinted with permission." Public reporting of data results must adhere to rigorous statistical guidelines such as not citing any result where the segmented sample size is too small to be a reliable result and may not be misleading in any way. All citations must have written consent from the Survey Research Institute. All third party inquires must be directed to the Survey Research Institute.

