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### Introduction

This report summarizes the findings of the 2008 Empire State Poll (ESP), conducted by the Survey Research Institute at Cornell University. The 2008 ESP queried New York State residents' opinions regarding the most important issues facing their community and New York State as a whole, community satisfaction, economic perceptions, institutional trust, and resident mobility.

### Methodology

- Two ballots of 800 telephone interviews each were conducted between February 1, 2008 and March 27, 2008, equally divided by upstate/downstate, and then weighted to reflect actual population distribution within the state. Each ballot asked a different set of questions with the exception of demographic data and questions on community satisfaction.
- For regional comparisons, "downstate" is defined as New York, Rockland, Kings, Richmond, Westchester, Suffolk, Queens, Nassau, and Bronx counties, with the remaining counties of the state defined as "upstate."
- The ESP utilizes a random digit dial (RDD) sample of NYS households. Eligible respondents must be residents of NYS and at least 18 years old.
- The cooperation rate was 71.1% using American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) standards.
- The margin of error (MOE) for questions with two response options among 800 respondents is 3.5% and is 4.9% for comparisons based on 400 respondents. The MOE may be smaller for some questions depending on the number of response options.

See Report 1: Introduction & Methodology for a full description at [www.sri.cornell.edu](http://www.sri.cornell.edu).

### Issues of Concern to New Yorkers

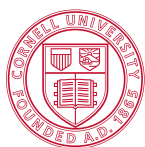
Overall, the most frequently cited issues facing local communities is economic growth and taxes (local, state, or federal) with nearly one in six (15%) residents identifying each of these issues as most important.

**Table 1** Most Important Issue in Local Community

Top Issues	% of respondents citing... as most important issue		
	NYS	Downstate	Upstate
Economic Growth	15	11	22
Taxes (local, state, or federal)	15	10	23
Crime	12	16	6
Employment	10	8	13
Education	10	12	6
Housing	8	11	3
Health Care	4	4	5
Other Issues	26	28	21

*Other responses mentioned by fewer than 5% of respondents include: environment, land development, terrorism, traffic and parking, poverty, and public utilities.*

- Crime (12%), employment (10%), and education (10%) are the next most frequently cited issues overall.
- However, there is a great deal of regional variation in what issues New Yorkers feel are most important to their local communities. For example, upstate residents are about twice as likely (22% vs. 11%) to cite economic growth as an issue than downstate residents. Additionally, upstate residents are more than twice as likely to cite taxes as the most important issue in the community than downstate residents (23% vs. 10%).
- Downstate residents are substantially more likely to cite crime (16% vs. 6%), education (12% vs. 6%), and the affordability and availability of housing (11% vs. 3%) than upstate residents.
- Conversely, upstate residents are more likely to identify employment (13% vs. 8%) as the most important issues facing their community than downstate residents.
- For Democrats, the top three community issues are crime (15%), economic growth (13%), and education (12%). The three most important community issues for Independents are taxes (20%), economic growth (17%), and employment (13%). For Republicans, taxes (26%),



economic growth (18%), and education (11%) are the three top community issues.

*In 2008, economic growth (18%) and taxes (17%) are cited as the most important issues facing New York State. In recent years employment and taxes have been cited as the most important issues in NYS.*

**Table 2** Most Important Issue in New York State

Year	% of respondents citing... as most important issue				
	Economic	Taxes	Employment	Education	Health-care
2008 overall	18	17	15	8	8
- 2008 (upstate)	19	30	16	3	9
- 2008 (downstate)	17	9	15	12	7
2007	9	16	16	4	9
2006	10	15	21	8	10
2005	8	17	25	8	7
2004	13	10	28	11	10
2003	12	27	25	12	17

*Other responses mentioned by fewer than 10% of respondents include: housing, state government, crime, foreign immigration, state budget, terrorism, transportation, environment, and people leaving NYS.*

- The number of New York residents citing employment as the most important issue has made an overall decline since 2003 (25% in 2003 vs. 15% in 2008).
- In 2008, upstate residents are over three times as likely (30% vs. 9%) to cite taxes as the most important issue facing NYS than downstate residents. This regional split was similar in 2007.
- The three top statewide issues cited by Democrats are economic growth (18%), employment (18%), and education (12%). For Independents, economic growth (18%), taxes (18%), and employment (16%) are the top three most cited statewide issues. The three statewide issues most frequently cited by Republicans were taxes (30%), economic growth (18%), and the state government (11%).

## Community Satisfaction

*Across the three dimensions upon which residents' opinions were queried, public education had the highest level of satisfaction (58%), followed by city or town government (55%), and employment conditions (40%).*

- Satisfaction with city/town government and employment in 2008 are higher than levels of satisfaction previously expressed in 2004-2007.

- Satisfaction with local public education has remained comparable to recent years (58% in 2008).

**Table 3** Resident Satisfaction with...

Dimension	Upstate	Downstate	All NYS			
			2008	2007	2005	2004
Public Education	73	49	58	56	65	57
City/Town Govt.	59	53	55	49	50	46
Employment	36	42	40	33	35	31

*Note: question was not asked in 2006.*

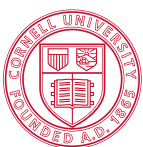
- Upstate residents are substantially more likely to be satisfied with local public education (73% vs. 49%) than downstate residents.
- Conversely, downstate residents are more likely to be satisfied with employment conditions in their local community (42% vs. 36%).
- More upstate residents are satisfied with their city/town government than downstate residents (59% to 53%).

## Evaluations of Personal Finance

*The number of New York State residents reporting that their personal economic situation has improved over the past year is similar compared to last year. However, there is a substantial increase in the number of residents reporting a decline in their personal economic situation (32% in 2008 vs. 22% in 2007).*

- Until 2007, respondents' reported personal financial situation remained remarkably consistent, with a little more than half (about 55%) reporting their financial situation remained the same, a little less than a quarter (about 22%) reporting that it had worsened, and about another quarter (about 23%) reporting that it had improved.
- In 2008 only 46% of respondents reported their personal financial situation had remained the same over the past year. This is a decrease from previous years, 2004-2007.

*Personal economic optimism for the forthcoming year has declined in 2008 compared to previous years with more residents believing their personal economic condition will decline and less residents believing their economic condition will improve in the upcoming year.*



**Table 4** Reported Personal Economic Conditions in NYS

Year	% of all respondents		
	Worse	Same	Better
<b>Perceptions of Past Year</b>			
2008 overall	32	46	22
- 2008 (upstate)	38	47	15
- 2008 (downstate)	29	46	25
2007	22	55	23
2006	22	56	23
2005	22	53	25
2004	22	55	24
2003	32	50	18
<b>Perceptions of Forthcoming Year</b>			
2008 overall	20	47	33
- 2008 (upstate)	27	51	22
- 2008 (downstate)	16	45	39
2007	11	46	40
2006	15	51	34
2005	13	51	35
2004	9	48	43
2003	15	53	32

- One in five respondents (20%) believes that their personal economic situation will decline in the forthcoming year, a nine-point increase from 2007 (11%).
- Almost half of the poll respondents (47%) believe their economic situation will remain the same and 33% believe it will improve (a seven-point decrease from 2007).

*There is some variation in personal economic situations by region.*

- A larger percentage of upstate residents reported a decline in their personal financial condition than downstate residents (38% vs. 29%, respectively).
- Looking to the next year, downstate residents are substantially more optimistic that their personal financial conditions will improve compared to upstate residents (39% vs. 22%, respectively).

## Evaluations of State Economic Performance

*The ESP found the number of New Yorkers who described the state economy as worsening over the past year increased significantly in 2008.*

- The number of residents who characterized the state economy as being “worse” over the past year increased to 68% in 2008 from 43% in 2007. The number of respondents who said that the economy remained the same decreased by 11 points (26% in 2008 vs. 37% in 2007).

*NYS residents’ economic expectations for the state economy substantially declined in 2008, with a considerable decrease in the numbers of New Yorkers who believe the economy will improve and an increase in the number of residents who believe the economy will worsen.*

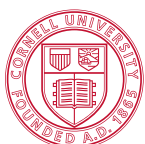
- The number of residents who expect the state economy to improve in the forthcoming year decreased by twelve percentage points (from 34% in 2007 to 22% in 2008). Consequently, the number of residents who believe the state economy will decline increased to 45% in 2008.

**Table 5** Evaluations of Economic Conditions in NYS - Residents

Year	% of all respondents		
	Worse	Same	Better
<b>Perceptions of Past Year</b>			
2008 overall	68	26	6
- 2008 (upstate)	73	24	3
- 2008 (downstate)	66	26	8
2007	43	37	20
2006	36	47	16
2005	50	34	16
2004	54	29	17
2003	79	17	3
<b>Perceptions of Forthcoming Year</b>			
2008 overall	45	33	22
- 2008 (upstate)	49	34	17
- 2008 (downstate)	43	32	25
2007	28	38	34
2006	25	52	23
2005	31	45	25
2004	27	39	34
2003	34	25	24

*Perceptions of the state economy continue to vary by region.*

- Nearly three out of four (73%) upstate residents believe the state economy worsened over the past year compared to about 66% of downstate residents.
- Conversely, downstate residents were more than twice as likely than upstate residents (8% vs. 3%)



to respond that the state economy has improved over the past year

- Downstate residents were substantially more likely to believe that the state economy will improve (25% vs. 17%) in the forthcoming year.

## Trust in Institutions in NYS

The ESP 2008 measured NYS residents' trust toward eight different institutions including large corporations, local businesses, other people, Mayor Bloomberg, labor unions, news media, local government, and state government. Trust is measured by asking respondents on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is untrustworthy and 10 is trustworthy, how they would rate the trustworthiness of each group. Ratings were categorized into low (1-3), medium (4-7), and high (8-10) trust groups. The overall percentage of respondents whose trust levels fell into each category is provided in Table 7.

**Table 6** Trust in Institutions in NYS

Group/Organization	Percentage of respondents who rate the level of trustworthiness as...		
	Low	Medium	High
Large corporations	35	54	11
Local businesses	6	51	43
Other people	9	56	35
Mayor Bloomberg	13	48	39
Labor unions	20	57	23
News media	29	51	20
Local government	23	56	21
State government	33	55	12

Of the eight institutions indicated in the ESP 2008, local businesses are associated with the highest level of trust and large corporations are associated with the lowest level of trust.

- Statewide, the three institutions associated with the highest level of trust are local businesses, the Mayor Bloomberg, and other people.
- The three institutions with most residents rating a low level of trustworthiness are large corporations, the state government, and the news media.

See Report 3: Institutional Trust for more details, available at [www.sri.cornell.edu](http://www.sri.cornell.edu).

## Resident Mobility

The ESP annually examines community/residence mobility. In 2008, respondents were asked the likelihood that they would be

living within in their residence in five years, and if not, the likelihood of remaining in New York State.

- In 2008, about two-thirds (68%) of New York State residents said they would likely be living in their current residence in five years.
- Nine percent of New Yorkers expect to leave the state within five years.
- The downstate New York region experiences higher resident mobility than upstate New York (34% likely to leave residence vs. 25%).
- In 2008, more residents report that they plan to stay in their current residence (68%) compared to 2007 (63%).

**Table 7** Resident Mobility Within New York State

Year	% of respondents saying that 5 years from now they will...			
	Stay in current residence*	Leave residence but stay in NYS	Leave residence and leave NYS	Stay in residence or stay in NYS undecided
2008 overall	68	19	9	4
- 2008 (upstate)	74	17	8	1
- 2008 (downstate)	61	22	12	5
2007	63	26	10	1
2006	77	3	11	4
2005	81	5	10	4
2004	74	5	13	7
2003	77	**	**	**

\* From 2003-2006, the wording was community, not residence.

\*\* Question was not asked on ESP 2003

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### Citing Results from the ESP:

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