

### New York State Budget

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#### Introduction

This report summarizes the findings pertaining to balancing the New York State budget in the 2010 Empire State Poll (ESP), conducted by the Survey Research Institute at Cornell University. The 2010 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. Results of other findings can be found at [www.sri.cornell.edu](http://www.sri.cornell.edu) (<https://sri.cornell.edu/sri/esp.reports.cfm>).

#### Methodology

- In total, 800 telephone interviews were conducted between February 1, 2010 and March 29, 2010, equally divided by upstate/downstate, and then weighted to reflect the actual population distribution within the state.
- 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 74.5% 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).

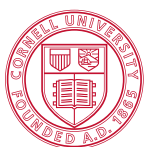
For the first time in the ESP, respondents were asked what they felt should be done to help balance the budget in New York State. The question states: Some people have said New York will not have enough money soon to balance its budget and pay for all its existing programs. If that happened and you had to choose among the following things, what would you prefer? 1. Raising state taxes, 2. Cutting state programs, or 3. Borrowing money.

**Table 1** How to Balance the NYS Budget

Preference	% of all respondents		
	NYS	Downstate	Upstate
Raise state taxes	24	27	19
Cut state programs	46	37	63
Borrow money	30	36	18

Note: Due to rounding, distributions may not add up to 100.

- Almost half (46%) of all respondents indicated they would prefer to cut state programs, followed by borrowing money (30%), and raising taxes (24%) in order to balance the budget and pay for all the states existing programs.
- Almost two out of three upstate residents (63%) identified cutting state programs as the solution, with only one out of five indicating that the state should raise taxes (19%), or borrow money (18%).
- Respondents who answered that state programs should be cut were then asked to specify which programs. About two out of five respondents were unable to provide a specific program to cut (38%). Of those who did provide a specific response, they included cutting welfare/social service programs (this overwhelmingly includes cutting Medicaid, and unemployment benefits) (39%), reducing the size of government (15%), reducing government salaries and pensions (15%), and reducing aid to local and state schools (12%). Numerous other programs were



specified each by less than 5% of respondents who choose to cut state programs which included things such as reducing funds for pork projects, lottery advertisements, transportation/highway, parks, prisons and programs supporting illegal immigrants.

**Table 2.** How to balance the NYS budget by Demographic Characteristics.

	Percentage		
	Raise state taxes	Cut state programs	Borrow money
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	24	52	24
Female	24	41	35
<i>Race</i>			
Non-white	26	29	45
White	23	57	21
<i>Age</i>			
18-24	13	10	77
25-34	29	27	44
35-44	20	51	29
45-54	23	55	22
55-64	26	52	22
65+	29	45	27
<i>Income</i>			
Less than \$29,999	25	35	41
30,000 to \$49,999	27	34	39
50,000 to \$99,999	19	50	30
\$100,000 or more	29	59	13
<i>Ideology</i>			
Liberal	33	33	34
Moderate	24	47	29
Conservative	15	60	25

Note: Weighting applied to match actual distribution of upstate vs. downstate. Due to rounding, distributions may not add up to 100.

- More men than women (52% vs. 41% respectively) support cutting state programs, whereas women are more likely to support borrowing money (35% compared to 24% for men).
- The majority (57%) of whites favor cutting state programs, whereas the plurality (45%) of non-whites support borrowing money.
- There is definitely a difference of opinion by age, with the overwhelming majority of those between the ages of 18 to 24 and the plurality of those age 25 to 34 supporting borrowing money, but this changes for the

older respondents. The majority of those age 35 to 64 support cutting state programs, and the plurality of those age 65+ do so as well.

- There is also a difference in opinion based on household income levels with those in the lower income groups (less than \$50,000/year) tending to support borrowing of money (41% and 39% support borrowing money in the two lowest income groups), and those in the higher income groups (\$50,000 and up) support cutting state programs (50% and 59% support cutting state programs in the two higher income groups).
- Looking at responses based on political ideology, there is an even split on how to balance the state budget for those who are liberal. The plurality of moderates (47%) and the majority (60%) of conservatives support cutting state programs.

Clearly the solution to balancing the state budget is one that requires a combination of reduction in spending and an increase in borrowing with raising taxes as the least desirable option.

**For More Information:**

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**Citing Results from the ESP:**

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