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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 School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) Survey Research Institute. Since its inception in 1996, the Survey Research Institute (SRI) has grown into a premier survey research facility and now comprises more than 60 staff and nearly 20 computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) stations.

The ESP 2005 marks the third 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 government officials, business and labor leaders, journalists, academics, and representatives from special interest groups. The data should also help guide policy making, raise issues for civic dialogue, and suggest avenues of future research

The ESP 2005 contains three sections: the "core" survey of topics and questions that appears annually; a section on topical political, social, and/or economic issues; and a series of special interest 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, the news media, and social scientists. In 2005, the ESP core questions were split between two different survey ballots. The core topics are broken down into the following categories:

Ballot One

- Employment/Working Conditions
- Compensation and Benefit Trends
- Work/Life Expectations and Satisfaction

Ballot Two

- Political and Civic Involvement
- Political Efficacy
- Institutional and Personal Trust
- Media Use and Exposure

Both Ballots

- Community Satisfaction
- Performance of State Government
- Economic Perceptions
- Resident and Household Demographics

ESP Omnibus Modules

The ESP is structured to allow for the insertion of questions developed by third-party organizations/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 the property of the sponsor and are not reported in the general statewide poll results, nor are they made publicly available without the express permission of the sponsor. For more information on the omnibus section of the poll, please contact the SRI directly.

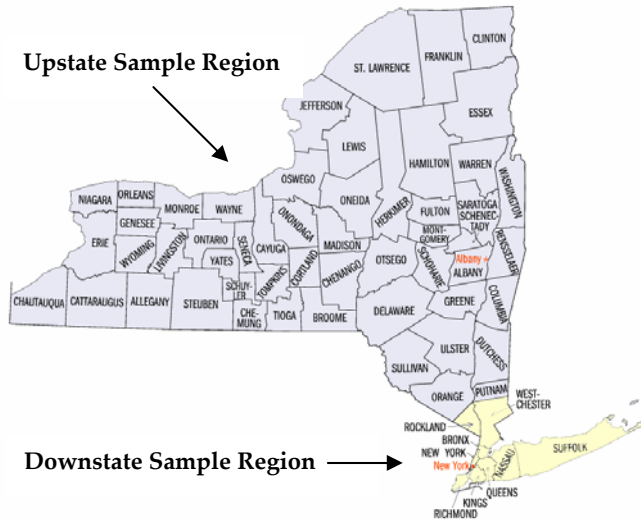
ESP Special Topic Areas

Each year, the SRI selects three or four special topics of interest on which to survey New York State residents. Topics are selected to reflect current political, social, or economic issues or events, and to provide opportunities to compare and contrast New York State residents' opinions to those revealed in recent national polls. In 2005, the SRI selected revisions to social security and publicly funded stem cell research within New York State.

Sampling Methodology

The ESP 2005 was split between two ballots with different sampling frames as part of an experimental design to examine sampling methods and bias within New York State. The sample for ballot one consisted of randomly selected households publicly listed on New York State telephone exchanges, commonly termed a "listed household sample." The sample for ballot two 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 supplied the sample for both ballots, 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.



Selection of individual respondents in both survey ballots 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. An additional eligibility requirement was that all respondents had to be legal residents of New York State.

These selection procedures ensured that every household in the state with a listed telephone number in ballot one, and every household with a telephone in ballot two, 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 2005.

ESP Data Collection

Telephone data collection commenced on February 7, 2005 and was completed March 24, 2005. All interviews are conducted using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software system, with the average interview length 18 minutes. A total of 1,602 interviews were completed statewide between both ballots. The survey was administered in both English and Spanish.

SRI survey interviewers are employed throughout the academic 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 nine-member SRI supervisory team. The SRI employs an electronic proxy system that allows for audio and video monitoring of all interviewer stations. All supervisors regularly monitor interviewers to maintain data collection quality, provide 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 two full-time computer programmers to support the CATI software and survey operations and to ensure data collection quality.

For the ESP 2005, 802 respondents completed ballot one of the survey out of a sample list of 3,400, while 800 respondents completed ballot two of the survey out of a sample list of 4,985. The response rate for ballot one was 27.4% and the cooperation rate was 78.9%. The response rate for ballot two was 22.8% and the cooperation rate was 79.5%. Additional data are detailed below in Table 1.

Table 1 Final Sample Status for ESP 2005

Status	Ballot 1	Ballot 2
Completed Survey	802	800
Refusal	214	206
Active	1869	2656
Physical/Language Problem	82	100
Ineligible/Not a Household	432	1229
<i>Total</i>		
Response Rate ¹	27.4%	22.8%
Cooperation Rate ¹	78.9%	79.5%
Average Number of Contact Attempts ²	8	8

¹ 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).

² Average number of contact attempts made to all eligible respondents, excluding Not in Service, Non-Household, and Physical or Language Problem households.

Sampling Error

The sampling error for the ESP 2005 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 2005 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”). For questions with 1,602 respondents, in no more than one time in twenty should chance variations in the sample cause the ESP 2005 results to vary by more than 2.5 percentage points from the answers that would be obtained if all New York state residents were interviewed. 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 800 and 3.5 percentage points for samples of 1,602.

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%. See Chart A 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.

Thus, the margin of error from responses of demographically distinct subgroups within the ESP 2005 will vary depending on the size of the group in question. Again, Chart A provides some standard sampling errors for different size groups.

Chart A Sampling Error Margins by Question Response Distribution and Sample Size

		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

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 2005 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 2005 report are weighted using this constructed variable.

Table 2 below compares the unweighted distribution of the ESP 2005 respondents’ characteristics with the actual statewide distributions based on the U.S. Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics reports.

Table 2 Key Respondent Demographics for ESP 2005

Characteristics	ESP 2005 Respondent Distribution % (n=1,602)	Actual Distribution %
<i>Geography</i>		
Upstate	50	38
Downstate	50	62
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	49	48
Female	51	52
<i>Race</i>		
White	73	70
Non-white	27	30
<i>Employment Status</i>		
In workforce	61	65
Not working	39	35
<i>Annual Household Income</i>		
Less than \$35k	35	41
\$35k-\$75k	35	33
More than \$75k	31	26
<i>Union Membership (working only)</i>		
Union member	25	25
Not a union member	75	75

For More Information

If you are interested in directly accessing data from the Empire State Poll, have questions regarding the methodology, or wish to discuss other services provided by the ILR Survey Research Institute, please contact the SRI representative listed below or go to www.sri.cornell.edu.

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Citing Results from the ESP

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