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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 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 nearly 20 computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) stations.

The ESP 2006 marks the fourth 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 2006 contains three sections: the "core" survey of topics and questions that appears annually; a series of questions ("omnibus modules") that were developed by third parties; and a section on topical political, social, and/or economic issues.

### 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:

- Employment/Working Conditions
- Employment Benefit Trends
- Work/Life Expectations and Satisfaction
- Institutional and Personal Trust
- Media Use and Access
- Terrorism
- State Performance
- Economic Perceptions
- 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.

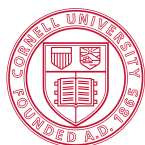
### ESP Special Topic Areas

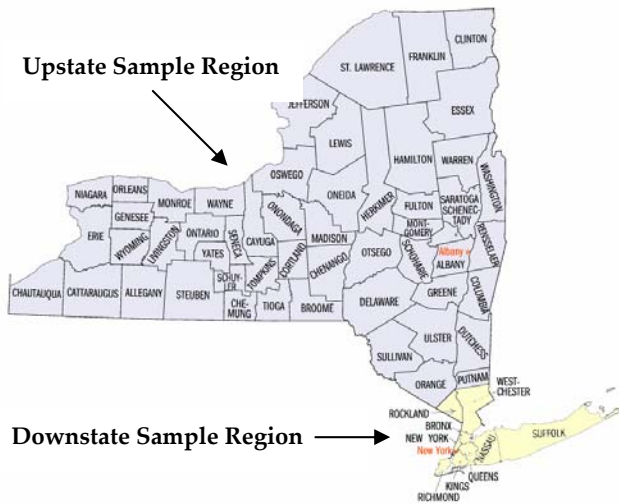
Each year, the SRI selects some special topics of interest on which to survey New York State residents. The SRI Empire State Poll Advisory Board selects topics to include in the poll to reflect current political, social, or economic issues or events, and to provide opportunities to compare and contrast New York State residents' opinions to those revealed in recent national polls. In 2006, the SRI selected wiretapping as the special topic to explore.

### Sampling Methodology

The ESP 2006 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.





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 2006.

<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 2, 2006 and was completed March 19, 2006. The timing on the ESP data collection is the same every year, beginning interviews in early February and ending in March. All interviews are conducted using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software system, with the average interview length 34 minutes (with the shortest interview taking 22 minutes and the longest taking 87 minutes). A total of 800 interviews were completed statewide. 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 2006, 800 respondents completed the survey out of a sample list of 4,691. The cooperation rate (which is often referred to as the response rate) was 62.2%, and the American Association of Public Opinion Research definition of response rate was 25.2%. These cooperation and response rates are slightly lower than previous years (as response rates are generally declining nationwide) but 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.

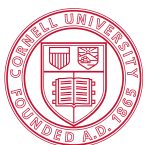
**Table 1** Final Sample Status for ESP 2006

Completed Survey	800
Refusal	487
Active	1463
Physical/Language Problem	77
Ineligible/Not a Household	1864
<i>Total</i>	4691
Response Rate <sup>2</sup>	25.2%
Cooperation Rate <sup>2</sup>	62.2%

<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 2006 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 2006 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.

Thus, the margin of error from responses of demographically distinct subgroups within the ESP 2006 will vary depending on the size of the group in question. Again, Chart A provides some standard sampling errors for different size groups.

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

Question Response Distribution (%)	Size of Sample (N)				
	800	600	400	200	100
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.

The accuracy of the ESP 2006 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 2006 report are weighted using this constructed variable.

Table 3 below compares the unweighted distribution of the ESP 2006 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 2006

Characteristics	ESP 2006 Respondent Distribution % (n=800)	US Census/BLS Distribution %
<i>Geography*</i>		
Upstate	50	37
Downstate	50	63
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	46	48
Female	54	52
<i>Race</i>		
White	69	68
Non-white	31	32
<i>Employment Status</i>		
In workforce	50	62
Not working	50	38
<i>Annual Household Income</i>		
Less than \$35k	33	41
\$35k-\$75k	33	33
More than \$75k	34	26

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

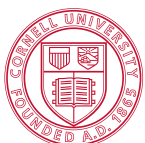
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**Citing Results from the ESP:**

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## Respondent Demographics



**Cornell University**  
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