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Introduction

This report summarizes New York State residents' social and political evaluation, specifically what issues are of greatest concern to New York State residents, ratings of New York State performance, and institutional trust. The 2006 Empire State Poll, conducted by the Survey Research Institute at Cornell University, collected the data presented in this report.

Methodology

- In total, 800 telephone interviews were conducted between February 2, 2006 and March 19, 2006, equally divided by upstate/downstate, and then weighted to reflect actual population distribution within the state.
- The ESP utilizes a random digit dial (RDD) sample of NYS households. Eligible respondents must be a resident of NYS and at least 18 years old to participate.
- The cooperation rate was 62.2% according to AAPOR standards.
- The margin of error for reported statewide results is 3.5% and is 4.9% for upstate/downstate comparisons. For regional comparisons, "Downstate" is defined New York, Rockland, Kings, Richmond, Westchester, Suffolk, Queens, Nassau, and Bronx counties, with the remaining counties of the state defined as "upstate."

See Report 1: Introduction & Methodology for full description.

Issues of Concern to New Yorkers

The ESP annually asks respondent what they believe is the most important problem facing New York State.

- As in past years, employment is the problem cited by a plurality (21%) of New York State residents as the most important.
- State taxes are the second most often cited problem within New York State (15%), with the state economy, education, and healthcare each being cited by approximately one in ten respondents.
- Upstate residents are three times more likely than downstate residents (26% vs. 8%) to cite state taxes as the most important problem in New York State.

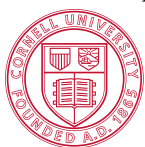
Table 1 Most Important Problem in New York State

Year	% of respondents citing... as most important problem				
	Employment	State taxes	State economy	Educational	Healthcare
2006 overall	21	15	10	8	10
- 2006 (upstate)	23	26	9	5	10
- 2006 (downstate)	19	8	10	9	10
2005	25	17	8	8	7
2004	28	10	13	11	10
2003	25	27	12	12	17

Other responses mentioned by fewer than one 10% of respondents included: foreign immigration, terrorism, state budget, crime, environment, people leaving NYS.

Perceptions regarding what is the most important problem vary substantially by key demographics.

- Roughly a quarter (24%) of Democrats believe that employment is the most important problem, compared to only 18% each of Independents and Republicans.
- Twenty-eight percent of Republicans cite state taxes as the most important problem, compared to half as many Independents (14%) and less than one in ten Democrats (8%).
- Non-white respondents believe employment is more of a problem in New York State than white respondents (26% vs. 19%).
- White respondents are nearly seven times more likely to cite state taxes as a problem than non-white respondents (20% vs. 3%).
- Men are almost twice as likely as women (20% vs. 11%) to cite state taxes as the most important problem.
- Younger respondents (less than 35 yrs old) are more than twice as likely (14% vs. 6%) as middle-aged respondents (35 to 54yrs old), and nearly five times as likely (14% vs. 3%) as older respondents (55yrs or older), to cite education as a problem.
- Older respondents (55yrs or older) are nearly three times (19% vs. 7%) more likely than younger respondents (less than 35yrs old) to cite state taxes as a problem.



Rating New York State

For the past four years, the ESP asked New Yorkers to rate their state across nine key aspects of New York using a scale of poor, fair, good, or excellent.

- Statewide, mass transit infrastructure (47%), the environment (43%), and public education (40%) are the three highest rated dimensions of New York State.
- State taxes (12%), the state budget (16%), and employment (19%) are the three lowest rated dimensions of New York State.
- Compared to 2005, mass transit infrastructure (47% vs. 37%), economic growth (31% in 2006 vs. 24% in 2005), the state budget (16% in 2006 vs. 10% in 2005), and the state government (23% in 2006 vs. 18% in 2005) all had noteworthy increases in respondent ratings.

Table 2 Rating NYS – Economic Dimensions

Year	% of respondents rating NYS's... as good or excellent			
	Economic Growth	Employment*	Mass Transit Infrastructure**	State Taxes
2006 overall	31	19	47	12
- 2006 (upstate)	18	15	40	6
- 2006 (downstate)	38	22	51	16
2005	24	19	37	11
2004	23	15	53	11
2003	12	12	***	7

* In 2003, wording was "Number of Suitable Jobs"

** Prior to 2005, wording was "Transportation Infrastructure"

*** Not asked in 2003

State ratings vary substantially by region, with upstate and downstate residents evaluating state performance quite differently.

- Upstate residents rate the environment (52% vs. 38%) and public education (51% vs. 34%) substantially higher than downstate residents.
- More than twice as many downstate residents as upstate residents (38% vs. 18%) rate the state's economic growth as good or excellent.
- Nearly three times as many downstate residents as upstate residents (16% vs. 6%) rate state taxes as good or excellent, and nearly twice as many downstate residents as upstate residents rate the state budget (20% vs. 12%) and state government (28% vs. 16%) as good or excellent.

Table 3 Rating NYS – Social and Political Dimensions

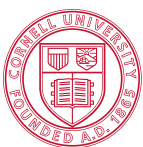
Year	% of respondents rating NYS's... as good or excellent				
	Environment	Quality of Public Ed.	Health & Human Svcs*	State Govt.	State Budget
2006 overall	43	40	28	23	16
- 2006 (upstate)	52	51	28	16	12
- 2006 (downstate)	38	34	28	28	20
2005	45	41	32	18	10
2004	43	40	36	18	11
2003	34	33	21	**	6

* In 2003, wording was "Health Services & Insurance"

** Not asked in 2003

Ratings of state performance also varied substantially by key demographic categories such as political party affiliation, race, age, and gender.

- Compared to Democrats and Independents, Republicans rate the state substantially higher on the environment (63% vs. 36% and 40%, respectively), public education (53% vs. 38% and 34%, respectively), and employment (29% vs. 16% and 17%, respectively).
- Democrats and Independents are more likely to provide higher ratings on state taxes (15% and 11%, respectively) than Republicans (9%).
- White respondents are more likely than non-white respondents to rate the environment (48% vs. 33%), public education (45% vs. 30%), and employment (22% vs. 11%) as good or excellent.
- Younger respondents (less than 35yrs old) are more likely to rate the state's economic growth as good or excellent compared to middle-aged (35yrs to 54yrs old) or older (55yrs or older) respondents (40% vs. 29% and 25%, respectively).
- Men are more likely than women to rate the environment (49% vs. 39%), mass transit infrastructure (53% vs. 43%), and public education (43% vs. 38%) as good or excellent.



Institutional Trust in NYS

New Yorkers annually cite on the ESP which political and social institutions within New York State they find the most trustworthy.

- Local businesses (68%), labor unions (44%), and local government are the most trusted institutions within New York State.
- Large corporations (28%). New York state government (35%), and the news media (39%) are the institutions least likely to be trusted by New Yorkers.
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of New York State Residents believe other people are trustworthy in general.
- Trust in large corporations within New York State has increased by about 40% since 2003.
- Trust in labor unions and the news media has also grown by approximately 8% since 2003 in New York State.

Table 4 Trust in New York

% of all respondents who trust*...	Year					
	2006	2006 (downstate)	2006 (upstate)	2005	2004	2003
State govt.	35	38	29	33	30	32
Local govt.	43	43	42	50	43	45
Local business	68	65	73	70	64	65
Large corp.	28	33	21	31	22	20
Labor unions	44	48	36	40	38	37
News media	39	42	35	42	33	31
Other people	63	61	67	66	59	63

Trust in some institutions varies substantially across the regions of New York State.

- Downstate New Yorkers are more likely than upstate residents to trust the state government (38% vs. 29%), large corporations (33% vs. 21%), and labor unions (48% vs. 36%).
- Upstate respondents are more likely than downstate respondents to trust local businesses (73% vs. 65%) and other people (67% vs. 61%).

Trust in social and political institutions varies significantly across key demographic categories such as party affiliation, race, age, and gender.

- Republicans are more likely than Democrats or Independents to trust large corporations (39% vs. 25% and 23%, respectively), local businesses (77% vs. 65% and 66%, respectively), local government (50% vs. 43% and 38%), and other people (73% vs. 60% and 61%, respectively).
- Democrats and Independents are more likely than Republicans to trust labor unions (55% and 36% vs. 30%) and the news media (45% and 35% vs. 27%).
- White respondents are more likely than non-white respondents to trust local businesses (73% vs. 57%), local government (45% vs. 38%), and other people (69% vs. 51%).
- Non-white respondents are more likely than white respondents to trust labor unions (51% vs. 41%) and the news media (44% vs. 37%).
- Younger respondents (less than 34yrs old) are more likely to trust labor unions than middle-aged (35yrs to 54yrs old) and older (55yrs or older) respondents (56% vs. 38% and 42%, respectively).
- Women are more likely than men to trust labor unions (48% vs. 39%) and the news media (42% vs. 36%).

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