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### Introduction

This report summarizes New York State residents' level of trust in several institutions: local corporations, local businesses, local governments, the New York State government, labor unions, news media, and other people. The source of the data featured in this report is the Empire State Poll, conducted by the Survey Research Institute at Cornell University.

### Methodology

- Over 800 telephone interviews were conducted between February and March for each of the years 2003 to 2008, 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 residents of NYS and at least 18 years old.
- The cooperation rate in 2008 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%. The MOE may be smaller for some questions depending on the number of response options.

See Report 1: Introduction & Methodology for a full description. Years 2003 to 2008 are available at [www.sri.cornell.edu](http://www.sri.cornell.edu).

### Institutional Trust 2003-2008

The ESP measured NYS residents' trust toward eight different institutions in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2008. The questions regarding institutional trust were not asked in 2007. Each year from 2003 to 2008 had at least 800 respondents answering questions on institutional trust. 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 institution. Ratings are categorized into low (1-3), medium (4-7), and high (8-10) trust groups. As an overall indication of the level of trust New York State respondents have, the

percentage of respondents indicating a high level of trust for each institution is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1** Trustworthiness of Institutions

% of respondents indicating a high level of trust with...	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008
Large corp	6	6	11	9	11
Local business	34	31	36	36	43
Local gov't	15	16	20	17	21
State gov't	10	9	11	15	12
Labor unions	12	16	17	18	23
News media	11	10	18	18	20
Other people	*	26	31	32	35

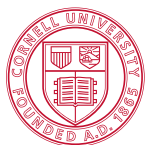
\* Question not asked in 2003

- Local businesses and other people have the most respondents indicating an overall high level of trust, with more than 25% of respondents for each of the past six years. Less than 25% of respondents indicate a high level of trust with each of the other institutions for each year.
- In 2008 the highest level of trust over six years has been observed for the following institutions: local businesses, other people, labor unions, local government, and news media.

### Large Corporations

*In recent years respondents have had a high level of trust with large corporations.*

- In 2008, the number of respondents who reported a high level of trust for large corporations has increased to 11% (from 6% in 2003).
- The number of respondents reporting a low level of trust for large corporations has also decreased over the



years and in 2008 was 35%, the lowest over the past six years.

- The percentage of respondents associating the local government with a high level of trust is highest in 2008 (21%).

**Table 2** Trustworthiness of Large Corporations

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008
Low	46	48	36	41	35
Med	48	46	53	50	54
High	6	6	11	9	11

## Local Businesses

More respondents indicated a high level of trustworthiness in local businesses in 2008, more than any previous year.

**Table 3** Trustworthiness of Local Businesses

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008
Low	8	9	9	7	6
Med	58	60	55	57	51
High	34	31	36	36	43

- In 2008, the number of respondents who reported a high level of trust for local businesses was 43%, an increase since 2006 (36%) and an overall increase since 2003.
- The percentage of respondents indicating a medium level of trust has declined to 51% in 2008.

## Local Government

Trustworthiness in local government has varied but remained steady from 2004 to 2008.

**Table 4** Trustworthiness of Local Government

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008
Low	21	26	21	25	23
Med	64	58	59	58	56
High	15	16	20	17	21

- In 2003 local government was associated with a lower level of trustworthiness with only 15% of respondents indicating a high level of trust and 64% indicating a medium level of trust.

## State Government

Trust in the state government has remained steady from 2003 to 2008, with a slight decrease in a high level of trust over the past year (15% in 2006 vs. 12% in 2008).

**Table 5** Trustworthiness of State Government

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008
Low	27	32	33	31	33
Med	63	59	56	54	55
High	10	9	11	15	12

- In 2003 63% of respondents indicate a medium level of trust with state government, while in 2008 55% of respondents report a medium level of trust, the largest difference in respondents' level of trust with the state government.

## Labor Unions

New York State residents' level of trust in labor unions has increased from 2003 to 2008.

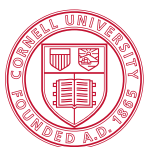
**Table 6** Trustworthiness of Labor Unions

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008
Low	24	26	28	27	20
Med	64	58	55	55	57
High	12	16	17	18	23

- In 2008 23% of respondents reported a high level of trust associated with labor unions, the highest over the past six years.
- The number of respondents who associate labor unions with a low level of trust has decreased to 20% in 2008, the lowest over the past six years.

## News Media

In recent years, New Yorkers have shown a higher level of trust in the news media.



**Table 7** Trustworthiness of News Media

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008
Low	35	35	28	30	29
Med	54	55	54	52	51
High	11	10	18	18	20

- In 2008 the highest number of respondents (20%) over the last six years have indicated that the news media has a high level of trustworthiness.
- Lower numbers of respondents indicate medium and low levels of trust with the news media since 2003.

**For More Information:**

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**Citing Results from the ESP:**

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## Other People

There is also an increase in the number of respondents who report that they have a high level of trust for other people, with 35% of respondents indicating a high level of trust in 2008.

**Table 8** Trustworthiness of Other People

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008
Low	*	10	8	8	9
Med	*	64	61	60	56
High	*	26	31	32	35

\* Question not asked in 2003

- The percentage of respondents indicating a high level of trust with other people has increased from 26% in 2004 to 35% in 2008.
- Respondents indicating a low level of trust have remained steady while those indicating a medium level of trust have decreased from 64% of respondents in 2004 to 56% in 2008.

