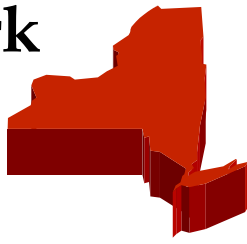


# New York Opinion Index



# Empire State Poll 2009

## Report 1: Introduction & Methodology

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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 it was founded in 1996, SRI has grown into a premier survey research facility and now comprises more than 60 staff and 22 Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) stations.

The ESP 2009 marks the seventh annual poll in an ongoing survey series that will probe residents' views on a range of workplace, social, political, and economic issues. The data derived from this yearly poll are 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 2009 contains two sections: the "core" survey of topics and questions that appear annually and a series of 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 and the news media. The core topics are broken down into the following categories:

- Media Use and Access
- Most Important Problem Facing the Community
- Community Satisfaction
- Political Behavior
- Economic Perceptions
- Trust in Institutions
- Demographics

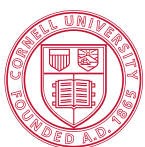
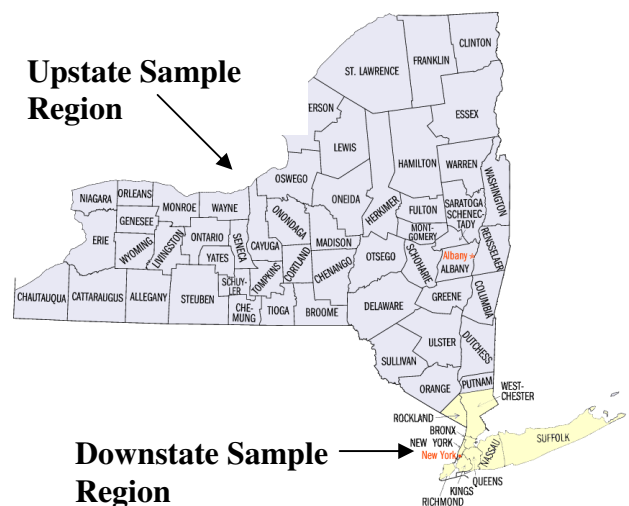
### ESP Omnibus Modules

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. 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 SRI directly.

### Sampling Methodology

The ESP 2009 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. The state was divided into two, upstate and downstate with sampling in proportion to the 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.



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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.

<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 January 30, 2009 and was completed March 16, 2009. The timing of the ESP data collection is the same every year, starting in February and ending in March. All interviews are conducted using a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software system, with the average interview length 29 minutes. A total of 800 interviews were completed – 400 upstate and 400 downstate. The survey was administered in both English and Spanish.

SRI survey interviewers are employed throughout the 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 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 SRI supervisory team. SRI employs a computer-based proxy system that allows for audio and video monitoring of all interviewer stations. All supervisors regularly monitor interviewers to maintain data collection quality, provide immediate feedback, and troubleshoot issues as they arise.

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. SRI employs programmers to support the CATI software and survey operations and to ensure data collection quality.

For ESP 2009, 800 respondents completed the survey out of a sample list of 4,834. Overall, the cooperation rate, often referred to as the response rate, was 70.6% and the American Associate of Public Opinion Research definition of response rate was 29.1%.

The cooperation and response rates differed between the upstate and downstate samples. The downstate sample was drawn from a sample list of 2,892, with a cooperation rate of 67.5% and a response rate of 22.6%. The upstate sample was drawn from a sample list of 1,942, and had a cooperation rate of 74.1% and a response rate of 40.9%.

These cooperation and response rates are 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 2009

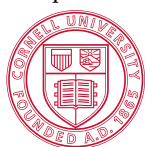
	Downstate	Upstate	Pooled Sample
Completed Survey	400	400	800
Refusal	193	140	333
Active	1130	430	1560
Physical/Language Problem	49	7	56
Ineligible/Not a Household	162	110	272
<i>Total</i>	2892	1942	4834
Response Rate <sup>2</sup>	22.6%	40.9%	29.1%
Cooperation Rate <sup>2</sup>	67.5%	74.1%	70.6%

<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 ESP 2009 assumes the traditional 95% confidence level, which is equivalent to a “significance level” of .05. This means that 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 2009 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.

The margin of error from responses of demographically distinct subgroups within ESP 2009 will vary depending on the size of the group in question. Again, Table 2 provides some standard sampling errors for different size groups.

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

		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	7.8	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.

## Respondent Demographics

The accuracy of ESP 2009 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 2009 report are weighted using this constructed variable.

Table 3 below compares the weighted distribution of all 800 ESP 2009 respondents' characteristics with the actual statewide distributions drawn from the 2005-07 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

**Table 3** Key Respondent Demographics for ESP 2009 (% reported)

Characteristics	Downstate (N=400)	Upstate (N=400)	Pooled* (N=800)	US Census/ ACS <sup>4</sup>
<b>Age</b>				
18-24	8	3	6	13
25-34	8	6	7	17
35-44	23	22	22	20
45-54	26	28	27	19
55-64	18	22	19	14
65 and older	18	19	18	17
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	47	48	47	48
Female	53	52	53	52
<b>Race</b>				
White	55	93	69	68
Non-White	45	7	31	32
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Hispanic (any race)	25	4	17	16
Non-Hispanic	75	96	83	84
<b>Employment Status</b>				
Employed	58	65	60	58
Unemployed	10	5	8	4
Not in labor force	32	30	31	37
<b>Annual Household Income</b>				
Less than \$10,000	6	2	5	5
\$10,000-49,999	33	32	33	34
\$50,000 -99,999	26	38	30	33
\$100,000 or more	35	28	32	28
<b>Education (18yrs+)</b>				
Less than Bachelor's Degree	57	55	56	70
Bachelor's Degree or higher	43	45	44	30

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

<sup>4</sup> Estimates made using the 2005-07 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics. <http://www.census.gov>

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**Citing Results from the ESP:**

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