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Introduction

This report summarizes six years of survey data on New York State residents' opinions regarding the most important issues facing New York State, New York State economic perceptions, institutional trust, and employment status. 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.

Respondent Opinions

The ESP has surveyed New York State residents on a wide variety of issues and topics. Over the past six years several questions have been asked consistently to residents in order to evaluate changing opinions over time.

Issues of Concern to New Yorkers

When residents were asked what they believe is the single most important issue facing people in New York State, their responses included many important problems facing New York today. The majority of respondents

indicated the following problems as the top six issues facing New York State: employment, economic growth, taxes, education, health care, and crime. The proportion of respondents indicating these issues as the most important are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Most Important Issue in New York State

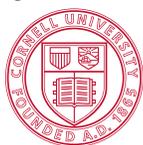
% of respondents indicating the most important issue is...	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Crime	2	3	2	3	7	4
Economic Growth	13	13	8	10	9	18
Education	12	12	8	8	5	8
Employment	24	28	25	21	16	15
Health care	17	10	6	11	10	8
Taxes	18	11	17	15	14	17

Other responses mentioned by fewer than 10% of respondents include: housing, state government, foreign immigration, state budget, terrorism, transportation, environment, and people leaving NYS.

- The most cited issue has been employment for five of the past six years. Employment was the top issue from 2003 to 2007, while economic growth was cited as the most important issue in 2008.
- There is an overall decreasing number of residents indicating employment as the most important issue in New York State (24% in 2003 vs. 15% in 2008).
- In 2008 a higher percentage of respondents cited both economic growth (18%) and taxes (17%) as the most important issue over employment which had the third highest number of respondents (15%).

Evaluations of Personal Finance

Respondents were asked if their financial situation is better, worse, or about the same as last year. They were also asked if they think a year from now that their financial situation will be better, worse, or about the same as the



current year. The proportion of responses has remained stable from 2003 to 2007, with a shift in opinion towards a more negative perception in 2008.

Table 2 Personal Economic Conditions

% of respondents indicating...	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Perceptions of Past Year						
Worse	31	22	22	22	22	32
About the Same	50	54	53	55	55	46
Better	19	24	25	23	23	22
Perceptions of Forthcoming Year						
Worse	16	9	14	15	12	20
About the Same	52	48	51	51	47	47
Better	32	43	35	34	41	33

- Personal economic perceptions over the past year have remained steady from 2003 to 2007. The majority of respondents indicate that their financial situation is about the same as the previous year, while overall the proportion of respondents who indicate their financial situation is either better or worse than last year is about 25% each.
- Reported perceptions for the forthcoming year also show no trend over the past five years. Overall, about 50% of respondents indicate they expect their financial situation to be about the same as last year, about 37% predict a better financial situation next year, and about 13% predict their economic condition will be worse next year.
- In 2008, a larger percentage of respondents indicated that they believe their economic situation has worsened over the past year (32%) and will be worse next year (20%).

Evaluations of State Economic Performance

Respondents were asked if they believe the state economy has gotten better, worse, or stayed the same compared to last year, thinking about the economy in New York State as a whole. They were also asked if they think a year from now that the NYS economy will be better, worse, or about the same as the current year. Economic perceptions of the state have changed over the past six years with an increasing number of residents reporting the economy has been worse off in the past few years.

Table 3 NYS Economic Conditions

% of respondents indicating...	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Perceptions of Past Year						
Worse	79	54	50	36	43	68
About the Same	18	29	34	48	37	26
Better	3	17	16	16	20	6
Perceptions of Forthcoming Year						
Worse	38	27	30	25	28	45
About the Same	38	39	45	52	38	33
Better	24	34	25	23	34	22

- Overall from 2003 to 2008, most respondents have reported that the state economy has gotten worse over the past year.
- The proportion of residents indicating the economy has declined over the past year has considerably decreased from 2003 to 2006 (79% in 2003 vs. 36% in 2006). This number has risen to 68% of respondents believing the state economy has declined in 2008.
- When asked about their perception of the state economy for the forthcoming year, most residents from 2003 to 2007 have reported that they believe the economy will remain the same.
- In 2008, a higher number of residents reported the state economy will be worse next year (45%) than either better (22%) or about the same (33%).

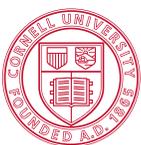
Employment Status

Between 2003 and 2008 ESP respondents were asked if they had looked for new work or a new job in the last four weeks. The percentage of respondents indicating they were looking for new work remained steady over the past six years.

Table 4 NYS Residents Looking for New Work

% of respondents indicating if looking for new work	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
No	80	81	85	81	82	86
Yes	20	19	15	19	18	14

- Overall, the proportion of respondents indicating they have not been looking for new work is about 83%.



- Approximately 17% of respondents over the past six years indicated they were looking for new work.

Self-Employment

Over the past six years respondents were asked if they were self-employed on their main job. Results have remained steady and no trend has occurred between 2003 and 2008.

Table 5 Self-employment

% of respondents indicating if self-employed	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
No	81	86	85	85	84	83
Yes	19	14	15	15	16	17

- Overall, the proportion of respondents indicating they are not self-employed is about 84%.
- Approximately 16% of respondents over the past six years indicated they were self-employed.

Institutional Trust

The ESP measured NYS residents' trust toward eight different institutions in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2008. Each year 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. The percentage of respondents indicating a high level of trust for each institution is provided in Table 6.

- Overall, there is an increasing amount of trust from New York State residents toward institutions over the past six years.
- There are substantial increases in the proportion of respondents indicating a high level of trust with some institutions including labor unions, local businesses, the news media, and other people.
- Local businesses and other people have the most respondents reporting a high level of trust for these institutions (43% and 35% in 2008, respectively).
- Large corporations and state government have the lowest number of respondents indicating a high trust level (11% and 12% in 2008, respectively).

Table 6 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 govt	15	16	20	17	21
State govt	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

See Report 3: Institutional Trust for more details, available at www.sri.cornell.edu.

Respondent Demographics

Information on resident demographics has also been recorded over the past six years. The distribution of certain characteristics of the sample of respondents participating in the ESP has remained constant while other characteristics have changed from the years 2003 to 2008.

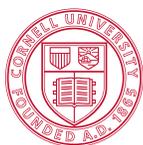
Age

Overall, most respondents of the ESP are between the ages 35 to 54 (about 43%), while approximately 29% of the surveyed residents are 55 years or more and approximately 28% are less than 35 years old.

Table 7 Age Distribution of ESP Respondents

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Less than 35	33	30	28	29	25	24
35 to 54	37	45	44	41	45	45
55 and over	30	25	28	30	30	31

- Changes in the distribution of age of ESP respondents have been small, with a slight decreasing trend in the number of young respondents (less than 35 years old).
- The number of respondents less than 35 has decreased over the past six years (33% in 2003 to 24% in 2008), such that the number of young respondents is less than



the number of respondents 55 and over in 2008.

- These changes agree with general trends for population estimates reported by the U. S. Census Bureau in that over the past six years, residents 55 and over have gone from the least abundant age group to the second most abundant age group. In 2008, ages 35 to 54 are the most abundant, while residents 18-34 comprise the lowest proportion of respondents.

Political Party

Although Democrats have been the dominating party out of ESP respondents for all years 2003 to 2008, the percentage of Republican and Independent respondents have changed over the past six years.

Table 8 Political Affiliation of ESP Respondents

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Democrat	43	52	47	47	46	45
Republican	29	23	26	23	16	16
Independent	25	20	22	28	35	37
Other	3	5	5	2	3	2

- From 2003 to 2008 most residents reported they were affiliated with the Democratic Party, while lower percentages reported being Republican or Independent.
- The data show an increasing number of independents and a decreasing number of republicans across time. From 2003 to 2005 more respondents indicated they were Republican than the number indicating they were Independent. From 2006 to 2008 more respondents indicated they were Independent than the number responding Republican.
- The high percentage of respondents indicating their party is Independent, does not correspond with population proportions of political parties in NYS according to the New York State Board of Elections. The distribution of parties in the sample is solely a feature of the ESP respondents and is an example of a potential bias in the survey.

Education Level

Respondents' level of education has been comparable across the years 2003 to 2008. The majority of respondents have attained an education level up to a Bachelor's degree, while a minority have attained a higher level of education,

specifically a Bachelor's degree or other professional degree beyond a Bachelor's degree.

Table 9 Education Level of ESP Respondents

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Bachelor's or more	50	45	42	39	44	41
Less than a Bachelor's	50	55	58	61	56	59

Summary

Based on economic perceptions, New York State residents believe the economy has declined in the past year. Additionally, residents expect the economy to worsen in the future. In general, residents believe their personal financial situation is better off than the state economy as a whole.

The number of respondents citing employment (which was cited as most important issue from 2003 to 2007) has been declining since 2003 and appeared as the third most cited issue, behind both economic growth and taxes in 2008.

Trust in institutions is increasing over time. The largest increases are with labor unions, local businesses, the news media, and other people.

The ESP has surveyed New York State residents' opinions on many issues, some seemingly unfavorable, such as recent views on the state of the economy, and some more favorable, such as individuals' trust in institutions. These attitudes will continue to change over time and can be used with results from this report in order to study changes in residents' opinions in future years.

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Citing Results from the ESP:

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