

## Americans Divided on President Obama's Handling of the Economy

*But they do have confidence in White House to produce policies to help fix the economic crisis*

**ROCHESTER, N.Y. – April 27, 2009** – President Obama may be getting positive ratings on his overall job performance (The Harris Poll, April 23, 2009) but Americans are divided over his economic job performance. Just under half (49%) give him positive ratings and 51% give his economic job performance negative ratings. This is a slight improvement from last month when 53% gave him negative economic job ratings and 47% of Americans gave him positive ratings.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,401 U.S. adults surveyed online between April 13 and 21, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

One thing that is unchanged from last month is the sense of confidence that Americans have in the Obama Administration to produce polices to help fix the economic crisis. Almost three in five adults (57%) say they are confident that the White House and the Administration will produce policies to fix the crisis while 43% are not confident. This is unchanged from March so confidence hasn't wavered – up or down.

### Looking at the economy in the coming year

When it comes to where the economy will be in the coming year, two in five Americans (39%) believe it will improve while just over one-third (35%) say it will stay the same and one-quarter (26%) believe it will get worse. There are differences in attitude depending on where one lives. Easterners are least pessimistic as just one in five (19%) believe things will get worse and 40% believe things will get better. Southerners are both more optimistic and pessimistic – 41% believe things will get better but 29% believe things will get worse. Midwesterners are just more pessimistic as 37% believe things will get better and 29% say the economy will get worse in the coming year.

There is also a racial and ethnic difference in opinion on where the economy will go in the next year. African Americans have the highest support for President Obama overall and this may translate into a sense of optimism about where things are going. Seven in ten African Americans (70%) believe the economy will improve in the coming year and only 8% say it will get worse. Hispanics are also much more positive as almost half (48%) believe the economy will improve while one in five (19%) say it will get worse. Whites are more pessimistic as only one-third (32%) believe the economy will improve in the coming year and 30% say it will get worse.

### Household's Financial Situation in Six Months

While people have confidence in economic policies, they do not believe their own finances will be getting better quickly. Specifically:

- In March, one in five Americans (20%) said, when thinking about their household's current financial situation, they expect things to be better in the next six months while just over one-third (35%) said they expected it to be worse;
- One month later and attitudes have changed slightly. Now, just under one-quarter of Americans (23%) say they expect things to be better for their household's financial situation six months from now and 31% say it will be worse; almost half (46%) say things will be the same; and,
- There are also regional differences on where the financial situation will be six months from now. Again, Easterners are more positive as 28% say they expect their household's financial situation to be better six months from now. Almost two in five Midwesterners (37%) believe their household's financial condition will be worse six months from now.

**So What?**

President Obama is now completing his first 100 days in office and there has been one main issue dominating almost each and every one of those days – the economy. While divided on his performance on it, Americans do remain confident that the Obama Administration will be able to enact policies to turn the economy around. But, the question will soon become when will these economic policies actually have an impact. Americans are willing to be patient up to a point and his approval ratings are probably insulating President Obama on this issue. Patience, however, will not last forever and the White House needs to be prepared for that.

**TABLE 1  
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING ON THE ECONOMY**

"How would you rate the overall job President Barack Obama is doing on the economy?"  
Base: All adults

	March	April
	%	%
POSITIVE	47	49
Excellent	13	13
Pretty good	34	36
NEGATIVE	53	51
Only fair	30	27
Poor	23	24

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 2**  
**CONFIDENCE IN WHITE HOUSE ON ECONOMY**

"How confident are you that the White House and the Administration will produce policies to help fix the economic crisis?"

Base: All adults

	March	April
	%	%
CONFIDENT (NET)	57	57
Very confident	16	17
Somewhat confident	41	40
NOT CONFIDENT (NET)	43	43
Not that confident	23	21
Not at all confident	20	22

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 3**  
**ECONOMY IN ONE YEAR**

"In the coming year, do you expect the economy to...?"

Base: All adults

	Total	Region				Race/Ethnicity		
		East	Midwest	South	West	White	Black	Hispanic
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Improve	39	40	37	41	36	32	70	48
Stay the same	35	41	34	31	36	38	22	33
Get worse	26	19	29	29	27	30	8	19

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 4**  
**HOUSEHOLDS' FINANCIAL CONDITIONS 6 MONTHS FROM NOW – TREND**

"Thinking about your household's current financial situation, do you expect it to be better or worse in the next six months?"

Base: All adults

	Feb 2008	March 2008	June 2008	July 2008	Nov 2008	Jan 2009	Mar 2009	April 2009
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
BETTER (NET)	39	33	40	36	24	20	20	23
Will remain the same	28	28	25	25	43	48	46	46
WORSE (NET)	34	39	36	39	33	32	35	31

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Note: Prior to November, there were three categories for Better and Worse

**TABLE 5**  
**HOUSEHOLDS' FINANCIAL CONDITIONS 6 MONTHS FROM NOW – BY REGION**  
 “Thinking about your household’s current financial situation, do you expect it to be better or worse in the next six months?”

Base: All adults

	Total	Region			
		East	Midwest	South	West
	%	%	%	%	%
<b>BETTER (NET)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>
Will be much better	5	12	2	3	4
Will be somewhat better	18	17	18	19	18
Will remain the same	46	43	43	48	48
<b>WORSE (NET)</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
Will be somewhat worse	25	24	29	25	22
Will be much worse	6	5	8	5	7

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

**Methodology**

The Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States April 13 and 21, 2008, among 2,401 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.***

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**The Harris Poll® #43, April 27, 2009**  
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**About Harris Interactive**

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