

Slightly More Americans Saying They Will Eat Out and Spend on Entertainment

Large ticket items, however, not seeing the same rebound

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – June 4, 2009 – While majorities are still inclined to decrease spending on eating out and entertainment, the numbers are better than they had been two months ago. In March, three-quarters of Americans said they were decreasing spending on eating out (74%) and entertainment (74%). Now, two-thirds say they are reducing eating out at restaurants (66%) and 64% say they have reduced spending on entertainment.

These are some of the results from The Harris Poll, a new study of 2,681 U.S. adults surveyed online between May 11 and 18, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

Americans are cutting back on their spending over the next six months. Specifically:

- Similar to last month, two-thirds of Americans (64%) say it is not likely they will take a vacation away from home lasting longer than a week while 36% say it is likely they will vacation away from home. In March, 35% of Americans said they would be likely to take a trip;
- Large purchases continue to suffer as more than three-quarters of Americans say it is not likely they will buy a new computer (79%), move to a different residence (81%), buy or lease a new car, truck or van (88%), purchase a house or condo (91%), start a new business (92%) or buy a boat or recreational vehicle (95%). These numbers are all very similar to March so people are still not ready to spend on the big-ticket items;
- One quarter of Americans (26%) say it is likely they will have more money to spend the way they want in the next six months which is up from 21% in March; and,
- People are slightly more likely to say that they are going to be saving or investing more money. Just over half of Americans (53%) say they are likely to save or invest more money while 47% are not likely to do so. In March, Americans were split on this as 50% said they were likely to save or invest and 50% said they were not likely to do so.

So What?

As people get ready for summer vacations, it seems as if the trips may be getting shorter and closer to home – more “daycations” and “staycations”. But, even if summer vacations may be changing this year, there are small signs that things may be getting better, at least in terms of spending. More people are eating out and spending money on entertainment, something that the studios for the big summer blockbusters will be happy to hear, but the big ticket items are still not seeing any type of rebound. Those may take a little longer to see the slight recovery that the smaller expenses are seeing.

TABLE 1
SPENDING/SAVINGS OVER NEXT SIX MONTHS

“How likely will you be to do the following within the next 6 months?”

Base: All adults

		LIKELY (NET)	Very likely	Somewhat Likely	NOT LIKELY (NET)	Not that likely	Not at all likely
Decrease spending on eating out at restaurants	%	66	31	36	34	22	12
Reduce spending on entertainment	%	64	29	35	36	23	12
Save or invest more money	%	53	20	33	47	21	26
Take a vacation away from home lasting longer than a week	%	36	17	19	64	19	45
Have more money to spend the way you want	%	26	5	21	74	31	43
Buy a new computer	%	21	6	15	79	20	59
Move to a different residence	%	19	8	11	81	11	70
Buy or lease a newly manufactured car, truck or van	%	12	4	8	88	14	73
Purchase a house or condo	%	9	4	5	91	8	83
Start a new business	%	8	3	5	92	9	83
Buy a boat or recreational vehicle (e.g. trailer, motor home)	%	5	3	2	95	6	90

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

TABLE 2
SPENDING/SAVINGS OVER NEXT SIX MONTHS - TREND

“How likely will you be to do the following within the next 6 months?”

Percent saying “Very/Somewhat Likely”

Base: All adults

		Nov. 2008	March 2009	May 2009
Decrease spending on eating out at restaurants	%	65	74	66
Reduce spending on entertainment	%	64	74	64
Save or invest more money	%	49	50	53
Take a vacation away from home lasting longer than a week	%	29	35	36
Have more money to spend the way you want	%	25	21	26
Buy a new computer	%	22	22	21
Move to a different residence	%	18	20	19
Buy or lease a newly manufactured car, truck or van	%	12	11	12
Purchase a house or condo	%	10	10	9
Start a new business	%	9	10	8
Buy a boat or recreational vehicle (e.g. trailer, motor home)	%	5	5	5

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

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States May 11 and 18, 2009, among 2,681 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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