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## **Wall Street's Record Profit One Sign of the Economy Easing, but Americans Say We Are Still a Long Way from Being Out of Trouble**

*Strong majorities believe government should regulate or limit Wall Street bonuses*

**Rochester, N.Y. — August 31, 2009** — As the economic news starts to show just a little brightening, the actions of Wall Street and the large investment banks are something that Americans are watching. As some of the large Wall Street firms, such as Goldman Sachs, and J.P. Morgan, release earnings results that show record profits, seven in ten Americans (70%) believe that this is one sign things may be easing, but they still believe the country is a long way from being out of economic trouble. One-quarter of Americans (25%) see this as bad news as it potentially indicates a return to the ways that caused some of the economic problems in the first place while 5% believe it is good news and shows the recession and economic troubles are almost over.

These are some of the results of a new **BBC World News America/The Harris Poll** of 2,004 adults surveyed online between August 12 and 14, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

One thing that comes along with these record profits is the potential of large bonuses and many of these firms, including those who had accepted and paid back government bailouts, indicate that they will once again be giving large bonuses to their top employees. Knowing this, almost three-quarters of Americans (72%) agree, including almost half (46%) who strongly agree, that the federal government should regulate or limit the amount that Wall Street firms can pay out in bonuses. There is a gender gap on this issue as almost four in five women (79%) believe the government should regulate or limit the amount of bonuses compared to less than two-thirds (64%) of men who say this.

While the American public is of one mind on some things, one area where they are not is with the notion that what is good for Wall Street is good for America. Just over two in five U.S. adults (44%) disagree with that notion but almost the same number (42%) agree with it and 14% of Americans are not at all sure. Again, there is a gender difference as men are more likely to agree with this idea than women are (47% versus 38%). There is also an age divide. Just over half of those aged 45-54 (51%) agree that what is good for Wall Street is good for American while half of those aged 18-34 (50%) disagree with this idea.

### **So What?**

As the dog days of summer wane and as people leave thoughts of beaches and summer vacations behind them, Americans are more likely to have issues such as the economy moving back to the forefront. And, as they do, there will be greater scrutiny on Wall Street. Americans view the firms that make up Wall Street with a [skeptical eye](#) already. As they begin to yet again pay out large bonuses, that skepticism is sure to remain and, perhaps, even deepen as the days go along.

**TABLE 1  
WALL STREET PROFITS**

“Recently, some of the large Wall Street firms, such as Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan have released earnings that show record profits. Which if these statements is closest to your opinion?”

Base: All U.S. adults

	Total	Gender	
		Male	Female
	%	%	%
This is one sign things may be easing, but we are still a long way from being out of economic trouble	70	66	74
This is bad news, as it indicates a return to the ways that helped cause economic problems in the first place	25	28	22
This is good news, as it means that the recession and economic troubles are almost over	5	7	4

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

**TABLE 2  
WALL STREET BONUSES**

“Many Wall Street firms have just returned to record profit months after accepting government bailouts. These same firms now indicate they will be once again giving large bonuses to their top employees.

Knowing this, how strongly to agree or disagree with the following statement?

The federal government should regulate or limit the amount Wall Street firms can pay out in bonuses.”

Base: All U.S. adults

	Total	Age				Gender	
		18-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Male	Female
		%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>AGREE (NET)</b>	72	70	68	69	77	64	79
Strongly agree	46	33	43	46	59	41	51
Somewhat agree	26	36	24	24	18	24	27
<b>DISAGREE (NET)</b>	28	30	32	31	23	36	21
Somewhat disagree	14	16	16	14	11	15	12
Strongly disagree	15	15	16	17	13	20	9

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

**TABLE 3**  
**IS WHAT IS GOOD FOR WALL STREET GOOD FOR AMERICA?**  
 “How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement?  
 What is good for Wall Street is good for America.”

Base: All U.S. adults

	Total	Age				Gender	
		18-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<b>AGREE (NET)</b>	42	37	41	51	42	47	38
Strongly agree	10	10	7	14	10	12	9
Somewhat agree	32	27	33	38	32	35	29
<b>DISAGREE (NET)</b>	44	50	42	36	43	44	43
Somewhat disagree	26	33	25	21	24	25	27
Strongly disagree	17	17	18	15	19	19	16
Not at all sure	14	13	17	12	15	10	19

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

### Methodology

This **BBC World News America/Harris Poll** was conducted online within the United States August 12 and 14, 2009, among 2,004 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.*

**The Harris Poll® #96, August 31, 2009**

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