

Americans Want Obama Administration to Focus on Economic Recovery Before Health Care Reform

Americans divided on confidence in U.S. and global economy

New York, N.Y. — September 29, 2009 — When one thinks of the economy, there are different permutations of it. Are Americans thinking of the U.S. economy? Probably, but there is also the European economy and the Asian economy to consider as well and how confident are Americans in the overall strength of each of these. When it comes to the U.S. and global economy, Americans are split and there is uncertainty regarding the European and Asian economies.

These are some of the results of **BBC World News America/ Harris Poll** of 3,636 adults surveyed online between September 9 and 14, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

Just under half of Americans (48%) say they are confident in the overall strength of the U.S. economy but the same number (48%) say they are not confident. More U.S. adults are not at all confident (17%) in the strength of the American economy than are very confident (11%). This split holds true for the overall global economy as 44% of Americans are confident in its strength while 43% are not at all confident.

There is a bit more uncertainty on the part of Americans when it comes to the European and Asian economies. Over two in five (43%) U.S. adults are confident in the overall strength of the European economy and 36% are not confident. There is a bit more confidence in the Asian economy strength as 46% of Americans are confident in its strength while one-third (32%) are not confident. But one in five Americans are not sure about the European economy (21%) or the Asian economy (22%).

Health care or economic recovery

In the past few weeks, the Obama Administration has been making a strong push to pass health care reform. While both health care reform and fostering economic recovery are obviously important, seven in ten Americans (71%) believe President Obama and his administration should focus on fostering economic recovery first while 29% say he should focus on health care reform first. Household income does show a difference in this – those with a household income of less than \$35,000 are more likely to say health care reform should be focused on first (34%) while those with a household income of \$75,000 or more say it should be economic recovery (77%).

Likelihood of health care passage

While the Obama administration has been trying to push passage of health care reform this year, most Americans are doubtful this will actually occur. Seven in ten (71%) believe it is not likely that this will be signed into law by the end of 2009 and just 29% say it is likely. There is more optimism for the end of next spring as 51% of Americans say it is likely to occur by then and 49% say it is not likely. But, almost two-thirds of U.S. adults (64%) say health care reform will be signed into law by the end of next summer while 36% say it is still not likely to happen by then.

So What?

While President Obama has been spending so much of his time attempting to pass health reform, he and many of his surrogates on the issue are being met with resistance by the American public. One reason may be a sense that the wrong priority is taking center stage. People are still suffering economically and the Administration may be spreading itself too thin in trying to do too much. No one will ever argue that health care reform is not important, but if it comes at the expense of fostering economic recovery, Americans may not want to see that choice made right now. Now, they are more interested to know what will be done to instill confidence in world economies and in revitalizing the job market. Until they know that, they may not want to hear anything else.

TABLE 1
CONFIDENCE IN THE ECONOMY

"At the current time, how confident are you in the overall strength of each of these?"

Base: All U.S. adults

	Global economy	U.S. economy	European economy	Asian economy
	%	%	%	%
CONFIDENT (NET)	44	48	43	46
Very confident	7	11	8	12
Somewhat confident	37	37	35	35
NOT CONFIDENT (NET)	43	48	36	32
Not that confident	31	30	25	22
Not at all confident	12	17	11	9
Not sure	13	4	21	22

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

TABLE 2
WHAT SHOULD OBAMA ADMINISTRATION FOCUS ON

"While both are obviously important, which do you think Pres. Obama and his administration should focus on first?"

Base: All U.S. adults

	Total	Household Income			
		Less than \$35k	\$35k-\$49.9k	\$50k-\$74.9k	\$75k+
		%	%	%	%
Health care reform	29	34	33	33	23
Fostering economic recovery	71	66	67	67	77

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

TABLE 3
LIKLIHOOD OF HEALTH CARE REFORM BEING PASSED

"Thinking about the health care debate currently underway in Washington, how likely do you think it is that health care reform will be passed by Congress and signed into law...?"

Base: All U.S. adults

	By the end of 2009	By next Spring	By the end of next Summer
	%	%	%
LIKELY (NET)	29	51	64
Very likely	8	13	25
Somewhat likely	22	38	38
NOT LIKELY (NET)	71	49	36
Not that likely	36	32	19
Not at all likely	34	17	17

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 September 9 and 14, 2009 among 3,636 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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