

Majorities of Adults in Five Largest European Countries and the U.S. Pessimistic About Their Country's Economic Situation

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – December 22, 2008 – A new **Harris Interactive/France 24/International Herald Tribune** survey conducted online by Harris Interactive® among a total of 6,165 adults (aged 16-64) within France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, and the United States and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy between 26 November and 8 December finds that:

- Majorities in all six countries are pessimistic about the economic status of their country. Over four in five French adults (83%), three-quarters of Italians (74%), 70% of both Britons and Spaniards, and 63% of Germans all say they are pessimistic about their country's economic status. Americans are a bit more divided as 52% are pessimistic while 48% are optimistic;
- Majorities in France (63%), Italy (62%), Spain (59%), Great Britain (58%) and Germany (52%) are also pessimistic about their own economic situation. Americans are of an opposite mind from their European counterparts as a majority (54%) are actually optimistic about their own economic situation;
- Thinking about the year that is coming to a close, 2008 was not a very good year for adults in these six countries. Almost half of Americans (47%), 43% of Italians, two in five Britons (39%), and 38% of both Spanish and French adults all say that, regarding their personal situation, 2008 has been a negative year. Germans are very split on how 2008 has been – 35% say it has been a positive year, 33% say it has been neither a negative nor positive year and 31% of Germans say 2008 was a negative year;
- Looking at the most significant events of the past year, two really rise to the top when people are asked to pick the top three. At least three-quarters of adults in each of the six countries say it was the stock exchange/banking/financial crisis and at least seven in ten in each country say it was the election of Barack Obama in the United States; and,
- When it comes to the most significant event for people personally in 2008, strong majorities in Spain (81%), Great Britain (67%), Italy (58%) and France (57%) say it was the stock exchange/banking/financial crisis. While half of adults in Germany (49%) and the United States (49%) also say the financial crisis was the most significant for them personally, 44% of Americans and 35% of Germans also say it was the election of Barack Obama.

So What?

As 2008 draws to a close, it is clear that the one major issue of the past year is the financial crisis around the globe. People in these six countries are pessimistic about what has been, about their country's economic situation and about their personal situation. The crisis is also the most significant event of the year – a year that had some dramatic events occurring during its 12 months. Americans, however, are seeing a small ray of hope. With the election of Barack Obama, they are hoping that things will get better and he will have a window of opportunity during his first few months in office to make these changes. How much time Americans will give him is yet to be known.

TABLE 1
OPINION OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

“Regarding the economic status of your country, would you say that you are today...?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OPTIMISTIC (NET)	30	17	26	30	37	48
Very optimistic	4	*	2	2	3	8
Somewhat optimistic	26	16	24	27	34	40
PESSIMISTIC (NET)	70	83	74	70	63	52
Somewhat pessimistic	56	58	53	46	52	40
Very pessimistic	14	25	20	25	11	12

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

TABLE 2
OPINION OF PERSONAL ECONOMIC SITUATION

“And more specifically regarding your own economic situation, would you say that you are today...?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OPTIMISTIC (NET)	42	37	38	41	48	54
Very optimistic	4	3	2	4	7	10
Somewhat optimistic	38	34	37	37	42	44
PESSIMISTIC (NET)	58	63	62	59	52	46
Somewhat pessimistic	45	50	49	40	42	35
Very pessimistic	13	13	12	19	10	11

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

TABLE 3
REFLECTING ON 2008

“Regarding your personal situation, would you say that 2008 has been...?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
POSITIVE (NET)	27	25	23	25	35	28
A very positive year	6	5	4	5	6	7
A somewhat positive year	21	21	19	20	29	21
A neither positive nor negative year	34	36	34	37	33	25
NEGATIVE (NET)	39	38	43	38	31	47
A somewhat negative year	26	23	28	26	21	30
A very negative year	14	15	15	12	10	17

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

TABLE 4
THREE MOST SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL EVENTS OF 2008

“Which of the following do you feel have been the 3 most significant international events of 2008?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
The stock exchange/banking/financial crisis	77	92	85	92	84	87
The election of Barack Obama in the United States	73	83	82	81	82	80
The Olympic Games in China	41	34	33	44	38	25
The conflict between China and Tibet	14	33	31	16	26	7
The conflict between Russia and Georgia	20	18	19	13	21	24
Evolution of the situation in Iraq	22	8	12	12	10	35
France as president of Europe	3	11	2	5	2	3
Other	6	5	6	10	8	11
Not sure	9	1	2	4	4	4

Note: Multiple responses allowed

TABLE 5
MOST SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL EVENT

“And among these events, which one has been the most significant for you personally in 2008?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
The stock exchange/banking/financial crisis	67	57	58	81	49	49
The election of Barack Obama in the United States	17	30	31	12	35	44
The Olympic Games in China	10	4	5	5	8	1
The conflict between China and Tibet	2	6	3	1	3	*
The conflict between Russia and Georgia	3	*	2	1	1	4
Evolution of the situation in Iraq	1	2	1	1	3	1
France as president of Europe	1	1	-	*	*	*

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

Methodology

This **Harris Interactive/France 24/International Herald Tribune** study was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,165 adults (aged 16-64) within France (1,034), Germany (1,074), Great Britain (1,111), Spain (949) and the United States (1,000), and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy (997) between 26 November and 8 December 2008. Figures for age, sex, education, region and Internet usage were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was 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 populations of the

respective countries. 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 and of the British Polling Council.

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