

Majorities in Five Largest European Countries and the U.S Have Little or No Trust in Politicians to Handle Fiscal Crisis

New York, N.Y. — June 17, 2010 — A new **Financial Times/Harris Poll** finds that adults in the U.S. and the five largest European countries do not have much trust in their political leaders to deal effectively with the current fiscal crisis. Just under half of Germans (45%), two in five French adults (40%), just under two in five Americans (39%), Spaniards (38%) and Italians (37%) and one-third of Britons (34%) say they do not trust politicians in their country at all to effectively deal with the fiscal crisis. Between 23% and 37% say they trust the politicians in their country just a little.

These are some of the findings of a **Financial Times/Harris Poll** conducted online by [Harris Interactive](#) among 6,289 adults aged 16-64 in France (1,062), Germany (1,002), Great Britain (1,127), Spain (1,022) and the United States (1,058) and adults aged 18-64 in Italy (1,018) between May 25 and June 2, 2010.

Spending cuts versus raising taxes

There are two ways for governments to reduce deficits: either cut public spending or raise taxes. Not surprisingly, only between 3% and 6% of adults in these six countries would prefer to see higher taxes to spending cuts, and between 9% and 17% would prefer to see a mixture of these two options, but with the tax increases playing the larger part. Half of Italians (50%) and just under half of Spaniards (48%) and French (48%) would prefer spending cuts to paying higher taxes. Just under half of Britons (47%) and two in five Americans (40%) would prefer to see a mixture of the two options, but with spending cuts bearing the larger part of the burden. Germans are split – 42% would want to see spending cuts over taxes and the same number would prefer a mixture but with spending cuts being the focus.

Strong majorities in the U.S. (80%), Germany (77%), France (73%), Spain (72%), Italy (71%) and Great Britain (65%) all think their government should find a way of consulting them and other citizens before deciding where spending cuts should be made.

The impact on families

While people realize that potential spending cuts will have an impact on their family, there is a sense they will be moderate, and will not affect them a lot or a great deal. One-quarter of Italians (25%), just under one-quarter of Britons (23%) and less than one in five Americans (19%), Germans (19%), Spaniards (18%) and French (17%) say cuts to public spending will affect them and their families at least a lot. Between 34% and 45% in each of the six countries say these spending cuts will affect them a moderate amount.

So What?

As deficits continue to rise, governments around the world will have to make some very tough decisions as to how to reduce them. While spending cuts are the preferred method, the issue is what should be cut? And, since political figures are not trusted to deal with the fiscal crisis, every cut will be closely scrutinized by a skeptical public. Whether the various administrations pass this scrutiny or not may be seen the next time each country holds elections.

TABLE 1
THE FINANCIAL CRISIS AND PEOPLE'S TRUST IN POLITICIANS

"How much do you trust politicians in your country to deal effectively with the current fiscal crisis?"

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
At least a lot (NET)	5	7	5	5	6	5
A great deal	*	2	*	1	1	1
A lot	5	5	5	4	5	4
A moderate amount	26	26	31	22	19	26
A little	29	33	24	36	37	23
Not at all	39	34	40	37	38	45

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

TABLE 2
REDUCING THE DEFICIT - SPENDING CUTS VS. TAXES RISES

"Generally, there are two ways (and multiple variations of these ways) for governments to reduce deficits: cutting public spending and raising taxes. Which one of the following options would you prefer to see your country take?"

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I would prefer spending cuts to paying higher taxes	38	30	48	50	48	42
I would prefer a mixture of the two, but with spending cuts bearing the bigger part of the burden	40	47	39	37	36	42
I would prefer a mixture of the two, but with tax rises bearing the bigger part of the burden	17	17	9	11	12	12
I would prefer higher taxes to spending cuts	5	6	4	3	3	4

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

TABLE 3
SPENDING CUTS AND PEOPLE'S SAY

"Do you think your government should find a way of consulting you and other citizens before deciding where the cuts should be made?"

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	80	65	73	71	72	77
No	10	19	21	18	20	14
I have no opinion either way	9	16	6	10	9	9

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

TABLE 4
SPENDING CUTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON FAMILIES

“If your country were to decide to cut public spending, how much, if at all, do you think the cuts will affect you and your family?”

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
At least a lot (NET)	19	23	17	25	18	19
A great deal	7	7	4	5	5	6
A lot	12	16	13	20	13	13
A moderate amount	38	37	42	45	44	34
A little	33	33	25	25	27	35
Not at all	10	8	16	5	11	12

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

Methodology

This **FT/Harris Poll** was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,289 adults aged 16-64 within France (1,062), Germany (1,002), Great Britain (1,127), Spain (1,022), U.S. (1,058) and adults aged 18-64 in Italy (1,018) between May 25 and June 2, 2010. 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.

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