

Concerns in the U.S. and the Five Largest European Countries about Government's Funds in the Future

Majorities would oppose tax increases to fund current and future government spending

New York, N.Y. — May 19, 2010 — A new **Financial Times/Harris Poll** finds majorities of French adults (53%), just under half of Americans (46%) and two in five Italians (40%) believe it is likely that their government will default in the next decade, that is, be unable to pay back money it has borrowed in financial markets. Germans are more optimistic on this front, as over two in five (43%) believe it is unlikely their government will default. Britons and Spaniards are more divided. Just over one-third of Spaniards (35%) and one-third of Britons (33%) believe it is likely their government will default, while 34% of Spaniards and 30% of Britons believe it is unlikely.

These are some of the findings of a **Financial Times/Harris Poll** conducted online by [Harris Interactive](http://www.harrisinteractive.com) among 6,318 adults aged 16-64 in France (1,035), Germany (1,040), Great Britain (1,124), Spain (1,001) and the United States (1,072) and adults aged 18-64 in Italy (1,046) between April 27 and May 4, 2010.

Paying for basic needs

There are many basic needs that governments fund for their citizens and there are some concerns about paying for these in the future. Almost three in five Germans (58%), just under half of Britons (48%), and over one-third of Italians (36%), Americans (36%) and French adults (35%) say they are not at all confident their government will be able to pay for a reasonable state pension in the future. One in five Spaniards (22%) are extremely or very confident with an additional 33% who are fairly confident.

Even after the recent health care reform laws passed in the U.S., two in five Americans (41%) are not at all confident their government will be able to pay for health care in the future. Two in five French and German adults (38%) share this feeling while two in five Italians (38%) are somewhat confident. Almost two in five Spaniards (37%) and one-third of Britons (32%) say they are fairly confident their government will be able to pay for health care in the future.

When it comes to mandatory education, at least two in five adults in each of the six countries are at least fairly confident that their government will be able to pay for this in the future. Further education, however, is another story. At least three in five adults in the U.S. (69%), Great Britain (66%), France (60%), Italy (62%) and Germany (70%) say they are only somewhat confident or not at all confident that their government will be able to pay for further education in the future. Again, Spaniards are more confident with almost three in five (58%) saying they are at least fairly confident their government will pay for further education in the future.

Paying for the future

Seven in ten Italians (72%) and French adults (69%), almost two-thirds of Spaniards (64%) and Germans (65%), over half of Americans (52%) and just under half of Britons (49%) say they would oppose a tax increase to fund current and future government spending initiatives without increasing debt. Just one-quarter of Americans (26%) and less than one in five adults in the five European countries would support such an idea.

More than three in five adults in the five European countries, as well as 44% of Americans, would support having banks pay a special international tax, however, to help the government out of its financial difficulties.

TABLE 1
GOVERNMENT’S BORROWING AND THE RISK OF DEFAULTING

“How likely do you think it is, if at all, that your government will "default" in the next decade, i.e. being unable to pay back money it has borrowed in financial markets?”

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Likely (NET):	46%	33%	53%	40%	35%	28%
Very likely	21%	10%	22%	14%	9%	9%
Somewhat likely	25%	23%	31%	26%	26%	19%
Neither likely nor unlikely	13%	21%	13%	22%	18%	23%
Unlikely (NET):	33%	30%	27%	29%	34%	43%
Somewhat unlikely	18%	16%	19%	18%	19%	27%
Very unlikely	15%	14%	7%	11%	15%	16%
Not sure	8%	16%	8%	9%	14%	6%

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

TABLE 2
CONFIDENCE IN THE AFFORDABILITY OF THE WELFARE STATE – STATE PENSION

“How confident are you, if at all, that in the future your government will be able to pay for the following?”
Reasonable state pension

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
At least very confident (NET):	9%	6%	6%	8%	22%	5%
Extremely confident	2%	1%	1%	1%	5%	2%
Very confident	7%	5%	5%	7%	17%	3%
Fairly confident	23%	25%	17%	23%	33%	11%
Somewhat confident	32%	21%	42%	34%	31%	26%
Not at all confident	36%	48%	35%	36%	14%	58%

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

TABLE 3**CONFIDENCE IN THE AFFORDABILITY OF THE WELFARE STATE – UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS**

“How confident are you, if at all, that in the future your government will be able to pay for the following?”
Unemployment benefits

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
At least very confident (NET):	12%	10%	4%	5%	22%	10%
Extremely confident	3%	2%	1%	1%	5%	2%
Very confident	9%	7%	3%	4%	17%	8%
Fairly confident	22%	30%	22%	23%	36%	23%
Somewhat confident	34%	27%	39%	38%	28%	37%
Not at all confident	32%	33%	36%	34%	14%	30%

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

TABLE 4**CONFIDENCE IN THE AFFORDABILITY OF THE WELFARE STATE – HEALTHCARE**

“How confident are you, if at all, that in the future your government will be able to pay for the following?”
Healthcare

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
At least very confident (NET):	12%	12%	6%	9%	37%	8%
Extremely confident	3%	3%	1%	1%	8%	2%
Very confident	8%	10%	6%	8%	29%	6%
Fairly confident	20%	32%	18%	29%	37%	17%
Somewhat confident	27%	26%	38%	38%	19%	37%
Not at all confident	41%	30%	38%	24%	7%	38%

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

TABLE 5**CONFIDENCE IN THE AFFORDABILITY OF THE WELFARE STATE – EDUCATION**

“How confident are you, if at all, that in the future your government will be able to pay for the following?”

Mandatory education

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
At least very confident (NET):	18%	17%	24%	18%	43%	22%
Extremely confident	4%	4%	6%	3%	11%	7%
Very confident	14%	13%	18%	15%	32%	15%
Fairly confident	25%	32%	36%	32%	37%	27%
Somewhat confident	31%	26%	24%	30%	14%	34%
Not at all confident	26%	25%	15%	20%	6%	17%

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

TABLE 6**CONFIDENCE IN THE AFFORDABILITY OF THE WELFARE STATE – FURTHER EDUCATION**

“How confident are you, if at all, that in the future your government will be able to pay for the following?”

Further education

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
At least very confident (NET):	11%	8%	10%	10%	21%	12%
Extremely confident	2%	1%	1%	2%	5%	2%
Very confident	9%	6%	9%	8%	16%	10%
Fairly confident	20%	27%	30%	28%	37%	18%
Somewhat confident	30%	24%	37%	38%	27%	39%
Not at all confident	39%	42%	23%	24%	14%	31%

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

TABLE 7**CONFIDENCE IN THE AFFORDABILITY OF THE WELFARE STATE – MILITARY**

“How confident are you, if at all, that in the future your government will be able to pay for the following?”

A strong military defense of the country

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
At least very confident (NET):	34%	12%	25%	13%	32%	18%
Extremely confident	12%	3%	4%	3%	7%	5%
Very confident	22%	9%	20%	10%	25%	13%
Fairly confident	30%	29%	35%	35%	41%	30%
Somewhat confident	20%	26%	23%	33%	17%	32%
Not at all confident	16%	33%	17%	19%	10%	20%

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

TABLE 8**TAX INCREASE AND GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

“How much would you favor or oppose a tax increase to fund current and future government spending initiatives without increasing government debt?”

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Favor (NET):	26%	19%	13%	11%	18%	16%
Strongly favor	7%	6%	2%	2%	6%	2%
Somewhat favor	18%	13%	11%	9%	13%	14%
Neither favor nor oppose	22%	32%	18%	17%	17%	19%
Oppose (NET):	52%	49%	69%	72%	64%	65%
Somewhat oppose	16%	23%	26%	28%	24%	27%
Strongly oppose	36%	26%	43%	44%	40%	38%

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

TABLE 9
AN INTERNATIONAL TAX ON BANKS

“Some argue that banks should pay a special international tax to help the government out of its financial difficulties. How much would you agree, if at all, with such a measure?”

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

	United States	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree (NET):	44%	61%	68%	63%	64%	69%
Strongly agree	18%	33%	32%	28%	38%	33%
Somewhat agree	26%	29%	36%	35%	26%	36%
Neither agree nor disagree	27%	24%	19%	23%	21%	20%
Disagree (NET):	29%	15%	13%	14%	15%	12%
Somewhat disagree	13%	8%	7%	9%	8%	7%
Strongly disagree	16%	6%	6%	6%	7%	4%

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 6,318 adults aged 16-64 within France (1,035), Germany (1,040), Great Britain (1,124), Spain (1,001), U.S. (1,072) and adults aged 18-64 in Italy (1,046) between April 27 and May 4, 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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