

HEARTLAND MONITOR POLL



Americans Express Overwhelming Confidence in Their Own Financial Decision-Making Ability but Remain Concerned About the Economy

19th Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor Poll Reveals Americans Believe the Great Recession Continues, Strong Majority Feel Negative Effects of Recent Government Shutdown

Washington, D.C., Nov. 22, 2013 — Most Americans feel well-equipped to make important financial decisions, but significant numbers worry they are making less progress than they should toward reaching financial goals, according to poll results announced today by The Allstate Corporation (NYSE: ALL) and *National Journal*. In the wake of challenging financial times, new data from the quarterly **Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor Poll** reveals that five years after the economic crash, most Americans believe the country remains in the grips of a recession and express limited confidence in most major institutions, with many people skeptical about investing in the stock market. Instead of what are perceived as riskier investment strategies, Americans are relying more on their own understanding of financial planning, paying off debt, putting away savings, and seeking out friends or family for advice.

Americans of all political stripes believe the recent federal government shutdown and national debt have negatively impacted them on a personal level. Three in four (73 percent) say the debt and deficit have directly affected their personal financial situation, a sentiment shared across party lines. Among those feeling personally affected, a third (33 percent) believe the main result will be to raise their taxes, and a quarter (26 percent) feel it will mean fewer opportunities for them to get jobs and increases in pay.

Though most Americans (58 percent) believe participating in the financial system is the safest and most reliable way to provide a secure financial future for their families, a substantial percentage (35 percent) worry the system is too volatile, complicated, and unreliable to provide a secure future. Americans believe the economy is struggling, with more than half (53 percent) saying the U.S. remains in the grips of a recession, and few believing economic improvements are on the horizon.

Yet Americans' confidence in their own abilities remains unwavering, supported by the strong belief that they are well-prepared to make important financial decisions in the wake of the Great Recession. Nearly nine in 10 (89 percent) say they're confident they understand information about important financial decisions writ large, and they're also

highly confident they have the information needed to buy a home (77 percent), plan their retirement (75 percent), and set up an inheritance (64 percent).

“Despite the headwinds we continue to face, the resilience of the American people is alive and well,” said Sanjay Gupta, executive vice president of marketing, innovation and corporate relations for Allstate. “It is this American trait and tradition of individual responsibility—more specifically, the ability to control one’s financial decisions and destiny—that makes this country unique and continues to be the foundation of our culture, political, and financial system.”

"With the stock market soaring, home prices recovering, and borrowing costs low, this survey suggests that Americans with means and credentials once again see the financial system as a reliable channel toward achieving their goals," writes Ronald Brownstein, editorial director for *National Journal* and Atlantic Media. "But for many Americans struggling to stay afloat after a decade of stagnant incomes, the financial system still looms like a cloud on the horizon—opaque, unpredictable, and vaguely menacing. This poll suggests that a clear challenge remains to create a financial system that all Americans believe can help them achieve their aspirations."

Watch a live briefing on key findings from the latest Heartland Monitor Poll today at 8:30 a.m. ET, at <http://www.nationaljournal.com/events>, featuring Sheila Bair, former chairwoman of the U.S. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC).

In evaluating their current situation, many Americans say they are falling behind on key financial milestones, including saving for retirement (44 percent), contributing to a 401k or IRA (42 percent), maintaining an emergency savings fund (47 percent), estate planning (54 percent) and investing in the stock market (50 percent). However, when it comes to paying off debt, Americans mostly believe they are either on track (54 percent) or ahead (21 percent); 65 percent of respondents also say they're on track with sticking to a monthly budget.

Americans are most likely to turn to friends or family members for information on managing their personal finances. Nearly half (47 percent) say they seek this “informal” advice while just one in three (33 percent) turn to a professional financial adviser, one in four (24 percent) seek advice from a banker at a branch location, and about one in six (17 percent) turn to a credit union.

The Obama presidency has hit a low-water mark in the Heartland Monitor Poll series. Just 23 percent of Americans believe the country is headed in the right direction and pessimism stretches across all socioeconomic groups. President Obama’s job approval has slipped to 38 percent, a new low for his presidency in this poll. His approval rating is now just 29 percent among independents, 29 percent among whites, and just 52 percent among Hispanics. Democrats (76 percent) and African-Americans (76 percent) remain supportive, though at reduced levels. Additionally, just 9 percent of Americans approve of the job Congress is doing, a 12-point drop from one year ago (21 percent).

Economic and personal financial indicators are also at or near their low point. Just 11 percent think the economy is in “excellent” or “good” shape, while 45 percent think it’s in “fair” shape and 44 percent think it is in “poor” shape. More Americans (36 percent) believe the economy will get worse over the next 12 months than those who believe it will improve (29 percent). Still, more Americans think their own situation will improve over the next year (39 percent) than believe it will become worse (15 percent). This holds true among all socioeconomic situations, demonstrating some continued optimism among the American public in the face of an uncertain economy and mixed economic experiences.

Key findings from the 19th Allstate/*National Journal* Heartland Monitor Poll are also available via [PDF](#). Additional information on the entire polling series can be found at: <http://www.theheartlandvoice.com/category/insights>.

Survey Methodology

Since April 2009, the quarterly Allstate/*National Journal* Heartland Monitor Polls have explored Americans' personal financial experiences, their views on the financial system, and their opinion of how the federal government’s budget situation impacts their personal finances. The most recent Allstate/*National Journal* Heartland Monitor poll was conducted by FTI Consulting, from Nov. 2-6, 2013, among N=1,000 American adults age 18+ reached via landline and cell phone. The margin of error for the N=1,000 telephone sample is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

About Allstate

[The Allstate Corporation](#) (NYSE: ALL) is the nation’s largest publicly held personal lines insurer, serving approximately 16 million households through its Allstate, Encompass, Esurance and Answer Financial brand names and Allstate Financial business segment. Allstate branded insurance products (auto, home, life and retirement) and services are offered through Allstate agencies, independent agencies, and Allstate exclusive financial representatives, as well as via www.allstate.com, www.allstate.com/financial and 1-800 Allstate®, and are widely known through the slogan “You’re In Good Hands With Allstate®.” As part of [Allstate’s commitment](#) to strengthen local communities, The Allstate Foundation, Allstate employees, agency owners and the corporation provided \$29 million in 2012 to thousands of nonprofit organizations and important causes across the United States.

About National Journal

[National Journal](#) is Washington’s premier source for 360-degree insight on politics and policy. With up-to-the-minute breaking news and analysis at *NationalJournal.com*, the essential intelligence of *National Journal Daily*, the knowledge and depth of *National Journal* magazine, and the comprehensive campaign coverage of *National Journal Hotline*, *National Journal* delivers everything you need to know to stay ahead of the curve in Washington.

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