

Adults Rate Their Governments and Heads of State Handling of Economic Crisis as Poor or Fair

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Adults in Five Largest European Countries and The U.S. Rate Both Their Governments and Heads of State Handling of Economic Crisis as Poor or Fair

As the economic crisis continues to deepen around the world, majorities of adults in the United States (68%), Spain (62%), Italy (57%), and Great Britain (53%) rate their government's handling of the financial global market crisis as poor while a plurality of Germans (43%) and 39% of French adults rate their government's handling as fair.

This is one of the findings of a Financial Times/Harris Poll conducted online by Harris Interactive® among a total of 6,257 adults (aged 16-64) in France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain and the United States and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy between October 29 and November 6, 2008.

Other findings include:

Looking at the European Union as a whole, majorities of adults in Spain (58%) and Great Britain (56%) as well as 46% of Italians say the EU as a whole has handled the global financial market crisis poorly while a plurality of French (41%) and German (42%) adults rate the EU's performance as fair. US adults are divided with one-third saying fair (32%) and one-third (32%) saying poor.

When it comes to individual heads of states, two-thirds of Americans (67%) rate George Bush's handling of the economic crisis as poor while three in five Spaniards (61%) rate Jose Zapatero's handling as poor. Majorities of adults in Great Britain (50%) and Italy (53%) rate Gordon Brown's and Silvio Berlusconi's handling as poor while 37% of French adults rate Nicolas Sarkozy's handling as poor. Angela Merkel ranks slightly better as just 32% rate her handling as poor while 37% rate her handling of the financial crisis as fair;

Thinking of the future and people's standard of living, three-quarters (76%) of French adults expect their standard of living to be worse in the next year as do majorities in Spain (59%), Italy (58%) and Great Britain (55%) and pluralities in Germany (45%) and the U.S. (44%);

Even though there is a global financial crisis, there are some things that need to be taken care of:

A plurality of adults in Italy (43%) and the United States (42%) as well as one-third of adults in Great Britain (34%) and Spain (34%) and three in ten Germans (31%) all say that it is absolutely essential for their government, even taking into account the recent global financial market crisis, to improve the quality of the health care system. While one-quarter (25%) of French adults say it is absolutely essential and very important (27%), one-third (32%) say it is important; Another service that people want to make sure is taken care of, again taking into account the financial crisis, is the educational system as a plurality of adults in both the US (42%) and Italy (42%) say it is absolutely essential for their government to improve the quality of the education system as do four in ten Germans (39%) and 37% of Spaniards. Just under three in ten Britons each say it is absolutely essential (28%) and very important (29%) to improve the quality of education. In France, 30% say it is important while 29% say it is absolutely essential.

So What?

The global economic crisis continues and leaders are being pressed to do more to get it under control. So far, people are not impressed, to say the least, with how their leaders have handled the crisis - either as a group or individually. Yet, people still want to see certain things, such as the quality of education and health care, improved - clearly an issue for governments struggling to ensure that other basic necessities are also taken care of for all their citizens. Hard decisions will need to be made by most governments around the world and how their citizens react will go a long way to potentially improving some of these numbers. But as leaders are looking for both long and short term solutions, will citizens have patience to wait for results?

Methodology

This FT/Harris Poll was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,257 adults (aged 16-64) within France (1,045), Germany (1,034), Great Britain (1,087), Spain (1,007) and the United States (1,032), and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy (1,052) between 29 October and 6 November 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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