Mixed Expectations For The New Decade

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By Adults In The Five Largest European Countries And The U.S.
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French most pessimistic while Americans and Spaniards more optimistic about what new decade will hold financially

A new Financial Times/Harris Poll in the United States and the five largest European countries looks ahead to the dawn of a new decade and examines what people think their standard of living will be.Â

Thinking ahead ten years, pluralities of adults 64 and under in the U.S. (43%) and Spain (41%) as well as 37% of Germans are optimistic about the new decade while 44% of French adults and 36% of Britons are pessimistic.

Two in five Italians (41%) are neither optimistic nor pessimistic.

These are some of the findings of a Financial Times/Harris Poll conducted online by Harris Interactive among 6,182 adults aged 16-64 in France, Germany, Britain, Spain, and the United States and 18-64 in Italy between December 2 and 11, 2009.

As the new decade dawns, this survey also looked backwards to see what has changed over the past ten years. Compared to ten years ago, pluralities of adults in the U.S. (44%), Spain (43%), and Germany (40%) as well as 38% of Britons say their standard of living has become better compared to a decade ago.

The French, again, are more negative as 44% of them say their standard of living has gotten worse.Â Almost two in five Italians (38%) say it has not changed for the better or the worse compared to ten years ago.

Looking ahead again ten years to what people think their standard of living will be there is more pessimism and not just by the French.

Over half of French adults (56%) say their standard of living will be worse as do pluralities of Germans (42%), Italians (41%) and Britons (38%).

Americans are slightly more optimistic as 39% believe their standard of living will be better ten years from now compared to 35% who believe it will be worse.

Spaniards are split as 35% each say their standard of living will be better and worse.

Other interesting findings include:
- When it comes to spending money there is more of a consensus as over half of adults in Spain (61%), Italy (58%), France (57%), Great Britain (51%) and Germany (51%) and just under half of Americans (49%) all say they are spending more money than they did ten years ago;

- The past ten years has also seen an increase in terrorism and this may explain why very few people feel safer. Almost half of Italians (46%) say they feel less safe compared to ten years ago while 56% of British adults, half of French (50%) and German (50%) adults and 49% of Americans all feel about the same in terms of their safety as they did ten years ago.

Spaniards are divided as 39% feel about the same while 38% feel less safe;

- Government's involvement in citizens' lives has also changed over the past decade. Majorities in all six countries (between 59% and 72%) say their government has much more information about them now than it did ten years ago.

There is also the impact of government in helping citizens financially. Again, most adults in these six countries agree as majorities (between 54% and 75%) say over the next ten years the government will do less for them and their family financially than it has in the past decade.

- This decade has also been marked by the war on terror. Strong majorities in Germany (64%), Great Britain (63%) and France (62%) as well as 49% of Spaniards and 46% of Americans believe it is unlikely that the U.S. and its allies will win this war. Italians are more optimistic as 45% of them believe it is likely.

So what?
The events of 2001 quickly set the stage for much of what occurred over the next ten years. Will there be some event

that sets the stage for the 2010s? Or will we have to wait until 2019 to look back and see what the defining moments of the decade were? One thing is certain. The current economic uncertainty is hitting home with citizens of these six countries, especially the French, and many people are taking a wait and see approach to what this new decade will bring.

Methodology
This FT/Harris Poll was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,182 adults aged 16-64 within France (1,071), Germany (1,010), Great Britain (1,076), Spain (949) ,and the United States (1,039), and adults aged 18-64 in Italy (1,037) between December 2 and 11, 2009. Â

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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