

The MassINC Polling Group Trend Monitor is published once a quarter to provide a snapshot of how key metrics from our statewide polling are changing over time. The figures contained in the Trend Monitor are based on polls¹ conducted by The MassINC Polling Group.

State Right Direction / Wrong Track

For the first time since the November 2010 election, a plurality of Massachusetts residents say the state is on the wrong track rather than headed in the right direction. For the previous two quarters, Bay State residents maintained optimism about the situation in their home state, even as national polls showed negative views of the direction of the nation as a whole.

	Right Direction / Wrong Track
Jul 2011	44 / 49
Apr 2011	47 / 41
Jan 2011	48 / 42
Sep 2010	41 / 47

Favorables - People

Views of President Obama have shown little movement since September 2010, in contrast to views of Congress, which have declined sharply (see next table). The July poll was taken July 27-30, during the final days of the debate over raising the debt ceiling. Views of Senator Brown also moved only a little, continuing the trend of slight downward movement with each quarterly poll.

Favorable / Unfavorable Ratios

	Barack Obama	Deval Patrick	Scott Brown
Jul 2011	57 / 41	47 / 40	48 / 30
Apr 2011	NA	54 / 36	50 / 28
Jan 2011	NA	57 / 33	51 / 25
Sep 2010	58 / 38	42 / 45	57 / 24

**Note: Totals do not add up to 100% due to "Don't know" and "Refused" responses. People and groups included in the favorables section are rotated.*

Favorables - Groups

Views of Congress have taken a turn for the worse over the last six months. The July poll was taken during the final days of the debt ceiling debate, which likely played a role in residents' views. Favorable views of Congress have dropped 19 points since January, and unfavorable views have risen by 22 points. The Tea Party saw their favorables fall slightly, a continuation of a yearlong trend.

Favorable / Unfavorable Ratios

	The United States Congress	The Massachusetts State Legislature	The Tea Party
Jul 2011	27 / 63	41 / 37	26 / 45
Apr 2011	NA	38 / 38	29 / 47
Jan 2011	46 / 41	41 / 37	30 / 46
Sep 2010	NA	NA	37 / 35

**Note: Totals do not add up to 100% due to "Don't know" and "Refused" responses. People and groups included in the favorables section are rotated.*

Massachusetts Index of Consumer Sentiment²

The Massachusetts Index of Consumer Sentiment (ICS) hit a new low for the year as residents' views of the economy continued to sour. Expectations of business conditions in the year ahead showed the most significant decline of any component of the ICS, with 64 percent now saying they expect bad times in the year ahead. As recently as January, residents were split 43-43 on whether they saw good times or bad times for business, but have now clearly adopted a pessimistic outlook.

	MA Index of Consumer Sentiment	MA Index of Current Economic Conditions	MA Index of Consumer Expectations
Jul 2011	59.4	64.5	56.1
Apr 2011	68.0	71.0	66.1
Jan 2011	73.3	72.8	73.7
Sep 2010	NA	NA	NA

The Massachusetts Index of Consumer Sentiment measures views of both current and future economic conditions. The ICS is made up two component indices, the Index of Current Economic Conditions, which measures present sentiments, and the Index of Consumer Expectations, which represents future prospects. The ICS is scaled such that the 1966 national ICS represents 100.

The questions shown below are the components of the Index of Consumer Sentiment.

We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that you (and your family living there) are better off or worse off financially than you were a year ago?			
	Better off	The same	Worse off
Jul 2011	25	24	49
Apr 2011	29	24	45
Jan 2011	27	27	45

Now looking ahead--do you think that a year from now you (and your family living there) will be better off financially, or worse off, or just about the same as now?			
	Better off	The same	Worse off
Jul 2011	19	54	23
Apr 2011	25	52	20
Jan 2011	28	51	17

Now turning to business conditions in the country as a whole--do you think that during the next twelve months we'll have good times financially or bad times?			
	Good times	Mixed, or both good and bad times	Bad times
Jul 2011	25	6	64
Apr 2011	35	7	53
Jan 2011	43	10	43

Looking ahead, which would you say is more likely--that in the country as a whole we'll have continuous good times during the next five years or so, or that we will have periods of widespread unemployment or depression?			
	Good times	Mixed, or both good and bad times	Widespread unemployment or depression
Jul 2011	27	5	62
Apr 2011	32	8	55
Jan 2011	35	10	52

About the big things people buy for their homes--such as furniture, a refrigerator, stove, television, and things like that. Generally speaking, do you think now is a good or bad time for people to buy major household items?			
	Good time to buy	Mixed, or both good and bad time	Bad time to buy
Jul 2011	38	6	49
Apr 2011	41	7	43
Jan 2011	45	9	40

**Note: Totals for this battery of questions do not add up to 100% due to "Don't know" and "Refused" responses.*

Financial Prospects

Doubts about the next generation's prospects remain widespread. Just 17 percent of residents believe the next generation will be better off financially than the current generation, while about half think they will be worse off.

Looking ahead, do you think the next generation will be financially better off when they are your age, financially worse off, or about the same?			
	Better Off	Worse Off	About the Same
Jul 2011	17	48	31
Apr 2011	20	38	37
Jan 2011	NA	NA	NA
Sep 2010	20	46	31

**Note: Totals do not add up to 100% due to "Don't know" and "Refused" responses.*

Would you say you are financially better off than your parents were when they were your age, financially worse off, or about the same?			
	Better Off	Worse Off	About the Same
Jul 2011	43	25	31
Apr 2011	50	22	26
Jan 2011	NA	NA	NA
Sep 2010	47	23	27

**Note: Totals do not add up to 100% due to "Don't know" and "Refused" responses.*

Questions or comments?

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¹ **About the Polls** - These results are based on questions from The MassINC Polling Group statewide polls of Massachusetts residents. Live telephone interviews are conducted via both landline and cell phone using conventional random digit dialing (RDD) sampling methods. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish by Eastern Research Services. Question wording and additional methodological details are available upon request, but are excluded from this document for simplicity and length.

² **About the Index of Consumer Sentiment** - The national Index of Consumer Sentiment is a consumer confidence index published monthly by the University of Michigan and Thomson Reuters. The ICS is made up two component indices, the Index of Current Economic Conditions, which measures present sentiments, and the Index of Consumer Expectations, which represents future prospects. The consumer confidence measures were devised in the late 1940's by George Katona at the University of Michigan. The measures have now developed into an ongoing, nationally representative survey based on telephonic household interviews. The Index of Consumer Sentiment (ICS) is developed from these interviews. The Index of Consumer Expectations (a sub-index of ICS) is included in the Leading Indicator Composite Index published by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.