

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

Massachusetts residents' outlook has brightened this quarter, with a majority now saying the state is headed in the right direction. Given the large increase in the Index of Consumer Sentiment (see below), it is likely that residents are reacting at least partially to the recent positive economic news.

	Right Direction / Wrong Track
Jan 2012	55 / 34
Oct 2011	44 / 45
Jul 2011	44 / 49
Apr 2011	47 / 41
Jan 2011	48 / 42
Sep 2010	41 / 47

Favorables - People and Groups

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney appears to face little threat on his home turf from a Newt Gingrich challenge. Gingrich is seen favorably by just 29 percent of Republicans and 24 percent of unenrolled voters, compared to 63 percent and 44 percent for Romney, respectively. A third of Massachusetts residents see Elizabeth Warren favorably, similar to the numbers who said the same in October 2011. Senator Brown's favorability figures have stopped the trend of small declines that had been present in each of our previous quarterly surveys.

Favorable / Unfavorable Ratios

	Mitt Romney	Scott Brown	Elizabeth Warren	Newt Gingrich
Jan 2012	42 / 45	50 / 28	33 / 18	21 / 56
Oct 2011	NA	47 / 30	32 / 14	NA
Jul 2011	NA	48 / 30	NA	NA
Apr 2011	42 / 40	50 / 28	NA	NA
Jan 2011	NA	51 / 25	NA	NA
Sep 2010	NA	57 / 24	NA	NA

**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

Consumer confidence in Massachusetts has risen since last quarter, buoyed by positive economic news. The largest gains came from consumers' perceptions of future business conditions as well as anticipated improvements for the overall economy (see next page). These gains may be fragile, vulnerable both to negative economic news as well as a new Washington-fueled crisis of confidence. The debt ceiling negotiations of 2011 drove down both statewide and national consumer confidence, reflective of serious doubts about the Government's handling of the economy.

	MA Index of Consumer Sentiment	MA Index of Current Economic Conditions	MA Index of Consumer Expectations
Jan 2012	78.4	80.2	77.2
Oct 2011	59.6	64.2	56.5
Jul 2011	59.4	64.5	56.1
Apr 2011	68.0	71.0	66.1
Jan 2011	73.3	72.8	73.7

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
Jan 2012	32	29	38
Oct 2011	25	27	47
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
Jan 2012	31	50	13
Oct 2011	21	54	18
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
Jan 2012	40	10	44
Oct 2011	22	8	62
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
Jan 2012	40	7	45
Oct 2011	22	9	62
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
Jan 2012	49	5	37
Oct 2011	35	7	48
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.*

Questions or comments?

Phone: (617) 224-1647

Email: info@massincpolling.com

[twitter](#) @MassINCPolling

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.