

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

The generally positive outlook for the state continued this quarter, with 54 percent of residents saying the state is headed in the right direction. For the last three quarters, more residents have offered a positive assessment of the state's direction than a negative one.

	Right Direction / Wrong Track
Jul 2012	54 / 36
Apr 2012	50 / 39
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

The Massachusetts Senate candidates each saw an uptick in the percent of state residents who see them favorably, while their unfavorables remained about even. Elizabeth Warren is becoming better known to Bay State residents and gaining in popularity, though there are still about one in three residents who are either unfamiliar with her, or do not have an opinion either way. Senator Brown's favorables climbed back to near the 50 percent mark, where they have been for most of the time since January, 2011.

President Obama's favorability figures have remained at the same elevated level observed in April 2012, and far higher than the figures for former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney. Previous polls from MPG and others have indicated a wide margin for the President in vote preference, indicating the state is unlikely to see any serious competition in the Presidential race. Residents again reported a dim view of Congress, with just 29 percent offering a favorable rating. This negative perception of Congress among Massachusetts residents is still not as low as has been observed in recent national polling.

Favorable / Unfavorable Ratios

	Barack Obama	Scott Brown	Elizabeth Warren	Mitt Romney	The U.S. Congress
Jul 2012	63 / 30	48 / 30	43 / 24	35 / 52	29 / 55
Apr 2012	64 / 33	44 / 31	34 / 23	NA	28 / 59
Jan 2012	NA	50 / 28	33 / 18	42 / 45	NA
Oct 2011	NA	47 / 30	32 / 14	NA	NA
Jul 2011	57 / 41	48 / 30	NA	NA	27 / 63
Apr 2011	NA	50 / 28	NA	42 / 40	NA
Jan 2011	NA	51 / 25	NA	NA	46/41
Sep 2010	58 / 38	57 / 24	NA	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 slipped somewhat this quarter, though it remains well above the low levels observed in the middle part of 2011. Leading the decline is a perceived souring outlook for businesses, where just one in three see a positive outlook for the year ahead. Closer to home, residents' assessment of their personal finances has remained roughly stable since last quarter. The one area where residents have changed is in their plans to buy big ticket items, which has declined since last quarter, a potential trouble spot for retailers and manufacturers.

	MA Index of Consumer Sentiment	MA Index of Current Economic Conditions	MA Index of Consumer Expectations
Jul 2012	75.5	76.9	74.6
Apr 2012	79.2	78.4	79.8
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
Jul 2012	30	30	38
Apr 2012	30	27	41
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
Jul 2012	30	49	13
Apr 2012	33	45	14
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
Jul 2012	33	14	43
Apr 2012	41	14	37
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
Jul 2012	34	13	42
Apr 2012	38	10	41
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
Jul 2012	41	12	35
Apr 2012	47	10	34
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?

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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. Since April 2012, MPG has used Braun Research, Inc. to conduct the interviewing for these surveys after using Eastern Research Services for prior iterations. 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.