

The MassINC Polling Group Trend Monitor is published quarterly to provide a snapshot of key metrics over time. The figures contained in the Trend Monitor are based on polls<sup>1</sup> conducted by The MassINC Polling Group. Unless otherwise noted, these figures all represent the general population, rather than voters specifically.

### Latest national political flare-up damages Bay State consumer confidence

In the wake of a new round of brinksmanship over funding the federal government and the Affordable Care Act, and raising the debt ceiling, Massachusetts residents see little reason to be optimistic about the nation's economy. This pessimism is reflected in this quarter's Consumer Sentiment Index reading of 67.3. While not as low as the nadir of 59.4 recorded during the last budget crisis, in July 2011, this represents a considerable drop from the relatively strong readings recorded during period of relative political calm throughout 2012 and the middle part of 2013.

Figure 1: Mass. Index of Consumer Sentiment (ICS)



For the first time since 2011, a majority of Massachusetts residents (56 percent) see bad business conditions in the year ahead, and 54 percent think the nation's economy is in for trouble over the next 5 years. Indeed, on four of the five index questions, more respondents answered negatively than positively, in three instances by double-digit margins.

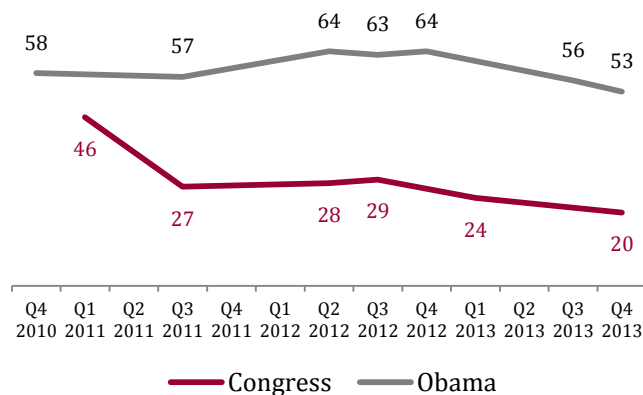
These trends are broadly reflective of more frequent consumer opinion measurements taken at the national level. Gallup polls [showed](#) a sharp drop off in their national Economic Confidence Index during the shutdown. Since the shutdown ended, pessimism has lessened somewhat, although the index is still clearly under downward pressure from the hangover and lingering questions as to whether the acrimony will continue at the Federal level.

For the full historical trend, see Appendix A.

### Both Congress, Obama see favorability ratings decline

The standoff over funding the Affordable Care Act and raising the debt ceiling has also taken a toll on both the President and Congress. The percentage of Massachusetts residents with a favorable opinion of each hit new lows, down nine points since 2012 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Favorability: President Obama v. Congress



Overall, Massachusetts residents have a much more favorable opinion of the President than the legislative branch, whose favorability dropped sharply in 2011 during the first round of debt ceiling negotiations and has still not recovered. A majority (53 percent) still hold a favorable opinion of the President, compared to 34 percent with an unfavorable opinion (Figure 3). Recent events have pushed Congress' favorability to a new low. Only one in five residents have a favorable opinion of the body; three times as many (61 percent) have an unfavorable opinion.

Congressional Republicans actually fare slightly better than Congress as a whole, despite national polling demonstrating voters assign them the lion's share of the blame for the shutdown. The GOP's 25 percent favorability is buoyed by a much more favorable opinion (52 percent) among registered Republicans. Even this, however, is a fairly weak reading for partisans rating their own party's congressional representatives. A comparatively high 76 percent of registered Democrats have a favorable view of Democrats in Congress. This difference in partisan views is also reflected nationally, with moderate Republicans expressing concern at the tactics espoused by their more conservative members.

**Figure 3: Favorable/Unfavorable**

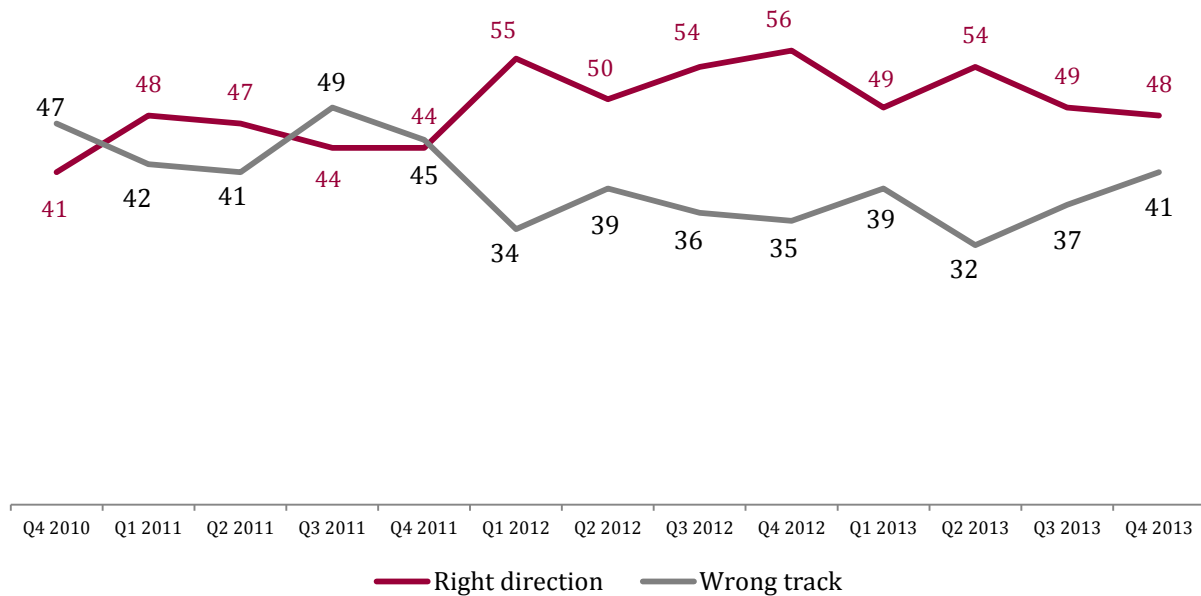
	Favorable	Unfavorable
President Obama	53%	34%
U.S. Congress	20%	61%
GOP in Congress	25%	53%
Dems in Congress	42%	38%

For the full historical trend on the President and Congress, along with other public figures and group from past polls, see Appendix B.

**Mass. right direction, wrong track narrowing, but still positive**

Residents seem more sanguine about conditions in Massachusetts than they do nationwide. The percentage of residents who think things in the state are headed in the right direction held steady at 48 percent (Figure 4). But there was an increase in the percentage thinking things are off on the wrong track, resulting in a net positive of 7 points – the smallest such positive margin since the end of 2011.

**Figure 4: Overall, do you think things in Massachusetts are headed in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?**



## Appendix A – Consumer Sentiment Historical Data

	MA Index of Consumer Sentiment	MA Index of Current Economic Conditions	MA Index of Consumer Expectations
Oct 2013	67.3	71.8	64.3
July 2013	78.9	83.8	75.7
Apr 2013	85.7	86.7	85.2
Jan 2013	71.2	74.0	69.4
Oct 2012	86.1	82.5	88.4
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.*

<b>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?</b>			
	Better off	The same	Worse off
Oct 2013	30	26	41
July 2013	36	23	37
Apr 2013	37	30	31
Jan 2013	29	24	46
Oct 2012	38	26	34
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

<b>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?</b>			
	Better off	The same	Worse off
Oct 2013	22	55	17
July 2013	25	54	16
Apr 2013	29	55	11
Jan 2013	24	48	24
Oct 2012	36	43	8
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
Oct 2013	30	4	56
July 2013	43	5	41
Apr 2013	51	11	31
Jan 2013	37	9	47
Oct 2012	46	11	30
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
Oct 2013	32	4	54
July 2013	40	4	47
Apr 2013	39	15	37
Jan 2013	38	5	51
Oct 2012	43	11	32
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
Oct 2013	39	3	44
July 2013	49	5	32
Apr 2013	48	9	31
Jan 2013	45	6	38
Oct 2012	44	10	35
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.*

## Appendix B – Favorables: People and Groups, All Periods

The table below contains results of people and groups included in past MPG Trend Monitors, where we asked about the person or group at least twice.

### Favorable / Unfavorable (all residents)

	Oct. 2013	July 2013	April 2013	Jan. 2013	Oct. 2012	July 2012	April 2012	Jan. 2012	Oct. 2011	July 2011	April 2011	Jan. 2011	Sept. 2010
<b>U.S. Congress</b>	20/61	N/A	N/A	24/49	N/A	29/55	28/59	N/A	N/A	27/63	N/A	46/41	N/A
<b>Cong. GOP</b>	25/53	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Cong. Dems</b>	42/38	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Barack Obama</b>	53/34	56/34	N/A	N/A	64/34	63/30	64/33	N/A	N/A	57/41	N/A	N/A	58/38
<b>Elizabeth Warren</b>	N/A	N/A	50/29	N/A	48/38	43/24	34/23	33/18	32/14	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Mass. State Legislature</b>	N/A	N/A	34/30	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	41/37	38/38	41/37	N/A
<b>Deval Patrick</b>	N/A	N/A	61/23	N/A	N/A	N/A	51/37	N/A	51/36	47/40	54/36	57/33	42/45
<b>Mitt Romney</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	36/56	35/52	N/A	42/45	N/A	N/A	42/40	N/A	N/A
<b>The Tea Party</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	28/42	26/45	29/47	30/46	37/35
<b>Ed Markey</b>	N/A	36/29	N/A	21/23	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Scott Brown</b>	N/A	45/29	N/A	48/32	47/39	48/30	44/31	50/28	47/30	48/30	50/28	51/25	57/24
<b>John Kerry</b>	N/A	54/25	N/A	N/A	50/33	N/A	50/34	N/A	53/29	N/A	56/28	N/A	59/31

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

### Questions or comments?

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<sup>1</sup> **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. Question wording and additional methodological details are available upon request, but are excluded from this document for simplicity and length.

<sup>2</sup> **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.