



Bush Tax Cuts, Finances, and Obama's Handling of the Economy

*** Complete Tables for Poll Appended ***

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This McClatchy-Marist Poll Reports:

Electorate Divides Over Extension of Bush Tax Cuts

The Bush era tax cuts are set to expire at the end of the year. As the debate in Washington rages on about whether to extend the cuts across the board or to limit the cuts to just the middle class, voters are weighing in. According to this McClatchy-Marist Poll, nearly half of registered voters nationally -- 49% -- believe the tax cuts should be extended to just the middle class but not to those who earn \$250,000 or more annually while 48% want everyone to receive an extension of the tax cuts. 3% are unsure.

Partisan differences are alive and well on this question. Seven in ten Democratic voters -- 70% -- want the tax cuts extended for just the middle class while 64% of Republican voters want them extended for everyone. Independent voters divide with 49% saying they want everyone to enjoy the tax breaks while 47% believe the nation's wealthiest two percent should not be included.

"The battle lines over the Bush era tax cuts are drawn with an eye focused on the midterm elections," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "The stakes for President Obama, the Democrats, and the GOP in Congress couldn't be any higher."

Do voters consider an annual household income of \$250,000 or more wealthy? A majority of registered voters -- 55% -- say it is while 45% believe it is not.

About two-thirds of Democratic voters -- 67% -- and a majority of independent voters -- 54% -- view an annual household income of \$250,000 or more as being wealthy while 54% of Republican voters do not.

Economy Will Worsen, Say Majority of Americans

A majority of U.S. residents are pessimistic about the future of the nation's economy. 52% think the worst is yet to come when thinking about America's economy. However, 44%

believe the worst is behind us. 4% are unsure. Similar proportions of registered voters share these sentiments.

There is a partisan difference on this question. 60% of Democrats believe the worst is behind us while 68% of Republicans say the worst is yet to come. A majority of independents nationwide -- 55% -- also think the worst is still ahead.

This dismal view of the economy crosses regional, gender, and income divides. However, Americans between the ages of 18 to 29 -- 55% -- and college graduates -- 51% -- are much more optimistic, saying that, when it comes to the economy, the worst is behind us.

Although the recession has been officially declared over, most U.S. residents think the country is still in one. 80% have this view while 18% disagree. 2% are unsure.

"Notwithstanding official calculations about the end of the recession, the public clearly sees things very differently," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion.

When Marist last asked this question in April 2008, more than three-quarters -- 78% -- thought the country was in a recession while 17% thought it was not. 5%, at the time, were unsure.

Majority Expect Steady Financial Picture

Although most Americans have a pessimistic view of the overall economy, residents remain cautiously optimistic about their own personal family finances. 52% think their personal financial situation will remain the same in the next year while 30% believe it will get better. Still nearly one in five -- 18% -- expect it to get worse.

Little has changed since Marist last asked this question in July. At that time, the same proportion -- 52% -- said their personal finances would stay the same, 33% reported they would get better, and 15% thought they would get worse.

Not surprisingly, Americans who think the worst of the nation's economic problems are behind us are more likely to have a brighter outlook of their personal financial situation. 54% of these Americans report their money matters will stay about the same while 39% believe they will improve. Only 7% say they will get worse.

Even 49% of those who think the U.S. economy will get worse report their financial situation will stay the same in the next year, and 22% think it will improve. 29%, though, say they expect it to deteriorate.

Majority Disapprove of Obama's Handling of Economy

A majority of registered voters nationally -- 56% -- disapprove of how President Barack Obama is handling the economy while 41% approve. 3% are unsure.

When Marist last asked voters about Mr. Obama's handling of the economy, the electorate divided. 48% disapproved of the president's fiscal approach while 46% approved. 6% were unsure.

Independent voters and Republican voters account for the increased dissatisfaction in the president's handling of the economy. Nearly six in ten independent voters -- 59% -- currently disapprove of President Obama's fiscal management while 51% held this view in June. There has also been a 10 percentage point increase in the proportion of Republican voters who disapprove of the president's handling of the economy. 89% report this is the case while 79% shared this opinion in Marist's previous survey.

Little has changed among Democratic voters on this question. 77% agree with how the president is dealing with the nation's economy now compared with 76% who thought that way in June.

Not surprisingly, when thinking about the U.S. economy, 74% of voters who believe the worst is yet to come disapprove of how Mr. Obama is handling the economy while 65% who believe the worst is behind us approve of his fiscal approach.

Economic Conditions Still Viewed as Inherited

Nearly six in ten registered voters in the United States -- 59% -- think President Obama inherited the nation's current economic conditions while 35% say they are a result of his own policies. 6% are unsure.

Although a majority views today's economic crisis as inherited, Mr. Obama's presidential cover on this issue may be diminishing. There has been a notable increase in the proportion of voters who report the status of the U.S. economy is Mr. Obama's fault. When Marist last asked this question in June, 62% believed today's economic conditions were thrust upon him while 28% thought they were a result of the president's policies. 10% were unsure.

Republican voters are the game changer on this question. Currently, 59% attribute today's tentative economic times to the president's policies while 34% say he inherited them from his predecessor. 6% are unsure. In Marist's June survey, 48% of GOP voters blamed the president while 42% thought he inherited the nation's economic problems. 10% were unsure.

Little has changed among Democratic voters, 82% report the country's economic crisis was handed to the president compared with 15% who say the onus is on him. 3% are unsure. In June, 78% said the president inherited the country's economic conditions, 12% pointed a finger at Mr. Obama's policies, and 10% were unsure.

Looking at independent voters, 62% call the economy "inherited" while 32% blame the president. 6% are unsure. 61%, 30%, and 9%, respectively, held these views in Marist's previous survey.

75% of voters who think the worst of the nation's economic conditions have passed say the president inherited the country's financial problems. Voters who think the worse is yet to come divide. 48% report they are a result of the president's own policies while 46% say they are inherited.

Nature of the Sample: 1,005 U.S. Residents

This survey of 1,005 United States residents was conducted on September 14th through September 16th. Residents 18 years of age and older were interviewed by telephone. Telephone numbers were selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the nation. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each region was represented in proportion to its population. To increase coverage, this land-line sample was supplemented by respondents reached through random dialing of cell phone numbers. The two samples were then combined. Results are statistically significant within ± 3.0 percentage points. There are 815 registered voters. The results for this subset are statistically significant within ± 3.5 percentage points. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.

		Registered Voters		
		The Bush tax cuts expire on December 31st. Which statement comes closer to your view:		
		Congress should extend the tax cuts only for the middle class, but not for the top 2 percent, that is, households earnings \$250,000 or more	Congress should extend the tax cuts for everyone, including the top 2 percent, that is, households earning \$250,000 or more	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		49%	48%	3%
Definitely Plan to Vote in November		48%	49%	3%
Enthusiasm About Voting in November	Very enthusiastic	41%	58%	1%
	Enthusiastic	50%	47%	2%
	Not enthusiastic	59%	36%	5%
Party ID	Democrat	70%	28%	2%
	Republican	33%	64%	4%
	Independent	47%	49%	3%
Tea Party Supporters		27%	71%	2%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	65%	34%	1%
	Democrat women	74%	24%	2%
	Republican men	32%	66%	2%
	Republican women	33%	62%	5%
	Independent men	38%	59%	3%
	Independent women	57%	39%	4%
Ideology	Liberal	71%	28%	1%
	Moderate	55%	42%	2%
	Conservative	35%	61%	3%
Region	Northeast	57%	41%	3%
	Midwest	49%	49%	2%
	South	49%	47%	4%
	West	43%	55%	2%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	54%	43%	4%
	\$50,000 or more	47%	51%	2%
Education	Not college graduate	51%	46%	3%
	College graduate	48%	50%	2%
Age	18 to 29	57%	41%	3%
	30 to 44	53%	46%	1%
	45 to 59	46%	52%	2%
	60 or older	47%	47%	6%
Gender	Men	44%	54%	2%
	Women	55%	42%	4%
Family Finances	Get better	47%	51%	2%
	Get worse	38%	57%	5%
	Stay about the same	55%	43%	3%
Views of U.S. Economy	The worst is yet to come	38%	59%	4%
	The worst is behind us	64%	35%	1%
Do you think a household income of \$250,000 makes you wealthy, or not?	Yes	59%	38%	3%
	No	38%	60%	3%

September 2010 Marist Poll National Registered Voters "N=815 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters	
		Do you think a household income of \$250,000 makes you wealthy, or not?	
		Yes	No
		Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		55%	45%
Definitely Plan to Vote in November		53%	47%
Enthusiasm About Voting in November	Very enthusiastic	47%	53%
	Enthusiastic	61%	39%
	Not enthusiastic	58%	42%
Party ID	Democrat	67%	33%
	Republican	46%	54%
	Independent	54%	46%
Tea Party Supporters		43%	57%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	69%	31%
	Democrat women	65%	35%
	Republican men	48%	52%
	Republican women	44%	56%
	Independent men	54%	46%
	Independent women	54%	46%
Ideology	Liberal	61%	39%
	Moderate	67%	33%
	Conservative	45%	55%
Region	Northeast	55%	45%
	Midwest	61%	39%
	South	49%	51%
	West	59%	41%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	63%	37%
	\$50,000 or more	51%	49%
Education	Not college graduate	61%	39%
	College graduate	47%	53%
Age	18 to 29	66%	34%
	30 to 44	55%	45%
	45 to 59	52%	48%
	60 or older	55%	45%
Gender	Men	56%	44%
	Women	55%	45%
Family Finances	Get better	54%	46%
	Get worse	51%	49%
	Stay about the same	58%	42%
Views of U.S. Economy	The worst is yet to come	52%	48%
	The worst is behind us	60%	40%

September 2010 Marist Poll National Registered Voters "N=815 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		USA Residents		
		When thinking about the U.S. economy, which statement comes closer to your view:		
		The worst is yet to come	The worst is behind us	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
USA Residents		52%	44%	4%
Registered Voters		53%	43%	4%
Definitely Plan to Vote in November		53%	43%	4%
Enthusiasm About Voting in November	Very enthusiastic	57%	39%	4%
	Enthusiastic	47%	49%	4%
	Not enthusiastic	58%	37%	5%
Party ID	Democrat	37%	60%	3%
	Republican	68%	29%	3%
	Independent	55%	39%	6%
Tea Party Supporters		70%	26%	3%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	40%	60%	0%
	Democrat women	35%	61%	5%
	Republican men	65%	32%	3%
	Republican women	71%	25%	4%
	Independent men	55%	39%	6%
	Independent women	54%	40%	6%
Ideology	Liberal	38%	58%	4%
	Moderate	47%	48%	5%
	Conservative	63%	33%	4%
Region	Northeast	53%	43%	4%
	Midwest	51%	46%	3%
	South	51%	43%	6%
	West	53%	44%	3%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	52%	43%	4%
	\$50,000 or more	50%	47%	3%
Education	Not college graduate	57%	40%	4%
	College graduate	45%	51%	4%
Age	18 to 29	41%	55%	3%
	30 to 44	52%	46%	2%
	45 to 59	58%	39%	4%
	60 or older	53%	40%	6%
Gender	Men	53%	44%	4%
	Women	51%	44%	4%
Family Finances	Get better	39%	59%	2%
	Get worse	81%	16%	2%
	Stay about the same	48%	46%	6%

September 2010 Marist Poll National Residents "N=1,005 MOE +/- 3%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		USA Residents		
		Do you think that the U.S. economy is currently in a recession, or not?		
		Yes	No	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
USA Residents		80%	18%	2%
Registered Voters		81%	18%	1%
Definitely Plan to Vote in November		82%	17%	1%
Enthusiasm About Voting in November	Very enthusiastic	81%	18%	1%
	Enthusiastic	80%	18%	2%
	Not enthusiastic	84%	15%	1%
Party ID	Democrat	73%	25%	2%
	Republican	85%	14%	1%
	Independent	86%	13%	1%
Tea Party Supporters		86%	13%	0%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	77%	23%	1%
	Democrat women	71%	26%	3%
	Republican men	81%	19%	0%
	Republican women	89%	10%	2%
	Independent men	87%	13%	0%
Ideology	Independent women	86%	13%	1%
	Liberal	76%	24%	0%
	Moderate	78%	20%	2%
Region	Conservative	86%	13%	1%
	Northeast	84%	15%	1%
	Midwest	72%	27%	1%
	South	82%	16%	2%
Household Income	West	82%	15%	3%
	Less than \$50,000	75%	22%	3%
Education	\$50,000 or more	85%	15%	0%
	Not college graduate	80%	18%	2%
Age	College graduate	82%	17%	1%
	18 to 29	77%	21%	2%
	30 to 44	79%	21%	0%
	45 to 59	82%	17%	1%
Gender	60 or older	80%	15%	4%
	Men	79%	20%	1%
Family Finances	Women	81%	16%	3%
	Get better	76%	23%	1%
	Get worse	92%	7%	1%
Views of U.S. Economy	Stay about the same	79%	18%	2%
	The worst is yet to come	88%	11%	1%
	The worst is behind us	71%	27%	2%

September 2010 Marist Poll National Residents "N=1,005 MOE +/- 3%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		USA Residents		
		In the coming year, do you expect your personal family finances to get better, get worse, or stay about the same?		
		Get better	Get worse	Stay about the same
		Row %	Row %	Row %
USA Residents		30%	18%	52%
Registered Voters		26%	21%	53%
Definitely Plan to Vote in November		25%	22%	53%
Enthusiasm About Voting in November	Very enthusiastic	28%	24%	48%
	Enthusiastic	27%	17%	57%
	Not enthusiastic	23%	22%	54%
Party ID	Democrat	36%	14%	50%
	Republican	20%	25%	56%
	Independent	21%	23%	56%
Tea Party Supporters		22%	30%	48%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	41%	18%	41%
	Democrat women	33%	11%	56%
	Republican men	27%	18%	55%
	Republican women	12%	32%	57%
	Independent men	21%	23%	55%
	Independent women	21%	23%	56%
Ideology	Liberal	39%	12%	50%
	Moderate	26%	17%	57%
	Conservative	21%	27%	52%
Region	Northeast	37%	15%	48%
	Midwest	25%	17%	58%
	South	30%	19%	51%
	West	28%	21%	51%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	32%	18%	49%
	\$50,000 or more	28%	16%	56%
Education	Not college graduate	32%	17%	51%
	College graduate	27%	21%	53%
Age	18 to 29	51%	7%	42%
	30 to 44	36%	16%	48%
	45 to 59	30%	19%	51%
	60 or older	8%	27%	65%
Gender	Men	33%	18%	48%
	Women	26%	18%	55%
Views of U.S. Economy	The worst is yet to come	22%	29%	49%
	The worst is behind us	39%	7%	54%

September 2010 Marist Poll National Residents "N=1,005 MOE +/- 3%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters		
		Do you approve or disapprove of how President Barack Obama is handling the economy?		
		Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		41%	56%	3%
Definitely Plan to Vote in November		40%	57%	2%
Enthusiasm About Voting in November	Very enthusiastic	34%	64%	2%
	Enthusiastic	48%	50%	2%
	Not enthusiastic	39%	56%	5%
Party ID	Democrat	77%	20%	3%
	Republican	9%	89%	2%
	Independent	37%	59%	3%
Tea Party Supporters		16%	83%	0%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	73%	24%	3%
	Democrat women	81%	17%	2%
	Republican men	13%	83%	4%
	Republican women	4%	95%	1%
	Independent men	32%	65%	4%
	Independent women	43%	54%	3%
Ideology	Liberal	81%	17%	2%
	Moderate	47%	49%	3%
	Conservative	20%	78%	2%
Region	Northeast	46%	52%	2%
	Midwest	42%	55%	3%
	South	40%	57%	2%
	West	38%	57%	4%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	46%	50%	4%
	\$50,000 or more	40%	59%	2%
Education	Not college graduate	41%	55%	4%
	College graduate	41%	57%	2%
Age	18 to 29	58%	42%	0%
	30 to 44	48%	51%	1%
	45 to 59	38%	59%	3%
	60 or older	33%	62%	5%
Gender	Men	37%	59%	3%
	Women	45%	53%	2%
Family Finances	Get better	62%	36%	2%
	Get worse	18%	79%	3%
	Stay about the same	40%	57%	3%
Views of U.S. Economy	The worst is yet to come	23%	74%	2%
	The worst is behind us	65%	33%	3%

September 2010 Marist Poll National Registered Voters "N=815 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters		
		Do you think the current economic conditions are mostly something President Obama inherited or are they mostly a result of his own policies?		
		Economic conditions mostly inherited	Economic conditions mostly result of his own policies	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		59%	35%	6%
Definitely Plan to Vote in November		57%	39%	5%
Enthusiasm About Voting in November	Very enthusiastic	45%	50%	4%
	Enthusiastic	66%	27%	7%
	Not enthusiastic	65%	30%	5%
Party ID	Democrat	82%	15%	3%
	Republican	34%	59%	6%
	Independent	62%	32%	6%
Tea Party Supporters		34%	62%	4%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	84%	13%	2%
	Democrat women	80%	16%	4%
	Republican men	41%	55%	4%
	Republican women	27%	64%	9%
	Independent men	58%	37%	5%
	Independent women	65%	26%	8%
Ideology	Liberal	92%	7%	1%
	Moderate	71%	24%	5%
	Conservative	36%	57%	7%
Region	Northeast	64%	29%	7%
	Midwest	57%	39%	4%
	South	58%	36%	6%
	West	58%	37%	5%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	61%	32%	7%
	\$50,000 or more	60%	36%	4%
Education	Not college graduate	56%	38%	6%
	College graduate	64%	31%	5%
Age	18 to 29	66%	33%	1%
	30 to 44	70%	28%	1%
	45 to 59	56%	36%	8%
	60 or older	52%	40%	8%
Gender	Men	59%	37%	4%
	Women	59%	34%	7%
Family Finances	Get better	75%	20%	5%
	Get worse	40%	51%	9%
	Stay about the same	59%	37%	4%
Views of U.S. Economy	The worst is yet to come	46%	48%	6%
	The worst is behind us	75%	20%	5%

September 2010 Marist Poll National Registered Voters "N=815 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.