

The Economy, the President and Congress

September 28-October 2, 2011

- 88% think the economy is in bad shape (the highest percentage in over two years) and few think it's getting better. 80% have been affected by the economic downturn, including a third who have suffered hardship that has caused major life changes.
- While few blame the President for the condition of the economy, 69% don't think he's made progress fixing it. Only 35% approve of his handling of it.
- Despite the President's negative ratings on the economy, most Americans continue to think he cares about their needs and problems. 57% view him as a strong leader, but that number is lower than it was earlier this year. 70% of Americans think he stands up for what he believes.
- Americans continue to be negative about the direction of the country; only 19% says it is headed in the right direction - the lowest since Barack Obama assumed office.
- Congress' job approval is 11%. While down just one point from last month, it now marks the lowest approval rating ever recorded in the CBS News/New York Times Poll.

The Economy: Affecting Lives

The weak economy has had a personal impact on fully 80% of Americans. 34% say the economic downturn has been a hardship that has caused major life changes, and another 46% say it has been difficult for their family but has caused no major life changes. Just one in five hasn't felt an impact.

Impact of the Economic Downturn on You and Your Family

Hardship with major life changes	34%
Difficult but no major life changes	46
No effect	20

In 2009, when asked how the recession impacted their family, fewer -- 24% -- said it was a hardship that caused major life changes.

The economy continues to be the most pressing issue for Americans. 54% volunteer it as the nation's most important problem, far outdistancing the budget deficit at 6%. Americans also continue to hold grim views of the economy: 88% now think it is in bad shape -- the highest number in more than two years.

Condition of the Economy

	Now	9/2011	6/2011	1/2011	9/2010	4/2009
Good	10%	14%	18%	26%	17%	11%
Bad	88	86	81	74	81	89

Few Americans – just 12% - think the economy is getting better. 40% think the economy is getting worse and another 46% do not see any change.

Americans continue to be concerned about potential job loss. Two-thirds are at least somewhat concerned that they or someone else in their household will lose their job within the next twelve months, including 36% who are very concerned. This level of concern is similar to last month, but higher than it was during the summer.

Concern about Unemployment in the Next 12 Months

	Now	9/2011	6/2011
Very concerned	36%	38%	31%
Somewhat concerned	30	25	29
Not at all concerned	34	37	39

Only 19% of Americans now think the country is headed in the right direction – the lowest percentage since Barack Obama assumed the presidency. 73% think the country is off on the wrong track.

Direction of the Country

	Now	9/2011	6/2011	11/2010	1/2009	10/2008
Right direction	19%	23%	28%	32%	15%	7%
Wrong track	73	72	63	63	79	89

President Obama

The economy has been weak since Barack Obama took office in 2009. Nearly seven in ten Americans do not think President Obama has made real progress fixing the economy.

Has Obama Made Real Progress Fixing the Economy?

	Now	9/2011	9/2010
Yes	25%	25%	35%
No	69	68	60

The President continues to get low approval ratings for his handling of the economy – only 35% approve. The last time President Obama’s approval rating on the economy was at 40% or higher was in February of this year.

Barack Obama’s Handling of the Economy

	Now	9/2011	6/2011	2/2011
Approve	35%	34%	37%	42%
Disapprove	53	57	56	50

Still, just 12% of Americans blame the Obama administration for the current condition of the nation’s economy. More say George W. Bush’s administration (22%) is to blame, but that’s down nine points from 2010, while blame for the Obama administration has risen slightly by five points. 16% blame Wall Street and financial institutions, while 15% say Congress.

Most to Blame for the Condition of the Economy

	Now	6/2011	3/2011	2/2010
Bush Administration	22%	26%	28%	31%
Wall Street	16	25	22	23
Congress	15	11	10	13
Obama administration	12	8	7	7
All of the above (vol.)	10	7	7	9

President Obama’s overall approval rating now stands at 44%, virtually unchanged from two weeks ago. 44% now disapprove. Aside from an uptick after the killing of Osama bin Laden, the President’s approval rating has not been at 50% or higher since April 2010.

President’s Overall Job Rating

	Now	9/2011	8/2011	5/2011	1/2011	4/2010
Approve	44%	43%	48%	57%	49%	51%
Disapprove	44	50	47	37	39	39

Views of the President’s job performance are highly partisan. A large majority of Democrats approve, while most Republicans disapprove of how he’s handling his job. Independents are split.

More than two and half years into his presidency, 43% of Americans say President Obama has accomplished less than they expected -- up 17 points from early 2010, at the one year mark in his presidency. About as many – 46% - say the President has accomplished what they expected, and another 9% say he has exceeded their expectations.

How Much has Barack Obama Accomplished?

	Now	2/2010	1/2010	4/2009
More than you expected	9%	9%	14%	28%
Less than you expected	43	37	26	12
About as expected	46	51	56	57

Republicans are most likely to say President Obama has fallen short of their expectations, but many in the President’s own party express some disappointment as well; 39% of Democrats say President Obama has accomplished less than they expected. Still, more than half of Democrats say he has met or exceeded their expectations.

How Much has Barack Obama Accomplished? – By Party Id

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
More than you expected	9%	4%	15%	8%
Less than you expected	43	49	39	41
About as expected	46	45	43	48

President Obama: Qualities and Characteristics

Although fewer than half of Americans approve of the job Barack Obama is doing overall, and most disapprove of his handling of the economy, majorities of Americans give the President positive assessments on a number of personal qualities. 70% think the President is someone who stands up for what he believes in, and 65% have a clear idea of what he stands for. Majorities of all partisan stripes think the president has these qualities. While Republicans may be at odds with him on many issues, most think they have a clear idea of what he stands for.

Seven in 10 Americans say the President cares at least some about the needs and problems of people like them, including 38% who say he cares a lot. More Democrats and independents than Republicans say he cares.

President Obama Characteristics

	Yes	No
Someone who stands up for his beliefs	70%	24
Cares about your needs and problems	69%	29
Clear idea what Obama stands for	65%	32
Has strong qualities of leadership	57%	39

A majority of Americans – 57% - views the president as a strong leader, but that is down slightly from earlier this year, and represents a double-digit decline from his first year in office. Democrats (82%) and independents (54%) say Barack Obama has strong qualities of leadership, while 68% of Republicans disagree.

Does Pres. Obama Have Strong Qualities of Leadership?

	Now	2/2011	1/2010	10/2009	2/2009
Yes	57%	62%	70%	72%	85%
No	39	34	28	24	10

Congress

Views of the job Congress is doing have once again reached a new low. Approval of Congress is now at 11%, and though the one point drop from last month is not a statistically significant difference, it now marks the lowest approval rating ever recorded in the CBS News/New York Times Poll dating back to 1977. Eight in 10 Americans disapprove.

Job Rating of Congress

	Now	9/2011	8/2011	2/2011	10/2008
Approve	11%	12%	14%	24%	12%
Disapprove	80	80	82	62	74

Disapproval of Congress is widespread and cuts across party lines: 78% of Republicans, 86% of Democrats, and 77% of independents all disapprove of the job Congress is doing.

Job Rating of Congress

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Approve	11%	14%	8%	11%
Disapprove	80	78	86	77

In keeping with their poor assessment of Congress, 75% of Americans think it is not very or not at all likely that the Democrats and Republicans in Congress will come together and pass a jobs package. Just 20% think this is somewhat likely, and only 3% think this is very likely. Views on were slightly more optimistic last month.

Confident Reps and Dems in Congress will Agree on Jobs Package

	Now	9/2011
Very	3%	3%
Somewhat	20	28
Not very	43	45
Not at all	32	22

Taxes Increases, Jobs and the Deficit

President Obama recently announced a deficit reduction plan that includes a tax increase on those making a million dollars a year or more, and most Americans (64%) support increasing taxes on such households in order to reduce the deficit. Majorities of Democrats and independents favor this, while more than half of Republicans are opposed.

Should Taxes on Millionaires Be Increased In Order to Lower the Deficit?

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Yes	64%	40%	83%	65%
No	30	54	13	28

51% of Americans think such a tax increase would have little impact on job creation. Still, more think it will help job create jobs than hurt job creation.

Impact of Higher Tax on Millionaires on Job Creation

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Help	25%	15%	37%	21%
Hurt	18	35	2	20
Not much difference	51	43	55	52

But when Americans are asked to choose the most effective way for the government to get the economy moving again, more pick cutting taxes to encourage spending and investment over spending more money to create jobs.

Which is the Most Effective Way for Gov't to Get the Economy Moving?

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Cutting taxes to encourage investment	47%	73%	28%	45%
Spending more money to create jobs	37	15	55	37
Both (vol.)	3	2	4	3
Neither (vol.)	6	6	4	8

Views of Government

Americans are also showing historic pessimism about the role of government in general. 64% think the government has a negative impact on most people's lives – an increase of 21 percentage points from when the question was last asked in 2006. Just 13% think it has a positive impact.

Impact of Government on Most People's Lives

	Total	7/2006	11/2001	1/1997
Positive	13%	30%	55%	28%
Negative	64	43	15	41
Not much impact	17	20	17	22

Though Republicans are the most negative (81%), majorities of Democrats (55%) and independents (61%) also think the government has a negative impact on most people's lives. Not surprisingly, 77% of Tea Party supporters think government's impact is mostly negative.

Impact of Government on Most People's Lives

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Positive	13%	6%	18%	14%
Negative	64	81	55	61
Not much impact	17	11	19	19

And going into the 2012 election campaign, the percentage of Americans that think elections matter in making the government pay attention to what people think is also at a new low. Just 26% of Americans think elections make the government pay a good deal of attention to what people think, down from 36% in 2001.

**Do Elections Make the Government
Pay Attention to What People Think...?**

	Now	1/2001	10/1996	8/1995	10/1990
A good deal	26%	36%	28%	41%	35%
Some	34	36	46	31	37
Not much	37	27	25	27	26

This poll was conducted by telephone from September 28-October 2, 2011 among 1,012 adults nationwide. Phone numbers were dialed from samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher. This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

CBS NEWS POLL
The Economy, the President and Congress
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q1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep11a
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	44	7	78	41	43
Disapprove	44	86	13	42	50
DK/NA	12	7	9	17	7

q2 Do you feel things in this country are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?

Right direction	19	5	36	14	23
Wrong track	73	91	55	76	72
DK/NA	8	4	9	10	5

q3 What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

Economy and jobs	54	59	61	45	59
Budget Deficit /Nat'l Debt	6	8	4	7	8
War/Iraq/Afghanistan	4	1	2	6	2
Partisan Politics	3	3	4	2	3
Health Care	2	2	2	2	3
Education	2	0	3	3	1
Politicians/Government	2	1	2	2	2
Religious Values	2	5	1	2	1
Moral Values/Family Values	2	2	1	2	2
Other	19	15	18	24	18
DK/NA	4	4	2	5	1

q4 BLANK

q5 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the economy?

Approve	35	4	67	30	34
Disapprove	53	94	21	53	57
DK/NA	12	2	12	17	9

q6 BLANK

q7 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the situation with Afghanistan?

					Jun11c
Approve	47	25	69	43	51
Disapprove	36	53	19	38	38
DK/NA	17	22	12	19	11

q8 BLANK

q9 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep11a
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	11	14	8	11	12
Disapprove	80	78	86	77	80
DK/NA	9	8	6	12	8

q10 How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

Very good	0	0	0	1	1
Fairly good	10	2	14	11	13
Fairly bad	47	47	49	46	39
Very bad	41	49	35	40	47
DK/NA	2	2	2	2	0

q11 Do you think the economy is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

Better	12	2	24	10	12
Worse	40	59	28	38	43
Same	46	39	45	50	44
DK/NA	2	0	3	2	1

q12 Who do you think is mostly to blame for the current state of the nation's economy-- the Bush administration, the Obama administration, Wall Street and financial institutions, Congress, or someone else?

					Jun11c
Bush administration	22	4	35	22	26
Obama administration	12	32	3	9	8
Wall Street & financial inst.	16	13	19	15	25
Congress	15	15	15	15	11
Someone else	8	9	6	9	8
All of the above (Vol.)	10	11	6	13	7
Combination (Vol.)	13	14	14	11	12
Don't know/No answer	4	2	2	6	3

q13-14 BLANK

q15 These days, what kind of impact do you think the government has on most people's lives--a positive impact, a negative impact, or doesn't the government have much impact on most people's lives?

					Jul06a
Positive impact	13	6	18	14	30
Negative impact	64	81	55	61	43
Doesn't have much impact	17	11	19	19	20
Don't know/No answer	6	2	8	6	7

q16 How much do you feel that having elections makes the government pay attention to what people think--a good deal, some, or not much?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **					
*** Party ID ***					
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan01a
	%	%	%	%	%
Good deal	26	30	32	20	36
Some	34	37	33	34	36
Not Much	37	31	33	43	27
Don't know/No answer	3	2	2	3	1

q17, q26, q28-q29, q34-q35 BLANK
 q18-25, q27, q30-q33 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q36 Do you think Barack Obama has strong qualities of leadership, or not?

Feb11a					
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Feb11a
Has	57	31	82	54	62
Does not have	39	68	15	39	34
Don't know/No answer	4	1	3	7	4

q37 How much do you think Barack Obama cares about the needs and problems of people like yourself--a lot, some, not much, or not at all?

Jan11c					
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan11c
A lot	38	13	69	30	36
Some	31	33	20	37	35
Not much	14	20	6	17	17
Not at all	15	34	5	12	10
Don't know/No answer	2	0	0	4	2

q38 BLANK

q39 Do you have a clear idea of what Barack Obama stands for, or don't you?

Have clear idea	65	65	79	56
Don't have clear idea	32	34	18	40
Don't know/No answer	3	1	3	4

q40 Do you think of Barack Obama as someone who stands up for what he believes in, or don't you?

Yes	70	53	85	68
No	24	42	9	24
DK/NA	6	5	6	8

q41 Since he took office, has Barack Obama made real progress in fixing the economy or hasn't he made real progress in fixing the economy?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **					
*** Party ID ***					
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep11a
	%	%	%	%	%
Made real progress	25	7	44	22	25
Hasn't made real progress	69	93	47	71	68
DK/NA	6	0	9	7	7

q42 Since he took office, do you think Barack Obama has accomplished more than you expected, less than you expected, or about what you expected him to accomplish by now?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Feb10a*
	%	%	%	%	%
More	9	4	15	8	9
Less	43	49	39	41	37
About expected	46	45	43	48	51
Don't know/No answer	2	2	3	3	3

*Wording: "In his first year in office..."

q43 BLANK

q44 How confident are you that Congressional Republicans and Democrats will be able to come to an agreement on a job creation package -- very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident or not at all confident?

					Sep11a
Very confident	3	2	4	2	3
Somewhat confident	20	23	25	16	28
Not too confident	43	48	39	43	45
Not at all confident	32	26	29	37	22
DK/NA	2	1	3	2	2

q45 Which would be a more effective way for the government to get the economy moving again--cutting taxes to encourage spending and investment, or spending more money to create new jobs?

					Jul10b
Cutting taxes	47	73	28	45	53
Government spending	37	15	55	37	37
Both (Vol.)	3	2	4	3	3
Neither (Vol.)	6	6	4	8	2
Don't know/No answer	7	4	9	7	5

q46 In order to lower the nation's budget deficit, do you think taxes should be increased on households earning one million dollars a year or more, or should the government address the budget deficit without increasing taxes on those households?

Should be increased	64	40	83	65
Should not	30	54	13	28
Don't know/No answer	6	6	4	7

q47 If taxes are increased on households earning one million dollars a year or more, do think this will help job creation in the U.S., hurt job creation in the U.S., or won't it make much difference on job creation?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	*** Party ID ***			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Help job creation	25	15	37	21
Hurt job creation	18	35	2	20
No difference	51	43	55	52
DK/NA	6	7	6	7

q48, Q51, Q53 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE
 q55-70 RELEASED SEPARATELY
 q54, q59, q62-63, Q67, q71-73 BLANK
 Q77-Q101 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

q74 Which best describes the way you and your family have been affected by the downturn in the economy? 1. It has been a hardship and caused major life changes. 2. It has been difficult but not caused any major life changes. 3. It has not had much effect one way or the other.

Hardship & life changes	34	30	28	40
Difficult but no life changes	46	50	45	43
No effect	20	19	26	17
DK/NA	0	1	1	0

q75 How concerned are you that in the next 12 months you or someone else in your household might be out of work and looking for a job -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not concerned at all?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep11a
	%	%	%	%	%
Very concerned	36	29	32	43	38
Somewhat concerned	30	33	27	30	25
Not at all concerned	34	38	40	27	37
DK/NA	0	0	1	0	0

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1012	
Total Republicans	266	247 (24%)
Total Democrats	343	316 (31%)
Total Independents	403	449 (45%)