

From Lifestyles to Political Discontent, Economic Woes Still Take their Toll

A near-record number of Americans call jobs difficult to find in their area, more than half say the long-running economic downturn has forced major changes in their personal lifestyle – and increasing numbers are upset or downright angry about it.

More than three and a half years since the recession began and more than two years after unemployment first cracked 9 percent, 82 percent of Americans still say the job market in their area is struggling – 2 points from the record in nearly 20 years of polls, set in December 2009.

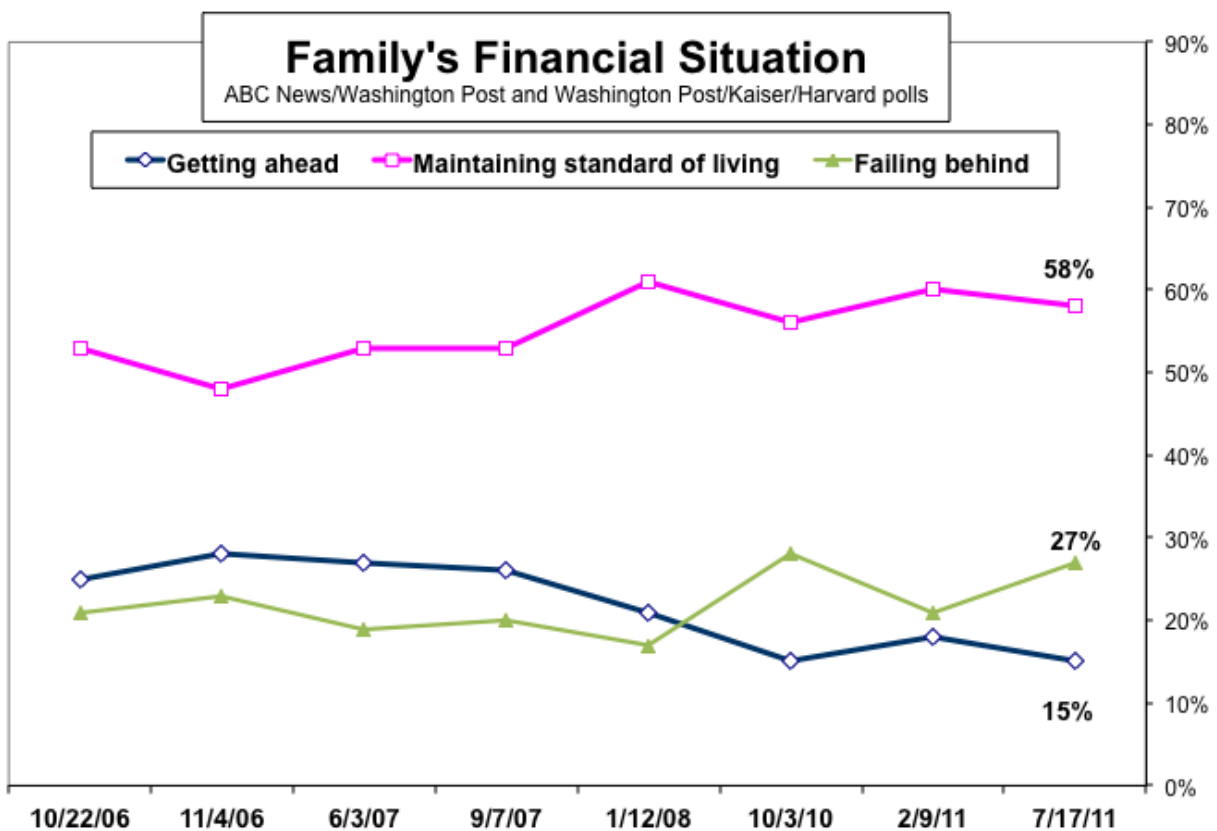
Indeed nearly half in this ABC News/Washington Post poll call it “very” difficult to find jobs in their area, and among those who’ve had a layoff hit their household, more, 68 percent, call jobs very hard to find – a troubling assessment for the more than 14 million Americans looking for work.



More broadly, ratings of the national economy have remained consistently dreadful for more than three years. Ninety percent rate it negatively, including half who give the economy the most negative rating, “poor”

Closer to home, a remarkable 74 percent in this poll, produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#), say they, someone in their household or a close friend or family member has been laid off in the last year. That includes nearly three in 10 who say it’s occurred in their own household, just slightly off its peak in December.

In terms of family finances, a mere 15 percent say they're "getting ahead financially" – nearly half what it was five years ago and tying the low set last year. Almost twice as many, 27 percent, say they are falling behind financially, up 6 points since February.



The toll is more than financial: Fifty-four percent of Americans say they’ve had to change their personal lifestyle in a significant way because of the economy. And among those who have had to change, six in 10 are angry or upset about it (23 and 38 percent, respectively) up 16 points since April 2009.

These economic woes are interrelated. Among those who’ve lost a job, or had a household member lose one, 43 percent say they’re falling behind financially – 23 points higher than it is

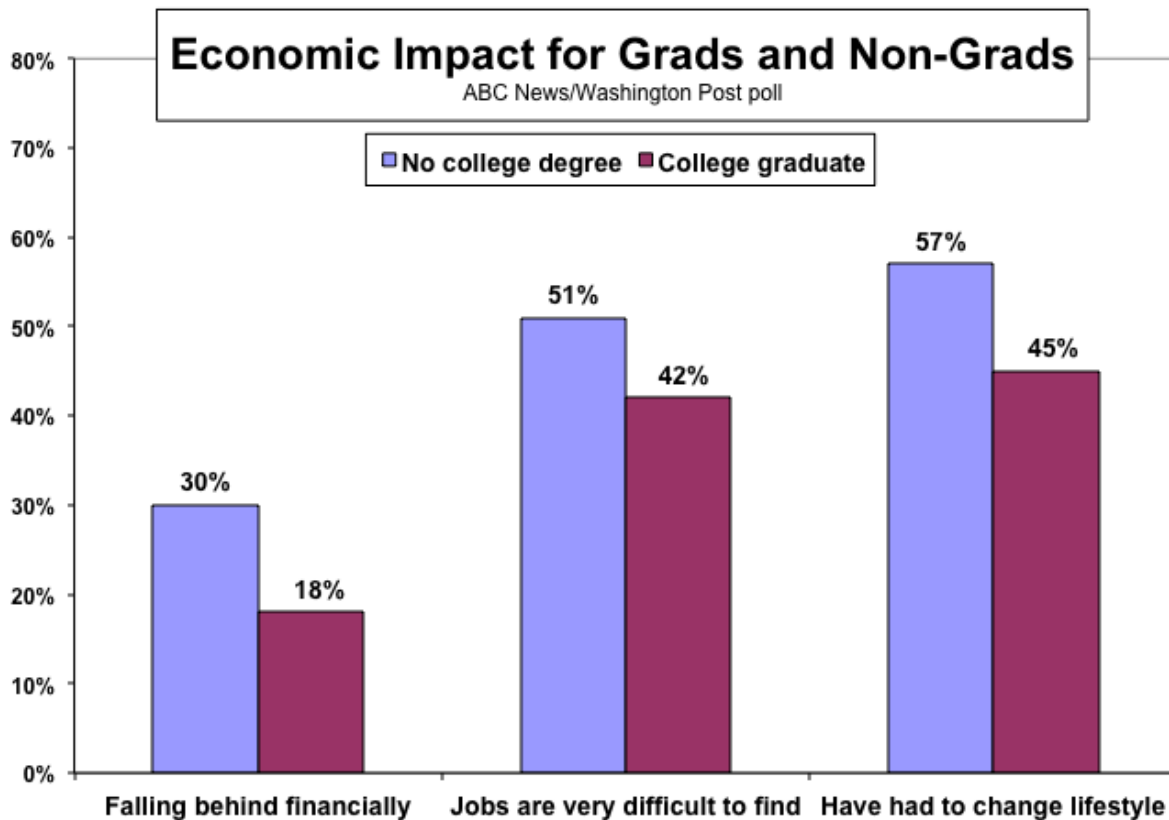
among those with no job loss in the household – and a remarkable 78 percent have had to change their lifestyle, 34 points higher than among those with no household job loss.

Those who’ve had a job loss at home, moreover, see little hope for improvement – 92 percent say jobs are difficult to land in their area, including, as noted, 68 percent who say jobs are “very” hard to find. That’s 27 points higher than it is among those who haven’t had a layoff hit their home.

HARDEST HIT – The long-term economic troubles are taking an especially big toll on less well-off and less-educated adults. Among those with household incomes under \$50,000, nearly four in 10 say they’re falling behind financially, compared with 14 percent of higher earners. It jumps to 53 percent among those earning less than \$20,000 a year.

Likewise, six in 10 lower income Americans have had to make significant changes in their lifestyle because of the economy, 35 percent have had a job loss in their household and 54 percent say job opportunities in their area are very hard to find. Those are 16, 12 and 11 points higher, respectively, than among those earning more than \$50,000 a year.

The economic situation also is causing considerable strife among less-educated adults. Among those who lack a college degree, 30 percent say they’re falling behind financially, 51 percent say jobs are very difficult to find and 57 percent have had to change their personal lifestyle significantly because of the economy. Those compare, respectively, to 18, 42 and 45 percent of college graduates.

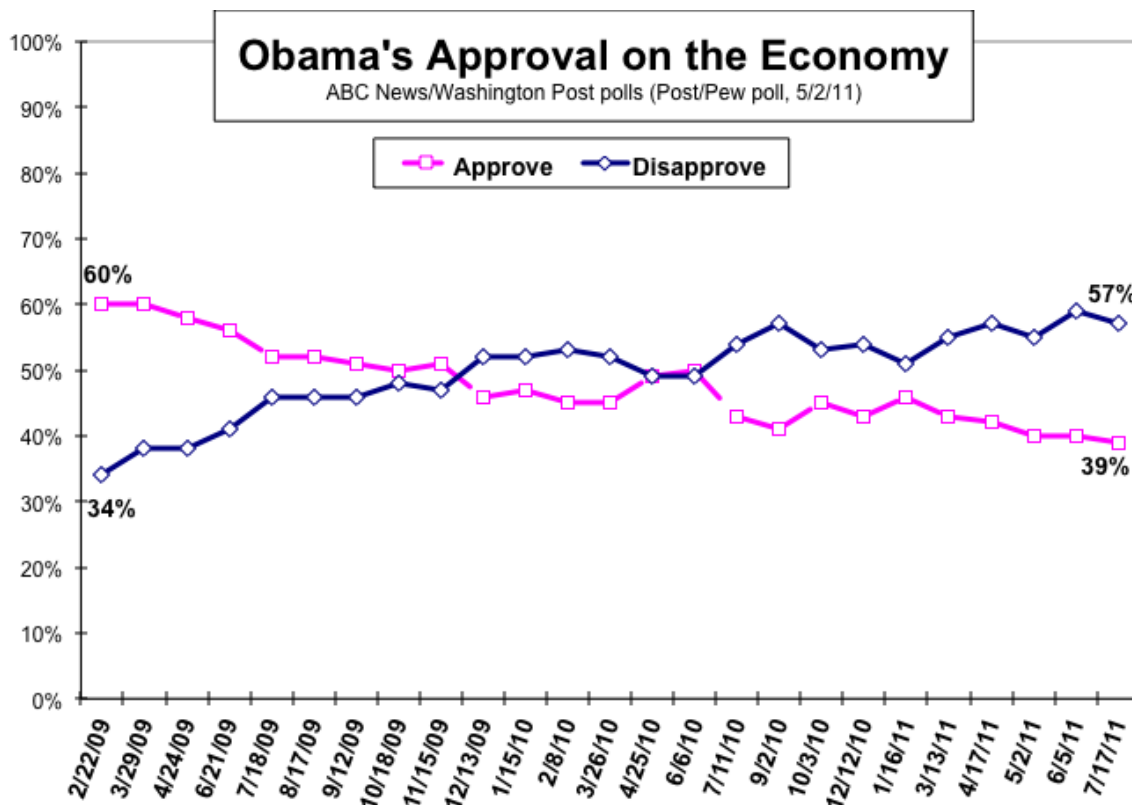


THE BLAME GAME – Two and a half years after George W. Bush left office, he still takes the lion’s share of blame for these economic woes. Fifty-seven percent of Americans say actions taken by the Bush administration made the economy worse, vs. just 16 percent better, a net negative by 41 points.

The Obama administration and congressional Republicans are blamed about equally – with 37 and 39 percent, respectively, saying their actions made the economy worse. But Obama does better on the plus side – nearly three in 10 say he’s improved the economy. That’s down 11 points since October, but still more than the number who say the same about the GOP, just 16 percent. That’s a net negative of 8 points for Obama, 23 points for the Republicans in Congress.

There are partisan and ideological differences in assigning blame, with Republicans and conservatives less likely to point the finger at the Bush administration and congressional Republicans, while Democrats and liberals are less critical of the Obama administration. But even among Republicans and conservatives, just 30 and 28 percent, respectively, think the Republicans in Congress are making things better. More Democrats and liberals, 53 and 50 percent, respectively, praise the Obama administration.

Overall, though, Obama’s approval rating on handling the economy has slipped below 40 percent for the first time, to 39 percent. Fifty-seven percent disapprove, and strong disapprovers outnumber strong approvers by more than 2 to 1. Just 41 percent approve specifically of how he’s handling job creation.



Ratings for the Republicans in Congress on the economy and job creation are even lower than Obama's, with just 28 and 26 percent approving, respectively.

Among Americans who say they're falling behind financially, three-quarters disapprove of the GOP's handling of the economy, and two-thirds disapprove of Obama's approach, 11 and 13 points higher than these views among those who are either holding steady or getting ahead financially.

With the election year ahead, anti-incumbency peaks among those who say the economy's in poor shape; 70 percent in this group are interested in looking for someone new from their district to send to Congress. Nearly all of those who say the economy's in poor shape, 93 percent, also say they're dissatisfied (54 percent) or even angry (39 percent) with the way the government's working; so do 86 percent of those who call jobs hard to find in their area. Each is a reminder of the political power of a bad economy, as evident in 2008, again in 2010 – and as much a potential factor in 2012.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone July 14-17, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,001 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

Analysis by Julie E. Phelan.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

*= less than 0.5 percent.

1, 2b-d, 3b, 3d, 4-6, 15-35 previously released or held for release.

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling [ITEM]? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

7/17/11 - Summary Table*

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
a. The economy	39	18	22	57	15	43	3
b-d. Previously released.							
e. Creating jobs	41	16	25	52	13	39	7

*Full sample asked item a; half sample asked item e.

Trend:

a. The economy

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
7/17/11	39	18	22	57	15	43	3
6/5/11	40	20	20	59	10	49	2
5/2/11*	40	18	22	55	16	39	4
4/17/11	42	23	19	57	11	46	2
3/13/11	43	22	21	55	13	41	2
1/16/11	46	22	24	51	13	38	2
12/12/10	43	21	22	54	15	39	3
10/28/10 RV	44	21	23	54	15	39	3
10/28/10 LV	42	23	19	55	10	45	2
10/3/10	45	22	23	53	13	41	2
9/2/10	41	20	21	57	13	44	2
7/11/10	43	20	23	54	13	41	4
6/6/10	50	26	24	49	12	37	2
4/25/10	49	24	25	49	10	39	2
3/26/10	45	23	22	52	12	40	3
2/8/10	45	22	23	53	15	38	2
1/15/10	47	22	24	52	13	39	1
12/13/09	46	23	24	52	12	40	2
11/15/09	51	26	25	47	12	36	2
10/18/09	50	29	22	48	13	35	1
9/12/09	51	28	24	46	13	33	2
8/17/09	52	27	25	46	13	33	2
7/18/09	52	29	23	46	10	35	3
6/21/09	56	28	28	41	13	27	3
4/24/09	58	31	28	38	13	25	4
3/29/09	60	34	25	38	12	26	3
2/22/09	60	NA	NA	34	NA	NA	6

*Washington Post/Pew Research Center poll

e. Creating jobs

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
7/17/11	41	16	25	52	13	39	7
2/8/10	47	25	22	51	15	35	3

3. Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Republicans in Congress are handling [ITEM]?

7/17/11 - Summary Table*

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
a. The economy	28	67	5
b. Previously released.			
c. Creating jobs	26	65	9
d. Previously released.			

*Full sample asked items a; half sample asked item c.

Trend:

a. The economy

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
7/17/11	28	67	5
4/17/11	34	62	3
11/4/90 LV*	26	69	5

* "the nation's economy"

c. No trend.

7. On another subject, would you describe the state of the nation's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good or poor?

	----- Positive -----			----- Negative -----			No opinion
	NET	Excellent	Good	NET	Not so good	Poor	
7/17/11	10	1	9	90	40	50	*
6/5/11	11	1	10	89	46	44	*
1/16/11	13	1	12	87	45	41	*
10/28/10	9	*	9	90	41	49	1
10/28/10 LV	8	*	7	92	42	50	1
10/3/10	9	1	8	90	40	50	*
9/2/10	8	*	7	92	40	53	0
7/11/10	10	1	9	90	44	46	0
6/6/10	12	*	11	88	43	45	0
1/16/09	5	1	5	94	32	62	*
9/22/08	9	*	9	91	34	57	*
4/13/08	10	1	9	90	39	51	*
2/1/08	19	1	18	81	43	38	0
12/9/07	28	3	25	72	40	32	*
11/1/07	35	3	32	64	39	26	*
4/15/07	42	5	37	57	37	20	*
12/11/06	50	7	42	50	36	14	*
10/22/06	55	10	45	45	28	17	*

Call for full trend.

8. Thinking now about job opportunities where you live, would you say there are plenty of jobs available in your community, or are jobs difficult to find? (IF DIFFICULT TO FIND) Are jobs very or somewhat difficult to find in your community?

	Plenty of jobs available	- Difficult to find -			Lots of some jobs, few of others (vol.)	No opinion
		NET	Somewhat	Very		
7/17/11*	14	82	33	49	2	2
12/13/09	12	84	NA	NA	2	2
10/4/09**	14	79			3	3
2/8/09	11	80			3	6
12/8/08	19	73			4	4
10/12/08	25	64			4	7
7/27/08	31	58			4	7
4/27/08	30	61			4	5
2/2/08	34	53			5	8
11/07	41	48			4	7
9/16/07	36	50			6	8
6/3/07	39	49			5	7
2/11/07	39	48			6	7
12/10/06	40	49			5	6
3/7/06	37	56			3	4
1/8/06	33	56			6	5
10/10/05	36	56			4	4
5/15/05	30	60			6	4
1/9/05	32	58			5	5
9/21/04	31	52			6	11
8/10/04	34	55			4	7
4/25/04	30	57			4	9
2/29/04	31	59			5	6
1/11/04	27	60			6	7
10/19/03	24	66			5	5
6/23/02	31	59			4	6
6/17/01	42	44			8	6
8/9/92	15	76			6	3
5/7/92	16	77			4	3

1/21/92 12 79 " " 6 3

*Prior to 7/17/11, very or somewhat follow was not asked

**10/09 to 6/01 Pew; 1992 U.S. News & World Reports

9. Which best describes your family's financial situation? Do you feel as if you are getting ahead financially, have just enough money to maintain your standard of living, or are you falling behind financially?

	Getting ahead	Just enough to maintain	Falling behind	No opinion
7/17/11	15	58	27	*
2/9/11*	18	60	21	*
10/3/10*	15	56	28	1
1/12/08	21	61	17	1
9/7/07	26	53	20	1
6/3/07*	27	53	19	1
11/4/06 RV	28	48	23	1
10/22/06 RV	25	53	21	1
11/4/96*	28	48	23	1

*Washington Post/Kaiser/Harvard

10. Has the economic situation caused you to change your personal lifestyle in a significant way, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
7/17/11	54	46	*
4/24/09	56	43	*

11. (IF HAD TO CHANGE LIFESTYLE) How would you describe your feelings about the changes you've had to make - are you angry about it, upset but not angry, not upset but concerned, or is it not a cause of concern?

	--- Angry/Upset ---			----- Not Angry/Upset -----				No opinion
	NET	Angry	Upset	NET	Cncd	Not cncd	Pos. (vol.)	
7/17/11	61	23	38	38	31	7	1	*
4/24/09	45	13	32	55	43	11	*	*

10/11 NET

	----- Caused changes -----					
	NET	Angry/Upset		Not Angry/Upset		No opinion
7/17/11	54	33		21	46	*
4/24/09	56	25		31	43	*

12. In the last year, have you or has anyone living in your household been laid off or lost their job?

	Yes	No	No opinion
7/17/11	29	71	*
12/12/10	34	65	*
11/15/09	30	70	*
9/12/09	27	73	*
4/24/09*	23	77	0
2/22/09	18	82	*
12/14/08	18	82	*

*4/24/09 and previous: "In the last few months..."

13. Thinking beyond your own household, do you have any close friends or immediate family members who have been laid off or lost their job?

	Yes	No	No opinion
7/17/11	71	29	*
12/12/10	72	28	0
4/24/09	63	36	*
2/22/09	60	40	1

14. Thinking about the economic challenges facing the country would you say the actions taken by the [ITEM] made things better, made things worse, or had no effect? (IF BETTER or WORSE) Would that be much better/worse or somewhat better/worse?

7/17/11 - Summary Table

	----- Better -----			----- Worse -----			No effect	No opin.
	NET	Much	Smwt.	NET	Smwt.	Much		
a. Obama administration	29	5	23	37	13	24	33	2
b. Bush administration	16	4	12	57	22	35	24	3
c. Republicans in Congress	16	3	12	39	20	19	42	3

Trend:

a. Obama administration

	----- Better -----			----- Worse -----			No effect	No opinion
	NET	Much	Smwt.	NET	Smwt.	Much		
7/17/11	29	5	23	37	13	24	33	2
10/3/10*	40	10	30	31	12	19	26	2

*Washington Post/Kaiser/Harvard

b. Bush administration

	----- Better -----			----- Worse -----			No effect	No opinion
	NET	Much	Smwt.	NET	Smwt.	Much		
7/17/11	16	4	12	57	22	35	24	3
10/3/10*	15	3	12	63	26	37	19	3

*Washington Post/Kaiser/Harvard

c. No trend.