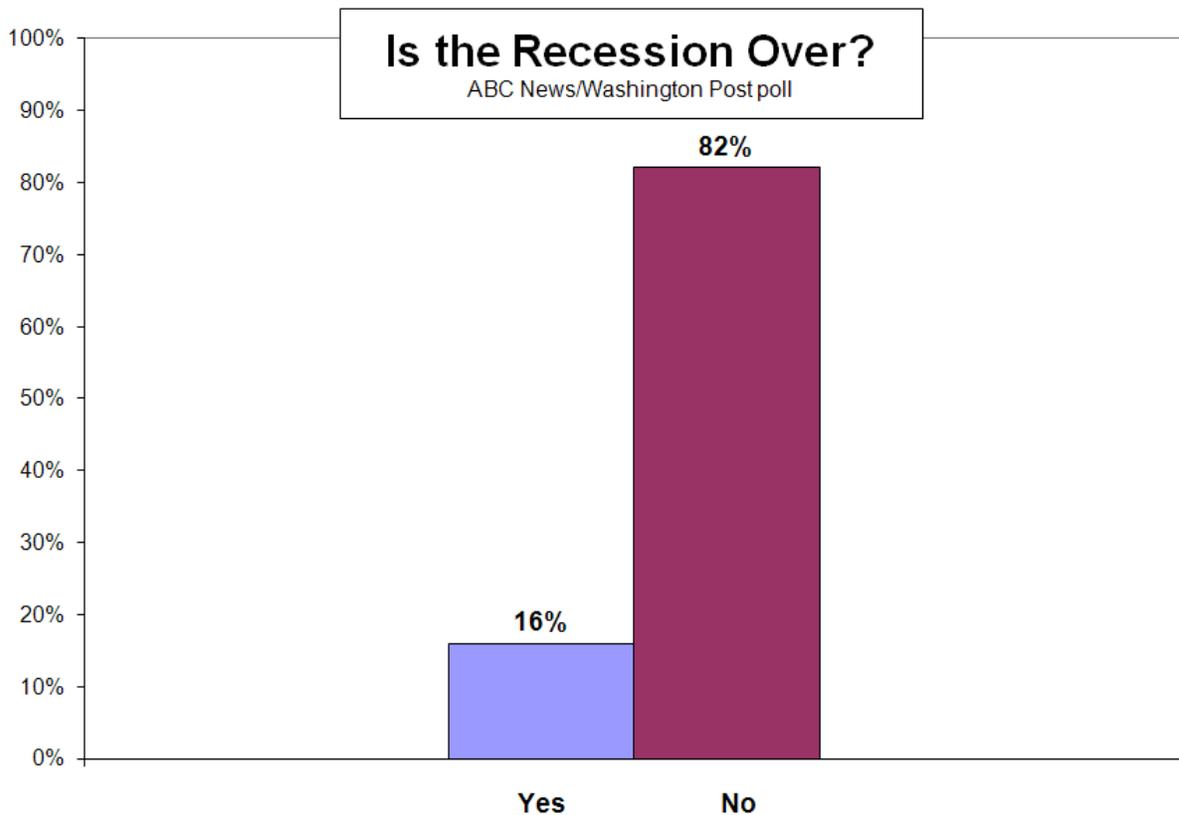


Recovery? What Recovery?

From the public's perspective, the rumors of economic recovery are greatly exaggerated.

The latest ABC News/Washington Post poll put it this way: "Many economists say that using the standards they apply, the recession probably is over. Thinking about your own experience of economic conditions, would you say that from your point of view the recession is over, or not over?"

Result: Not over, 82 percent.

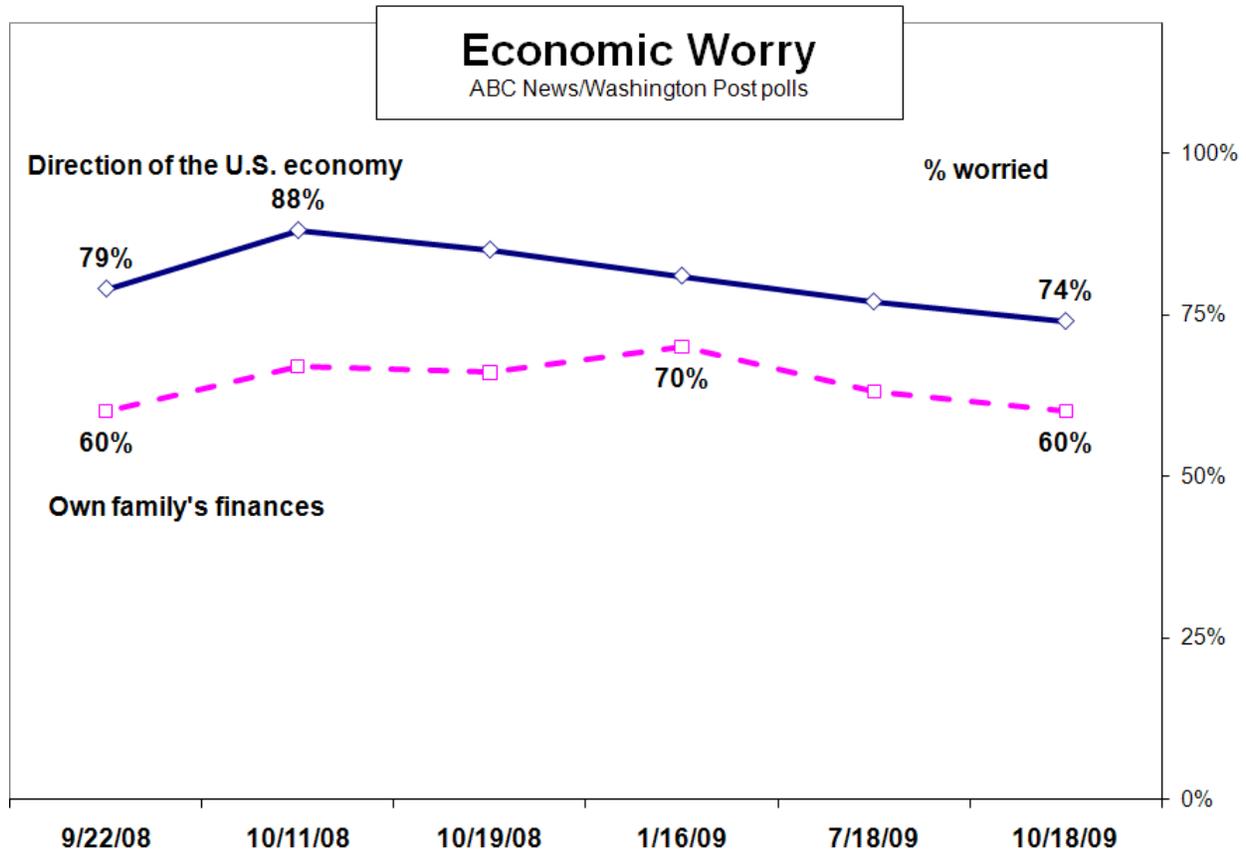


That marks more than the disconnect between definitions of recession; it also points to the land mines that pockmark the political landscape, threatening potential woe to President Obama in particular and incumbent office-holders in general. Claims of a recovery that few people feel are fraught with the taint of disconnect.

GDP aside, plenty informs the public's continued experience of recession: unemployment, especially including people who've given up looking; declining work hours and personal

income; foreclosures and more. It's also reflected in the ongoing ABC News consumer index, in which 89 percent rate the economy negatively, 77 percent call it a bad time to spend money and 59 percent say their own finances are hurting – all near their lows in 23 years of weekly polls.

Indeed, contrary to rumors of recovery, 74 percent in this poll are worried about the direction of the nation's economy over the next few years – down 14 points from its peak a year ago, but still three-quarters of the public. And six in 10 remain worried about their own family's financial prospects. These worries are very strong factors in belief the recession's not over.

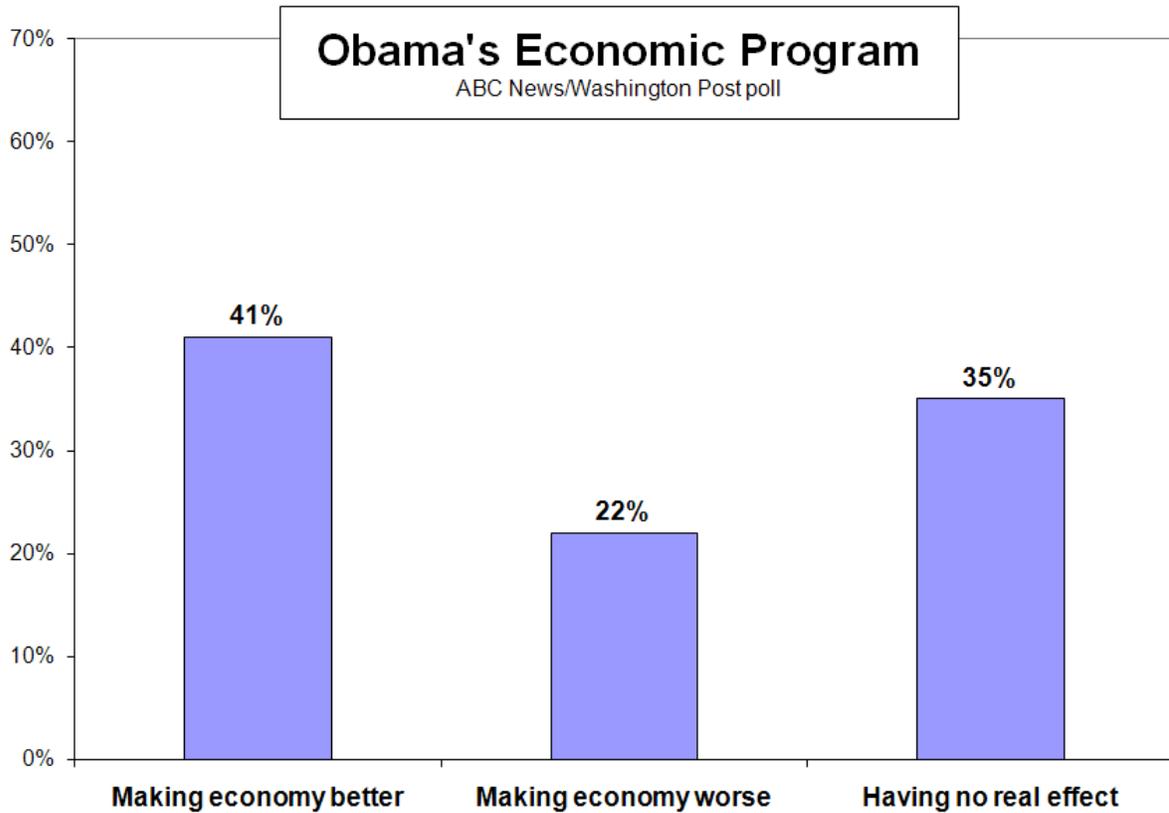


Many also are baring their teeth at executives of companies associated with the carnage. Seventy-one percent support cutting executive compensation at companies that received emergency government loans in the past year. Fifty-eight percent support it strongly.

POLITICS – Politically, the economy very probably is the single biggest threat to Barack Obama. Well under half of Americans, 41 percent, think his economic program is making it better – which is part of the reason why, by 57-38 percent, the public opposes spending more on recovery efforts if doing so would increase the federal budget deficit.

That doesn't give Obama a lot of wiggle room. As things stand, his approval rating for handling the economy has slipped to 50 percent, barely below a majority for the first time and down 10

points from its high in the spring. On handling the deficit, he's lower still (albeit up a bit from last month's rating) at 45 percent approval.



It is extremely difficult for a president to thrive in a bad economy. In conditions much like these, Ronald Reagan went from 73 percent approval to 48 percent in his first year in office. The first President Bush went from 69 percent to 33 percent in 11 months during the long slog out of the 1990-91 recession. And the failing economy helped push George W. Bush to 23 percent approval almost exactly a year ago, 1 point from the lowest in 70 years of presidential approval polls.

RISKS/GROUPS – The political risks also are illustrated by the first President Bush, who in 1992 said the economy wasn't so bad after all. He was technically right – the recession, as classically defined, long had been over – but it wasn't experienced that way by most Americans. Bush paid for the disconnect by losing his re-election bid that fall.

The discontinuity can last a long while, depending on the strength and speed of recovery. While the 1990-91 recession technically ended in March 1991, unemployment didn't peak until June 1992, and consumer sentiment didn't regain its pre-recession levels until June 1994. After Bush suffered, so did the Democrats, with the loss of Congress in the 1994 midterms.

Those experiences raise the stakes in comments such as Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke's last month, when he said the recession is "very likely over," and in congressional testimony

yesterday by Christina Romer, chair of Obama's Council of Economic Advisers: "A recession that showed no signs of ending last January appears to be firmly entering the recovery phase."

Again from the public's perspective, there's not a single group or region of the country in which more than 28 percent think the recession is over. Among people with household incomes under \$100,000 a year, 84 percent say the recession's still going – but in the wealthiest households, 75 percent say the same. Among people who don't have a college degree, 85 percent say it's not over – but so do 76 percent of college graduates.

Eighty-seven percent of women and 77 percent of men say the recession's still on. So do 88 percent of conservatives, 81 percent of liberals and 79 percent of moderates; and 85 percent of independents, 84 percent of Republicans and 79 percent of Democrats.

Worry about the future, especially in terms of Americans' own household finances, also crosses political lines. On the recession, then, bipartisanship prevails – economists aside.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 15-18, 2009, among a random national sample of 1,004 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results for the full sample have a 3.5-point error margin. Click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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).

1-17 previously released.

18. Changing topics, do you think Obama's economic program is making the economy (better), making it (worse) or having no real effect?

	Better	Worse	No effect	No opinion
10/18/09	41	22	35	2
8/17/09	43	23	32	2

19. Which of these do you think is more important right now - (increasing federal spending to try to improve the economy, even if it sharply increases the federal budget deficit); or (avoiding a big increase in the federal budget deficit, even if it means not increasing federal spending to try to improve the economy)?

	Increasing spending	Avoiding deficit	No opinion
10/18/09	38	57	5
7/18/09	40	55	5
3/29/09	49	47	5
1/16/09	51	44	4

20. How do you feel about [ITEM] - very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried or not worried at all?

10/18/09 - Summary Table

	----- Worried ----			----- Not worried ----			No op.
	NET	Very	Smwt.	NET	Not too	At all	
a. The direction of the nation's economy over the next few years	74	34	40	26	17	9	*
b. Your own family's financial situation	60	23	37	40	24	16	*

Trend:

a. The direction of the nation's economy over the next few years

	----- Worried ----			----- Not worried ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Smwt.	NET	Not too	At all	
10/18/09	74	34	40	26	17	9	*
7/18/09	77	36	42	22	16	6	*
1/16/09	81	35	46	18	15	4	*
10/19/08 LV	85	44	42	14	9	5	1
10/11/08	88	48	40	11	8	3	1
9/22/08	79	40	39	17	13	5	3
1/5/03	67	27	40	31	22	10	1
11/4/02 LV	76	34	42	23	17	6	1
11/3/02 LV	75	33	42	24	17	7	1
11/2/02 LV	73	32	41	26	19	8	1
10/27/02	75	27	48	23	16	7	2

b. Your own family's financial situation

10/18/09	60	23	37	40	24	16	*
7/18/09	63	23	41	37	25	12	0
1/16/09	70	27	43	30	20	10	*
10/19/08 LV	66	24	43	33	21	12	*
10/11/08	67	23	43	33	22	11	1
9/22/08	60	22	38	40	26	14	*

21. Many economists say that using the standards they apply, the recession probably is over. Thinking about your own experience of economic conditions, would you say that from your point of view the recession is over, or not over?

	Over	Not over	No opinion
10/18/09	16	82	1

22. Would you support or oppose the federal government putting limits on the salaries and other compensation that can be paid to top executives at the companies that received emergency government loans in the past year? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
10/18/09	71	58	13	27	7	20	2

23-38 previously released.

END