

# Post-Midterm Elections, Nation's Long-Term Fiscal Outlook Remains Top Concern for Voters

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**The November 2014 Fiscal Confidence Index, Modeled after the Consumer Confidence Index, is 44 (100 is Neutral)**

**NEW YORK** — The Peter G. Peterson Foundation's November Fiscal Confidence Index, a monthly measure of public attitudes about the nation's long-term debt and the efforts elected leaders are making to address America's fiscal challenges, shows that Americans remain highly concerned about the country's fiscal outlook. The Fiscal Confidence Index, modeled after the Consumer Confidence Index, is 44 (100 is neutral), indicating voters continuing negative public sentiment about America's fiscal future.

Voters agree that the debt is an issue the President and Congress should be spending more time addressing (82% more time/11% less time), with over eight in ten (81%) calling for the national debt to be among their top three priorities. Two-thirds (67%) of Americans say that their level of concern about the national debt has increased over the last few years.

"As we look ahead to a new Congress, voters continue to call for an increased focus in Washington on the nation's long-term fiscal and economic challenges," said Michael A. Peterson, President and COO of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation. "Voters are looking to their elected officials for leadership, and they understand that putting our fiscal house in order is vital to securing economic prosperity and growth, now and in the future."

The Fiscal Confidence Index measures public opinion about the national debt by asking six questions in three key areas:

- **CONCERN:** Level of concern and views about the direction of the national debt.
- **PRIORITY:** How high a priority addressing the debt should be for elected leaders.
- **EXPECTATIONS:** Expectations about whether the debt situation will get better or worse in the next few years.

The survey results from these three areas are weighted equally and averaged to produce the Fiscal Confidence Index value. The Fiscal Confidence Index, like the Consumer Confidence Index, is indexed on a scale of 0 to 200, with a neutral midpoint of 100. A reading above 100 indicates positive sentiment. A reading below 100 indicates negative sentiment.

## **Fiscal Confidence Index Key Data Points:**

- **The November 2014 Fiscal Confidence Index value is 44.** A score of 100 is neutral. Values below 100 show negative sentiment, while values above 100 show positive sentiment. (October's value was 49. September's value was 41.)
- The current Fiscal Confidence Index score for CONCERN about the debt is 40, indicating deep concern about the debt. The score for debt as a PRIORITY that leaders must address is 23, indicating that Americans want elected leaders to make addressing long-term debt a high priority. The score for EXPECTATIONS about progress on the debt is 69, indicating strong pessimism about the direction of long-term fiscal policy in the next few years. The Fiscal Confidence Index of 44 is the average of these three sub-category scores.
- For a description of the complete methodology, see the Appendix below.

The Peter G. Peterson Foundation commissioned a poll by the Global Strategy Group and North Star Opinion Research to survey public opinion on the national debt. The nationwide poll included 1,003 U.S. registered voters, surveyed by telephone between November 17 and November 20, 2014. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.1%. The poll examined voters' opinions on the national debt, political leadership, and America's fiscal and economic health.

Detailed poll results can be found online at: [www.pgpf.org/what-we-are-doing/education-and-awareness/fiscal-confidence-index](http://www.pgpf.org/what-we-are-doing/education-and-awareness/fiscal-confidence-index)

### **About the Peter G. Peterson Foundation**

*The Peter G. Peterson Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that is dedicated to increasing public awareness of the nature and urgency of key long-term fiscal challenges threatening America's future, and to accelerating action on them. To address these challenges successfully, we work to bring Americans together to find and implement sensible, long-term solutions that transcend age, party lines and ideological divides in order to achieve real results. To learn more, please visit [www.pgpf.org](http://www.pgpf.org).*

## **APPENDIX: Fiscal Confidence Index Methodology and Questions**

- The Fiscal Confidence Index is released monthly by the Peter G. Peterson Foundation.
- The Fiscal Confidence Index value is based on six questions in three categories.
- As is done with the Consumer Confidence Index, the first step in calculating the Fiscal Confidence Index is determining the "Relative Value" for each question. This calculation is made by taking the positive response for each question and dividing it by the sum of the positive and negative responses. Each question was asked on a four-point scale, and answers were weighted according to intensity, with the strongest responses counting twice as much as the middle responses ("much" better or worse answers count twice as heavily as "somewhat" better or worse answers).
- The scores for the Concern, Priority, and Expectations categories are determined by averaging the scores derived from the two questions in each category.
- The Fiscal Confidence Index value is converted from the Relative Value to place it on a scale on which 100 indicates equal positive and negative sentiment, while values below 100 indicate negative sentiment and values above 100 indicate positive sentiment.
- The Peter G. Peterson Foundation commissioned the poll by the Global Strategy Group and North Star Opinion Research to survey public opinion on the national debt. The nationwide poll included 1,003 U.S. registered voters, surveyed by telephone between November 17 and November 20, 2014. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.1%. The poll examined voters' opinions on the national debt, political leadership,

and America's fiscal and economic health.

- The questions are as follows:

<b>CONCERN (40)</b>	
<p>Thinking about our national debt over the last few years, would you say your level of concern has increased or decreased? ? Is that a lot or just a little?</p>	
	(Don't know)
	<b>INCREASED</b>
<b>DECREASED</b>	

<p>When it comes to addressing our national debt, would you say things in the United States are heading in the right direction or do you think things are off on the wrong track? ? Do you feel that way strongly or just somewhat?</p>	
	Right direction
	Right direction
	Wrong track
	Wrong track
	(Don't know)
	<b>RIGHT DIRECTION</b>
<b>WRONG TRACK</b>	

<b>PRIORITY (23)</b>	
<p>Some people say that addressing the national debt should be among the President and Congress' top 3 priorities. Do you agree or disagree? ? Do you feel that way strongly or just somewhat?</p>	
	S
	(Don't know)
	<b>DISAGREE</b>

<p>And when it comes to our national debt, do you think it is an issue that the President and Congress should spend more time addressing or less time addressing? ? Would you say a lot (more or less) time or just a little?</p>	<p>(The sam (Do <b>MO</b> <b>LI</b></p>
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<b>EXPECTATIONS (69)</b>	
<p>And thinking about our national debt over the next few years, do you expect the problem to get better or worse? ? Is that much (better or worse) or just somewhat (better or worse)?</p>	<p>(Do</p>

<p>And when it comes to our national debt, are you optimistic or pessimistic that the United States will be able to make progress on our national debt over the next few years? ? Would you say you are very (optimistic or pessimistic) or just somewhat?</p>	<p>So Som (Do <b>OPT</b> <b>PES</b></p>
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