

# As Congress Approaches August Recess, Americans Focus on Nation's Fiscal Health

Jul 25, 2017

**Contact:** Nicole Goodkind  
(212) 470-5340  
[ngoodkind@pgpf.org](mailto:ngoodkind@pgpf.org)

*The July 2017 Fiscal Confidence Index, Modeled after the Consumer Confidence Index, is 52 (100 is Neutral)*

**NEW YORK** — As policymakers prepare to return to their districts for August recess, American voters remain concerned about the nation's fiscal health, according to the Peter G. Peterson Foundation's July Fiscal Confidence Index, a monthly measure of public attitudes about the national debt and the efforts elected leaders are making to address America's fiscal challenges. The Fiscal Confidence Index, modeled after the Consumer Confidence Index, is 52 (100 is neutral), indicating that voters expect policymakers to prioritize fiscal solutions as they tackle a busy legislative agenda.

Voters are now more than twice as likely to say that the United States is on the wrong track in addressing the national debt than to say it is moving in the right direction (57% wrong track / 26% right direction), representing a negative shift in their attitudes about the direction of the problem since last month (53% wrong track / 31% right direction).

Americans remain slightly more optimistic (47%) than pessimistic (44%) that there will be progress on the issue in the next few years, but more than three-quarters (77%) believe national leaders should devote more time to addressing the national debt.

"As Congress heads into August recess, Americans remain focused on finding solutions to our long-term debt problem," said Michael A. Peterson, President and CEO of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation. "Americans understand that a sustainable fiscal future is an essential ingredient in a growing, healthy economy. With major reforms on the legislative table, voters want policymakers to put our nation on a more sustainable fiscal path, because they know our economy depends on it."

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 July 2017 Fiscal Confidence Index value is 52.** (The June value was 56 and the May value was 54.)
- The current Fiscal Confidence Index score for CONCERN about the debt is 43, indicating deep concern about the debt. The score for debt as a PRIORITY that leaders must address is 33, 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 78. The Fiscal Confidence Index 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 July 17 and July 20, 2017. 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/FiscalConfidenceIndex](http://www.pgpf.org/FiscalConfidenceIndex).

### **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 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 questions are as follows:

### CONCERN (43)

<b>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?</b>	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>June 2017</b>	<b>May 2017</b>
Increased a lot	40%	40%	47%
Increased a little	24%	25%	21%
Decreased a little	10%	9%	8%
Decreased a lot	5%	4%	4%
(No change)	18%	19%	17%
(Don't Know/Refused)	2%	3%	2%
<b>INCREASED (NET)</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>DECREASED (NET)</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>

<b>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?</b>	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>June 2017</b>	<b>May 2017</b>
Right direction-Strongly	9%	13%	15%
Right direction-Somewhat	17%	18%	18%
Wrong track-Somewhat	17%	18%	14%
Wrong track-Strongly	40%	35%	39%
(Neither/Mixed)	9%	10%	7%
(Don't Know/Refused)	8%	6%	8%
<b>RIGHT DIRECTION (NET)</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>WRONG TRACK (NET)</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>53%</b>

### PRIORITY (33)

<b>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?</b>	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>June 2017</b>	<b>May 2017</b>
Strongly agree	47%	45%	50%
Somewhat agree	25%	27%	24%
Somewhat disagree	14%	11%	11%
Strongly disagree	9%	9%	9%
(Don't Know/Refused)	5%	7%	6%

AGREE (NET)	72%	72%	74%
DISAGREE (NET)	23%	21%	20%

**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?**

	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>June 2017</b>	<b>May 2017</b>
<b>? Would you say a lot (more or less) time or just a little?</b>			
A lot more time	49%	47%	55%
A little more time	28%	29%	23%
A little less time	7%	7%	6%
A lot less time	5%	3%	3%
(The same amount of time)	6%	8%	7%
(Don't Know/Refused)	6%	7%	6%
MORE TIME (NET)	77%	76%	78%
LESS TIME (NET)	12%	10%	10%

#### **EXPECTATIONS (78)**

**And thinking about our national debt over the next few years, do you expect the problem to get better or worse?**

	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>June 2017</b>	<b>May 2017</b>
<b>? Is that much (better or worse) or just somewhat (better or worse)?</b>			
Much better	10%	13%	14%
Somewhat better	17%	23%	20%
Somewhat worse	27%	25%	21%
Much worse	32%	28%	35%
(No change)	6%	6%	4%
(Don't know/Refused)	8%	6%	7%
BETTER (NET)	28%	36%	34%
WORSE (NET)	59%	52%	56%

**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?**

	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>June 2017</b>	<b>May 2017</b>
<b>? Would you say you are very (optimistic or pessimistic) or just somewhat?</b>			
Very optimistic	20%	22%	24%
Somewhat optimistic	27%	27%	27%
Somewhat pessimistic	18%	20%	16%
Very pessimistic	26%	22%	26%
(Neither/Mixed)	5%	5%	4%
(Don't Know/Refused)	4%	4%	3%
OPTIMISTIC (NET)	47%	49%	51%
PESSIMISTIC (NET)	44%	42%	42%

- Careers

- Terms of use
- Copyright policy
- Permissions
- Privacy policy
- Sitemap

© 2019 Peter G. Peterson Foundation. All rights reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.pgpf.org/press-release/2017/07/fci-press-release>