

Voters Across Party Lines Hold Serious Concerns About Nation's Fiscal Condition as U.S. Debt Continues To Rise

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The March 2019 Fiscal Confidence Index, Modeled after the Consumer Confidence Index, is 49 (100 is Neutral)

NEW YORK (March 26, 2019) — Strong bipartisan majorities of voters continue to hold serious concerns about the nation's fiscal outlook, according to the Peter G. Peterson Foundation's 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 March Fiscal Confidence Index, modeled after the Consumer Confidence Index, is 49 (100 is neutral), indicating that voters remain troubled by the lack of action in Washington fix America's longstanding and worsening debt problem.

More than four in five Americans (83%) want the President and Congress to spend more time addressing the issue, including overwhelming majorities of Democrats (84%), Independents (84%), and Republicans (81%, up five points from last month).

More than three-quarters (76%) say the national debt should be a top-three priority of the President and Congress. Again, these attitudes are bipartisan with large majorities of Democrats (75%), Independents (74%), and Republicans (78%) all agreeing on this priority.

“The vast majority of Americans across party lines continue to urge national leaders to manage the debt,” said Michael A. Peterson, CEO of the Peterson Foundation. “They know that reducing our debt means lower interest costs and greater resources for national priorities and our future. With budget discussions underway, officials in Washington have an opportunity and obligation to create a sustainable fiscal path.”

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 March 2019 Fiscal Confidence Index value is 49.** (The February value was 50, and the January value was 46.)
- ? The current Fiscal Confidence Index score for CONCERN about the debt is 48, indicating deep concern about the debt. The score for debt as a PRIORITY that leaders must address is 25, 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 74. 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 this poll by the Global Strategy Group and North Star Opinion Research to survey public opinion on the national debt. The nationwide poll included 1,000 U.S. registered voters, surveyed by telephone between March 18, 2019 and March 21, 2019. 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.

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.

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 (48)

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?	March 2019	February 2019	January 2019
Increased a lot	41%	40%	40%
Increased a little	23%	23%	24%
Decreased a little	11%	12%	10%
Decreased a lot	5%	5%	6%
(No change)	19%	18%	17%
(Don't Know/Refused)	1%	1%	2%
INCREASED (NET)	64%	64%	64%
DECREASED (NET)	16%	18%	17%

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?	March 2019	February 2019	January 2019
Right direction-Strongly	13%	16%	13%
Right direction-Somewhat	17%	14%	11%
Wrong track-Somewhat	18%	17%	18%
Wrong track-Strongly	39%	42%	45%
(Neither/Mixed)	8%	7%	8%
(Don't Know/Refused)	4%	4%	4%
RIGHT DIRECTION (NET)	30%	30%	24%
WRONG TRACK (NET)	57%	59%	64%

PRIORITY (25)

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?	March 2019	February 2019	January 2019
Strongly agree	49%	46%	48%
Somewhat agree	27%	27%	26%
Somewhat disagree	12%	14%	12%
Strongly disagree	7%	7%	8%

(Don't Know/Refused)	5%	6%	6%
AGREE (NET)	76%	74%	74%
DISAGREE (NET)	19%	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?

? Would you say a lot (more or less) time or just a little?

	March 2019	February 2019	January 2019
A lot more time	58%	53%	58%
A little more time	25%	28%	24%
A little less time	5%	6%	5%
A lot less time	3%	4%	3%
(The same amount of time)	6%	6%	6%
(Don't Know/Refused)	3%	3%	4%
MORE TIME (NET)	83%	81%	82%
LESS TIME (NET)	8%	10%	7%

EXPECTATIONS (74)

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)?

	March 2019	February 2019	January 2019
Much better	8%	9%	9%
Somewhat better	18%	16%	14%
Somewhat worse	30%	29%	29%
Much worse	32%	36%	38%
(No change)	6%	4%	4%
(Don't know/Refused)	5%	6%	5%
BETTER (NET)	26%	25%	23%
WORSE (NET)	62%	65%	67%

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?

	March 2019	February 2019	January 2019
Very optimistic	18%	18%	17%
Somewhat optimistic	27%	28%	26%
Somewhat pessimistic	21%	20%	19%
Very pessimistic	25%	26%	29%
(Neither/Mixed)	4%	4%	4%
(Don't Know/Refused)	5%	4%	4%
OPTIMISTIC (NET)	45%	47%	44%
PESSIMISTIC (NET)	46%	46%	48%

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