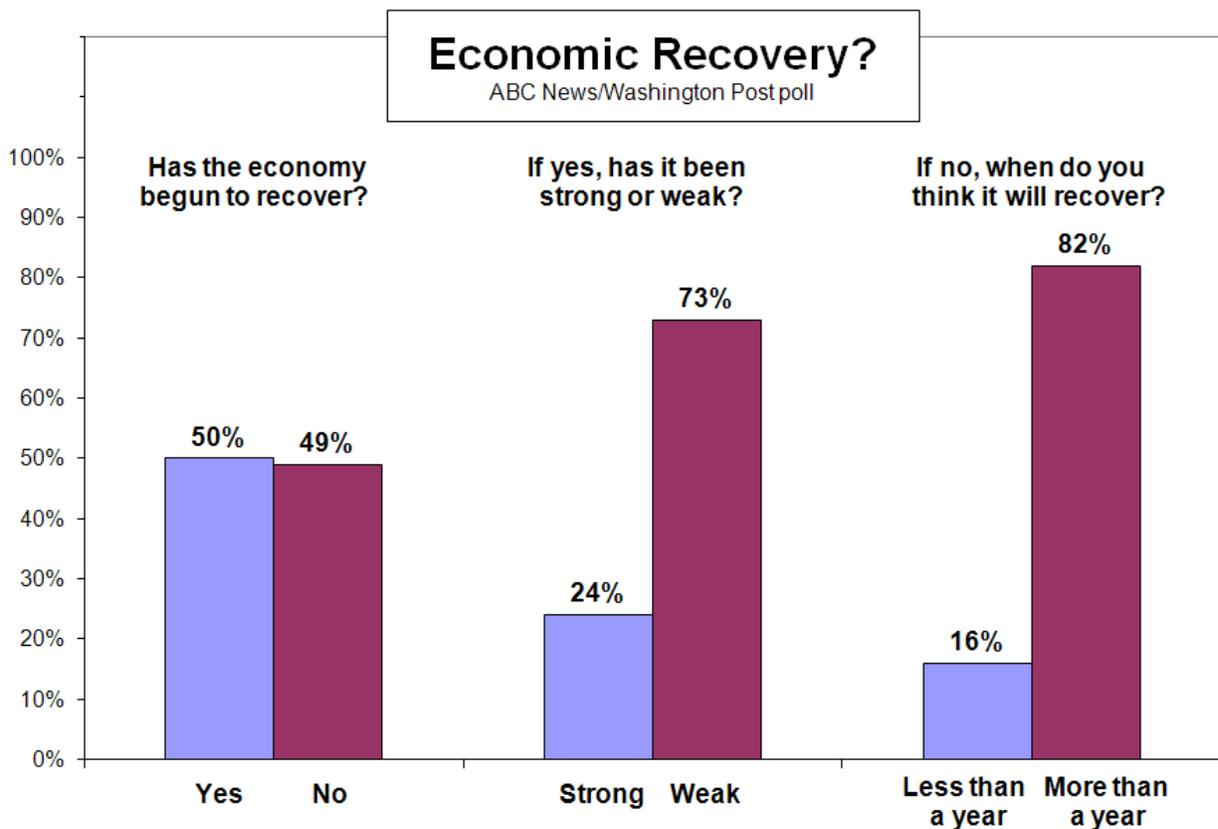


Half See Glimmers of Recovery, Yet Economic Gloom Stays Deep

There's a slight glimmer of light in public views of the economy: Half of Americans say it's begun to recover. But negatives aplenty threaten to douse that candle.

Among people who see a recovery beginning, nearly three-quarters say it's a weak one. Among those unconvinced it's begun, most don't expect it anytime soon. Ratings of the job market, 84 percent negative, are their worst in polls since 1992. And six in 10 Americans say the U.S. economy is in "long-term decline," essentially unchanged from the height of despair a year ago.



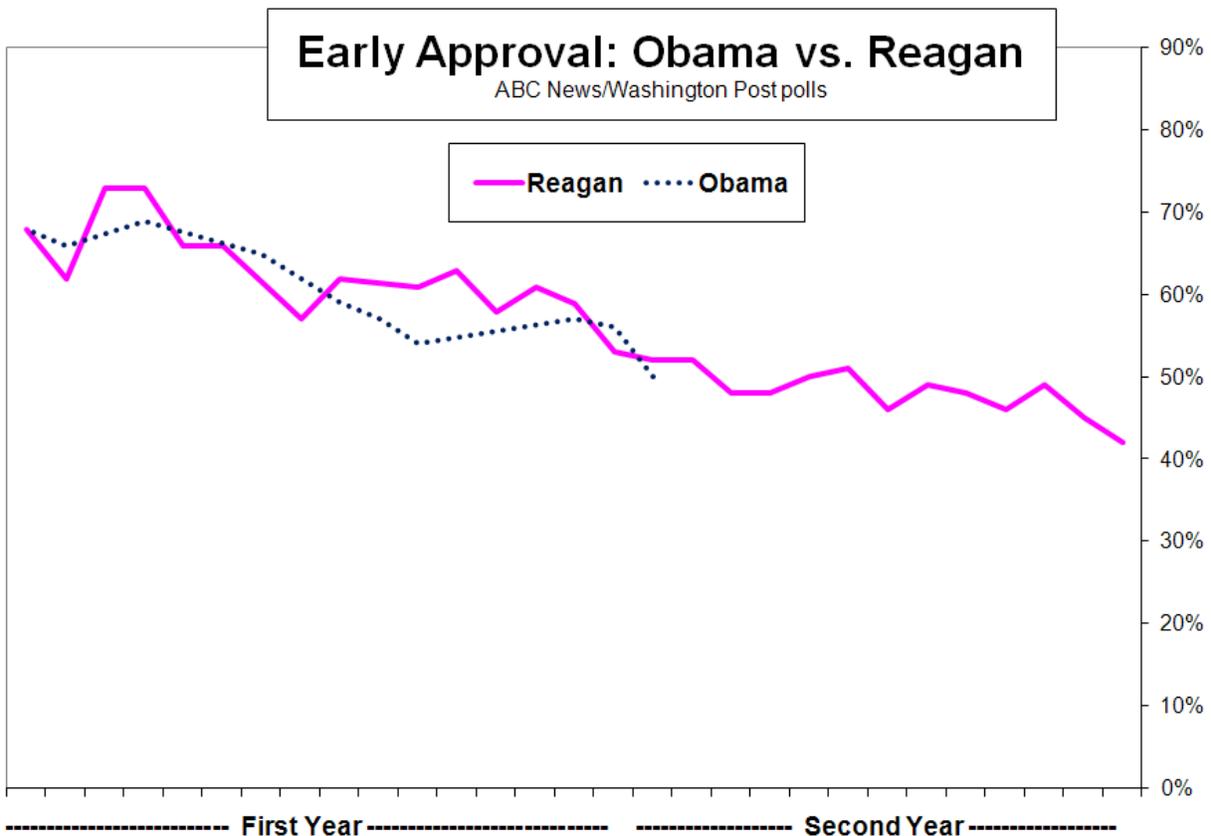
On a more personal level, 64 percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll are worried about maintaining their standard of living, also no better than a year ago and much worse than pre-crisis. Fifty-seven percent report personal stress as a result of the economic situation, again where it's been all year. For more than one in four – 28 percent – it's "serious" stress.

The number who say a recovery's begun, 50 percent, is up from 44 percent a month ago – the most hopeful sign in otherwise bleak views. In another bottom-line question, by contrast, just 13 percent say that from their perspective the recession is over, while 86 percent think not. That's slightly gloomier than last month's 82 percent.

Separately, the ABC News Consumer Comfort Index is wrapping up what will be its worst year in 24 years of weekly polls. This week 93 percent of Americans say the national economy is in bad shape, 71 percent call it a bad time to spend money and 53 percent say their own finances are hurting. The index, figured on a scale of +100 to -100, is -45 now and has averaged -48 this year, compared to a long-term average of -12. It started the '00s at a record high +38.

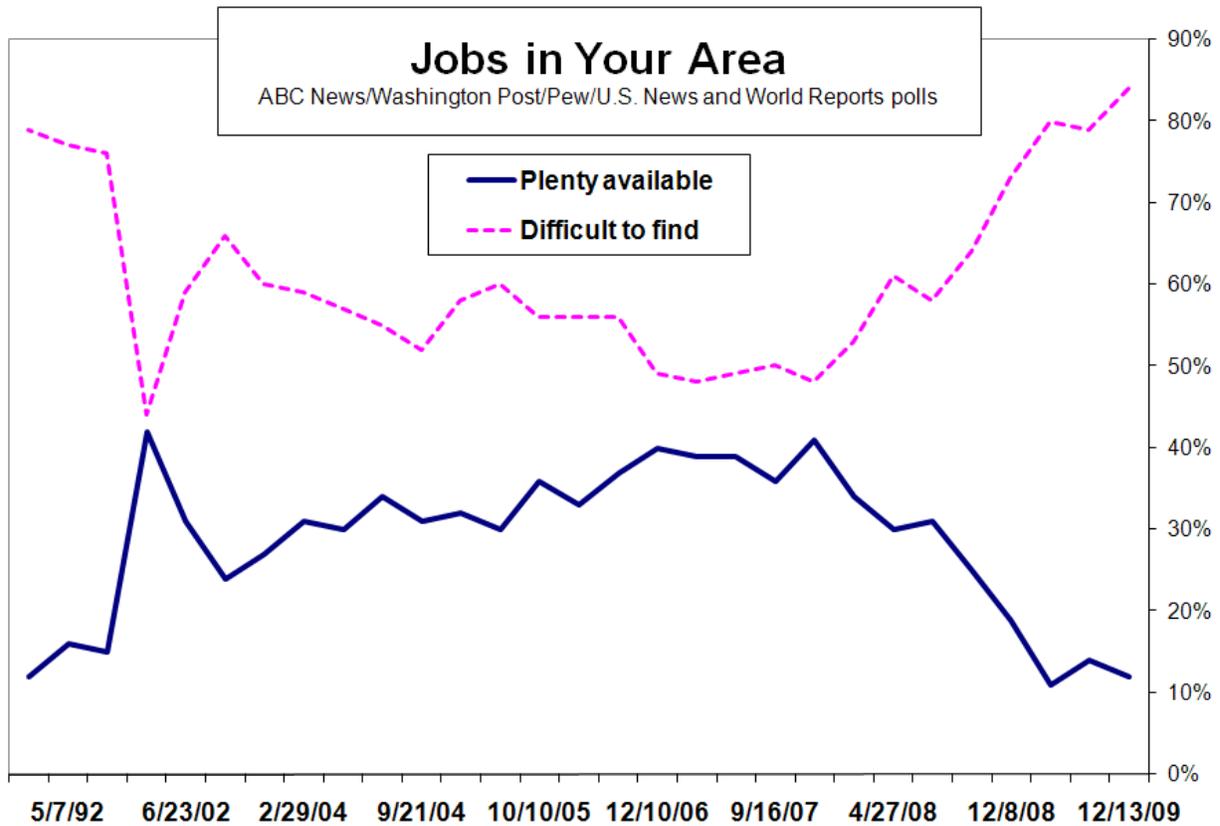
POLITICAL PAIN – There are political repercussions: As noted in yesterday's analysis, Barack Obama's job approval rating has fallen to 50 percent, with 46 percent disapproving. On the economy, 52 percent disapprove, a new high; on the deficit, 56 percent, likewise a high.

We've been here before. Ronald Reagan, the last president to take office in the teeth of a recession, fell from a high of 73 percent approval near the start of his first term to 52 percent the following December, then stayed low though his second year in office – bottoming out at 42 percent – until the economy turned around. Obama, so far, has followed a similar path.



JOBS JOBS JOBS – Unemployment and underemployment are major contributors to the public’s economic pain. As recently as November 2007, 41 percent in a Pew Research poll said there were “plenty of jobs available” in their community. Today just 12 percent say so.

Eighty-four percent instead call jobs “difficult to find,” the most in polls back nearly 18 years, and up 36 points in barely more than two years. And that assessment holds across groups, with at best only minor differences by region, age, education, income or political preference.



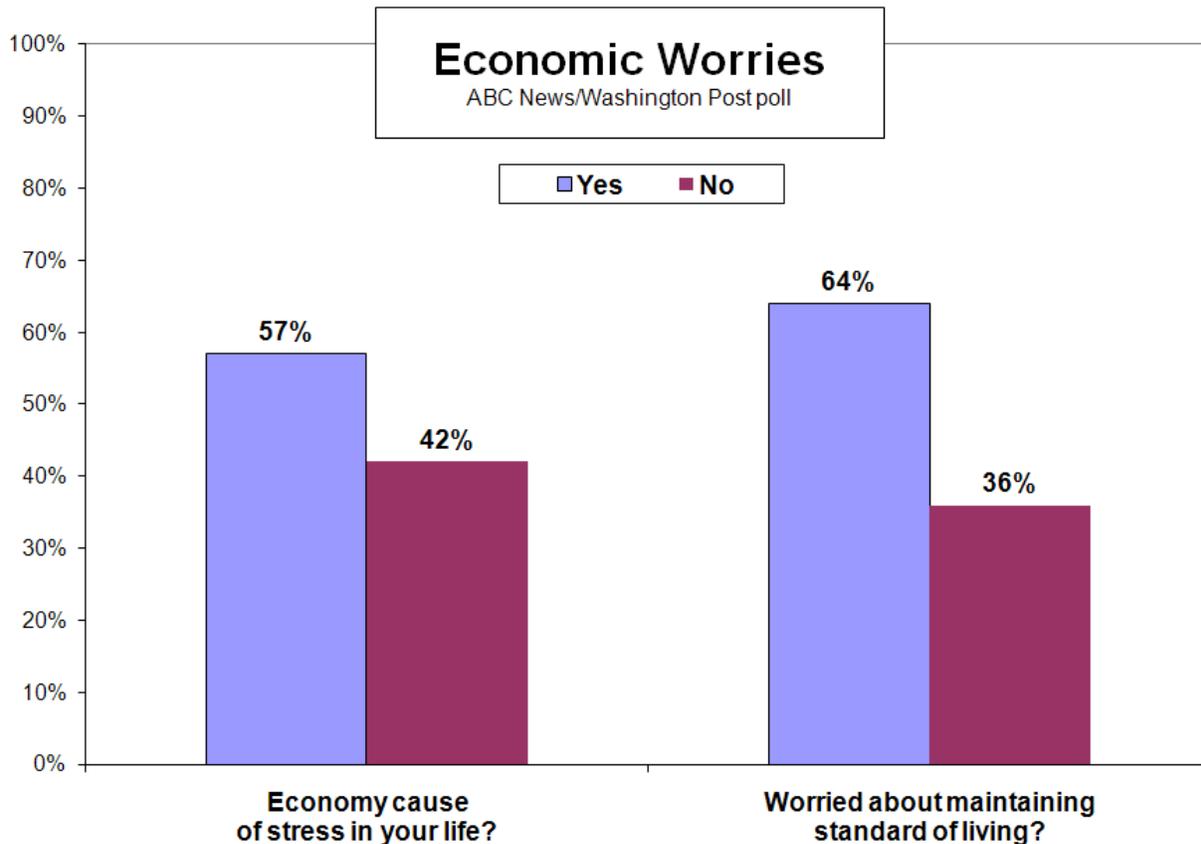
There are differences in views of whether a recovery has begun, informed in part by political predispositions – 64 percent of Democrats say yes, just 45 percent of Republicans and 41 percent of independents agree. Young adults and college graduates also are more apt to see recovery as under way.

Even among Democrats who see improvement, just a third say it’s strong, and that falls sharply in other groups; all told, as noted, among those who think a recovery’s begun, 73 percent see it as a weak one. And among the other half, who see no recovery yet, 82 percent don’t think the economy will begin to recover for more than a year.

DECLINE and WORRY – There also are political differences in views of whether the economy’s in a long-term decline, or the economic system is still pretty solid. Liberal Democrats

are most optimistic, dividing by 45 percent to 49 percent. Conservative Republicans, by contrast, see a long-term decline by better than 2-1, 67 percent to 29 percent.

The trend overall is not good. The 61 percent who see a long-term decline now is about the same as the 63 percent who said so a year ago. That compares to 49 and 46 percent, respectively, in polls in early 2008 and mid-1996.



Similarly, the 64 percent who express worry about maintaining their standard of living compares with 51 percent in late 2007. And that concern is a strong predictor of personal stress as a result of economic conditions. In stress itself, income's a very strong factor; among people in the highest income bracket, 48 percent report stress from the economy, 24 percent "serious" stress. In the lowest-income families stress soars to 67 percent, with serious stress affecting four in 10.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 10-13, 2009, among a random national sample of 1,003 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).

1-11 previously released.

12. Changing topics, 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
12/13/09	13	86	1
10/18/09	16	82	1

13. 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?

	Plenty of jobs available	Jobs are difficult to find	Lots of some jobs, few of others (vol.)	No opinion
12/13/09	12	84	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

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

14. Do you think the United States is in a long-term economic decline, or do you think the country's economic system is basically pretty solid?

	Long-term decline	Basically pretty solid	No opinion
12/13/09	61	35	4
12/14/08	63	34	3

2/1/08	49	47	4
5/6/96	46	51	3

15. Regardless of whether or not the recession is over, in terms of your own personal experience, do you feel the economy has or has not begun to recover?

	Has	Has not	No opinion
12/13/09*	50	49	1
11/15/09	44	54	1

*Add "Regardless of whether or not the recession is over..."

15a. (IF NOT BEGUN TO RECOVER) When do you think the economy will begin to recover - in the next few months, in six months to a year, or do you think it'll be longer than that?

	Next few months	Six months to a year	Longer than that	No opinion
12/13/09	*	16	82	1
11/15/09	4	19	77	1

15/15A NET:

	---- Economy has not begun recovery ---					No opinion
	Has	NET	Will in next few months	In 6 mos. to a year	Longer	
12/13/09	50	49	*	8	40	1
11/15/09	44	54	2	10	41	1

15b. (IF HAS BEGUN TO RECOVER) Do you think the economy's recovery so far has been a strong one or a weak one?

	Strong	Weak	No opinion
12/13/09	24	73	3

15/15B NET:

	- Recovery's begun-				
	NET	Strong	Weak	Has not	No opinion
12/13/09	50	12	36	49	1

16. Is the current economic situation a cause of stress in your life, or not? (IF YES) Is it a cause of serious stress, or stress, but not serious?

	--- Yes, cause of stress --			Not a cause of stress	No opinion
	NET	Serious	Not serious		
12/13/09	57	28	30	42	*
9/12/09	55	33	23	44	*
3/29/09	61	33	28	39	*
2/22/09	57	27	30	43	0

17. How concerned are you about being able to maintain your current standard of living - are you very worried, somewhat worried, not so worried or not worried at all?

	---- Worried ----			---- Not worried ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Smwt	NET	Not so	At all	
12/13/09	64	24	39	36	19	17	*
12/14/08	66	24	42	34	17	16	*
5/11/08	68	28	40	32	16	15	*

12/9/07 51 17 34 49 22 27 *

18-35 previously released or held for release.

END