



Times Mirror
Center for
The People &
The Press

NEWS

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Less Support For Clintonomics Over The Back Fence

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LESS SUPPORT FOR CLINTONOMICS OVER THE BACK FENCE

A substantial majority of the American people continues to support Bill Clinton's economic program, even as an uneasy and critical tone dominates the conversations and discussions of the plan among a remarkably high proportion of the public. At the same time, the poll also finds most Americans seemingly willing to wait for a personal payoff from the Clinton plan.

A nationwide *Times Mirror* survey conducted February 20-23 indicates that Clinton gets strong backing for the economic proposals he outlined last week (58% favor, 27% oppose). But when Americans are asked to characterize their discussions in recent days with friends and neighbors, expressed opinions about the President's plan are much more divided. Only 45% of those respondents say the discussions were mostly *positive*, while about as many (46%) depict their conversations as *critical* of the Clinton plan.

Americans who are displeased are doing more talking than those who back the President's initiative. But these grass roots deliberations can nonetheless erode support for the Clinton program over time among key groups, particularly Perot supporters, who barely give the plan majority approval.

The Clinton program has received more public attention than any presidential policy or proposal in the history of Times Mirror's public interest surveys.¹ Forty-eight percent of Americans say they paid *very close* attention to news about the economic plan. No fewer than 64% of respondents polled by the Times Mirror Center say they have discussed the plan over the past five days with friends and neighbors.

Critics are more likely than supporters to have talked about the plan (73% to 64%). Eighty-nine percent of critics who discussed the plan with friends and relatives characterize these discussions as "mostly critical of the Clinton approach to the economy", while only 70% of backers say their discussions with friends and relatives were mostly supportive of the program.

Americans who voted for Ross Perot in November offer the most dramatic disjuncture between their own views of the plan and their characterizations of "back porch opinions" - 49% favor Clinton's program, 34% oppose and 17% are unsure. But 53% of those who voted for Perot in November characterized discussions of the plan with acquaintances as critical, while only 36% described these talks as supportive.

Quick Fix Not Anticipated

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of public reactions to the Clinton program from the Administration's point of view is that Americans seem willing to wait for the Clinton program to work. Most do not expect enactment of the Clinton program to benefit them

¹ Public interest in George Bush's policies reached a high of 40% in Sept. 1989 when he announced a war on drugs. Only 34% followed very closely Bush attempts to reach budget deficit agreements with Congress (Oct-Nov. 1990).

financially in the short run. In fact, a 42% plurality of Times Mirror's respondents thought they would be *worse off* this year, and only 33% believe they will be *better off* if the President's plan goes into effect in 1993. However, majorities believe that three years from now they will be better off (51%) and the country will be better off (58%).

The difference between long and short term views of Clinton's program relates very much to income level. People earning less than \$30,000 a year expect to better off both in the long run and short run. More affluent people expect to be worse off in the short run, but better off three years from now, if Clinton's policies are enacted. (See Table on page 4)

Politically, people who say they voted for Bush expect to be worse off as a result of Clinton's program in both the short and long runs, while Clinton voters expected to be better off at both points in time. Perot voters express equivocal views - 55% expect to be worse off in the next 12 months, and only 20% better off. Three years from now, 38% see themselves as potentially better off, but about as many, 41%, think they will be worse off.

A Tax Emphasis

By a large margin the Clinton program is seen as one that mostly emphasizes tax increases (59%) rather than spending cuts (23%). As might be expected, critics of the plan are more apt to focus on tax hikes (78%), but a majority of those who back the plan also characterize it that way. Looked at another way, the survey shows support for the Clinton initiative even among those who see it as a tax increase program. Forty-nine percent of those who see the plan mainly as a tax hike favor it, while 35% oppose it. However, 72% of American who don't see the plan as mainly a tax increase favor it.

Analysis of the survey indicates that younger Americans who see the Clinton program as mostly a tax increase are more likely to still support the President's plan (57%) than are older people who see it that way (43%).

A Swollen Middle Class

More people today (51%) than in the 1960s (45%) say they are members of the middle class. At the same time the number of people who describe themselves as working class has fallen from 37% to 29% over that period.

Opinion of President Clinton's Economic Plan

	<i>Personal View</i>		<i>Discussions With Friends and Neighbors²</i>		<u>N</u>
	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Mostly Supportive</u>	<u>Mostly Critical</u>	
Total	58	27	45	46	(1516)
Sex					
Male	59	29	42	47	(761)
Female	58	24	47	44	(755)
Race					
White	56	29	41	49	(1300)
Black	77	12	79	15	(117)
*Hispanic	60	23	55	34	(78)
Age					
Under 30	63	25	46	47	(352)
30-49	58	27	46	44	(665)
50 +	56	28	42	48	(485)
Education					
College Grad.	59	29	40	48	(424)
Other College	56	31	42	48	(417)
H.S. Grad.	61	24	47	43	(514)
< H.S. grad.	57	22	53	43	(158)
Region					
East	64	22	45	43	(288)
Midwest	58	27	45	45	(405)
South	57	28	44	47	(544)
West	56	28	44	47	(279)
Party ID					
Republican	30	51	18	72	(425)
Democrat	84	9	71	21	(532)
Independent	55	25	40	50	(494)
Presidential Vote					
Bush	27	55	13	78	(381)
Clinton	87	6	72	18	(515)
Perot	49	34	36	53	(187)

Question: Overall, do you support or oppose Bill Clinton's economic plan?

Question: In the past few days, have you discussed Bill Clinton's economic plan with your friends or neighbors, or not? Overall, were these discussions mostly supportive or mostly critical of Clinton's economic plan?

*The designation, hispanic, is unrelated to the white-black categorization.

²Based on respondents who had discussions with friends and neighbors (N=1014).

Personal Financial Future

(If Clinton's Economic Program Is Enacted)

	<i>In One Year</i>			<i>In Three Years</i>			<u>N</u>
	<u>Better Off</u>	<u>Worse Off</u>	<u>No Diff.</u>	<u>Better Off</u>	<u>Worse Off</u>	<u>No Diff.</u>	
Total	33	42	14	51	32	5	(1516)
Sex							
Male	30	47	14	49	35	6	(761)
Female	35	38	15	52	29	4	(755)
Race							
White	29	46	14	47	35	5	(1300)
Black	64	11	15	75	8	5	(117)
*Hispanic	44	28	16	53	27	11	(78)
Age							
Under 30	47	36	11	60	28	4	(352)
30-49	30	47	12	51	33	4	(665)
50+	27	41	19	43	34	7	(485)
Income							
50K+	22	55	14	49	38	3	(315)
30-49K	27	50	14	51	36	3	(402)
20-29K	40	35	14	52	30	7	(277)
<20K	43	30	16	55	25	7	(355)
Region							
East	33	38	19	57	23	5	(288)
Midwest	32	44	12	50	35	4	(405)
South	35	39	14	48	34	5	(544)
West	30	48	14	48	35	6	(279)
Party ID							
Republican	15	66	11	26	55	5	(425)
Democrat	51	20	18	72	12	4	(532)
Independent	28	48	13	47	36	6	(494)
Presidential Vote							
Bush	7	73	10	19	65	3	(381)
Clinton	52	18	19	77	10	4	(515)
Perot	20	55	14	41	38	7	(187)

Question: *If Clinton's economic program is enacted, do you think that you and your family will be better or worse off financially in a year?*

Question: *If Clinton's economic program is enacted, do you think that you and your family will be better or worse off financially in 3 years?*

*The designation, hispanic, is unrelated to the white-black categorization.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,516 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period February 20-23, 1993. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

TIMES MIRROR CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS
 NATIONAL OPINION SURVEY
 FEBRUARY 20-23, 1993
 N=1,516

INTRODUCTION: Hello, I am _____ calling for the Princeton Survey Research Associates from Princeton, New Jersey. We are conducting a telephone opinion survey for leading newspapers and TV stations around the country. I'd like to ask a few questions of the youngest male, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home (IF NO MALE, ASK: May I please speak with the oldest female, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home?)

Q.1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President?

56 Approve
 25 Disapprove
19 No opinion
 100

Q.2 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. (READ AND ROTATE LIST) How closely did you follow news stories about ... (READ SCALE IF NECESSARY)?

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	<u>DK</u>
c. Bill Clinton's economic plan	49	36	10	5	*=100

Q.3 Overall, do you support or oppose Bill Clinton's economic plan?

58 Support
 27 Oppose
15 Don't know/Refused
 100

Q.3a If Bill Clinton's economic program is enacted, do you think that a year from now you and your family will be better off financially or worse off financially?

33 Better off
42 Worse off
14 No difference (VOL)
11 Don't know/Refused
100

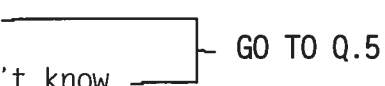

Q.4 What about three years from now ... If Bill Clinton's economic program is enacted, do you think that you and your family will be better off financially or worse off financially three years from now?

50 Better off
32 Worse off
5 No difference (VOL)
13 Don't know/Refused
100

Q.4a What about the country as a whole? If Bill Clinton's economic program is enacted, do you think that the country as a whole will be better off financially or worse off financially three years from now?

58 Better off
29 Worse off
3 No difference (VOL)
10 Don't know/Refused
100

Q.4b In the past few days, have you discussed Bill Clinton's economic plan with your friends or neighbors, or not?

64 Yes
36 No 
* Don't know 
100

Q.4c Overall, were these discussions mostly supportive or mostly critical of Clinton's economic plan?

BASED ON THOSE WHO ANSWERED YES IN Q.4b N=1,014

45 Supportive
46 Critical
9 Don't know/Refused
100

Q.5 What would you say Bill Clinton has emphasized more in his economic program: government spending increases, government spending cuts, or tax increases?

5 Spending increases
23 Spending cuts
59 Tax increases
8 All equally (VOL)
5 Don't know/Refused
100

D13. By and large, do you think of yourself as being of the ... (READ LIST)?

	<u>NORC - Oct. 1964</u>
1 Upper class	2
9 Upper middle class	11
51 Middle class	45
29 Working class, or	37
8 Lower class	3
<u>2</u> Don't know/Refused 100 (DO NOT READ)	<u>2</u> 100