



AP Poll: Most people prefer balanced budget to tax cuts, don't believe taxes have decreased.

WASHINGTON DC (AP) -- By almost a 2-1 margin, Americans prefer balancing the nation's budget to cutting taxes, according to an Associated Press poll, even though many believe their overall tax burden has risen despite tax cuts over the past three years.

The Associated Press Poll is conducted by Ipsos-Public Affairs. Between March 19-21, 2004, the AP/Ipsos poll interviewed a representative sample of 1,001 adults nationwide, including 784 registered voters. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 for all adults, +/- 3.5 for registered voters.

Public Release Date: Posted on Thursday, April 15, 2004

Contact: Thomas Riehle
202-463-7300
thomas.riehle@ipsos-na.com

By WILL LESTER
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON DC (AP) -- By almost a 2-1 margin, Americans prefer balancing the nation's budget to cutting taxes, according to an Associated Press poll, even though many believe their overall tax burden has risen despite tax cuts over the past three years.

About six in 10, 61 percent, chose balancing the budget while 36 percent chose tax cuts when they were asked which was more important, according to a poll conducted for the AP by Ipsos Public Affairs.

As the nation's tax deadline of April 15 approaches, people's lukewarm feeling about tax cuts may be influenced by a belief that recent cuts haven't helped them personally.

Half in the poll, 49 percent, said their overall tax burden -- including federal, state and local taxes -- had gone up over the past three years. That's almost four times the 13 percent in the poll who said their overall taxes had gone down.

"Every time you turn around, there's a new gasoline tax, more property taxes, a library tax, because they don't have enough money," said Tom Artley, a 52-year-old supervisor at a manufacturing plant in Williamsport, Pa. He was referring to increasing financial problems faced by many cities and states.

"I'd like to retire in the next five years," Artley said. "It's scary for people like me who are going to be living on a fixed income."

Even when it comes to federal taxes, most in the public don't feel their taxes have gone down over the past three years. Twenty-five percent in the poll said their federal taxes had gone up during that time, while 43 percent said they had stayed the same.

Among those most likely to say their taxes had gone down were the wealthy and investors.

Both the conservative-leaning Tax Foundation and the liberal-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities have come to the conclusion that the federal tax burden is easing for the average American family. The Tax Foundation suggests that federal income taxes are lower for Americans than they have been for almost four decades.

The perception of many that they're paying more overall is no surprise to Iris Lav, deputy director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

"Federal tax cuts largely benefit higher income people," Lav said. "In the meantime, people face tax increases on sales, cigarettes, gasoline."

For 73-year-old Bonnie Shoemaker of Fort Morgan, Colo., the choice between tax cuts and balancing the budget is a tough one.

"We all need money to live on," she said. "But I think we ought to concentrate on balancing the budget."

Opinion was mixed on whether the wealthiest Americans should have to give up the tax cuts they've gotten over the past three years. Just over half, 53 percent, said they want the elimination of recent tax cuts for people who earn more than \$200,000 a year, while 45 percent said they want those cuts to remain in place.

The presidential campaign has included plenty of debate between President Bush and Democrat John Kerry about taxes and balanced budgets.

More of the poll respondents thought Kerry would raise taxes than believed Bush would, 51 percent to 34 percent. Bush has been pushing cuts since his first campaign for president in 2000.

Some see tax cuts as the best way to improve the economy and, eventually, to balance the budget.

"If I had to choose, I would pick cutting taxes," said Marta Mitzenmacher of Miami, a budget director for a community college. "I think the more money I have in my pocket, the more that circulates in the economy, and that puts more money back into government."

The AP-Ipsos poll of 1,001 adults was taken March 19-21 and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

For more information, please contact:

Thomas Riehle
President, Ipsos Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
202.463.7300

Ipsos Public Affairs

Ipsos Public Affairs, headquartered in Washington D.C., is a non-partisan, objective, survey-based research company made up of campaign and political polling veterans as well as seasoned research professionals. The company conducts strategic research initiatives for a diverse number of American and international organizations, based not only on public opinion research but often elite stakeholder, corporate, and media opinion research. It has offices in New York City, Chicago, San Ramon (CA), and Washington, with affiliates around the world. Ipsos Public Affairs conducts national and international public opinion polling on behalf of The Associated Press, the world's oldest and largest news organization, and conducts the young voters poll for Newsweek.com. Ipsos Public Affairs is an Ipsos company, a leading global survey-based market research group.

To learn more, visit www.ipsos-pa.com.

Ipsos

Ipsos is a leading global survey-based market research company, owned and managed by research professionals. Ipsos helps interpret, simulate, and anticipate the needs and reactions of consumers, customers, and citizens around the world.

Member companies assess market potential and interpret market trends. They develop and build brands. They help clients build long-term relationships with their customers. They test advertising and study audience responses to various media. They measure public opinion around the globe.

Ipsos member companies offer expertise in advertising, customer loyalty, marketing, media, and public affairs research, as well as forecasting and modeling and consulting. Ipsos has a full line of custom, syndicated, omnibus, panel, and online research products and services, guided by industry experts and bolstered by advanced analytics and methodologies. The company was founded in 1975 and has been publicly traded since 1999. In 2003, Ipsos generated global revenues of \$644.2 million U.S.

Visit www.ipsos.com to learn more about Ipsos offerings and capabilities.