

# **A Third of Americans Agree That Economic Conditions in Their Local Communities Are Better Than Those of The US Overall**

***Small Business, Public Schools, and Hospitals/Healthcare Organizations Are Seen as Most Influential on Local Economies.***

**Public Release Date: Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup> 2016**



*Ipsos Public Affairs is a non-partisan, objective, survey-based research practice made up of seasoned professionals. We conduct strategic research initiatives for a diverse number of American and international organizations, based not only on public opinion research, but elite stakeholder, corporate, and media opinion research. Ipsos has media partnerships with the most prestigious news organizations around the world. In Canada, the U.S., UK, and internationally, Ipsos Public Affairs is the media polling supplier to Reuters News, the world's leading source of intelligent information for businesses and professionals. Ipsos Public Affairs is a member of the Ipsos Group, a leading global survey-based market research company. We provide boutique-style customer service and work closely with our clients, while also undertaking global research.*

To learn more visit: [www.ipsos-na.com](http://www.ipsos-na.com)

For copies of other news releases, please visit:  
<http://www.ipsos-na.com/news-polls/>

---

© Ipsos

Washington • New York • Boston • Los Angeles • Austin • Chicago • St. Louis  
Cincinnati • Minneapolis • Seattle • San Francisco • Vancouver • Calgary  
Winnipeg • Toronto • Guelph • Ottawa • Montreal • St. John

## **A Third of Americans Agree That Economic Conditions in Their Local Communities Are Better Than Those of The US Overall**

### ***Small Business, Public Schools, and Hospitals/Healthcare Organizations Are Seen as Most Influential on Local Economies.***

**Washington, DC** – When thinking about the U.S., American respondents are more likely to describe current economic conditions as being fair (37%) or poor (35%) than they are to rate these as being very good/ good (28%), according to a new survey conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs on behalf of Wells Fargo and USA Today. While the proportion of those who rate the economy as good remains on par with results seen last year (28% vs. 27%, 2015), Americans are growing more pessimistic towards the economic conditions of the country, with the proportion of those who describe these as being poor up 8-percentage points since last wave (35% vs. 27%, 2015).

- ‘Good’ economic ratings for the U.S. continue to drop when moving from national results to those seen in Indiana (23%), South Dakota (21%), and Nevada (19%) more specifically.

Perceptions about the economy do improve somewhat at the local level - despite dropping a significant seven percentage points since last wave (50%, 2015) - with just over two in five respondents rating the economic conditions in their local communities as being good (43%). Similarly, Americans are much more likely to rate their personal finances as being very good/ good (46%) than they are to rate these as being poor/ very poor (21%).

- In both cases, South Dakotans are more likely to rate economic conditions as being good compared to other key states, including 58% who rate conditions in their community as being good (versus 43% Indiana, and 38% Nevada), and 46% who rate their personal finances as good (versus 38% and 39%).

Though these ratings suggest that there is room for improvement, the economic landscape is nevertheless perceived to be stable, with Americans most likely to agree that economic conditions in their nation (45%), their communities (60%), and their personal finances (47%) are about the same as they were last year. Similarly, when looking ahead to a year from now, roughly half of all respondents expect that economic conditions in the U.S. (47%), their communities (59%), and their personal finances (45%) will remain about the same as they are now.

- Respondents are especially optimistic when it comes to their personal financial condition, with two in five (43%) expecting this to get better over the course of the next year, compared to three in ten who feel the same about the economy at the national (29%) and community level (27%).

### *Perceptions about the National Economy*

National economic indicators, such as the stock market, unemployment, and inflation, continue to be most likely to influence the public's evaluation of how the U.S. economy is doing overall (63% vs. 69%, 2015) - much more so than what they are observing in their community (20%) or with their personal finances (15%). Respondents living in South Dakota (70%) and Indiana (68%) are especially likely to rely on such national indicators, while respondents from Nevada fall in line with the national average (64%).

When thinking about how healthy the national economy is, a growing job market is rated as being the most important component (74%), although this is followed closely by reasonable cost-of-living expenses (71%), financial security in retirement (71%), education systems that prepare a skilled workforce (70%), and opportunities for young people to enjoy a bright future (70%) – each one rated as being *very* important to the health of the national economy by at least seven in ten. Roughly two thirds say the same thing about a healthy business climate for both small and large businesses (68%) and a strong middle class (67%), while six in ten rate opportunities for workers to advance into better jobs (62%), few people living in poverty (62%), and a good system to help workers learn new skills (61%) as being very important to the health of the national economy.

- Residents of Indiana are significantly more likely to rate many of these indicators as being *very* important to the health of the national economy, especially when compared to results seen in Nevada.

However, relatively few feel that the U.S. is performing well when it comes to these very components that respondents see as being so important to a healthy national economy. For example, just over three in ten believe that there is a growing job market in the US (32%), while one in five believe that in the U.S. there are currently ample opportunities for young people (23%) and workers (22%) to advance, the presence of education systems that prepare a skilled work force (22%), the ability to have financial security in retirement (21%), a system to help workers learn new skills and get better jobs (20%) or a strong middle class (20%). Meanwhile, not quite one in five believe that US fosters a healthy business climate for small and large businesses alike (19%) or reasonable cost-of-living expenses (19%), and only one in ten believe that there are currently few people living in

poverty (11%). A considerable proportion, nearly two in five (36%), believe instead that in the US there are none of these.

### *Perceptions about their Local Economy*

Thinking now about how healthy the economy is in their *communities*, respondents are most likely to rate reasonable cost-of-living expenses (71%) as being *very* important, followed closely by having a growing job market (68%), an education system that prepares a skilled work force (67%), and retirement security (64%). Other factors such as having a healthy business climate (64%), opportunities for workers to advance (63%), a strong middle class (63%), and a good system to help workers get new skills/ better jobs (62%) are seen as being *very* important by a similar proportion, with at least six in ten Americans rating these as such - results that are on point with those found at the national level.

- Across the different key states, both reasonable cost-of-living expenses and a growing job market tie as first ranked when it comes to being rated the most important to the health of the local community by those in Indiana (78%, each) and Nevada (69%, each). A different trend emerges in South Dakota, with the ability for Americans to have financial security in retirement (70%) and a healthy business climate (70%) among the top ranked, behind only cost-of-living expenses (72%).
- Once again, respondents in Indiana are significantly more likely to rate all of these indicators as being very important to the health of their local communities, especially when compared to results in Nevada.

Major discrepancies are also found at the community level when moving from rating the importance of indicators to actual performance - though these are perceived as performing somewhat better overall at the local level versus

nationally. More specifically, at least three in ten believe that their communities have a strong middle class (33%), offer reasonable cost-of-living expenses (32%), and that there is a growing job market (30%), while slightly fewer agree that there is a healthy business climate for both small and large businesses (29%) or the presence of education systems that prepare a skilled workforce (28%) in their communities. Another one in five report that in their community there is a good system to help workers learn new skills and get better jobs (19%) and opportunities for Americans to have financial security in retirement (17%). However, three in ten are just as likely to say that none of these are true when thinking about their communities (30%) – a figure comparable to those who said the same of national conditions.

- Respondents living in Indiana (27%) and Nevada (27%) are considerably more likely to say that none of these are present in their communities compared to those in South Dakota who say the same (14%).
- Pessimism does perspire into the local when it comes to economic performance, with a considerably greater proportion of adults saying that none of these are present in their communities compared to last year (30% vs. 24%, 2015).

### *Impact of Economic Sectors and Institutions on Local Economies*

Greater variance exists when it comes to the importance and impact of different economic sectors in regard to local economic health more specifically, with clear leaders emerging and other sectors falling behind. Looking at the impact of major economic sectors on the health of local communities more specifically, education (59%) and healthcare (59%) are seen as being most important, followed by about two in five who say the same thing of retail trade (47%), technology (44%), and construction (41%). While other major economic sectors are rated as being

important to the health of local communities by about a third of all respondents – including manufacturing (37%), financial services/ banking (35%), agriculture (35%), energy/ natural resources (33%), government (31%), and tourism/ gaming (28%) - mining (6%) is least likely to be seen as important at the local level.

- Although current data ranking follows a similar pattern as that seen last wave, all economic sectors were generally much more likely to be seen as important to the health of the local economy in 2015.
- While education and healthcare are the top two sectors selected by respondents nationally, in South Dakota, agriculture trumps ratings for both of these (70%), while in Nevada tourism and gaming come out ahead (70%). Likewise, for residents of Indiana, education and healthcare fall behind manufacturing (64%) as being the most important to the health of the local economy.

Looking at whether these same sectors are perceived to be prospering or struggling in their communities, respondents are most likely to see growth in sectors such as technology (56% prospering vs. 23% struggling), financial services/banking (55% vs. 19%), tourism/ gaming (50% vs. 29%), healthcare (49% vs. 32%), and construction (48% vs. 33%). Opinions are more split when it comes to energy/ natural resources (37% prospering vs. 39% struggling), the retail trade sector (36% vs. 42%), and government (33% vs. 36%). Sectors that are most likely to be seen as struggling include the manufacturing industry (51% struggling vs. 27% prospering), the education sector (48% vs. 33%), and the mining sector (41% vs. 27% prospering).

- South Dakotans are significantly more likely than respondents from the other key states - and Americans more generally - to rate all sectors mentioned as prospering within their local communities, with the exception



of technology and energy/ natural resources, where ratings are similar across all audiences.

- While education (67%) and healthcare (48%) are significantly more likely to be seen as struggling in local communities by residents of Nevada compared to those from other key states, both healthcare (38%) and retail trade (49%) stand out in these same respects for those in Indiana. The performance of other sectors such as government, manufacturing, agriculture, construction and tourism/ gaming are also significantly more likely to be seen as struggling in both these states.

Turning now to the impact that major institutions can have on the health of the local economies, small businesses (68%), public schools (66%), and hospitals/ other health care organizations (64%) are seen as most influential, rated as being *very* important to the health of local economies by roughly two thirds. Another two in five believe local government (44%) and banks (41%) are very important in this regard, while a third say the same thing about major state or federal institutions (35%). Residents of Nevada are significantly less likely to rate all of these institutions as being important to the health of their local economy, although they are among the most likely to recognize the importance of major state or federal institutions (36%).

### ***Political Sentiments***

When it comes to the electoral landscape, nearly nine in ten (86%) Americans say that they are registered to vote, while another seven in ten (69%, rated “10” Very Likely) plan to vote in the upcoming 2016 election. Two thirds of Americans further say that they have given much thought (65%) to this election - including two in five who say that they have given the election *a lot* of thought (39%).



When it comes to their country's future, the three most important economic issues that respondents would like to see the next President prioritize – regardless of who wins in November – are Health Care costs/Health Insurance/Obamacare (44%), economic recovery (33%), and balancing the federal budget (26%). Job creation (24%), immigration reform (24%), and decreasing federal spending (23%) do not fall far behind, with roughly a quarter of Americans listing these as among the most important economic issues for the next U.S. President to prioritize, while one in five mention college affordability/ student loans (20%). Increasing minimum wage (17%), social security reform (17%), energy/environment (16%), and tax reform (15%) fall slightly below this threshold, while one in ten say the same of raising the employment rate (13%) and prioritizing science/innovation/exploration (8%). Only 1% of Americans mention some other economic issue as being most important for the next President to prioritize, in their opinion.

- Healthcare is seen to be the most important issue for the next President to prioritize, both nation-wide and across the three key states – although this is especially true for those in South Dakota.
- Regional differences do emerge, however, with balancing the budget (37%) and decreasing federal spending (32%) rounding out the top three issues for those in South Dakota; economic recovery (29%) and job creation (27%) for those in Indiana; and decreasing deferral spending (32%) and economic recovery (29%) as most important for those in Nevada.

American perceptions fluctuate when it comes to thinking about current Presidential candidates and the effectiveness with which they are seen to present solutions to sustain and grow various economic necessities. Americans are most likely to think candidates are doing a good job when it comes to thinking of ideas and solutions to grow the job market and provide job opportunity (41%) –

although they are just as inclined to say that current candidates are doing a bad job here (45%). Meanwhile, a similar proportion believes candidates are doing a good job when it comes to thinking of ideas and solutions to ensure a healthy business climate for both small and large business (39%), strengthen the middle class (38%), and ensure an education system that produces a skilled workforce (37%). Americans are less likely to see current candidates as doing a good job when thinking of solutions and ideas to reduce the number of people living in poverty (30%), while ensuring Americans are saving enough for retirement (26%) could use the most improvement when it comes to candidates doing a good job.

### *Personal Finances*

As was mentioned earlier, a majority of Americans feel very good/good (46%) about their current personal financial situation, and another two in five (43%) expect these conditions to continue to improve over the next year. In comparison, only 21% rate their personal finances as being poor, and only one in ten (12%) think that this will get worse in the next twelve months.

- In South Dakota, respondents are significantly more likely to describe their current financial situation as being very good/ good (46%), while they are also most likely to believe this will continue to get better (49%).

When asked to think about the obstacles that prevent them from achieving their financial goals, the high cost of healthcare is top of mind, with two in five (42%) respondents nationwide seeing this as setting them back. Slightly more than a third (34%) mention difficulty saving enough for retirement as preventing them from achieving their financial goals, and a quarter of Americans mention lack of good jobs in the area (25%) – although both issues are especially problematic for those living in Indiana (44% and 31%, respectively).

- Healthcare (45%, 2015), difficulty saving for retirement (37%), and lack of good jobs (25%) were also the top three obstacles selected by Americans in the benchmark wave.

Another one in five see the current housing market (20%), and both their credit (20%) and student debts (19%) as preventing them from attaining their financial goals, while difficulties getting a raise or promotion (15%) and having to finance their children's college education (12%) are preventing slightly more than one in ten from achieving the same thing. Other reasons mentioned (1%, each) are not as likely to impact the ability for Americans to reach their financial goals, while 14% of respondents say that none of these are obstacles to achieving their financial targets.

### ***Spotlight: South Dakota***

Among respondents living in South Dakota, nearly three quarters of all of those surveyed (72%) agree that there are plenty of opportunities for economic development within the state. This sentiment is especially common among those who rate current conditions in their communities as good (79%), as well as those who predict better economic conditions at both the national (80%) and local level (77%). Nearly half (49%) of all South Dakotans further agree that compared to other states nearby, young adults have good job prospects in South Dakota – although respondents are just as likely to disagree with this statement (46%). Furthermore, just over half say that there are enough skilled workers in South Dakota to fill the available jobs (52%) – although this is only ten percentage points greater than those who would say the opposite (42%, disagree).

When it comes to education, respondents in South Dakota are slightly more likely to agree that there is good access to quality higher education across the state (77%) than they are to agree that there is the same thing when it comes to quality K-12

education for children (69%). Older respondents (over the age of 55) are particularly likely to agree that there is access to such education in both cases (83% and 78%, respectively). However, nearly eight in ten South Dakotans do not agree that teacher pay in South Dakota is enough to attract and retain a skilled workforce of teachers (78%).

Agriculture is another top of mind sector for South Dakota, with 91% of respondents agreeing that the overall success of this sector (incl. ranching and farming) in South Dakota affects the economic health of their local communities. If agriculture were no longer a major contributor to the state's economy, respondents are most likely to say that tourism (36%) would be the state's main driver of economic growth, while manufacturing (17%) follows at a distance. One in ten believe small business (13%) or renewable energy (10%) would drive growth, while other industries fall below this threshold.

- Nearly half (45%) of all South Dakotans believe that climate change will hurt South Dakota's agricultural economy in the next 5 to 10 year – including a majority (54%) of those with children living at home expressing this concern.

### ***Spotlight: Indiana***

Taking a closer look at economic perceptions and realities for those living in Indiana, two thirds here agree that their state offers a competitive and attractive climate for business (66%) – although the proportion of those who also agree that wages in Indiana are generally good and competitive with other states falls down sizably (50%).

- While men (61%), those with a college degree (60%), and the more affluent (62%) are among those most likely to agree that wages in Indiana are

generally good and competitive, women (51%) and those earning less than \$50,000 annually (53%) are significantly more likely to disagree.

- Those who rate the economic conditions of their personal finances, their communities, and their nation as good are significantly more likely to agree with both statements.

Despite this, nearly half believe that the state of Indiana needs to improve when it comes to attracting young adults and families to relocate here (48%).

Small business is considered to positively affect the economic health of Indianians' local communities by nearly nine in ten (88%), and roughly six in ten further believe that Indiana provides an atmosphere that fuels entrepreneurship (58%). Another two thirds of those living in Indiana agree that the state's workforce has the skills needed to help businesses succeed (65%) – although even greater proportions do see a need to invest more in vocational training (80%) and higher education (76%).

If manufacturing were no longer a major contributor to the state's economy, one in five believe that small business would become the main driver of Indiana's economic growth (18%) – behind only Agribusiness (35%). Technology drops slightly here (15%), while other industries such as renewable energy (7%), life sciences (5%), tourism (3%), and fossil fuel energy (3%) are among those least commonly selected. One in ten (11%) say that none of these would be the main driver of Indiana's economic growth should the manufacturing industry no longer be a major contributor.

### ***Spotlight: Nevada***

When it comes to economic conditions in Nevada, it's residents are just as likely to agree that they and their families are financially better off today than they were



ten years ago (45%) as they are to disagree with this statement (47%). However, a majority (51%) do not think that they will be able to enjoy their ideal standard of living on my retirement income (versus 38%, agree) – this concern is especially prevalent among women (60%), older respondents (60%, 55+), lower income earners (59%), and those who rate current economic conditions in their personal life (88%), community (74%), and nation (66%) as being poor.

The housing market is seen to be faring well so far this year by about half of those living in Nevada (49%).

As was the case with South Dakota, respondents from Nevada are more likely to agree that there is access to quality higher education in their state (51%) than they are to agree that there is good quality K-12 education for children (41%) – though access to both is perceived to be considerably lower than it is in South Dakota (77% and 69%, respectively). While teacher's pay pales in comparison to access, with only 26% agreeing that it is enough to attract and retain a skilled workforce of teachers – this points to an improvement when compared to result seen in South Dakota (16%).

Aside from gaming and tourism, renewable energy (36%) is seen as being the most promising industry for economic growth in Nevada, as selected by more than a third of residents. A quarter think instead that technology (24%) would present the biggest opportunity here, while roughly one in ten see potential in industries such as advanced manufacturing (11%) or mining (9%). Aerospace & defense (6%) and fossil fuel energy (4%) are least likely to be considered as potential drivers for economic growth.



*These are findings from an Ipsos poll conducted February 4<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016, on behalf of Wells Fargo and USA Today. For the survey, a sample of 2,511 US adults age 18 and over was interviewed online in English, including oversamples to reach at least 500 adults residing in each of South Dakota, Indiana, and Nevada.*

*The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos' online panel (see link below for more info on "Access Panels and Recruitment"), partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos "Ampario Overview" sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing sample. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2014 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics.*

*Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 2.2 percentage points for all respondents, and 5.0 percentage points for each of the five states (see link below for more info on Ipsos online polling "Credibility Intervals"). Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following for all respondents ( $n=2,511$ ,  $DEFF=1.5$ , adjusted Confidence Interval=3.7); and a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following for each boost state ( $n=500\sim$ ,  $DEFF=1.5$ , adjusted Confidence Interval=6.5).*

*For more information about Ipsos online polling methodology, please go here*

*<http://goo.gl/yJBkuf>*





**-30-**

**For more information on this news release, please contact:**

***Chris Jackson***  
***Vice President***  
***Ipsos Public Affairs***  
***202-420-2025***  
***chris.jackson@ipsos.com***

***News releases are available at: <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news-polls/>***