

Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll

The Politics of Economic Uncertainty: Dayton Gains From Current Pain, Emmer Gains From Future Worries

Report prepared by the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota

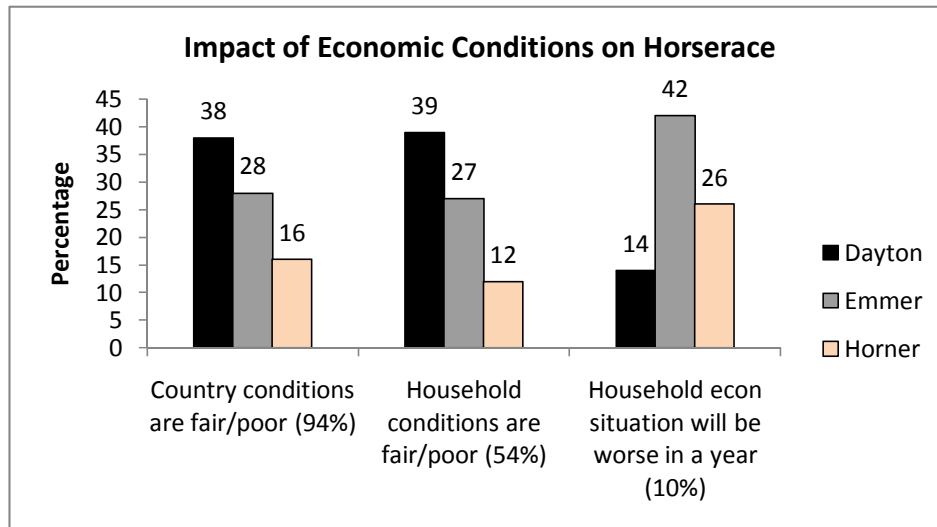
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According the latest Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll, the extraordinary economic downturn is powerfully impacting Minnesota politics in late September. The astounding 94% of likely voters who believe that the national economy is in poor shape are breaking for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate Mark Dayton over his Republican rival Tom Emmer by 10 points. A similar pattern is evident for voters who report that their own household economic situation is in poor shape.

By contrast, Emmer enjoys a 28 point margin (42% to 14%) among voters worried about their family's future economic conditions. The problem for Emmer is that only 10 percent expect their household situations to worsen over the coming year.

Today's Bad Economy Helps Dayton, Worries About Future Help Emmer



The Independence Party candidate Tom Horner is also drawing some support from the economic travails and worries of Minnesotans but to a lesser degree than Dayton and Emmer.

The survey was conducted of 750 likely voters in Minnesota between September 22 and September 26, 2010. The margin of error ranges between +/-3.6 percentage points based on the conventional calculation and +/-5.1 percentage points, which is a more cautious estimate based on professional best practices. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error is larger. The section at the end of this report, “About the Survey,” discusses the statistical calculations for the margin of sampling error and how to interpret it.

Bad Times Hit Home

In many elections, a host of issues – from education and health care to abortion and gay marriage – compete with pocket book issues for the attention of voters. In the 2010 election season, however, the economy and jobs are the preeminent concern of Minnesotan voters: 55% single it out as the most important issue facing the country and 43% place it at the top of Minnesota’s list of problems. These percentages are 3 to 4 times larger than any other issue.

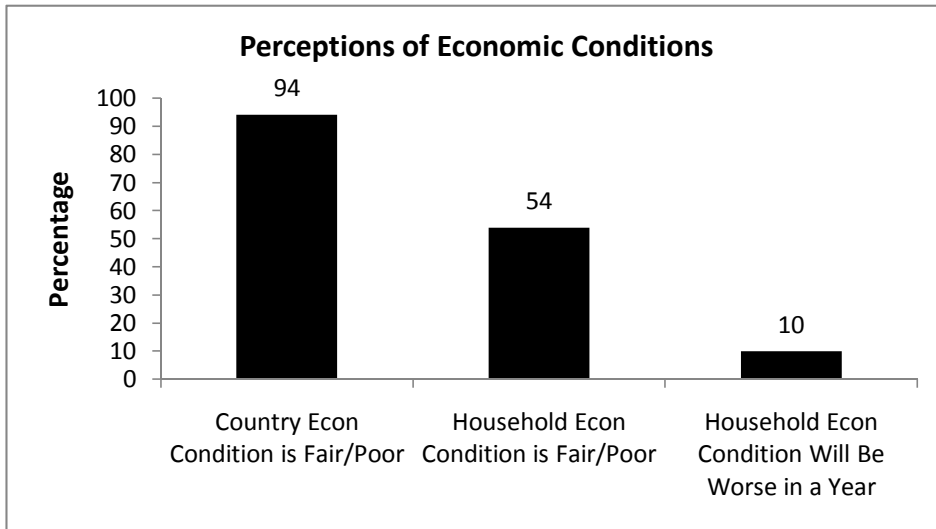
Economy and Jobs Tops Lists of National and State Problems

	Single Most Important Problem Facing Minnesota Today	Single Most Important Problem Facing the Country Today
Economy and Jobs	43%	55%
Budget Deficit	15	14
Education	13	not asked
High Taxes	9	2
Health Care	8	10
Immigration	5	4
Gay Marriage	2	2
Abortion	2	2
War	not asked	7
Terrorism	not asked	1

(Percentages here and elsewhere may not sum to 100% owing to rounding or to the omission of respondents who did not answer a question.)

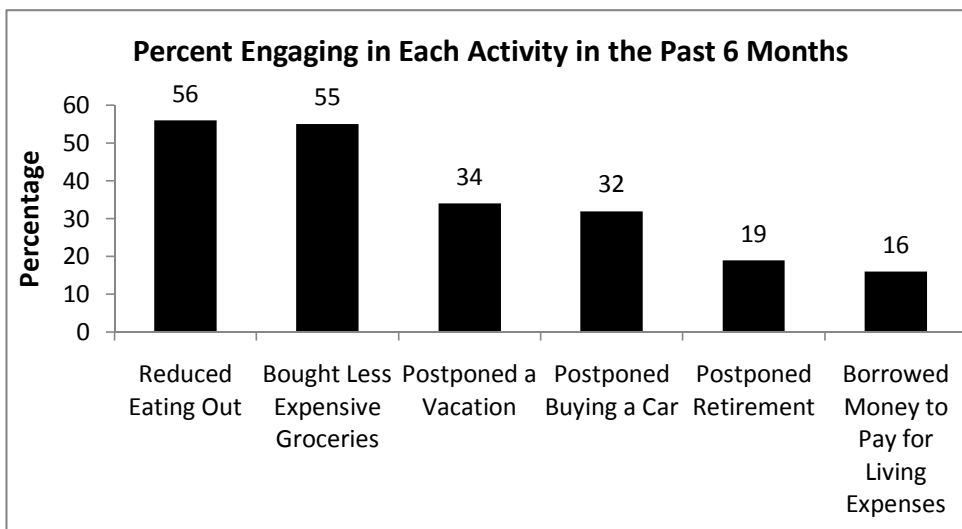
The extraordinary salience of the economy and jobs reflects the intense concern and personal distress of Minnesota voters. Ninety-four percent report that the national economy is fair or poor and 54% indicate that their own household's situation is suffering. Despite the distress of Minnesotans about their personal situations and the national economy, they are more optimistic about the future – only 10% think that their personal situations will be worse in a year.

Intense Voter Distress



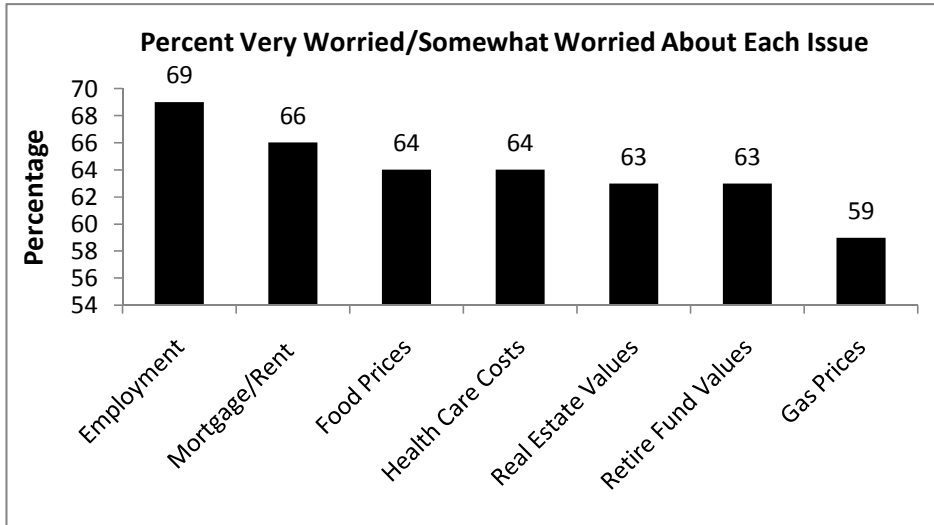
The Great Recession has shaken up the lives of many Minnesotans. Majorities report that they have cut back on eating out and have bought less expensive groceries, and a third have postponed vacations and car purchases. In addition to being more frugal, 19% indicate they have delayed their retirement and 16% have borrowed money to pay for living expenses.

Economic Tough Times Force Minnesotans to Cut Back



In addition to their tangible daily struggles to make ends meet, Minnesotans are also deeply worried about future economic threats. Upwards of two-thirds are very or somewhat worried about their jobs, paying for a host of essentials (their mortgage or rent, food, health care, and gas), and declines in real estate and retirement fund values.

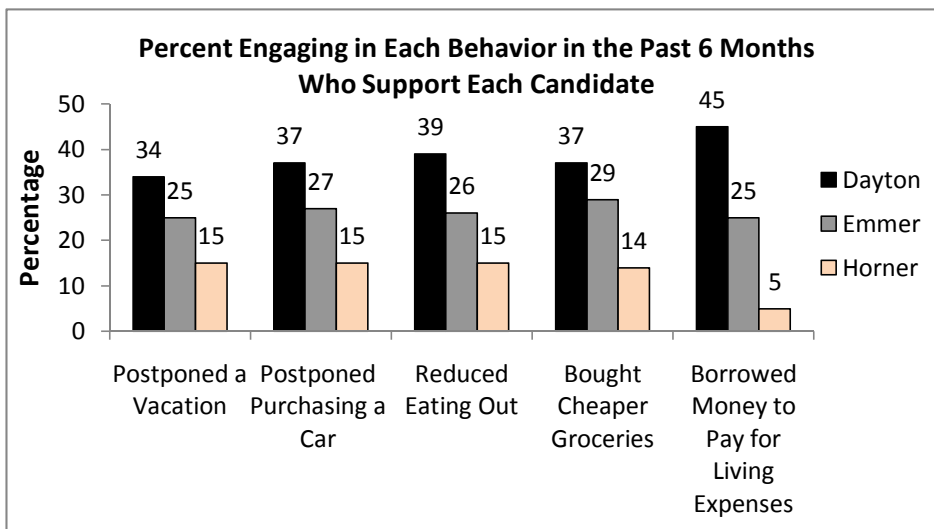
Specific Fears about Jobs, Paying for Essentials, and Economic Security



Economic Pain and Worry Helps Dayton

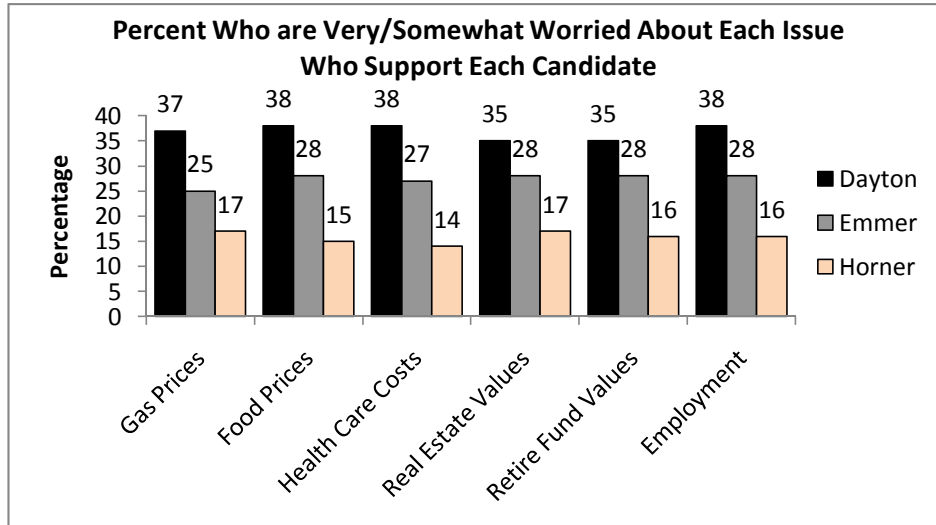
Dayton is being propelled by voters who have had to make tangible cutbacks. Those who have cut back on vacations, purchasing a car, eating out, and purchasing more expensive groceries are breaking for Dayton over Emmer by 8 to 13 point margins. The 16% of voters who have had to borrow money to make ends meet favor Dayton by a 20 point margin.

Voters Forced to Cut Back Favor Dayton



Voters worried about future economic threats are also breaking for Dayton. The Democratic candidate holds leads of up to 10 points over his Republican rival among voters worried about economic risks related to their jobs; paying for gas, food, and health care; and facing lower real estate or retirement fund values.

Economic Worries Also Boosting Support For Dayton



About the Survey

This survey is a collaboration between Minnesota Public Radio News and the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The survey was analyzed by the Center. The research team was Lawrence R. Jacobs (Center Director) and Joanne M. Miller (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science). Charles Gregory provided research assistance.

The survey was fielded by the Information Specialists Group (ISG) and is based on a landline random digit dial survey in Minnesota. ISG called a sample of telephone exchanges that was randomly selected by a computer from a list of active residential exchanges within Minnesota. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was selected to be the respondent for the survey.

As is common with public opinion surveys, the data were weighted. In the first stage, the data were weighted based on the number of potential survey respondents and the number of landline telephone numbers in the household. In the second stage, data were weighted according to cell phone usage, as well as gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity to approximate the demographic characteristics of the population according to the Census.

Results are based on a model that accounts for the likelihood of a respondent voting based on the following factors: self-reported probability of voting in the upcoming election, voting in the 2006 gubernatorial election as reported by the respondent, interest in the 2010 election, and whether the respondent reported being registered to vote. The model estimates a turnout of 58%, which we expect to increase during the fall as the campaign heats up and interest in the election increases.

The key characteristics of the sample's likely voters in Minnesota are the following:

	Likely Voters
Republican	38
Independent	12
Democrat	48
Men	47
Women	53
High School or less	56
Some College or more	44
Less than \$50,000	37
More than \$50,000	55

(Percentages here and above may round to higher than 100% due to rounding.)

750 likely voters living in Minnesota were interviewed by telephone between September 22 and September 26, 2010. The margin of error ranges between +/-3.6 percentage points based on the conventional calculation and +/-5.1 percentage points, which is a more cautious estimate that takes into account design effects, in accordance with professional best practices. The conventional calculation of the margin of sampling error is primarily based on the number of respondents and, critically, assumes that all respondents selected for interviewing were actually reached. No public opinion survey successfully contacts the entire sample and therefore the professional best practice is to adjust for the actual response rate and for other design effects, producing a higher margin of sampling error. In this report, we use the conventional calculation to determine the minimal level of significance and the more cautious calculation to reach a higher level of confidence in the results.

Using the design-effect calculation of the margin of sample error, in 19 cases out of 20 the results among Minneapolis voters will differ (in theory) by no more than +/-5.1 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all likely voters in the election. The response rate is 26 percent (based on AAPOR response rate calculation 4).

The results of properly conducted scientific surveys of candidate support estimate the most probable relative positions at the time of the interviewing. The margin of error indicates a range of support with unequal probabilities of accuracy. For example, assume a poll reports that Candidate A received 55% and Candidate B received 45% of support with a margin of error of +/-5 percentage points. Based on normal sampling distribution, the 55% to 45% result is the best or most probable standing at the time of the survey. Taking into account the margin of sampling error, however, we can estimate the lower boundary of support for Candidate A as 50% and the upper boundary of support for Candidate B as 50%. These results are possible but are less probable.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

This survey invested considerable resources in a set of procedures to reduce distortions. The sample of interviewees was drawn using comprehensive lists of phone exchanges. In addition, the interviewers were carefully trained and monitored to maintain consistency in implementing the questionnaire. Further, several steps were used to capture as much of the sample as possible including call backs to numbers when no one appeared to be at home or when the initial request to conduct the interview was not accepted.

Questions

Which ONE of the following issues do you think is the single MOST important problem facing Minnesota today: (ROTATE THE FIRST CHOICES) (READ TOP 9 CHOICES) (PROBE IF NECESSARY for SINGLE MOST important issue)

Transportation	1
The economy and jobs	2
Education	3
Health Care	4
Immigration.....	5
The Budget Deficit.....	6
High Taxes	7
Gay Marriage	8
Abortion	9
Or something else (SPECIFY) (vol).....	80 O
Don't Know (vol)	88
Refused (vol)	99

Which ONE of the following issues do you think is the single MOST important problem facing the United States today: (RANDOMIZE THE ORDER OF THE FIRST 9 CHOICES) (READ TOP 9 CHOICES) (PROBE IF NECESSARY for SINGLE MOST important issue)

War.....	1
The economy and jobs	2
Health Care	3
Immigration.....	4
The Budget Deficit.....	5
High Taxes	6
Gay Marriage	7
Abortion	8
Terrorism.....	9
Or something else (SPECIFY) (vol).....	80 O
Don't Know (vol)	88
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How would you rate economic conditions in this country today?
(READ CHOICES 1-4)

Excellent	1
Good	2
Fair	3
Poor	4
Don't Know (vol)	8
Refused (vol)	9

How would you rate the financial situation in your household? (READ CHOICES 1-4)

- Excellent 1
- Good 2
- Fair 3
- Poor 4
- Don't Know (vol) 8
- Refused (vol) 9

In the last two years would you say the financial situation in your household has gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same?

- Better 1
- Worse 2
- Stayed about the same 3
- Don't Know (vol) 8
- Refused (vol) 9

Now looking ahead, do you think that a year from now the financial situation in your household will be better than it is now, worse than it is now, or do you think that it will be about the same as it is now?

- Better 1
- Worse 2
- About the Same 3
- Don't Know (vol) 8
- Refused (vol) 8

I'm going to read a list of economic issues. Please tell me how worried you are about each one.

- Very worried 1
- Somewhat worried 2
- Not too worried 3
- Not at all worried 4
- Don't Know (vol) 8
- Refused (vol) 9

- A. Gasoline Prices 1
- B. Food Prices 2
- C. Health Care Costs 3
- D. Real Estate Values 4
- E. Retirement Fund Values 5
- F. Employment 6
- G. Paying your mortgage or rent 7

Of the following economic issues, which ONE do you worry about the most?

Gasoline Prices 1

Food Prices 2

Health Care Costs 3

Real Estate Values 4

Retirement Fund Values 5

Employment 6

Paying your mortgage or rent 7

All (vol.) 80

Don't Know (vol) 88

Refused (vol) 99

Next, I am going to ask you some questions about how recent changes in the economy may have affected you or your family. In the past 6 months have you:

A. Postponed a vacation?

Yes 1

No 2

Don't Know 8

Refused 9

B. Postponed purchasing a car?

Yes 1

No 2

Don't Know 8

Refused 9

C. Reduced the number of times you eat out?

Yes 1

No 2

Don't Know 8

Refused 9

D. Bought less expensive groceries?

Yes 1

No 2

Don't Know 8

Refused 9

E. Borrowed money to pay everyday living expenses?

Yes 1

No 2

Don't Know 8

Refused 9

F. Postponed plans to retire?

Yes 1
No 2
Don't Know 8
Refused 9