

## **Global Poll Finds Diverse Economic Perceptions**

January 24, 2006

**Mexicans, Germans, Russians Become More Upbeat; Indonesians, Britons, French, Americans More Negative**

[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)

As the World Economic Forum meets in Davos this week to talk about the international economy, a new BBC World Service poll of 32 nations finds highly divergent economic perceptions in countries around the world. In 15 countries majorities or pluralities see conditions in their country getting better, while in 17 they see conditions getting worse.

Perceptions of the world economy are also divided, with 14 countries seeing it getting better and 15 seeing it getting worse (with 3 divided). Among the 19 countries that were polled a year ago as well as in the current poll, there are also divergent trends with some growing more optimistic and some less.

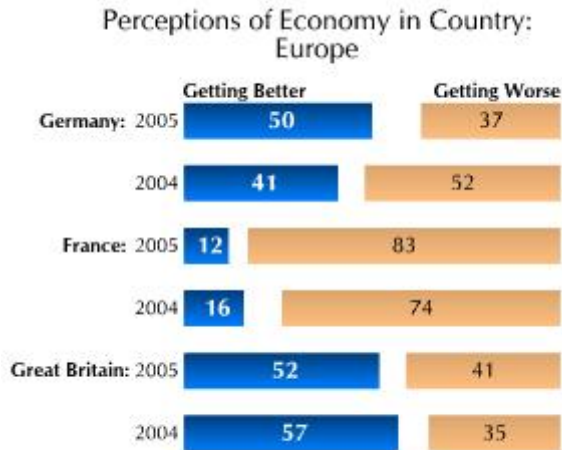
The poll of 37,572 people was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan together with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. The 32-nation fieldwork was coordinated by GlobeScan and completed between October 2005 and January 2006.

Steven Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes comments, "While it is true that we live in a more globalized economy, it is also true that people around the world have highly different perceptions of the state of their own economies and even of the world economy."

### **Europe**

Germans' feelings about their economy appears to be turning a corner. While in late 2004 52 percent saw their economy worsening, this dropped to 37 percent in late 2005, while the perception that it is improving moved up to 50 percent from 41 percent. Perceptions of their personal situation followed a similar pattern.

The French seem to be going from bad to worse: perceptions that their economy is getting worse has gone from an already large 74 percent in 2004 to 83 percent. For themselves individually they do not seem to have such dire perceptions, but here too things have gotten worse. The percentage saying things are getting worse for them and their family increased from 45 percent to 52 percent.



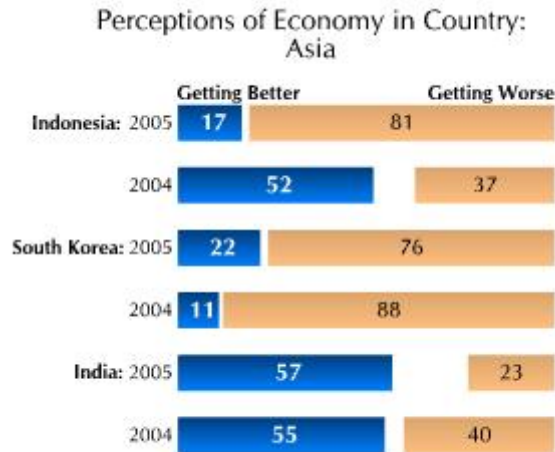
BBC, 12/2005 In Great Britain the bloom is coming off the rose.

While in 2004 57 percent were optimistic about their country's economy, this has slipped to 52 percent, while pessimistic perceptions have drifted upward from 35 percent to 41 percent. Perceptions of personal conditions, while on a higher tier, have shifted similarly. Positive perceptions slipped from 64 percent to 60 percent, while negative perceptions rose from 22 percent to 28 percent.

## Asia

Indonesians' optimism about their economy has been all but washed away by the tsunami. While in 2004--just before the tsunami--52 percent saw their country's economy as getting better (37% worse), this has plunged to 17 percent, with 81 percent saying that it is getting worse. But for Indonesians personally this drop has been much more modest.

Indians' perception that their own lot is improving has come down from the heights of 2004--dropping from 77 percent to 59 percent. But Indians' perceptions of their country's economy has actually firmed up a bit, with the perception that it is getting worse dropping from 40 percent to 23 percent.



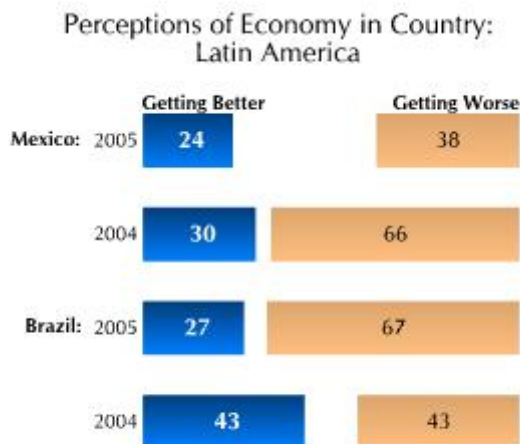
BBC, 12/2005 South Koreans' pessimism about their economy

has abated a bit, but is still quite extreme. While 88 percent saw their economy getting worse in 2004, now 76 percent see it that way. The percentage seeing their personal position slipping has also moderated a bit--going from 71 percent to 54 percent.

## Latin America

Globally, the biggest positive movement was among the Mexicans. While in 2004, 66 percent saw their economy getting worse, this dropped 28 points to 38 percent. Mexican perceptions that their own economic conditions are worsening also dropped from 69 percent to 32 percent.

While Brazilians were divided about their perceptions of their economy in 2004, perceptions that it is getting worse has jumped 24 points to 67 percent. However, there has only been a 5-point increase in Brazilians' perception that their individual conditions are getting worse, rising from 34 percent to 39 percent.



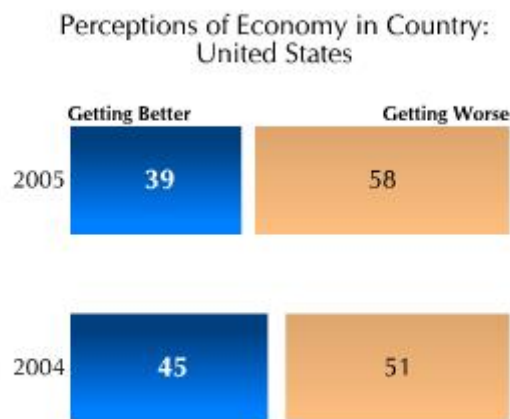
BBC, 12/2005 Russia

Russians' perceptions of the Russian economy have improved from a divided perception in 2004 to a plurality perceiving it getting better (39% better, 27% worse). Perceptions of their personal

situations have improved even more, shifting from a plurality seeing their personal positions getting worse (42% worse, 29% better) a year ago to a plurality perceiving it as getting better (34% better, 28 worse).

## United States

Americans' view of their economy has slipped, with the percentage saying that they see it getting worse increasing from 51 percent to 58 percent. Perceptions of their personal situation, though, continue to be majority positive, slipping only 2 points from 58 percent to 56 percent.



BBC, 12/2/2005 **DETAILED FINDINGS**

## Variations in Perceptions of Economy

### *The Bears and the Bulls*

Throughout the world there are major differences between countries in how people view their country's economy and their own economic fate.

In 10 countries, majorities were bullish about economic trends for their country and themselves. Topping the list were the Canadians, with 63 percent upbeat about their country and 64 percent about their own finances.

Interestingly, two countries in the top tier are the two countries that have recently suffered wars and are hosting foreign forces: Afghanistan, with 57 percent saying their country's economy is improving and 70 percent saying their own circumstances are improving, and Iraq, where 56 percent say their country's economy is improving and 65 percent saying their own conditions are getting better. It may be that war creates a "year zero" experience of collectively starting over, that has a positive core.

Also in the top tier are India (57% country getting better, 59% self getting better), Finland (57% country, 56% self), South Africa (57% country, 54% self), Australia (56% country, 61% self), Senegal (52% country, 69% self) and Great Britain (52% country, 60% self).

Six countries also had majorities that were bearish about their country and themselves: Zimbabwe (90% country's economy getting worse, 84% own situation getting worse), France (83% country, 52% self), Italy (78% country, 54% self), Democratic Republic of the Congo (79% country, 63% self), South Korea (76% country, 54% self) and Kenya (57% country, 53% self).

While it would make sense that the majority's view of their own situation should correspond to their view of the country, this is not always the case. In some countries majorities were positive about their own economic conditions, but were also quite negative about their country. For example, in the Philippines 62 percent were positive about themselves, while an extraordinary 83 percent were negative about the country. This pattern was found in Nigeria (64% positive about self, 70% negative about country), Indonesia (53% positive about self, 81% negative about country), and the United States (56% positive about self, 58% negative about country).

### *World Economy*

Seven countries were bullish on the world economy. Four of these were hardcore optimists--positive about their country and themselves as well. Curiously, two of them were war-torn countries--Iraq (71%) and Afghanistan (63%)--as well as India (66%) and South Africa (53%). But while 64 percent of Tanzanians were positive about the world and 56 percent were positive about their country, they were divided about themselves. Nigerians, on the other hand, were positive about themselves (64%) as well as the world (55%), but were overwhelmingly negative (70%) about their country's economy.

There were also seven bears on the world economy. Three were across-the-board pessimists, negative on their country's economy and their own situation as well, including France (70% negative on the world), Italy (69%) and South Korea (63%). Three were positive about themselves but negative about their country's economy as well as the world economy--the United States (56%), the Philippines (71%) and Brazil (62%). Canada, curiously, while the most optimistic country polled in regard to themselves and their country, nonetheless had a majority (54%) with a pessimistic view of the world.