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## **ECONOMY WORRIES REPUBLICANS, HURTS MIDDLE-AGED AND POOR**

National outlook souring, but state outlook stable and brighter

**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** – Tennessee Republicans feel the most anxiety about the economy, but the state’s middle-aged and poor residents feel the most actual pain, regardless of their politics, the latest MTSU Poll finds.

Overall, 33 percent of state residents describe themselves as “very worried” about the national economy, and another 46 percent say they are “somewhat worried,” the poll found. Meanwhile, 67 percent say the recession has hurt them financially, and, of these, half say they’ve been hurt “a great deal.”

“Here in Tennessee, politics predicts worry about the national economy,” said Dr. Bob Wyatt, Middle Tennessee State University professor of journalism and a co-founder of the MTSU Poll. “But when you ask who is actually having a tough time, you hear from Tennesseans of all political bents who are poor or in the middle- and older-age groups. Those are the very people perhaps most likely to be losing their jobs in mid-career, defaulting on mortgages they have yet to pay off, or feeling the squeeze of living on a fixed income..”

Conducted by Middle Tennessee State University’s College of Mass Communication, the telephone poll of 634 Tennessee adults chosen at random from across the state has an error margin of plus or minus four percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. Full results are available on the poll’s website, [www.mtsusurveygroup.org](http://www.mtsusurveygroup.org).

According to the poll, 43 percent of the state’s self-identified Republicans say they are very worried about the national economy. By contrast, about half as many Democrats (24 percent) are very worried.

Asked whether the recession has hurt them financially, though, Tennesseans age 35 to 64 say “yes” the loudest, regardless of their political affiliation. Among this age group, 77 percent say they’ve felt the recession’s pain compared to 60 percent of those who are older and about half of those who are younger.

Among those who have felt it, the recession’s pain appears most intense among the poor. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of those with family incomes of \$25,000 a year or less say the recession has hurt them “a great deal” compared to 42 percent of those making \$25,000 or more in family income.

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Worries about the family budget over the next year are also more prevalent among the poor, with 34 percent of those bringing home \$25,000 or less per year very worried, compared to 20 percent of those in the \$40,001 to \$50,000 group and just 11 percent of those in the \$50,001 and above bracket.

In other findings related to the economy, the poll found that despite Tennessee's worsening budget situation, a strong majority of Tennesseans (65 percent) want the state to spend more on elementary and secondary education, and pluralities want more spending on foster care (48 percent), community and technical colleges (48 percent), the handicapped (47 percent), the mentally challenged (45 percent) and mental health (45 percent).

A plurality is the largest group in a population – in this case, the number who think the state spends too little compared both to those who think spending is about right or too much.

Meanwhile, measures of Tennesseans' general outlook show a souring mood about the national picture but a stable, and brighter, take on conditions within Tennessee. The economy dominates as the problem Tennesseans identify as most pressing, both at the national and state levels.

For 11 years, the Survey Group at MTSU has been providing independent, non-partisan and unbiased public opinion data regarding major social, political, and ethical issues affecting Tennessee. The poll began in 1998 as a measure of public opinion in the 39 counties comprising Middle Tennessee and began measuring public opinion statewide in 2001. Learn more and view the full report at [www.mtsusurveygroup.org](http://www.mtsusurveygroup.org).

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**Note:** [Click here](#) to view Spring 2010 poll results and to search past poll results.

Document files may be obtained by contacting [jena@hallstrategies.com](mailto:jena@hallstrategies.com). Economic results from the MTSU Poll will be released tomorrow.