

January 2014

The Butler Center for Business and Economic Research is pleased to announce the results of the Fall 2013 Community Attitude Survey. The results of the survey are used to calculate consumer sentiment which measures the relative amounts of positive to negative attitudes by consumers in our local area with regard to current economic conditions and future expectations. Specifically, we ask five questions similar to those used by national surveys of consumer attitudes such as the University of Michigan's Index of Consumer Sentiment and the Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index.

We measure consumer sentiment for each question on a scale from 0 to 200. A value equal to 100 indicates an equal amount of positive and negative attitudes, a value below 100 indicates relatively more pessimism, and a value above 100 indicates relative optimism. Overall consumer sentiment is then calculated as the average of all five questions. Each of the questions and the corresponding measure of consumer sentiment is presented below.

| Survey Question | Consumer Sentiment |
|--|--------------------|
| Would you say that you and your household are better off or worse off financially than you were a year ago? | 89.0 |
| Do you think that a year from now you and your household will be better off financially, worse off, or just about the same? | 106.3 |
| In the country as a whole, do you think that during the next <i>12 months</i> we'll have good times financially or bad times? | 78.3 |
| In the country as a whole, do you think that during the next <i>five years</i> we'll have good times financially or bad times? | 86.7 |
| Do you think now is a good or a bad time for people to buy major household items? | 105.2 |
| Overall | 93.1 |

On average, local consumers indicate that they are worse off now than they were one year ago. In spite of this, they indicate that it is a good time to make major purchases. This seeming contradiction could be due to their overall positive perceptions about their household's economic situation in the coming year. Somewhat dramatic is the degree of negative sentiment regarding the national economy in both time frames. The degree of this latter pessimism is the reason the overall measure reflects negative consumer sentiment. In the future we will use the consumer sentiment measures from this survey as benchmarks and create index numbers in order to gauge changes in local consumer sentiment.

In addition, the survey asked local households to indicate the top 3 issues that are of the greatest concern to families in our area. The table below lists the five most popular choices.

| Issue | Percent |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Affordable Health Care | 50.4% |
| Rising Prices | 48.3% |
| Having Enough Income | 44.7% |
| Crime | 38.1% |
| Planning for Retirement | 31.3% |

For more information contact:

Benjamin F. Blair, the Sarah T. Butler Distinguished University Chair in Business and Finance, director of the Butler Center for Business and Economic Research and Associate Professor of Economics at Columbus State University. (706) 507-8173; blair_benjamin@columbusstate.edu