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FAU BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS POLLING INITIATIVE College of Business Florida Atlantic University

The Business and Economics Polling Initiative (BEPI) at Florida Atlantic University conducts surveys on business, economic, political, and social issues with main focus on Hispanic attitudes and opinions at regional, state and national levels. (PRNewsFoto/Business and Economics Polling..)

The Hispanic Consumer Sentiment Index (HCSI), taken from January through March 2018, stands at 98.9, up 5.4 points from the fourth quarter of 2017, and the highest score since the index went to a quarterly count in 2016. The index is 2.5 points below the 101.4 score for the overall U.S. population for December, as published by the University of Michigan .

Hispanics are more optimistic about their personal finances in the first quarter of 2018 compared to the last quarter of 2017. Overall, 69 percent of Hispanics indicate that they are financially better off today than a year ago, up 4 points from the last quarter. In addition, 78 percent of Hispanics are optimistic about their financial future, up 7 points from the previous quarter. Finally, 69 percent of Hispanics think it is a good time to purchase big-ticket items for their homes, up 17 points from the last quarter of 2017.

"Perhaps this is due to the fact that interest rates are going up and it is better to lock lower interest rates today," said Monica Escaleras , Ph.D., director of FAU BEPI.

Nearly 6 in 10 Hispanics (59 percent) said it was a good time to buy a home and 62 percent said it was a good time to buy a car. However, the cost of living continues to increase for the majority of Hispanics, with 59 percent saying it has gone up while 23 percent saying it has gone down.

U.S. President Donald Trump's approval rating among Hispanics rose from 33 to 37 percent in the first quarter of 2018, just two points below the high of 39 percent in the first quarter of 2017.

The survey was conducted nationally from Jan. 1 to March 31, 2018. The random polling sample consisted of 755 Hispanics, 18 years of age and older, with a margin of error of +/- 4.3 percent.

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