



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2010

Consensus in Principle, Resistance in Practice

Deficit Solutions Meet With Public Skepticism

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andrew Kohut

President, Pew Research Center

Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock

Associate Directors

Scott Keeter

Director of Survey Research

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel (202) 419-4350

Fax (202) 419-4399

www.people-press.org

Consensus in Principle, Resistance in Practice

Deficit Solutions Meet With Public Skepticism

In many respects, there is a broad public consensus when it comes to the federal budget deficit: seven-in-ten say it is a major problem that must be addressed right away, and roughly two-thirds say that the best way to reduce the deficit is through a combination of cutting major government programs and increasing taxes. These views cross partisan lines, with majorities of Republicans, Democrats and independents saying we must deal with it now, and that the best approach involves both program cuts and tax increases.

Yet this general consensus evaporates when concrete deficit reduction proposals are tested. And the Bowles-Simpson commission's effort to package spending cuts and tax increases into a comprehensive package has met with far more public opposition than support. Among those who have heard of the deficit commission's proposal, 48% disapprove and just 30% approve.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Dec. 1-5 among 1,500 adults finds that the deficit commission is not the only group that faces public skepticism when it comes to deficit reduction proposals. Neither Republican nor Democratic congressional leaders have much credibility on this issue, with majorities saying they have little or no confidence in each when it comes to dealing with the deficit. Obama is viewed more positively, by comparison, with a slim majority expressing at least a fair amount

Views of the Deficit

<i>Best describes federal budget deficit ...</i>	%
Major problem, must address now	70
Major problem, address when economy better	23
Not much of a problem	1
Don't know	<u>5</u>
	100
<i>Best way to reduce federal budget deficit ...</i>	
Cutting major programs	16
Increasing taxes	4
Combination of both	65
Not a priority (Vol.)/Don't know	<u>14</u>
	100
<i>Deficit commission's proposals ...*</i>	
Approve	30
Disapprove	48
Don't know	<u>21</u>
	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.
 * Dec. 3-5, 2010 omnibus, based on those who heard a lot or a little about the deficit commission's proposals.

On Deficit, Obama Has More Credibility than Congressional Leaders

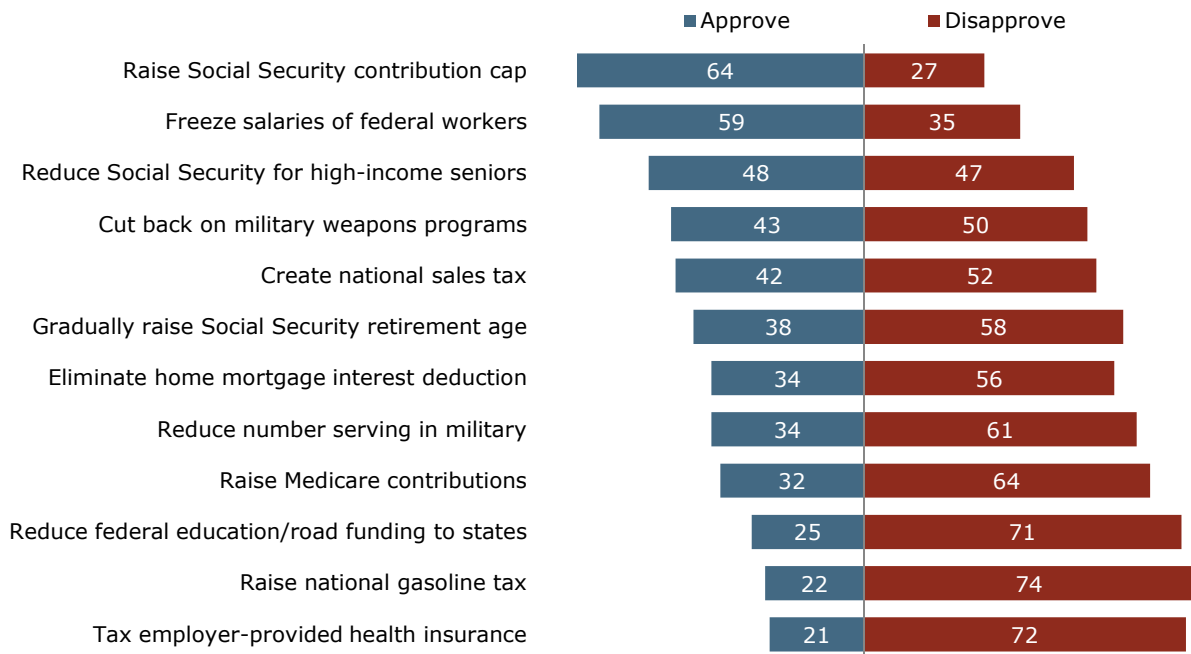
<i>Confidence in each when it comes to dealing with the deficit</i>	Barack Obama	Dem Leaders	Rep Leaders
	%	%	%
Great deal/Fair amount	53	42	40
Not too much/None	44	52	56
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

of confidence in his leadership on the deficit.

Most of the major deficit reduction proposals under discussion meet with public disapproval. Particularly unpopular are provisions that would tax the health insurance people receive from their employers (72% disapprove), raise the national gasoline tax (74% disapprove), and reduce federal funding to states for things like education and roads (71% disapprove). Of 12 ideas tested, just two meet with majority approval: increasing the amount of earned income that is subject to Social Security withholding (64% approve) and freezing the salaries of government workers (59% approve); the latter proposal is supported by President Obama and many Republicans.

Little Support for Most Proposals to Reduce the Budget Deficit



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010 Q53a-l.

The public is skeptical that much progress will be made in reducing the deficit in coming years. Just 37% think we will have made significant progress in reducing the federal budget deficit over the next five years, while 52% think we will not.

And reflecting the broad economic problems facing the nation, the deficit ranks far below the job situation as the biggest economic worry for most people, with no increase in focus on the deficit over the course of the year. In the new survey, 47% cite the job situation as the economic issue that most worries them, while fewer than half as many (19%) cite the budget deficit.

Job Situation Remains the Bigger Concern

<i>Economic issue that worries you most...</i>	Mar	Jun	Sep	Dec
	%	%	%	%
Job situation	45	41	49	47
Budget deficit	22	23	19	19
Rising prices	17	16	15	15
Financial/Housing markets	11	13	12	14
Other/DK	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010 Q24.

Deficit Solutions: Principle vs. Practice

There is broad, and bipartisan, agreement that the best approach to reducing the federal budget deficit involves a combination of both government cutbacks and increased taxes. Roughly two-thirds (65%) express this view, including majorities of Republicans (58%), Democrats (72%) and independents (67%). Relatively few Americans (16%) believe that focusing mostly on cutting major government programs is the best approach to take. Even among Republicans, only about a third (32%) say a strategy focused mostly on cutting government is the right line of attack. Even fewer Americans (4%) believe the best way to reduce the deficit is through a focus on increasing taxes.

Most Support Combination of Program Cuts and Tax Increases

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Mostly focus on cutting major programs	16	32	8	14
Mostly focus on increasing taxes	4	1	8	4
Do a combination of both	65	58	72	67
Other/Don't know	<u>14</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>15</u>
	100	100	100	100
N	1500	415	481	499

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010 Q51.

Yet the recent proposals by a presidentially appointed bipartisan deficit reduction commission have met with far more public resistance than acceptance. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Americans say they have heard about the commission's proposals, and disapproval outweighs approval by a 48% to 30% margin among those who heard about them. Republicans, in particular, view the commission's proposals negatively – 58% disapprove and just 16% approve. Democrats are divided about evenly over the commission's proposals (42% approve, 41% disapprove).

Little Support for Deficit Commission Proposals

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
Heard about deficit commission's proposal	72	76	74	69
<i>Among those who heard</i>				
Approve	30	16	42	31
Disapprove	48	58	41	48
Don't know	<u>21</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>22</u>
	100	100	100	100
N	578	160	183	169

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 3-5, 2010 omnibus survey
PEW8f-g.

Most Specific Proposals Opposed

Of 12 individual proposals for reducing the federal budget deficit, only two – raising the current cap on payroll tax contributions to Social Security and freezing the salaries of government workers – receive majority support. Fully 77% of Democrats support making Social Security payroll taxes apply to more of high-earners' incomes, as do 65% of independents. Republicans are less unified, but still about half (53%) back this idea. Freezing the salaries of federal government workers receives roughly the same level of support from Republicans (64%), Democrats (57%) and independents (62%) alike.

Another proposal – reducing Social Security benefits for seniors with higher incomes – divides the American public; 48% approve and 47% disapprove with no difference of opinion across party lines.

Two of the largest partisan gaps are on issues related to reducing military spending. Roughly half of Democrats (53%) approve of cutting back on military weapons programs as a way of reducing the deficit; 71% of Republicans disapprove of this idea. Republicans are equally opposed (70%) to reducing the number of people serving in the military. In this case, most Democrats (55%) share this opposition, though by a slimmer margin.

Republicans are also less supportive than Democrats of two tax proposals: a national sales tax and an increase in the gasoline tax. Republicans disapprove of the sales tax idea by a 62% to 33% margin, while both Democrats and independents are more evenly divided.

On the gasoline tax, both Republicans and independents overwhelmingly reject a higher gas tax as a means of reducing the deficit (79% of each disapprove). Roughly two-thirds of Democrats (68%) also oppose raising the gasoline tax.

Republicans are somewhat more willing than Democrats to rethink Social Security and Medicare benefits in the interest of deficit reduction. While Democrats disapprove of gradually raising the Social Security retirement age by a two-to-one margin (65% disapprove, 33% approve), half (50%) of Republicans disapprove while 42% approve. Republicans also are slightly more supportive of raising the amount people on Medicare contribute to cover their health care costs (37% of Republicans, 29% of Democrats), though most disapprove of this idea across party lines.

Areas of Partisan Agreement and Disagreement

		Rep	Dem	Ind	R-D Gap
		%	%	%	
Proposals that receive more Democratic support					
Cut back on military weapons programs	Approve	23	53	44	-30
	Disapprove	71	38	50	+33
Raise Social Security contribution cap	Approve	53	77	65	-24
	Disapprove	40	15	26	+25
Tax employer-provided health insurance	Approve	12	28	18	-16
	Disapprove	81	64	77	+17
Reduce number of people serving in the military	Approve	27	42	32	-15
	Disapprove	70	55	63	+15
Raise the national gasoline tax	Approve	17	31	17	-14
	Disapprove	79	68	79	+11
Create a national sales tax	Approve	33	44	47	-11
	Disapprove	62	50	47	+12
Proposals with no significant partisan divide					
Freeze salaries of federal workers	Approve	64	57	62	+7
	Disapprove	32	37	35	-5
Reduce Social Security for high income seniors	Approve	49	50	50	-1
	Disapprove	46	45	48	+1
Eliminate home mortgage interest deduction	Approve	33	37	33	-4
	Disapprove	60	57	56	+3
Raise Medicare premiums	Approve	37	29	31	+8
	Disapprove	58	67	66	-9
Proposals that receive more Republican support					
Gradually raise Social Security retirement age	Approve	42	33	42	+9
	Disapprove	50	65	56	-15
Reduce funding to states for roads & education	Approve	30	17	29	+13
	Disapprove	63	81	67	-18

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010 Q53.

The Tea Party and the Deficit

The deficit is seen as an especially pressing issue to those who agree with the Tea Party movement. While seven-in-ten Americans (70%) say it is a major problem that the country must address now, that figure rises to 84% among those who agree with the Tea Party. Tea Party supporters are more likely to favor addressing the deficit mostly by cutting major programs (39%) than are Americans generally (16%). Yet Tea Party supporters do not flatly reject tax increases as part of the deficit solution; roughly half (51%) believe that the best way to address the deficit is through a combination of major program cuts *and* tax increases.

When it comes to reducing government spending, roughly three-quarters (74%) of Tea Partiers support freezing government salaries, compared with 59% of the general public. Yet, as with the public at large, the vast majority of Tea Partiers oppose reducing federal funding to states for things like education and roads (65% disapprove, compared with 71% of the general public.)

Nor are Tea Party backers clearly more willing to reduce entitlement spending. Those who agree with the Tea Party are somewhat more supportive of making Medicare recipients pay a larger share of their health care costs, though about half (54%) oppose this idea. Tea

Little Support among Tea Party Supporters for Reducing Funding for States to Cut Deficit

	General public	Tea Party	Diff
	%	%	
Best way to address the deficit			
Cutting major programs	16	39	+23
Increasing taxes	4	*	-4
Combination of both	65	51	-14
Other/Don't know	<u>14</u>	<u>10</u>	-4
	100	100	
Percent who approve of...			
Spending Reduction Proposals			
Freeze salaries of federal workers	59	74	+15
Raise Medicare premiums	32	42	+10
Gradually raise Social Security retirement age	38	45	+7
Reduce funding to states for education & roads	25	30	+5
Reduce Social Security for high income seniors	48	50	+2
Cut back on military weapons programs	43	34	-9
Reduce number of people serving in the military	34	19	-15
Tax and Revenue Proposals			
Raise Social Security contribution cap	64	48	-16
Tax employer-provided health insurance	21	12	-9
Eliminate home mortgage interest deduction	34	28	-6
Raise the national gasoline tax	22	18	-4
Create a national sales tax	42	40	-2

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010. Q51, Q53. Significant differences in **bold**. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Partiers are not significantly more supportive than other Americans of raising the retirement age or means-testing Social Security benefits.

Moreover, people who agree with the Tea Party are among the most resistant to reductions in military spending – 79% oppose reducing military personnel levels, and 62% oppose cutting back on military weapons programs, compared with 61% and 50%, respectively, of the general public.

People who agree with the Tea Party are less supportive of many major tax proposals aimed at deficit reduction. While the public backs increasing the amount of earned income that is subject to Social Security withholding by two-to-one (64% approve, 27% disapprove), Tea Partiers are divided (48% approve, 47% disapprove). Tea Party supporters overwhelmingly reject (81% disapprove) taxing employer-provided health care benefits; a smaller majority of the public (72%) opposes this proposal. And 67% of Tea Party supporters oppose eliminating the home mortgage interest deduction, compared with 56% of the public at large.

But Americans who agree with the Tea Party are no more opposed to a national sales tax than the public in general: 40% of Tea Party supporters approve of a national sales tax as a deficit reduction measure while 53% oppose, which is comparable to the 42% to 52% margin nationwide.

Age Differences Over Tax Proposals

Many of the deficit reduction ideas under discussion would have a differential impact on people at different stages of life. And not surprisingly, age is linked to reactions to some of the key provisions – particularly those that would impose new taxes on workers and homeowners.

For example, younger Americans are more open to the idea of a national sales tax as a means of reducing the budget deficit. People

ages 18 to 39 are divided about evenly as to whether they approve (47%) or disapprove (49%) of this idea. Among those age 65 and older, only 34% approve of this while 53% disapprove.

And while taxing employer-provided health insurance benefits is deeply unpopular across all age groups, there is slightly more support among younger Americans (28% approve among those 18 to 39) than among older Americans.

One generally popular proposal – freezing the salaries of government employees – meets with more resistance among younger Americans. Favored by 70% of those 65 and older, and 61% of those 40 to 64, a government salary freeze is backed by just half (50%) of adults under 40, while a roughly equal number of younger people (48%) disapprove.

One of the largest age differences is on the issue of eliminating the home-mortgage interest tax deductions. Among adults under age 40, 43% approve of this proposal, while 49% disapprove. This proposal is opposed by two-to-one (60% vs. 30%) among adults 40 and older. Much of this is linked to the life cycle of homeownership. Fewer than half (46%) of adults under 40 own their home, compared with about eight-in-ten Americans 40 to 64 (77%) and 65 and older (80%). And any change in the mortgage interest would affect a majority of adults between 40 and 64, 56% of whom are currently paying off a

Young People Are More Supportive of Some Tax Changes...

		18-39	40-64	65+
		%	%	%
Create a national sales tax	Approve	47	41	34
	Disapprove	49	54	53
Eliminate home mortgage interest deduction	Approve	43	30	29
	Disapprove	49	64	50
Tax employer-provided health insurance	Approve	28	16	21
	Disapprove	69	79	62

And Less Supportive of Federal Salary Freeze

		18-39	40-64	65+
		%	%	%
Freeze salaries of federal workers	Approve	50	61	71
	Disapprove	48	32	21

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010 Q53. Significant differences in **bold**.

home mortgage. Just 20% of seniors are paying a mortgage because most (58%) own a home and have paid it off. Just 35% of adults under 40 are paying a mortgage because most (53%) either rent or have other living arrangements.

Overall, the idea of eliminating the home-mortgage interest deduction as a way to reduce the federal budget deficit is opposed by homeowners by two-to-one (64% disapprove, 29% approve). And mortgage status matters; 72% of those still making mortgage payments disapprove of the idea, compared with 52% of homeowners who have paid for their home. The idea of eliminating the mortgage interest deduction is not nearly as offensive to renters – 43% approve of the idea, while 43% disapprove.

Homeownership and the Home Mortgage Deduction

<i>Eliminate tax deductions for home mortgage interest</i>	Home Owners			Rent
	All	Pay Mortgage	Paid Off	
	%	%	%	%
Approve	29	25	35	43
Disapprove	64	72	52	43
Don't know	<u>7</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>
	100	100	100	100
N	551	326	212	161

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010 Q53.

Modest Age Differences on Entitlement Changes

When it comes to proposals that would change the way Social Security and Medicare operate, there are at most only modest differences in how different age groups react. Regardless of age, wide majorities approve of increasing the amount of earned income that is subject to Social Security withholding. Similarly, young, middle-aged, and older Americans are all about evenly divided over whether reducing Social Security payments for higher income seniors is acceptable as a way to address the deficit.

Young and Old Disapprove of Raising Retirement Age, Medicare Premiums

		18-39	40-64	65+
		%	%	%
Raise Social Security contribution cap	Approve	66	64	62
	Disapprove	28	28	22
Reduce Social Security for high income seniors	Approve	51	48	44
	Disapprove	46	48	46
Gradually raise Social Security retirement age	Approve	38	35	42
	Disapprove	59	62	51
Raise Medicare premiums	Approve	39	26	32
	Disapprove	59	69	59

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010 Q53. Significant differences in **bold**.

Majorities in all age groups oppose increasing the amount Medicare recipients contribute to cover their health care costs, with the broadest disapproval coming from

people between ages 40 and 64. More than half in all age groups also disapprove of a gradual increase in the retirement age, though opposition is somewhat lower among those who are already 65 or older (51% oppose) than among adults who are under 65 (60% oppose).

Most Expect Little Progress on Deficit

Just 37% of Americans think we will make significant progress in reducing the federal budget deficit over the next five years, while 52% say we will not. This is a slightly more pessimistic assessment than the public offered as deficits were growing in 1989. At that time, 40% thought progress would be made, while 46% did not.

The public's outlook is divided along partisan lines. Most Democrats (53%) believe the country will make progress over the next five years, while most Republicans (60%) do not. Independents are just as skeptical as Republicans on this question – just 29% believe the country will make progress on the deficit by 2015, while 59% think we will not.

Democrats Optimistic, Republicans and Independents Skeptical

Looking ahead five years, will we make significant progress in reducing the deficit, or not?

	Yes	No	DK
	%	%	%
December 2010	37	52	11=100
February 1989	40	46	14=100
<i>December 2010 among...</i>			
Republican	29	60	11=100
Democrat	53	37	10=100
Independent	29	59	11=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010. Q52.

Obama Has Credibility Edge on Deficit

Neither Republican nor Democratic congressional leaders garner much public confidence when it comes to the deficit, especially outside of their own partisan base. In particular, only 37% of independents say they have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in Democratic leaders, and 35% say the same about Republican leaders. Instead, most independents say they have little or no confidence in both (59% for Democratic leaders, 62% for Republican leaders).

Compared with congressional leaders, Barack Obama has somewhat more credibility.

Overall, 52% of Americans say they have at least a fair amount of confidence in Obama, and this includes half (50%) of independents. Still, 48% of independents say they have little or no confidence in Obama on the deficit.

Republicans are equally skeptical of both Obama and Democratic leaders; 17% say they have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in each, while about eight-in-ten express little or no confidence. Democrats are about equally skeptical of Republican leaders in Congress (24% great deal or fair amount, 74% little or no confidence). Republicans and Democrats are about equally confident in their own party's congressional leaders – 73% of Republicans and 72% of Democrats feel at least a fair amount of confidence in their party's leaders on the deficit. An even greater number of Democrats (85%) say they have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in Barack Obama when it comes to dealing with the budget deficit.

Congressional Leaders Have Little Credibility on Deficit

Percent expressing Great deal/Fair amount of confidence in each on deficit

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Barack Obama	52	17	85	50
Dem leaders in Congress	43	17	72	37
Rep leaders in Congress	40	73	24	35

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec. 1-5, 2010 Q54a-c.

About the Surveys

Most of the analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted December 1-5, 2010 among a national sample of 1,500 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (1,000 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 500 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 201 who had no landline telephone). Interviewing was conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2009 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1500	3.0 percentage points
Form 1	763	4.5 percentage points
Form 2	737	4.5 percentage points
Republican	415	6.0 percentage points
Democratic	481	5.5 percentage points
Independent	499	5.5 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

In addition to the main survey, this report is supplemented with results from an omnibus survey. Telephone interviews were conducted December 2-5, 2010 among a national sample of 1,003 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (671 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 332 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 146 who had no landline telephone). Interviewing was conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2009 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1003	4.0 percentage points
Republican	265	7.5 percentage points
Democratic	322	7.0 percentage points
Independent	308	7.0 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

Andrew Kohut, Director

Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research

Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors

Michael Remez, Senior Writer

Leah Christian and Jocelyn Kiley, Senior Researchers

Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf, and Alec Tyson, Research Associates

Jacob Poushter, Research Analyst

Danielle Gewurz, Research Assistant

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
DECEMBER 2010 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
December 1-5, 2010
N=1500

QUESTIONS 1, 3a, 9, 12-14, 17-19 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

QUESTIONS 2-3, 4-5, 9, 20-23 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

NO QUESTIONS 6-8, 10-11, 15-16

ASK ALL:

Q.24 Which of the following national economic issues worries you most? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

Dec 1-5 <u>2010</u>		Aug 25-Sep 6 <u>2010</u>	Jun 3-6 <u>2010</u>	Mar 10-14 <u>2010</u>
47	The job situation	49	41	45
19	The federal budget deficit	19	23	22
15	Rising prices	15	16	17
14	Problems in the financial and housing markets	12	13	11
1	Other (VOL.)	2	3	2
1	None/Not worried about any (VOL.)	1	1	*
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2	2	2

NO QUESTIONS 25-27, 38, 45-48

QUESTIONS 28-37, 39-44 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

Q.49 How much, if anything, have you heard or read about discussions in Washington about how to address the federal budget deficit? Have you heard **[READ]**

Dec 1-5 <u>2010</u>	
31	A lot
49	A little
19	Nothing at all
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

Q.50 Which of these statements do you think best describes the federal budget deficit **[READ IN ORDER; REVERSE ORDER FOR HALF OF SAMPLE]**

Dec 1-5 <u>2010</u>	
70	It is a major problem that the country must address now
23	It is a major problem that should be addressed when the economy is better
1	It is not much of a problem for the country
5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

Q.51 What-is the best way to reduce the federal budget deficit? Should we mostly focus on **[RANDOMIZE: Cutting major programs / Increasing taxes]** mostly focus on **[increasing taxes / cutting major programs]** or should we do a combination of both?

Dec 1-5

2010

16	Cutting major programs
4	Increasing taxes
65	Combination of both
1	Deficit is not a priority/Don't focus on deficit (VOL.)
13	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

Q.52 Looking ahead five years or so, do you think we will have made significant progress in reducing the federal budget deficit, or not?

Dec 1-5

2010

37	Yes
52	No
11	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

Feb

1989

40
46
14

ASK ALL:

Q.53 Thinking about ways to reduce the federal budget deficit, please tell me if you would you approve or disapprove of each of the following. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]**? What about **[NEXT ITEM]**? **[IF NECESSARY: Would you approve or disapprove of this as a way to reduce the federal budget deficit?]**

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=763]:

		<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
a.F1	Reduce federal funding to states for things like education and roads Dec 1-5, 2010	25	71	4
b.F1	Gradually raise the age at which people can begin receiving Social Security benefits Dec 1-5, 2010	38	58	4
c.F1	Reduce Social Security benefits for seniors with higher incomes Dec 1-5, 2010	48	47	5
d.F1	Eliminate tax deductions for interest paid on home mortgages Dec 1-5, 2010	34	56	10
e.F1	Create a national sales tax Dec 1-5, 2010	42	52	6
f.F1	Reduce the number of people serving in the military Dec 1-5, 2010	34	61	5

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=737]:

g.F2	Raise the amount people on Medicare contribute to cover their health care costs Dec 1-5, 2010	32	64	5
h.F2	Tax the health insurance people receive from their employer Dec 1-5, 2010	21	72	7

Q.53 CONTINUED...

		<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
i.F2	Cut back on the development of military weapons programs Dec 1-5, 2010	43	50	8
j.F2	Make more of high-earners' income subject to the Social Security payroll tax Dec 1-5, 2010	64	27	9
k.F2	Freeze the salaries of federal workers Dec 1-5, 2010	59	35	5
l.F2	Raise the national gasoline tax Dec 1-5, 2010	22	74	4

ASK ALL:

Q.54 How much confidence do you have in **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]** to do the right thing when it comes to dealing with the federal budget deficit – a great deal of confidence, a fair amount of confidence, not too much confidence, or no confidence at all? What about **[NEXT ITEM]**?

		<u>A great deal</u>	<u>A fair amount</u>	<u>Not too much</u>	<u>No confidence at all</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	Barack Obama Dec 1-5, 2010	19	34	20	24	4
b.	Republican leaders in Congress Dec 1-5, 2010	6	34	29	27	4
c.	Democratic leaders in Congress Dec 1-5, 2010	9	33	28	24	5

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL.) <u>No preference</u>	(VOL.) <u>Other party</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>	<u>Lean Rep</u>	<u>Lean Dem</u>
Dec 1-5, 2010	25	33	34	5	1	2	13	14
Nov 4-7, 2010	26	30	37	4	*	2	17	13
Oct 27-30, 2010	25	34	31	6	1	4	13	11
Oct 13-18, 2010	25	31	36	4	*	3	16	13
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010	24	32	39	2	*	2	15	17
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	26	33	34	4	*	3	14	14
Jun 16-20, 2010	27	34	34	3	1	2	15	15
Apr 21-26, 2010	26	33	36	3	1	3	16	13
Mar 11-21, 2010	28	34	32	3	*	3	13	12
Mar 10-14, 2010	22	33	37	6	*	3	14	13
Feb 3-9, 2010	26	31	37	3	*	3	14	17
Jan 6-10, 2010	22	33	42	2	1	2	17	16
Yearly Totals								
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6

PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED...

			(VOL.)		(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

QUESTION 55 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

ASK ALL:

TEAPARTY From what you know, do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the Tea Party movement, or don't you have an opinion either way?

	Strongly agree		Strongly disagree		No opinion either way	(VOL.) Haven't heard of	(VOL.) Refused	Not heard of/DK
Dec 1-5, 2010	5	17	14	12	49	2	2	--
Nov 4-7, 2010	8	19	11	11	49	1	1	--
Oct 27-30, 2010 ¹ (RVs)	12	17	11	14	32	--	1	13
Oct 13-18, 2010 (RVs)	9	19	11	13	30	--	1	16
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010 (RVs)	11	18	12	14	32	--	1	13
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	8	14	9	9	37	--	1	21
Jun 16-20, 2010	9	15	10	8	30	--	*	27
May 20-23, 2010	10	15	8	10	31	--	1	25
Mar 11-21, 2010	9	15	7	7	29	--	1	31

¹ In October 2010 and earlier, question was asked only of those who had heard or read a lot or a little about the Tea Party. In May through October, it was described as: "the Tea Party movement that has been involved in campaigns and protests in the U.S. over the past year." In March it was described as "the Tea Party Protests that have taken place in the U.S. over the past year."

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX
DECEMBER 2-5, 2010 OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1003**

PEW.1-PEW.7 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

ASK ALL DECEMBER 3-5 ONLY [N=775]:

PEW.8f How much, if anything have you heard about the federal budget deficit commission that recently made proposals on how to reduce the national debt over the next several years? Have you heard
[READ IN ORDER]

Dec 3-5 <u>2010</u>		<i>\$1.75 trillion deficit projection</i> Feb 27-Mar 2 <u>2009²</u>
24	A lot	57
48	A little	30
27	Nothing at all	12
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)	1

ASK IF HEARD A LOT OR A LITTLE (PEW.8f=1,2), DECEMBER 3-5 ONLY [N=578]:

PEW.8g From what you have read and heard, do you approve or disapprove of the deficit commission's proposals?

Dec 3-5 <u>2010</u>	
30	Approve
48	Disapprove
21	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

PEW.9 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

² For February 27-March 2, 2009 the question asked about "The Obama administration projecting a \$1.75 trillion budget deficit for this year."