

JUNE 17, 2013

Young People Say Leak Serves Public Interest

---

## Public Split over Impact of NSA Leak, But Most Want Snowden Prosecuted

*A Pew Research Center/USA TODAY Survey*

---

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT  
THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE  
PEOPLE & THE PRESS**

**Michael Dimock**

Director

**Carroll Doherty**

Associate Director

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel (202) 419-4372

Fax (202) 419-4399

[www.people-press.org](http://www.people-press.org)

---

## Young People Say Leak Serves Public Interest

# Public Split over Impact of NSA Leak, But Most Want Snowden Prosecuted

The public is divided over whether the leak of classified information about NSA phone and internet surveillance serves the public interest. But a majority says that former government contractor Edward Snowden should be criminally prosecuted.

The new national survey, conducted June 12-16 by the Pew Research Center and USA TODAY among 1,512 adults, finds that 44% think that the release of classified information about the NSA program harms the public interest, while 49% say it serves the public interest.

However, 54% of the public – including identical majorities of Republicans and Democrats (59% each) – say the government should pursue a criminal case against the person responsible for leaking the classified information about the program.

Young people, by 60% to 34%, think that the NSA leak serves the public interest. Americans 30 and older are divided (46% serves vs. 47% harms). And while those younger than 30 are divided over whether Snowden should be prosecuted, majorities in older age groups favor the government pursuing a criminal case against him.

---

### Divided Views of Snowden's Leak, Support for His Prosecution

<i>Release of classified information about gov't phone, internet data collection program...</i>	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Harms public interest	44	45	44	44
Serves public interest	49	49	50	49
Neither/Both (Vol.)	3	2	3	3
Don't know	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100	100	100
<i>Should gov't pursue a criminal case against the person responsible for leaking the classified information?</i>				
Should pursue criminal case	54	59	59	48
Should not	38	37	35	43
Don't know	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>10</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY June 12-16, 2013.  
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

---

The survey finds that the public has a more positive opinion about the impact of the revelations of NSA communications surveillance on the public interest than it did about the release of a massive trove of classified material about U.S. diplomatic relations by the Wikileaks website two-and-half years ago.

In December 2010, just 29% said the Wikileaks disclosures served the public interest while 53% said they harmed it. Today, about as many say the leak about the NSA surveillance program serves the public interest (49%) as harms it (44%).

In terms of the impact of the NSA surveillance on personal privacy, about half of Americans (54%) say the U.S. government probably has collected data about their personal phone calls, emails and other online communications. More (63%) say that if they *knew* that the government had collected such information, they would feel like their privacy would have been violated.

---

### More Say NSA Leak Is In Public Interest than Wikileaks in 2010

	<b>Dec 2010</b>	<b>June 2013</b>
	<i>Diplomatic cables to WikiLeaks</i>	<i>Gov't data collection program</i>
<i>Do you think the release of this classified information ...</i>	%	%
Serves public interest	29	49
Harms public interest	53	44
Neither/Both (Vol.)	7	3
Don't know	<u>11</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY June 12-16, 2013.  
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

---

## Mixed Approval of NSA Program, But Most Say It Helped Prevent Terrorism

The public is divided over the NSA surveillance program itself. About as many approve (48%) as disapprove (47%) of the “government’s collection of telephone and internet data as part of anti-terrorism efforts.”

Yet a majority of Americans (53%) think the government’s collection of telephone and internet data has helped prevent terrorist attacks, while 41% say it has not.

There are wider partisan differences in views of the program than about whether the leak of NSA surveillance serves the public interest, or whether Snowden should be criminally prosecuted. Nearly six-in-ten Democrats (58%) approve of the government’s data collection efforts, compared with 45% of Republicans and 42% of independents. Democrats are also more likely than Republicans or independents to say the program has helped prevent terrorist attacks.

[In a Pew Research Center/Washington Post survey](#) released a week ago, more Democrats (64%) than Republicans (52%) said it was acceptable for the NSA to get “secret court orders to track telephone call records of millions of Americans in an effort to investigate terrorism.” In that survey overall, 56% of the public said they considered the NSA phone tracking program acceptable.

---

### Democrats More Supportive of NSA Data Collection Program

<i>The govt’s collection of phone and internet data as part of anti-terrorism efforts</i>	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Approve	48	45	58	42
Disapprove	47	51	38	53
Don’t know	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100	100	100
<i>Has this program helped prevent terrorist attacks, or not?</i>				
Yes, has helped	53	52	59	48
No, has not	41	42	33	46
Don’t know	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY June 12-16, 2013.  
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

---

## Young People More Likely to Say NSA Leak Serves Public Interest

People under 30 are the only age group in which a clear majority (60%) says that the release of classified information about the NSA phone and email data collection program serves the public interest.

Those 30 to 64 are divided while people 65 and older think that the NSA disclosures harm the public interest (by 53% to 36%).

Young people are also the only age group that is divided over whether Snowden should be criminally prosecuted: 44% say he should be prosecuted while 50% say he should not. Among older age groups, more favor than oppose criminal prosecution.

People under 30 also are somewhat more skeptical about the NSA program's effectiveness. Just 43% of young people say the program has helped prevent attacks, compared with about half or more in older age groups.

---

### Young People Divided over Snowden Prosecution, Older People Favor Criminal Case

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
<i>Heard about the gov't collecting info. about phone and online communications?</i>	%	%	%	%
Heard a lot	44	47	54	61
Heard little/Nothing	54	53	46	39
<i>Do you think the release of this classified information ...</i>				
Serves the public interest	60	51	46	36
Harms the public interest	34	43	47	53
<i>Should the government pursue a criminal case against the person responsible for leaking the classified information?</i>				
Yes, should pursue criminal case	44	53	63	55
No, should not	50	39	31	33
<i>Overall, view of government collection of telephone and internet data as part of anti-terrorism efforts?</i>				
Approve	43	50	52	45
Disapprove	55	46	44	47
<i>Has government collection of data helped prevent terrorist attacks?</i>				
Yes, has helped prevent terrorist attacks	43	52	60	53
No, has not helped prevent terrorist attacks	52	41	34	37

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY June 12-16, 2013.  
Don't know responses not shown.

---

## Tea Party Republicans, Liberals Say NSA Leak Is in Public Interest

Tea Party Republicans are paying a great deal of attention to news about the NSA surveillance program and are highly critical of it. By more than two-to-one (65% to 29%) Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who agree with the Tea Party disapprove of the government collecting data as part of anti-terrorism efforts. By comparison, Republicans who do not express agreement with the Tea Party are divided (50% approve, 46% disapprove).

On the question of whether the leaked information serves the public interest, there are significant divides within both parties' political bases. In the GOP, Tea Party Republicans are more likely than their more moderate counterparts to see the release of the classified information as serving the public interest. Within the Democratic Party, more liberals than moderates and conservatives view the leaks as a good thing.

The same gaps exist when it comes to whether to prosecute Edward Snowden. There is substantially less support for pursuing a case against the leaker among Tea Party Republicans and liberal Democrats than there is among moderate segments of the party bases.

### Tea Party Republicans Most Engaged, Most Opposed to the NSA Program

	--Rep/Rep Lean--		--Dem/Dem Lean--	
	Agree with tea party	Disagree with tea party/No opinion	Moder/Conserv	Liberal
<i>Heard about the gov't collecting info. about phone and online communications?</i>	%	%	%	%
Heard a lot	75	42	42	58
Heard little/Nothing	25	58	58	42
<i>Gov't collection of telephone and internet data as part of anti-terrorism efforts?</i>				
Approve	29	50	61	52
Disapprove	65	46	36	45
<i>Do you think the release of this classified information ...</i>				
Serves the public interest	56	42	45	57
Harms the public interest	39	51	48	38
<i>Should the government pursue a criminal case against the person responsible for leaking the classified information?</i>				
Yes, should pursue criminal case	48	61	60	51
No, should not	45	32	33	42
<i>Has government collection of data helped prevent terrorist attacks?</i>				
Yes, probably has	44	52	60	56
No, probably has not	50	43	33	36
N	299	323	435	258

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY June 12-16, 2013.  
Other/Don't know responses not shown.

## Most Think Gov't Has Probably Collected Their Data

A majority of Americans (54%) think the U.S. government has collected data about their phone or online communications; 39% say it has probably not.

When asked how they would feel if they knew that the federal government had collected data about their phone and internet activity, 63% say they would feel that their personal privacy has been violated.

Men are more likely than women to think the government has collected their personal data (58% vs. 49%). Two-thirds of blacks (66%) believe this, compared to about half of whites (51%) and Hispanics (50%).

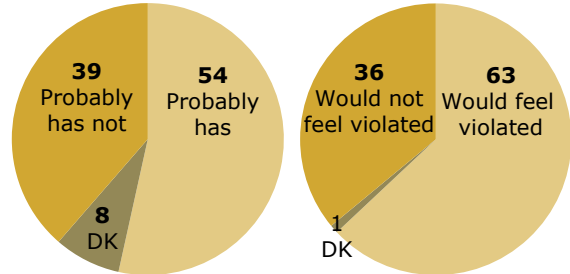
However, there are only modest age and partisan differences in people's opinions about whether the government has probably accessed their personal data. About half (52%) of Republicans and Democrats say the government has probably collected their own data, as do 54% of independents.

Yet there are sharper partisan divisions about how people would feel if they knew the U.S. government had collected data about their personal phone and internet activity. Fully 69% of independents and 68% of Republicans would consider this a violation of their personal privacy, compared with 53% of Democrats.

## Views of NSA Program and Personal Privacy

Gov't *probably* has collected data about your phone calls, emails or other online communications?

*If you knew* that the gov't had collected your phone and internet data, would you feel that your privacy had been violated?



PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY June 12-16, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

## Tea Party Republicans More Likely to Have Privacy Concerns

	Think gov't has collected your data	Would feel violated if you knew
	%	%
Total	54	63
Men	58	65
Women	49	61
White	51	64
Black	66	58
Hispanic	50	60
18-29	52	67
30-49	59	64
50-64	54	60
65 and older	45	61
College grad+	62	60
Some college	53	61
HS or less	48	67
Republican	52	68
Democrat	52	53
Independent	54	69
<i>Among Reps and Rep-leaning inds</i>		
Agree w/Tea Party	65	78
Disagree/No opinion	49	64

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY June 12-16, 2013.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who agree with the Tea Party say the government probably has collected data about their own personal calls and online communications; just 49% of non-Tea Party Republicans say the government has probably accessed their personal information. Tea Party Republicans (78%) also are more likely than non-Tea Party Republicans (64%) to say they would feel their privacy had been violated if they knew the government had collected their personal information.

Overall, the share of the public who say they would feel their personal privacy had been violated is little changed from 2006, when a similar Gallup/USA Today question asked about telephone companies providing people's records to the federal government (63% today vs. 57% then).

But there has been a large partisan shift in these opinions. When asked about the Bush-era program in 2006, 77% of Democrats said they would feel their privacy had been violated, compared with just 28% of Republicans. Today, only about half of Democrats (53%) say they would feel their privacy has been violated if they knew the government had collected their personal data. By contrast, the percentage of Republicans who feel their privacy would be violated has more than doubled (from 28% to 68%).

---

### Since '06, Partisan Reversal in Feelings about Personal Privacy

<i>% saying they would feel their personal privacy was violated if they knew gov't had collected their data</i>	<b>May 2006</b>	<b>Jun 2013</b>	<b>Diff</b>
Total	57	63	+6
Republican	28	68	+40
Democrat	77	53	-24
Independent	61	69	+8

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY June 12-16, 2013.  
May 2006 survey by Gallup/USA Today; see topline for question wording.

---



## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted June 12-16, 2013 among a national sample of 1,512 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (758 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 754 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 394 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. 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, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. 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 2012 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 among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus...</b>
Total sample	1,512	2.9 percentage points
Republicans	388	5.8 percentage points
Democrats	487	5.2 percentage points
Independents	575	4.8 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS/USA TODAY**  
**JUNE 2013 POLITICAL SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**June 12-16, 2013**  
**N=1,512**

**QUESTIONS 15-16 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**QUESTIONS 1-5, 8, 14, 20, 24-27, 32, 44-49, 51-52, 55-58 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**NO QUESTIONS 6-7, 9-13, 17-19, 21-23, 28-31, 33-35, 50, 53-54**

**ASK ALL:**

Next,

Q.36 How much, if anything, have you heard about the government collecting information about telephone calls, e-mails and other online communications as part of efforts to monitor terrorist activity? Have you heard...**[READ IN ORDER]**?

(U)	
Jun 12-16	
<u>2013</u>	
51	A lot
35	A little
14	Nothing at all
1	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**ASK ALL:**

Q.37 Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the government's collection of telephone and internet data as part of anti-terrorism efforts?

(U)	
Jun 12-16	
<u>2013</u>	
48	Approve
47	Disapprove
4	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**NO QUESTION 38**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.39 As you may know, news organizations found out about this program through the leak of classified information. Do you think the release of this classified information **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**:

(U)		<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON</b>	
Jun 12-16		<i>WikiLeaks</i>	
<u>2013</u>		Dec 2-5	
49	Serves the public interest	<u>2010</u> <sup>1</sup>	29
44	Harms the public interest		53
3	Neither/Both <b>(VOL.)</b>		7
5	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>		11

<sup>1</sup> In December 2010 question was worded, "From what you've read and heard, do you think the release of classified documents about U.S. diplomatic relations by WikiLeaks serves the public interest or harms the public interest?"

**ASK ALL:**

Q.40 Do you think the government should or should not pursue a criminal case against the person responsible for leaking the classified information about the program?

(U)  
 Jun 12-16  
2013  
 54 Should pursue criminal case  
 38 Should not pursue criminal case  
 8 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.41 And thinking about yourself, do you think the U.S. government probably has or probably has not collected data about your own personal phone calls, e-mails or other online communications?

(U)  
 Jun 12-16  
2013  
 54 Probably has  
 39 Probably has not  
 8 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.42 If you knew that the federal government had collected data about your telephone or internet activity would you feel that your personal privacy had been violated, or not?

			<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>
			<b><i>Phone records</i></b>
			<i>Gallup/USA Today</i>
			<u>May 2006<sup>2</sup></u>
(U)			
Jun 12-16			
<u>2013</u>			
63	Yes, would feel violated		57
36	No, would not		42
1	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>		1

**ASK ALL:**

Q.43 What's your impression, do you think the government's collection of telephone and internet data has helped prevent terrorist attacks, or not?

(U)  
 Jun 12-16  
2013  
 53 Yes, has helped prevent terrorist attacks  
 41 No, has not helped prevent terrorist attacks  
 7 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

<sup>2</sup> In May 2006, Gallup/USA Today question was worded, "If you knew that your telephone company had provided your telephone records to the federal government as part of this program, would you feel that your personal privacy had been violated, or not?"

**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?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
Jun 12-16, 2013	23	33	39	3	*	2	17	15
May 1-5, 2013	25	32	37	2	1	3	14	16
Mar 13-17, 2013	26	33	34	3	1	3	14	15
Feb 13-18, 2013	22	32	41	2	*	2	15	19
Jan 9-13, 2013	25	32	38	2	*	2	15	16
Dec 17-19, 2012	21	32	38	4	*	4	15	14
Dec 5-9, 2012	23	33	38	3	1	2	14	19
Oct 31-Nov 3, 2012	26	34	34	3	1	3	13	16
Oct 24-28, 2012	28	33	33	4	*	2	12	16
Oct 4-7, 2012	27	31	36	3	1	3	15	15
Sep 12-16, 2012	24	35	36	2	*	2	14	16
Jul 16-26, 2012	22	33	38	4	*	3	14	15
Jun 28-Jul 9, 2012	24	33	37	3	*	3	15	17
<b>Yearly Totals</b>								
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
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
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	--	--	--	--	--

**ASK ALL:**

TEAPARTY2 From what you know, do you agree or disagree with the Tea Party movement, or don't you have an opinion either way?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Not
	Agree	Disagree	No opinion either way	Haven't heard of	Refused	heard of/ DK
Jun 12-16, 2013	22	29	46	2	2	--
May 23-26, 2013	17	20	56	3	4	--
Feb 14-17, 2013	19	26	52	2	1	--
Dec 5-9, 2012	18	29	50	2	1	--
Oct 31-Nov 3, 2012 (RVs)	19	29	47	1	3	--

## TEAPARTY2 CONTINUED...

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No opinion either way</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>Haven't heard of</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>Refused</u>	<i>Not heard of/ DK</i>
Oct 4-7, 2012	19	25	52	2	2	--
Sep 12-16, 2012	18	26	53	2	2	--
Jul 16-26, 2012	16	27	54	2	1	--
Jun 28-Jul 9, 2012	19	27	49	3	2	--
Jun 7-17, 2012	21	25	52	2	1	--
May 9-Jun 3, 2012	16	25	54	2	3	--
Apr 4-15, 2012	20	26	50	3	2	--
Mar 7-11, 2012	19	29	48	2	2	--
Feb 8-12, 2012	18	25	53	2	2	--
Jan 11-16, 2012	20	24	52	2	2	--
Jan 4-8, 2012	18	25	52	2	3	--
Dec 7-11, 2011	19	27	50	2	2	--
Nov 9-14, 2011	20	27	51	1	1	--
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011	19	27	51	2	1	--
Aug 17-21, 2011	20	27	50	1	1	--
Jul 20-24, 2011	20	24	53	1	1	--
Jun 15-19, 2011	20	26	50	3	2	--
May 25-30, 2011	18	23	54	2	2	--
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	22	29	47	1	1	--
Mar 8-14, 2011	19	25	54	1	1	--
Feb 22-Mar 1, 2011	20	25	52	2	2	--
Feb 2-7, 2011 <sup>3</sup>	22	22	53	2	2	--
Jan 5-9, 2011	24	22	50	2	1	--
Dec 1-5, 2010	22	26	49	2	2	--
Nov 4-7, 2010	27	22	49	1	1	--
Oct 27-30, 2010 (RVs)	29	25	32	--	1	13
Oct 13-18, 2010 (RVs)	28	24	30	--	1	16
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010 (RVs)	29	26	32	--	1	13
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	22	18	37	--	1	21
Jun 16-20, 2010	24	18	30	--	*	27
May 20-23, 2010	25	18	31	--	1	25
Mar 11-21, 2010	24	14	29	--	1	31

---

**Key to Pew Research trends noted in the topline:**

(U) Pew Research Center/USA Today polls

---

<sup>3</sup> In the February 2-7, 2011 survey and before, question read "...do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the Tea Party movement..." 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 2010 through October 2010, 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 2010 it was described as "the Tea Party protests that have taken place in the U.S. over the past year."