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Most Support Raising Taxes on High Incomes  
to Reduce Deficit

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Obama Draws More Confidence  
than GOP Leaders on Deficit

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## Most Support Raising Taxes on High Incomes to Reduce Deficit Obama Draws More Confidence than GOP Leaders on Deficit

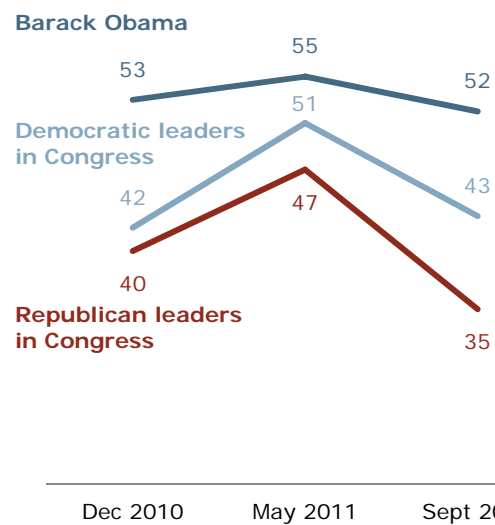
As the nation prepares for another round of deficit reduction debates, the public's confidence in congressional leaders, particularly Republican leaders in Congress, has plummeted. Just 35% say they have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in Republican leaders in Congress to do the right thing when it comes to dealing with the federal budget deficit, down from 47% in May. Fully 62% say they have little or no confidence in the Republican leaders on this issue.

Public confidence in Barack Obama on the budget deficit, by comparison, has remained largely unchanged. The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Sept. 22-25 among 1,000 adults finds that 52% express at least a fair amount of confidence in Obama to do the right thing when it comes to dealing with the deficit, virtually unchanged from 55% earlier in the year.

The drop in confidence in GOP congressional leaders is broad based, even occurring among Republicans themselves. The share of Republicans confident in their party's leaders on this issue has fallen from 76% four months ago to 62% today, with comparable declines among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who agree with the Tea Party and those who do not.

### Obama Holds Wide Confidence Advantage on Budget Deficit

*% saying they have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in each to do the right thing in dealing with the federal budget deficit:*



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Public trust in Democratic congressional leaders has also suffered – 43% say they have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in Democratic leaders, down from 51% four months ago.

Democrats offer a more positive assessment of their leaders' handling of the deficit than Republicans do of theirs. Fully 84% of Democrats have at least a fair amount of confidence in Obama to do the right thing regarding the deficit, and 75% are confident in Democratic leaders in Congress. This compares with 62% of Republicans who are confident in how GOP congressional leaders will handle this issue.

Independents are equally skeptical of both parties in Congress (35% have at least a fair amount of confidence in Republican leaders, 34% express confidence in Democratic leaders). Nearly half of independents (47%) say they have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in Obama to do the right thing when it comes to dealing with the federal budget deficit.

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### Confidence in GOP Leaders on Deficit Falls among Republicans

<i>Great deal or fair amount of confident in...</i>	<b>Dec 2010</b>	<b>May 2011</b>	<b>Sept 2011</b>	<b>May-Sept Change</b>
	%	%	%	
<b>Barack Obama</b>				
Total	53	55	52	-3
Republican	17	21	20	-1
Democrat	85	85	84	-1
Independent	50	52	47	-5
<b>Rep Leaders</b>				
Total	40	47	35	-12
Republican	73	76	62	-14
Democrat	24	30	14	-16
Independent	35	46	35	-11
<b>Dem Leaders</b>				
Total	42	51	43	-8
Republican	17	26	19	-7
Democrat	72	79	75	-4
Independent	37	45	34	-11

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## Proposals to Reduce Deficit and Debt

The survey also finds continued public support for raising the tax rate on high incomes as a way to reduce the federal budget deficit and the size of the national debt.

Two-thirds (67%) approve of raising the tax rate on incomes over \$250,000 as a means of reducing the national debt. This is virtually unchanged from May (66% approve). Just 30% disapprove of raising tax rates for incomes above \$250,000.

### Majority Approves of Taxing Incomes Above \$250K to Reduce Nation's Debt

		May	September			
		Total	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
<i>In order to reduce the deficit and national debt...</i>		%	%	%	%	%
Raise income tax on income over \$250,000	Approve	66	67	47	82	67
	Disapprove	31	30	51	15	29
Reduce military commitments overseas	Approve	65	66	54	72	70
	Disapprove	30	29	42	24	26
Limit tax deductions for large corporations	Approve	62	56	56	56	60
	Disapprove	34	40	41	39	38
Making changes to Social Security and Medicare	Approve	--	48	56	46	49
	Disapprove	--	46	40	48	47
Reduce funding to help lower income Americans	Approve	40	40	52	33	38
	Disapprove	54	55	43	63	58
Reduce funding to states for roads & education	Approve	23	32	41	24	32
	Disapprove	73	66	57	74	66

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About half who approve of raising the tax rate on incomes above \$250,000 – 33% of the public overall – say they *strongly* approve of this proposal. By contrast, only about a third of those who disapprove – 10% of the public – say they *strongly* disapprove of raising tax rates for incomes above \$250,000.

Democrats overwhelming support raising the tax rate on income over \$250,000; 82% of Democrats approve of this proposal and 67% of independents agree. As was the case in May, Republicans are divided: 47% approve and 51% disapprove of higher tax rates on income in excess of \$250,000.

Views of other proposals to address the deficit and national debt also have changed only modestly since May. Two-thirds (66%) approve of reducing military commitments overseas to reduce the debt while 56% approve of limiting tax deductions for large corporations. While more Democrats (72%) than Republicans (54%) approve of reducing military commitments to reduce the debt, there are no partisan differences in opinions about limiting corporate tax deductions to achieve this goal (56% of Republicans and Democrats, 60% of independents).

Most Americans continue to oppose reducing federal government spending on programs to help lower income people (55% disapprove, 40% approve) to reduce the budget deficit and national debt. And two-thirds (66%) disapprove of reducing federal support to states for things like education and roads, while only about half that number (32%) approves of this proposal.

## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted September 22-25, 2011 among a national sample of 1,000 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (600 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 400 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 186 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. 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/detailed>.

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 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2010 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 sample sizes and 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	1,000	4.0 percentage points
Republicans	244	8.0 percentage points
Democrats	302	7.0 percentage points
Independents	377	6.5 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  
SEPTEMBER 22-25, 2011 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1,000**

**PEW.1-PEW.5 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**ASK ALL:**

Next...

PEW.6 As you may know, political leaders are debating various ways to reduce the deficit and size of the national debt. Please tell me if you would approve or disapprove of each of the following. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]** Would you strongly approve, approve, disapprove or strongly disapprove of this as a way to reduce the size of the national debt? What about **[NEXT ITEM]**? **[IF NECESSARY: Would you strongly approve, approve, disapprove or strongly disapprove of this as a way to reduce the size of the national debt?]**<sup>1</sup>

	-----APPROVE-----			-----DISAPPROVE-----			(VOL.)
	Strongly	App-	App-	Strongly	Dis-	Dis-	
	<u>Net</u>	<u>rove</u>	<u>rove</u>	<u>Net</u>	<u>approve</u>	<u>approve</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
a. Reduce federal funding for programs that help lower-income Americans							
September 22-25, 2011	41	12	28	55	20	35	4
May 25-30, 2011	40	--	--	54	--	--	6
b. Reduce military commitments overseas							
September 22-25, 2011	66	26	40	29	9	20	4
May 25-30, 2011	65	--	--	30	--	--	6
c. Reduce federal funding to states for things like education and roads							
September 22-25, 2011	32	10	22	66	30	36	2
May 25-30, 2011	23	--	--	73	--	--	4
Dec 1-5, 2010	25	--	--	71	--	--	4
d. Limit tax deductions for large corporations							
September 22-25, 2011	56	25	31	39	14	26	5
May 25-30, 2011	62	--	--	34	--	--	4
e. Raise the income tax rate on incomes over \$250,000 a year							
September 22-25, 2011	67	33	34	29	10	20	4
May 25-30, 2011	66	--	--	31	--	--	3
f. Making changes to the Social Security and Medicare programs							
September 22-25, 2011	49	16	32	45	19	27	6

<sup>1</sup> In December 2010, question began, "Thinking about ways to reduce the federal budget deficit..." and in May 2011, the question began, "Thinking about ways to reduce the deficit and size of the national debt..." In December, 2010 and May, 2011 respondents were not asked whether they strongly approve/disapprove.

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.7 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]**?

		A great <u>deal</u>	A fair <u>amount</u>	Not too <u>much</u>	No confidence <u>at all</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	Barack Obama					
	September 22-25, 2011	18	34	21	25	2
	May 25-30, 2011	22	33	22	21	2
	Dec 1-5, 2010	19	34	20	24	4
b.	Republican leaders in Congress					
	September 22-25, 2011	5	30	31	31	4
	May 25-30, 2011	7	40	31	20	2
	Dec 1-5, 2010	6	34	29	27	4
c.	Democratic leaders in Congress					
	September 22-25, 2011	10	33	29	24	3
	May 25-30, 2011	12	39	28	18	3
	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?

		(VOL.) No	(VOL.) Other	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean Rep	Lean Dem
September 22-25, 2011	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>preference</u>	<u>party</u>	
	23	30	39	4	*	3
						14
						1

**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?

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	No opinion <u>either way</u>	(VOL.) Haven't <u>heard of</u>	(VOL.) <u>Refused</u>	Not heard of/ <u>DK</u>
September 22-25, 2011	19	29	46	2	3	--
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>2</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

<sup>2</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 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."