



CBS News/New York Times Poll  
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**The Economy, the Budget Deficit and Gun Control**  
 January 15-19, 2011

- Most Americans continue to think the federal budget deficit is a very serious problem, and more than half say immediate action is required to address it. 64% are very concerned that the deficit will create hardships for future generations.
- However, not all agree the problem needs immediate action: nearly four in ten think lowering the deficit can wait for better economic times.
- Americans are far more willing to see changes in military spending rather than Medicare and Social Security in order to help lower the deficit.
- Views of the national economy remain bad, but have improved. Now 74% say the economy is fairly or very bad, down from 82% in November.

70% of Americans say the budget deficit is a very serious problem for the country, and nearly two-thirds are very concerned about the impact it will have on future generations.

**Concerned Large Deficit will Create Hardships for Future Generations?**

Very	64%
Somewhat	26
Not	8

Americans cite specific hardships such as jobs and unemployment, the impact on services like health care and Social Security, and concern about the future of the U.S. economy as a result of the deficit.

More than half of the public thinks it's necessary to take immediate action to lower the budget deficit, while 38% think it's possible to wait for better economic times. Republicans and independents see the deficit as a more urgent matter than Democrats.

**The Federal Budget Deficit...**

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Needs immediate action	56%	68%	44%	57%
Can wait for better economic times	38	26	49	36

**Ways to Reduce the Deficit**

When Americans are faced with a choice between having their taxes raised or cuts in government programs from which they benefit, 62% prefer cutting government programs as a

way to lower the deficit. Majorities of Republicans and independents support reducing spending on government programs, while Democrats are more divided.

**Prefer to Reduce the Deficit**

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Raising your taxes	29%	11%	42%	31%
Cutting gov't programs that benefit you	62	81	49	60

More than half of Americans expect it may be necessary to cut government programs that affect them in order to reduce the deficit. Fewer think it will be necessary to increase their taxes.

Medicare, Social Security and the military are the largest items in the federal budget, and when asked to choose which one they would be willing to change in order to reduce government spending, 55% of Americans pick the military – the top choice. Significantly fewer are willing to change Medicare or Social Security.

**Which One Would You Change to Cut Government Spending?**

Military	55%
Medicare	21
Social Security	13

More specifically, a majority of Americans choose reducing the number of U.S. troops in Europe and Asia as the area of military spending they would most like to see cut.

**Which One Would You Prefer in Order to Reduce the Deficit?**

Reduce troops in Europe and Asia	55%
Eliminating weapons programs	19
Reducing non-combat military pay	12
Reducing size of the armed forces	7

Medicare and Social Security make up a significant portion of the nation's budget, and changes to these programs may be necessary in order to keep them paying benefits. Given a choice, Americans prefer increasing taxes on people who pay into Medicare and Social Security rather than reducing future benefits for recipients of those programs.

**Medicare and Social Security: Reduce Future Benefits or Raise Taxes?**

	Medicare	Social Security
Reduce benefits	24%	25%
Raise taxes	64	63

When faced with some possible changes to the Medicare program which may help lower the deficit, Americans are most willing to raise the age at which people receive benefits (now at age 65). This remedy is far more popular than raising premiums on all Medicare beneficiaries or having the program cover fewer treatments.

**Which Change to Medicare Benefits Would You Prefer In Order to Reduce The Deficit?**

Raising age people receive benefits	46%
Raising premiums for all	26
Covering fewer treatments	16

However, when the option of raising premiums for Medicare beneficiaries with higher incomes is introduced, that becomes the most popular choice.

**Which Change to Medicare Benefits Would You Prefer  
In Order to Reduce The Deficit?**

Raising premiums for high-income	48%
Raising age people receive benefits	21
Raising premiums for all	16
Covering fewer treatments	9

In a similar question about Social Security, 66% of Americans again choose reducing benefits for those with higher incomes as a way to keep the program financially sound. Far fewer want to see the age at which people receive benefits raised or scheduled benefit increases for future retirees reduced.

**Which Change to Social Security Would You Prefer  
in Order to Keep it Financially Sound?**

Reducing benefits for high-income Americans	66%
Raising age people receive benefits	18
Reducing scheduled benefit increases	8

When Americans are asked to choose from a list of other domestic programs they would be willing to reduce in order to cut government spending, 34% pick roads, bridges and infrastructure, followed by science and medical research (26%), and aid to the unemployed and poor (21%). Only 8% are willing to reduce spending on education.

Cutting spending is one way to lower the deficit, while raising revenue is another. When Americans are asked to choose from a list of taxes that may help reduce the deficit, the creation of a national sales tax and limiting the mortgage tax reduction are the top answers. Taxing health insurance benefits and a national gas tax are less popular.

**Which Way to Raise Taxes Would You Prefer  
in Order to Reduce the Deficit ?**

Creating a national sales tax	33%
Limiting mortgage interest tax deduction	32
Raising national gasoline tax	12
Taxing health insurance benefits	10

While Americans express concern about the country's deficit situation, they are not entirely opposed to deficits. 75% think it is sometimes okay for the government to run them, such as in emergencies or if the size of the deficit is kept manageable. Just 6% it's generally okay for the government to run whatever deficits it needs to if that's what it takes to provide important services to people, and 16% think it is never acceptable for the government to run a deficit.

**The Economy**

Although concern about the deficit is widespread, that issue pales in comparison to concerns about the economy and jobs. As they have throughout President Obama's first two years in office, Americans volunteer the economy and jobs as the most important problem facing the country today -- 51% name that. The budget deficit and national debt (6%) and health care (6%) are far behind.

	<b>Most Important Problem</b>		
	Now	10/2010	1/2009
Economy and jobs	51%	54%	60%
Budget deficit/nat'l debt	6	3	2
Health care	6	7	2
Immigration	3	3	1
Education	2	2	2
War/Iraq/Afghanistan	2	1	3

74% of Americans rate the national economy as bad, including 28% who think it is very bad. Still, assessment of the economy has been slowly improving over the course of President Obama's first two years in office. 26% now say the economy is good, up eight points from the end of last November, and up 21 points from a historic low at the beginning of his presidency in February, 2009.

	<b>Condition of the Economy</b>		
	Now	11/2010	2/2009
Good	26%	18%	5%
Bad	74	82	94

30% of Americans think the economy is getting better, while 21% think it is getting worse and 46% don't see any change either way. These numbers are similar to views at the end of last November, though they are a better assessment than at the beginning of the Obama presidency.

	<b>Direction of the Economy</b>		
	Now	11/2010	2/2009
Better	30%	31%	5%
Worse	21	24	51
Same	46	44	42

Americans who have kept their jobs during the country's period of high unemployment have fared relatively well in some ways – most do not report either a loss in wages or benefits in the last twelve months. About seven in 10 working Americans have not had either their wages or benefits reduced.

	<b>Has the Bad Economy Reduced Your...</b> (Among Working Americans)	
	Wages	Benefits
Yes	30%	30%
No	70	69

In addition, 36% of working Americans report having received a raise in pay within the past year, and more than half have had their pay increased within the past two years.

<b>Last Pay Raise</b> (Among Working Americans)	
Within last year	36%
1-2 years ago	28
More than two years ago	29

Still, Americans remain concerned about job loss. 41% of Americans are very concerned that someone in their family will be out of work and looking for a job in the next 12 months, and another 25% are somewhat concerned. These numbers have changed little over the past two years.

**Concern about Household Job Loss in Next 12 Months**

	Now	10/2010	2/2010	2/2009
Very concerned	41%	36%	31%	44%
Somewhat concerned	25	26	26	28
Not too/at all concerned	34	38	41	27

**Gun Control Laws**

The aftermath of the shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and others in Tucson, Arizona finds little changed in the public's views of gun control. Now, 46% think gun laws should be made more strict, while 38% want them kept as they are now, similar to views expressed immediately after the shooting.

**Should Gun Control Laws Be...?**

	Now	Last week	4/2010	10/2002	11/1994
More strict	46%	47%	40%	56%	59%
Less strict	13	12	16	11	10
Kept as now	38	36	42	30	28

Nor has there been much change in views on banning the sale of all handguns; just 33% favor that, while twice as many, 65%, oppose it. Those percentages have remained steady since 2000.

**Ban on Sale of All Handguns**

	Now	4/2007	3/2000	4/1999	1/1994	3/1989	4/1981
Favor	32%	33%	34%	43%	46%	40%	43%
Oppose	65	64	63	53	50	55	51

As would be expected, Americans who live in households with a gun are less supportive of a ban on the sale of all handguns. Just 18% of them favor a ban, while 81% are opposed.

There is more public support for limits on the sales of other types of weapons and ammunition. Certain assault weapons were banned from public sale in 1994, but the ban was allowed to expire in 2004. Now, 63% favor a nationwide ban on assault weapons, up from 2009 but similar to the level of support in 2000.

**Nationwide Ban on Assault Weapons**

	Now	4/2009	3/2000	8/1996	1/1995	8/1994
Favor	63%	54%	67%	72%	67%	78%
Oppose	34	41	27	24	27	19

Even a majority of gun-owning households favor a ban on assault weapons, although by a smaller margin. 54% of them favor it, and 44% oppose.

Nearly two in 3 Americans favor a ban on high capacity magazines or clips that can hold many rounds of ammunition, which were used in the Arizona shootings. 63% favor a ban on those (including 58% of gun-owning households), while 34% oppose it.

**Ban on High Capacity Gun Clips**

Favor	63%
Oppose	34

And while there are partisan differences on many of these questions, with Democrats more supportive of stricter gun laws and Republicans opposed, half of Republicans favor a ban on assault weapons and on high capacity magazine clips.

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This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1,036 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone January 15 - 19, 2010. Phone numbers were dialed from RDD samples of both standard land-lines and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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q1-q2 SEPARATE RELEASE

q3 What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Oct10a
	Total	*** Party ID ***			
	%	Rep	Dem	Ind	%
Economy and jobs	51	50	54	49	54
Health Care	6	4	9	5	7
Budget Deficit/National Debt	6	11	3	5	3
Immigration	3	3	0	4	3
Education	2	1	1	4	2
War/Iraq/Afghanistan	2	1	5	1	1
Misc. Government Issues	2	3	1	1	1
President/Barack Obama	2	3	0	1	2
Partisan Politics	2	1	4	1	1
Crime	2	0	0	4	0
Other	17	18	19	19	21
DK/NA	5	5	4	6	5

q4-q11 SEPARATE RELEASE

q12 How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

					Nov10c
Very good	2	1	3	1	1
Fairly good	24	16	37	18	17
Fairly bad	46	47	40	51	46
Very bad	28	36	19	30	36
DK/NA	0	0	1	0	0

q13 Do you think the economy is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

					Nov10c
Better	30	15	51	22	31
Worse	21	32	10	23	24
Same	46	52	34	52	44
DK/NA	3	1	5	3	1

q14-q23 SEPARATE RELEASE

q24 So far, do you think the government's stimulus package has made the economy better, made the economy worse, or has it had no impact on the economy so far?

					Oct10a
Better	29	9	53	23	29
Worse	21	34	8	23	21
No impact	44	53	35	44	45
DK/NA	6	4	4	10	5

q25 So far, do you think the government's stimulus package has made the job situation better, made the job situation worse, or has it had no impact on the job situation so far?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Better	26	5	46	24
Worse	15	23	10	14
No impact	55	69	39	58
DK/NA	4	3	5	4

q26-q27 BLANK

q28 As you may know, the budget deficit is the shortfall when the amount of money the government spends is more than the amount of money it takes in. How much have you heard or read about the federal government's current budget deficit -- a lot, some, not much, or nothing at all?

					Apr10a
A lot	33	36	31	32	30
Some	38	36	41	36	40
Not much	22	20	19	25	21
Nothing at all	7	7	9	5	8
DK/NA	0	1	0	2	1

q29 How serious a problem do you think the budget deficit is for the country right now--very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

					Jan11a
Very serious	70	81	58	73	70
Somewhat serious	25	16	34	22	25
Not too serious	3	1	6	3	3
Not at all serious	0	1	1	0	1
DK/NA	2	1	1	2	1

q30 Do you think it is necessary to take immediate action to lower the budget deficit or do you think it's possible to wait for better economic times?

Immediate action	56	68	44	57
Possible to wait	38	26	49	36
DK/NA	6	6	7	7

q31 How concerned are you that a large budget deficit will create hardships for future generations of Americans--very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not concerned at all?

Very concerned	64	78	51	66
Somewhat concerned	26	19	33	26
Not too concerned	5	2	9	5
Not concerned at all	3	2	4	2
DK/NA	2	0	3	1



q32 What specific hardships concern you the most?

\* VERY OR SOMEWHAT CONCERNED IN q31 \*  
 \*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Jobs/outsourcing/unemployment	29	31	28	28
Services cut/reduced	18	14	26	14
Hurt economy in future	15	16	13	16
Future generations pay	9	14	6	8
Country in debt	7	7	6	9
Taxes will go up	5	6	4	4
U.S. become weaker country	2	2	2	3
Nothing	0	0	1	0
Other	5	2	5	6
DK/NA	10	8	9	12

q33 In general, which comes closer to your view of the government's budget deficit? 1. It is generally okay for the government to run whatever deficits it needs, if that's what it takes to provide important services to people. 2. It is sometimes okay for the government to run deficits such as in emergencies or if the size of the deficit is kept manageable, OR 3. It is never okay for the government to run deficits under any circumstances.

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Jan11a
Generally okay	6	2	8	9	7
Sometimes okay	75	73	82	71	72
Never okay	16	24	8	18	18
DK/NA	3	1	2	2	3

q34 In order to reduce the federal budget deficit, do you think it will be necessary or not necessary to increase taxes on people like you?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Jan93a
Necessary	41	35	46	41	42
Not necessary	56	62	50	57	54
DK/NA	3	3	4	2	4

q35 In order to reduce the federal budget deficit, do you think it will be necessary or not necessary to cut back on government programs that benefit people like you?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Feb93a
Necessary	55	68	44	57	56
Not necessary	39	27	51	38	37
DK/NA	6	5	5	5	7

q36 If you HAD to choose ONE, which would you prefer in order to reduce the federal budget deficit--raising taxes on people like you or reducing spending on government programs that benefit people like you?

Raising taxes	29	11	42	31
Reducing spending	62	81	49	60
DK/NA	9	8	9	9

q37 If you HAD to choose ONE, which of the following domestic programs would you be willing to reduce in order to cut government spending -- 1. education, OR 2. Roads, bridges and other infrastructure, OR 3. science and medical research, OR 4. aid to the unemployed and poor?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	*** Party ID ***			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Education	8	13	7	6
Roads, bridges, and other	34	23	41	37
Science and medical research	26	26	23	28
Aid to the unemployed and	21	32	13	20
DK/NA	11	6	16	9

q38 As you may know, the largest items in the federal budget are Medicare, the government health insurance program for seniors, Social Security and the military. If you HAD to choose ONE, which of the following programs would you be willing to change in order to cut government spending-- Medicare, Social Security or the military?

Medicare	21	31	10	23
Social Security	13	17	11	13
Military	55	42	66	55
DK/NA	11	10	13	9

q39 Currently, most Americans receive Medicare benefits once they turn 65. But the money Medicare takes in from taxpayers is not enough to pay for the program as it exists now. If you HAD to choose ONE in order to reduce the federal budget deficit, which would you prefer: reduce the future benefits of Medicare recipients or raise Medicare taxes on people paying into the system?

Reduce benefits	24	33	16	26
Raise taxes	64	57	71	63
DK/NA	12	10	13	11

q40 If you HAD to choose ONE, which of the following changes to Medicare benefits would you prefer in order to reduce the federal budget deficit: 1. raising the age people start receiving Medicare benefits, OR 2. raising the premiums all Medicare recipients have to pay, OR 3. covering fewer treatments?

	***** HALF SAMPLE A *****			
Raising age people receive	46	51	39	50
Raising premiums	26	29	31	19
Covering fewer treatments	16	8	19	19
DK/NA	12	12	11	12

q41 If you HAD to choose ONE, which of the following changes to Medicare benefits would you prefer in order to reduce the federal budget deficit: 1. raising the age people start receiving Medicare benefits, OR 2. raising the premiums all Medicare recipients have to pay, OR 3. raising the premiums Medicare recipients who have high-incomes have to pay OR 4. covering fewer treatments?

	***** HALF SAMPLE B *****			
Raising age people receive	21	32	7	25
Raising premiums for all	16	15	20	13
Raising premiums for wealthy	48	37	63	43
Covering fewer treatments	9	11	3	12
DK/NA	6	5	7	7

q42 If you HAD to choose ONE, which of the following changes to military spending would you prefer in order to reduce the federal budget deficit: 1. reducing the size of the army and other branches of the military, OR 2. reducing the number of American troops stationed in Europe and Asia, OR 3. eliminating some major weapons programs, OR 4. reducing the pay and benefits of non-combat military personnel and veterans?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	*** Party ID ***			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Reducing size of the army	7	5	7	9
Reduce troops Europe & Asia	55	56	53	55
Eliminating weapons programs	19	13	21	20
Reducing non-combat military	12	16	10	12
DK/NA	7	10	9	4

q43 Currently, most Americans are scheduled to receive full Social Security benefits by age 67. But the money Social Security takes in from taxpayers is not enough to pay for the program in the long term. If you HAD to choose ONE in order to deal with this shortfall, which would you prefer: reduce the future benefits of Social Security recipients or raise Social Security taxes on people paying into the system?

Reducing benefits	25	31	19	27
Raise taxes	63	54	72	62
DK/NA	12	15	9	11

q44 If you HAD to choose ONE, which of the following changes to Social Security benefits would you prefer in order to keep the program financially sound: 1. raising the age people start receiving full Social Security benefits beyond 67, OR 2. reducing scheduled benefit increases for future retirees, OR 3. reducing benefits for Americans with higher incomes?

Raising age people receive	18	25	13	18
Reducing scheduled benefit	8	8	7	9
Reducing benefits for wealthy	66	59	71	67
DK/NA	8	8	9	6

q45 If you HAD to choose ONE, which of the following ways of raising taxes would you prefer in order to reduce the federal budget deficit: 1. taxing the health insurance people receive from their employers, OR 2. limiting tax deductions for interest paid on home mortgages, OR 3. raising the national gasoline tax, or 4. creating a national sales tax?

Taxing health benefits	10	13	11	7
Limiting mortgage deduction	32	33	32	32
Raising national gasoline tax	12	7	16	13
Creating a national sales tax	33	33	33	34
DK/NA	13	14	8	14

q46-q58 SEPARATE RELEASE

q59 In general, do you think gun control laws should be made more strict, less strict, or kept as they are now?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan11b
	%	%	%	%	%
More strict	46	27	68	42	47
Less strict	13	17	5	17	12
Kept as they are now	38	53	25	40	36
DK/NA	3	3	2	1	5

q60 Would you favor or oppose a ban on the sale of all handguns, except those that are issued to law enforcement officers?

					Apr07b
Favor	32	17	50	28	33
Oppose	65	82	46	70	64
Don't know/No answer	3	1	4	2	3

q61 Do you favor or oppose a nationwide ban on assault weapons?

					Apr09b
Favor	63	53	79	56	54
Oppose	34	44	18	41	41
DK/NA	3	3	3	3	5

q62 As you may know, high-capacity magazines or clips can hold many rounds of ammunition, so a shooter can fire more rounds without manually reloading. Would you favor or oppose a nationwide ban on the sale of high-capacity magazines that hold many rounds of ammunition?

Favor	63	55	70	62
Oppose	34	42	25	35
DK/NA	3	3	5	3

q63-q71 SEPARATE RELEASE

q72 How concerned are you that in the next 12 months you or someone else in your household might be out of work and looking for a job - very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not concerned at all?

					Oct10e
Very concerned	41	43	37	42	36
Somewhat concerned	25	22	26	26	26
Not at all concerned	34	35	37	31	38
DK/NA	0	0	0	1	0

q73 Are you currently employed - either full-time or part-time -- or are you temporarily out of work, or are you not in the market for work at all?

IF NOT IN MARKET FOR WORK, ASK: Are you currently retired, or not?

Currently employed	54	54	54	53
Temporarily out of work	16	14	15	19
Not in the market for work	12	10	11	15
Retired	18	22	20	12
DK/NA	0	0	0	1

q74 How long have you been out of work and actively seeking employment less than six months, six to 11 months, 12 months to 18 months, or more than 18 months?

	* TEMPORARILY UNEMPLOYED *			
Less than 6 months	42	49	35	43
6-11 months	13	9	12	16
12-18 months	23	26	26	20
More than 18 months	18	8	22	21
DK/NA	4	8	5	0

q75 In the last 12 months, as a result of bad economic conditions, have your salary or wages been reduced, or not?

	***** EMPLOYED *****				jul10b
Yes	30	22	33	33	31
No	70	77	66	67	69
DK/NA	0	1	1	0	0

q76 In the last 12 months, as a result of bad economic conditions, have your benefits at work been reduced, or not?

Yes	30	32	31	27
No	69	67	67	73
DK/NA	1	1	2	0

q77 When was the last time you received an increase in your base pay -- within the last year, 1 to 2 years ago, 3 to 5 years ago, or more than 5 years ago?

Within last year	36	32	43	33
1-2 years ago	28	33	25	27
3-5 years ago	20	19	18	22
More than 5 years ago	9	10	7	10
DK/NA	7	6	7	8

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1036	
Total Republicans	302	284 (27%)
Total Democrats	341	351 (34%)
Total Independents	393	401 (38%)