

*spotlight on*

# POVERTY *and* OPPORTUNITY

THE SOURCE FOR NEWS, IDEAS AND ACTION



***American Attitudes on  
the Poor and the Deficit:  
A Collection of Public  
Opinion Responses***

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# Spotlight on Poverty: The Source for News, Ideas and Action

## Mission

*Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity: The Source for News, Ideas and Action* is a non-partisan initiative that brings together diverse perspectives from the political, policy, advocacy and foundation communities to find genuine solutions to the economic hardship confronting millions of Americans. Through the ongoing exchange of ideas, research and data, *Spotlight* seeks to inform the policy debate about reducing poverty and increasing opportunity in the United States.

## About Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity: The Source for News, Ideas and Action

*Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity: The Source for News, Ideas and Action* was launched in October 2007 by major U.S. foundations to foster non-partisan debate during the 2008 campaign season about policy approaches for addressing poverty and opportunity. Today, *Spotlight* provides a platform for ongoing discussion about how best to address the needs of those who have fallen into poverty during the Great Recession and those who have struggled for generations to move up the economic ladder.

*Spotlight* is perhaps the leading non-partisan forum on poverty in the country, known for presenting “big tent” ideas and solutions for reducing poverty and increasing economic opportunity through its comprehensive website, weekly e-newsletter, policy events, and original research and surveys. *Spotlight* has attracted interest from public figures of all political stripes who write for the website’s exclusive commentary section, participate in webcasts and rely on the one-stop shop website for the latest news, research, data, and commentary about poverty and opportunity.

For more information, please visit [\*Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity: The Source for News, Ideas and Action\*](#).

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# Introduction

No debate looms larger in America right now than that over federal budgets. Anxiety over deficits and our long-term debt has reached record levels, and many segments of the electorate are clamoring for action. A critical question for all those who care about poverty – Democrat and Republican alike – is how these debates could affect low-income Americans.

Public opinion may have a say in determining the answer to that question. To better understand public opinion regarding the intersection of budgets and low-income issues, *Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity* has conducted a review of public opinion polls, both recent and historic.

Two key themes emerge from this review. First, very few polling questions explicitly target the relationship between concern over deficits and attitudes toward programs that target or benefit low-income Americans. Second, public opinion polls that indicate public agreement with regard to deficits often mask underlying disagreement among respondents of different income levels.

Within this context, the review discusses in greater detail six findings:

- 1 Concern about the deficit has reached historic highs**
- 2 Low-income Americans remain more worried about income equality than higher-income Americans**
- 3 Americans don't identify spending on the poor as the leading cause of the deficit**
- 4 Low-income Americans are as worried about spending cuts as federal budget problems**
- 5 Appetite is growing to address the deficit through a combination of cuts and revenue**
- 6 Americans are reluctant to make specific cuts—especially to programs for the poor**

These findings result from an analysis of poll questions dating as far back as 1980. Most of the survey questions included in this analysis were drawn from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. Each question referenced is accompanied by a full citation, including sample size and dates in the field. In addition, multiple appendices list questions in full, with a complete methodological note.

This is a critical moment for those who care about low-income Americans. Policymakers face difficult choices, and our national conversation is often bereft of quality, accurate data about what the American public believes. This report is intended to add needed information to an important conversation.

# Concern about the Deficit Has Reached Historic Highs

Public anxiety about deficits and their impact on the country has reached record levels.

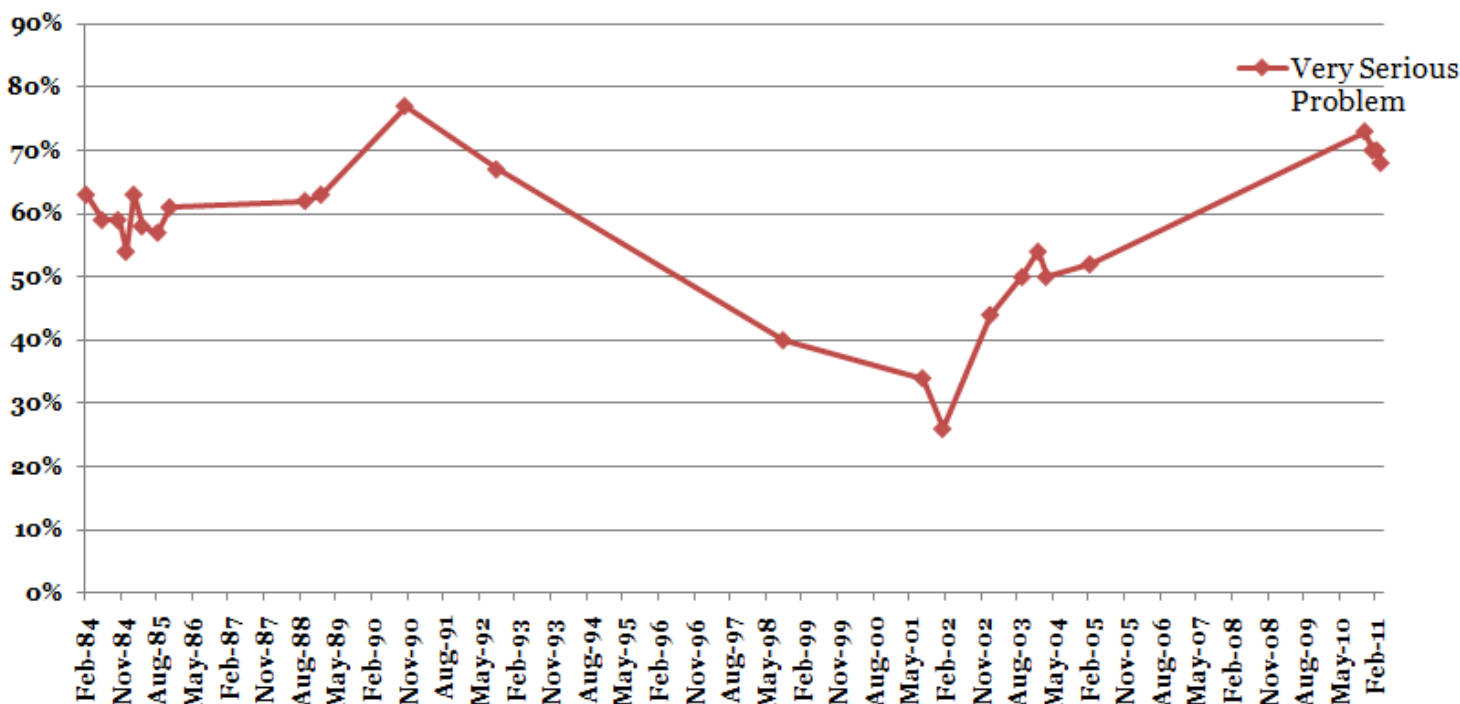
When asked how serious a problem the federal budget deficit is in a June 2011 CBS poll, 75 percent regarded the deficit as “a very serious problem.”<sup>1</sup> This marked a rise in concern of 49 percentage points since 2002.

Over the last 25 years, concern about deficits has only been higher in 1990, when a Time/CNN/Yankelovich Clany Shulman poll found that 77 percent regarded federal budget deficits as “a serious problem.” (See Figure 1).

This anxiety is not abstract, but reflects an acute concern about how current deficits will affect future generations. When asked in several Associated Press/GfK polls between 2008 and 2011, “How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?,” 77-85 percent of respondents replied that they were very worried or somewhat worried.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1

## Percentage of Americans who see the budget deficit as concerning, over 25 years



<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.1

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A.2

Figure 2

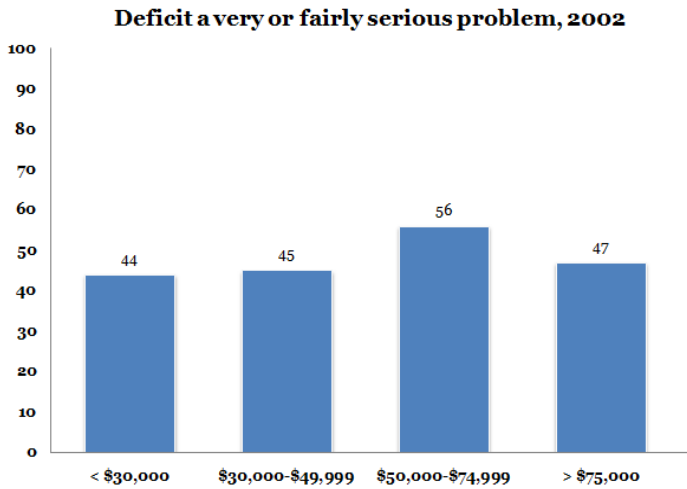
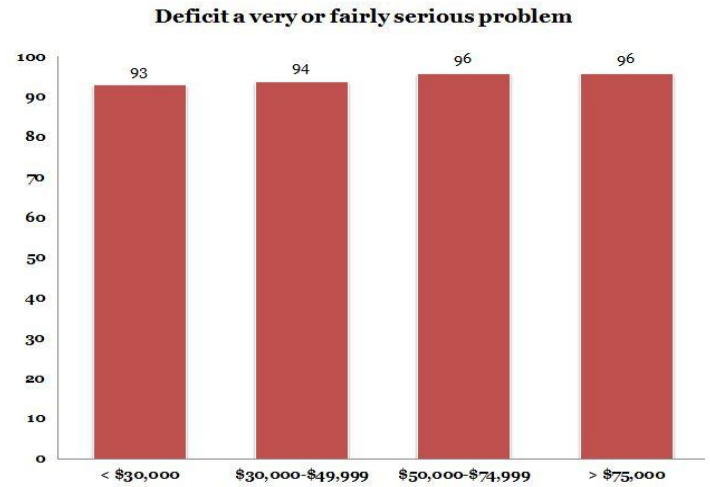


Figure 3



The recent debt ceiling agreement has done little to allay this concern. In an August 2011 USA Today/Gallup poll taken on the same day Congress reached an agreement to lift the debt ceiling, one in five (22 percent) saw the agreement as “a step backward” and half (50 percent) saw the agreement as neither a step forward nor a step backwards.<sup>3</sup> In a separate August CBS News/New York Times poll, a plurality (44 percent) said that the “spending cuts included in the debt ceiling agreement didn’t go far enough.”<sup>4</sup>

Deficit anxieties have also remained largely consistent across income. In 2002, 44 percent of those who made under \$30,000, 45 percent of those who made \$30,000-49,999, 56 percent of those who made \$50,000-74,999, and 47 percent of those who made over \$75,000 considered deficits a very or fairly serious problem. By 2010, these numbers had risen to 93 percent for the lowest earners, and 96 percent for the highest earners. Overall, anxiety varied only by three percentage points across all income ranges in 2010.<sup>5</sup> (See Figures 2 and 3).

<sup>3</sup> USA Today/Gallup Poll. National adult sample of 1,012, August 2, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> CBS News/New York Times Poll. National adult sample 960, August 2-3, 2011. The 960 adults were made up of people who were first interviewed in two polls: a CBS News/New York Times Poll conducted June 24-28, 2011, and a CBS News Poll conducted July 15-17, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> NBC News/Wall Street Journal. Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies. Nonal adult sample of 1,011, January 18-21, 2002.

CBS News. Conducted by CBS News. National adult sample of 1,067, November 29-December 2, 2010.

## Low-Income Americans Remain More Worried about Income Equality than Higher-Income Americans

Although overall anxiety about deficits is at an all-time high, the deficit has only recently begun to eclipse income inequality as a leading economic priority—a result that varies widely across income levels.

When asked to identify the top economic problem for the country in a 2006 NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll, 18 percent said “the gap between the rich and the poor” and 11 percent identified “the federal budget deficit.”<sup>6</sup> In a 2007 Pew Research Center poll, a similar question found that 12 percent ranked “the gap between the rich and the poor” as the top economic priority, and 10 percent chose “the federal budget deficit.”<sup>7</sup>

The results for the 2007 Pew poll varied widely by income. Among those who made under \$30,000, 14 percent ranked income inequality as the top economic priority and only six percent chose “the federal budget deficit.” (See Figure 4).

Among the highest earners – those who made over \$75,000 – the priorities flipped. Thirteen percent chose the federal budget deficit and only nine percent chose “the gap between the rich and the poor.” (See Figure 5).

Figure 4

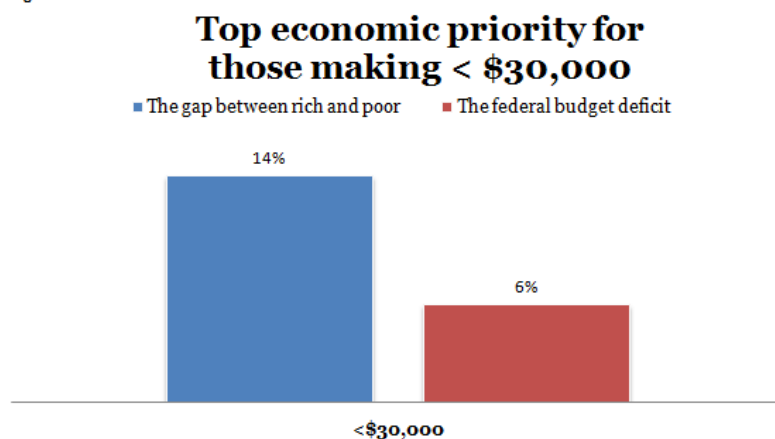
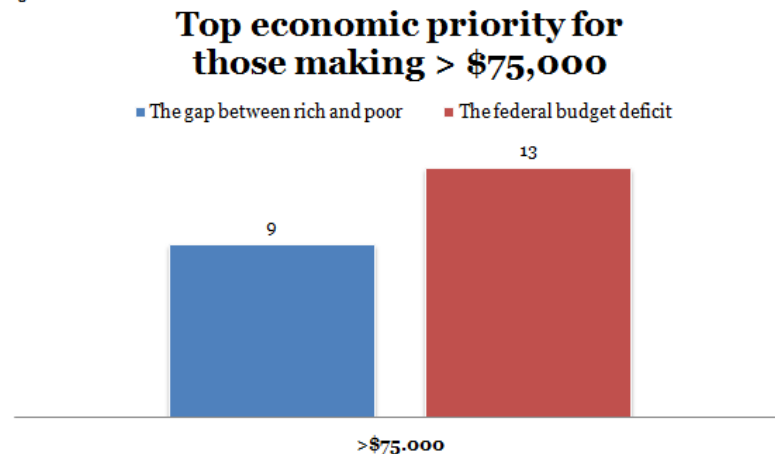


Figure 5



<sup>6</sup> NBC News, Wall Street Journal. Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies. National adult sample of 1,010. July 21-24, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates. National adult sample of 1,503, May 30-June 3, 2007.

Figure 6.1

### Top economic priority among Republicans

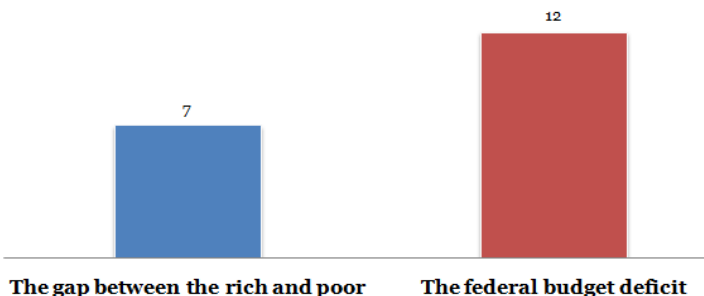
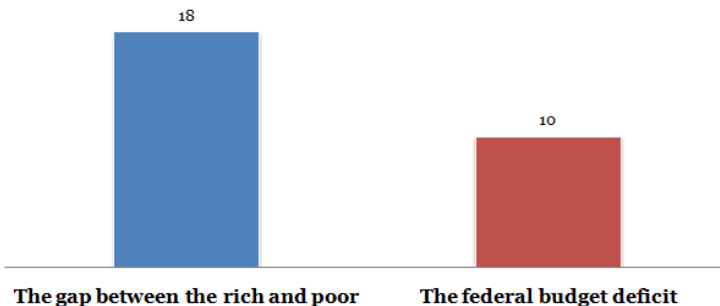


Figure 6.2

### Top economic priority among Democrats



Perhaps most significant was the primacy of kitchen table economic issues across all income levels. “Gas prices and energy costs” topped the charts in the 2006 NBC/Wall Street Journal poll at 40 percent, far outweighing the combined percentages for inequality and deficit concerns.<sup>8</sup> “Gas prices and energy costs” were also the leading issues in the 2007 Pew poll, with 29 percent reporting it was their top economic concern.<sup>9</sup>

The results also vary by party affiliation, especially with regard to income inequality. In the 2007 Pew poll, 18 percent of Democrats said “the gap between the rich and poor” was the top economic problem.

In contrast, only seven percent of Republicans identified the income gap as the top economic problem. (See Figures 6.1 and 6.2).

Yet Republicans were only slightly more concerned over deficits than Democrats. In the same poll, 12 percent of Republicans chose the federal budget deficit as the top economic priority compared to ten percent of Democrats.

<sup>8</sup> NBC News, Wall Street Journal. Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies. National adult sample of 1,010. July 21-24, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates. National adult sample of 1,503, May 30-June 3, 2007.

# Americans Don't Identify Spending on the Poor as the Leading Cause of the Deficit

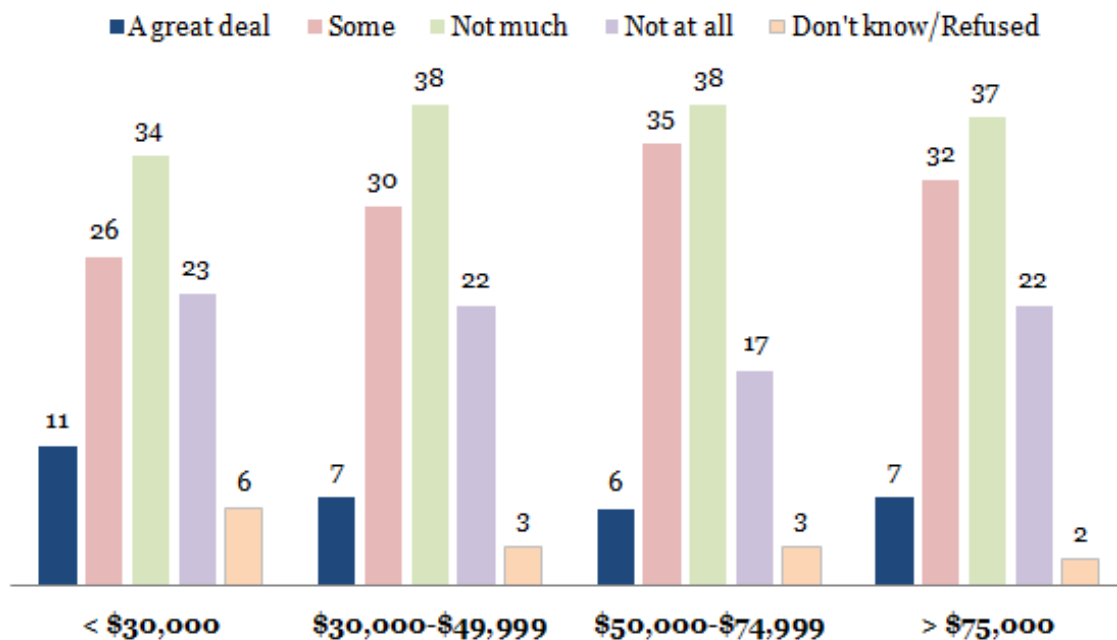
Despite high levels of budget anxiety, people largely do not blame programs for the poor as the leading contributor to perceived deficit woes, although there is variation by income.

In a 2004 Pew News Interest poll, eight percent of respondents said that spending on domestic programs (including “aid to the poor”) contributed “a great deal” to the budget deficit, while a plurality (36 percent) said these domestic programs added “not much” to the deficit.<sup>10</sup>

These responses were similar across all income levels. Eleven percent of those who made under \$30,000, seven percent of those who made \$30,000 to 49,999, six percent of those who made \$50,000 to 74,999, and seven percent of those who made over \$75,000 claimed spending on domestic programs (including aid to the poor) contributed “a great deal” to the budget deficit. (See Figure 7).

Figure 7

“Has increased spending on domestic programs such as roads, health care, and aid to the poor added a great deal, some, not much, or not at all to the current budget deficit?”

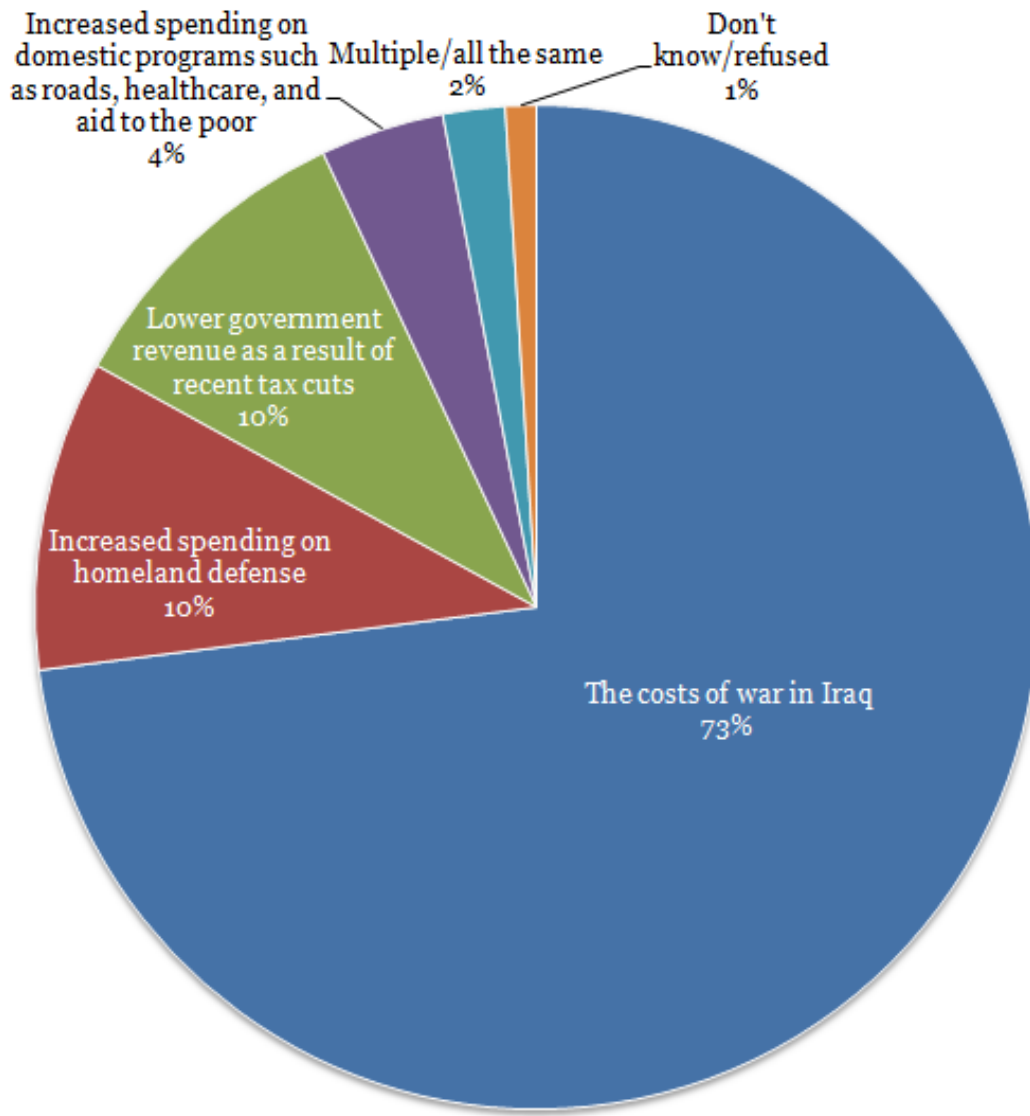


<sup>10</sup> Pew News Interest Index. National adult sample of 1,500, February 11-16, 2004.

When asked in the same poll to rank potential contributors to the deficit, an overwhelming majority (73 percent) of people said the war in Iraq had the greatest effect on the deficit.

This is compared to only four percent who attributed the deficit to increased spending on domestic programs, including aid to the poor. In fact, domestic spending including aid to the poor was the least popular response, behind the war in Iraq, increased spending on homeland defense, and lower government revenue as a result of tax cuts. (See Figure 8).

**Figure 8**



# Low-Income Americans Are As Worried about Spending Cuts as Federal Budget Problems

Overall, Americans are currently more personally worried about the impact of perceived federal budget problems than they are about significant program cuts, with important variation across income. In particular, low-income Americans are as worried about spending cuts as they are about federal budget problems.

A February 2011 NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll asked respondents two similar questions:<sup>11</sup>

1. “Thinking about yourself and your family, when you think about **our federal budget problems**, including our growing federal budget deficit and our increasing national debt, how much does this concern you personally, in terms of how it impacts you and your family’s future?” [emphasis added] (See Figure 9).

2. “Thinking about yourself and your family, if Congress decided to **make major cuts across the board** on most programs in order to reduce government spending, how much does this concern you personally, in terms of how it impacts you and your family’s future?” [emphasis added] (See Figure 10).

Across all respondents, 80 percent said they were “a great deal” or “quite a bit” concerned about how budget problems would impact their families, while 62 percent reported being “a great deal” or “quite a bit” concerned about how major cuts across the board would impact their families.

Figure 9

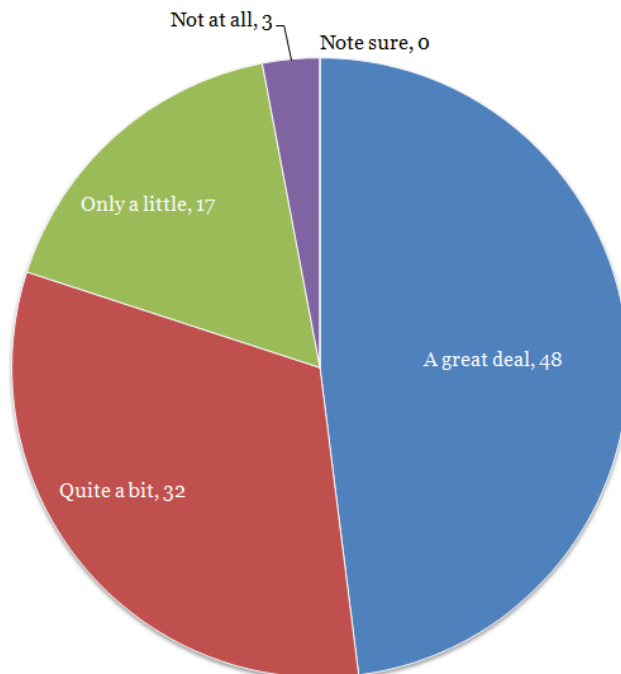
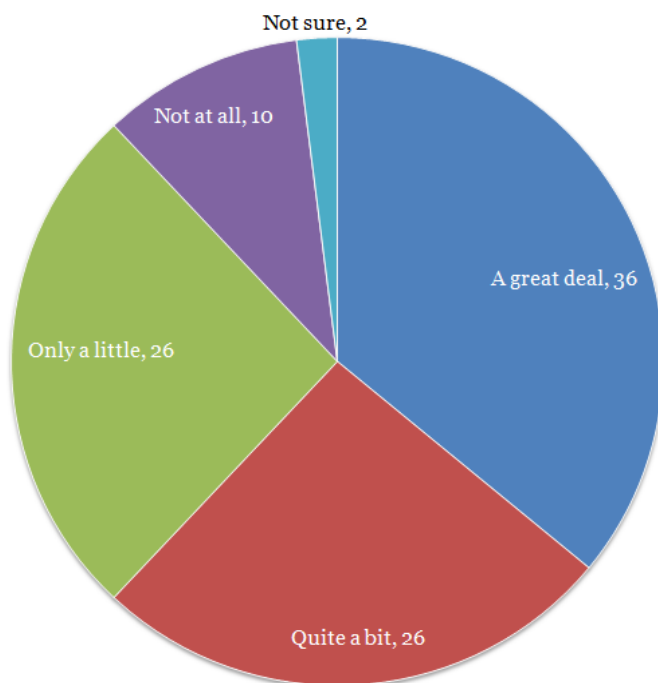


Figure 10



<sup>11</sup> NBC News, Wall Street Journal Survey. Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies. National poll of 1,000 adults, February 24-28, 2011.

When analyzed by income the results diverge. Overall personal concern about “our federal budget problems” was largely consistent across income. For example, 79 percent of those who made under \$30,000, 79 percent of those who made \$30,000 to 49,999, 86 percent of those who made \$50,000 to \$74,999 and 78 percent of those who made over \$75,000 were “a great deal” or “quite a bit” concerned about how budget problems would impact their families. (See Figure 11).

Those who make under \$30,000 were substantially more concerned than other income brackets about the impact of “major cuts across the board.” For example, 79 percent of those who made under \$30,000 were “a great deal” or “quite a bit” concerned. Comparatively, 61 percent of those who made \$30,000 to \$49,999, 60 percent of those who made \$50,000 to 74,999, and 53 percent of those who made over \$75,000, were “a great deal” or “quite a bit” concerned. (See Figure 12).

Figure 11

**How much do our federal budget problems concern you personally, in terms of how it impacts you and your family’s future?**

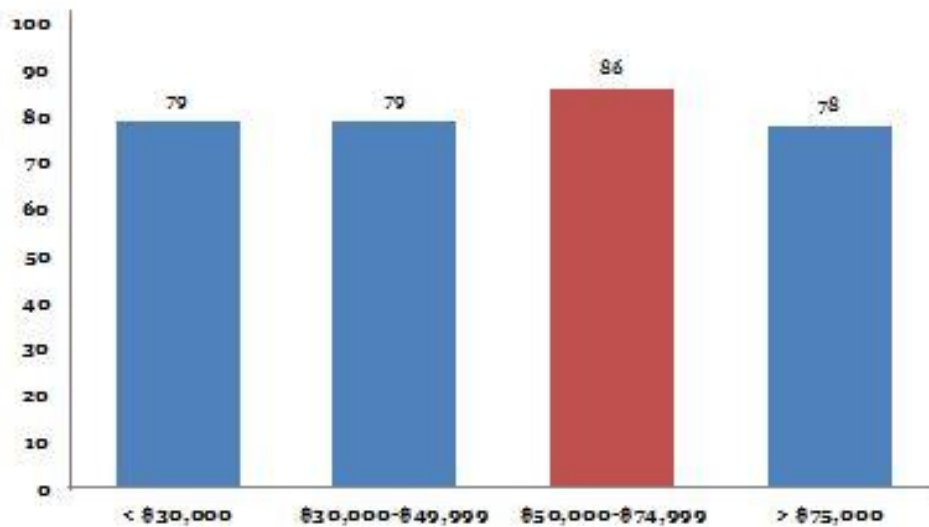
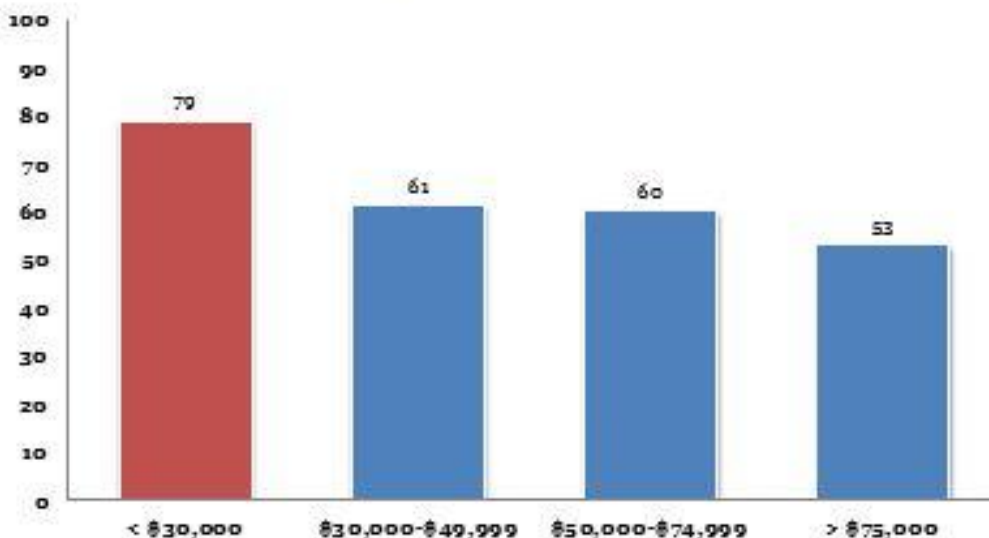


Figure 12

**How much do major cuts across the board concern you in terms of how it impacts you and your family’s future?**



## Appetite Is Growing to Address the Deficit through a Combination of Cuts and Revenue

Support for both cutting programs and raising taxes to reduce the deficit has increased, with important variation by income and party affiliation.

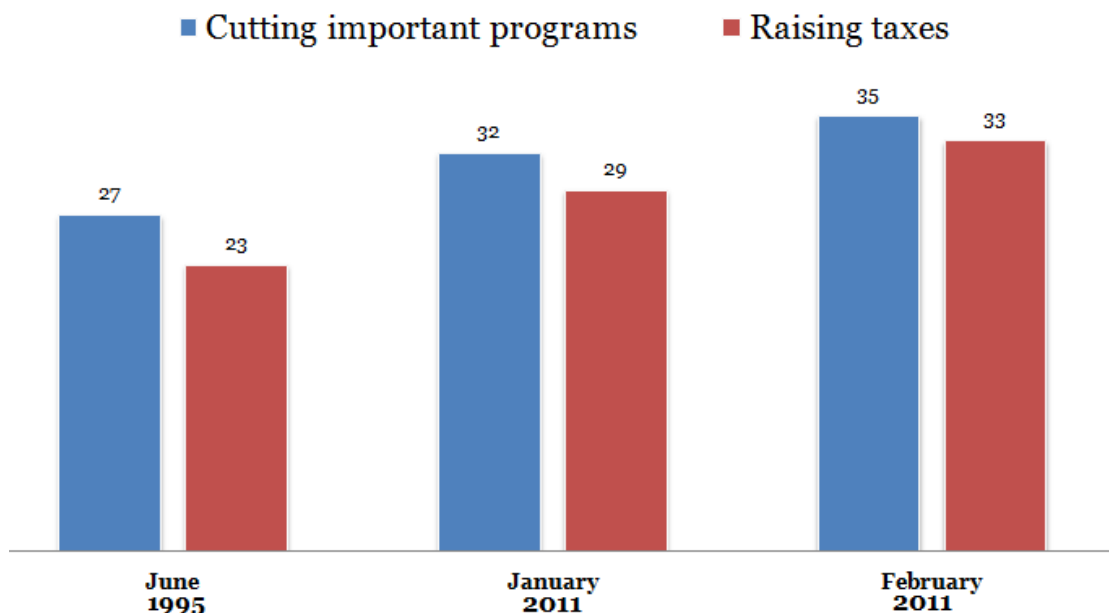
A 1995 NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll asked whether respondents would favor “cutting important programs” or “raising taxes” in order to eliminate the deficit. Twenty-seven percent said cutting programs, and 23 percent favored raising taxes.<sup>12</sup>

In January and February 2011 NBC News/Wall Street Journal polls, positive responses to both options climbed.<sup>13</sup> In January, 32 percent said they would favor “cutting important programs,” a total which rose to 35 percent by February.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in January, 29 percent said raising taxes, which also climbed to 33 percent in February.

This marks an increase of eight percentage points for “cutting important programs” and ten percentage points for “raising taxes” since 1995. (See Figure 13).

Figure 13

### Which would you favor [to eliminate the deficit]?



<sup>12</sup> NBC News, Wall Street Journal Survey. Conducted by Hart and Teeter Research Companies, National poll of 1,008 adults, June 2 - 6, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> NBC News, Wall Street Journal Survey. Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies. National poll of 1,000 adults, January 13-17, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> NBC News, Wall Street Journal Survey. Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies. National poll of 1,000 adults, February 24-28, 2011.

Figure 14

**Cuts to important programs by income**



In the January 2011 poll, the lowest earners were the most resistant to cutting programs in order to address deficits, and the highest earners the most willing. Support for cutting important programs rose with income level from 23 percent for those who made under \$30,000, to 34 percent for those who made \$30,000 to \$49,999, to 36 percent for those who made \$50,000 to \$74,999, to 39 percent for those who made over \$75,000. (See Figure 14).

Support for raising taxes to eliminate the deficit rose slightly across all income levels in the February 2011 poll. For example, 26 percent of those who made under \$30,000 supported raising taxes, while 30 percent of those who made \$30,000 to \$49,999, 33 percent of those who made \$50,000 to 74,999, and 40 percent of those who made over \$75,000 were willing to pay more taxes. (See Figure 15).

Figure 15

**Support raising taxes to eliminate the deficit by income**

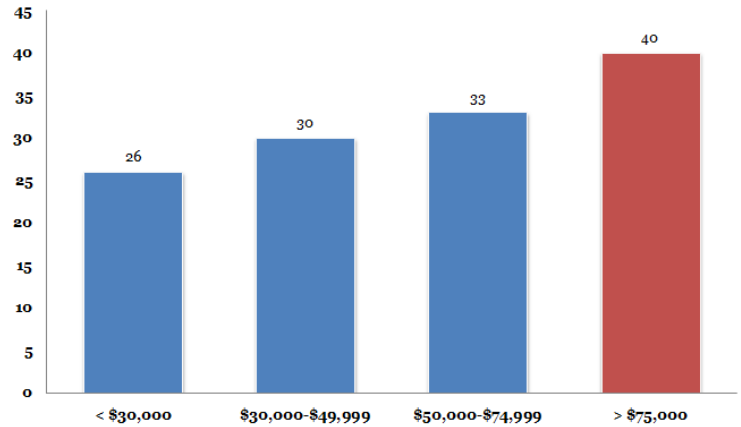
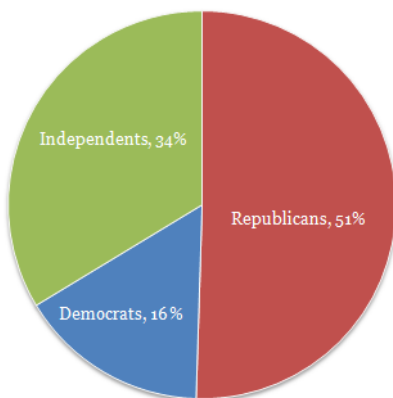


Figure 16

**Cuts to important programs by party affiliation**



Preferences diverged even more substantially by party affiliation in the January 2011 poll. Fifty-one percent of Republicans favored cuts to important programs, compared to 16 percent of Democrats and 34 percent of Independents.<sup>15</sup> (See Figure 16).

<sup>15</sup> NBC News, Wall Street Journal. Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies. National poll of 1,000 adults, January 13-17, 2011. NBC News, Wall Street Journal. Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies. National poll of 1,000 adults, February 24-28, 2011.

# Americans Are Reluctant to Make Specific Cuts—Especially to Programs for the Poor

While Americans abstractly support cuts in order to reduce the deficit, they are significantly more reluctant to make cuts when asked about programs that serve low-income Americans.

This reticence applies both to the general notion of cutting programs for low-income Americans, as well as to specific programs described as significant for poorer Americans.

For example, an April 2011 Gallup/USA Today poll found 64 percent of those polled were worried a Republican deficit reduction plan would “take away programs for the poor and disadvantaged.”<sup>17</sup>

The remainder of this section details responses to questions that asked about specific programs that target low-income people.

## Education

Americans largely oppose any cuts to education, including when low-income students are mentioned.

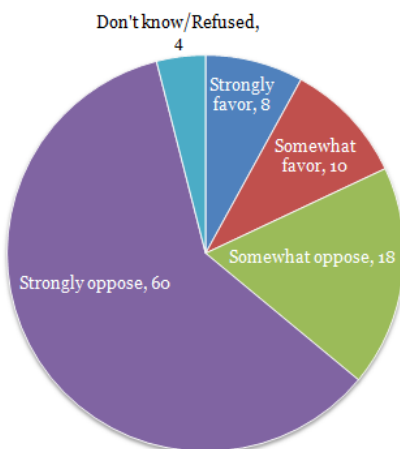
A February 2011 Democracy Corps poll of likely voters found 78 percent somewhat or strongly opposed “cuts [to] funding for K-12 education and support for special education, students with disabilities and schools in high poverty areas, cutting off almost 4 million students and losing thousands of teachers.”<sup>16</sup> (See Figure 17).

The same February poll found about three in four (73 percent) respondents strongly or somewhat opposed cuts proposed in the House Republicans’ budget for “Head Start funding for 120,000 children in pre-school.”

This is consistent with public opinion regarding education cuts in general. For examples, a February 2011 NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll found that 77 percent of people regarded cuts to K-12 education as totally or mostly unacceptable “as a way to help reduce the federal budget deficit.”<sup>18</sup>

Figure 17

**Favor or oppose funding cuts for K-12 education & support for special education, students with disabilities and schools in high poverty areas**



<sup>17</sup> Gallup/USA Today. Conducted by Gallup Organization. National adult sample of 1,013. April 20-23, 2011

<sup>16</sup> Democracy Corps Poll. Conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. National sample likely voter sample of 1,000 adults, February 7-8, 2011

<sup>18</sup> NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll. Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies. National sample of 1,000 adults, February 24-28, 2011.

## Heating Assistance

Americans oppose cuts to heating assistance.

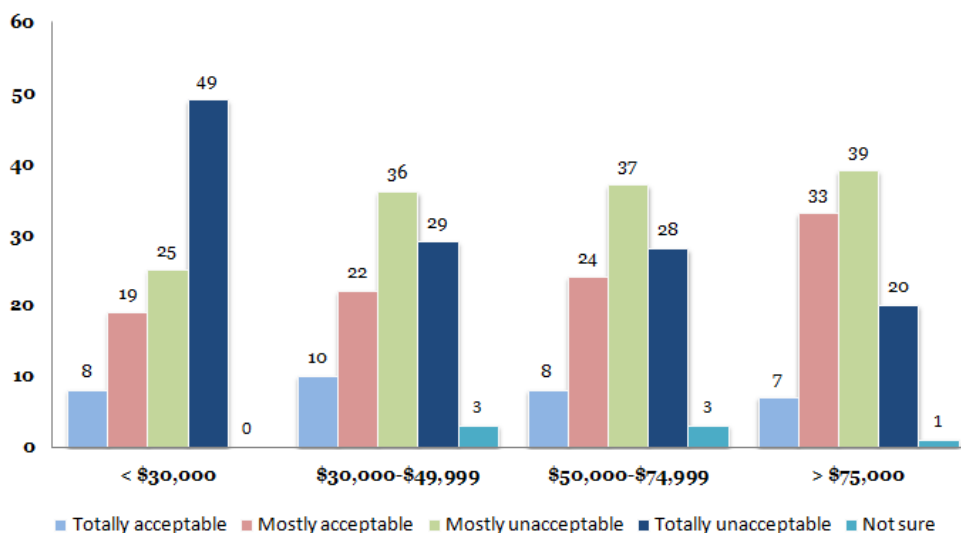
In a February 2011 NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll, two in three Americans (65 percent) found cuts to heating assistance “for low-income families,” totally or mostly unacceptable.

Despite a strong majority against cuts, there was notable variation by income. People who might benefit from the program were much more concerned by threats of cuts than those with higher incomes.

For example, 49 percent of those who made under \$30,000 found heating assistance cuts “totally unacceptable” as a way to reduce deficits. In comparison, 29 percent of those who made \$30,000 to \$49,999, 28 percent of those who made \$55,000 to \$74,999, and 20 percent of those who made over \$75,000 considered cuts to heating assistance “totally unacceptable.”<sup>20</sup> (See Figure 1)

Figure 18

### Acceptability of cuts to “heating assistance for low-income families.”



## Food Assistance Programs

Most Americans, regardless of age or income, support federal food assistance.

Only 40 percent supported cutting the food stamp program in a January 2011 Harris poll, compared to 65 percent in a similar 1980 Harris poll.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, almost three-quarters (73 percent) of Americans strongly or somewhat opposed cuts to “five million meals now delivered to the homebound elderly” in a February 2011 Democracy Corps poll.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Harris Poll. Conducted by Harris Interactive. National adult sample of 2,566. January 17-24, 2011. Note: a chart including poll results from 1980 was included in results released in January 2011.

<sup>20</sup> NBC News, Wall Street Journal. Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies. National adult sample of 1,000, February 24-28, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Democracy Corps. Conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. National likely voter sample of 1,000, February 7-9, 2011.

## Medicaid

Despite overall resistance to cuts to Medicaid, Americans are more divided about the program's merit.

Since the 1980s, opposition to Medicaid cuts has varied, but rarely dropped below 50 percent.

This variation was not gradual, but erratic. When asked about support or opposition to Medicaid cuts, responses varied drastically from year to year and month to month. (See Figures 19.1 and 19.2).

Opposition to Medicaid cuts peaked in a 1994 Kaiser/Harvard Election Night poll in which 83 percent of respondents opposed "decreased spending on Medicaid for the poor." The low point for opposition was a 2011 Kaiser/Harvard poll in which 47 percent of respondents opposed cuts to "spending on Medicaid."<sup>22</sup>

Unlike other areas of assistance to low-income people, positions on Medicaid cuts have varied more with the ongoing budget debates. Over the past few months, those opposing cuts to the amount the government spends on Medicaid increased from 57 percent in an April 2011 Quinnipiac poll to 77 percent in a July 2011 CNN/ORC International poll.<sup>23</sup>

Figure 19.1

### Support/opposition to Medicaid cuts, 1984-2010

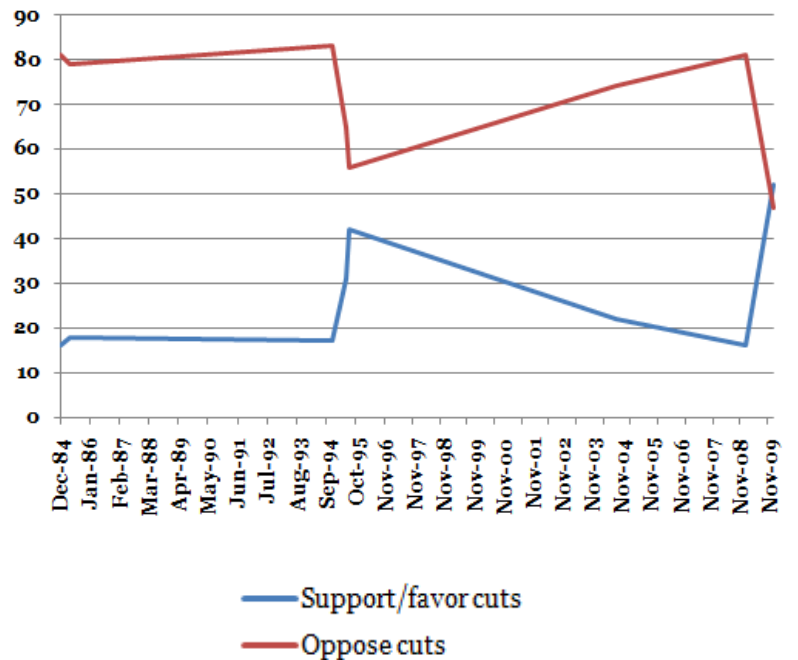
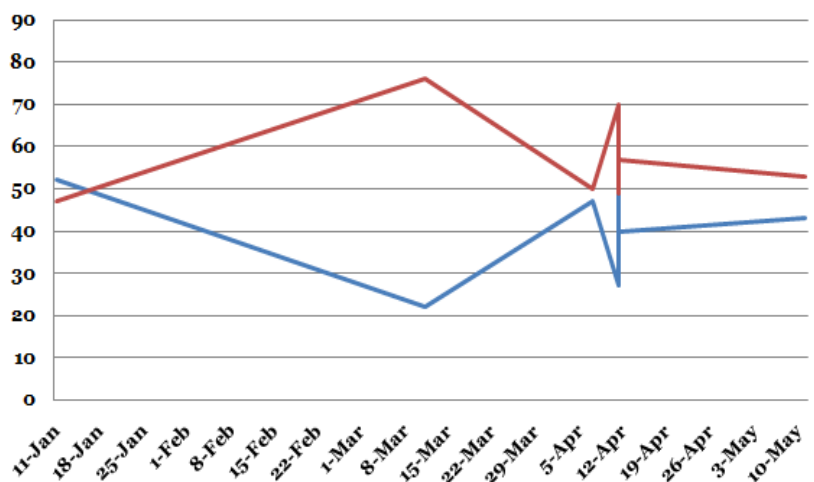


Figure 19.2

### Support/opposition to Medicaid cuts, 2011



<sup>22</sup> See Appendix F.2 and F.3

<sup>23</sup> Quinnipiac University Poll. Conducted by Quinnipiac University Polling Institute. National registered voter sample of 1,408. April 26-May 1, 2011. CNN/ORC International Poll. Conducted by Cable News Network. National adult sample of 1,009, July 19-20, 2011.

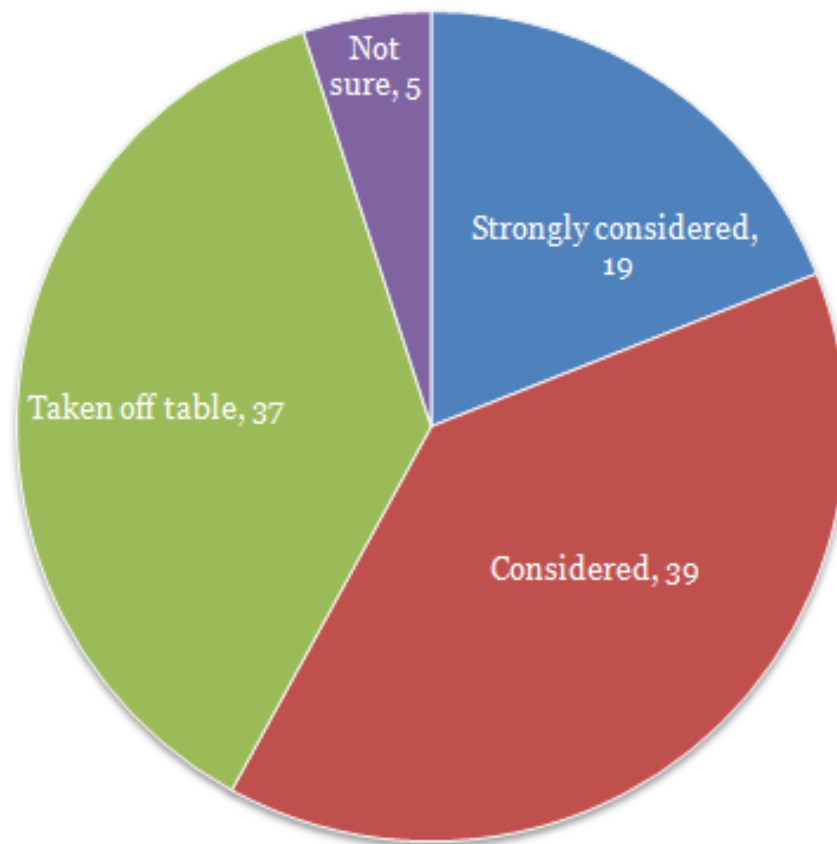
## Strong Opinions about Medicare Reform and Privatization

Recent polling has found some receptivity to alternative mechanisms for reforming Medicare to reduce the deficit, as long as the program maintains assistance for low-income program beneficiaries.

With regard to low-income people, a 2010 Bloomberg poll found that 58 percent of respondents considered or strongly considered “privatizing Medicare with assistance for low-income seniors” as a potential source of savings for the federal government.<sup>24</sup> (See Figure 20).

Figure 20

### Willingness to consider “privatizing Medicare with assistance for low-income seniors.”



<sup>24</sup> Bloomberg. Conducted by Selzer & Co. National adult sample of 1,001, October 7-10, 2010.

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## Conclusion

As talks about the budget remain at the forefront of the national debate, many will be watching to see how this debate affects low-income Americans. This review explored what Americans think about these issues by examining a range of recent and historic public opinion surveys.

Overall, we identified six findings:

- 1 Concern about the deficit has reached historic highs**
- 2 Low-income Americans remain more worried about income equality than higher-income Americans**
- 3 Americans don't identify spending on the poor as the leading cause of the deficit**
- 4 Low-income Americans are as worried about spending cuts as federal budget problems**
- 5 Appetite is growing to address the deficit through a combination of cuts and revenue**
- 6 Americans are reluctant to make specific cuts—especially to programs for the poor**

The debate over budget is only likely to intensify over the near term, making it increasingly important to understand and learn what the public believes with regard to programs and services for low-income communities.

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## Methods

*Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity* conducted this review using polls found on the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, an online database of public opinion polls.

A June 2011 search on the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research used the following terms: “(deficit or budget) and (poverty or low-income or poor).” The analysis in this report drew on results from that search and additional relevant polls which were added as needed. More information about the methodology of specific polls is available in Appendices A-F.

Poll sources included the following organizations:

- ABC News
- Bloomberg News
- CBS News
- CNN
- Committee For Education Funding Survey
- Democracy Corps
- First Focus Quiet Voice Surveys
- Gallup Organization
- Garth Analysis
- Kaiser Health Tracking
- Los Angeles Times
- NBC News
- News Interest Index
- ORC Issue Watch
- Pew Research Center for People and the Press
- Public Interests Project
- Quinnipiac University
- Wall Street Journal
- Washington Post

# Appendices

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# Appendices

The appendices are divided according to each finding in the report. The first and last sections are further separated to accommodate poll questions that cover multiple years. Each entry includes the full survey question cited as well as a methodological note which includes: the polling institution, the date, and the sample size.

<b>Appendix A.1 – A.3</b> Concern about the Deficit Has Reached Historic Highs	23-38
<b>Appendix B</b> Low-Income Americans Remain More Worried about Income Equality than Higher-Income Americans	38
<b>Appendix C</b> Americans Don't Identify Spending on the Poor as the Leading Cause of the Deficit	39
<b>Appendix D</b> Low-income Americans are as worried about spending cuts as federal budget problems	40
<b>Appendix E</b> Appetite Is Growing to Address Deficit through Cuts and Revenue	41
<b>Appendix F.1 – F.2</b> Americans Are Reluctant to Make Specific Cuts – Especially to Programs for the Poor	42-52

# Appendix A: Concern about the Deficit Has Reached Historic Highs

## Appendix A.1: Figure 1

The following includes polls from the 1980's until 2011

### Garth Analysis Survey [February, 1984]

Do you think that federal budget deficits are a very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not very serious problem?

63% Very serious  
30% Somewhat serious  
4% Not serious  
3% Don't know

Subpopulation: Registered voters

Survey by Garth Analysis

Methodology: Conducted by Penn & Schoen Associates February 8-February 12, 1984, and based on telephone interviews with a national registered voters sample of 1,008.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### Garth Analysis Survey [June, 1984]

Do you think that federal budget deficits are a very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not a very serious problem?

59% Very serious  
31% Somewhat serious  
6% Not serious  
3% Don't know

Survey by Garth Analysis

Methodology: Conducted by Penn & Schoen Associates June 12-June 17, 1984, and based on telephone interviews with a registered voters sample of 1,005.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Garth Analysis Survey [October, 1984]**

Do you think that federal budget deficits are a very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not a very serious problem?

59% Very serious  
33% Somewhat serious  
6% Not very serious  
1% Don't know

Survey by Garth Analysis

Methodology: Conducted by Penn & Schoen Associates October 10-October 12, 1984, and based on telephone interviews with a registered voters sample of 1,001.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Gallup Poll (AIPO) [December, 1984]**

In your opinion, is the Federal budget deficit a VERY serious problem for the country, a FAIRLY serious problem, NOT a serious problem, or is this something you haven't thought much about?

54% Very serious  
29% Fairly serious  
5% Not serious  
9% Haven't thought much about  
3% Don't Know

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization December 7-December 10, 1984, and based on personal interviews with a national adult sample of 1,505.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Shaping A Compromise: reducing The Deficit And Simplifying Taxes [February, 1985]**

The federal budget deficit was almost 200 billion dollars in fiscal year 1984. Do you feel that deficits of this size are a very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not serious at all for the country?

63% Very serious  
27% Somewhat serious  
4% Not serious at all  
6% Not sure

Survey by Sentry Insurance

Methodology: Conducted by Louis Harris & Associates February 1-February 12, 1985, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,253.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Gallup Report [April, 1985]**

In your opinion, is the current Federal budget deficit a very serious problem for the country, a fairly serious problem, not a serious problem, or is this something you haven't thought much about?

58% Very serious  
23% Fairly serious  
5% Not serious  
12% Haven't thought about  
2% No opinion

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization April 12-April 15, 1985, and based on personal interviews with a national adult sample of 1,525.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Ad Hoc Telephone Survey [August, 1985]**

In your opinion, is the current Federal budget deficit a VERY serious problem for the nation, a FAIRLY serious problem, NOT a serious problem, or is this something you haven't thought much about?

57% Very serious  
21% Fairly serious  
2% Not serious  
19% Haven't thought much about  
1% Don't Know

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization August 13-August 15, 1985, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,009.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Gallup Poll [November, 1985]**

In your opinion, is the current federal budget deficit a very serious problem for the country, a fairly serious problem, not a serious problem, or is this something you haven't thought much about?

61% Very serious  
23% Fairly serious  
3% Not serious  
13% Haven't thought much about/No opinion

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization November 11-November 18, 1985, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,008.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **American National Election Study 1988 (Pre-Election) [September, 1988]**

There's a lot of talk these days about the budget deficit that has resulted because the federal government has spent more money than it has taken in. Do you personally feel the budget deficit is a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not much of a problem?

62% Very serious  
30% Somewhat serious  
6% Not much  
3% Don't know

Methodology: Conducted by Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan September 6-November 7, 1988, and based on personal interviews with a national adult sample of 2,040. A post-election survey with re-interviews of 1775 (87%) of the pre-election respondents was conducted November 8, 1988-January 30, 1989. Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Gallup Poll [January, 1989]**

In your opinion, is the current federal budget deficit a very serious problem for the country, a fairly serious problem, not serious problem, or is this something you haven't thought much about?

63% Very serious  
20% Fairly serious  
3% Not serious  
14% No opinion

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization January 24-January 26, 1989, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,001. Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Time/CNN/Yankelovich Clancy Shulman Poll [October, 1990]**

How serious a problem is the federal budget deficit--very serious, somewhat serious or not very serious?

77% Very serious  
19% Somewhat serious  
2% Not very serious  
2% Not sure (vol.)

Survey by Time, Cable News Network

Methodology: Conducted by Yankelovich Clancy Shulman on October 3, 1990, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 500.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Gallup/Newsweek Poll [September, 1992]**

In your opinion, is the current federal budget deficit a very serious problem for the country, a fairly serious problem, not a serious problem, or is this something you haven't thought much about?

67% Very serious  
19% Fairly serious  
2% Not serious  
13% Haven't thought about/Don't know/Refused

Note: Asked of registered voters/Don't have to register (77%)

Survey by Newsweek

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization September 10-September 11, 1992, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 920.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll [January, 1998]**

In your opinion, is the current federal budget deficit a very serious problem for the country, a fairly serious problem, not a serious problem, or is this something you haven't thought much about?

40% Very serious  
34% Fairly serious  
7% Not serious  
18% Not thought much about it  
1% Don't know/Refused

Survey by Cable News Network, USA Today

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization January 6-January 7, 1998, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,015.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Gallup Poll [August, 2001]**

(As you may know, the federal government currently has a budget surplus, which means the government takes in more money than it spends.)... Do you think the decrease in the budget surplus is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not a serious problem at all?

34% Very serious  
39% Somewhat serious  
15% Not very serious  
10% Not serious at all  
2% No opinion

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization August 24-August 26, 2001, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 814.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll [January, 2002]**

As you may know, the federal budget was running a surplus but is now running a deficit. Do you consider this a very serious problem, a fairly serious problem, just somewhat of a problem, or not really a problem?

- 26% Very serious problem
- 23% Fairly serious problem
- 34% Just somewhat of a problem
- 16% Not really a problem
- 1% Not sure

Survey by NBC News, Wall Street Journal

Methodology: Conducted by Hart and Teeter Research Companies January 18-January 21, 2002, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,011.

### **Quinnipiac University Poll [January, 2003]**

How serious a problem do you think the federal budget deficit is--very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not at all serious?

- 44% Very serious
- 42% Somewhat serious
- 9% Not too serious
- 2% Not at all serious
- 3% Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by Quinnipiac University Polling Institute January 29-February 3, 2003, and based on telephone interviews with a national registered voters sample of 1,307.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **CBS News/New York Times Poll [September, 2003]**

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

- 50% Very serious
- 36% Somewhat serious
- 9% Not too serious
- 3% Not at all serious
- 2% Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News/New York Times September 28-October 1, 2003, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 981.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Quinnipiac University Poll [January, 2004]**

How serious a problem do you think the federal budget deficit is--very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

54% Very serious  
34% Somewhat serious  
8% Not too serious  
3% Not at all serious  
1% Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by Quinnipiac University Polling Institute January 28-January 31, 2004, and based on telephone interviews with a national registered voters sample of 1,219.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **CBS News/New York Times Poll [March, 2004]**

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?

50% Very serious  
36% Somewhat serious  
9% Not too serious  
2% Not at all serious  
3% Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News/New York Times March 10-March 14, 2004, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,206.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **CBS News/New York Times Poll [February, 2005]**

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?

52% Very serious  
38% Somewhat serious  
8% Not too serious  
1% Not at all serious  
1% Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News/New York Times February 24-February 28, 2005, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,111.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **CBS News Poll [November, 2010]**

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?

73% Very serious  
21% Somewhat serious  
3% Not too serious  
1% Not at all serious  
2% Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News November 29-December 2, 2010, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,067. The interviews were conducted by land-line and cell phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **CBS News Poll [January, 2011]**

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?

70% Very serious  
25% Somewhat serious  
3% Not too serious  
1% Not at all serious  
1% Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News January 5-January 9, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,178. The interviews were conducted by land-line and cell phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **CBS News Poll [February, 2011]**

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?

70% Very serious  
25% Somewhat serious  
3% Not too serious  
1% Not at all serious  
1% Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News February 11-February 14, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,031. The interviews were conducted by land-line and cell phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **CBS News Poll [March, 2011]**

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?

68% Very serious  
26% Somewhat serious  
5% Not too serious  
1% Not at all serious

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News March 18-March 21, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,022. The interviews were conducted by land-line and cell phones. Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **CBS News Poll [June, 2011]**

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?

75% Very serious  
20% Somewhat serious  
3% Not too serious  
1% Not at all serious  
1% Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News June 3-June 7, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,024. The interviews were conducted by land-line and cell phones. Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## Appendix A.2: Footnote 2

### Associated Press/Gfk Poll [September, 2008]

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

42% Very worried  
37% Somewhat worried  
11% Not too worried  
8% Not at all worried  
2% Does not apply (Vol.)

Survey by Associated Press

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Media September 27-September 30, 2008, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,160.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### Associated Press/Gfk Poll [November, 2008]

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

38% Very worried  
39% Somewhat worried  
13% Not too worried  
9% Not at all worried  
1% Don't know

Survey by Associated Press

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Media November 6-November 10, 2008, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,001. Interviews were conducted with 801 respondents on landline telephones and 200 on cellular phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### Associated Press/Gfk Poll [January, 2009]

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

45% Very worried  
34% Somewhat worried  
13% Not too worried  
7% Not at all worried  
1% Does not apply (Vol.)  
1% Don't know  
\*% Refused

Survey by Associated Press

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Media January 9-January 14, 2009, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,001. Interviews were conducted with 801 respondents on landline telephones and 200 on cellular phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Associated Press/Gfk Poll [April, 2009]**

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

49% Very worried  
30% Somewhat worried  
12% Not too worried  
9% Not at all worried  
1% Does not apply (Vol.)  
\*% Don't know

Survey by Associated Press

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Media April 16-April 20, 2009, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,000. Interviews were conducted with 800 respondents on landline telephones and 200 on cellular phones.

### **Associated Press/Gfk Poll [July, 2009]**

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

46% Very worried  
34% Somewhat worried  
11% Not too worried  
8% Not at all worried  
1% Does not apply (Vol.)  
\*% Don't know  
1% Refused

Survey by Associated Press

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Media July 16-July 20, 2009, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,006. Interviews were conducted with respondents on landline and cellular phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Associated Press/Gfk Poll [September, 2009]**

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

47% Very worried  
33% Somewhat worried  
11% Not too worried  
9% Not at all worried  
1% Does not apply (Vol.)  
\*% Don't know  
\*% Refused

Survey by Associated Press

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Media September 3-September 8, 2009, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,001. Interviews were conducted with 801 respondents on landline telephones and 200 on cellular phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Associated Press/Gfk Poll [January, 2010]**

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

50% Very worried  
31% Somewhat worried  
11% Not too worried  
8% Not at all worried  
\*% Does not apply (Vol.)  
\*% Don't know

Survey by Associated Press

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Media January 12-January 17, 2010, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,008.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Associated Press/Gfk Poll [August, 2010]**

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

54% Very worried  
26% Somewhat worried  
10% Not too worried  
9% Not at all worried  
\*% Does not apply (Vol.)  
\*% Don't know

Survey by Associated Press

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications August 11-August 16, 2010, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,007.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Associated Press/Gfk Poll [October, 2010]**

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

48% Very worried  
32% Somewhat worried  
10% Not too worried  
10% Not at all worried  
\*% Does not apply (Vol.)  
\*% Don't know  
\*% Refused

Survey by Associated Press

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications October 13-October 18, 2010, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,501. Interviews were conducted with 1051 respondents on landline telephones, and 450 on cellular phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Associated Press/CNBC/Gfk Poll [November, 2010]**

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

56% Very worried  
29% Somewhat worried  
10% Not too worried  
4% Not at all worried  
1% Don't know  
\*% Refused  
1% Does not apply (Vol.)

Survey by Associated Press, CNBC

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications November 18-November 22, 2010, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,000.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Associated Press/Gfk Poll [March, 2011]**

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

58% Very worried  
27% Somewhat worried  
9% Not too worried  
5% Not at all worried  
\*% Does not apply (Vol.)  
\*% Don't know  
\*% Refused

Survey by Associated Press

Methodology: Conducted by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications March 24-March 28, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,001.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## Associated Press/Gfk Poll [June, 2011]

How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children and grandchildren?...Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, not at all worried

55%	Very worried
26%	Somewhat worried
10%	Not too worried
8%	Not at all worried

AP-GfK Poll conducted by GfK Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications. June 16-20, 2011. N=1,001 adults nationwide. Margin of error  $\pm$  4.1.

## Appendix A.3: Footnotes 3-5, Figures 2 and 3

### Gallup/USA Today Poll [August, 2011]

(Next, I'd like to ask you about the agreement reached by the president (Barack Obama) and Congress (August 1, 2011) to raise the federal debt ceiling.)...Based on what you know or have read about the agreement, do you view it as a step forward, a step backward, or neither in terms of addressing the federal debt situation?

20% Step forward  
22% Step backward  
50% Neither  
8% No opinion

Survey by USA Today

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization on August 2, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,012. Interviews were conducted with respondents on landline telephones for respondents with a landline telephone, and cellular phones for respondents who are cell phone only.

[USGALLUP.11AUG02.R03]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### CBS News/New York Times Poll [August, 2011]

Do you think the spending cuts included in the debt ceiling agreement went too far, didn't go far enough, or are they about right?

15% Too far  
44% Not far enough  
29% About right  
12% Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News/New York Times August 2-August 3, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult re-interviewed sample of 960. The interviews were conducted by land-line and cell phones. Respondents were originally interviewed June 24-26, 2011 by CBS News/New York Times and July 15-17, 2011 by CBS News. [USCBSNYT.080411.R20]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll [January, 2002]

As you may know, the federal budget was running a surplus but is now running a deficit. Do you consider this a very serious problem, a fairly serious problem, just somewhat of a problem, or not really a problem?

26% Very serious problem  
23% Fairly serious problem  
34% Just somewhat of a problem  
16% Not really a problem  
1% Not sure

Survey by NBC News, Wall Street Journal

Methodology: Conducted by Hart and Teeter Research Companies January 18-January 21, 2002, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,011. [USNBCWSJ.02JAN.R30A]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **CBS News Poll [November, 2010]**

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?

73%	Very serious
21%	Somewhat serious
3%	Not too serious
1%	Not at all serious
2%	Don't know/No answer

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News November 29-December 2, 2010, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,067. The interviews were conducted by land-line and cell phones. [USCBS.120310.R25]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut

# Appendix B: Low-Income Americans Remain More Worried about Income Equality than Higher-Income Americans

**Includes Graphs:** Figure 5.1, Figure 5.2, Figure 6.1, Figure 6.2

## **Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey [May, 2007]**

What do you see as the biggest economic problem facing the country today? Is it...gas and energy prices, the federal budget deficit, the gap between rich and poor, health care costs, or the job situation?

29%	Gas and energy prices
10%	The federal budget deficit
12%	The gap between rich and poor
17%	Health care costs
7%	The job situation
20%	All/Multiple (Vol.)
3%	Other (Vol.)
2%	Don't know/Refused

Survey by Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

Methodology: Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International May 30-June 3, 2007, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,503.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll [July, 2006]**

I'd like to list some economic issues....Gas prices and energy costs, the gap between rich and poor, the federal budget deficit, pension security, unemployment, federal taxes, inflation...As of right now, which one do you feel is the most important economic issue facing the country? (If More than one, ask:) Well, if you had to choose just one, which would it be?

40%	Gas prices and energy costs
18%	The gap between rich and poor
11%	The federal budget deficit
6%	Pension security
5%	Unemployment
5%	Federal taxes
5%	Inflation
9%	All equally important (Vol.)
1%	Not sure

Survey by NBC News, Wall Street Journal

Methodology: Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies July 21-July 24, 2006, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,010.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

# Appendix C: Americans Don't Identify Spending on the Poor as the Leading Cause of the Deficit

**Includes Graphs:** Figure 7, Figure 8

## Pew News Interest Index Poll [February, 2004]

Currently, the United States has a budget deficit, meaning that it is spending more than it is taking in. How much do you think each of the following has contributed to the current federal budget deficit? Has...increased spending on domestic programs such as roads, health care, and aid to the poor added a great deal, some, not much, or not at all to the current budget deficit?

- 8% A great deal
- 31% Some
- 36% Not much
- 21% Not at all
- 4% Don't know/Refused

Survey by Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

Methodology: Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International February 11-February 16, 2004, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,500. [USPSRA.021904.R37A]  
Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## Pew News Interest Index Poll [February, 2004]

Which do you think has had the greatest effect on the federal budget deficit?...Increased spending on domestic programs such as roads, health care, and aid to the poor, increased spending on homeland defense, the costs of war in Iraq, lower government revenue as a result of recent tax cuts

- 4% Increased spending on domestic programs such as roads, health care, and aid to the poor
- 10% Increased spending on homeland defense
- 73% The costs of war in Iraq
- 10% Lower government revenue as a result of recent tax cuts
- 2% Multiple/All the same (vol.)
- 1% Don't know/Refused

Note: Those who said one or more has contributed a great deal to the budget deficit (83%)

Survey by Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

Methodology: Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International February 11-February 16, 2004, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,500. [USPSRA.021904.R38]  
Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

# Appendix D: Low-Income Americans Are As Worried About Spending Cuts as Federal Budget Problems

**Includes Graphs:** Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11, Figure 12

## NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll [February, 2011]

Thinking now about yourself and your family, when you think about our federal budget problems, including our growing federal budget deficit and our increasing national debt, how much does this concern you personally, in terms of how it impacts you and your family's future--a great deal, quite a bit, only a little, or not at all?

48%	A great deal
32%	Quite a bit
17%	Only a little
3%	Not at all

Survey by NBC News, Wall Street Journal

Methodology: Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies February 24-February 28, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,000. The sample included 200 respondents who use a cell phone only. [USNBCWSJ.11FEB.R19]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll [February, 2011]

Thinking again about yourself and your family, if the Congress decided to make major cuts across the board on most programs in order to reduce government spending, how much does this concern you personally, in terms of how it impacts you and your family's future--a great deal, quite a bit, only a little, or not at all?

36%	A great deal
26%	Quite a bit
26%	Only a little
10%	Not at all
2%	Not sure

Survey by NBC News, Wall Street Journal

Methodology: Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies February 24-February 28, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,000. The sample included 200 respondents who use a cell phone only. [USNBCWSJ.11FEB.R20]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

# Appendix E: Appetite Is Growing to Address Deficit through Cuts and Revenue

Included Graphs: Figure 13, Figure 14, Figure 15, Figure 16

## NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll [June, 1995]

If the deficit cannot be eliminated solely by cutting wasteful federal spending, which one of these steps would you most favor--cutting important programs, raising taxes, or postponing elimination of the deficit?

- 27% Cutting important programs
- 23% Raising taxes
- 37% Postponing elimination of the deficit
- 4% Combination (vol.)
- 9% Not sure

Subpopulation: Asked of half sample

Survey by NBC News, Wall Street Journal

Methodology: Conducted by Hart and Teeter Research Companies June 2-June 6, 1995, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,008. [USNBCWSJ.060895.R17C]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll [January, 2011]

If the (federal budget) deficit cannot be eliminated solely by cutting wasteful spending, which one of these steps would you most favor--cutting important programs, raising taxes, or postponing elimination of the deficit?

- 32% Cutting important programs
- 29% Raising taxes
- 30% Postponing elimination of the deficit
- 2% Combination (Vol.)
- 7% Not sure

Subpopulation: Asked of Form A half sample

Survey by NBC News, Wall Street Journal

Methodology: Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies January 13-January 17, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,000. The sample included 200 respondents who use a cell phone only. [USNBCWSJ.11JAN.R27]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll [February, 2011]

If the (federal budget) deficit cannot be eliminated solely by cutting wasteful federal spending, which one of these steps would you most favor--cutting important programs, raising taxes, or postponing elimination of the deficit?

- 35% Cutting important programs
- 33% Raising taxes
- 26% Postponing elimination of the deficit
- 1% Combination (Vol.)
- 5% Not sure

Survey by NBC News, Wall Street Journal

Methodology: Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies February 24-February 28, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,000. The sample included 200 respondents who use a cell phone only. [USNBCWSJ.11FEB.R23]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

# Appendix F: Americans Are Reluctant to Make Specific Cuts – Especially to Programs for the Poor

## Appendix F.1: Footnotes 16 – 21, 23, 24. Figures 17, 18

### Gallup/USA Today Poll [April, 2011]

Are you worried or not worried that the Republican plan for reducing the federal budget deficit in the long-term would...take away medical protections for the poor and disadvantaged?

64% Worried  
34% Not worried  
2% No opinion

Survey by USA Today

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization April 20-April 23, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,013. Interviews were conducted with respondents on landline telephones for respondents with a landline telephone, and cellular phones for respondents who are cell phone only.

[USGALLUP.11APL20.R24C]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### Democracy Corps Poll [February, 2011]

Now I am going to read you some of the specific spending cuts proposed in the House Republicans' budget for this year (2011). After I read each one, please tell me whether you favor or oppose it....It cuts funding for K-12 education and support for special education, students with disabilities and schools in high poverty areas, cutting off almost 4 million students and losing thousands of teachers. (If Favor/Oppose, ask:) (Is that strongly or somewhat favor oppose?)

8% Strongly favor  
10% Somewhat favor  
18% Somewhat oppose  
60% Strongly oppose  
4% Don't know/Refused

Subpopulation: Asked of Form A half sample

Survey by Democracy Corps

Methodology: Conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research February 7-February 9, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national likely voters sample of 1,000. Likely voters are registered voters who voted in the 2008 election/weren't registered/ineligible/too young to vote and said they are probably or almost certain to vote in the 2012 election. [USGREEN.11DCFEB.R064]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll [February, 2011]**

(Let me read you a number of programs that could be cut significantly as a way to reduce the current federal budget deficit. For each one, please tell me if you think significantly cutting the funding for this program is totally acceptable, mostly acceptable, mostly unacceptable, or totally unacceptable as a way to help reduce the federal deficit.)...Heating assistance to low-income families

8% Totally acceptable  
26% Mostly acceptable  
35% Mostly unacceptable  
30% Totally unacceptable  
1% Not sure

Subpopulation: Asked of Form A half sample

Survey by NBC News, Wall Street Journal

Methodology: Conducted by Hart and McInturff Research Companies February 24-February 28, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,000. The sample included 200 respondents who use a cell phone only. [USNBCWSJ.11FEB.R25J]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **Democracy Corps Poll [February, 2011]**

(Now I am going to read you some of the specific spending cuts proposed in the House Republicans' budget for this year (2011). After I read each one, please tell me whether you favor or oppose it.)...It cuts Head Start funding for 120,000 children in pre-school and eliminates 40,000 jobs. (If Favor/Oppose, ask:) (Is that strongly or somewhat favor oppose?)

9% Strongly favor  
14% Somewhat favor  
23% Somewhat oppose  
50% Strongly oppose  
4% Don't know/Refused

Subpopulation: Asked of Form B half sample

Survey by Democracy Corps

Methodology: Conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research February 7-February 9, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national likely voters sample of 1,000. Likely voters are registered voters who voted in the 2008 election/weren't registered/ineligible/too young to vote and said they are probably or almost certain to vote in the 2012 election. [USGREEN.11DCFEB.R071]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## Democracy Corps Poll [February, 2011]

(Now I am going to read you some of the specific spending cuts proposed in the House Republicans' budget for this year (2011). After I read each one, please tell me whether you favor or oppose it.)...It eliminates 5 million meals now delivered to the homebound elderly. (If Favor/Oppose, ask:) (Is that strongly or somewhat favor oppose?)

12% Strongly favor  
11% Somewhat favor  
21% Somewhat oppose  
52% Strongly oppose  
4% Don't know/Refused

Subpopulation: Asked of two-thirds of Form B half sample

Survey by Democracy Corps

Methodology: Conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research February 7-February 9, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national likely voters sample of 1,000. Likely voters are registered voters who voted in the 2008 election/weren't registered/ineligible/too young to vote and said they are probably or almost certain to vote in the 2012 election. [USGREEN.11DCFEB.R070]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## Harris Interactive Poll [January, 2011]

Below is a list of different areas of federal government spending. For each, please indicate if you would favor a major cut in spending, a minor cut, no cut at all, or would you increase spending in this area?"

*Summary of those saying "favor a major cut" or "favor a minor cut"*

	Favor Cut (NET)			Change 1980-2011
	1980	2008	2011	
	%	%	%	%
Foreign economic aid	82	74	75	-7
Foreign military aid	77	69	69	-8
Spending by the regulatory agencies generally	72	53	56	-16
Space programs	66	49	54	-12
Subsidies to business	69	62	51	-18
Federal welfare spending	69	52	51	-18
Federally funded scientific research programs	51	35	42	-9
Farm subsidies	53	44	42	-11
Defense spending	34	35	41	7
Federal housing programs	54	39	41	-13
The food stamp program	65	43	40	-25
Pollution control	49	22	37	-12
Spending for mass transportation	42	28	35	-7
Federal aid to cities	58	33	34	-24
Federal jobs programs	57	34	33	-24
Federal highway financing	59	24	31	-28
Revenue sharing with states and cities	53	30	28	-25
Health care	37	12	24	-13
Federal aid to education	37	17	21	-16
	23	8	11	-12

Note: Please note that in 1980, this survey was conducted by telephone

Survey by Harris Interactive

Methodology: This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States between January 17 to 24, 2011 among 2,566 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

(About sixty percent of the federal budget goes toward defense, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Please tell me whether you would support or oppose each of the following in order to reduce the federal budget deficit.) Would you support or oppose...cutting the growth of spending on Medicaid benefits, which is the government program which pays for health care for low income people?

40% Support  
57% Oppose  
4% Don't know/No answer

Subpopulation: Form A half sample

Methodology: Conducted by Quinnipiac University Polling Institute April 26-May 1, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national registered voters sample of 1,408. The interviews included landline and cell phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **CNN/ORC International Poll [July, 2011]**

(Now I'm going to read you some of the specific proposals for cutting government spending and increasing taxes that have been suggested as part of the discussions on the debt ceiling. For each one, please tell me whether you favor or oppose that proposal as a way to reduce the amount that the government owes.)...Cutting the amount the government spends on Medicaid, the federal health program for the poor

22% Favor  
77% Oppose  
\*% No opinion

Survey by Cable News Network

Methodology: Conducted by ORC International July 18-July 20, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,009. The sample included 856 interviews among landline respondents and 153 interviews among cell phone respondents. [USORC.072111A.R24D]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### **Bloomberg Poll [October, 2010]**

(To reduce the budget deficit, spending cuts or changes to major government programs may be required. In that context, please tell me for each of the following if you think this approach should be strongly considered, just considered, or taken off the table.)...Privatize Medicare with assistance for low-income seniors.

19% Strongly considered  
39% Considered  
37% Taken off table  
5% Not sure

Survey by Bloomberg

Methodology: Conducted by Selzer & Co. October 7-October 10, 2010, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,001. [USSELZER.101310.R08E]

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## Appendix F.2: Figure 19.1 and 19.2

### Time/Yankelovich, Skelly & White Poll [December, 1984]

People have also suggested making spending cuts in specific program areas in order to reduce the (federal budget) deficit. I am going to read you a list of programs. For each, please tell me whether you FAVOR spending cuts to reduce the deficit or OPPOSE spending cuts. Medicaid, which assists the poor in their medical costs.

16% Favor  
81% Oppose  
2% Not sure (Volunteered)

#### Survey by Time

Methodology: Conducted by Yankelovich, Skelly & White December 10-December 12, 1984, and based on telephone interviews with a registered voters sample of 1,024.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### Time/Yankelovich, Skelly & White Poll [April, 1985]

People have suggested making spending cuts in specific program areas in order to reduce the deficit. I am going to read you a list of programs. For each, please tell me whether you FAVOR spending cuts to reduce the deficit or OPPOSE spending cuts. Medicaid, which assists the poor in their medical costs.

18% Favor  
79% Oppose  
4% Not sure (Volunteered)

#### Survey by Time

Methodology: Conducted by Yankelovich, Skelly & White April 30-May 2, 1985, and based on telephone interviews with a registered voters sample of 1,014.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

### Kaiser/Harvard Election Night Survey [November, 1994]

(A number of policies have been proposed in order to reduce the federal deficit. If the next Congress decides to address the problem of the deficit, would you favor or oppose each of the following policies that might be proposed?)...Decrease spending on Medicaid for the poor

17% Favor  
83% Oppose

#### Survey by Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Harvard School of Public Health

Methodology: Conducted by KRC Communications/Research on November 8, 1994, and based on telephone interviews with a national adults who voted Nov. 8, 1994 sample of 1,203.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## Quinnipiac University Poll [April, 2011]

(About sixty percent of the federal budget goes toward defense, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Please tell me whether you would support or oppose each of the following in order to reduce the federal budget deficit.) Would you support or oppose...cutting the growth of spending on Medicaid benefits, which is the government program which pays for health care for low income people?

40% Support  
57% Oppose  
4% Don't know/No answer

Subpopulation: Form A half sample

Methodology: Conducted by Quinnipiac University Polling Institute April 26-May 1, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national registered voters sample of 1,408. The interviews included landline and cell phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## First Focus Quiet Voice Survey [April, 2011]

The House budget proposal (April 2011) cuts over \$750 billion from funding for Medicaid, a federal health program that provides care to low-income children, the elderly and the disabled. Generally speaking, do you favor or oppose this cut in Medicaid? (If Favor/Oppose, ask:) (Is that strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?)

14% Strongly favor  
13% Somewhat favor  
22% Somewhat oppose  
48% Strongly oppose  
3% Don't know/Refused

Survey by First Focus

Methodology: Conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research April 13-April 18, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national likely voters sample of 1,024. Likely voters are registered voters who voted in the 2008 election/not registered in 2008/ineligible/too young to vote, and they are almost certain/will probably vote in the 2012 election. 114 respondents were interviewed on cell phones.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **First Focus Quiet Voice Survey [April, 2011]**

(I am going to read you a list of different programs that might be affected by efforts to reduce the federal budget deficit. After each one I read, please tell me whether you would support no reductions in this program, whether you would support minor reductions in this program or support major reductions in this program.)...Medicaid, a federal health program that provides care to low-income children, the elderly and the disabled

49% Support no reduction  
40% Support minor reduction  
10% Support major reduction  
1% Don't know/Refused

Survey by First Focus

Methodology: Conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research April 13-April 18, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national likely voters sample of 1,024. Likely voters are registered voters who voted in the 2008 election/not registered in 2008/ineligible/too young to vote, and they are almost certain/will probably vote in the 2012 election. 114 respondents were interviewed on cell phones.  
Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **Knowledge Of Medicare And Support For Policy Proposals Survey [May, 1995]**

(A number of spending reductions have been proposed in order to balance the federal budget and avoid raising taxes.) Would you favor or oppose making major spending reductions in...Medicaid?

31% Favor  
65% Oppose  
4% Not sure

Survey by Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Harvard School of Public Health

Methodology: Conducted by Louis Harris & Associates May 31-June 5, 1995, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,383. The sample included an oversample of 307 respondents age 65 & over. Results are weighted to be representative of a national adult population.  
Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **Washington Post/Harvard/Kaiser Family Foundation Race Relations Poll [July, 1995]**

A number of spending reductions have been proposed in order to balance the federal budget and avoid raising taxes. Would you favor or oppose making major spending reductions in each of the following federal programs?... Medicaid

42% Favor  
56% Oppose  
2% Don't know/No opinion

Subpopulation: Asked of Form A half sample.

Survey by Harvard University, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

Methodology: Conducted by Washington Post July 20-September 28, 1995, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult (see note) sample of 1,970. The interviewing was done July 20-Aug. 19 and Sept. 18-28, 1995. The sample included an oversample of blacks, Asians, and Latinos. Results are weighted to be representative of a national adult population.  
Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **Public's Views About Medicaid Survey [April, 2005]**

As you may know, many states are thinking about cutting back their Medicaid program in order to help balance their state budget. Would you support or oppose making some cuts to the Medicaid program in your state? (If Support/Oppose, ask:) Is that strongly support/oppose or somewhat support/oppose?

5% Strongly support  
17% Somewhat support  
22% Somewhat oppose  
52% Strongly oppose  
4% Don't know/Refused

Subpopulation: Asked of Form A half sample

Survey by Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

Methodology: Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International April 1-May 1, 2005, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,201.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **State Tobacco Taxes Survey [January, 2010]**

(As you may have heard, virtually all states are currently facing severe budget deficits. I am going to read you a list of proposals that have been suggested as ways to address the state budget deficit. After I read each one, please tell me if you favor or oppose that proposal.)...Reduce funding for Medicaid health services...Do you favor or oppose that proposal? (If Favor/Oppose, ask:) Do you favor/oppose that proposal strongly or not so strongly?

10% Strongly favor  
6% Somewhat favor  
21% Somewhat oppose  
60% Strongly oppose  
3% Don't know

Survey by Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

Methodology: Conducted by ICR-International Communications Research January 20-January 24, 2010, and based on telephone interviews with a national registered voters sample of 847.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **Kaiser/Harvard The Public's Health Care Agenda for the 112th Congress Survey [January, 2011]**

(If Congress decides to reduce the deficit by reducing spending on federal programs and services, I'd like to know in which programs you would be willing to see spending reduced. For each program I name, please tell me if you would support major spending reductions, minor spending reductions or no reductions at all as a way to reduce the federal deficit.) To reduce the deficit would you support major reductions, minor reductions, or no reductions to spending on...Medicaid? (If Necessary, ask:) To reduce the deficit, would you support major reductions, minor reductions, or no reductions to spending on...Medicaid?

13% Major reductions  
39% Minor reductions  
47% No reductions  
1% Don't know  
\*% Refused

Survey by Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Harvard School of Public Health

Methodology: Conducted by Social Science Research Solutions January 4-January 14, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,502. 1000 respondents were interviewed on landline telephones, and 502 were interviewed on cell phones, including 203 who had no landline telephone.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **ABC News/Washington Post Poll [March, 2011]**

(Now thinking about budget problems at the state level. I'm going to name some proposals that may help reduce state budget deficits. For each, please tell me if that's something you would support strongly, support somewhat, oppose somewhat or oppose strongly in your state.) How about...cut state funding for the Medicaid health insurance program?

11% Support strongly  
11% Support somewhat  
23% Oppose somewhat  
53% Oppose strongly  
3% No opinion

Subpopulation: Asked of half sample

Methodology: Conducted by ABC News/Washington Post March 10-March 13, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,005. Interviews were conducted by TNS Intersearch. The interviews included landline and cell-phone-only respondents.

Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **Kaiser Health Tracking Poll [April, 2011]**

(If Congress decides to reduce the deficit by reducing federal spending, I'd like to know in which areas you would be more willing to see spending reduced. For each area I name, please tell me if you would support major spending reductions, minor spending reductions or no reductions at all as a way to reduce the federal deficit.) To reduce the deficit would you support major reductions, minor reductions, or no reductions to spending on...Medicaid?

12% Major reductions  
35% Minor reductions  
50% No reductions  
3% Don't know/Refused

Survey by Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

Methodology: Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International April 7-April 12, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,207. 803 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 404 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 190 who had no landline telephone. Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

## **Kaiser Health Tracking Poll [May, 2011]**

(In order to reduce the federal budget deficit, Congress may decide to reduce federal spending in certain areas. For each area I name, please tell me if you would support major spending reductions, minor spending reductions or no reductions at all as a way to reduce the federal deficit.) To reduce the deficit would you support major reductions, minor reductions, or no reductions to spending on...Medicaid?

13% Major reductions  
30% Minor reductions  
53% No reductions  
3% Don't know/Refused

Survey by Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

Methodology: Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International May 12-May 17, 2011, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,203. 801 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 402 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 197 who had no landline telephone. Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.