

Program for Public Consultation

Consulting the People on Public Policy

STIMSON



Consulting the American People on National Defense Spending

**A Study by the Program for Public Consultation,
in collaboration with the Stimson Center and
the Center for Public Integrity**

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Knowledge
NETWORKS

The Program for Public Consultation seeks to improve democratic governance by helping governments consult their citizenry on the key public policy issues the government faces. Unlike standard polls, in public consultations respondents are presented information that helps simulate the issues and tradeoffs faced by policymakers. PPC has been established to develop the methods and theory of public consultation and to conduct public consultations. PPC is a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes and the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland.

The Center on Policy Attitudes (COPA) was established in 1992 with the purpose of giving public opinion a greater voice in the public policy process. COPA conducts in-depth studies of public opinion that include polls, focus groups and interviews. It integrates its findings together with those of other organizations. In addition to PPC, COPA has a joint program with the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland called the Program on International Policy Attitudes.

School of Public Policy, University of Maryland (College Park) is one of the nation's leading graduate programs devoted to the study of public policy, management and international affairs. It is the only policy school in the Washington area that is embedded in a major research university and combines both domestic and international policy studies under one roof.

Knowledge Networks is a polling, social science, and market research firm based in Menlo Park, California. Knowledge Networks uses a large-scale nationwide research panel which is randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and is subsequently provided internet access for the completion of surveys (and thus is not limited to those who already have internet access).

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INTRODUCTION

With the United States facing large budget deficits, a major debate is underway in Washington DC over whether defense spending will be subject to cuts.

Unless Congress succeeds in agreeing on a new budget, current law calls for the 'sequestration' provision to kick in, which would cut defense spending 10 percent. Many voices on both sides of the aisle have expressed substantial concern over that prospect.

But how does the American public feel about the potential of cutting defense to mitigate the deficit? If a representative sample of Americans were at the table when decisions were being made, what would they say?

Existing polls present a somewhat confusing picture of American public attitudes about defense spending. This issue has become confused in public discussion, because many polls simply ask Americans whether they favor cutting defense, increasing it, or keeping it the same. These find that more favor cuts than increases, but those favoring cuts are still fewer than half of those surveyed. When pollsters frame the issue in terms of the budget deficit, the number ready to cut defense may rise to about half. As respondents are given more information, support for reductions rises. And when they are asked to choose between defense and other programs, defense is consistently the most popular program to cut and is cut by majorities. (For a more detailed discussion of such polls see <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brunitedstatescanadara/709.php?nid=&id=&pnt=709&lb=brusc>)

The Program for Public Consultation in December 2010 did a survey in which respondents were presented the discretionary budget and asked to propose their own budget. In this case 70 percent cut defense spending, with the average respondent cutting the base defense budget 18 percent.

This still leaves open many questions. Though it appears that when Americans see how much is spent on defense compared to other items in the discretionary budget they are inclined to cut defense, there is other information they could be exposed to that might elicit a different response. Opponents of defense cuts often emphasize that when compared to spending on Social Security and Medicare, defense spending is rather modest and that as a percentage of GDP, defense spending is low and has been on the decline for decades now. Advocates of defense cuts argue that considering how much potential enemies and allies spend, US spending is way out of proportion. They also argue that the US defense spending is high historically, but then opponents say that it is consistent with other times in history when the US was at war.

Another key question is how Americans would respond if they heard the key arguments that proponents and opponents of defense cuts make on the issue. If Americans were to hear a debate on this issue, which side would be more likely to win?

Finally, the defense budget is not just one big number. It consists of numerous programs that Americans may view quite differently. If Americans were presented the defense budget broken down into major areas, presented arguments for and against cutting each area, and given the tools to make their own budget as they saw fit, what would this budget look like?

To find out, the Program for Public Consultation joined forces with the Stimson Center's Budgeting for Foreign Affairs and Defense program and the Center for Public Integrity's National Security program.

How the Study Was Conducted

The key goal of public consultation studies is not to simply find out respondents' most immediate response based on existing information, but to elicit a fuller picture of their values by learning what conclusions they come to when they have the kind of information that policymakers have. It is also necessary to give respondents a chance to deliberate by presenting them the key arguments surrounding the issue, much like hearing a debate.

Naturally, making something as complex as the defense budget and the arguments surrounding it lucid for the average American was a challenge. To develop a budget framework that average Americans could understand, while being fully accurate, the Stimson Center provided their expertise in the complexities of defense budgeting.

To develop the arguments for and against cuts on defense spending in general and on specific budget areas, PPC drew on the Stimson Center and CPI. Other sources, especially the Foreign Policy Initiative, were also consulted. Every effort was made to ensure that all key arguments for and against cutting defense were included and presented in a way that is consistent with the way advocates present them.

The study was fielded over April 12 to 18 with a sample of 665 American adults. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.8%; with the design effect also taken into account, the margin of error is plus or minus 4.8%. It was conducted over the Internet with a representative sample of the American public who are part of the nationwide panel of Knowledge Networks.

Though these surveys take place online, the panel is not derived from an "opt-in" process by which any online user can volunteer to be a respondent. Instead, panelists are recruited through a scientific process of selection using two methods: a random selection of possible US telephone numbers (also called random digit dial sampling, or RDD); and a random selection of residential addresses using the United States Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File (a complete list of all U.S. residential households--including households that have only cell phones and often missed in random-digit-dial sampling).

Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the panel called the KnowledgePanel. Those who agree to participate but who do not have Internet access are provided a laptop computer and Internet service. A representative sample is then chosen for a specific survey. Once that sample completes a survey, the demographic breakdown of the sample is compared to the US census. Any variations from the census are adjusted by weighting.

Conducting surveys with this type of representative sample online has proven to be superior to standard telephone surveys, as respondents can take as much time as they like to read and respond to questions, thus increasing the thoughtfulness of their answers.

The following report presents the findings of the study in a way that follows the order of the presentation to the respondents. But to see a summary road map of the process, see Appendix A.

How the Budget Numbers Were Developed

There are different ways to define the boundaries of defense spending. For this study we used budget numbers for the 2012 fiscal year national defense budget. "National defense" corresponds to the Office of Management and Budget's function 050, and it includes the Pentagon, the Energy

Department's nuclear weapons programs, and national security elements of the FBI. Figures are reported as budget authority, the amount of money that Congress appropriated. The fiscal year runs from October 2011 through September 2012.

Breaking down the national defense budget in a way that is meaningful to the average American was a challenging endeavor undertaken by the Stimson Center's project on budgeting for foreign affairs and defense. Compiling data directly from the enacted appropriations legislation, it then separated the budget into costs for air, ground, and naval forces. In addition to the Army, the ground force category includes the Marine Corps' funding for personnel and operations and maintenance, as well as spending on procurement explicitly itemized for the Marines. Most procurement and all of the research for the Marine Corps is not labeled in that way, though, and both remain within the budget for the Navy, the Marines' parent organization.

Stimson further divided air, ground, and naval costs into investment resources and funding for existing capabilities. Research, development, testing, and evaluation are the core of investment, but it also includes the procurement costs for programs that are less than a quarter into their production lines.

Several capabilities cutting across the air, ground, and naval forces are sufficiently pronounced to be examined on their own. They are special operations, nuclear weapons programs, and missile defense. Stimson extracted budget figures for these capabilities from across the budget. Nuclear weapons program funding primarily represents the Pentagon's Strategic Forces figure ("Major Force Program - 1) and the weapons activity figure from the Energy Department's National Nuclear Security Administration.

These categories are mutually exclusive to avoid double-counting. Not all of the national defense budget fits properly into one of these categories—such as items like defense environmental restoration, itemized counter-drug programs, overseas humanitarian aid, and the office of the inspector general. These costs are included in aggregate representations of the budget, however.

Respondents considered spending on a variety of individual issues at the end of the survey and separate from the budgeting section, including military compensation, military healthcare, and specific weapon systems. Figures in these sections were based on the January 2012 *New York Times*' research for its extensive online exercise regarding the defense budget, based primarily on numbers from the Congressional Budget Office.

A Note on Reporting Findings

For this report as a whole, average responses are used as the primary method to describe public preferences. Averages have the merit of incorporating each individual's responses equally in an all-inclusive whole. The average shows what the budget would be if each individual had an equal amount of influence on the total.

However, also included are majority positions, e.g. the amount that a majority cut, though most of that majority actually cut a greater amount. This is a more conservative approach because it prevents individuals from having a disproportionate impact and arguably is more similar to the political process of finding majority consensus. However, it should be recognized that the majority may under-represent the changes respondents are willing to make, or would have been willing to make in a budgeting process if they knew how the majority had voted on specific areas (as would happen in a negotiating context). If a respondent were to find that the amount they could cut in one area was

limited by a more reluctant majority, to meet his or her goals relative to the overall size of defense spending he or she might choose to cut more deeply in some other area. With a number of people making such adjustments, the distribution of amounts across the nine areas might have been different.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. Responses to the Magnitude of Defense Spending

When given information about the size of the national defense budget from five different perspectives, in three of the five cases a majority of respondents said that the size of the defense budget was more than they expected, and in two cases that it was roughly in line with expectations; in no case did a majority say it was less than expectations. When the national defense budget was presented in comparison to other items in the discretionary budget, to historical defense spending levels in constant dollars, and to the defense spending of potential enemies and allies, majorities said defense was larger than they had expected. The amount of national defense spending was more consistent with expectations when presented in comparison to Social Security and Medicare, and in terms of historical trends as a percentage of GDP.6

2. Assessing Whether to Cut National Defense to Reduce the Deficit

Presented arguments for and against cutting national defense spending to address the budget deficit, majorities found both sets of arguments convincing. However, when asked for their conclusion, a large majority favored cutting defense..... 14

3. Setting an Overall Level for the National Defense Budget

Presented the base national defense budget for 2012 and given the opportunity to set a level for 2013, three quarters reduced it, including two thirds of Republicans and 9 in 10 Democrats. On average defense spending was lowered 23%. A majority lowered it at least 11%.

Shown that spending on Afghanistan and Iraq operations is already scheduled for a significant 2013 reduction, a very large majority of both parties nonetheless made further cuts to the residual operation in Afghanistan--on average 40%..... 17

4. Making Up a Base Defense Budget, Area by Area

Respondents were given the opportunity to make up their own defense budget by proposing changes to the levels of spending for nine areas of the defense budget. After evaluating arguments for and against cutting that area, a majority cut all nine areas presented, though in three areas less than a majority of Republicans, made cuts.

The average proposed level represented a cut in eight of the nine areas from 10 to 27%. The deepest cuts in percentage terms were to nuclear weapons, and in dollar terms to existing ground forces. The one area that was increased was the development of new capabilities for ground forces.

All areas combined were cut 18% on average, with Republicans cutting 12% and Democrats 22%. A majority cut at least 13%.....21

4A. Air Power

A large majority (72%) made cuts in existing air power capabilities, including majorities of Democrats (85%), and Republicans (61%), with the sample as a whole cutting it an average of 17%. Two thirds cut new capabilities in this area--three quarters of Democrats and six in ten Republicans--with the whole sample cutting it an average of 19%.23

4B. Ground Forces

Three in four reduced spending on existing capabilities for ground forces, including nine in ten Democrats and seven in ten Republicans. Overall, the sample cut spending existing capabilities 23%, the largest in dollar terms. Fewer respondents (57%) made cuts to new capabilities (seven in ten Democrats and half of Republicans). On average, spending on new capabilities was the one area that was increased--9%..... 25

4C. Naval Forces

Roughly seven in ten Americans cut the budget for existing capabilities for naval forces, including 85% of Democrats and 65% of Republicans, with an average cut of 13%. Seven in ten also made cuts to the budget for new capabilities, including 84% of Democrats and 63% of Republicans, with an average cut of 20%..... 27

4D. Nuclear Weapons

Two thirds decreased the budget for nuclear weapons, including eight in ten Democrats and two thirds of Republicans, with the sample as a whole cutting it an average of 27%--the largest area percentage cut..... 29

4E. Special Operations Forces

Six in ten reduced the budget for Special Operations Forces, but while three quarters of Democrats made cuts, only 42% of Republicans did so. On average, 10% was cut 31

4F. Missile Defense

A majority (58%) made cuts to the budget for missile defense, including 73% of Democrats but only 47% of Republicans. Overall, the sample cut spending 14%..... 32

5. Military Healthcare Costs (TRICARE)

Majorities of both parties favored reducing healthcare costs by having military families and retirees pay a typical co-pay for drug prescriptions. However, there was not majority support for increasing the premiums of military retirees younger than 65 or raising the cap on out-of-pocket expenses for military retirees..... 34

6. Military Personnel Costs

Majorities of both parties favored slowing the growth of (but not reducing) the tax-exempt allowances military families receive for housing and food. A slight majority favored a proposal for reducing military pension benefits, but Democrats were divided. Majorities of both parties opposed capping the rate of growth of military pay at half a percentage point below increases in private sector wages. 36

7. Specific Weapon Systems

Presented arguments for and against cancelling several weapons systems and information about the related costs, modest majorities favored cancelling the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and the development of a new long-range bomber, and six in ten favored not building a new aircraft carrier and allowing the number to decline from 11 to 10. A majority opposed cancelling the V-22 Osprey, and eliminating bombers as one of the three means of delivering nuclear weapons..... 39

Appendix: Roadmap of the Process Respondents Went Through..... 44

FINDINGS

1. Responses to the Magnitude of Defense Spending

When given information about the size of the national defense budget from five different perspectives, in three of the five cases a majority of respondents said that the size of the defense budget was more than they expected, and in two cases that it was roughly in line with expectations; in no case did a majority say it was less than expectations. When the national defense budget was presented in comparison to other items in the discretionary budget, to historical defense spending levels in constant dollars, and to the defense spending of potential enemies and allies, majorities said defense was larger than they had expected. The amount of national defense spending was more consistent with expectations when presented in comparison to Social Security and Medicare, and in terms of historical trends as a percentage of GDP.

To begin the process of providing respondents the tools they would need to make their own national defense budget, they were given information about the size of national defense spending. Since magnitude is always relative, the defense budget can appear larger or smaller depending on what it is compared to, and thus its relative size alone can be a politically controversial subject. We included five different perspectives on the defense budget that are prominent in debates about the defense budget.

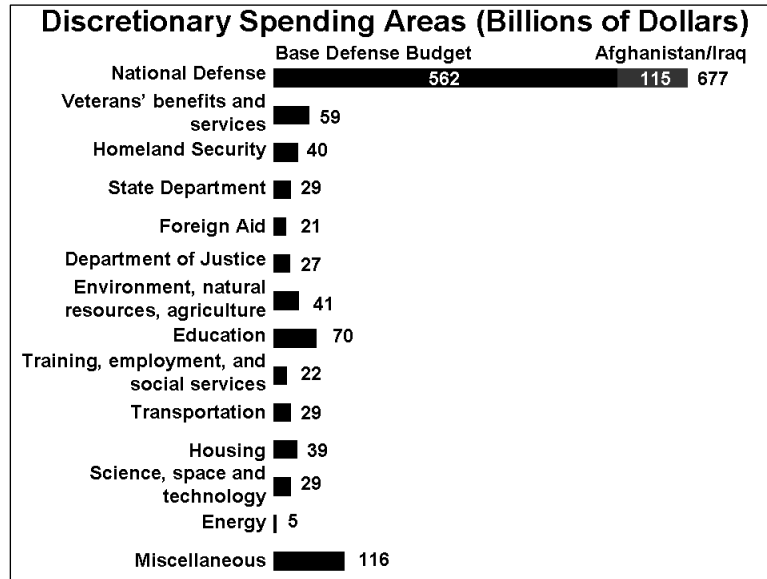
Each perspective was presented in the form of a graph. Respondents were asked for their reaction to each perspective, saying whether defense spending appeared more, less, or about the same as they expected.

For three perspectives majorities said defense spending was more than they expected; for the other two, less than half thought so—as summarized in the table below.

Perspective on defense spending—compared to:	More than expected	About same as expected	Less than expected
Other areas of the discretionary budget	65%	29%	6%
The past—historical trends since 1960 (constant dollars)	60%	32%	7%
Spending by potential enemies and major allies	56%	36%	7%
Spending on Social Security and Medicare	45%	41%	14%
The size of the US economy (GDP)	26%	34%	40%

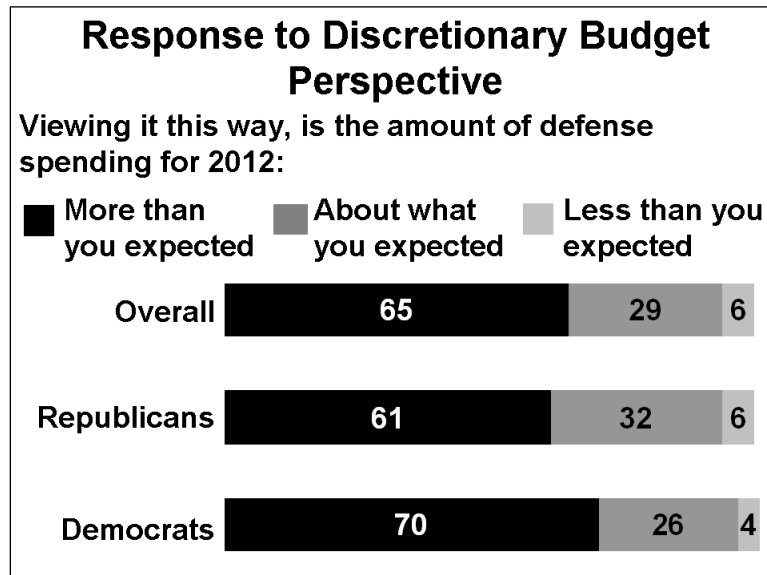
National Defense Spending and the Discretionary Budget

In the first perspective, respondents were shown the 2012 discretionary budget divided into spending categories, including spending on national defense (all numbers are derived from the Office of Management and Budget). The nature of the discretionary budget had just been explained to them (see full text in questionnaire).



On the same screen they were asked whether, “viewing it this way...the amount of defense spending for 2012 [is] much more than you expected, somewhat more than you expected, about what you expected, somewhat less than you expected, or much less than you expected?”

About two in three (65%) said that from this perspective defense spending was more than they expected (much more, 37%). Twenty-nine percent said it was about what they expected, and only 6 percent found it less than they expected (much less, 2%).



There were partisan differences, but they were not pronounced. Both Democrats and independents were more likely to say defense spending was much more than they expected (44% and 42% respectively) than were Republicans (27%). However, among Republicans, 61% still said defense spending was more than they expected (much more 27%, somewhat 34%).

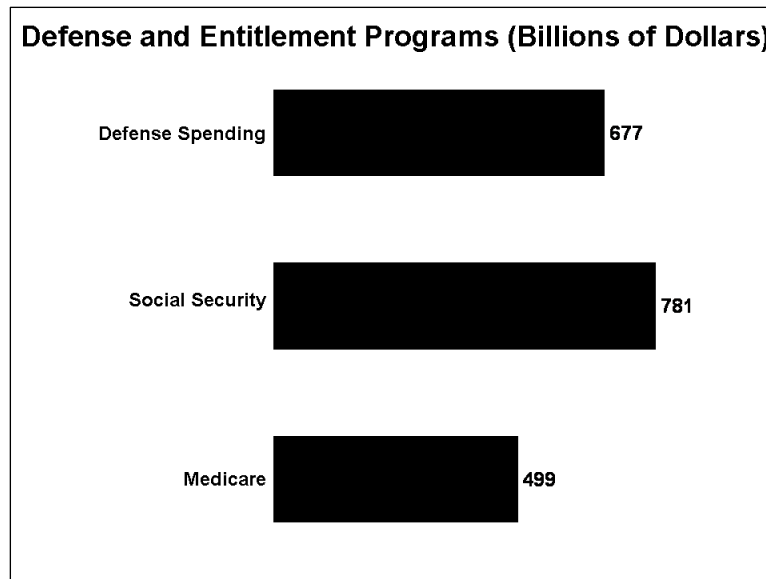
National Defense Spending Relative to Social Security and Medicare

In the context of the total federal budget—rather than the discretionary federal budget—the size of the national defense budget is rivaled by that of Social Security and Medicare. This is a point that is frequently stressed in debates by defenders of the current levels of national defense spending.

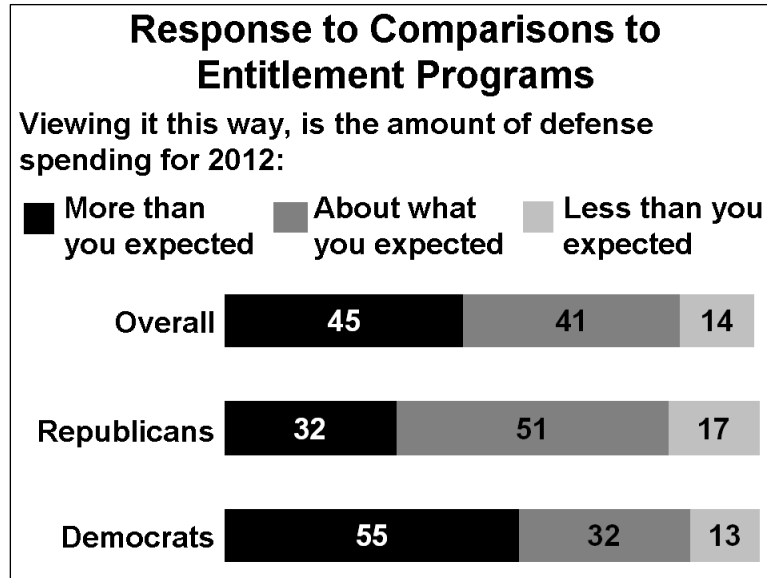
Respondents were told:

The second way of viewing defense spending is comparing it to the two other largest areas of Federal spending--Social Security and Medicare. These two programs are not part of the discretionary budget and are funded through payroll taxes.

They were then shown this graph:



Responding to this perspective, fewer than half (45%) thought defense spending was more than they had expected, which was roughly similar to those that thought this was about what they had expected (41%). Only 14 percent said it was less than they had expected (much less, 3%).



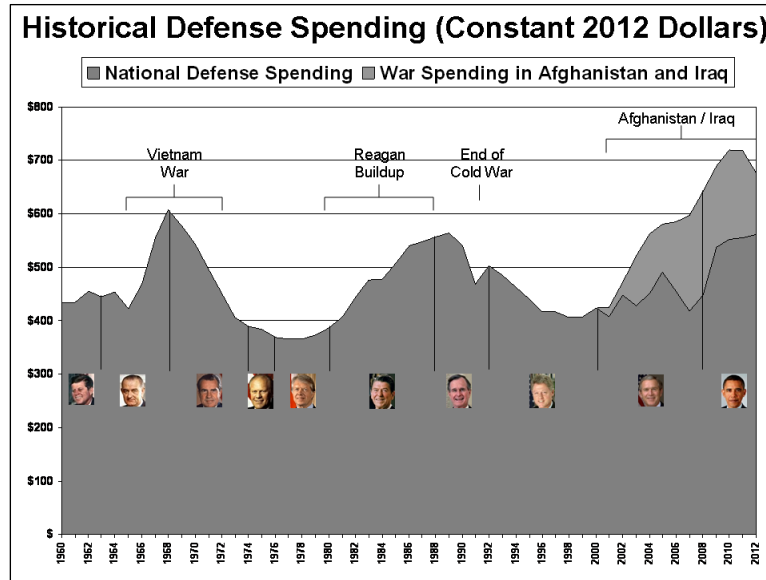
Among Republicans, half (51%) said this amount was about what they had expected, though only 32% of Democrats had this reaction (independents, 41%). Thirty-two percent of Republicans thought defense was more than they had expected, while a majority of Democrats (55%) thought this (independents, 44%). Seventeen percent of Republicans and smaller percentages of both Democrats and independents thought the amount was less than they had expected (13%).

Historical Trends in National Defense Spending

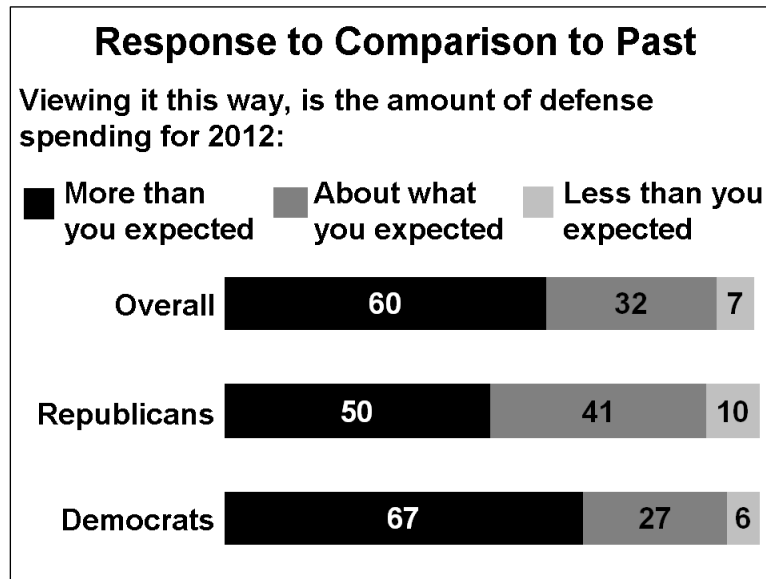
Much of the debate about the defense budget tends to revolve around historical norms and levels that were set in the past and are often seen as customary and appropriate. In order to expose respondents to this aspect of the debate, they were first told:

The third way of viewing the national defense budget is how much the government is currently spending on defense, as compared to how much it has spent in the past. Here is how the current year spending compares to the past in inflation-adjusted dollars. As you will see, the costs for conducting the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq are separate from the base defense budget we are focusing on here.

They were shown this graph, with markers indicating the various wars and presidencies:



Three in five—60%-- looking at this graph, felt that 2012 defense spending was more than they had expected (much more, 30%). A third (32%) saw it as about what they had expected. Only 7% said it was less than they had expected.



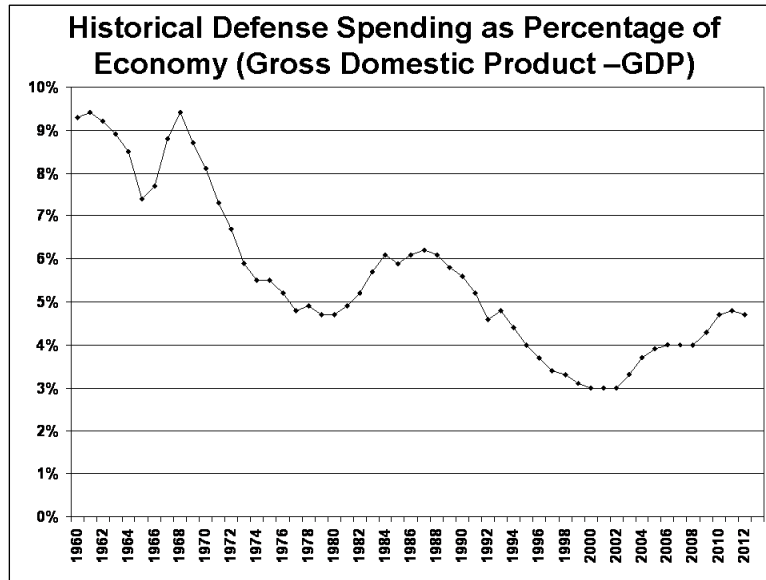
Democrats and independents had the largest numbers saying defense was more than they expected, at 67% and 64% respectively. However, 50% of Republicans also said it was more than they had expected. Republicans were more likely to say defense spending was about what they had expected (41%) than independents (30%) or Democrats (27%).

National Defense Spending as a Percentage of GDP

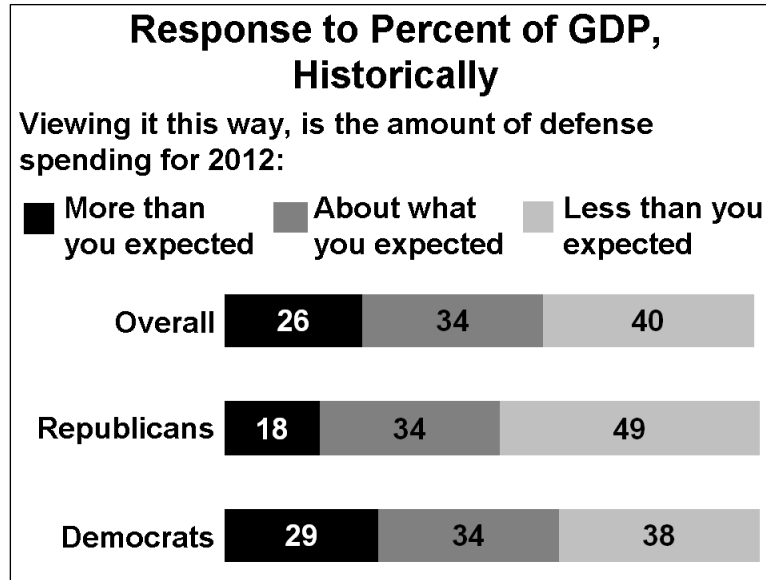
In the debate over defense spending, it is often argued, especially by opponents of defense cuts, that defense spending should not be viewed in constant dollars but in terms of the percentage of the US economy devoted to defense. It is argued that this is a better measure of the affordability of defense spending levels. So that respondents could understand this perspective as well, they were told:

The fourth way of viewing the size of the national defense budget (including war spending) is how much the US spends as a percentage of its overall economy, or GDP. Although the absolute amount of spending has been going up, as you will see, the percentage of the economy devoted to national defense spending has been going down. That is because over this period the size of the US economy has grown five times larger--substantially more than defense spending.

They were then shown a graph that indicated this decline in the percentage of the US economy devoted to defense.



From this perspective, 40% thought that defense spending was less than they had expected, and this was the most common answer (32% somewhat, 8% much less). Thirty-four percent said it was about what they had expected and only 26% said it was more than they had expected.



Half of Republicans (49%) said that from this perspective defense spending was below what they had expected, as did 38% of Democrats, but only 29% of independents. In all three groups, curiously, 34% said the amount was about what they had expected. Eighteen percent of Republicans, 29% of Democrats and a higher 33% of independents saw defense spending from this perspective as more than they had expected.

National Defense Spending Compared to That of Potential Enemies, Major Allies

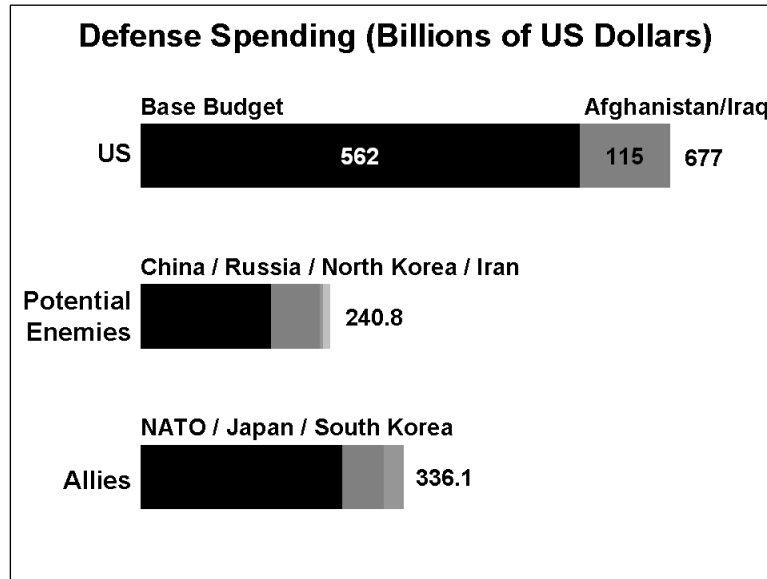
A final key element of the debate is the issue of how US spending on national defense stacks up to that of possible adversaries on one hand, and that of long-standing allies on the other. Some argue that the defense resources of potential enemies should serve as one of the benchmarks in evaluating US defense needs, as they offer some measure of the relative capabilities the US would face in a conflict with those countries. Additionally, many argue that burden-sharing with countries that have been US allies for decades should be admitted into the calculus because, given alliance commitments, their resources would arguably be contributed to collective defense efforts in the event of aggression.

Respondents were introduced to this perspective by reading the following:

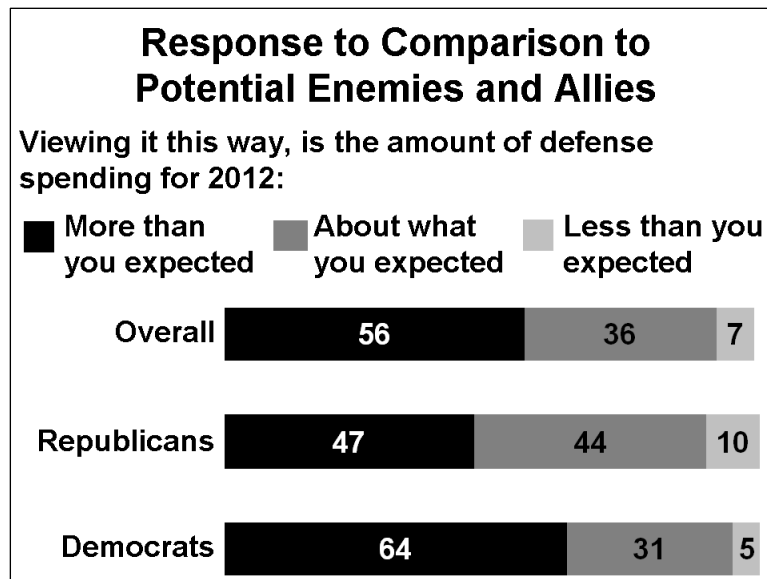
A final way of viewing the size of the national defense budget is to compare how much the US government spends on defense to the amounts spent by America’s potential enemies and major allies.

For this analysis we can consider as potential enemies Russia, China, Iran and North Korea. Labor costs are cheaper in these countries, so these numbers have been adjusted upward based on how much it would cost to produce the same defense capabilities in the United States. As major allies, we are including NATO members, Japan and South Korea.

They then saw the graph below:



From this perspective, a 56% majority felt that the amount of defense spending was more than they had expected (27% much more). About a third (36%) said it was about what they had expected. Only 7% perceived it as less than they had expected (much less, 2%).



Clear majorities of both Democrats (64%) and independents (55%) perceived it as more than they had expected (much more: Democrats 32%, independents 30%). However, a little under half of Republicans saw the amount as more than they had expected (much more, 20%).

Forty-four percent of Republicans said the amount was about what they had expected, while this was about a third of Democrats (31%) and independents (35%). Only 10% of Republicans felt the amount was less than they had expected (Democrats 5%, independents 7%).

2. Assessing Whether to Cut National Defense to Reduce the Deficit

Presented arguments for and against cutting national defense spending to address the budget deficit, majorities found both sets of arguments convincing. However, when asked for their conclusion, a large majority favored cutting defense.

Respondents were told the arguments “are often made about whether the national defense budget should be reduced or not.” They were then presented and asked to evaluate pairs of arguments for and against reducing defense spending to address the budget deficit, with each respondent evaluating three of the four pairs offered. Arguments against cutting defense and for cutting defense were presented together, with each pair on a single screen.

Majorities found both sets of arguments convincing, although the arguments in favor of reductions were found convincing by larger majorities. Overall, the four arguments for reducing defense spending were found convincing by 70% on average, while the four for not reducing spending were found convincing by 58%.

(See next page)

<i>Pro and Con Arguments on Cutting Defense</i>					
Pro			Con		
<p>The United States has far more military power than any other nation and more than enough to protect itself and its allies. But we are playing the role of world policeman too much, and we are building up our military power to project it everywhere in the world. We can deal with global threats by working together with our allies and sharing the burden. We don't have to have a military so big that we can do everything, and do it all by ourselves.</p>			<p>The United States is exceptional and should be leading the world, not following it. US military power has been a major stabilizing force that has contributed to global peace. The US should have the ability to quickly and decisively project overwhelming military power anywhere in the world. Cutting defense spending would undermine this ability. It would send a signal that we are no longer committed to playing our leadership role; our allies would lose confidence in us; adversaries would challenge us; and Asian countries might increasingly come under China's influence.</p>		
Overall	Rep	Dem	Overall	Rep	Dem
72	60	83	61	82	46
<p>Even though there is no country in the world that can even come close to matching us militarily, we are spending more than we did at the height of the Cold War. The national defense budget has gone up and up so that it is now more than three times all of our potential enemies combined. This is way out of proportion to the real threats we face and doesn't buy us more security.</p>			<p>America is threatened by an increasingly hostile world, with threats coming from many corners of the globe. Reducing our military would lower our guard and make us more vulnerable. If problems broke out in more than one place, we would not be able to deal with them all. Furthermore, cutting defense spending would be seen as a sign of weakness and would embolden our enemies to challenge our interests.</p>		
Overall	Rep	Dem	Overall	Rep	Dem
64	51	79	60	72	48
<p>These enormous national defense budgets actually hurt us by adding to the deficit, weakening the economy, and obligating future generations to repay the debt. Other parts of the economy are short-changed, diverting talent and resources from other goals and weakening America's economic competitiveness--which hurts our security in the long run. We need to rebalance our priorities and rein in defense spending.</p>			<p>We do have deficit problems, but national security cannot be shortchanged. National defense is the first responsibility of government, as called for in the Constitution, and it is too important to let fiscal concerns dictate our level of spending on it. The US can clearly afford its current national defense budget--after all, it is just 4 percent of America's economy and this percentage has been going down for some years.</p>		
Overall	Rep	Dem	Overall	Rep	Dem
63	53	75	58	76	45
<p>There is a lot of waste in the national defense budget. Members of Congress often approve unnecessary spending for their districts or keep unneeded bases open, just to benefit their own supporters. The military branches buy duplicates of both weapons and services, and do a poor job of tracking where the money goes. Defense contractors persuade lawmakers to approve weapons that aren't needed by giving them large campaign contributions and other personal benefits. Clearly there is room to reduce the national defense budget without affecting US security.</p>			<p>The US government should not cut defense because many people would lose their jobs if defense factories and military bases were shut down. This would be a blow to working Americans and their families, hurt the economy, and drive up government costs to provide a social safety net for the jobless. Also, once this defense industrial base is lost, it is not easy to rebuild.</p>		
Overall	Rep	Dem	Overall	Rep	Dem
81	80	86	54	59	50

The argument against cutting that did best focused on the exceptional leadership role of the United States:

The United States is exceptional and should be leading the world, not following it. US military power has been a major stabilizing force that has contributed to global peace. The US should have the ability to quickly and decisively project overwhelming military power anywhere in the world. Cutting defense spending would undermine this ability. It would send a signal that we are no longer committed to playing our leadership role; our allies would lose confidence in us; adversaries would challenge us; and Asian countries might increasingly come under China's influence.

Three in five (61%) found this argument convincing (19% very) while only 37% found it unconvincing. While 82% of Republicans found it convincing, so did 58% of independents and almost half of Democrats (46%).

The most persuasive argument in favor of reducing the defense budget focused on the issue of waste and made the case that there was fat to cut away without seriously hurting defense capabilities:

There is a lot of waste in the national defense budget. Members of Congress often approve unnecessary spending for their districts or keep unneeded bases open, just to benefit their own supporters. The military branches buy duplicates of both weapons and services, and do a poor job of tracking where the money goes. Defense contractors persuade lawmakers to approve weapons that aren't needed by giving them large campaign contributions and other personal benefits. Clearly there is room to reduce the national defense budget without affecting US security.

Four in five (81%) found this argument convincing (39% very). This included 80% of Republicans, 86% of Democrats, and 76% of independents.

The argument against cutting that did least well was, interestingly, the one focused on jobs. It went as follows:

US government should not cut defense because many people would lose their jobs if defense factories and military bases were shut down. This would be a blow to working Americans and their families, hurt the economy, and drive up government costs to provide a social safety net for the jobless. Also, once this defense industrial base is lost, it is not easy to rebuild.

While this argument garnered a majority, only 54% found it convincing (very, 14%). Republicans were slightly higher at 59%, while half of Democrats (50%) found it convincing (independents 57%).

The least convincing argument for reducing defense spending made the case that big defense budgets indirectly harm the economy. This garnered a majority but did not do as well as other arguments for cuts. It read:

These enormous national defense budgets actually hurt us by adding to the deficit, weakening the economy, and obligating future generations to repay the debt. Other parts of the economy are short-changed, diverting talent and resources from other goals and weakening America's economic competitiveness--which hurts our security in the long run. We need to rebalance our priorities and rein in defense spending.

Sixty-three percent found this argument convincing (25% very), and 36% unconvincing. However, it was notably most popular with Democrats (75%) and did not do as well with Republicans (53%) or independents (58%).

Conclusion About Addressing the Budget Deficit

After reviewing the arguments respondents were asked whether they would favor cutting defense as a way to address the deficit. However, to emphasize that there are options for addressing the deficit other than cutting defense, respondents were presented two other options as well. Respondents were asked, "Which of the following do you think Congress should do to address the budget deficit?" and presented three options, any or all of which the respondent could choose:

- Raise revenues, through increasing some taxes
- Reduce non-defense spending
- Reduce national defense spending

Of the three options, the most popular was to reduce defense spending and was the only one endorsed by a majority. Sixty-two percent said they thought Congress should reduce national defense spending. This included half of Republicans (49%) and a very large majority of Democrats (78%), with 52% of independents agreeing.

Half (50%) wanted to reduce (unspecified) non-defense spending and this fell out along standard party lines, with 68% of Republicans, only 34% of Democrats, and 50% of independents saying Congress should reduce non-defense spending. Only 27% endorsed Congress raising unspecified revenues (Republicans 17%, Democrats 40%, and independents 19%).

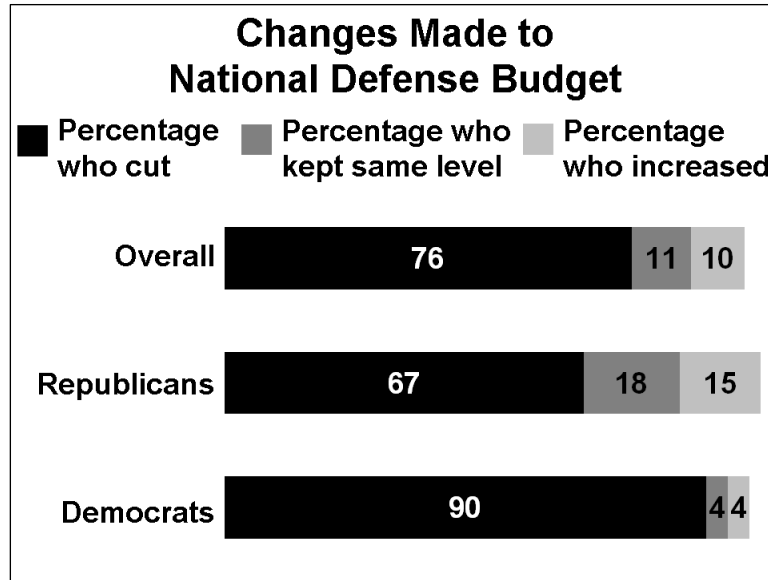
3. Setting an Overall Level for the National Defense Budget

Presented the base national defense budget for 2012 and given the opportunity to set a level for 2013, three quarters reduced it, including two thirds of Republicans and 9 in 10 Democrats. On average defense spending was lowered 23%. A majority lowered it at least 11%.

Shown that spending on Afghanistan and Iraq operations is already scheduled for a significant 2013 reduction, a very large majority of both parties nonetheless made further cuts to the residual operation in Afghanistan--on average 40%.

Having reviewed information and considered the arguments, respondents began the actual budgeting part of the exercise. They were first presented the dollar amount of the base defense budget (\$562 billion, excluding war spending) and asked to set an overall level for the base defense budget for 2013 in billions of dollars.

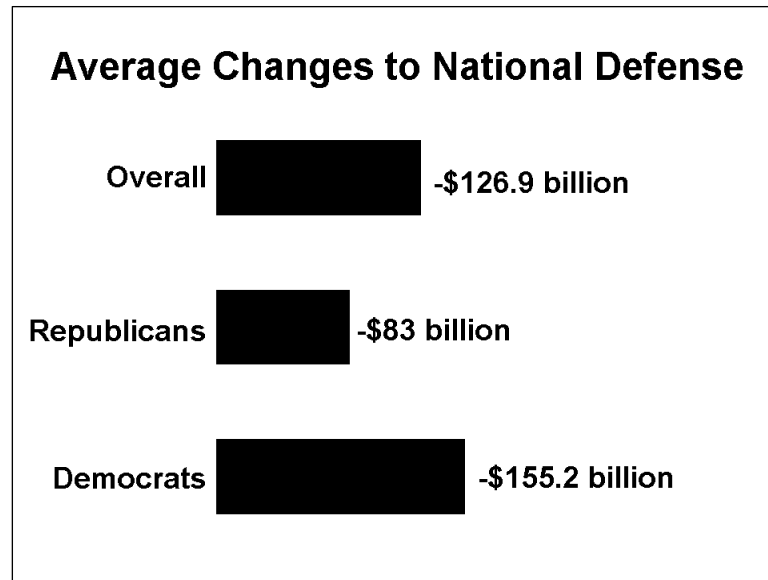
Overall 76% set a level for 2013 lower than the level for 2012. This included two thirds of Republicans (67%), 90% of Democrats, and 68% of independents. Another 11% kept the same level and 10% proposed a higher level of defense spending.



Among tea party sympathizers 63% made reductions, while among Occupy Wall Street sympathizers 90% made reductions.

Interestingly, when given the opportunity to specify their exact proposed level, a substantially larger percentage made cuts than had said they would in the earlier question which offered them three approaches to dealing with the deficit (see above). In the earlier question, 62% had said they thought Congress should reduce defense spending. Among the 38% who *did not* select the option of cutting defense, when given the option to specify the number, half of them gave a number below 2012 levels and thus a made a cut. As would be expected, this group who seemingly changed their minds made reductions that were milder, compared to those who *did* want Congress to cut defense spending. This suggests that some of them, in declining to say that they would cut defense, may have been rejecting what they thought of as a substantial cut, or resisted giving a blank check for an unspecified amount, actually favoring some level of cutting which was only expressed when they could specify that level.

For the whole sample, the average proposed level of spending was \$435 billion--\$127 billion below 2012 levels, representing a 23% cut. Among Republicans, the average proposed level was down \$83 billion (a 15% cut); among Democrats, it was down \$155 billion (a 28% cut); and among independents it was down \$147 billion (a 26% cut).



Women cut more than men (\$141 billion versus \$112 billion). Even larger differences were found across age groups. The deepest cuts were by 18-29 year olds (\$161 billion) diminishing with each group, with the smallest cuts made by those 60 and over (\$105 billion). Tea Party sympathizers cut \$85 billion and Occupy Wall Street sympathizers cut \$144 billion.

Another much more conservative way of measuring the exercise's outcome would be to calculate only the amount of change to the defense budget that was made by a majority of respondents who answered—much as if respondents were a body that could only agree on a change if a majority voting agreed to that amount. Thus, the amount recorded would only be the amount that at least 51% reduced it to, even though most of them may have cut it further.

A majority reduced defense spending by *at least* \$63 billion, or 11%—thus down to \$499 billion—with many in this majority reducing it by more. The majority level for cuts is not as deep as the average because the average was pulled down by some respondents who made very deep cuts. Among Republicans, 54% cut defense spending to \$500 billion or less; among Democrats, 81% did so; and among independents 61% did so.

War Spending on Afghanistan

Over the last ten years, the costs of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have for the most part been handled in a special category (called Overseas Contingency Operations) separate from the rest of the defense budget (called the base defense budget). Because this spending is slated for a deep cut in 2013, this issue was posed in terms of whether spending, primarily on Afghanistan, should be reduced even further.

First, respondents were told that “Because the operation in Iraq closed down in December, and because we are drawing down in Afghanistan, the amount that will be spent for these operations is to be reduced from \$115 billion in 2012 to \$88 billion in 2013.” Then they were offered an argument in favor of a further reduction:

We have been in Afghanistan for over 10 years. We have achieved our primary objective by breaking al Qaeda’s central organization and its connection to the Taliban, as well as killing Osama bin Laden. It is time for the Afghan people to manage their own country and for us to bring our troops home.

This argument was found convincing by a very large 85% (very, 43%). This included 83% of Republicans, 90% of Democrats and 80% of independents. Fifteen percent found it unconvincing.

Respondents were then presented the argument for holding the line at the reduction to \$88 billion that is already in place.

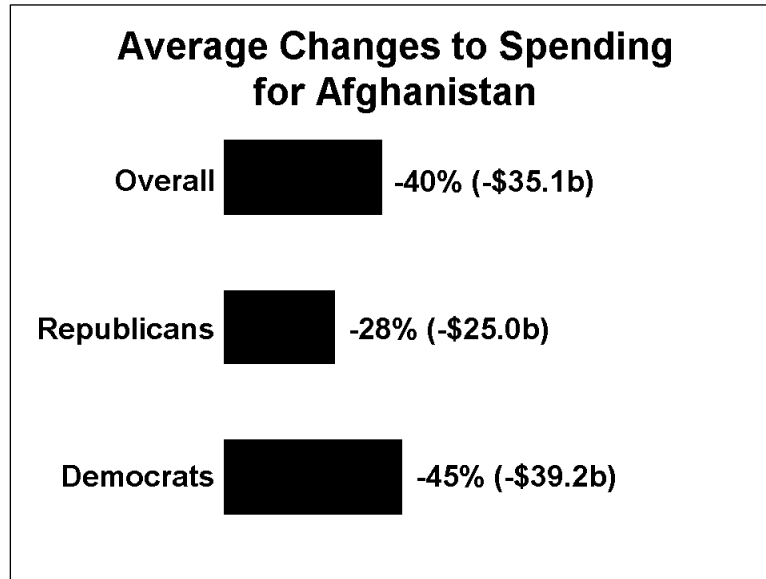
We are making progress in Afghanistan, but the job is not yet done. If we pull out now, the Taliban could regain power and allow the country to become a safe haven for al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, as they did before 9/11. Furthermore, if we don’t stay the course, America will be seen as lacking resolve, and embolden terrorists to take the offensive. Too many lives and too much treasure have been invested.

This argument was found convincing by 51% (very, 10%). However, 48% found it unconvincing (very, 15%). Among Republicans, a clear 63% majority found it convincing, but only 40% of Democrats did (independents were almost identical to the full sample).

<i>Pro and Con Arguments on Cutting Spending on Afghanistan</i>					
Pro			Con		
We have been in Afghanistan for over 10 years. We have achieved our primary objective by breaking al Qaeda’s central organization and its connection to the Taliban, as well as killing Osama bin Laden. It is time for the Afghan people to manage their own country and for us to bring our troops home.			We are making progress in Afghanistan, but the job is not yet done. If we pull out now, the Taliban could regain power and allow the country to become a safe haven for al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, as they did before 9/11. Furthermore, if we don’t stay the course, America will be seen as lacking resolve, and embolden terrorists to take the offensive. Too many lives and too much treasure have been invested.		
Overall	Rep	Dem	Overall	Rep	Dem
85	83	90	51	63	40

After evaluating these arguments respondents were asked to set their preferred budget level for 2013. An overwhelming number (82%) cut the budget for Afghanistan. Among partisan groups, 89% of Democrats, 79% of independents, and 74% of Republicans decreased spending in this area.

On average, the sample made a 40% cut (\$35 billion). Independents made the highest percentage cut, at 50%, followed by Democrats (45%) and Republicans (28%). These amounted to cuts of \$44, 39, and 25 billion respectively.



Overall a majority made a cut of at least 43% (\$38 billion). These figures were also true of majorities of both Democrats and independents. A majority of Republicans made at least a 20% cut (\$18 billion).

4. Making Up a Base Defense Budget, Area by Area

Respondents were given the opportunity to make up their own defense budget by proposing changes to the levels of spending for nine areas of the defense budget. After evaluating arguments for and against cutting that area, a majority cut all nine areas presented, though in three areas less than a majority of Republicans made cuts.

The average proposed level represented a cut in eight of the nine areas, from 10 to 27%. The deepest cuts in percentage terms were to nuclear weapons, and in dollar terms to existing ground forces. The one area that was increased was the development of new capabilities for ground forces.

All areas combined were cut 18% on average, with Republicans cutting 12% and Democrats 22%. A majority cut at least 13%.

It is one thing to propose a reduction to defense spending in general—as respondents did in the section above—when it is primarily juxtaposed against the deficit and other desirable spending areas. It is quite another to find acceptable cuts when the areas of the defense budget are broken out, their purpose and functions described and arguments are presented for why they should be preserved—i.e., something more akin to what policymakers experience.

In the next section respondents were presented the defense budget broken into six major areas—air power, ground forces, naval power, nuclear weapons, special operations forces and missile defense. The spending on these areas constitutes 87% of the base defense budget.

For each of these areas respondents read a paragraph-long description of that area. They then read and evaluated strongly stated arguments for why that area should not be cut or should even be increased, followed by an argument for why it is acceptable to cut it.

They were then presented the amount of spending for that area for 2012 and asked to propose a spending level for 2013. The amount could be increased, decreased or kept the same. For the three largest areas—air power, naval power, and ground forces—this budget was broken into spending on maintaining current capabilities and spending on developing new capabilities. Thus respondents specified two spending amounts for each of these areas.

As they went along, in a corner of the screen, they saw a tally of the changes they were making, and also the level for defense spending overall that they had initially proposed for the budget as a whole.

Responses to Pro and Con Arguments for Areas

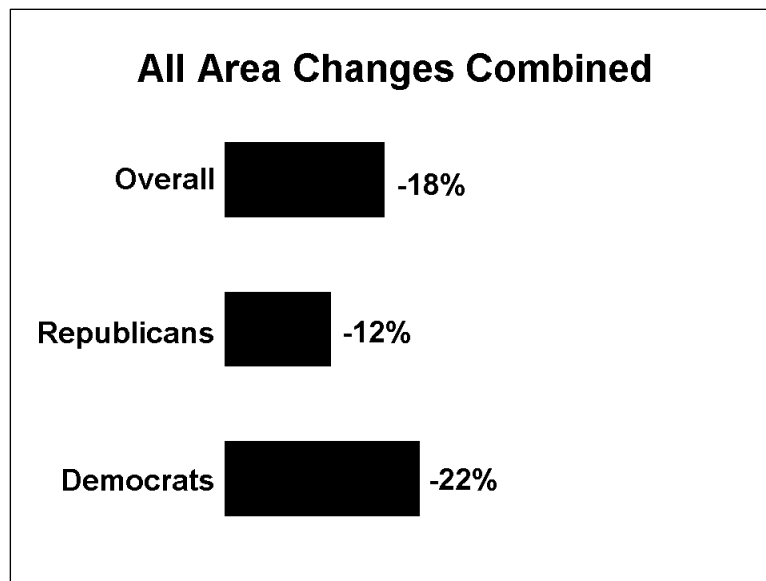
Somewhat surprisingly, each of the arguments for or against cutting spending across the various areas received a clear majority finding it convincing. While the levels of the majorities varied, all the arguments were found plausible and got a fairly warm reception. The six arguments for cutting spending had majorities from 59 to 72% finding them convincing (averaging at 65%); while the six arguments for preserving current spending had majorities from 57 to 79% (averaging at 70%).

Although arguments for preserving funding did slightly better on average, the majority of respondents went on to make cuts—some large, some relatively slim--in all areas. There was a relationship, however, between how many respondents found an argument convincing and the size of the reduction made: when the argument against cutting was especially strong, cuts were not as large.

Budget Changes by Areas

Eight of the nine areas were cut, with averages ranging from 10 to 27%. The deepest cuts in percentage terms were to nuclear weapons (27%), and in dollar terms to existing ground forces (\$36 billion). The one area that was increased was the development of new capabilities for ground forces, which was increased 9% (from \$10 billion to \$11 billion).

On average, the sample as a whole cut all areas combined by 18%. Republicans' average cut was a lower 12%; Democrats' average was 22%; and independents cut a similar 19%.



Women cut only slightly more than men when presented the nine areas (19% vs. 17%), but 18 to 29 year olds cut defense substantially more than those older than 60 (23% vs. 11%). Tea Party sympathizers cut 12%, while Occupy Wall Street sympathizers cut 22% on average.

Overall, the average cut to the nine areas presented came to a total of \$87 billion. However, it should be noted that the total amount presented for budgeting only constituted 87% of the total base budget.

Later in the survey, options for cutting specified military healthcare and personnel costs were also elected by large numbers, which would increase the dollar amount cut. As we will see, the average savings from military personnel costs was \$9.4 billion (Democrats \$9.1 billion, Republicans \$9.8 billion and independents \$9.5 billion) and for healthcare proposals was \$7 billion (Democrats \$6.6 billion, Republicans \$7.6 billion and independents \$7.2 billion).

This results in a grand total average reduction in spending overall of \$103.5—for Democrats \$124.4 billion, Republicans \$74 billion and independents \$112.2 billion.

Once again, a more conservative approach is to calculate the amount of cutting a majority agreed to for each area. (See the section in the introduction on the different forms of reporting on such numbers and why we have emphasized the average numbers in this report.) Overall a majority made cuts of at least 13% (\$65 billion). Broken out by party affiliation, a majority of Democrats made cuts of at least 20% (\$97 billion), independents cut at least 15% (\$73 billion), and Republicans cut at least 6% (\$29 billion).

In addition, a majority created savings of \$3 billion in military healthcare (Democrats \$3 billion, Republicans \$6 billion, independents \$3 billion) and \$15 billion in changes to compensation and retirement programs (Democrats \$6 billion, Republicans \$15 billion, and independents \$15 billion). This results in a total reduction of \$83 billion overall and \$106 billion for Democrats, \$50 billion for Republicans, and \$88 billion for independents.

4A. Air Power

A large majority (72%) made cuts in existing air power capabilities, including majorities of Democrats (85%), and Republicans (61%), with the sample as a whole cutting it an average of 17%. Two thirds cut new capabilities in this area--three quarters of Democrats and six in ten Republicans--with the whole sample cutting it an average of 19%.

When presented with arguments for and against reducing spending on air power capabilities, both arguments were found convincing by majorities. However, more found the argument against reducing spending convincing. And when asked to set a level, respondents chose to reduce air power spending significantly.

First respondents were given a brief summary of air power's role:

This includes bombers, fighters, cargo planes, and other aircraft, and the personnel to maintain and operate them. These forces give the US the capability to control airspace, strike hostile forces or other targets on the ground, and help protect U.S. ground forces. Planes and satellites also provide intelligence.

They were shown the 2012 spending level for maintaining existing capabilities--\$113 billion—and the level for developing new capabilities--\$30 billion. Then respondents reviewed the argument for

preserving spending levels on these capabilities:

Reducing spending on air power capabilities could limit our ability to strike any target on short notice and with precision. It could limit US military access in some regions, such as Asia where the US has growing interests, but has limited ground forces. Furthermore, the Air Force has played a key role in successfully tracking and targeting al Qaeda. Clearly air power is critical and should not be compromised.

A large 77% majority found this argument convincing, though only 26% said it was very convincing. Only 22% found it unconvincing. (There were no meaningful differences by party.)

The argument in favor of reducing spending focused on US superiority relative to possible rivals:

America's air power is already by far the most powerful and advanced in the world. China's air force is several decades behind the US, while Russia's air force has been deteriorating for the last two decades. Nonetheless, the defense industry is always coming up with new, fancier, and more expensive technologies. We have more than enough to defend our own territory and that of key allies. Enough is enough.

A lesser majority of 62% found this argument convincing (18% very), while 38% found it unconvincing.

Respondents were then asked to specify two spending levels--for maintaining existing air capabilities, and for developing new air capabilities.

Budgeting Existing Air Power Capabilities

A majority of respondents (72%) and majorities of Democrats (85%), Republicans (61%) and independents (63%) reduced the budget for existing air power capabilities.

On average, respondents reduced spending to maintain existing capabilities by 17% (\$19 billion). Republicans' average reduction was 9% (\$11 billion); Democrats' was 22% (\$25 billion); and independents' was 19% (\$21 billion).

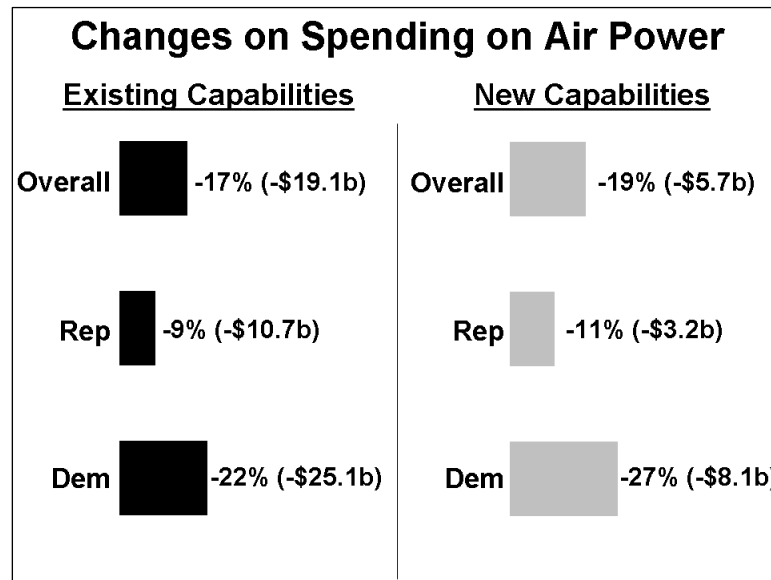
A majority made at least a 12% cut (\$13 billion). Among Republicans, a majority reduced by 3% (\$3 billion); and among Democrats and independents alike, a majority reduced by 12%.

Budgeting New Air Power Capabilities

A majority of respondents (66%) reduced spending on new capabilities for air power. This was also true among partisan groups: 74% of Democrats, 60% of Republicans, and 60% of independents.

Respondents' average cut to funds for developing new air power capabilities was 19%, or \$6 billion. Republicans made an average reduction of 11% (\$3 billion), while Democrats on average cut it 27% (\$8 billion) and independents 18% (\$5 billion).

A majority made at least a 17% cut (\$5 billion), and these figures corresponded also to the majority among Republicans. While a majority of Democrats made at least a 33% cut (\$10 billion), a majority of independents reduced by 23% or more (\$7 billion).



4B. Ground Forces

Three in four reduced spending on existing capabilities for ground forces, including nine in ten Democrats and seven in ten Republicans. Overall, the sample cut spending existing capabilities 23%, the largest in dollar terms. Fewer respondents (57%) made cuts to new capabilities (seven in ten Democrats and half of Republicans). On average, spending on new capabilities was the one area that was increased--9%.

Respondents were introduced to the dimension of ground capabilities in the following way:

American ground forces include the Army and the Marine Corps. In addition to the troops they include weapons, tanks, artillery, helicopters, and armored personnel carriers. They create the capability to put troops on the ground and to seize and hold territory. They also operate bases in other countries, adding to the US military’s worldwide presence.

Respondents saw that “operating, maintaining and replacing” existing ground force capabilities is budgeted at \$160 billion in 2012, and developing new capabilities at \$10 billion. They then reviewed the argument for maintaining these spending levels:

We’re still at war in Afghanistan. Reducing ground forces now could limit our ability to fight that war and still respond on short notice to a new emergency elsewhere. This would overstretch our forces and put strains on troop morale. Further, a large ground force contributes to the military’s ability to reassure allies and deter enemies.

A majority of 57% found this argument convincing (very, 14%), with two thirds of Republicans (67%) thinking so, and majorities of independents (56%) agreeing. Democrats were roughly divided on the argument.

The argument in favor of reducing spending relied on the large number of soldiers and Marines on duty, and on the view that events like the Afghanistan and Iraq operations are not the norm:

The US has three quarters of a million soldiers and Marines on active duty and another quarter million in the reserves—troops that are the best trained and equipped in the world. The US built up our active ground forces for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and now that we are drawing them down, we can reduce our active duty ground forces and still have more than enough for whatever need may arise.

A large 72% majority found this argument convincing (very, 21%), including 61% of Republicans. Eighty-two percent of Democrats and 70% of independents shared this view. About a quarter (27%) found it unconvincing.

Respondents were then asked to offer two spending levels--for maintaining existing ground force capabilities, and for developing new capabilities.

Budgeting Existing Ground Force Capabilities

Three in four (76%) reduced spending on existing capabilities for ground forces. Majorities across all partisan groups made cuts in this area: Democrats (88%), Republicans (69%), and independents (65%).

On average, respondents made a cut of 23% to the 2012 spending for maintaining current ground force capabilities, or \$36 billion. Among Republicans this was a lower 15% (\$24 billion), but among Democrats it was 28% (\$44 billion) and among independents a similar 26% (\$41 billion).

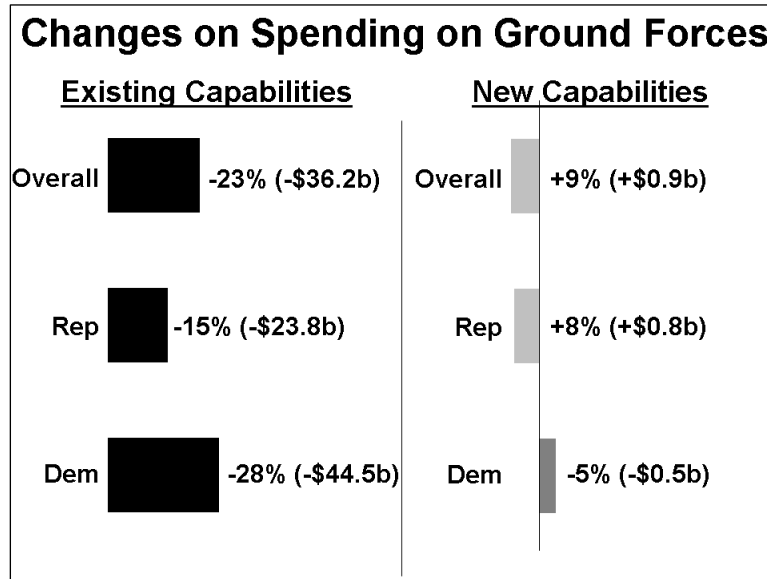
Viewing this in terms of majorities, a majority cut the budget for current capabilities by at least 13% (\$20 billion). A majority of Republicans made a 6% reduction or more (\$10 billion), with a majority of Democrats making at least a 25% reduction (\$40 billion), and a majority of independents making a 19% reduction (\$30 billion) or more.

Budgeting New Ground Force Capabilities

More than half (57%) made cuts to new capabilities for ground forces. A majority of Democrats (70%) took this position; however, fewer Republicans (49%) and independents (46%) did.

Unusually, this area was given more resources in the average result, as it was increased by 9% (\$1 billion). Both Republicans and independents raised it on average: Republicans raised it 8% (\$1 billion), but independents raised it a striking 37% (\$4 billion). This area had some strong supporters who made larger increases, driving up the average. Democrats on average cut it 5% (\$0.5 billion).

From the perspective of the majority position, the anomalous increase in spending disappears—this is because some respondents advocated large increases. Overall, a majority of the full sample supported at least a 20% reduction (\$2 billion). Both a majority of Republicans and of independents supported maintaining this area's spending at at least \$10 billion. However, a majority of Democrats cut the area by 30% (\$3 billion) or more.



4C. Naval Forces

Roughly seven in ten Americans cut the budget for existing capabilities for naval forces, including 85% of Democrats and 65% of Republicans, with an average cut of 13%. Seven in ten also made cuts to the budget for new capabilities, including 84% of Democrats and 63% of Republicans, with an average cut of 20%.

Unlike the approach respondents took with ground forces, with naval forces respondents tended to cut development of new capabilities more deeply than existing capabilities.

The role of US naval forces was introduced as follows:

We will now address American naval forces. Naval forces include ships, submarines, aircraft carriers and their jets, and the personnel who operate and maintain them. Their missions include projecting US power from the seas, patrolling commercial sea-lanes, gathering intelligence, and on occasion responding to humanitarian disasters. Naval forces are stationed in the US and in bases in East Asia, the Persian Gulf, and other parts of the world.

They were shown the amounts of 2012 spending for current naval forces--\$113 billion—and development of new naval forces--\$24 billion. Then they reviewed the argument in favor of preserving the existing levels of spending:

Reductions in American naval power would be seen as a signal that the US is not committed to maintaining its preeminent global role. The Navy protects shipping lanes that are important for commerce, as well as for security, including lanes used to deliver oil from the Persian Gulf. It is also capable of quickly responding to humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters. As China continues to rise, we need to increase our naval force in East Asia to ensure that our Asian allies in the region do not draw closer to China and restrict our military or commercial access in the region.

This argument was found convincing by a large 69% majority (very, 19%). Both Republicans and Democrats found it convincing by large margins (76% and 64% respectively; independents, 66%).

Twenty-nine percent found it unconvincing (very, 6%).

The pro argument for cutting spending on this area sought to focus on the magnitude of US naval power compared to that of other countries viewed as potential threats:

America's naval power is so much greater than that of all other countries that the US can safely trim these forces without any risk to US national security or its interests. Besides hundreds of ships, the US has 11 large aircraft carriers that roam the world, while China and Russia only have one each. Other countries can do their part, policing sea-lanes in their own areas and, in the event of a crisis, we can send our forces. We don't need to be the cops on the beat everywhere at once.

Sixty-eight percent found this argument convincing as well—virtually the same number as found the argument against cutting convincing, with about as many (22%) finding it very convincing. Democrats were distinct in finding it more persuasive (78%), but 59% of Republicans also found it convincing (independents, 63%). A third (32%) found it unconvincing.

Though the responses to the arguments were approximately balanced, the sample went on to cut the budget for naval forces.

Budgeting Existing Naval Force Capabilities

Roughly seven in ten respondents (73%) cut the budget for existing capabilities for naval forces. This included 85% of Democrats, 65% of Republicans, and 64% of independents.

On average, the budget for existing capabilities was cut 13% (\$15 billion). While both Democrats and Republicans cut it by 11% on average (\$12 billion), independents cut much deeper—21% (\$24 billion).

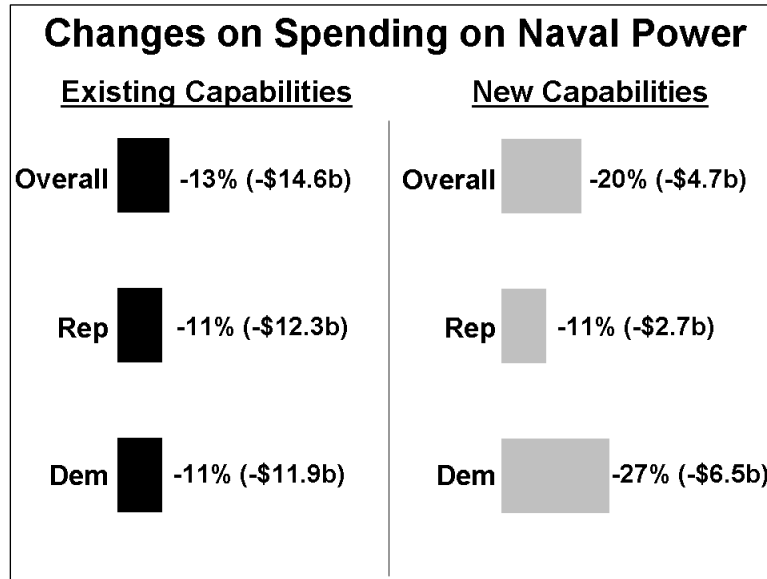
A majority of respondents cut naval forces by 12% or more (at least \$13 billion). Majorities of Democrats and independents were identical to the majority of the whole sample. Republicans were lower with a majority cutting 3% or more (\$3 billion).

Budgeting New Naval Force Capabilities

A large majority (70%) made cuts to the budget for new capabilities for naval forces, including 84% of Democrats, 63% of Republicans, and 55% of independents.

In the naval case, the amount for future capabilities was cut more sharply than that for current capabilities. On average, this area was cut 20% (\$5 billion). Average cuts were made by Republicans (11%, \$3 billion), Democrats (27%, \$7 billion), and independents (18%, \$4 billion).

A majority cut at least 17% (\$4 billion) or more, and these exact figures were also true of a majority of Republicans and independents. Among Democrats, a majority cut 25% or more (\$6 billion).



4D. Nuclear Weapons

Two thirds decreased the budget for nuclear weapons, including eight in ten Democrats and two thirds of Republicans, with the sample as a whole cutting it an average of 27%--the largest area percentage cut.

Respondents were introduced to the role of the nuclear arsenal and nuclear-armed forces with this description:

The United States has bombers, submarines, and land-based missiles, armed with nuclear weapons. Ballistic missile submarines are always on patrol, and nuclear-capable bombers are stationed at, or rotate through, bases around the world. Nuclear weapons are primarily meant to deter nuclear attacks by another state, by threatening nuclear retaliation after an attack. Some nuclear weapons are also designed for first use in highly limited circumstances.

They were informed of the total 2012 amount for operating and maintaining these forces, which is \$19 billion.

Then they were offered arguments for preserving, and for reducing, the nuclear weapons budget. The argument for maintaining this area's budget relied on the strategic importance and low cost of nuclear weapons.

America's nuclear arsenal is our country's ultimate insurance policy against aggression. It helps protect our influence in a world with many threats and at a relatively modest cost. It provides assurance to our allies, decreasing incentives to develop their own nuclear weapons, and communicates our resolve to be a global power. It also deters threatening actions by our enemies. Developing newer models of nuclear warheads, as well as more modern bombers, more accurate missiles, and submarines to carry them, ensures that the deterrent remains reliable, useable, and therefore credible.

About two thirds (65%) found this argument convincing (very, 22%). Democrats and independents were similar, but slightly lower than the full sample at 61% and 60% respectively. Republicans were notably higher at 74%. Thirty-four percent found it unconvincing.

The argument for reducing spending focused on the great magnitude of the US nuclear arsenal and its asymmetry with the kinds of enemies the US has faced in recent years:

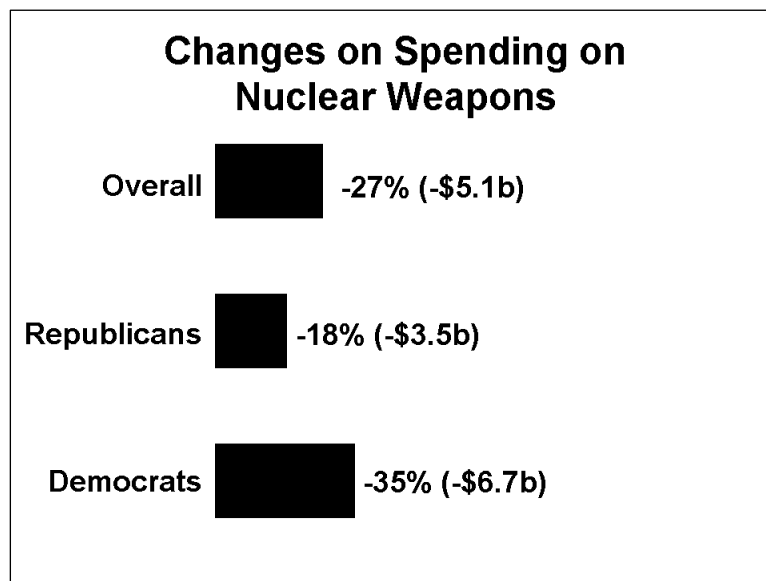
America’s nuclear arsenal consists of thousands of weapons, most far more destructive than the one that obliterated Hiroshima. The idea that we need thousands of weapons to deter an adversary is absurd: We can effectively destroy a country with a small number of weapons. Their use is also highly unlikely against today’s foes—some of whom use crude road bombs. Advanced conventional arms can accomplish virtually every mission that nuclear arms can, without killing thousands of civilians and producing long-lasting nuclear fallout.

This argument was found convincing by 67%--not very differently from how the opposing argument was rated (very, 26%). Republicans and Democrats responded to the argument quite similarly, with 66% and 72% respectively, finding it convincing (independents, 62%).

In setting their own budget, two thirds (68%) decreased the budget for nuclear weapons. Majorities of all partisan groups made cuts: 78% of Democrats, 64% of Republicans, and 57% of independents.

The sample cut an average \$5 billion or 27% from the nuclear weapons budget. Republicans cut \$4 billion or 18% (\$3.5 billion); Democrats cut \$7 billion or 35%; and independents cut \$5 billion or 26%.

At least \$4 billion or 21% was cut by a majority. Among both Republicans and independents, majorities made the same cuts as the majority of the full sample. A majority of Democrats cut \$6 billion or 32%.



4E. Special Operations Forces

Six in ten reduced the budget for Special Operations Forces, but while three quarters of Democrats made cuts, only 42% of Republicans did so. On average, 10% was cut.

Respondents were introduced to the military roles played by SOF today in the following language:

Special operations forces are highly trained forces that include the Green Berets, Army Rangers, Delta Force, and Navy SEALs, as well as elite aviators and Marines. They undertake covert missions (such as against terrorist groups), fight adversaries' elite or irregular forces, and frequently train and advise other countries' militaries.

They were shown the 2012 amount of SOF spending, \$14 billion. They were then offered an argument for preserving the SOF budget as is:

US Special Operations Forces provide a less expensive, rapid and more precise way than regular soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines to counter immediate threats from terrorists (such as the operation against bin Laden), pirates, paramilitary criminal groups, and nuclear proliferators. Using them to train partner states' militaries may help head off the need for US military operations in the future. Reducing Special Operations Forces could affect the US's ability to discreetly and precisely target adversaries' leaders and military assets.

This argument was found convincing by a large majority—79%--with 36% finding it very convincing. Almost all Republicans found it convincing (89%); 75% of Democrats and 72% of independents agreed with them. Only 19% found it unconvincing.

The argument in favor of reducing spending focused on the issues of secrecy and accountability, and pointed out that recent expansions of SOF may have already made them unwieldy.

US Special Operations Forces need to be used very selectively. They operate mostly out of the public eye and thus are less accountable. Some operations have been legally and morally questionable—such as assassinations and kidnappings—and have provoked hostility toward the US. Additionally, Special Operations Forces have recently been expanded to over 60,000 personnel, making it larger than the militaries of 100 countries. This is too big: it dilutes their quality and increases the likelihood that they will be overused.

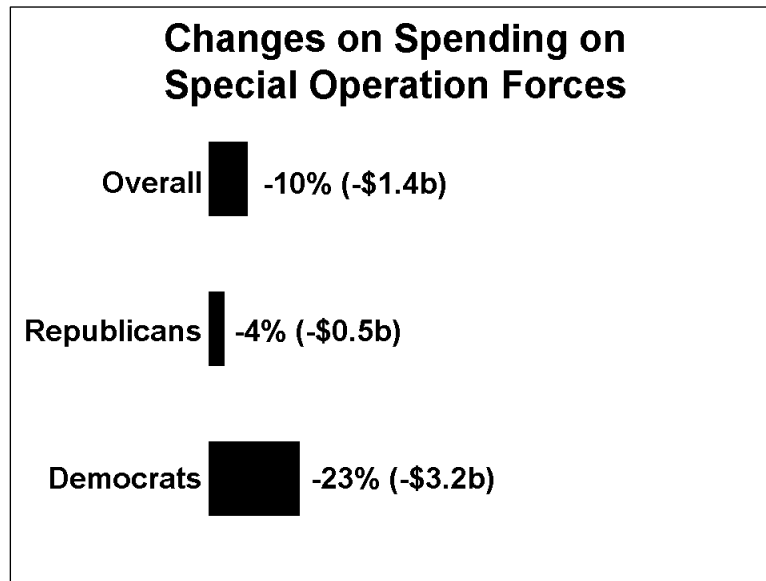
Though a majority found the argument convincing, it did not get nearly as good a reception as the argument for preserving spending. Fifty-nine percent found it convincing (very, only 15%). This included a little under half of Republicans (45%), a much larger 69% of Democrats, and 64% of independents. Thirty-nine percent found it unconvincing.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents reduced the budget for Special Operations Forces at least some. Most Democrats (74%) and independents (54%) made cuts, while only 42% of Republicans did.

In setting their own budget for this area, on average, the sample trimmed off a modest \$1.4 billion (a 10% cut). This average cut was driven largely by Democrats, who reduced the area by \$3.2 billion (23%). Republicans on average cut just \$0.5 billion, or 4%. Interestingly, among independents, SOF was an area where some made increases that drove up independents' average amount, raising it by \$0.7 billion or 5%.

When we view how majorities of respondents acted, however, the picture is somewhat different. A

majority cut by at least 14% (\$2 billion). A majority of Republicans preserved the SOF budget at its 2012 level. A majority of Democrats cut it by 29% (\$4 billion) or more. A majority of independents resembled the full sample, making a 14% cut or more.



4F. Missile Defense

A majority (58%) made cuts to the budget for missile defense, including 73% of Democrats but only 47% of Republicans. Overall, the sample cut spending 14%.

While many respondents, and especially independents, were receptive to the concept of missile defense, on average there was a tendency to trim its budget shown by both Republicans and Democrats.

The missile defense program was explained to respondents in the following way:

Missile defense is a program that seeks to defend the US and allies in Europe from incoming missiles by creating the capacity to shoot them down before they land on their target.

Respondents were then shown the 2012 budget figure for this area, \$8 billion. The argument presented for preserving spending banked on the defensive purpose of the technology and the potential enemies that might be thwarted.

Actively protecting the US from the threat of attack by missiles carrying nuclear warheads would mitigate, or even eliminate, the most catastrophic risk our country faces. This technology is fundamentally peaceful because it is defensive, and we could extend it to our allies as well. Some countries, such as Iran and North Korea, are trying to develop offensive ballistic missiles that could eventually be capable of reaching the United States and its allies. Even if we have not succeeded so far, we have made progress and should keep trying.

About three in four—74%—found this argument convincing (very, 27%). It was especially convincing to Republicans (82%), but about seven in ten Democrats and independents as well (70%) agreed. Twenty-four percent found it unconvincing.

The argument for reducing spending on missile defense said that extensive investment has so far yielded a low return and that missile defense is a poor fit for contending with the types of enemies the United States has now.

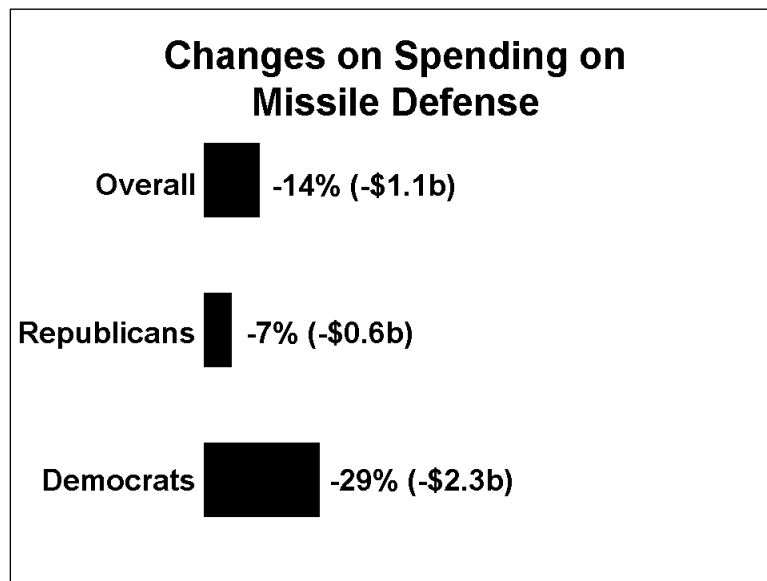
After 28 years of research and spending \$150 billion, national missile defense systems have largely failed to work, even in tests conducted in ideal conditions. . And even if we succeeded with missile defense, it is not relevant to the most likely nuclear threats today. We are no longer facing the Soviet Union, but smaller nations or groups that could just use another delivery method, such as low flying cruise missiles, small boats, or smuggled suitcases.

Sixty-four percent found this argument convincing (20% very), notably lower than the response to the argument against cutting. Interestingly, though, a Republican majority (55%) found it convincing, along with 70% of Democrats and 60% of independents.

In setting their own budget level, a majority (58%) made cuts to the budget for missile defense, including 73% of Democrats. However, slightly fewer than half (47%) of both Republicans and independents made cuts.

On average, the sample trimmed missile defense by \$1 billion (a 14% cut). Republicans trimmed \$0.6 billion (7%) and independents \$0.5 billion (7%). Democrats cut more deeply, by \$2.3 billion (29%).

Overall, a majority cut at least \$2 billion (25%), and a majority of Democrats cut at least that amount as well. Among Republicans and independents, however, a majority did not make a cut.



5. Military Healthcare Costs (TRICARE)

Majorities of both parties favored reducing healthcare costs by having military families and retirees pay a typical co-pay for drug prescriptions. However, there was not majority support for increasing the premiums of military retirees younger than 65 or raising the cap on out-of-pocket expenses for military retirees.

A significant aspect of the overall cost of America's military establishment is providing health care for family members of active-duty personnel, for retirees of working age, and for retirees.

After setting a budget level for nine areas of military capabilities, respondents were asked to consider three proposals that have been made regarding the Defense Department's health care expenses or TRICARE. All these proposals only concerned the health care of families of military families and retirees—not active-duty personnel. Each proposal had a cost savings figure denoted, and if respondents endorsed that proposal the savings would be tallied into their area-by-area budget.

The issue was introduced to respondents this way:

Let's first focus on health care costs for the military, also known as TRICARE.

As you may know, active-duty personnel and their families get full health care coverage. After they retire from the military, and are still of working age, they pay \$520 a year for family coverage. In the private sector families pay far more—on average more than \$4,000.

They were then presented pro and con arguments, though they were not asked to evaluate them.

Some people argue that people who have been in the military have contributed so much to our security that they deserve to pay little for this health benefit.

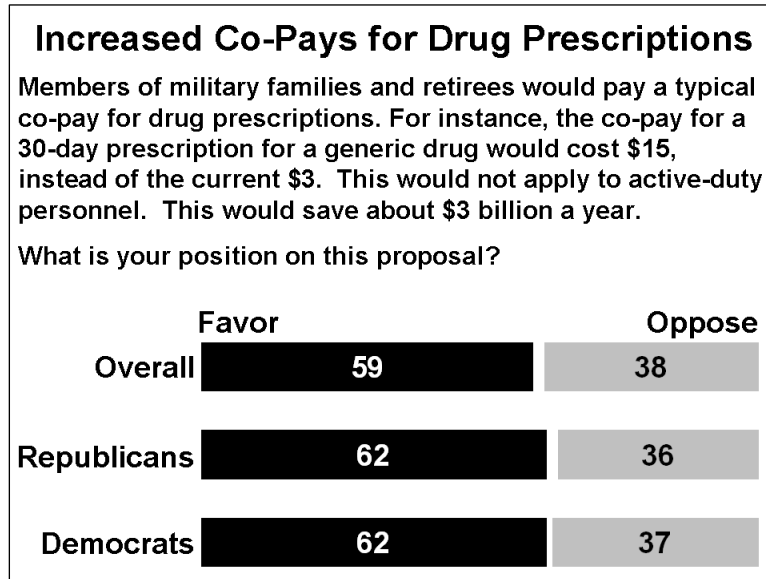
Others say that, with deficit pressures, people who have been in the military should pay closer to what most Americans pay for similar services.

Increased Co-Pays

Respondents were then offered the first proposal:

Members of military families and retirees would pay a typical co-pay for drug prescriptions. For instance, the co-pay for a 30-day prescription for a generic drug would cost \$15, instead of the current \$3. This would not apply to active-duty personnel. This would save about \$3 billion a year.

A 59% majority favored making this change to prescription costs, with 38% opposed. Republicans and Democrats favored it equally, both at 62%. Independents were essentially divided.

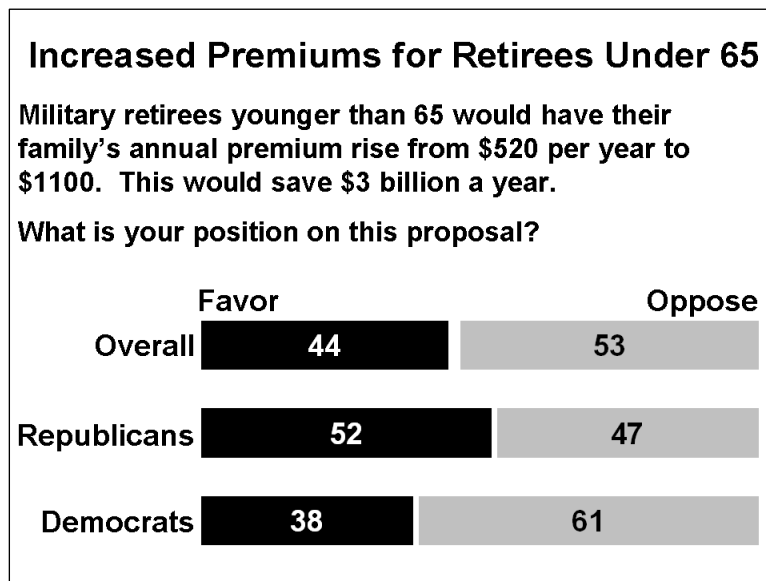


Increased Premiums for Working Age Retirees

The second proposal concerned military retirees who were still of working age:

Military retirees younger than 65 would have their family’s annual premium rise from \$520 per year to \$1100. This would save \$3 billion a year.

This idea was turned down by a clear majority of 53%, with 44% supporting it. Three in five Democrats rejected it (61 to 38%) as did a plurality of independents (50 to 42%). Republicans were roughly divided, 52% in favor to 47% against.

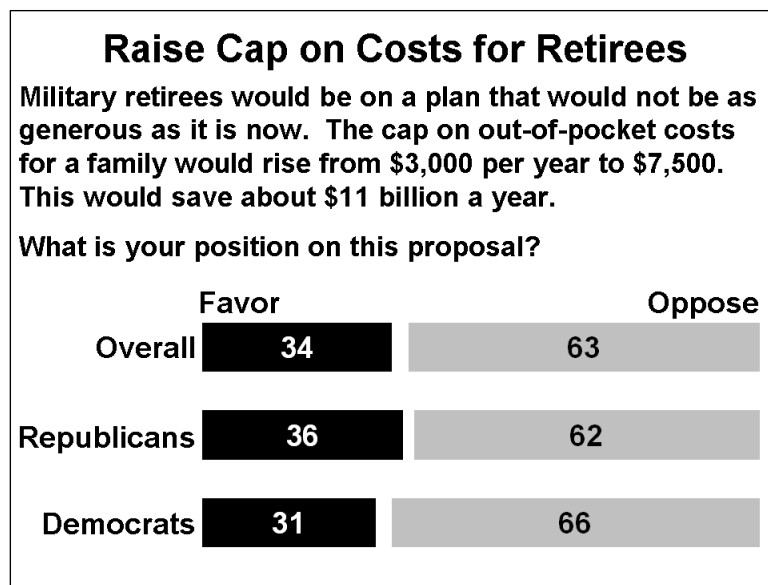


Raising Cap on Out-of-Pocket Costs for Retirees

Finally, the third proposal concerned military retirees’ out-of-pocket costs, which are capped at \$3,000. The proposal stated that:

Military retirees would be on a plan that would not be as generous as it is now. The cap on out-of-pocket costs for a family would rise from \$3,000 per year to \$7,500. This would save about \$11 billion a year.

This was rejected by nearly two out of three, 63 to 34%. Republicans and Democrats were quite similar on this point (62 and 66% respectively). Fifty-eight percent of independents agreed.



6. Military Personnel Costs

Majorities of both parties favored slowing the growth of (but not reducing) the tax-exempt allowances military families receive for housing and food. A slight majority favored a proposal for reducing military pension benefits, but Democrats were divided. Majorities of both parties opposed capping the rate of growth of military pay at half a percentage point below increases in private sector wages.

Along with health care costs, the payroll and pension costs of the Defense Department are a substantial element in its budget that some argue should be examined for potential cuts. As with health care, respondents were offered three proposals. Each proposal had a cost savings figure denoted, and if respondents chose that proposal the savings would be tallied into their area-by-area budget.

The problem was introduced to respondents this way, followed by pro and con arguments that they were not asked to evaluate:

Another possible area for reductions lies in salaries and financial benefits the Defense Department pays to military personnel.

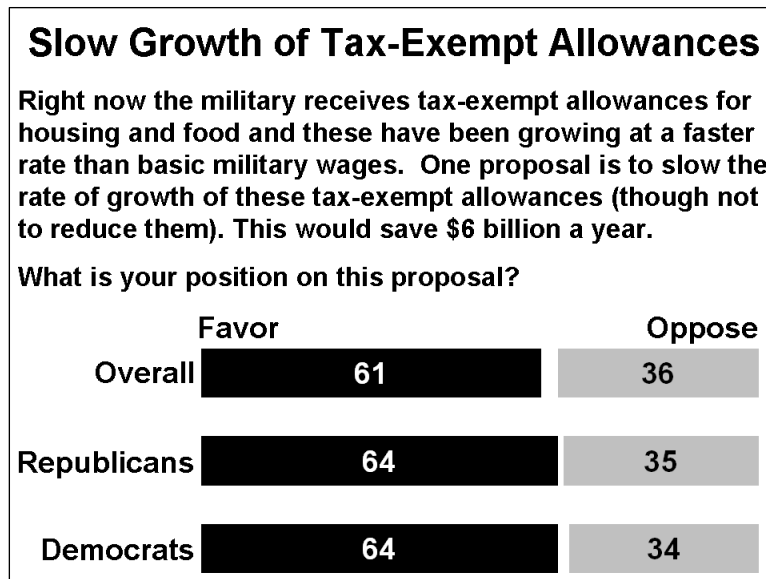
Some people say reducing salaries and benefits would not be fair to military families, risk hurting morale and make recruitment more difficult.

Others say that military personnel get very generous benefits and, like other Americans, they need to do their share to deal with the current budget crisis.

Tax Exempt Allowances

Respondents were then presented a proposal for controlling costs for tax-exempt allowances for housing and food. The proposal explained that “these have been growing at a faster rate than basic military wages,” and that if their rate of growth was slowed, this would save \$6 billion a year. Thus this proposal did not call for reducing a current amount for these allowances.

Three in five supported cost controls for tax-exempt allowances, 61 to 36%. Sixty-four percent of both Republicans and Democrats supported this approach, as did 52% of independents.

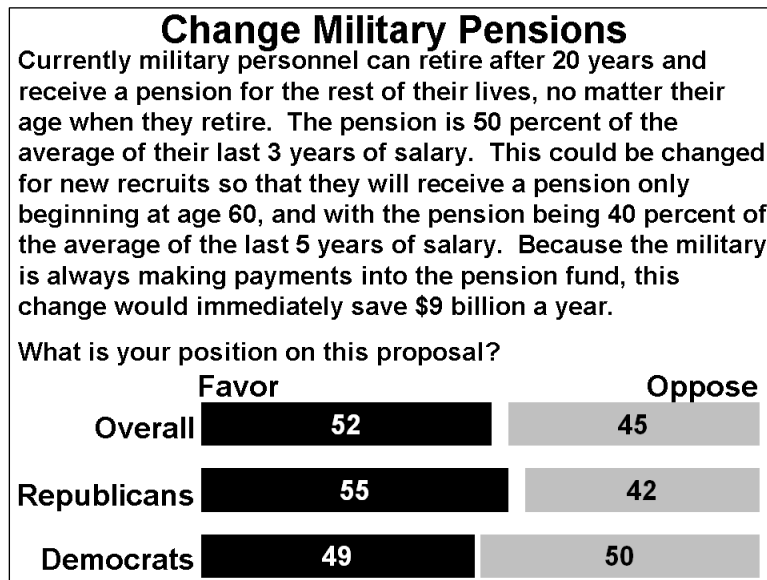


Retirement Pensions

Another approach to reducing costs involves revising the rules for military retirement pensions. One proposal for doing so was explained as follows:

Currently military personnel can retire after 20 years and receive a pension for the rest of their lives, no matter their age when they retire. The pension is 50 percent of the average of their last 3 years of salary. This could be changed for new recruits so that they will receive a pension only beginning at age 60, and with the pension being 40 percent of the average of the last 5 years of salary. Because the military is always making payments into the pension fund, this change would immediately save \$9 billion a year.

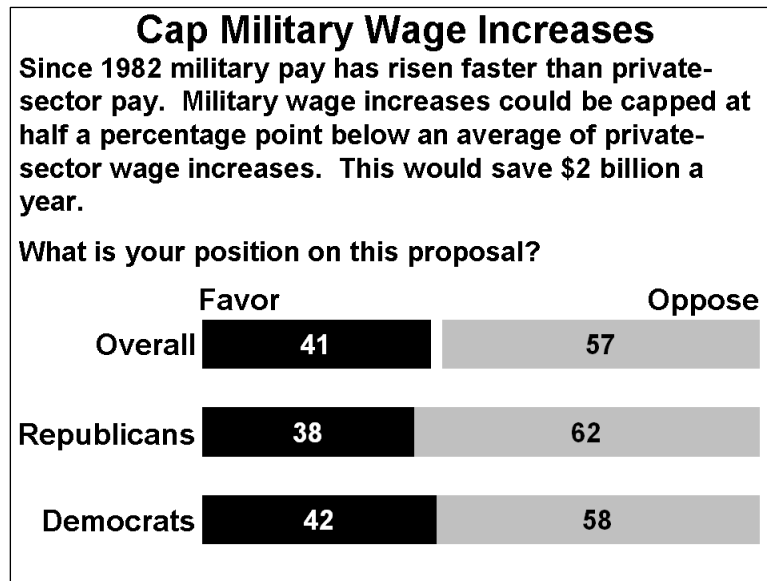
A slim majority overall supported this proposal, with 52% support and 45% opposition. Republicans clearly favored it (55%) and so did independents (53 to 39%). Democrats, however, were evenly split.



Military Pay Raises

A final proposal focused on military pay raises. Respondents were told that “since 1982 military pay has risen faster than private-sector pay,” and offered the idea that “military wage increases could be capped at half a percentage point below an average of private-sector wage increases,” saving \$2 billion a year.

This idea was rejected by a clear majority of 57%. It was opposed by 62% of Republicans, 58% of Democrats, and a plurality of 50% of independents.



7. Specific Weapon Systems

Presented arguments for and against cancelling several weapons systems and information about the related costs, modest majorities favored cancelling the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and the development of a new long-range bomber, and six in ten favored not building a new aircraft carrier and allowing the number to decline from 11 to 10. A majority opposed cancelling the V-22 Osprey, and eliminating bombers as one of the three means of delivering nuclear weapons.

Once respondents had completed the budget exercise, they were asked questions regarding five specific weapons systems. Respondents were told: “We would like you to consider a few specific programs that are controversial. Because they are within areas that have been explored above, they will not affect your budget tally.” This was to avoid not only the possibility of real double-counting, but also any belief on respondents’ part that their area-by-area budget figure would be altered by responses to these questions. They were, however, given estimates of the specific systems’ costs. Each specific weapons system was dealt with in a single question.

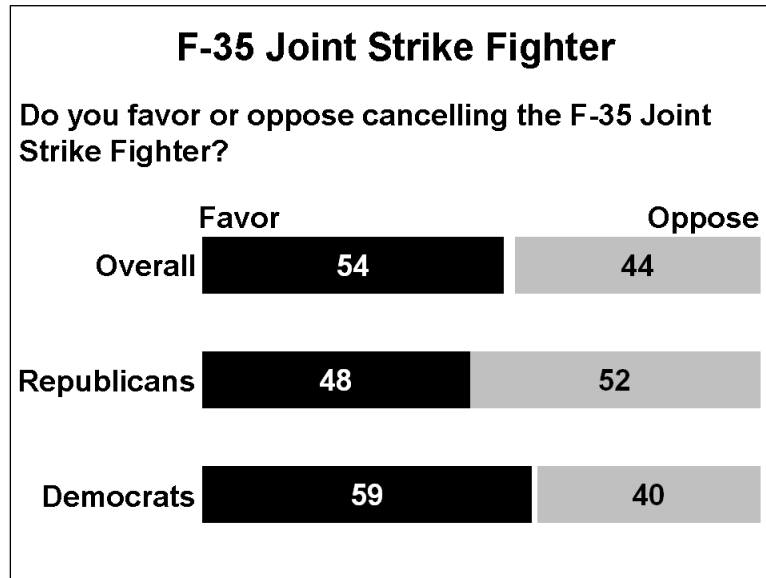
F-35 Joint Strike Fighter

Respondents were informed that the F-35 “is designed to produce a jet fighter with more advanced features, especially high stealth capabilities” and that there is a proposal to cancel the program and buy and upgrade current fighters instead. The question included the arguments:

Some say the F-35 is a more sophisticated plane than we need, that it has many design problems, and is way over budget already, with more overruns likely. Others say that alternative aircraft, even after upgrading, will not be stealthy enough and will have less capability in combat as other countries develop better fighters of their own.

Respondents also learned that the proposal “would save approximately \$5 billion a year in 2013, and \$382 billion over the remaining life of the program.”

A majority favored cancelling the program, 54 to 44%. A large majority of Democrats (59%) and a modest majority of independents (53%) took this position. Republicans were essentially divided, with 48% in favor of cancelling and 52% opposed.

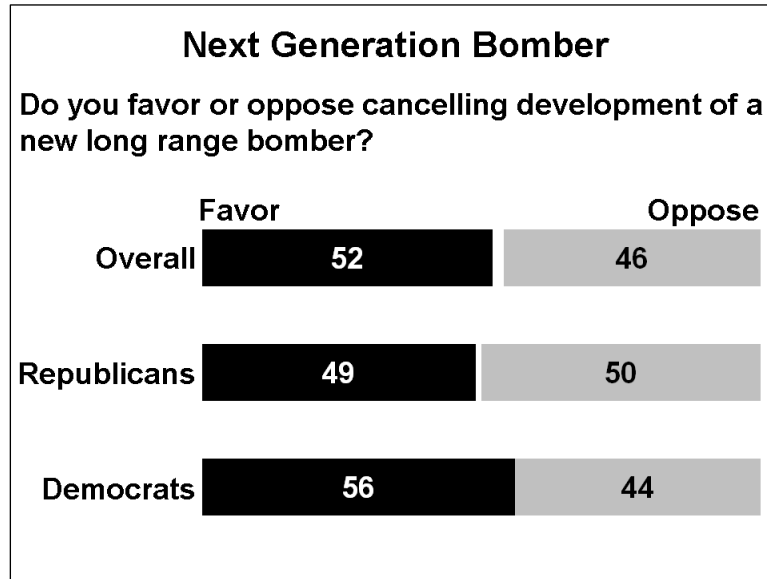


Next Generation Bomber

Respondents were informed that “The Air Force is beginning the development of a new long-range stealth bomber (called ‘Next Generation’) that may carry nuclear weapons and operate either manned or unmanned. It is intended to go into service sometime in the 2020s.” They were exposed to arguments on this program:

Some argue that the Air Force has B-2 stealth bombers only 10 years old—which the Air Force is now spending \$2 billion to upgrade—that are far more advanced than those of any other country and are more than adequate for the foreseeable future. Others argue that the B-2s’ range is not enough and that we don’t have enough of them, so we need a new bomber.

Told that the program would cost \$6 billion over the next few years and \$55 billion for the projected fleet, they were asked whether they favored or opposed cancelling development. A majority preferred to cancel, 52 to 46%. Republicans were closely divided, while Democrats were slightly more willing to cancel (56%) than the full sample was. Independents supported cancellation, 51 to 43%.

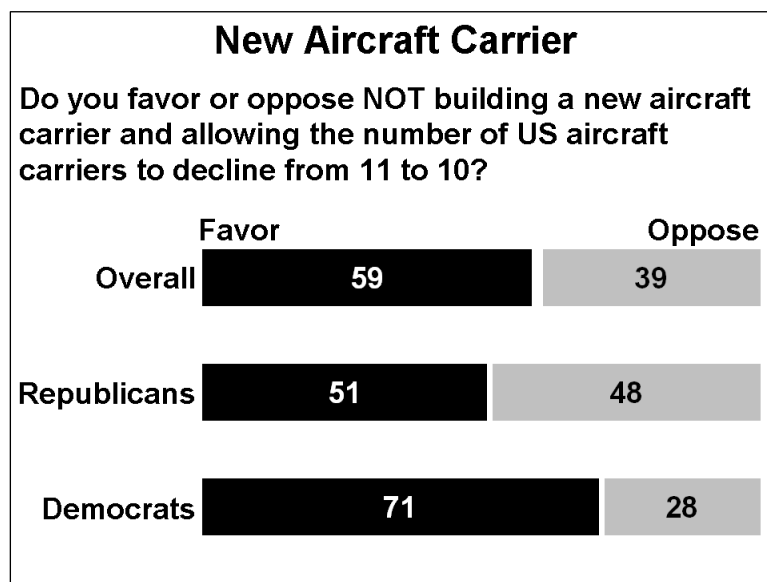


Allow Number of Aircraft Carriers to Decline from 11 to 10

Respondents were told that the Navy is planning to retire an aging aircraft carrier (one of 11) and build another. Then they read arguments about this decision:

Some say we don't need large aircraft carriers as much as we did during the Cold War, and our current force of 11 carriers is more than adequate—China and Russia have a total of two. Others say reducing America's force of aircraft carriers would limit our reach around the world, by cutting our ability to project air power into areas where we do not have bases.

Three in five (59%) favored not building a new aircraft carrier to replace the one about to be retired. This majority was driven by Democrats, 71% of whom were in favor. Both Republicans and independents were divided.

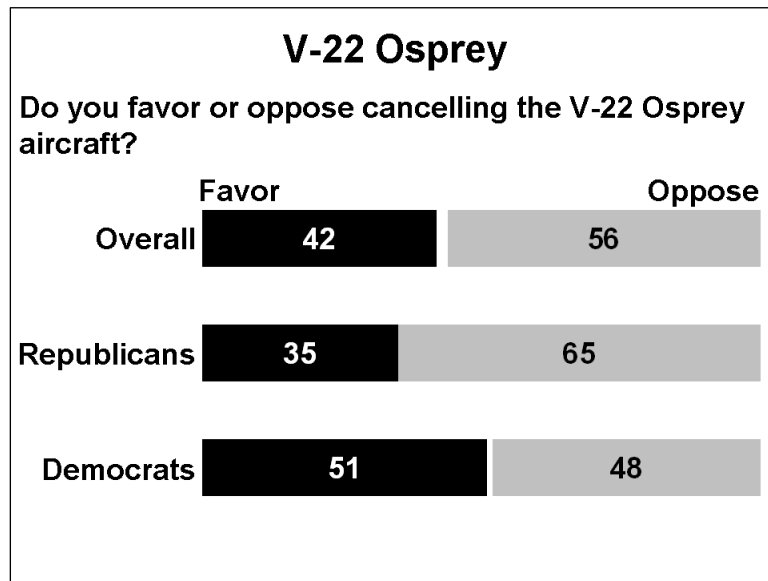


V-22 Osprey

Respondents were introduced to the Osprey with the description that it “is an aircraft that has the capability to take off like a helicopter and fly like a plane.” They were told of the controversy around the Osprey:

Some say the V-22 Osprey is too complicated, its costs have ballooned way beyond the original estimates and it has major safety and maintenance problems. Others say the aircraft provides the Marine Corps with the ability to move troops and materiel much further than a helicopter can, and that many of the safety and maintenance problems are being addressed.

Then they were told that cancellation would save “about \$1 billion next year.” Asked to decide, a clear majority kept the Osprey, 56 to 42%. Sixty-five percent of Republicans and 55% of independents favored continuing with the Osprey, while Democrats were divided.



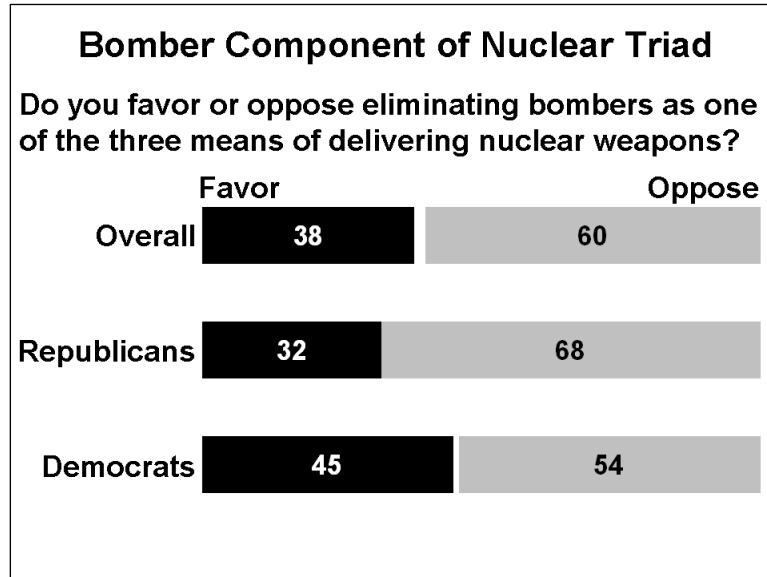
Eliminating Bomber Leg of Nuclear Weapons Triad

Respondents were introduced to this long-running debate with the information that “right now the US has three different ways to deliver nuclear weapons: land-based missiles, submarines, and bombers,” and that there is a proposal to eliminate bombers and keep the other two. The question then covered the following arguments:

Some people say that, given how powerful nuclear weapons are and the low likelihood that they will be used, having just two systems for delivering them is enough and we should save the money. Others say that it is better to have three ways of delivering nuclear weapons than two, and that bombers have a unique value because they can be recalled at the last minute. Submarine-launched or ground-launched missiles cannot be recalled once they are fired.

Respondents were told that eliminating the bomber leg of the triad would save about \$4 billion a year.

Three in five (60%) opposed eliminating bombers as a means of nuclear weapons delivery, while 38% favored the proposal to eliminate this. Majorities of Republicans (68%), Democrats (54%), and independents (58%) were all opposed.



Appendix: Roadmap of the Process Respondents Went Through

In order to gain a clear and detailed understanding of how the public views the national defense budget in response to information, respondents worked through a process in which they received information, arguments and current budget figures, evaluated these and set their own budget levels. This process went as follows:

Perspectives on the Relative Size of the Defense Budget. After an introduction describing the issue of the federal budget deficit and the debate over defense spending's role, respondents were shown five graphs—each a different perspective on the defense budget's relative size. These graphs showed defense's share of the discretionary budget, compared to other spending areas; defense compared to Social Security and Medicare (all for 2012); historical trends in defense spending, in constant dollars, since 1960; the trend in defense spending as a percentage of gross domestic product since 1960; and US defense spending compared to that of potential enemies and major allies. For each graph, respondents were asked whether *from this perspective*, they found defense spending to be more, less or about the same as they expected.

General Arguments About Whether Defense Spending Should Be Reduced. The sample then reviewed four arguments in favor, and four arguments against, reducing defense spending. For each argument, respondents indicated whether they found it convincing or unconvincing.

General Approach to the Deficit. Respondents were then asked what broad strategy Congress should follow--raise revenues, reduce non-defense spending, reduce defense spending—or any combination of these.

Overall Level for Base Defense. Respondents were again shown the 2012 budget figure for the base defense budget and asked to enter their own figure, setting their preferred level. They were able to increase as well as reduce this level, or keep it the same.

War Spending on Afghanistan: Since the base defense budget excludes operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, respondents were next told the size of the already-planned 2013 spending cut for these operations. They evaluated one argument for, and one against, reducing spending in this area below the planned 2013 level. Shown the 2013 level again, they entered their own proposed amount.

Setting Defense Spending Levels Area by Area. Respondents next worked through the defense budget divided into six major areas, with three of them divided into maintaining current capabilities and developing future capabilities. These areas were: air power (current and future); ground forces (current and future); naval forces (current and future); nuclear weapons; special operations forces; and missile defense. For each of the six major areas they were given a brief description of what that area includes and were asked to evaluate an argument for, and an argument against, reducing spending in this area. Respondents were shown the 2012 budget level for each area and entered their own proposed budget level for each. In the lower right-hand corner of the screen they saw their overall changes being tallied, and as a reference the overall base budget level they had set initially.

Proposals on Health Care. Respondents were next offered three current proposals for controlling health care costs for the military's family members and retirees. Each was explained with a pro and con argument and the expected cost savings. Respondents decided whether they favored or opposed each proposal. If a proposal was favored, its cost savings went into to the respondent's area-by-area tally.

Proposals on Compensation and Retirement. Respondents were shown three proposals regarding compensation and retirement. One involved capping salary increases; a second involved slowly the growth of tax-exempt allowances (housing and food); and a third involved less generous rules for retirement pensions. Respondents decided whether they favored or opposed each proposal, and if they favored it, cost savings went into the respondent's area-by-area tally. This section concluded the process of setting an area-by-area budget level.

Proposals on Specific Weapons Systems. Finally, respondents were asked five questions about specific weapons systems. To avoid possible double-counting, it was explained that these questions did not affect the respondent's budget level (the tally indicator was removed). These questions covered the F-35, the V-22 Osprey, the Next Generation stealth bomber, the bomber leg of the nuclear delivery triad, and a new aircraft carrier to replace one slated for retirement. Each was explained with a pro and con argument and the expected cost, or cost savings. Respondents decided whether they favored or opposed each proposal-- concluding the whole process.

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