

Independent Voter Project

Wave 9 Findings Report
September 12-20, 2011



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Abbreviation Key

DEM	Democratic voter/candidate/party
DLI	Democratic-leaning independent
DNK	Do not know
All IND	All Independents
Pure IND	Pure independent
REP	Republican voter/candidate/party
RLI	Republican-leaning independent
TPS	Tea Party supporter



Background

Why Study Independents?

Independents are a critical voting bloc in American politics. About one-third of registered voters identify as independents, so swings among this group towards one party or another often determine election outcomes. Significant attitudinal differences exist, however, within the independent bloc. Lumping them together misses important patterns and potential opportunities for both political parties.

Research Objective

To better understand the political landscape of the country, this effort will build on previous waves of research to understand and track the political attitudes and views of registered voters, particularly Independent and unaffiliated voters. A module was included in wave nine to assess voter reactions to a potential increase in the federal excise tax on tobacco in the context of deficit reduction measures.

The following presentation is commissioned and prepared by Altria Client Services and contains data from nine waves of public opinion surveys conducted on the political landscape and the attitudes of self-identified independent voters.



Methodology

This survey of n=1176 registered voters nationwide was conducted September 12-20, 2011 by trained interviewers at Voter / Consumer Research's phone center in Houston, Texas. The total sample consists of a base sample of n=800 registered voters plus an oversample of 376 self-identified independent voters to reach a total of n=1176. The margin of error for the base sample is +/- 3.5% and for the independent sample is +/- 4.0% at the 95% confidence interval.

Respondents were selected randomly from a registered voter sample including both cell phone and landline telephone numbers. Cell phone respondents make up approximately 17% percent of the base and independent samples. All respondents confirmed that they are registered to vote.

Quotas were set for gender, age, race and census region to ensure consistency with previous waves and national demographic trends. Party identification for the base sample of registered voters is 36% Democrat, 29% independent, and 32% Republican, and was weighted to align with national party identification for consistency with previous waves.



Executive Summary

Political Environment

Voters are pessimistic about the direction of the country and its leadership.

- The mood of the country is at its lowest point since tracking began in October 2009, with 72% of voters and 80% of pure independents now saying the country is off on the wrong track.
- Concern over jobs specifically and the economy more broadly drive the nation's sour mood, as fully 2 out of 3 voters cite these in response to an open-ended question about the most important problem facing the nation (66%).
- Despite the introduction of President Obama's Jobs Plan (days before wave 9 fielded), voters are still disenchanted with national leadership. Approval of the president drops to a tracking low of 43% overall and to 34% among pure independents this wave. Similarly, only one-quarter of voters (25%) approve of the job Republicans are doing, compared with only one-third of voters (33%) approving of Democratic members of congress.

Voters want the government to do less.

- By a two-to-one margin, voters prefer smaller government over bigger government (60% to 30%), with the margin even greater among pure independents (73% to 17%).
- Despite concerns about jobs and the economy, 52% say government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals, while 44% say government should do more to solve problems. This is the largest advantage for "doing too much" in our tracking history.



...Executive Summary...

Election 2012

Ballot results indicate that voters are taking their frustration out on Democrats more than Republicans.

- The generic Republican leads President Obama by 3 points on the presidential ballot (42%-39%) and leads the generic Democratic candidate by 3-points on the congressional ballot (44% to 41%).
- Pure independents are still largely undecided on the ballot, but are becoming less so. Since May, some undecided pure independents have shifted their support to the generic Republican, resulting in an early 10-point lead on the presidential ballot (31% Republican to 21% President Obama) and a 5-point lead on the congressional ballot (32% Republican to 27% Democrat).
- This shoring up of independent support happens as the Republican primary field solidifies. On a named Republican primary ballot, Rick Perry leads Mitt Romney by 6 points among Republican primary voters overall (29% to 23%). There is a sharp ideological divide between these frontrunners, as Perry has a double digit lead with Republican identifiers (12-points), conservatives (14-points) and Tea Party supporters (16-points). Romney has the advantage with independents (4-points) and moderates (15-points). While the field is set (Chris Christie and Sarah Palin recently announced they will not run), positioning within the field continues to evolve.



...Executive Summary...

Federal Debt Reduction

Voters' preference for limiting government aligns with recommendations for handling the federal deficit.

- In response to an open-ended question on recommendations for deficit reduction, the overwhelming majority of voters offered some form of spending cuts (68%) while only 14% volunteered some type of tax increase as a solution.
- Furthermore, 70% say that the government has a spending problem and we need to cut spending to reduce the deficit. Just 20% say the deficit is caused by a lack of revenue and we need to raise taxes to avoid cuts to education, health care and other services.



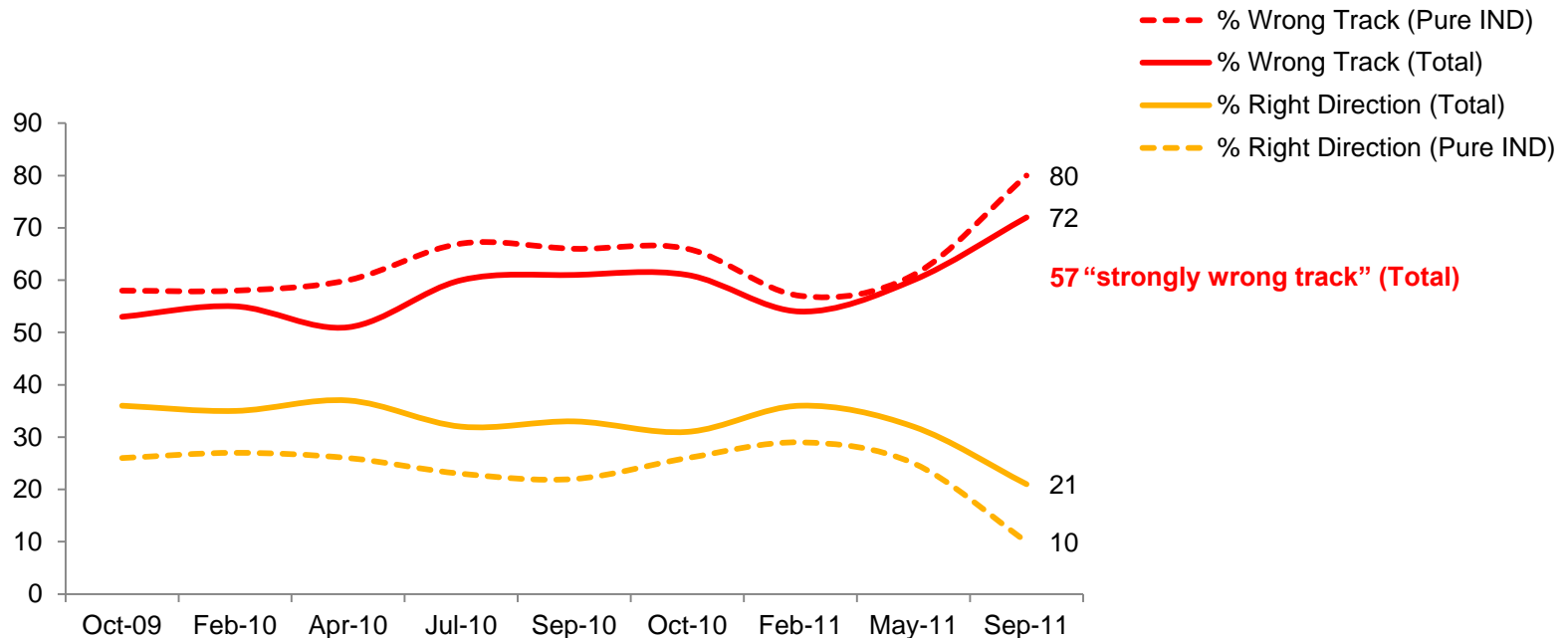
Section 1 Political Environment



The national mood reaches a tracking low

Now thinking more generally about the direction of the country, would you say things in this country are [ROTATE: Heading in the right direction; OR Off on the wrong track]?

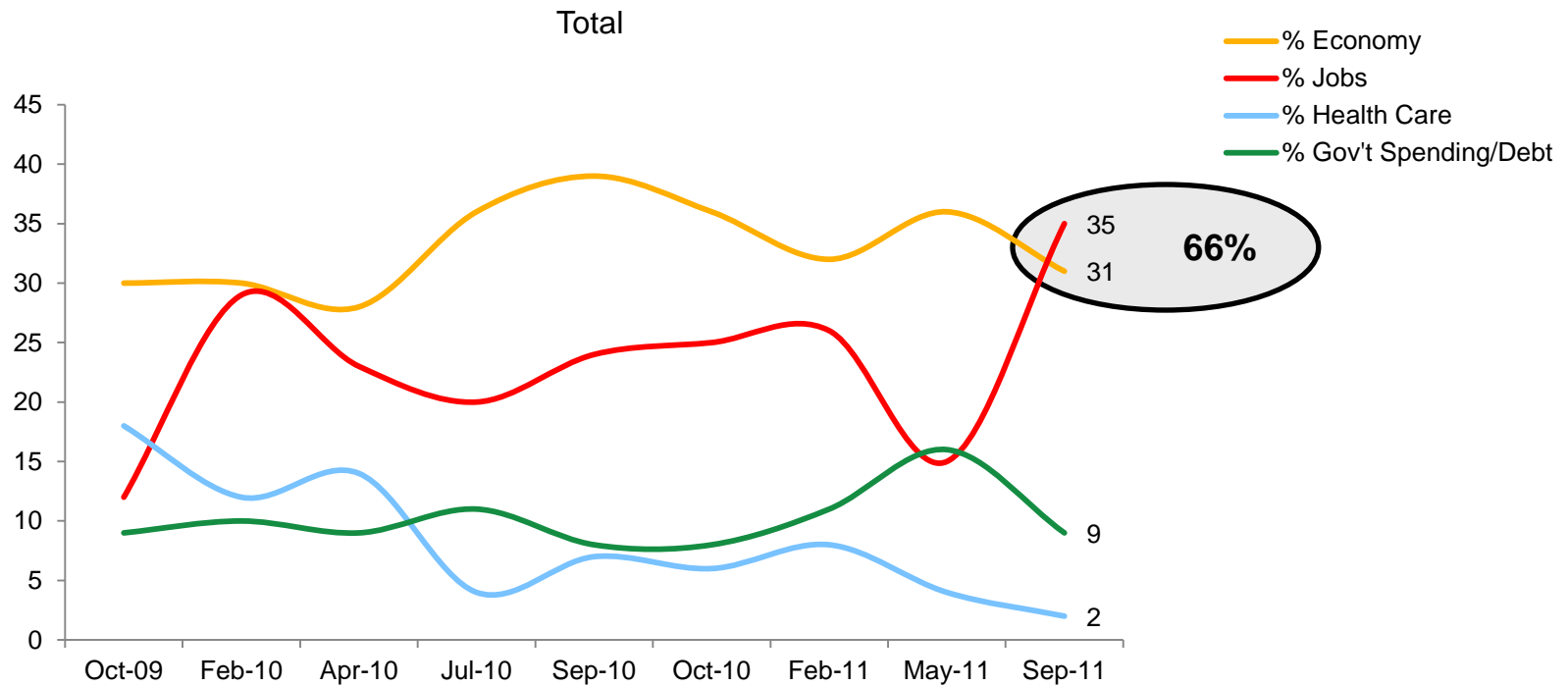
Direction of Country Trendline



Concern over jobs drives national pessimism

What would you say is the single most important problem facing the nation [OPEN-ENDED]?

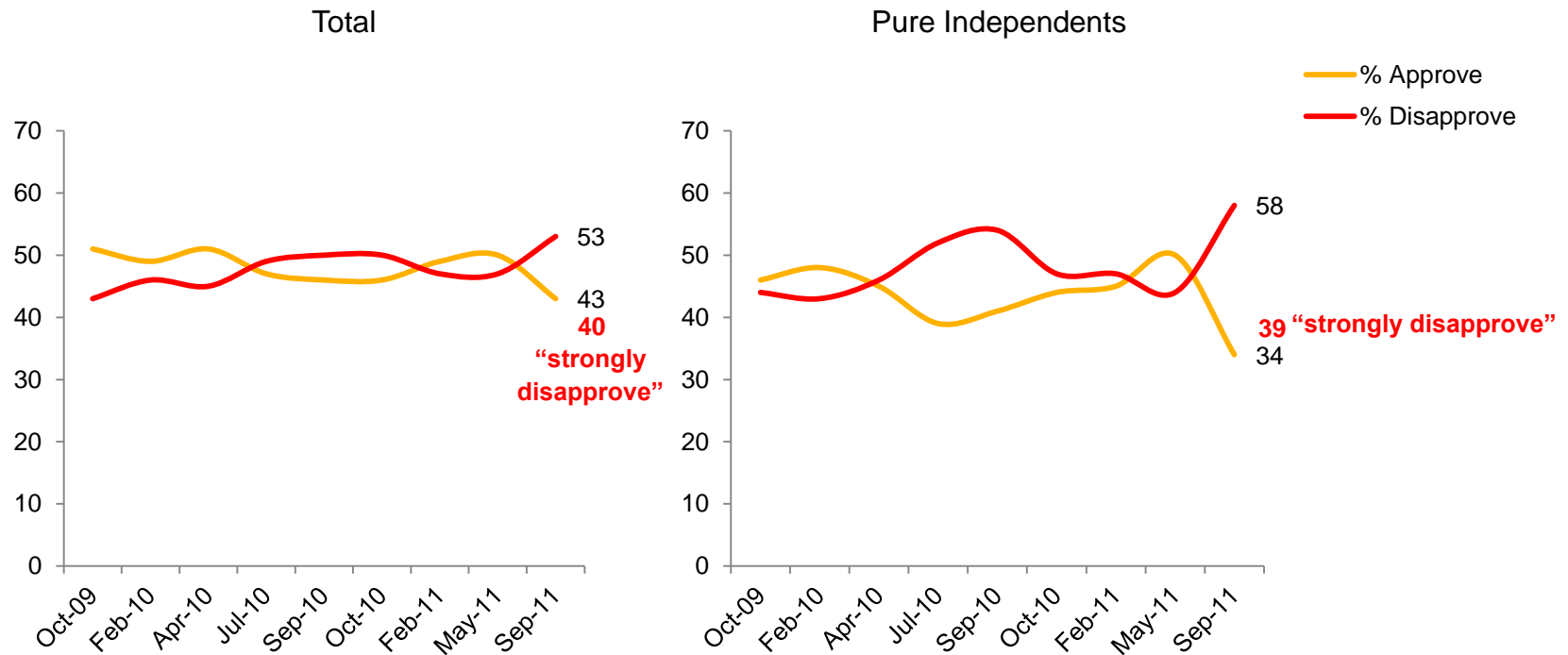
Most Important Problem Facing Nation



Presidential job approval drops to a new tracking low

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President? [IF APPROVE, ASK: Do you strongly approve or somewhat approve?] [IF DISAPPROVE, ASK: Do you strongly disapprove or somewhat disapprove?]

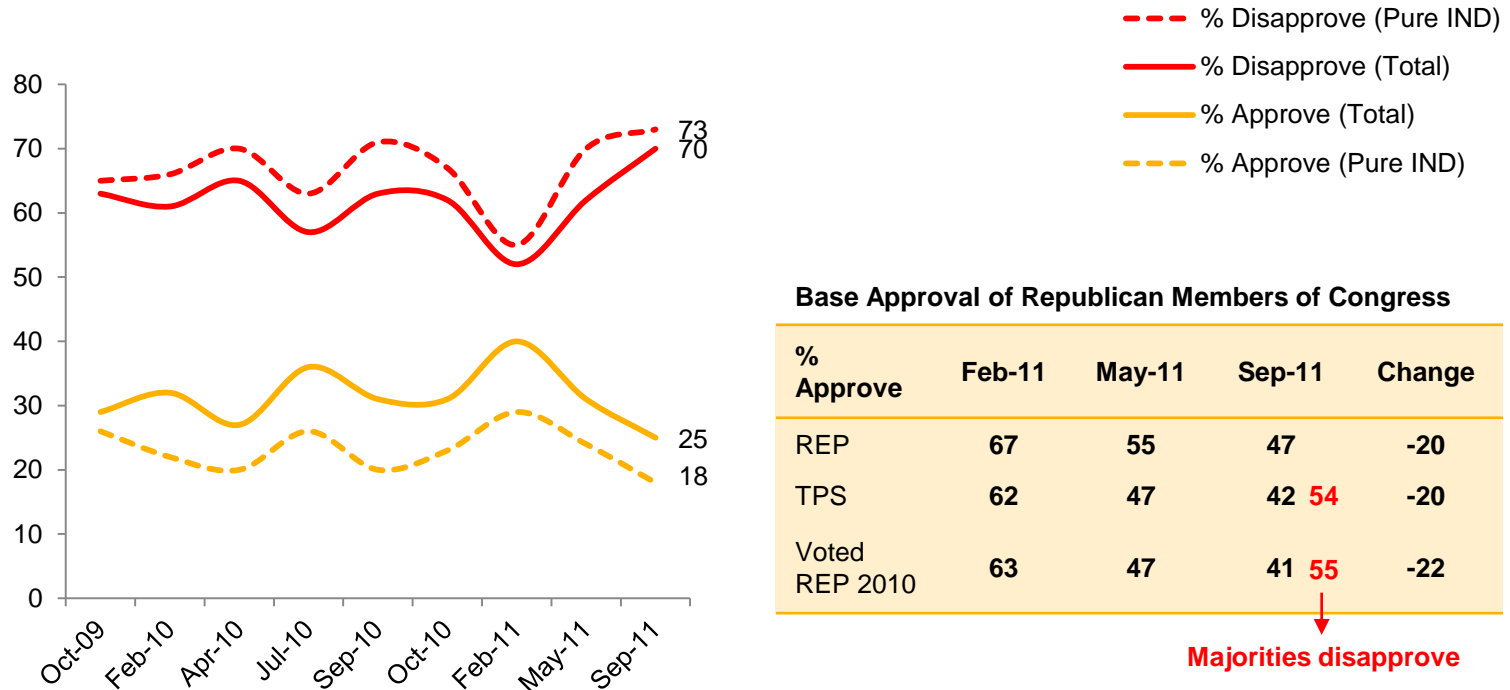
Approval of President Obama



Republican job approval declines, especially among base

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Republicans in the U.S. Congress are handling their job? [IF APPROVE, ASK: Do you strongly approve or somewhat approve?] [IF DISAPPROVE, ASK: Do you strongly disapprove or somewhat disapprove?]

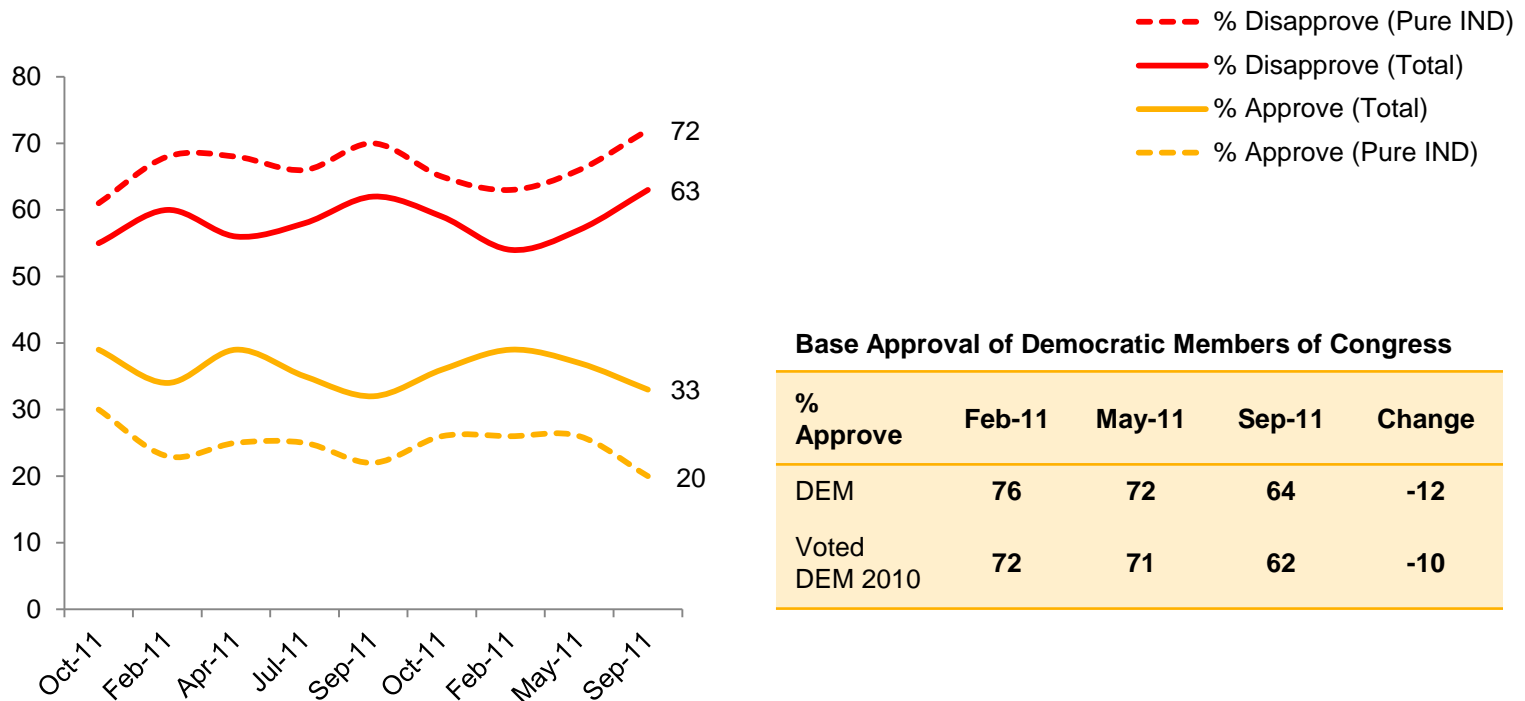
Approval of Republican Members of Congress



Approval of Democratic members is low, but remains high among base

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Democrats in the U.S. Congress are handling their job? [IF APPROVE, ASK: Do you strongly approve or somewhat approve?] [IF DISAPPROVE, ASK: Do you strongly disapprove or somewhat disapprove?]

Approval of Democratic Members of Congress

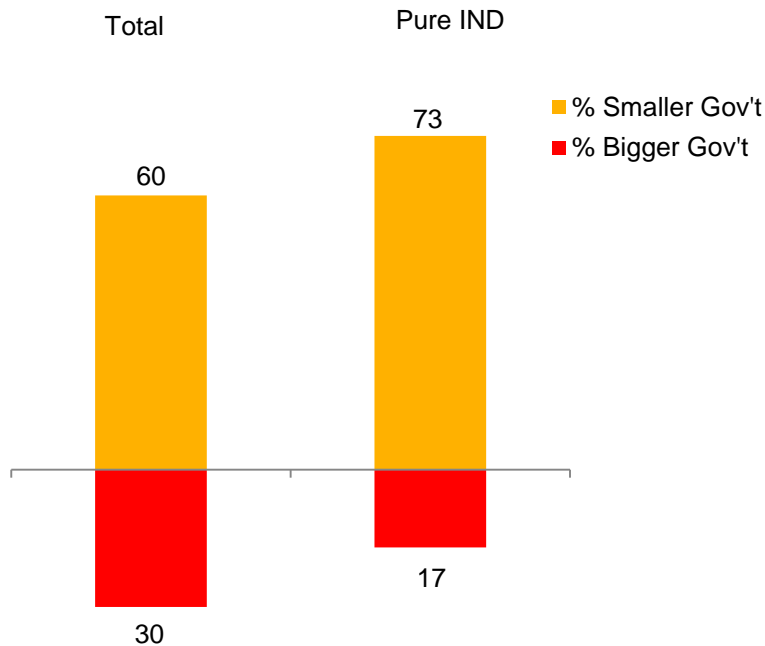


Voters want the government to do less

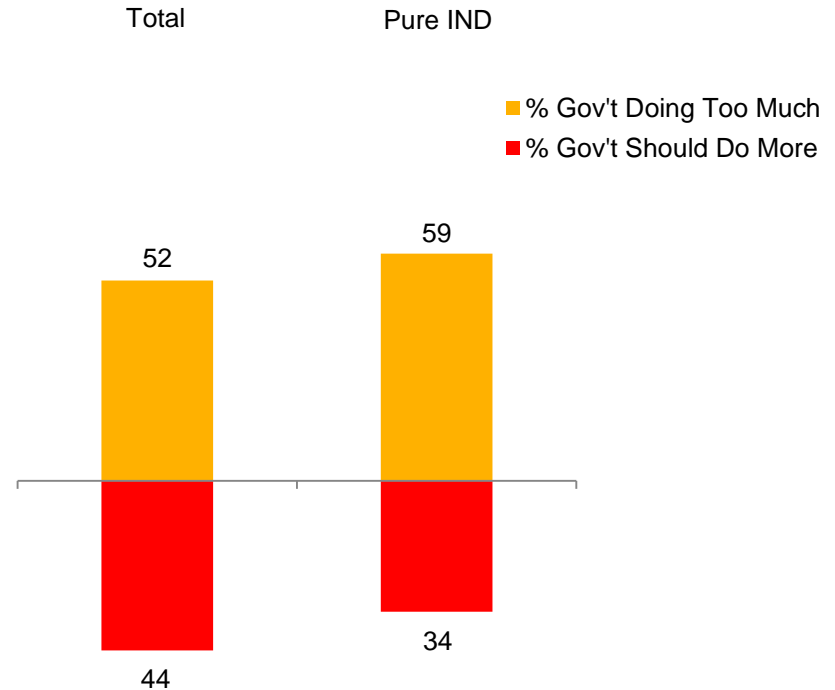
In general, do you prefer [ROTATE: Bigger government with more services; OR Smaller government with fewer services]?

...which statement comes closer to your point of view: [ROTATE:] Government should do more to solve problems and help meet the needs of people; OR Government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals? [PROBE: Strongly/Somewhat]

Preference for Government Size



Preference for Government Role



Section 2 Election 2012

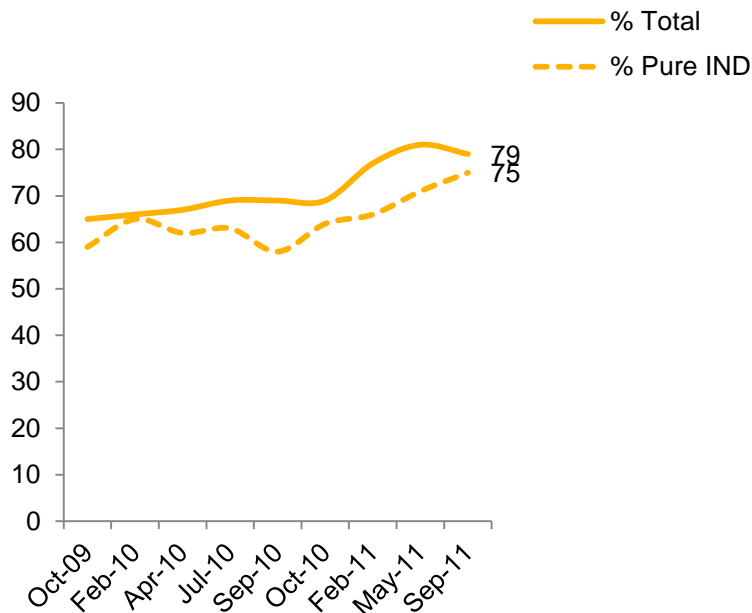


Likelihood to vote in the 2012 election is high

As you know, there will be a general election for president and U.S. Congress in November 2012. I know it's still a ways off, but would you say you are extremely likely to vote, very likely to vote but not extremely likely, somewhat likely to vote, or not too likely to vote? [Note: Question was "...there will be an election for U.S. Congress in November 2010..." in waves 10/09 – 10/10]

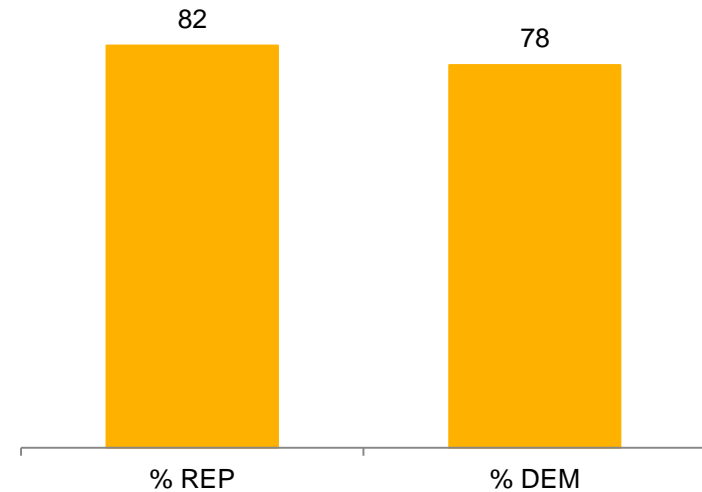
Vote Intensity Trendline

"Extremely Likely" to Vote



Vote Intensity Advantage

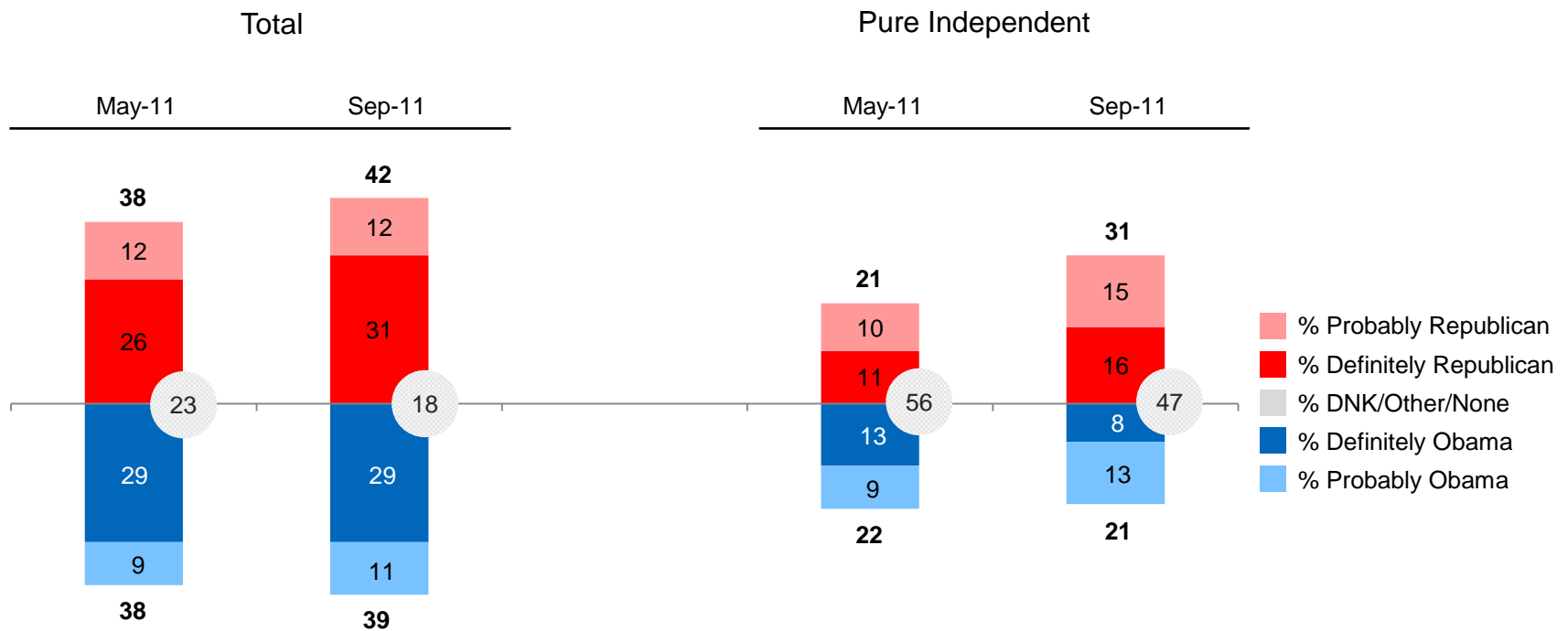
"Extremely Likely" to Vote



Driven by independents, support for the generic Republican increases on the presidential ballot

Thinking about the 2012 Presidential election, do you think you will [ROTATE: Vote for President Obama, the Democratic candidate; OR Vote for the Republican candidate]? [IF OBAMA ASK: Would that be definitely President Obama or probably President Obama]? [IF REPUBLICAN, ASK: Would that be definitely the Republican or probably the Republican]?

Presidential Ballot



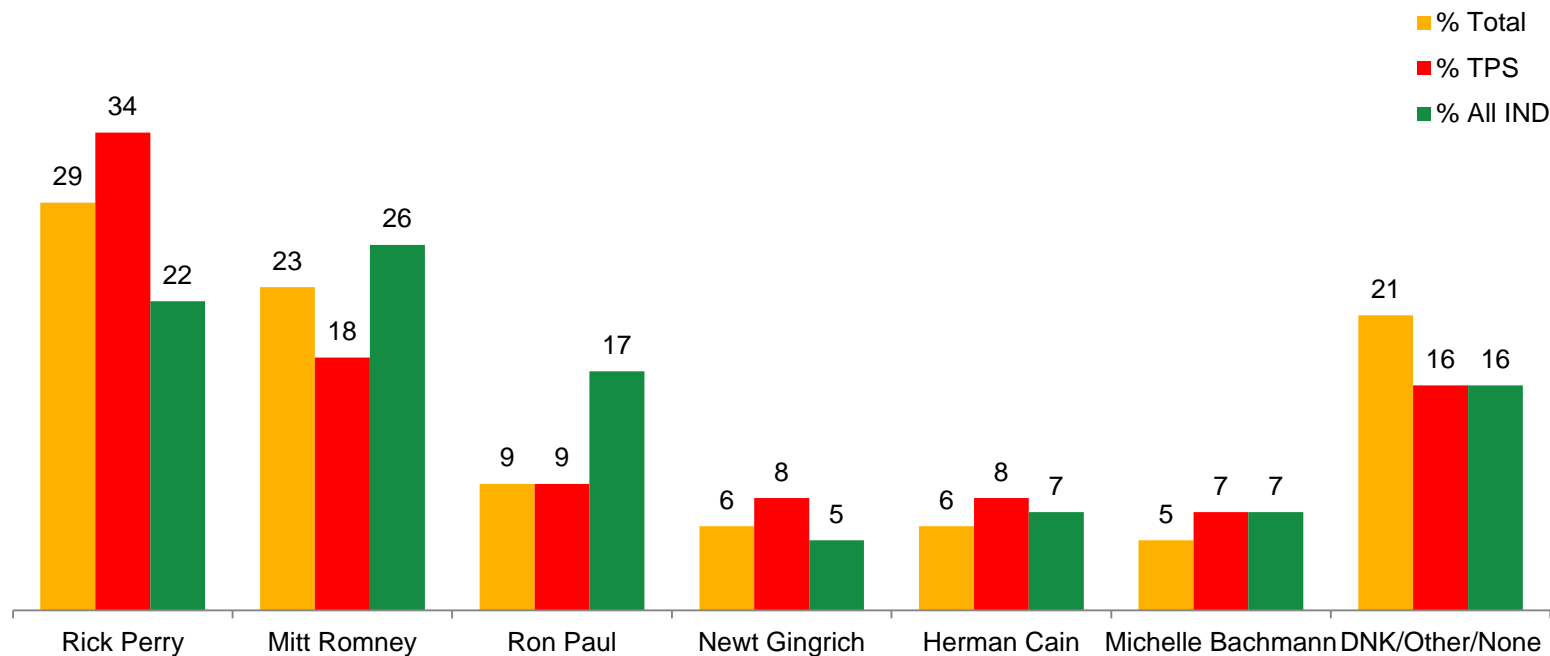
Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

Ballot continues to evolve: Perry leads overall and among Tea Party supporter, Romney leads with pure independents.

If the Republican presidential primary were held today, for whom would you vote if the candidates were: [RANDOMIZE: Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Ron Paul, Rick Perry, Mitt Romney; OR Michelle Bachmann]? (n=335)

Republican Primary Ballot

Self-Identified Republican Primary Voters (n=335)



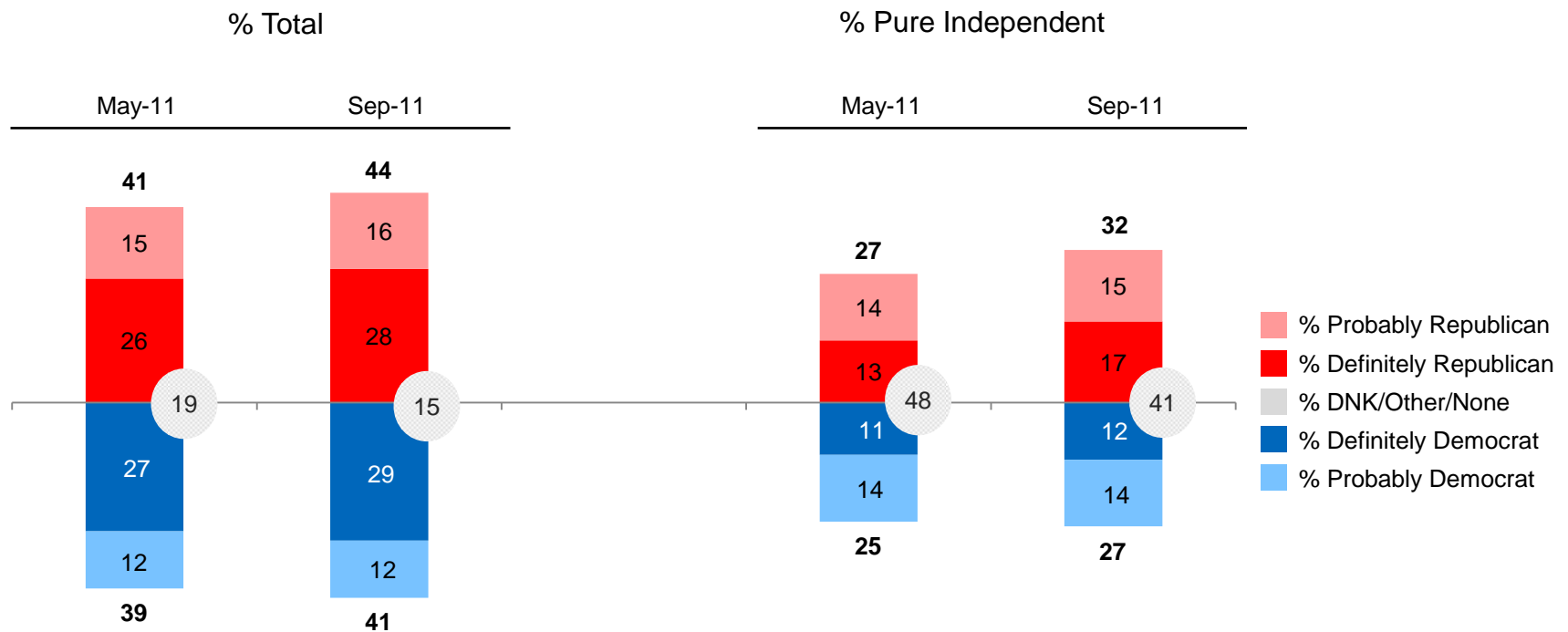
Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.



Support for the generic Republican increases on the congressional ballot

Now, thinking about the next election for U.S. Congress in 2012. If it were being held today, would you vote for [ROTATE: the Republican candidate; OR the Democrat candidate] in your district? [IF REPUBLICAN, ASK: Would that be definitely the Republican or probably the Republican?] [IF DEMOCRAT, ASK: Would that be definitely the Democrat or probably the Democrat?]

Congressional Ballot



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

Section 3 Federal Deficit



A strong majority of voters recommend spending cuts to reduce the deficit

As part of the recently passed federal debt agreement, a bi-partisan Congressional committee must propose in the next few months a plan to reduce the deficit by one point five trillion dollars over the next ten years. What would be your number one recommendation to the committee on how to reduce the federal deficit?

Recommendations on Deficit Reduction

Total

68%	CUT SPENDING	41%	OTHER
16%	Cut government spending	8%	Stop the war/Bring home troops
10%	Reduce entitlement programs	8%	Create jobs
9%	Cut foreign aid	6%	Tax reform/Eliminate tax breaks/Loopholes
6%	Cut military spending/Reduce military size	5%	Other
6%	Cut pay and benefits for politicians	2%	Repeal new healthcare bill
5%	Eliminate wasteful spending	2%	Work together/Compromise
4%	Cut entitlement programs	1%	Get rid of everyone in government/New people
3%	Cut pork barrel spending	1%	Flat tax
2%	Cut/Reduce welfare programs	1%	Overseas tax/Limit imports
2%	Reduce size of government	1%	Remove regulation on businesses
2%	Cut unnecessary government departments/Jobs	1%	Help small businesses
2%	No more bail outs/Stimulus/Borrowing money	1%	Cut taxes
1%	Get rid of the Department of Education	1%	Get rid of Medicare/Medicaid fraud
14%	RAISE TAXES	1%	Use our own natural resources
10%	Raise taxes on the rich	1%	Stop benefits for illegal aliens
3%	Raise taxes	1%	Close borders/Stop illegal immigration
1%	Increase taxes on large corporations	13%	DON'T KNOW

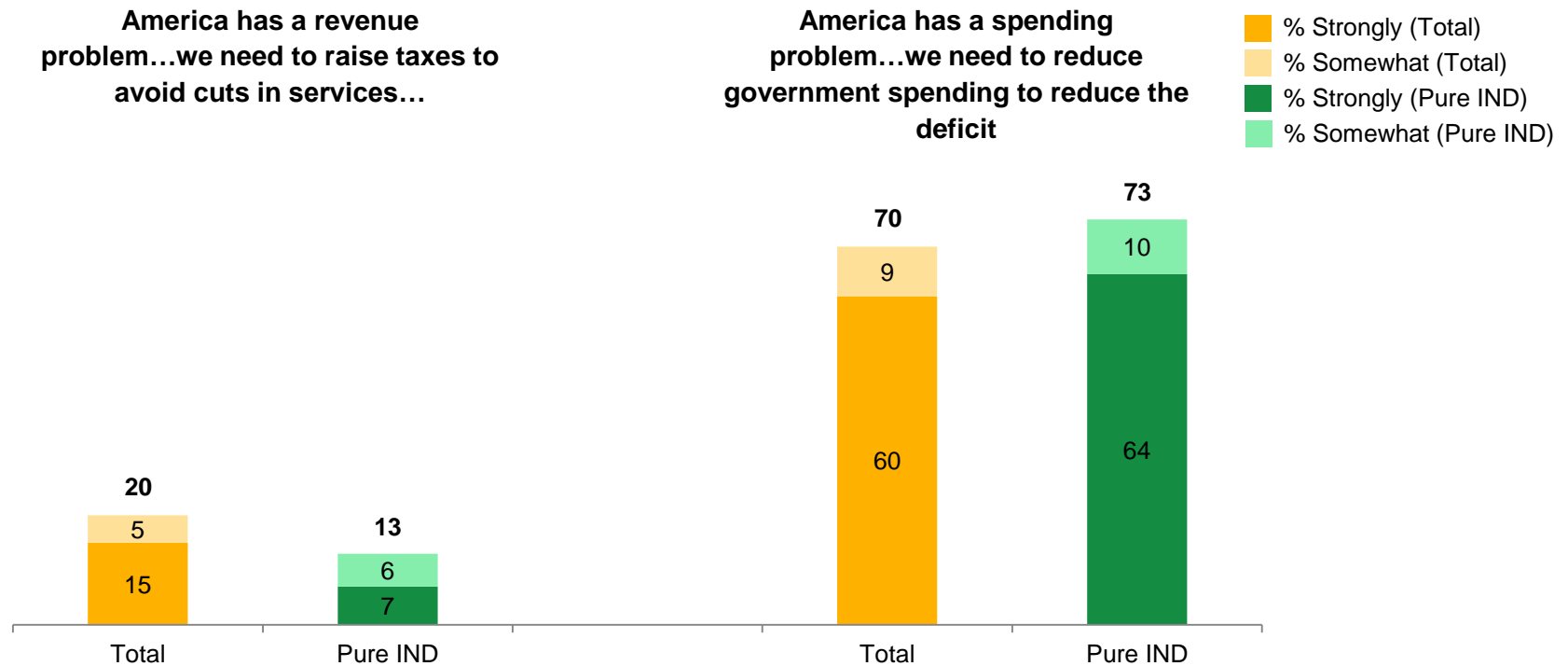
Note: Percentages will not total 100% due to multiple recommendations from each respondent.



Most voters agree that America needs to cut spending rather than raise taxes

When it comes to the deficit, which of the following views comes closest to your own view: America has a revenue problem and we need to raise taxes to avoid cuts in services like education, health care, law enforcement and transportation ...OR...America has a spending problem with too much waste and inefficiency, and we need to reduce government spending to reduce the deficit?

Deficit Reduction: Raising Taxes vs. Cutting Spending



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

