

2011 SURVEY OF AARP MEMBERS IN TEXAS ABOUT THE STATE BUDGET SHORTFALL

AARP's Texas State Office, in response to its commitment to protect funding for long-term care services for older Texans, commissioned this survey to explore the views of its members on the Texas state budget shortfall.

These results are based on a telephone survey, fielded January 25 through February 5, 2011 of AARP members in Texas. A total of 1,501 interviews were completed yielding a sampling error of ± 2.5 percent.

A weighted, annotated survey of responses begins on page 2, and detailed methodology is on page 7.

SURVEY-IN-BRIEF

- ❖ **Most AARP members in Texas are aware that the State of Texas is currently facing a budget deficit and have seen, heard, or read about the state budget recently.**
 - ✓ 93 percent say they know that the State of Texas is currently facing a budget deficit.
 - ✓ 44 percent say they have seen, heard, or read “a lot” and 34 percent have seen, heard, or read “some” about the state budget in the last three months.
- ❖ **Three in four AARP members in Texas would oppose cuts to health and human services as an approach to balance the state budget.**
 - ✓ 76 percent say they would oppose cuts in health and human services, including long-term care services for older persons, as an approach to balance the state budget; 15 percent would support such cuts; and 8 percent are not sure.
 - ✓ Well over the majority of members – regardless of political party affiliation – say they oppose such cuts (Democrats, 89%; Republicans, 70%; Independents, 73%).
- ❖ **Two in three AARP members in Texas think the Rainy Day Fund should be used to help balance the state budget. Of these AARP members, about half think that half of the Rainy Day Fund should be used.**
 - ✓ 66 percent say the Rainy Day Fund should be used to help balance the budget. The majority of members – regardless of political party affiliation – say they think the Rainy Day Fund should be used (Democrats, 77%; Republicans, 57%; Independents, 68%).
 - ✓ Of these members, 49 percent think that half of the Rainy Day Fund should be used, 26 percent think that all of the Rainy Day Fund should be used, and 19 percent think some other proportion of the Rainy Day Fund should be used.
- ❖ **Top budget priorities for AARP members in Texas are education (primary and secondary) and health and human services.**
 - ✓ 41 percent say their top budget priority is education for Kindergarten through 12th grade.
 - ✓ 28 percent say their top budget priority is health and human services, including long-term care services for older persons.

2011 Texas State Budget Survey
(Survey Sample: 50+ AARP Members in Texas)
(n=1,501; sampling error = ±2.5%)

Main Questions

M-1. In the last three months, how much have you seen, heard, or read about Texas’s state budget? Have you seen, heard, or read ...? [READ ANSWERS]

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
44%	A lot
34%	Some
16%	Not very much
6%	Nothing at all
1%	Not sure
<0.5%	Refused

M-2. Did you know that the State of Texas is currently facing a budget deficit?

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
93%	Yes
6%	No
1%	Don’t know
-	Refused

The Texas legislature, which convened in January, is facing a budget shortfall estimated to be up to 27 billion dollars. I would like to ask your opinion on how you think Texas should prioritize its budget for state services.

M-3. I’m going to read you a list of state services. Please tell me which **ONE** you think should be the top budget priority for Texas legislators. [READ ITEMS A THROUGH E AND RANDOMIZE.]

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
28%	a. Health and human services, including long-term care services for older persons
41%	b. Education for Kindergarten through 12 th grade students
3%	c. Public colleges and universities in Texas
7%	d. Public safety including courts and prisons
9%	e. Transportation, construction, and maintenance for roads, bridges, and mass transit
1%	All of them
<0.5%	Education (all)
<0.5%	Immigration/Border security
<0.5%	Raise/have sales taxes
<0.5%	Cut politicians perks/salaries
1%	Other
2%	None of these services
6%	Don’t know
1%	Refused

M-4. As I mentioned earlier, Texas is facing a budget shortfall estimated to be up to 27 billion dollars. One approach to help balance the state budget is to use the state’s Rainy Day Fund. Money is continuously deposited into this fund from state fees on oil and gas production. Currently, the Rainy Day Fund has about 9 billion dollars that could be used to help balance the Texas state budget over the next two years. Do you think the Rainy Day Fund should be used to help balance the budget?

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
66%	Yes
25%	No
9%	Don’t know
<0.5%	Refused

M-5. Do you think all of the Rainy Day Fund, that is nine billion dollars should be used to help balance the state budget, half of the Rainy Day Fund, that is four and a half billion dollars should be used to help balance the state budget, or should some other portion of the Rainy Day Fund be used to help balance the state budget?

Base: Think the Rainy Day Fund should be used to help balance the budget (n=988)	
26%	Use all of the Rainy Day Fund, \$9 billion, to help balance the state budget
49%	Use half of the Rainy Day Fund, \$4.5 billion, to help balance the state budget
19%	Use some other portion of the Rainy Day Fund
7%	Don’t know
<0.5%	Refused

M-6. Another approach to balancing the state budget is to cut health and human services, including long-term care services for older persons. Would you support or oppose these cuts as a way to help balance the budget?

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
15%	Support
76%	Oppose
8%	Not sure
1%	Refused

M-6a. Would you say you strongly support or somewhat support?

Base: Support cuts to help balance budget (n=228)	
5%	Strongly support
10%	Somewhat support
<0.5%	Refused

M-6b. Would you say you strongly oppose or somewhat oppose?

Base: Oppose cuts to help balance budget (n=1,147)	
62%	Strongly oppose
14%	Somewhat oppose
<0.5%	Refused

Demographic Questions

The following questions are for classification purposes only and will be kept entirely confidential.

D-1. RECORD RESPONDENT'S GENDER. [ASK ONLY IF ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY: "To ensure it is recorded accurately, could you please state your gender?"]

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
54%	Male
46%	Female

D-2. What is your age as of your last birthday? [RECORD AGE]

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
1%	42 – 49
25%	50 – 59
47%	60 – 74
23%	75 or older
4%	Refused

D-3. What is your current marital status? Are you ...? [READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
70%	Married
2%	Not married, living with your partner or significant other
<0.5%	Separated
8%	Divorced
13%	Widowed
5%	Or are you currently single <u>and</u> never married
<0.5%	Don't know
1%	Refused

D-4. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? [READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
4%	0 to 12 th grade, but with no diploma
20%	High school graduate or equivalent
16%	Post high school education, but with no degree
11%	2 year degree
24%	4 year degree
4%	Post graduate study, but with no degree
21%	Graduate or professional degree
-	Don't know
1%	Refused

D-5. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? [READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
5%	Self-employed full-time
3%	Self-employed part-time
23%	Employed full-time
6%	Employed part-time
54%	Retired and not working at all
3%	Unemployed and looking for work
5%	Or are you not in the labor force for other reasons
<0.5%	Don't know
1%	Refused

D-6. Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino origin or descent?

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
6%	Yes
93%	No
1%	Don't know
1%	Refused

D-7. What is your race? Are you...[READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]?

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
87%	White or Caucasian
7%	Black or African American
1%	Native American or Alaskan Native
-	Asian
<0.5%	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
1%	Hispanic/Mexican
<0.5%	Mixed
1%	Don't know
3%	Refused

D-8. Thinking about state elections for Texas Governor and Legislators in the last 10 years, which of the following best describes your voting behavior? Would you say you vote always, most of the time, about half of the time, seldom, or would you say you never vote?

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
67%	Always
20%	Most of the time
5%	About half of the time
3%	Seldom
3%	Never
1%	Don't know
1%	Refused

D-9. Do you consider yourself to be a ...? [READ AND RANDOMIZE A, B, AND C]

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
25%	a. Democrat
32%	b. Republican
29%	c. Independent
7%	Or something else?
3%	Don't know
4%	Refused

D-10. How would you characterize your political views? Would you say you are ...?

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
48%	Conservative
32%	Moderate
9%	Liberal
5%	None of the above
4%	Don't know
3%	Refused

D-11. What is your 5-digit ZIP CODE?

D-12. We realize income is a private matter and so rather than ask you anything specific about your income, I'd like to ask you to please stop me when I get to the category that your includes your household's income before taxes in 2010. Was it...[READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]?

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,501)	
3%	Less than \$10,000
6%	\$10,000 to less than \$20,000
11%	\$20,000 to less than \$35,000
12%	\$35,000 to less than \$50,000
10%	\$50,000 to less than \$60,000
8%	\$60,000 to less than \$75,000
11%	\$75,000 to less than \$100,000
8%	\$100,000 to less than \$125,000
4%	\$125,000 to less than \$150,000
6%	\$150,000 or more
2%	Don't know
19%	Refused

Methodology

AARP Texas commissioned a research study to explore the opinions of its members in Texas about the Texas state budget. Woelfel Research, Inc. conducted a telephone survey of Texas AARP members between January 25 and February 5, 2011. A total of 1,501 interviews were completed. A sample of this size has a sampling error of plus or minus 2.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Survey responses were weighted to reflect the actual distribution of age and gender for AARP membership in Texas. Interviewing was completed with a final response rate of 27 percent, cooperation rate of 95 percent, and refusal rate of 5 percent. These rates were calculated according to AAPOR standards (Response Rate 3, Cooperation Rate 3, and Refusal Rate 3).

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a membership that helps people 50+ have independence, choice, and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce *AARP The Magazine*, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 35.1 million readers; *AARP Bulletin*, the go-to news source for AARP's millions of members and Americans 50+; *AARP VIVA*, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The views expressed herein are for information, debate, and discussion, and do not necessarily represent official policies of AARP.



AARP

Research and Strategic Analysis

For more information, please contact Terri Guengerich at:

202.434.6306 or e-mail tguengerich@aarp.org