
A decorative bar in the top left corner, consisting of a large green rectangle and a smaller yellow square at its bottom right corner.A thin horizontal grey line extending from the green bar to the left edge of the page.A thin horizontal grey line extending from the left edge of the page to the yellow square.A thin vertical grey line extending from the yellow square to the bottom edge of the page.A small yellow square located at the intersection of the horizontal and vertical grey lines.

**AARP Pre-Debate
Arizona and National Survey
Presidential Debate
Tempe, Arizona
October 13, 2004**

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**Report prepared by
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AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to making life better for people 50 and over. We provide information and resources; engage in legislative, regulatory and legal advocacy; assist members in serving their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These include *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, our quarterly newspaper in Spanish; *NRTA Live & Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our Web site, www.aarp.org We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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AARP Pre-Debate Arizona and National Survey

Presidential Debate

Tempe, Arizona, October 13, 2004

In late-September, and early October, 2004, AARP commissioned national and Arizona telephone surveys of registered voters, ages 50 and over. A total of 1,003 people responded to the national survey and 500 responded to the Arizona state survey. These surveys gave AARP an opportunity to present election issues important to the 50+ population and issues that may affect their voting decisions. AARP also wanted to learn more about how the 50+ population in Arizona and nationally feels about domestic policy issues that they want the presidential candidates to address in the Tempe debate.

This report will highlight the Arizona state survey data, with comparisons to data from the national survey. The survey methodology is described at the end of this report, and a tabulated questionnaire is appended.

AARP is a non-partisan organization. It does not contribute to political campaigns nor does it endorse or oppose any candidates for public office.

Key Findings

Older voters are following the campaigns and they vote:

- Older Americans not only register to vote in proportionately larger numbers than younger voters; they also turn out to vote in proportionately larger numbers. This magnifies their political “clout” compared to younger age groups.
- Nearly nine in 10 older Americans contacted for the national survey (87%) and 86 percent in Arizona said they are registered voters, but only registered voters were actually interviewed. Ninety-five percent of older Arizona registered voters (93 percent nationally) say they are certain to vote in November; 92 percent in Arizona and 94 percent nationally say they voted in 2000.
- 91 percent of older voters in Arizona and 88 percent nationally say they are following the 2004 presidential race at least somewhat closely (64% “very closely” in Arizona, compared to 59% nationally).
- More than four in five older voters both in Arizona (84%) and nationally (82%) say they have definitely decided how they will vote in November; 16 percent in Arizona and 18 percent nationally say they have not yet decided. Compared to decided voters, older undecided voters are disproportionately female, lower income, less educated, less politically engaged, and more likely to be Independents.

The focus of this series of surveys is on the electoral process and the debates, not on the campaigns generally and on the candidates.

- 77 percent of older voters in Arizona and 73 percent nationally, say they watched at least one of the presidential/vice-presidential debates in 2000; more than eight in 10 older voters in Arizona (85%) and 83% nationally say they are at least somewhat likely to watch the town hall debate between the presidential candidates in Tempe, Arizona, on October 13, 2004. Seventy-percent in Arizona say they are “very likely” to watch the last presidential debate in Tempe, compared to 62 percent nationally.
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of older voters in Arizona and nationally (74%) say the debates are at least somewhat important in the election of the president (35% of older Arizonans say they are very important, compared to 34% nationally).

Which way in the country heading? A majority of older voters (53% in Arizona and 52% nationally) believe things in this country have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track; 37 percent of Arizona voters (and 36% nationally) believe things in this country are going in the right direction today.

Voting orientations: issues, candidate qualities, or party? A majority of older voters both in Arizona (58%) and nationally (55%) say they vote for a presidential candidate more in terms of positions on one or two key issues, rather than personal qualities of the candidates (29% in Arizona and 32% nationally), or political party (7% in Arizona and 6% nationally).

Which is more important: foreign policy issues or domestic policy issues? One-third of older voters both in Arizona (34%) and nationally (33%) consider domestic issues such as jobs and the economy and health care to be more important than foreign policy issues such as the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism (32% in Arizona, 26% nationally). One-third in Arizona (33%) and 40 percent nationally consider these issues to be equally important.

Issues of greatest importance in voting for president in 2004. There is one top issue on the minds of voters nationally that will affect their vote for president in November: it is the war in Iraq (28%), followed by the economy and jobs (20%) and terrorism/homeland security (12%). In Arizona, the war in Iraq is the leading issue (34%), followed by the economy and jobs (17%) and terrorism and homeland security (11%).

Domestic issues of greatest importance. Survey respondents were also asked the most important domestic issues that they want to see addressed in the debates by the presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The number one domestic issue for older voters is jobs and the economy, which is equally important in Arizona (65%) and nationally (66%). The second biggest issue for older voters in the debates is health care, which is also an important issue in Arizona (46%) and nationally (50%). The third most important issue for older voters is senior issues (such as Social Security and Medicare), which is important in Arizona (29%) and nationally (26%).

Other domestic issues mentioned are terrorism and homeland security (12% in Arizona and 15% nationally), and education (18% in both Arizona and nationally).

Survey respondents were also asked which one question about domestic issues they would ask the vice-presidential candidates if they had the chance to do so. Responses were widely scattered, but far and away the top topic was jobs and the economy (20% both in Arizona and nationally).

The war in Iraq is an issue for more voters 65 and older than it is for voters 50-64, in Arizona and nationally. Conversely, jobs and the economy is the domestic political issue that is more salient to voters ages 50-64 both in Arizona (69%) and nationally (73%) than it is for voters age 65 or older (61% in Arizona and 60% nationally). Health care is another issue that is more salient for voters ages 50-64 in Arizona (54%) and nationally (57%) than it is for voters ages 65 and up (39% in Arizona and 43% nationally). Senior issues, such as Social Security and Medicare, are more salient nationally for voters ages 65 and up (30%) than it is for voters ages 50-64 (24% nationally). In Arizona, there are no statistically significant differences between those ages 50-64 (27%) and those ages 65 and older (30%) in the saliency of senior issues.

Partisanship.

Our survey findings confirm the divisive nature of this presidential election. There are sharp partisan differences (see Table, below):

- Nationally, Republicans see the country as heading in the right direction (68%); Democrats (79%) and Independents (54%) see the country as seriously having gotten off on the wrong track. In Arizona, the partisan differences are also sharp: More Republicans (67%) see the country as heading in the right direction; Democrats (84%) and Independents (64%) see the country as seriously having gotten off on the wrong track.
- More Republicans (42% both in Arizona and nationally) say they will vote for president this year more in terms of the candidates' personal qualities than will Democrats (17% in Arizona and 19% nationally) and Independents (25% in Arizona and 31% nationally). More Democrats (67% in Arizona and 62% nationally) and Independents (67% in Arizona and 60% nationally) than Republicans (43% in Arizona and 44% nationally) say they will cast their presidential vote based on positions on one or two key issues.
- More Republicans (48% in Arizona and 42% nationally) than Democrats (16% in Arizona and 13% nationally) and Independents (30% in Arizona and 24% nationally) say foreign policy issues are more important than domestic policy issues in voting for president this November. More Democrats (46% in Arizona and 42% nationally) and Independents (36% both in Arizona and nationally) than Republicans (22% in Arizona and 21% nationally) say domestic policy issues are more important. Twenty-nine percent of older Republicans in Arizona and 37 percent nationally, and thirty-seven percent of older Arizona Democrats (43% nationally) and Independents (32% in Arizona and 40% nationally), say these two types of issues are equally important.

Methodology

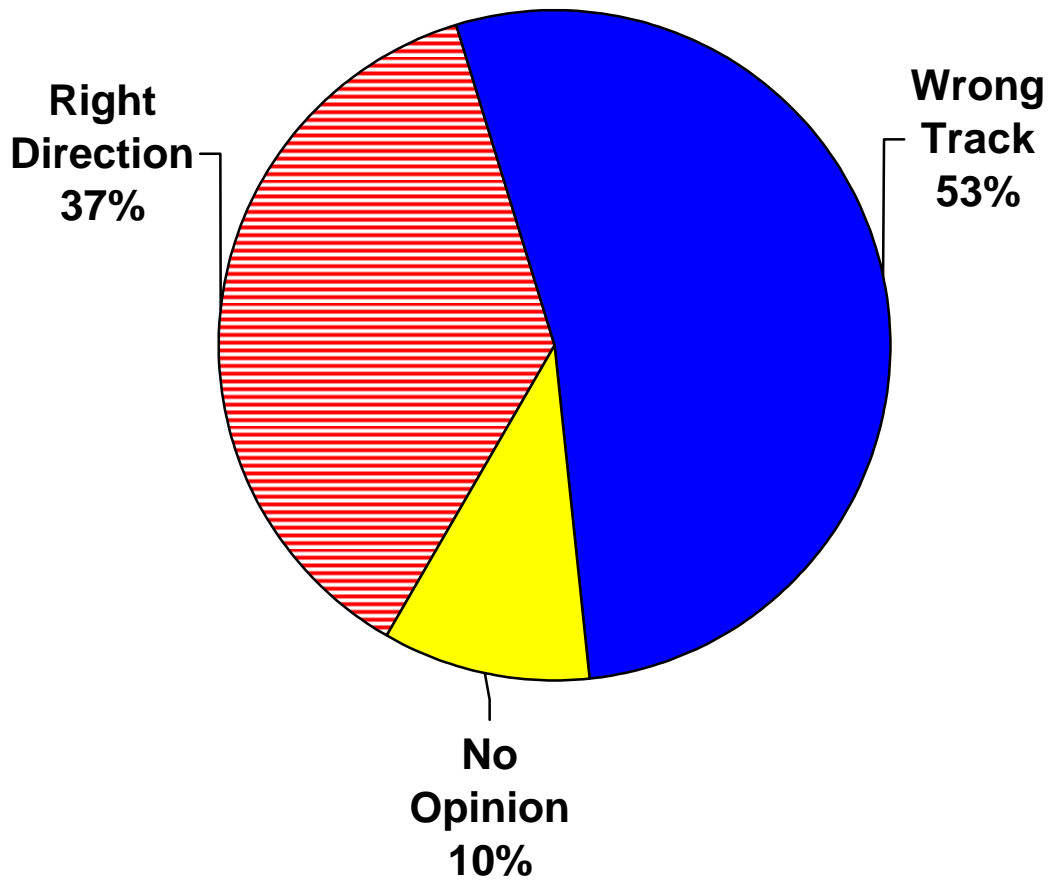
AARP commissioned Woelfel Research, Inc., a national survey research firm, to conduct a random digit dial (RDD) telephone survey of registered voters, age 50+ nationally (n=1,003) and a separate survey of 500 registered voters ages 50+ in the state of Arizona. Interviews in the national survey were conducted between October 2-8, 2004, and the Arizona survey was conducted over the same time period. The national survey has a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would fall in a range of 3 percentage points of what would have been obtained if every person 50+ in the U.S. had been surveyed. The Arizona survey has a sampling error rate of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

For presentation purposes, percentage points have been rounded off to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages in a given table column may total slightly higher or lower than 100%. For questions that permit multiple responses, columns may total to significantly more than 100%, depending on the number of different responses offered by each respondent. Similarly, when only selected responses are shown, percentages may total less than 100%.

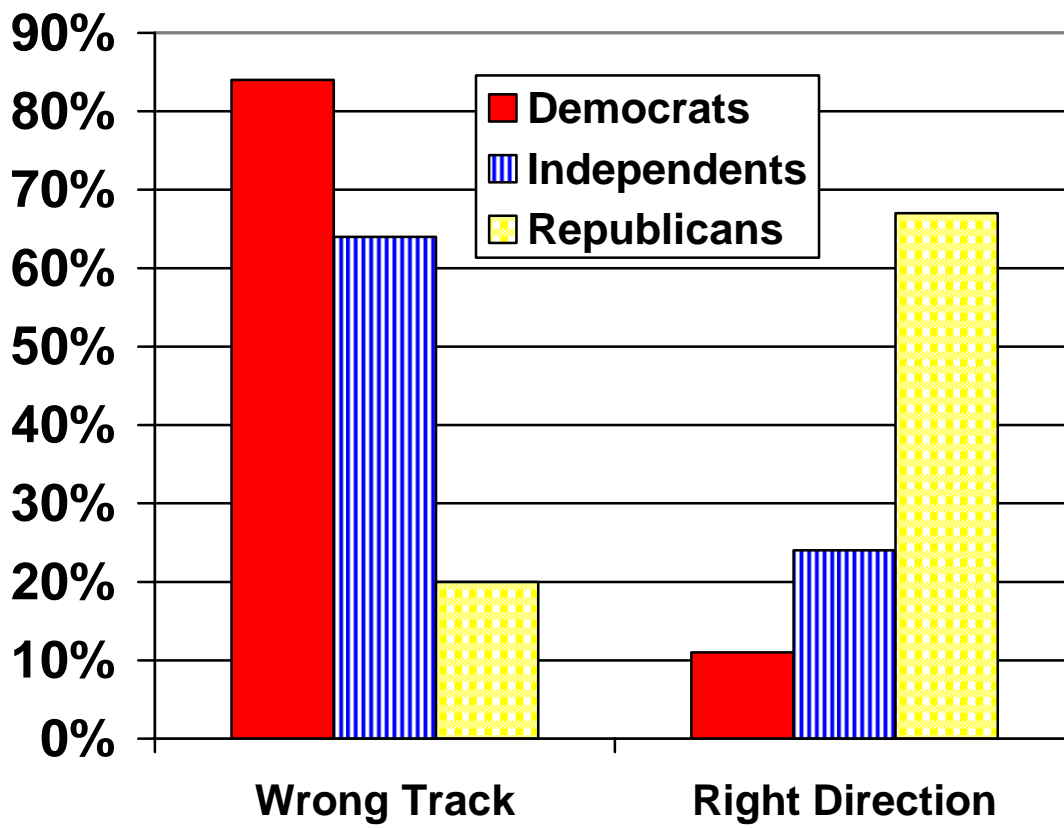
**Partisan Differences in Responses to Key Issues
(Arizona data)**

	Party ID			
	Rep	Dem	Ind	Total
Country heading in: Right Direction	67%	11%	24%	37%
Wrong Track	20%	84%	64%	53%
Don't know	14%	5%	12%	10%
<hr/>				
Vote in terms of: Candidates personal qualities	42%	17%	25%	29%
Position on one or two key issues	43%	67%	67%	54%
Political party	9%	9%	2%	7%
<hr/>				
Foreign policy issues more important	48%	16%	20%	32%
Domestic policy issues more important	22%	46%	36%	34%
Both foreign and domestic policy issues equally	29%	37%	32%	33%
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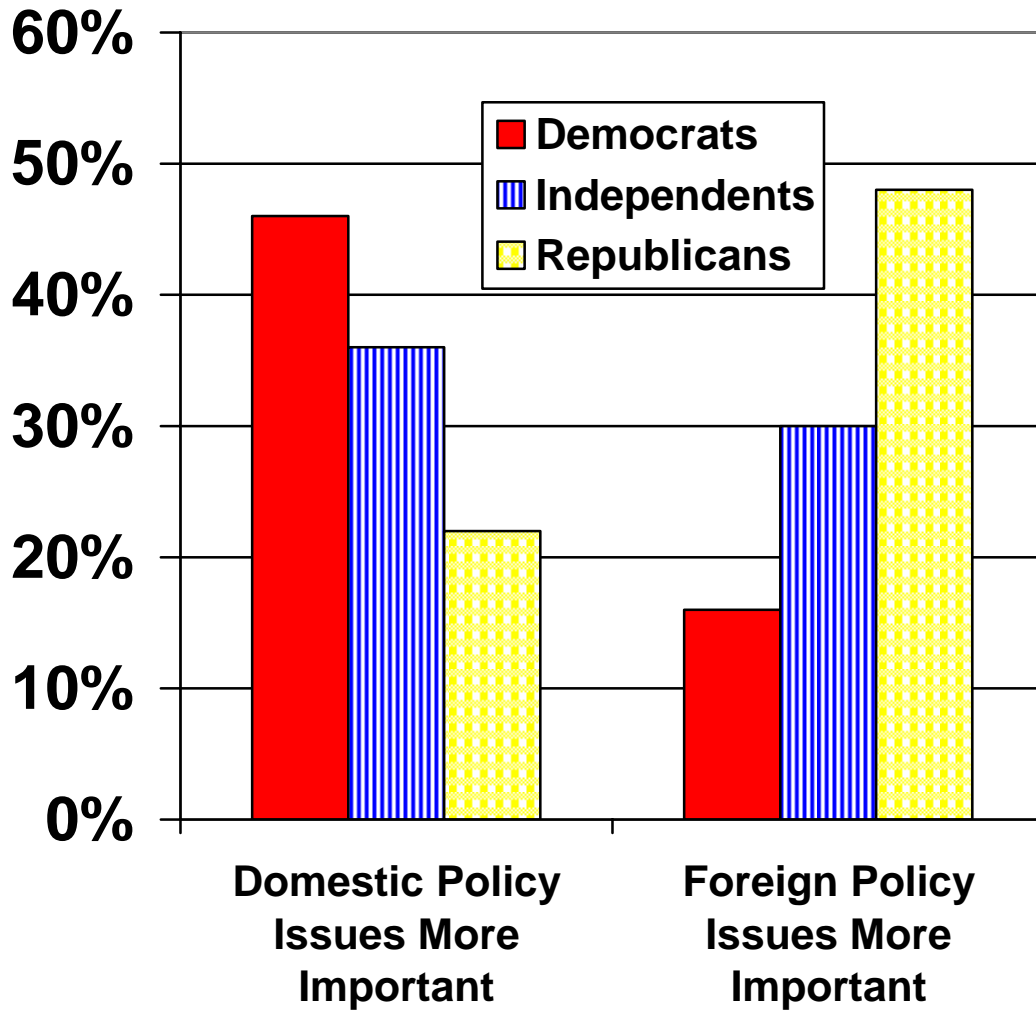
**Direction Country is Headed
(Arizona data)**



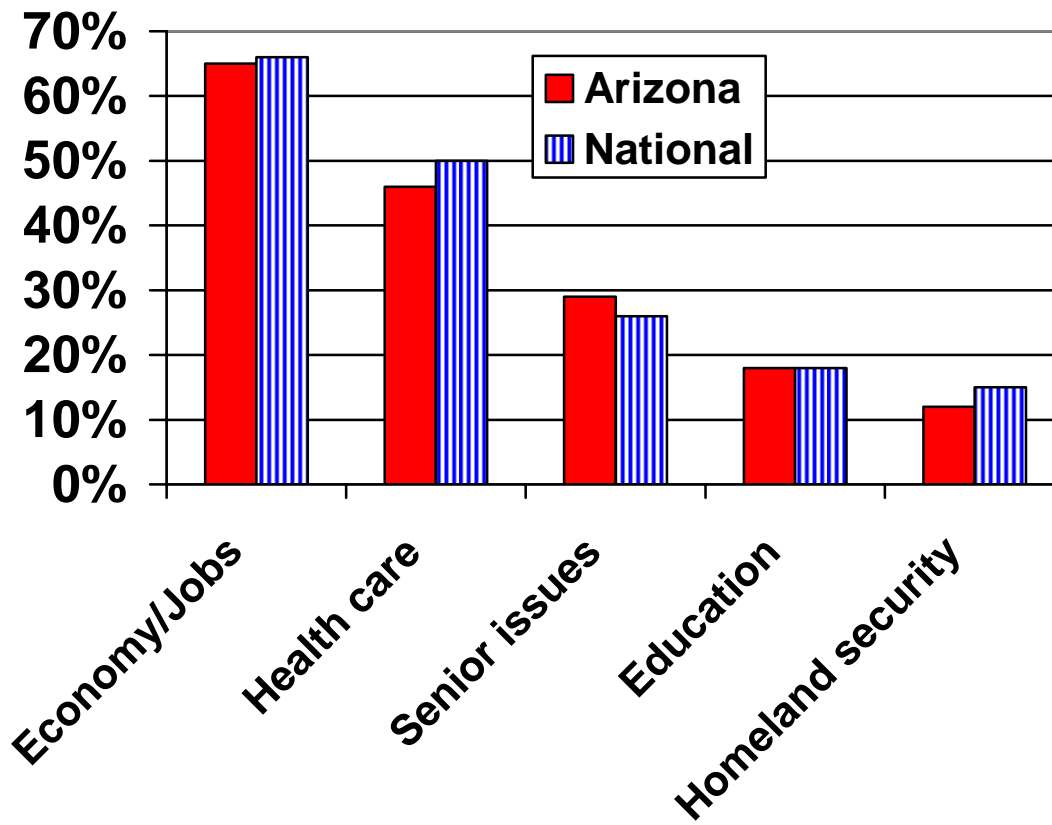
**Direction the Country is headed by Party Identification
(Arizona data)**



**The Relative Importance of Domestic Policy Issues
and Foreign Policy Issues by Party Identification
(Arizona data)**



Most Important Domestic Issues Candidates Should Address



Questionnaire for the Pre-Debate Arizona and National Surveys

1. Do you feel things in this country are going in the right direction today or do you feel that things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?

Arizona	National	
37%	36%	Right direction
53%	52%	Wrong track
10%	11%	(DO NOT READ) Don't know
0	1%	(DO NOT READ) Refused

2. Are you registered to vote at your current address?

100%	Yes	CONTINUE
--	No	TERMINATE

3. I'd like you to rate the chances that you will vote in the presidential election in November: Are you absolutely certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50 or less than that?

Arizona	National		
95%	93%	Certain to vote	CONTINUE
2%	4%	Probably vote	CONTINUE
2%	3%	Chances 50/50	CONTINUE
1%	--	Less than 50/50	CONTINUE
0	--	Don't think will vote (vol.)	TERMINATE

4. Did you vote in the 2000 presidential election?

Arizona	National	
92%	94%	Yes
8%	6%	No
--	--	Don't know

5. Did you watch any of the presidential/vice presidential debates in 2000?

Arizona	National		
77%	73%	Yes	CONTINUE
16%	17%	No	SKIP TO Q. 6
8%	10%	DK	

5a. Did you watch all of them or just some of them?

Arizona	National	
--	--	None of them
51%	58%	Some of them
43%	37%	All of them
5%	4%	DK

6. How closely are you following the 2004 presidential race -- very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely or not closely at all?

Arizona	National	
64%	58%	Very closely
27%	30%	Somewhat closely
7%	7%	Not too closely
2%	4%	Not closely at all
--	1%	No opinion

7. Have you decided definitely which presidential candidate you will vote for or are you still undecided at this point in the campaign?

Arizona	National	
84%	82%	Definitely decided
16%	18%	Undecided

8. How likely are you to watch the upcoming presidential debate from Tempe, AZ on October 13th? Are you very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

Arizona	National	
70%	62%	Very likely
14%	21%	Somewhat likely
6%	6%	Not too likely
9%	9%	Not at all likely
1%	2%	Don't know

9. All things considered, how important do you think the presidential debates are to the election of the president?

Arizona	National	
35%	34%	Very important
37%	40%	Somewhat important
14%	15%	Not too important
11%	9%	Not at all important
3%	2%	DK

10. What will be the most important political issue in your vote for president this November?

(RECORD VERBATIM. PROBE FOR CLARITY. ACCEPT ONE ONLY)

- 1 Answer given (SPECIFY) _____
- 2 None
- D (DO NOT READ) Don't know
- R (DO NOT READ) Refused

10A. What is more important to you, foreign policy issues, such as the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism, or domestic policy issues, such as jobs and the economy and health care?

Arizona	National	
32%	26%	Foreign policy issues
34%	33%	Domestic policy issues
33%	40%	Both are equally important
2%	1%	No opinion

11. As you may know, the upcoming presidential debate in Tempe on October 13th focuses exclusively on domestic issues. What are the most important domestic issues you want to see addressed by the presidential candidates?

(RECORD VERBATIM. PROBE FOR CLARITY. ACCEPT UP TO 3; ask and code as the most important, the next most important, and the third most important?)

Arizona	National	
1%	1%	Civil liberties
18%	18%	Education
46%	50%	Health care
12%	15%	Homeland security
1%	1%	Importation of prescription drugs from Canada or other countries
--	--	Long term care issues
10%	10%	Medicare/Medicare premium increases
6%	6%	Prescription drug prices
7%	8%	Social issues such as abortion and gay marriage
16%	14%	Social Security
11%	13%	Taxes
65%	66%	The economy and jobs
4%	3%	The environment
6%	6%	The federal government deficit
1%	9%	Other
10%	9%	DK

12. If you could ask just one question of the presidential candidates concerning domestic issues in the upcoming presidential debate in Tempe on October 13th, what would it be?

(RECORD VERBATIM. PROBE FOR CLARITY. ACCEPT ONE ONLY)

13. Which of the following matters most when you vote for a candidate for president this year - the candidate's political party, the candidate's position on key issues, or the personal qualities of the candidate?

Arizona	National	
7%	6%	Political party
58%	55%	Position on one or two key issues (PROBE: Which issues?)
29%	32%	Personal qualities (PROBE: Which qualities?)
2%	1%	None of these (vol.)
5%	5%	Don't know (vol.)

14. Do you think the tone of the presidential candidates' campaigns this year thus far is more positive, more negative, or about the same as presidential candidates' campaigns in the past?

Arizona	National	
8%	9%	More positive
44%	38%	More negative
42%	48%	About the same
5%	5%	DK/Refused

**15. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as...?
(READ LIST. ENTER ONE ONLY)**

Arizona	National	
38%	32%	A Republican
30%	33%	A Democrat
26%	29%	An Independent
3%	3%	(Do not read) Other
1%	1%	(Do not read) Don't know
2%	3%	(Do not read) Refused

(SCRAMBLE CODES 1-3)

**16. Generally speaking, would you characterize your political views as being...?
(READ LIST. ENTER ONE ONLY)**

Arizona	National	
40%	41%	Conservative
42%	41%	Moderate
12%	11%	Liberal
1%	2%	(Do not read) None of the Above
4%	4%	(Do not read) Don't know
--	1%	(Do not read) Refused

Demographic questions:

D1. What is your age as of your last birthday? [RECORD IN YEARS]

Arizona	National	Age
31%	38%	50-59
15%	13%	60-64
27%	28%	65-74
24%	20%	75+
3%	2%	Refused
Avg. age = 66	Avg. age = 65	

D2. What is your marital status? Are you currently....

Arizona	National	
63%	61%	Married,
12%	12%	Divorced,
1%	1%	Separated,
19%	20%	Widowed,
4%	5%	Or have you never been married?
1%	--	Living with partner [DO NOT READ]
--	--	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
2%	1%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

[ASK ONLY IF RESPONDENT IS 50 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER]

D3. Are you [OR YOUR SPOUSE IF MARRIED] a member of A-A-R-P formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons? [IF NOT "MARRIED" ASK, "Are you a member..."]

Arizona	National	
54%	54%	Yes
45%	45%	No
1%	--	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
--	1%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D4. What is the highest level of education you have completed? [READ LIST]

Arizona	National	
5%	7%	Less than high school
18%	28%	High school graduate or equivalent
32%	28%	Some college or technical training beyond high school
23%	19%	College graduate
21%	18%	Or, Post-graduate or professional degree
--	--	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
--	1%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D5. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? Are you currently....[READ LIST]

Arizona	National	
23%	26%	Employed full-time
6%	8%	Employed part-time
59%	52%	Retired and not working
2%	1%	Unemployed and looking for work
4%	5%	Homemaker
4%	5%	Disabled
--	--	Student
2%	2%	Or something else [Specify: _____]
--	--	Don't Know [DO NOT READ]
1%	1%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D6. Would you say that you always vote in presidential elections, usually vote, sometimes vote, rarely vote, or never vote)

Arizona	National	
84%	82%	Always
10%	13%	Usually
3%	4%	Sometimes
1%	1%	Rarely
--	--	Never
--	--	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D7. For statistical purposes only, please stop me when I get to the category that includes your household's income before taxes in 2003. Was it... [READ LIST]

Arizona	National	
4%	5%	Less than \$10,000
10%	10%	\$10,000 but less than \$20,000
11%	12%	\$20,000 but less than \$30,000
11%	12%	\$30,000 but less than \$40,000
10%	10%	\$40,000 but less than \$50,000
14%	14%	\$50,000 but less than \$75,000
6%	7%	\$75,000 but less than \$100,000
11%	9%	\$100,000 or more
2%	4%	Don't know [DO NOT READ]
22%	18%	Refused [DO NOT READ]

D8. Are you Spanish, Latino, or Hispanic?

Arizona	National	
6%	5%	Yes
93%	93%	No
--	--	Don't Know
1%	1%	Refused

D9. Which of the following groups best describes your race? [READ LIST]

Arizona	National	
90%	87%	White
2%	7%	Black or African-American
--	--	Asian
--	--	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
2%	1%	American Indian or Alaska Native
4%	3%	Other
--	--	Don't know
2%	2%	Refused

D10. [RECORD STATE]

D11. What is your gender?

Arizona	National	
46%	45%	Male
54%	55%	Female

D12. Finally, what is your 5-digit zip code?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING! YOUR OPINION COUNTS!