

# AMERICAN VIEWPOINT

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**HART**  
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**AARP**

**2010 Election Survey Results**

**U.S. National**

**Prepared for  
AARP Strategic Issues Research**

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**October 2010**

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# Introduction and Methodology

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AARP commissioned American Viewpoint, Inc. to conduct a series of election surveys in consultation with Hart Research Associates, Inc. Blinded telephone interviewing was conducted with AARP members who are likely voters in the 2010 federal elections. Respondents were selected from random samples of the membership provided by AARP and then screened for likelihood of voting and to confirm AARP membership. Eight surveys were conducted between September 9 and 21 including a national survey with an Hispanic oversample and seven statewide surveys as follows:

<b>Survey Population</b>	<b>Field Dates</b>
<b>U.S. National, n=1,000 with an oversample of n=250 Hispanic voters</b>	<b>9/9-13/2010</b>
Ohio Statewide, n=500	9/12-13/2010
Pennsylvania Statewide, n=500	9/12-14/2010
Nevada Statewide, n=500	9/13-15/2010
New Hampshire Statewide, n=500	9/14-15/2010
Colorado Statewide, n=500	9/14-15/2010
Florida Statewide, n=500	9/19-20/2010
Missouri Statewide, n=500	9/20-21/2010

National data were weighted to sex and age within region, and race. Weights were based on population characteristics. All surveys are subject to errors caused by interviewing a sample of persons rather than the entire population. At 95 percent confidence, the margin of error for a simple random sample of n=1,000 is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points; for n=500,  $\pm 4.4$ ; and for n=250,  $\pm 6.2$ . Some scores may not add to 100% due to rounding.

# Executive Summary

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- The AARP members interviewed are highly likely to vote. In all, 88% say they are definitely planning to vote and another 12% are likely to vote.
- Like many Americans, most AARP members say that things in the country have gotten off on the wrong track, are dissatisfied with current economic conditions and are concerned about the deficit. In all, 61% say the country is on the wrong track, 82% are dissatisfied with the current state of the economy, and 91% are concerned about the deficit. Fewer than four in ten (39%) think the national economy will get better over the course of the next year while 24% think it will get worse and 31% think it will stay about the same.
- As a result, they are concerned about the future. In addition to near-term misgivings about the economy, there is a widespread belief that conditions for their children's generation will be more difficult than they have experienced. Indeed, just one in four (26%) is confident that life for their children's generation will be better than it has been for them while 66% say they are not confident.
- At the same time, most are at least somewhat satisfied with their own economic situation. In fact, 70% are satisfied overall (21% very satisfied) while 28% of all members are dissatisfied with their own economic situation. In addition, they are reasonably optimistic about their economic outlook in the near-term. Most (64%) indicate that their personal financial situation will remain about the same in the next year while 18% think it will get better and 15% worse.
- Part of this optimism may stem from their confidence in Social Security. Two-thirds of members (67%) are confident that they will receive full Social Security benefits throughout their retirement while 29% are not confident. The inherent value of Social Security is underscored by the fact virtually all respondents (97%) – regardless of political affiliation, ideology, or demographic characteristics – say that it is important to them that Social Security is there for future generations.
- To that end, 95% of the likely voters interviewed say it is important that a candidate in the 2010 election pledge their commitment to ensuring that Social Security remains a guaranteed life-long benefit.

# Executive Summary

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- With regard to the deficit, AARP members do not support reducing Social Security benefits for future retirees in order to control the deficit. The vast majority (67%) agree more with a hypothetical candidate who says that Social Security is essential for retirement security and that cutting the benefits of future retirees will place an unfair burden on them. Approximately one in four (24%) agree more with a candidate who says that Social Security is one of the biggest federal programs and we can't control the deficit without reducing Social Security benefits for future retirees.
- Furthermore, 60% say that they would be less likely to vote for a candidate who favors reducing the deficit by cutting Social Security benefits for future retirees. Opposition is evenly distributed across the nation and cuts across age, race, income and voter type. Indeed, a majority of Republicans (51%), Democrats (66%) and Ticket-Splitters (61%) would be less likely to vote for a candidate who favors this approach.
- Medicare fraud is perceived to be a major problem that adds substantially to the cost of the program (72%). Members' reasoning for cracking down on Medicare fraud is focused more on maintaining the overall strength of the program than on the impact on their own health or finances. The top reason to crack down on Medicare fraud is to keep Medicare financially strong (51%), although a substantial number say the most important reason to fight fraud is that it will save consumers money (17%), protect seniors' health (13%) or help reduce the deficit (9%).
- Members are very responsive to a number of bipartisan legislative proposals that have been offered in Congress to fight Medicare fraud. Most (90%) say that "significantly increasing penalties for criminals who commit fraud" would be at least somewhat helpful in helping minimize Medicare fraud and identity theft of Medicare patients, including 61% who say it would help to a great extent. Similarly, 88% say that "changing the way Medicare pays claims so that suspicious claims would have to be verified before they are paid" would help; 54% a great deal. Further, 64% say it would be helpful to "prevent Medicare from using a person's Social Security number as their Medicare number" (36% a great deal). Here again, a majority of AARP members (70%) are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports these proposals while just 6% are less likely.

# Executive Summary

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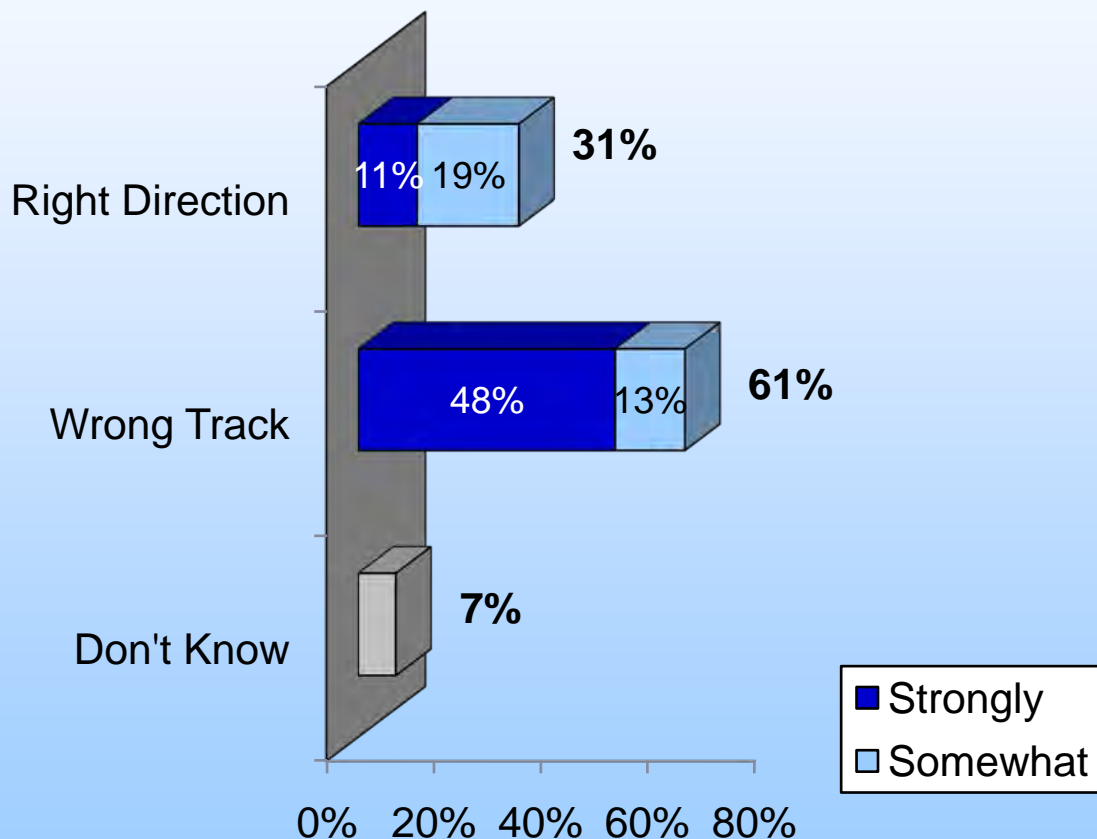
- Members see the threat of annual reduction in reimbursement rates to Medicare doctors as a problem and support a permanent solution. In all, 81% of AARP Medicare beneficiaries say that they are concerned – and 53% are very concerned – that if the 23% cut in payments takes place in December as scheduled, their current doctors will stop accepting Medicare. Future retirees are also concerned; 86% of those not currently enrolled in Medicare say that they are concerned – 58% very – that if Congress fails to fix the doctor reimbursement problem, it will limit their access to doctors when they become Medicare eligible.
- As a result, a majority (59%) would be more likely to vote for a candidate who promises to fix the system to prevent future cuts in reimbursement rates to doctors. Just 10% are less likely.

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# *Political Environment*

**Mood of the Country:** Like other Americans, AARP members are dissatisfied with the direction of the country – 61% say things are off on the wrong track. Majorities of most major subgroups hold this view while just 31% overall say things are going in the right direction. A more positive perspective is found among African Americans (73% right direction), Hispanics (48%), Democrats (58%) and Liberals (60%).

Generally speaking, would you say things in this country are going in the right direction or have they gotten off on the wrong track?

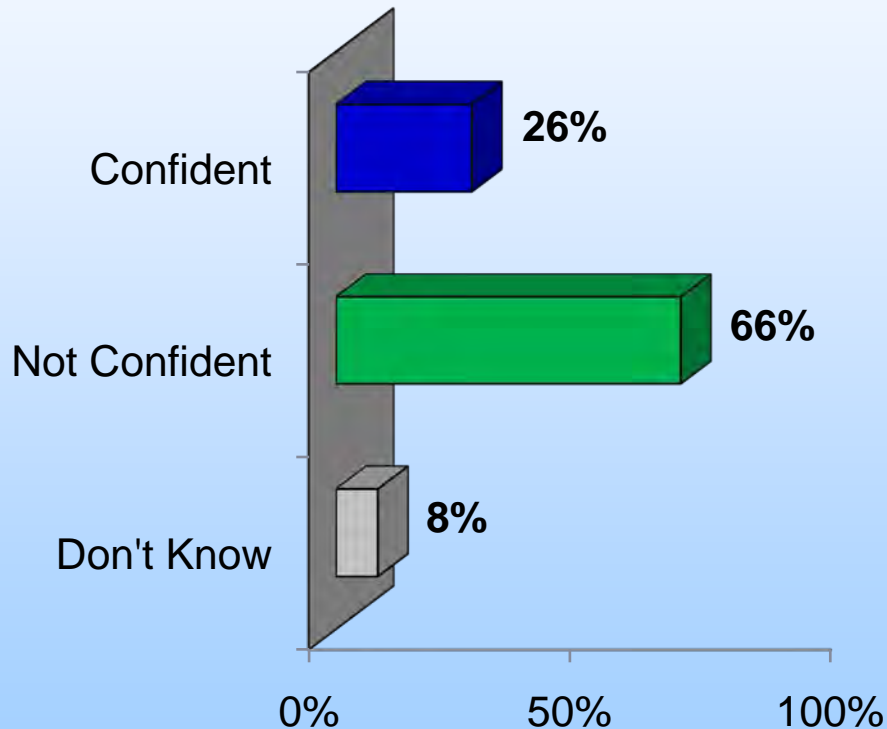


	Right Direction	Wrong Track
Midwest	35%	57%
Northeast	35%	59%
Southeast	30%	62%
Southwest	24%	67%
West	28%	63%
Male 64 & under	28%	64%
Male 65+	31%	60%
Female 64 & under	36%	60%
Female 65+	29%	60%
White	26%	66%
African American	73%	17%
Hispanic	48%	45%
Republican	4%	94%
Ticket Splitter	26%	67%
Democrat	58%	31%
Liberal	60%	27%
Moderate	41%	51%
Conservative	9%	86%



**Life for our Children's Generation:** Most members lack confidence that life will be better for their children's generation than it has been for them. Again, this sentiment is found across most of the population with few exceptions. Indeed, those with higher incomes are no more likely than those with lower incomes to express confidence. However, African-American voters (57% confident) are far more confident about their children's future than are Hispanics (38%) or White voters (24%).

Do you feel confident or not confident that life for our children's generation will be better than it has been for us?



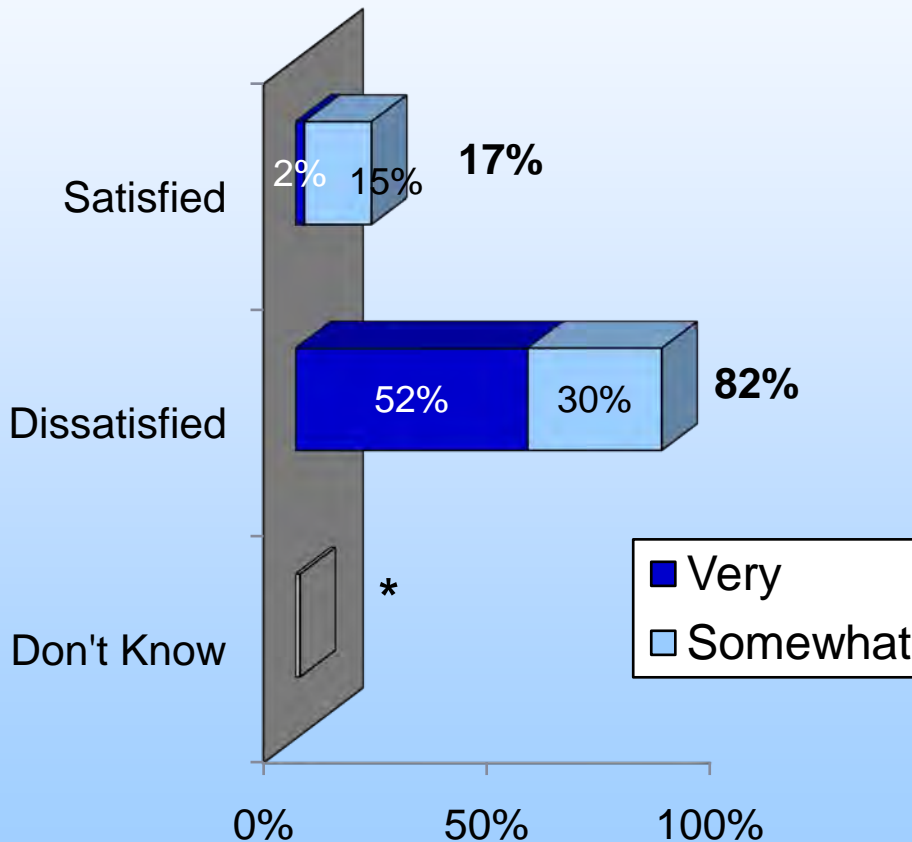
	Confident	Not Confident
Midwest	30%	62%
Northeast	28%	66%
Southeast	28%	65%
Southwest	21%	70%
West	22%	66%
Male 64 & under	24%	69%
Male 65+	23%	66%
Female 64 & under	30%	65%
Female 65+	27%	63%
White	24%	68%
African American	57%	31%
Hispanic	38%	54%
Republican	8%	85%
Ticket Splitter	25%	71%
Democrat	42%	46%
Liberal	40%	47%
Moderate	34%	60%
Conservative	13%	80%
Under \$30K	26%	67%
\$30K-\$49K	29%	61%
\$50-\$74K	24%	67%
\$75K and Over	25%	68%

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# *The Economy*

**Dissatisfaction with the economy:** Most members are dissatisfied with the current state of the U.S. economy.

How satisfied are you with the state of the U.S. economy today – are you: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the state of the economy?



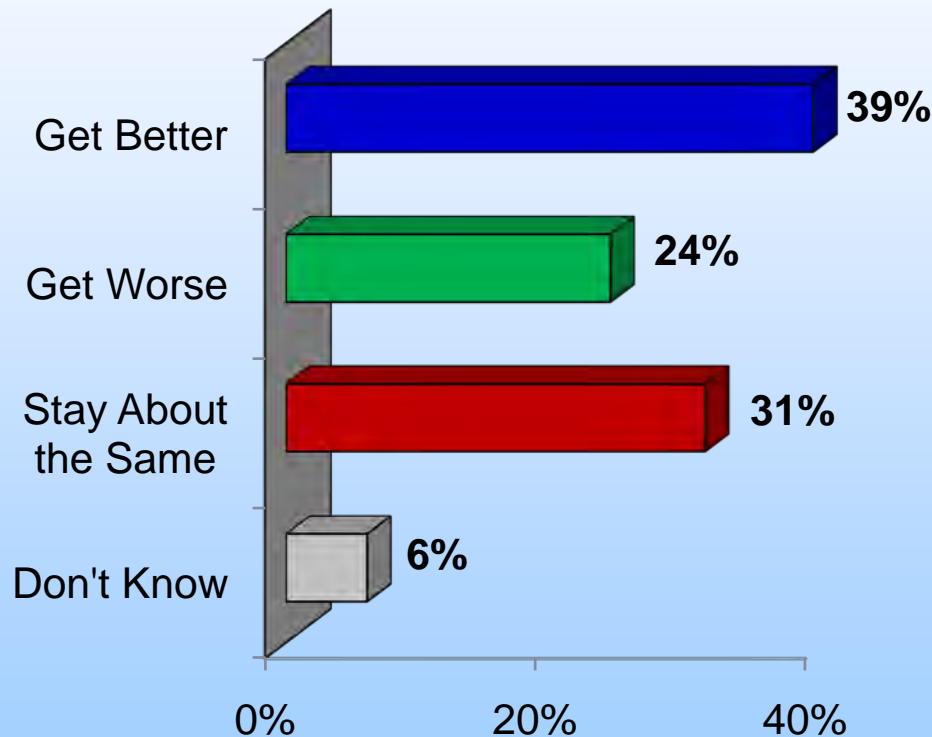
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Midwest	18%	82%
Northeast	16%	82%
Southeast	22%	78%
Southwest	18%	82%
West	12%	88%
Male 64 & under	16%	82%
Male 65+	16%	83%
Female 64 & under	17%	82%
Female 65+	20%	80%
White	15%	84%
African American	40%	60%
Hispanic	29%	70%
Republican	5%	95%
Ticket Splitter	15%	85%
Democrat	30%	69%
Liberal	27%	72%
Moderate	20%	79%
Conservative	10%	90%
Future U.S. Econ.		
Better	29%	71%
Worse	5%	95%
Same	14%	85%
S.S. Through Retire.		
Confident	21%	78%
Not Confident	7%	93%

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**Economic outlook:** 39% think the economy will get better in the next year, 24% that it will get worse, and 31% that it will stay about the same. African-Americans, Democrats, liberals, and those who are confident about Social Security are among the most optimistic about the economic outlook.

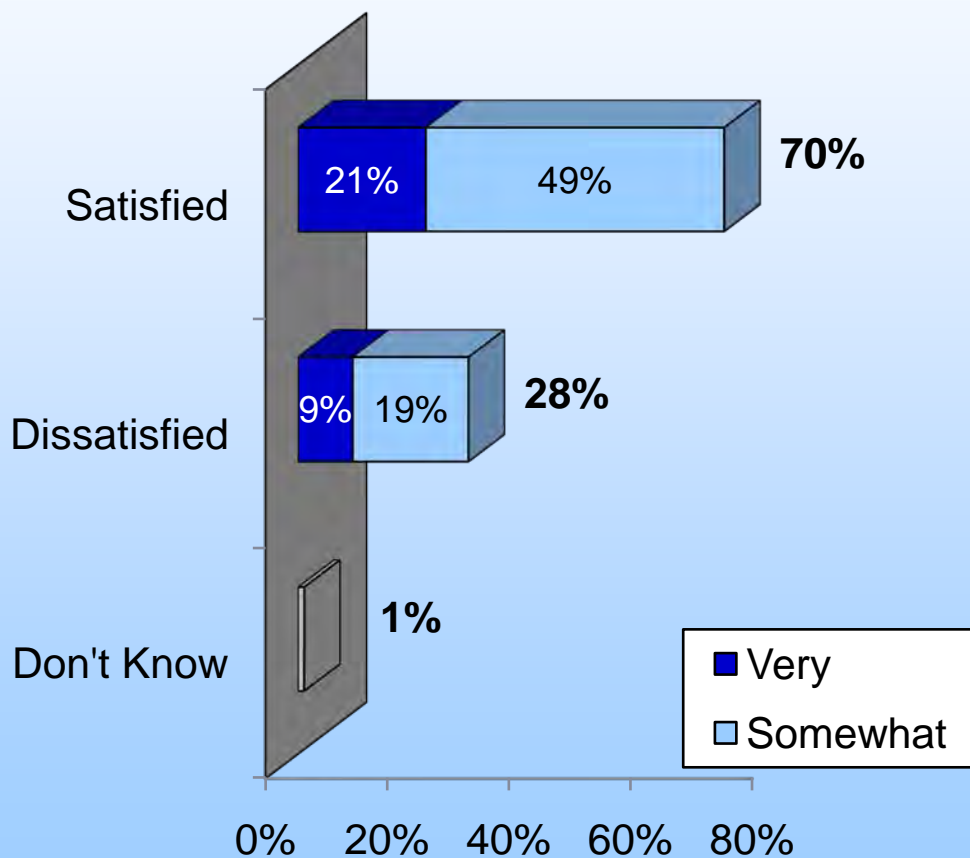
Thinking about a year from now, do you think the national economy will get better, get worse, or stay about the same as it is now?



	Better	Worse	Same
Midwest	44%	19%	32%
Northeast	37%	20%	37%
Southeast	36%	26%	30%
Southwest	39%	30%	25%
West	36%	27%	30%
Male 64 & under	37%	28%	32%
Male 65+	40%	23%	31%
Female 64 & under	38%	28%	31%
Female 65+	40%	18%	30%
White	36%	25%	33%
African American	71%	10%	15%
Hispanic	48%	17%	29%
Republican	16%	43%	33%
Ticket Splitter	35%	22%	37%
Democrat	60%	13%	21%
Liberal	63%	10%	22%
Moderate	45%	18%	32%
Conservative	22%	36%	35%
S.S. Through Retiree.			
Confident	47%	15%	33%
Not Confident	20%	45%	27%

**Satisfaction with personal financial situation:** Most members are at least somewhat satisfied with their own financial situation. Only one subgroup – those who think their own situation will worsen in the next year – have a majority dissatisfied (43% satisfied – 55% dissatisfied). Satisfaction scores increase with income and education. Those who lack confidence in Social Security are less satisfied than those who are confident that they will continue to receive benefits throughout retirement.

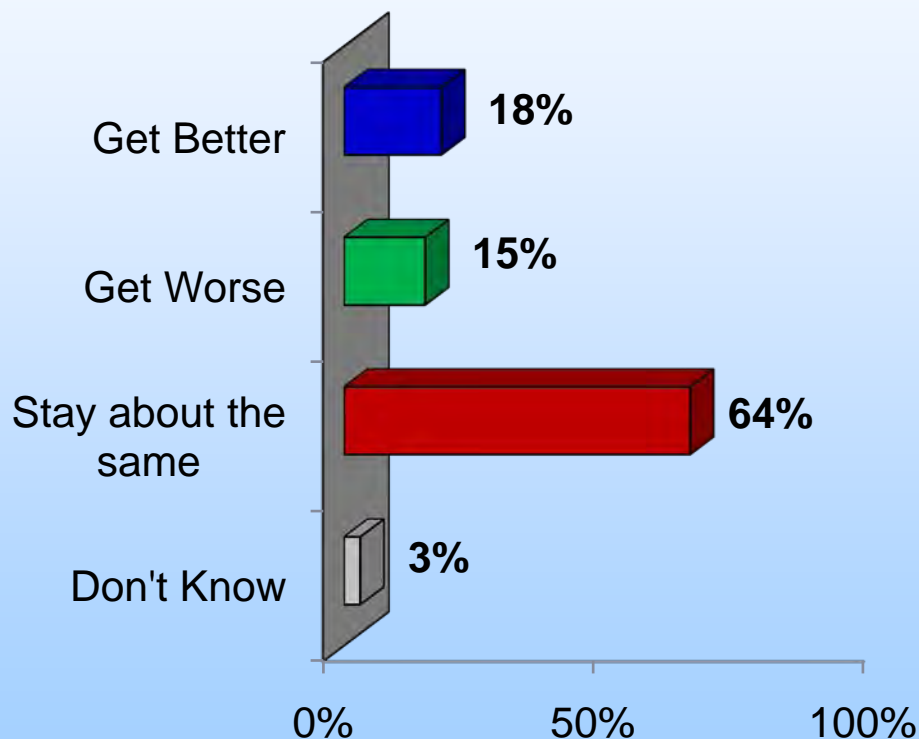
How satisfied are you with the state of your own financial situation today – are you: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with your own financial situation?



	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Midwest	64%	34%
Northeast	71%	27%
Southeast	67%	31%
Southwest	80%	19%
West	70%	29%
Male 64 & under	68%	32%
Male 65+	74%	25%
Female 64 & under	66%	33%
Female 65+	74%	23%
White	70%	28%
African American	73%	24%
Hispanic	66%	33%
Republican	70%	29%
Ticket Splitter	69%	29%
Democrat	74%	26%
Liberal	75%	23%
Moderate	71%	28%
Conservative	69%	29%
Future U.S. Econ.		
Better	78%	19%
Worse	59%	41%
Same	68%	30%
S.S. Through Retire.		
Confident	76%	22%
Not Confident	55%	44%

**Most members indicate that their personal financial situation is stable.** Those who lack confidence in Social Security are more likely to say their situation will worsen over the next year.

Thinking about a year from now, do you think your personal financial situation will get better, get worse, or stay about the same as it is now?



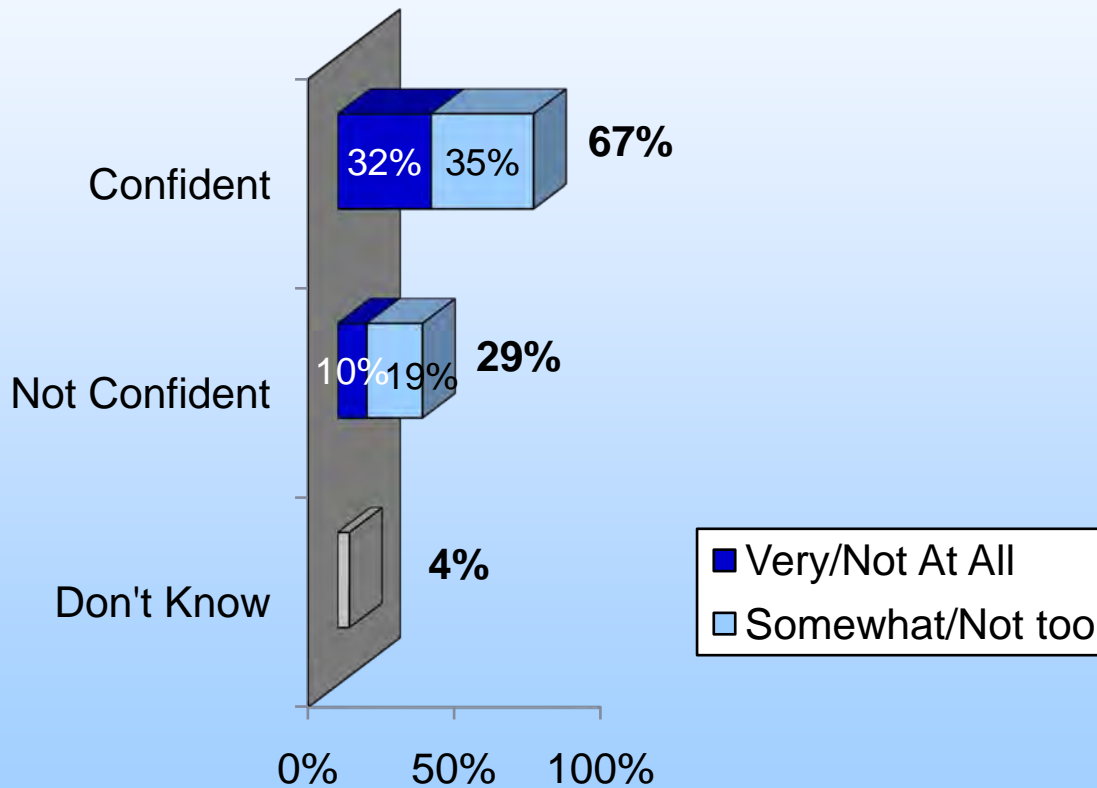
	Better	Worse	Same
Midwest	21%	17%	59%
Northeast	13%	12%	73%
Southeast	22%	17%	57%
Southwest	20%	15%	61%
West	13%	12%	71%
Male 64 & under	27%	12%	60%
Male 65+	15%	17%	64%
Female 64 & under	22%	15%	61%
Female 65+	10%	14%	71%
White	15%	16%	66%
African American	43%	6%	44%
Hispanic	25%	12%	58%
Republican	13%	22%	62%
Ticket Splitter	15%	14%	68%
Democrat	26%	10%	61%
Liberal	24%	10%	65%
Moderate	18%	10%	69%
Conservative	15%	21%	60%
Future U.S. Econ.			
Better	32%	5%	60%
Worse	7%	36%	53%
Same	10%	10%	78%
S.S. Through Retire.			
Confident	21%	9%	68%
Not Confident	12%	30%	54%

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# *Social Security*

**Confidence in Social Security:** Two-thirds of AARP members say they are confident that they will receive full Social Security benefits throughout their retirement. However, just one in three respondents (32%) expresses high confidence. Not surprisingly, younger members are less confident than their older counterparts. Republicans and Ticket-Splitters are somewhat less confident than Democrats.

How confident are you that you will receive full Social Security benefits throughout your retirement?

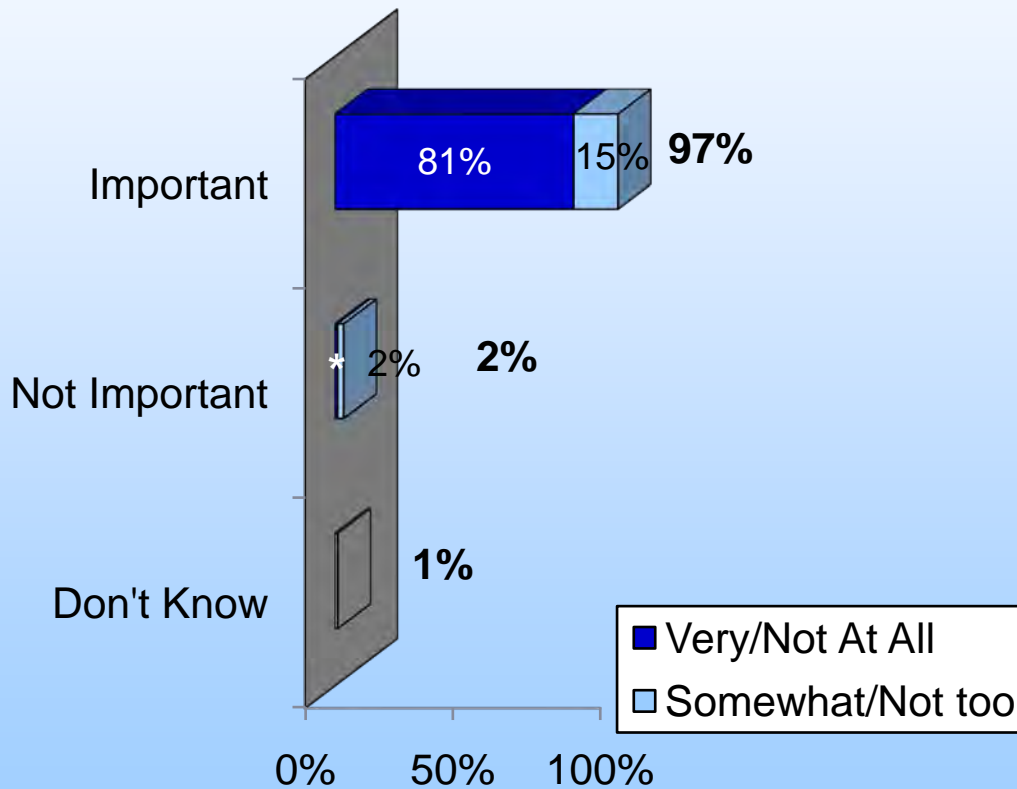


	Confident	Not Confident
Midwest	67%	30%
Northeast	73%	24%
Southeast	65%	31%
Southwest	58%	35%
West	71%	24%
Male 64 & under	59%	37%
Male 65+	76%	18%
Female 64 & under	57%	40%
Female 65+	73%	21%
White	66%	30%
African American	77%	16%
Hispanic	66%	32%
Republican	58%	39%
Ticket-Splitter	65%	32%
Democrat	77%	16%
Liberal	77%	18%
Moderate	72%	24%
Conservative	57%	39%



**The future of Social Security is important to members:** Virtually all members say it is important to them that Social Security is there for future generations.

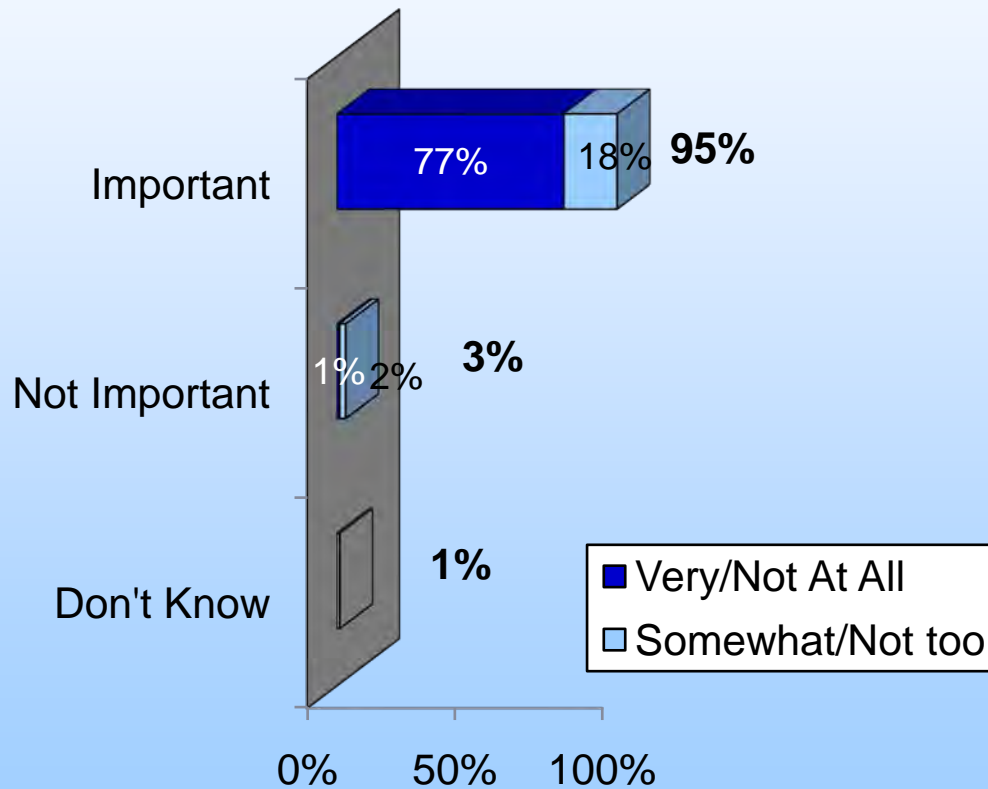
How important is it to you that Social Security is there for future generations?



	Total Important	Very Important	Not Important
Midwest	97%	78%	3%
Northeast	97%	82%	1%
Southeast	98%	84%	2%
Southwest	96%	87%	4%
West	96%	78%	2%
Male 64 & under	97%	76%	3%
Male 65+	96%	80%	4%
Female 64 & under	96%	80%	2%
Female 65+	98%	88%	1%
White	97%	81%	3%
African American	99%	84%	1%
Hispanic	96%	90%	2%
Republican	94%	71%	4%
Ticket Splitter	97%	81%	2%
Democrat	99%	90%	1%
Liberal	98%	85%	2%
Moderate	97%	82%	2%
Conservative	96%	79%	3%

**AARP members want candidates to pledge their commitment to Social Security:** Across the population, there is a nearly universal sentiment that it is important for candidates in the 2010 election to voice their commitment to ensuring that Social Security remains a guaranteed life-long benefit.

In the 2010 election campaign, how important is it to you that a candidate pledge their commitment to ensuring that Social Security remains a guaranteed life-long benefit.



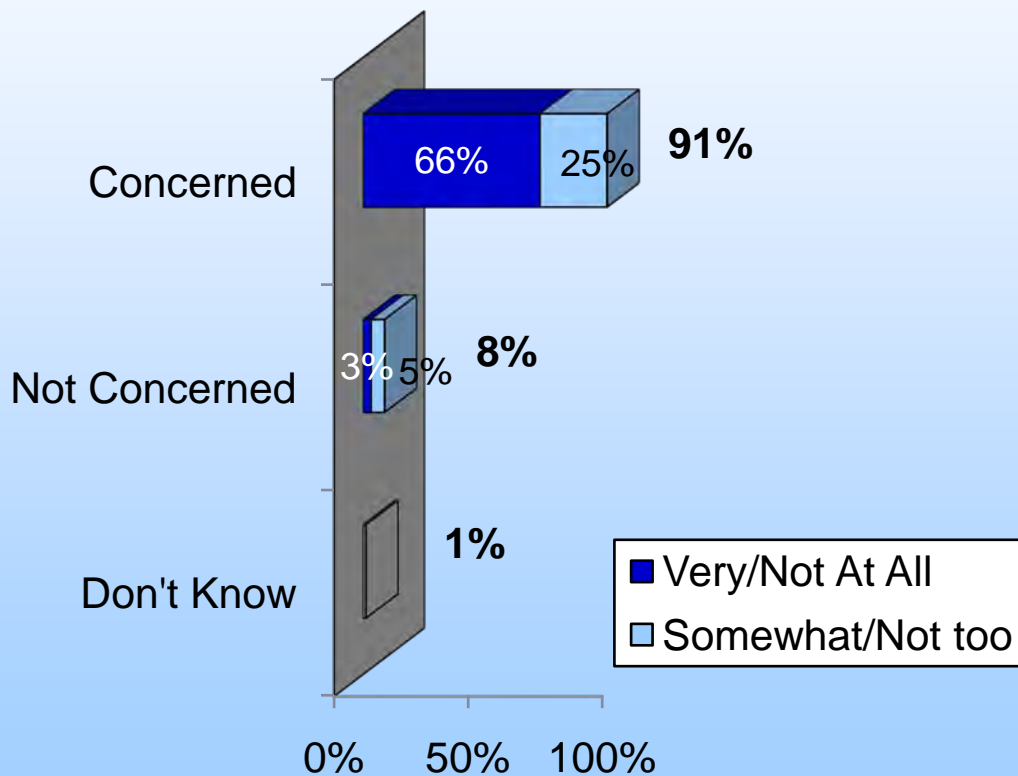
	Total Important	Very Important	Not Important
Midwest	96%	76%	2%
Northeast	96%	80%	3%
Southeast	95%	80%	5%
Southwest	96%	79%	2%
West	94%	71%	5%
Male 64 & under	92%	67%	6%
Male 65+	94%	77%	4%
Female 64 & under	96%	76%	2%
Female 65+	99%	87%	1%
White	96%	77%	3%
African American	97%	86%	1%
Hispanic	98%	87%	1%
Republican	94%	66%	4%
Ticket Splitter	95%	78%	4%
Democrat	98%	85%	1%
Liberal	97%	83%	1%
Moderate	96%	79%	3%
Conservative	94%	73%	4%

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# *The Deficit*

**Concern about the deficit runs high across the population:** 91% are concerned about the deficit and 66% are very concerned. Even 85% of Democrats say they are concerned about the deficit, including 52% who are very concerned.

How concerned are you about the national deficit?



	Total Concerned	Very Concerned	Not Concerned
Midwest	90%	64%	8%
Northeast	89%	64%	9%
Southeast	92%	67%	7%
Southwest	93%	74%	7%
West	92%	64%	8%
Male 64 & under	89%	64%	10%
Male 65+	89%	66%	10%
Female 64 & under	93%	65%	6%
Female 65+	93%	70%	6%
White	92%	68%	7%
African American	85%	55%	12%
Hispanic	90%	64%	8%
Republican	98%	87%	2%
Ticket Splitter	93%	67%	7%
Democrat	85%	52%	13%
Liberal	81%	47%	17%
Moderate	89%	58%	10%
Conservative	97%	82%	2%

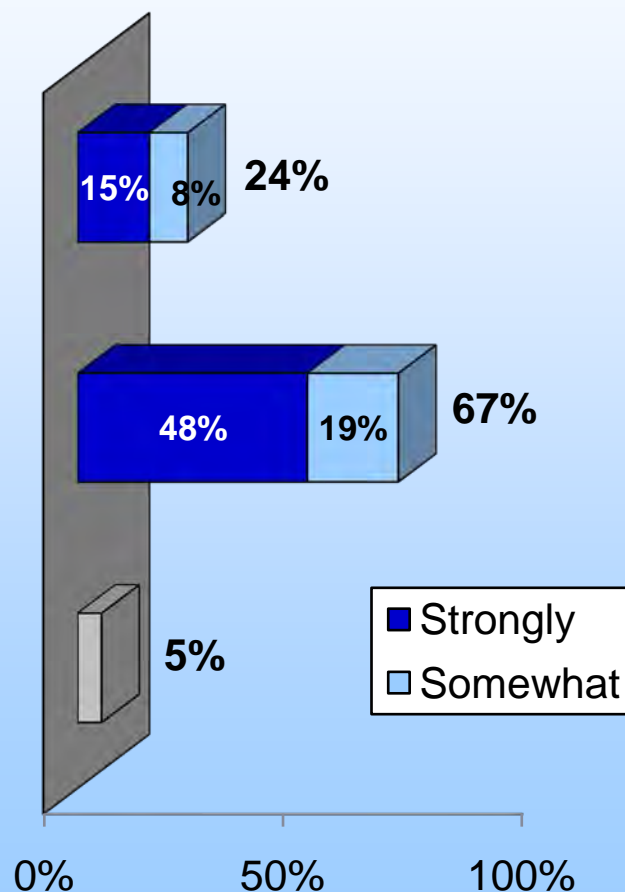
**Two out of three AARP members reject the idea of reducing Social Security benefits for future retirees in order to control the deficit:** Only one in four would agree more with a candidate who says we can't control the deficit without reducing the Social Security benefits of future retirees.

Which of these two candidates do you agree with more?

Says Social Security is one of the biggest federal programs and we can't control the deficit without reducing Social Security benefits for future retirees.

Says Social Security is essential for the retirement security of senior citizens and cutting the benefits of future retirees will place an unfair burden on them.

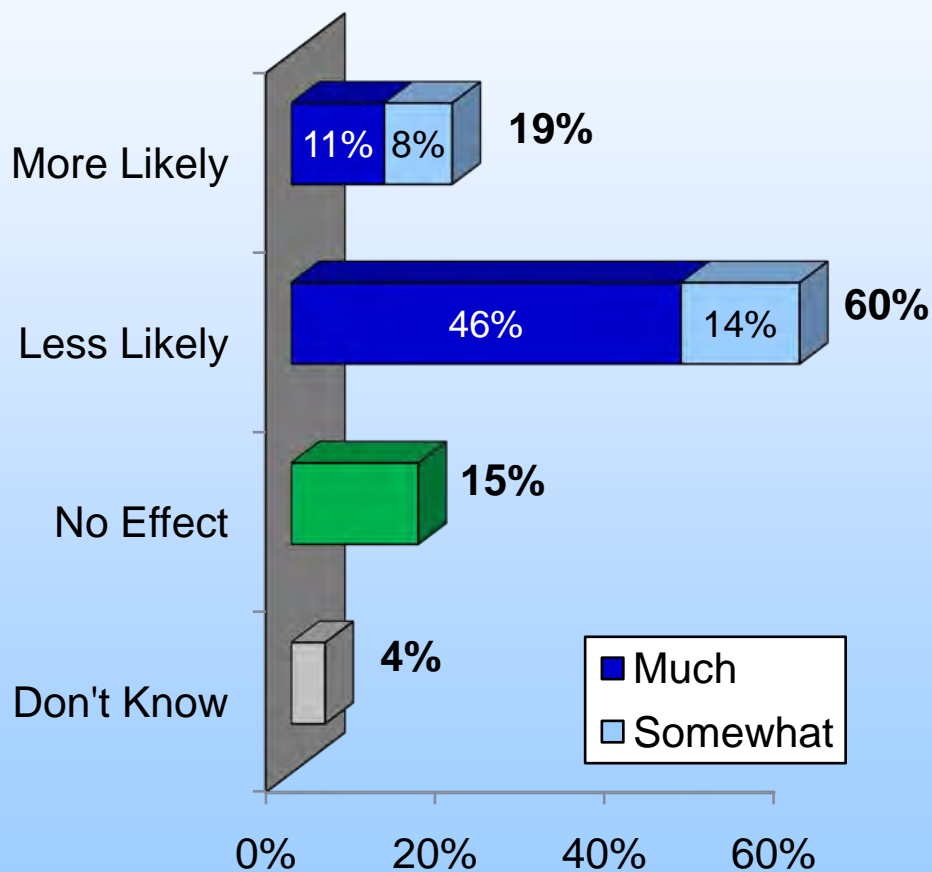
Don't Know



	Cuts Needed	Unfair Burden
Midwest	22%	68%
Northeast	24%	68%
Southeast	25%	65%
Southwest	29%	64%
West	19%	70%
Male 64 & under	27%	65%
Male 65+	26%	62%
Female 64 & under	27%	69%
Female 65+	17%	71%
White	24%	66%
African American	22%	70%
Hispanic	18%	72%
Republican	30%	60%
Ticket Splitter	22%	70%
Democrat	23%	68%
Liberal	25%	68%
Moderate	22%	69%
Conservative	25%	65%

**AARP members would be less likely to vote for a candidate who would reduce the deficit by cutting Social Security benefits for future retirees.** 60% – including a majority of Republicans, Ticket-Splitters and Democrats – would be less likely to vote for a candidate who favors this approach.

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for a candidate who favors reducing the deficit by cutting Social Security benefits for future retirees, or would it not affect your vote either way?



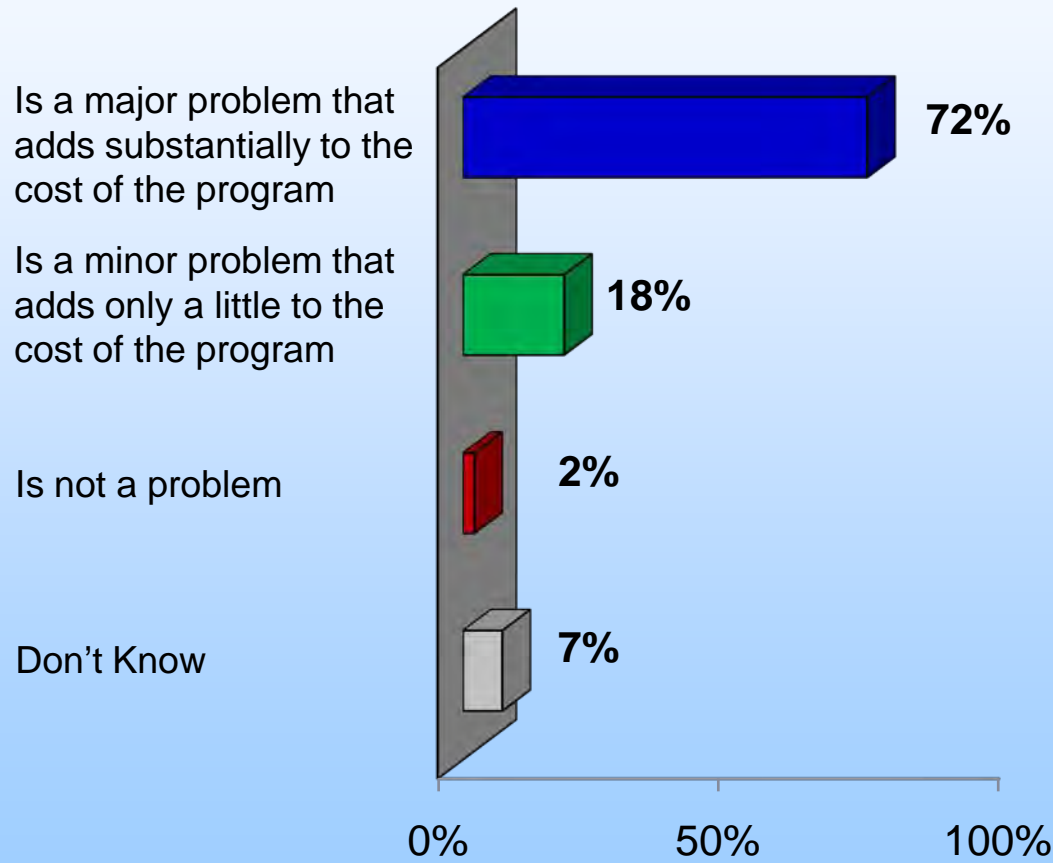
	More Likely	Less Likely	No Effect
Midwest	20%	56%	17%
Northeast	19%	61%	13%
Southeast	16%	61%	15%
Southwest	19%	61%	14%
West	20%	59%	17%
Male 64 & under	18%	56%	19%
Male 65+	20%	59%	15%
Female 64 & under	17%	66%	15%
Female 65+	19%	58%	11%
White	18%	60%	15%
African American	18%	58%	18%
Hispanic	19%	63%	10%
Republican	23%	51%	19%
Ticket Splitter	17%	61%	16%
Democrat	17%	66%	11%
Liberal	19%	66%	11%
Moderate	17%	63%	17%
Conservative	21%	55%	16%

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# *Reducing Medicare Fraud*

**Medicare fraud is seen as a major problem that adds substantially to the cost of the program.** In all, 72% say fraud is a major problem, 18% a minor problem, and 2% that it is not a problem. Majorities of all major subgroups call fraud a major problem.

Would you say that Medicare fraud:

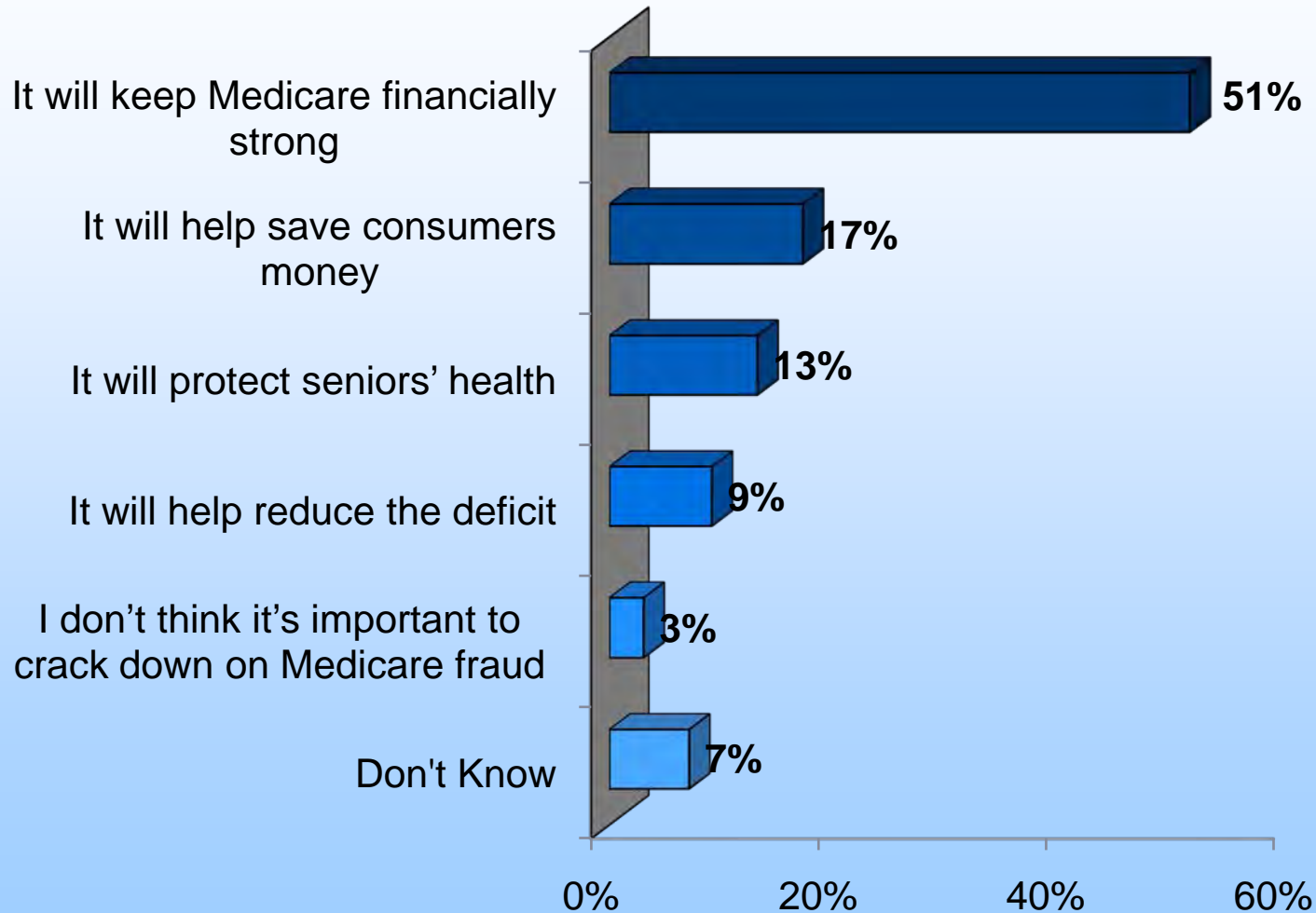


	Major Problem	Minor Problem
Midwest	75%	15%
Northeast	71%	23%
Southeast	75%	15%
Southwest	75%	17%
West	65%	22%
Male 64 & under	70%	22%
Male 65+	79%	15%
Female 64 & under	68%	24%
Female 65+	71%	14%
White	72%	19%
African American	74%	16%
Hispanic	77%	14%
Republican	76%	16%
Ticket Splitter	74%	19%
Democrat	67%	21%
Liberal	62%	25%
Moderate	72%	19%
Conservative	77%	16%



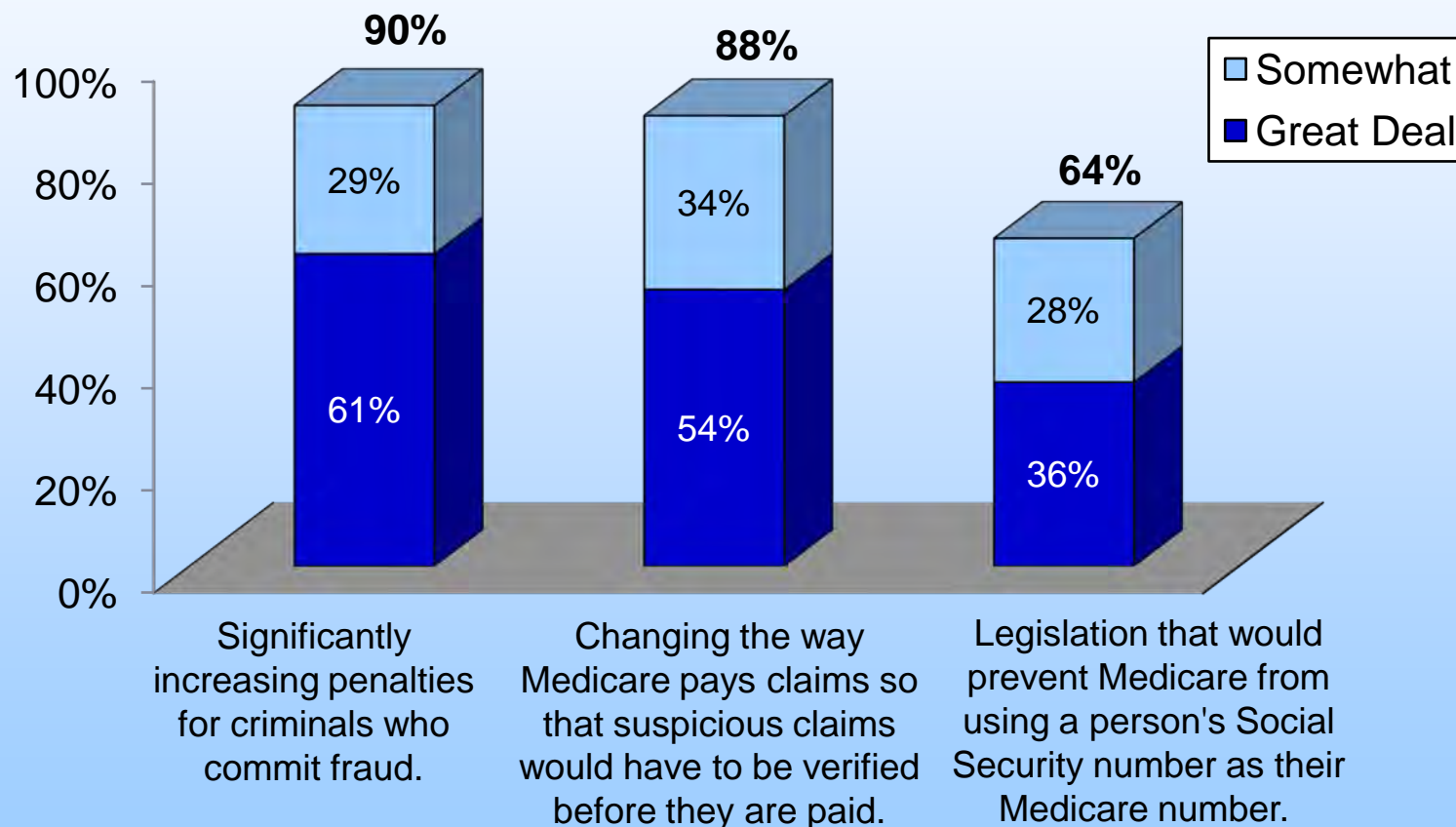
**Cracking down on Medicare Fraud:** A majority of AARP members say the most important reason to crack down on fraud is to keep Medicare financially strong. By age and sex, only men under age 65 fall below a majority (42%) with 24% saying that the most important reason is that it will help save consumers money.

Which do you think is the most important reason to crack down on Medicare fraud?



**Members are very responsive to a number of bipartisan legislative proposals that have been offered in Congress to fight Medicare fraud.**

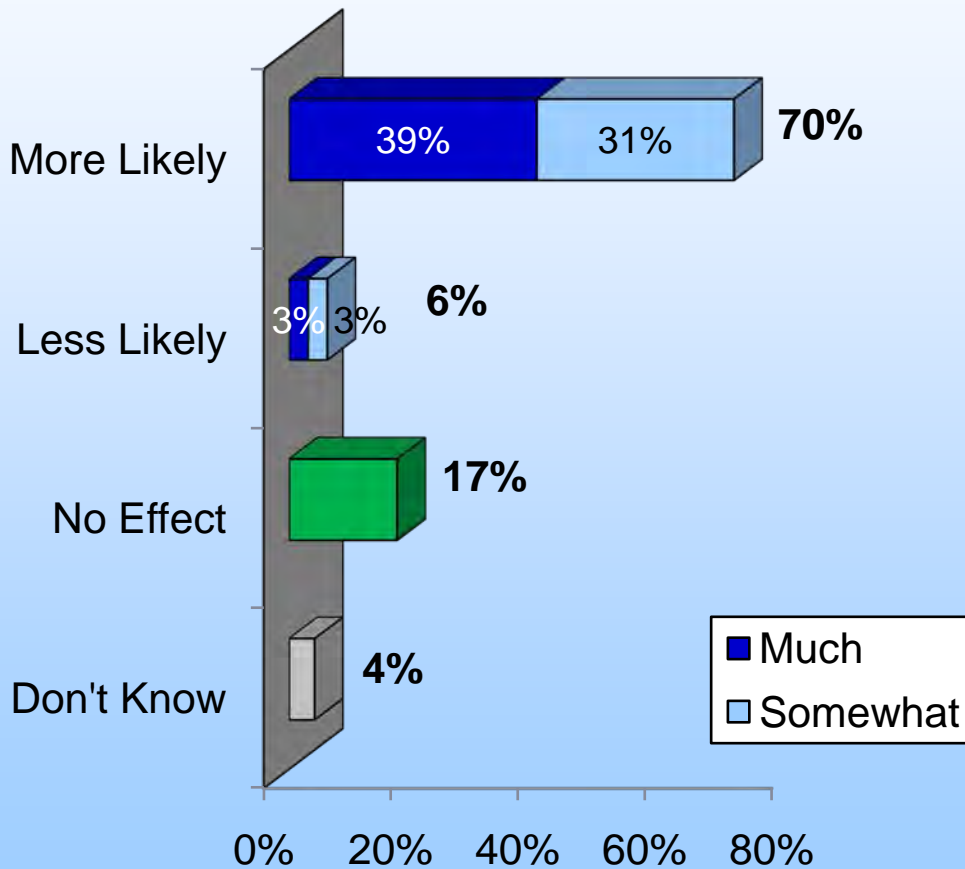
Now I'm going to read several legislative proposals that have been made by members of Congress and ask to what extent you think each proposal would help minimize Medicare fraud and identity theft of Medicare patients?



**AARP members are more likely to vote for candidates who support these legislative proposals.**

Seven in 10 AARP members are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports the legislative proposals to minimize Medicare fraud and identity theft. Candidate support is strong regardless of party identification, region, age, sex, or income.

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for a candidate who supports these proposals or would it not affect your vote either way?



	More Likely	Less Likely	No Effect
Midwest	71%	6%	18%
Northeast	67%	6%	18%
Southeast	67%	6%	20%
Southwest	75%	8%	10%
West	71%	5%	19%
Male 64 & under	68%	9%	18%
Male 65+	69%	7%	17%
Female 64 & under	75%	3%	17%
Female 65+	70%	6%	16%
White	71%	6%	16%
African American	69%	9%	23%
Hispanic	74%	4%	14%
Republican	73%	3%	17%
Ticket Splitter	72%	6%	15%
Democrat	68%	7%	19%
Liberal	65%	6%	22%
Moderate	72%	5%	18%
Conservative	73%	6%	13%
Under \$30K	70%	11%	11%
\$30K-\$49K	72%	5%	17%
\$50K-\$74K	69%	4%	21%
\$75K and Over	76%	3%	18%

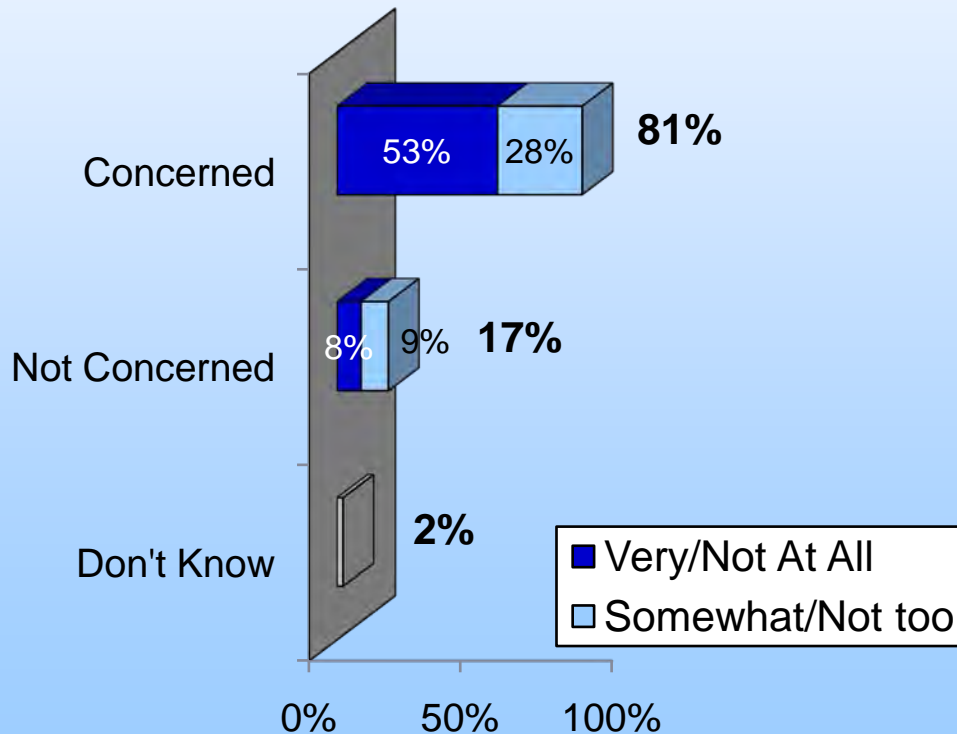
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# *Doc Fix*

**Concern about Medicare reimbursement rates:** Medicare enrollees express a high level of concern that their current doctors will stop accepting Medicare if the scheduled 23% cut goes into effect. Concern is high across the board, particularly so among Republicans (88%), Ticket-Splitters (84%), conservatives (87%) and those who are not confident that they will receive full Social Security benefits (92%).

As you may know, in an effort to control the rate of growth in Medicare spending, current law requires that doctors who treat Medicare patients receive a reduction in reimbursement rates every year. Although Congress has taken action to block the cuts in the past, it has been unable to come up with a permanent solution to the problem. Currently, doctors are scheduled to receive a 23% cut in reimbursement rates starting December 1.

***If the 23 percent payment cut takes effect, how concerned are you that your current doctors will stop accepting Medicare? Are you: (Base=450)***

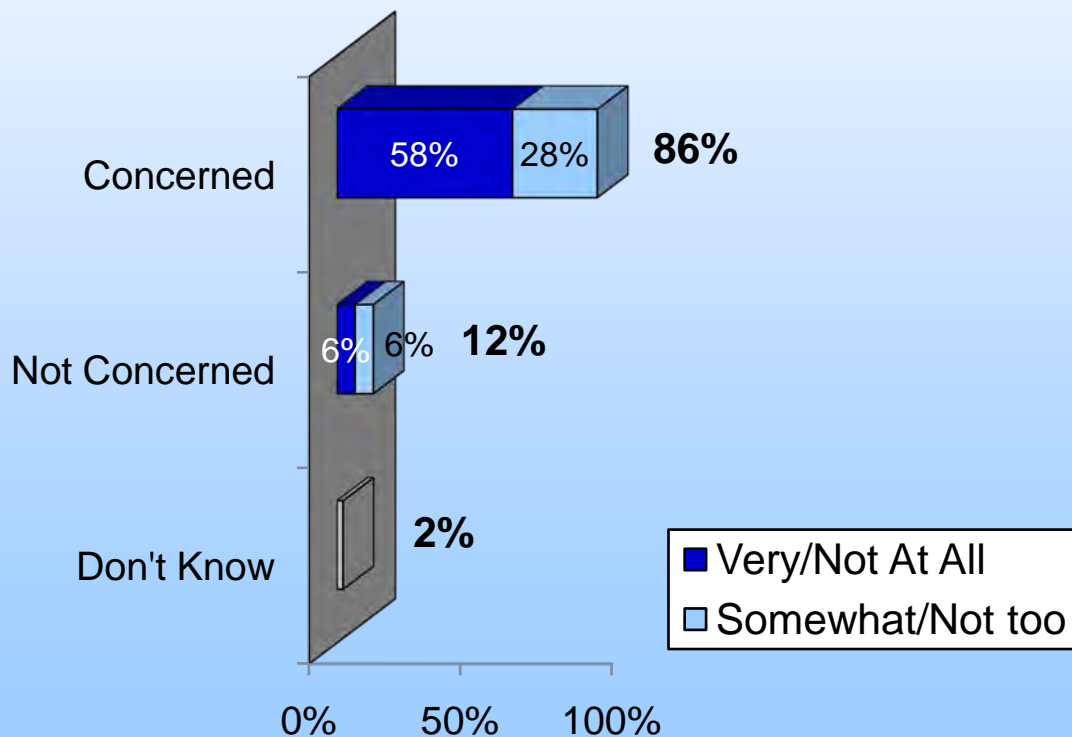


	Total Concerned	Very Concerned	Not Concerned
Midwest	76%	48%	18%
Northeast	82%	51%	17%
Southeast	87%	61%	11%
Southwest	82%	56%	17%
West	78%	48%	22%
Male 65+	81%	52%	18%
Female 65+	80%	51%	17%
Republican	88%	63%	11%
Ticket Splitter	84%	53%	15%
Democrat	72%	46%	24%
Liberal	70%	41%	26%
Moderate	81%	51%	18%
Conservative	87%	60%	12%
S.S. Through Retire.			
Confident	78%	50%	20%
Not Confident	92%	64%	7%

**Concern about Medicare reimbursement rates:** the non-Medicare population is highly concerned that their access to Medicare doctors will be limited in the future if Congress fails to fix the doctor reimbursement problem. Again, scores are high across the population subgroups.

As you may know, in an effort to control the rate of growth in Medicare spending, current law requires that doctors who treat Medicare patients receive a reduction in reimbursement rates every year. Although Congress has taken action to block the cuts in the past, it has been unable to come up with a permanent solution to the problem. Currently, doctors are scheduled to receive a 23% cut in reimbursement rates starting December 1.

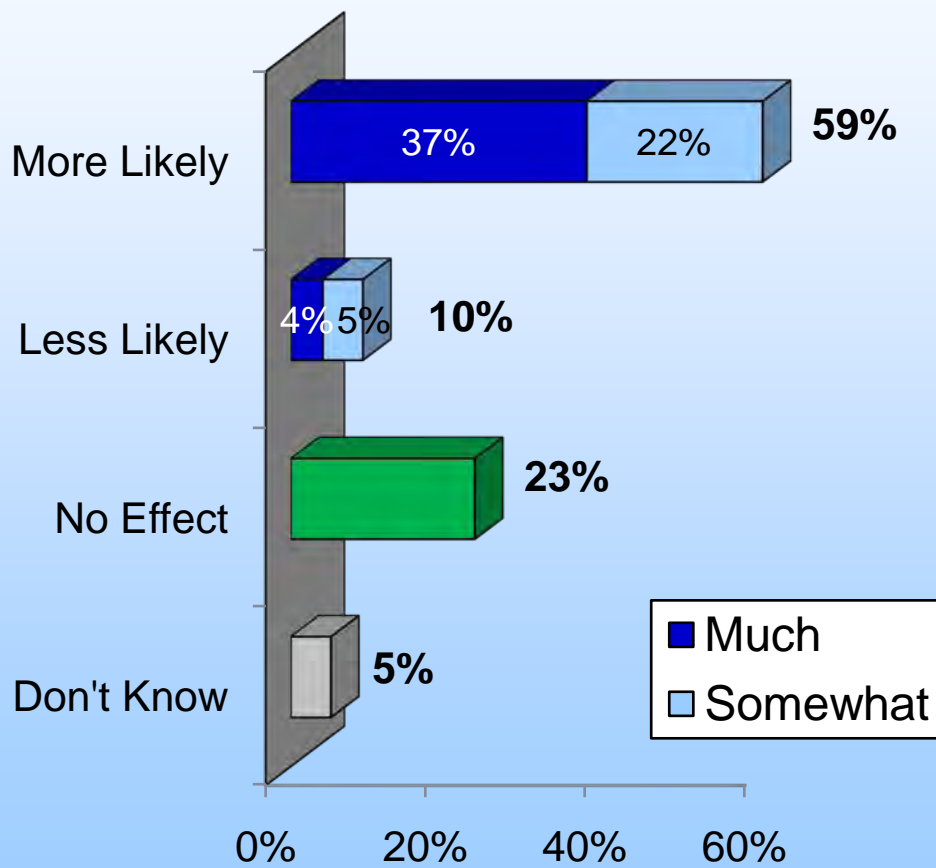
***If Congress fails to fix the doctor reimbursement problem, how concerned are you that it will limit your access to doctors when you become Medicare eligible? (Base=536)***



	Total Concerned	Very Concerned	Not Concerned
Midwest	86%	54%	12%
Northeast	86%	61%	12%
Southeast	87%	58%	12%
Southwest	83%	62%	13%
West	86%	58%	12%
Male 64 & under	85%	54%	15%
Female 64 & under	87%	60%	11%
Republican	83%	61%	15%
Ticket Splitter	87%	62%	12%
Democrat	85%	50%	11%
Liberal	80%	41%	16%
Moderate	86%	57%	12%
Conservative	89%	69%	10%

**AARP members are more likely to vote for a candidate who promises to fix the system to prevent future cuts in Medicare reimbursement rates to doctors.** In all, 59% are more likely and 37% are much more likely to vote for such a candidate. Only 10% are less likely. By voter-type, scores are highest among Republicans and lowest among Democrats. The lower score among Democrats is driven by Democratic men (47% more likely – 18% less likely).

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for a candidate who promises to fix the system to prevent future cuts in reimbursement rates to doctors, or would it not affect your vote either way?



	More Likely	Less Likely	No Effect
Midwest	51%	9%	30%
Northeast	60%	11%	22%
Southeast	61%	8%	21%
Southwest	63%	12%	18%
West	59%	8%	25%
Male 64 & under	55%	9%	29%
Male 65+	57%	12%	24%
Female 64 & under	63%	8%	26%
Female 65+	60%	10%	16%
White	59%	10%	23%
African American	53%	9%	31%
Hispanic	65%	7%	18%
Republican	67%	7%	19%
Ticket Splitter	61%	9%	22%
Democrat	53%	13%	27%
Liberal	51%	12%	27%
Moderate	61%	9%	23%
Conservative	62%	9%	21%

## Summary and Conclusions

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- This survey reveals a political climate born out of the economic crisis and uncertainty of recent years. AARP members are highly dissatisfied with the direction of the country and with the U.S. economy. Fewer than four in 10 are optimistic about the nation's economic prospects over the next year and one in four thinks economic conditions will worsen during that time.
- In addition, members are very concerned about the deficit and about the future. Indeed, two-thirds of AARP members say they lack confidence that life for their children's generation will be better than it has been for them.
- Even so, most are relatively satisfied with their own economic circumstances and think that their own financial situation will remain stable in the near-term.
- Confidence in Social Security may underpin this view as two-thirds of all respondents are confident that they will receive full Social Security benefits throughout their retirement.
- Not surprisingly, then, most think Social Security is very important for future generations and would like to see candidates pledge their commitment to ensuring that Social Security remains a guaranteed life-long benefit. Republicans, Democrats and Ticket-Splitters all stress the importance of this commitment.
- In fact, on the important policy questions in this survey, there was surprisingly little difference based on partisan affiliation or voting behavior.



## Summary and Conclusions

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- This common outlook extends to the concept of reducing the Social Security benefits of future retirees in order to control the deficit. This approach is rejected by 67% of AARP members (including 60% of Republicans, 70% of Ticket-Splitters and 68% of Democrats) as an unfair burden to future retirees. Further, 60% say they would be less likely to vote for a candidate who favors this approach to deficit reduction. Once again, a majority of all partisan groups (51% of Republicans, 61% of Ticket-Splitters and 66% of Democrats) hold this view.
- Similarly, there is widespread concern about the continued threat of reductions in Medicare reimbursement rates to doctors. Most think that their ability to receive treatment from a doctor who accepts Medicare will be impacted if the issue is not addressed. As a result, 59% say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who promises to fix the system to prevent further cuts to reimbursement rates to doctors.
- Medicare fraud is perceived as a major problem and members think the most important reason to crack down on fraud is to keep Medicare strong. To that end, they are receptive to the bipartisan legislative proposals tested and would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports these efforts to minimize fraud and identity theft of Medicare patients.

# AMERICAN VIEWPOINT

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