

AARP Bulletin Survey on Midterm Elections

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AARP Bulletin Survey on Midterm Elections: Executive Summary

The AARP Bulletin commissioned a nationwide survey in August 2010 to assess overall interest and intent to vote in the upcoming midterm elections this November. The survey also looked at the various factors people consider when choosing a candidate. The survey was conducted for AARP by Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS). Interviews were conducted August 18-25, 2010 among a nationally representative sample of 1,051 adults age 18 and older.

The findings indicate that about two-thirds of Americans plan to vote in the upcoming midterm elections. Older adults (adults age 50 or older) reported a greater interest in the election and were more likely to indicate that they planned to vote.

Survey Findings

- **Eight in ten Americans age 50 and older (80%) said they planned to vote in the November midterm election compared to 65% of adults overall.** While the overall number marks an increase in the percentage who said they plan to vote in this midterm election, it reinforces the fact that older voters will be a factor in determining who controls the next Congress.
- **Older adults (adults age 50+) were much more likely than younger adults (adults under age 50) to say they were planning to vote in the midterm elections (80% vs. 54%).** About two in ten (19%) younger adults were unsure if they were going to vote compared to only 5% of older adults. Older adults were also more likely than younger adults to report being interested in the upcoming election (82% vs. 58%).
- **More than two-thirds of Americans (68%) indicated that they were interested in the upcoming midterm election.** Specifically, 34% of adults were *very interested* in the upcoming election and 35% indicated that they were *somewhat interested*. Interest in the election is related to adults' level of education. Adults with a college education (79%) were more likely than adults with some college education (68%) or a high school education (62%) to say they were interested in the upcoming election.

- **Income and education were significant factors influencing intent to vote.** Adults with a household income of \$50,000 a year or more (75%) were more likely than adults with a household income of \$50,000 a year or less (55%) to say they intended to vote. Adults with more education were also more likely to report an intent to vote (58% of adults with a high school education compared to 71% of adults with a college education or some college education).
- **Character or personal quality of a candidate and positions on key issues matter most when choosing a candidate for a national or state office.** More than three in ten adults (38%) indicated that character or personal quality of a candidate matters most. This was followed by a candidate's position on one or two political issues (28%). A candidate's political party (11%) or voting record (13%) was rated as important by fewer people.
- **Nine in ten adults (90%) indicated that the issue of jobs will influence how they will vote in November.** Also, almost nine in ten adults (88%) said the issue of the cost of health care and access to doctors will influence how they will vote in the upcoming election. Among adults at least 50 years old, the top three issues were jobs (90%), Social Security (89%), and the cost of health care and access to doctors (88%).
- **Disgust with politics was the most commonly cited reason why adults do not plan to vote.** Almost four in ten adults (38%) who do not plan to vote indicated that their disgust with politics is one of the reasons they will not vote. Twenty-eight percent of those who do not plan to vote indicated that they do not trust any of the candidates.

Survey Methodology

This study was conducted via telephone by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews took place August 18-August 25, 2010 among a nationally representative sample of 1,051 respondents age 18 and older. The margin of error for total respondents is +/- 3.02% at the 95% confidence level. SSRS weighted the data to provide nationally representative estimates of the population 18 years of age and older.

AARP Bulletin Survey on the 2010 Midterm Elections Annotated Questionnaire

This study was conducted via telephone by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted from August 18 – August 25, 2010 among a nationally representative sample of 1,051 respondents' age 18 and older. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-3.02% at the 95% confidence level.

ME-1 Do you plan to vote in the November midterm congressional elections?

	Yes	No	Don't know	Refused
Total	65%	20%	13%	2%
Under 50	54	24	19	2
Aged 50+	80	14	5	1

ME-2 There are many reasons why people don't plan to vote or are not sure if they'll vote. Please tell me if any of the following reasons apply to you. (Asked of total who do not plan to vote or are don't know/not sure/undecided; n = 253)

	Total	Under 50	Aged 50+
I don't trust any of the candidates	28%	28%	28%
I don't think my vote matters	16	14	22
I do not have transportation to the polls	4	3	5
I don't have time to vote	11	13	3
I'm disgusted with politics	38	36	44
This election is not about my concerns/issues	16	15	20
Don't know	11	10	15
Refused	7	5	11

ME-3 How interested are you in the upcoming midterm election in November 2010? Would you say...?

	INTERESTED			NOT INTERESTED			Don't know	Refused
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not very	Not at all		
Total	68%	34%	35%	31%	18%	12%	1%	1%
Under 50	58	22	36	42	27	16	-	<0.5
Aged 50+	82	50	33	15	7	8	1	1

ME-4 Which of the following matters most when you vote for a candidate for a state or national office: Would it be...?

	Total	Under 50	Aged 50+
Character or personal qualities of a candidate	38%	36%	40%
Political party of a candidate	11	12	10
Candidate's position on one or two issues	28	31	25
Candidate's length of time in office	3	3	3
Candidate's voting record	13	11	15
Don't know	6	6	5
Refused	1	1	2

ME-5 I'm going to read you a list of seven issues. Please tell me whether each of the following issues will influence how you will vote in the upcoming election? How about (INSERT)? (Ask of total who plan to vote or who are don't know/not sure/undecided or who refused; n = 886)

	Total	Under 50	Age 50+
a. War in Iraq and Afghanistan and/or Terrorism	79%	77%	80%
b. Social Security	82	76	89
c. Jobs	90	90	90
d. Cost of health care and access to doctors	88	88	88
e. Corruption with government	84	81	87
f. Budget deficit	83	81	85
g. Energy costs	77	76	78