

**Cutting Benefits for Deficit  
Reduction:  
A Survey of Registered Voters Age 50+  
in NY CD-20**

**July 2011**



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Reduction:  
A Survey of Registered Voters Age 50+ in  
NY CD-20**

**Report prepared by  
Joanne Binette**

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AARP  
Research & Strategic Analysis  
501 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
<http://www.aarp.org/research>  
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AARP's New York State Office, in response to its commitment to protect Social Security and Medicare for all state residents, commissioned this survey to explore the views of its registered voters over the age of 50 in Congressional District 20 about proposals to cut Social Security and Medicare as a way to reduce the federal deficit.

These results are based on a telephone survey, fielded July 7 through July 11, 2011 of registered voters over the age of 50 in Congressional District 20 in New York. A total of 400 interviews were completed yielding a sampling error of +/- 4.9 percent. An annotated survey of responses begins on page 2, and a detailed methodology is on page 13.

## **SURVEY-IN-BRIEF**

- ❖ **While residents of Congressional District 20 over the age of 50 are very concerned about the federal deficit, they oppose reductions in Social Security and Medicare benefits to help reduce the deficit.**
  - ✓ Seven in ten (71%) are very concerned about the federal budget deficit.
  - ✓ Seven in ten (70%) oppose raising the debt limit if it means there will be cuts to Social Security and Medicare for current beneficiaries.
  
- ❖ **Residents of Congressional District 20 over the age of 50 believe seniors should not pay higher Medicare costs or be forced into nursing homes in order to reduce the deficit.**
  - ✓ Three-quarters say they are less likely to reelect their member of Congress if they support a proposal that requires seniors to pay higher Medicare premiums (75%) or pay higher out of pocket costs for Medicare services (77%).
  - ✓ Three-quarters (76%) oppose legislation that could result in cuts to services that help older Americans and people with disabilities remain in their own homes rather than go into a nursing home.
  
- ❖ **Residents of Congressional District 20 over the age of 50 oppose Social Security benefit reductions and are less likely to reelect members of Congress who support these cuts.**
  - ✓ Eight in ten (79%) oppose a current proposal to change the calculation for the Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) that would immediately and permanently reduce seniors' annual COLA.
  - ✓ Three-quarters (76%) say they are less likely to reelect their member of Congress if they support cutting Social Security benefits to help reduce the deficit.

# 2011 New York Medicare/Social Security Survey

(Survey Sample: 50+ Registered Voters in Congressional District—20)  
(N=400, sampling error = ±4.9%)

## INTRODUCTION/SCREENER

Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_ calling from Woelfel Research, Inc., a national opinion research firm. We are not telemarketers and are not trying to sell you anything. We would like to find out your opinions on Medicare and Social Security. Your views are important and we would greatly appreciate your participation. All your responses will be kept entirely confidential.

S1. Our study is interested in the opinions of certain age groups. Could you please tell me your age as of your last birthday? [IN YEARS] \_\_\_\_\_ [RECORD ACTUAL AGE AND USE THE AGE GROUPS BELOW TO KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY RESPONDENTS WE ARE GETTING IN EACH GROUP]

| Base: Total Respondents     | CD #20<br>N=400 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
|                             | %               |
| 50 – 64                     | 45              |
| .....50 – 59                | 26              |
| .....60 – 64                | 19              |
| .....Unspecified actual age | -               |
| 65+                         | 55              |

S2. And just to confirm, are you a resident of New York?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No [TERMINATE]

S3. Are you registered to vote in New York at this address?

1. Yes
2. No [ASK TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE IN HOUSEHOLD WHO IS REGISTERED AND REPEAT S1. IF NO ONE IS REGISTERED TO VOTE, TERMINATE.]

## Main Questionnaire

Q1. How concerned are you about the federal budget deficit? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned or not at all concerned?

| Base: Total Respondents | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Very concerned          | 71                   |
| Somewhat concerned      | 22                   |
| Not very concerned      | 4                    |
| Not at all concerned    | 2                    |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]  | 1                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]   | <0.5                 |

Q2. As you may know, Congress is considering making certain changes to Medicare in order to reduce the deficit and control Medicare spending. Now I'd like to read you some changes to Medicare that Congress is considering in order to reduce the deficit and control Medicare spending. After I read each one, I would like you to tell me if you would be more likely or less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress if he or she votes in favor of this proposal.

Q2AB. Require seniors to pay higher Medicare premiums to help reduce the deficit.

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress if he or she votes in favor of this proposal or would it not make a difference?

| Base: Total Respondents            | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| More likely [ <b>SKIP TO Q2A</b> ] | 9                    |
| Less likely [ <b>SKIP TO Q2B</b> ] | 75                   |
| Makes no difference                | 12                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]             | 4                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]              | 1                    |

Q2A. Would you be *much* more likely or *somewhat* more likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress?

| Base: More likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress | CD #20<br>N=36<br>% |
|--|---------------------|
| Much more likely   | 33                  |
| Somewhat more likely   | 64                  |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                                       | 3                   |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]  | -                   |

Q2B. Would you be *much* less likely or *somewhat* less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress?

| Base: Less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress | CD #20<br>N=300<br>% |
|--|----------------------|
| Much less likely   | 66                   |
| Somewhat less likely   | 31                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                                       | 3                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]  | 1                    |

Q2-AB. Would you be more likely or less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress if he or she votes in favor of “requiring seniors to pay higher Medicare premiums to help reduce the deficit” or would it make no difference?

| Base: Total Respondents | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Much more likely        | 3                    |
| Somewhat more likely    | 6                    |
| Makes no difference     | 12                   |
| Somewhat less likely    | 23                   |
| Much less likely        | 49                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]  | 7                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]   | -                    |

Q2CD. Require seniors to pay higher out of pocket costs for Medicare services such as home health care and lab work.

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress if he or she votes in favor of this proposal or would it not make a difference?

| Base: Total Respondents   | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| More likely [SKIP TO Q2C] | 9                    |
| Less likely [SKIP TO Q2D] | 77                   |
| Makes no difference       | 11                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]    | 3                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]     | 1                    |

Q2C. Would you be *much* more likely or *somewhat* more likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress?

| Base: More likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress | CD #20<br>N=34<br>% |
|--|---------------------|
| Much more likely   | 53                  |
| Somewhat more likely   | 47                  |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                                       | -                   |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]  | -                   |

Q2D. Would you be *much* less likely or *somewhat* less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress?

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Base: Less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress | CD #20<br>N=308 |
|  | %               |
| Much less likely   | 72              |
| Somewhat less likely   | 26              |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                                       | 2               |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]  | -               |

Q2-CD. Would you be more likely or less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress if he or she votes in favor of “requiring seniors to pay higher out of pocket costs for Medicare services such as home health care or lab work”?

|                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Base: Total Respondents | CD #20<br>N=400 |
|                         | %               |
| Much more likely        | 5               |
| Somewhat more likely    | 4               |
| Makes no difference     | 11              |
| Somewhat less likely    | 20              |
| Much less likely        | 56              |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]  | 5               |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]   | -               |

Q3. Some in Congress say to fix our 14.3 trillion dollar national debt everything has to be on the table, including cuts to Social Security benefits.

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress if he or she supports cutting Social Security to help reduce the deficit or would it make no difference?

|                           |                 |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Base: Total Respondents   | CD #20<br>N=400 |
|                           | %               |
| More likely [SKIP TO Q3A] | 11              |
| Less likely [SKIP TO Q3B] | 76              |
| Makes no difference       | 9               |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]    | 4               |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]     | 1               |

Q3A. Would you be *much* more likely or *somewhat* more likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress?

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Base: More likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress | CD #20<br>N=44 |
|  | %              |
| Much more likely   | 61             |
| Somewhat more likely   | 39             |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                                       | -              |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]  | -              |

Q3B. Would you be *much* less likely or *somewhat* less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress?

| Base: Less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress | CD #20<br>N=305<br>% |
|--|----------------------|
| Much less likely   | 83                   |
| Somewhat less likely   | 16                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                                       | 2                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]  | -                    |

Q3-AB. Would you be more likely or less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress if he or she supports cutting Social Security to help reduce the deficit or would it make no difference?

| Base: Total Respondents | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Much more likely        | 7                    |
| Somewhat more likely    | 4                    |
| Makes no difference     | 9                    |
| Somewhat less likely    | 12                   |
| Much less likely        | 63                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]  | 6                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]   | -                    |

Q4. One of the proposals being considered by Congress to help reduce the deficit could result in cuts to services that help older Americans and people with disabilities remain in their homes rather than going to a nursing home. Do you favor or oppose legislation to reduce the deficit if it included cuts to these services?

| Base: Total Respondents       | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Favor [ <b>SKIP TO Q4A</b> ]  | 13                   |
| Neither favor nor oppose      | 5                    |
| Oppose [ <b>SKIP TO Q4B</b> ] | 76                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]        | 5                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]         | 1                    |

Q4A. Do you *strongly* favor or *somewhat* favor this legislation?

| Base: Favor legislation to reduce deficit | CD #20<br>N=53<br>% |
|---|---------------------|
| Strongly favor                            | 45                  |
| Somewhat favor                            | 49                  |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                    | 6                   |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]                     | -                   |



Q4B. Do you *strongly* oppose or *somewhat* oppose this legislation?

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Base: Oppose legislation to reduce deficit | CD #20<br>N=305<br>% |
| Strongly oppose                            | 76                   |
| Somewhat oppose                            | 23                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                     | <0.5                 |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]                      | -                    |

Q4-AB. One of the proposals being considered by Congress to help reduce deficit could result in cuts to services that help older Americans and people with disabilities remain in their homes rather than going to a nursing home. Do you..?

|                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Base: Total Respondents  | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
| Strongly favor           | 6                    |
| Somewhat favor           | 7                    |
| Neither favor nor oppose | 5                    |
| Somewhat oppose          | 18                   |
| Strongly oppose          | 58                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]   | 7                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]    | -                    |

Q5. Congress sets the limit on the amount of debt the United States government is allowed to incur. Currently the government is projected to exceed this limit. If Congress doesn't raise the limit, the United States will have trouble borrowing money and will default on its current debt.

Congress and the President have said an agreement to raise the government's debt limit must include substantial cuts in the federal budget. Such cuts could include Social Security and Medicare. Do you favor or oppose raising the debt limit if it means there will be cuts to Social Security and Medicare for current beneficiaries?

|                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Base: Total Respondents  | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
| Favor [SKIP TO Q5A]      | 16                   |
| Neither favor nor oppose | 6                    |
| Oppose [SKIP TO Q5B]     | 70                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]   | 6                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]    | 3                    |

Q5A. Do you *strongly* favor or *somewhat* favor raising the debt limit?

|                                    |                     |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Base: Favor raising the debt limit | CD #20<br>N=63<br>% |
| Strongly favor                     | 57                  |
| Somewhat favor                     | 41                  |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]             | 2                   |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]              | -                   |

Q5B. Do you *strongly* oppose or *somewhat* oppose raising the debt limit?

|                                     |                      |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Base: Oppose raising the debt limit | CD #20<br>N=279<br>% |
| Strongly oppose                     | 81                   |
| Somewhat oppose                     | 18                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]              | <0.5                 |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]               | -                    |

Q5-AB. Congress and the President have said an agreement to raise the government's debt limit must include substantial cuts in the federal budget. Such cuts could include Social Security and Medicare. Do you..?

|                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Base: Total Respondents  | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
| Strongly favor           | 9                    |
| Somewhat favor           | 7                    |
| Neither favor nor oppose | 6                    |
| Somewhat oppose          | 13                   |
| Strongly oppose          | 57                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]   | 9                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]    | -                    |

Q6. There is currently a proposal in Congress to change the calculation for the Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment or COLA to help reduce the deficit . This change would permanently reduce seniors' annual COLA immediately. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?

|                               |                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Base: Total Respondents       | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
| Favor [ <b>SKIP TO Q6A</b> ]  | 13                   |
| Neither favor nor oppose      | 2                    |
| Oppose [ <b>SKIP TO Q6B</b> ] | 79                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]        | 4                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]         | 2                    |

Q6A. Do you *strongly* favor or *somewhat* favor the proposal?

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| Base: Favor the proposal to change the calculation for the Social Security COLA | CD #20<br>N=53<br>% |
| Strongly favor  | 45                  |
| Somewhat favor  | 55                  |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]  | -                   |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]   | -                   |

Q6B. Do you *strongly* oppose or *somewhat* oppose the proposal?

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Base: Oppose the proposal to change the calculation for the Social Security COLA | CD #20<br>N=315<br>% |
| Strongly oppose  | 83                   |
| Somewhat oppose  | 17                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]   | -                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]  | -                    |

Q6-AB. There is currently a proposal in Congress to change the calculation for the Social Security COLA to help reduce the deficit. This change would permanently reduce Seniors' annual COLA immediately. Do you favor or oppose proposal?

|                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Base: Total Respondents  | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
| Strongly favor           | 6                    |
| Somewhat favor           | 7                    |
| Neither favor nor oppose | 2                    |
| Somewhat oppose          | 14                   |
| Strongly oppose          | 65                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]   | 6                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]    | -                    |

## Demographics

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

D1.RECORD RESPONDENT'S GENDER. ASK ONLY IF ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY: "To ensure it is recorded accurately, could you please state your gender?"

|                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Base: Total Respondents | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
| Male                    | 41                   |
| Female                  | 59                   |

D2. Are you or your spouse currently a member of AARP?

|                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Base: Total Respondents | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
| Yes                     | 54                   |
| No                      | 46                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]  | <0.5                 |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]   | 1                    |

D3.What is the highest level of education that you completed? [READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]

| Base: Total Respondents                          | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|--|----------------------|
| 0 to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade, but with no diploma | 6                    |
| High school graduate or equivalent               | 30                   |
| Post high school education, but with no degree   | 13                   |
| 2 year degree                                    | 13                   |
| 4 year degree                                    | 14                   |
| Post graduate study, but with no degree          | 5                    |
| Graduate or professional degree                  | 18                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                           | -                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]                            | 1                    |

D4.Which of the following best describes your current employment status? [READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]

| Base: Total Respondents                             | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|---|----------------------|
| Self-employed full-time                             | 5                    |
| Self-employed part-time                             | 3                    |
| Employed full-time                                  | 20                   |
| Employed part-time                                  | 5                    |
| Retired and not working at all                      | 56                   |
| Unemployed and looking for work                     | 3                    |
| Or are you not in the labor force for other reasons | 8                    |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                              | 1                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]                               | 1                    |

D5.Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino origin or descent?

| Base: Total Respondents | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Yes                     | 2                    |
| No                      | 97                   |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]  | -                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]   | 2                    |

D6. What is your race? Are you...[READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]?

| Base: Total Respondents                   | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|---|----------------------|
| White or Caucasian                        | 94                   |
| Black or African American                 | <0.5                 |
| Native American or Alaskan Native         | 1                    |
| Asian                                     | 1                    |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | -                    |
| Hispanic                                  | 1                    |
| Mixed                                     | 1                    |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]                    | -                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]                     | 3                    |

D7. Thinking about your state elections for New York 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 | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Always                  | 68                   |
| Most of the time        | 21                   |
| About half of the time  | 4                    |
| Seldom                  | 4                    |
| Never                   | 2                    |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]  | <0.5                 |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]   | 1                    |

D8. Do you consider yourself to be a .... [INTERVIEWER READ AND RANDOMIZE EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]

| Base: Total Respondents    | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Democrat                   | 25                   |
| Republican                 | 32                   |
| Independent                | 35                   |
| Vote for individual issues | 3                    |
| Other                      | 1                    |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]     | 1                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]      | 3                    |

D9. How would you characterize your political views? Would you say you are...[READ AND RANDOMIZE EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]?

| Base: Total Respondents | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Conservative            | 38                   |
| Moderate                | 36                   |
| Liberal                 | 15                   |
| None of the above       | 5                    |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]  | 5                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]   | 2                    |

D10. What is your 5-digit zip code? \_\_\_\_ \_

D11. 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 includes your household's income before taxes in 2010. Was it...[READ EACH ANSWER CATEGORY]?

| Base: Total Respondents          | CD #20<br>N=400<br>% |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Less than \$10,000               | 6                    |
| \$10,000 to less than \$20,000   | 11                   |
| \$20,000 to less than \$35,000   | 18                   |
| \$35,000 to less than \$50,000   | 17                   |
| \$50,000 to less than \$60,000   | 9                    |
| \$60,000 to less than \$75,000   | 8                    |
| \$75,000 to less than \$100,000  | 7                    |
| \$100,000 to less than \$125,000 | 6                    |
| \$125,000 to less than \$150,000 | 3                    |
| \$150,000 to less than \$200,000 | 1                    |
| \$200,000 or more                | 1                    |
| Not sure [DO NOT READ]           | 3                    |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]            | 10                   |

**That was our last question for tonight/today. Thanks you very much for taking the time to help us out. Have a great day/night!**

## Methodology

AARP New York commissioned a research study to explore the opinions of registered voters over the age of 50 in New York Congressional district 20 on Social Security and Medicare. Woelfel Research Inc. conducted this telephone survey between July 7 and 11, 2011. A total of 400 interviews were completed. A sample of this size has a sampling error of plus or minus 4.9 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. Survey responses were not weighted because there is no reliable data available for registered voters at the Congressional district level. Interviewing was completed with a final response rate of 36 percent, cooperation rate of 92 percent, and refusal rate of 7 percent. The response, cooperation, and refusal rates were calculated according to AAPOR standards RR3, CCOP3, REF3.

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.

State Research brings the right knowledge at the right time to our state and national partners in support of their efforts to improve the lives of people age 50+. State Research consultants provide strategic insights and actionable research to attain measurable state and national outcomes.

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



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**Research and Strategic Analysis**

**For more information, please contact Joanne Binette at:**

**202.434.6303 or e-mail [jbinette@aarp.org](mailto:jbinette@aarp.org)**