

**Cutting Benefits for Deficit  
Reduction:  
A Survey of Registered Voters Age 50+  
in NY CD-25**

**July 2011**



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Reduction:  
A Survey of Registered Voters Age  
50+ in NY CD-25**

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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 25 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 25 in New York. A total of 406 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 25 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 (70%) are very concerned about the federal budget deficit.
  - ✓ Three-quarters (74%) oppose raising the debt limit if it means there will be cuts to Social Security and Medicare for current beneficiaries.
  
- ❖ **Residents of Congressional District 25 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 (74%).
  - ✓ Over three-quarters (77%) 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 25 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 (80%) 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.
  - ✓ Over three-quarters (77%) 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—25)  
(N=406, 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 #25 N=406
	%
50 – 64	42
.....50 - 59	27
.....60 – 64	14
.....Unspecified actual age	1
65+	58

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 #25 N=406 %
Very concerned	70
Somewhat concerned	23
Not very concerned	5
Not at all concerned	2
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	<0.5
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 #25 N=406 %
More likely [ <b>SKIP TO Q2A</b> ]	11
Less likely [ <b>SKIP TO Q2B</b> ]	75
Makes no difference	12
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	2
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 #25 N=44 %
Much more likely	39
Somewhat more likely	57
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	5
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 #25 N=305 %
Much less likely	71
Somewhat less likely	27
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	3
Refused [DO NOT READ]	<0.5

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 #25 N=406 %
Much more likely	4
Somewhat more likely	6
Makes no difference	12
Somewhat less likely	20
Much less likely	53
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	5
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 #25 N=406 %
More likely [ <b>SKIP TO Q2C</b> ]	12
Less likely [ <b>SKIP TO Q2D</b> ]	74
Makes no difference	11
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	2
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 #25 N=47 %
Much more likely	53
Somewhat more likely	45
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	2
Refused [DO NOT READ]	-

Q2D. Would you be *much* less likely or *somewhat* less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress? (n=respondents who say they are less likely)

Base: Less likely to vote to reelect your member of Congress	CD #25 N=302 %
Much less likely	75
Somewhat less likely	24
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	1
Refused [DO NOT READ]	1

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 #25 N=406 %
Much more likely	6
Somewhat more likely	5
Makes no difference	11
Somewhat less likely	18
Much less likely	55
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	4
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 #25 N=406 %
More likely [SKIP TO Q3A]	10
Less likely [SKIP TO Q3B]	77
Makes no difference	10
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	2
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 #25 N=40 %
Much more likely	53
Somewhat more likely	48
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 #25 N=314
	%
Much less likely	82
Somewhat less likely	17
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	1
Refused [DO NOT READ]	1

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 #25 N=406
	%
Much more likely	5
Somewhat more likely	5
Makes no difference	10
Somewhat less likely	13
Much less likely	64
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	4
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 #25 N=406
	%
Favor [ <b>SKIP TO Q4A</b> ]	14
Neither favor nor oppose	3
Oppose [ <b>SKIP TO Q4B</b> ]	77
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	5
Refused [DO NOT READ]	<0.5

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

Base: Favor legislation to reduce deficit	CD #25 N=56
	%
Strongly favor	52
Somewhat favor	48
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	-
Refused [DO NOT READ]	-



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

Base: Oppose legislation to reduce deficit	CD #25 N=314 %
Strongly oppose	83
Somewhat oppose	17
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	-
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 #25 N=406 %
Strongly favor	7
Somewhat favor	7
Neither favor nor oppose	3
Somewhat oppose	13
Strongly oppose	64
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	5
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 #25 N=406 %
Favor <b>[SKIP TO Q5A]</b>	16
Neither favor nor oppose	2
Oppose <b>[SKIP TO Q5B]</b>	74
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	6
Refused [DO NOT READ]	2

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

Base: Favor raising the debt limit	CD #25 N=65 %
Strongly favor	46
Somewhat favor	54
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	-
Refused [DO NOT READ]	-

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

Base: Oppose raising the debt limit	CD #25 N=302 %
Strongly oppose	83
Somewhat oppose	16
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	1
Refused [DO NOT READ]	<0.5

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 #25 N=406 %
Strongly favor	7
Somewhat favor	9
Neither favor nor oppose	2
Somewhat oppose	12
Strongly oppose	62
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	8
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 #25 N=406 %
Favor [SKIP TO Q6A]	12
Neither favor nor oppose	3
Oppose [SKIP TO Q6B]	80
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	4
Refused [DO NOT READ]	1

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

Base: Favor the proposal to change the calculation for the Social Security COLA	CD #25 N=48 %
Strongly favor	44
Somewhat favor	52
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	2
Refused [DO NOT READ]	2

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

Base: Oppose the proposal to change the calculation for the Social Security COLA	CD #25 N=326
	%
Strongly oppose	84
Somewhat oppose	16
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	<0.5
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 #25 N=406
	%
Strongly favor	5
Somewhat favor	6
Neither favor nor oppose	3
Somewhat oppose	13
Strongly oppose	67
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	5
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 #25 N=406
	%
Male	37
Female	63

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

Base: Total Respondents	CD #25 N=406
	%
Yes	55
No	43
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	1
Refused [DO NOT READ]	1

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

Base: Total Respondents	CD #25 N=406 %
0 to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade, but with no diploma	7
High school graduate or equivalent	30
Post high school education, but with no degree	16
2 year degree	13
4 year degree	16
Post graduate study, but with no degree	6
Graduate or professional degree	12
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 #25 N=406 %
Self-employed full-time	2
Self-employed part-time	1
Employed full-time	17
Employed part-time	6
Retired and not working at all	63
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 #25 N=406 %
Yes	2
No	96
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	<0.5
Refused [DO NOT READ]	2

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

Base: Total Respondents	CD #25 N=406 %
White or Caucasian	89
Black or African American	4
Native American or Alaskan Native	2
Asian	<0.5
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	-
Hispanic	1
Middle Eastern	<0.5
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	1
Refused [DO NOT READ]	4

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 #25 N=406 %
Always	64
Most of the time	25
About half of the time	6
Seldom	2
Never	2
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	-
Refused [DO NOT READ]	1

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

Base: Total Respondents	CD #25 N=406 %
Democrat	29
Republican	29
Independent	31
Vote for individual issues	3
Other	<0.5
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	2
Refused [DO NOT READ]	6

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

Base: Total Respondents	CD #25 N=406 %
Conservative	36
Moderate	36
Liberal	17
None of the above	4
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	4
Refused [DO NOT READ]	3

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 #25 N=406 %
Less than \$10,000	4
\$10,000 to less than \$20,000	16
\$20,000 to less than \$35,000	17
\$35,000 to less than \$50,000	14
\$50,000 to less than \$60,000	8
\$60,000 to less than \$75,000	6
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	10
\$100,000 to less than \$125,000	5
\$125,000 to less than \$150,000	2
\$150,000 to less than \$200,000	2
\$200,000 or more	1
Not sure [DO NOT READ]	2
Refused [DO NOT READ]	13

**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 25 on Social Security and Medicare. Woelfel Research Inc. conducted this telephone survey between July 7 and 11, 2011. A total of 406 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 33 percent, cooperation rate of 91 percent, and refusal rate of 8 percent. The response, cooperation, and refusal rates were calculated according to AAPOR standards RR3, CCOP3, REF3.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization 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 35.7 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.

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