Patriotism Survey Among U.S. Adults Age 18 and Older

Conducted for AARP Bulletin

June 2006
Patriotism Survey Among U.S. Adults Age 18 and Older

Report Prepared by Hana Holley
AARP Strategic Issues Research

Survey conducted by
International Communications Research

June 2006

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Washington, D.C. 20049
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**Acknowledgements**
This study was conducted for the *AARP Bulletin*. International Communications Research, Inc. collected and tabulated the data. For additional information contact the author, Hana Holley, at (202)-434-6324.
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The main purpose of this May 2006 *AARP Bulletin* study was to examine the extent of patriotic feelings among U.S. adults age 18 or older and the ways they express patriotism. In addition, the survey asked about plans Americans have for the upcoming Fourth of July, and how these plans can be potentially affected by gas prices.

The survey was executed via telephone with a representative sample of 608 adults age 18 and older (304 respondents age 18-49 and 304 respondents age 50 or older). Interviews were conducted from May 19, 2006, to May 23, 2006, by ICR/International Communications Research as a part of ICR’s omnibus survey. Responses were weighted to be nationally representative of U.S. population age 18 or older. The margin of error is +/-4.79% at the 95% confidence level.
OVERALL LEVEL OF PATRIOTISM

- Based on the May 2006 *AARP Bulletin* poll, close to six in ten (57%) Americans age 18 or older say they are “extremely” (19%) or “very” (38%) patriotic. Nearly three in ten (28%) describe themselves as “somewhat” patriotic, and just over one in ten (12%) as “not especially” patriotic.

SELF-RATED LEVEL OF PATRIOTISM

- Extremely: 19%
- Very: 38%
- Somewhat: 28%
- Not especially: 12%
- Don't know: 2%
- Refused: 1%
The strength of patriotic feelings differs among various groups:

- Men (61%) are more likely to say they are extremely or very patriotic than women (53%).
- Adults age 50 or older (74%) are more likely to describe themselves as extremely or very patriotic than those age 35 to 49 (60%) or those age 18-34 (32%).
- The age differences persist when looking at the results by gender: men age 18-49 (49%) are significantly less likely to be extremely or very patriotic compared to men age 50 or older (80%); 42% of women under age 50 say they are extremely or very patriotic, compared to 69% of women age 50 or older. (The differences between younger men and younger women, and older men and older women are not statistically significant.)
- The proportions of highly patriotic adults 18+ do not significantly differ by region.
- Finally, those with more than a high school education (62%) are more likely to be highly patriotic than those with a high school or lower education (52%). Similarly, those with total household income of $50,000 or higher (67%) are more likely to consider themselves to be highly patriotic than those with household income between $25,000 and $50,000 (48%), or household income lower than $25,000 (45%).

Similar patterns can be seen when examining the proportions of those identifying themselves as “extremely” patriotic.
EXTREMELY + VERY PATRIOTIC

- Male: 61%
- Female: 53%
- Age 18-34: 32%
- Age 35-49: 60%
- Age 50+: 74%
- HS or less: 52%
- More than HS: 62%
- Less than $25,000: 45%
- $25,000-$49,999: 48%
- $50,000 or more: 67%
- North East: 58%
- North Central: 61%
- South: 58%
- West: 50%
May 2006 Patriotism Survey

EXTREMELY PATRIOTIC

- Male: 24%
- Female: 14%
- Age 18-34: 8%
- Age 35-49: 19%
- Age 50+: 27%
- HS or less: 17%
- More than HS: 21%
- Less than $25,000: 10%
- $25,000-$49,999: 16%
- $50,000 or more: 24%
- North East: 20%
- North Central: 16%
- South: 19%
- West: 20%
When asked how their feelings of patriotism have changed in the last five years, over six in ten Americans age 18 or older say that their feelings have remained the same (62%), while one-quarter have become more patriotic (25%) and approximately one in ten has become less patriotic (11%).

The survey did not find any significant differences in the way people’s feelings changed by main demographics, except for age.

A higher percentage of younger adults (29% of those age 18-34 and 29% of those age 35-49) report becoming more patriotic over the last five years, compared to their older counterparts (age 50 or older; 19%). In contrast, those age 50 or older (68%) are more likely than those under age 50 (58%; 55% of 18-34 and 60% of 35-49) to consider themselves as patriotic as they were five years ago. The proportions of those younger than 50 (12%) and those age 50 or older (11%) who became less patriotic are similar.
DISPLAYS OF PATRIOTISM IN THE PAST YEAR

- There are many ways to show patriotism and the respondents were asked which of the listed four things they have done in the last year. Six in ten or more Americans age 18 or older report saying the pledge of allegiance (64%), singing the national anthem (61%), and displaying the American flag on their home or car (61%). Over half also wore clothes, pins, or ribbons with a patriotic theme (55%). Only 14% admit to not engaging in any of the listed activities in the past year.

- Men and women do not significantly differ in likelihood of doing any of these activities in the last year.

- However, significant differences appear by age. Those 50 or older are more likely than adults age 18-34 to express their patriotism during the last year through all the activities:
  - Display the American flag on their home or car (74% among age 50 or older vs. 44% among age 18-34; 61% among those age 35-49)
  - Wear patriotic clothes, pins, or ribbons (60% vs. 46%; 60% among age 35-49)
  - Say the pledge of allegiance (70% vs. 52%; 67% among those age 35-49)
  - Sing the national anthem (67% vs. 44%; 72% among those age 35-49)
• Interestingly, adults age 18 or older living in the Northeast region (79%) are significantly more likely than those living in the remaining three main regions to have displayed the American flag on their home or car (North-Central 60%; South 57%; West 52%). Those living in the West region (38%) are the least likely to have worn any clothes, pins, or ribbons with a patriotic theme (Northeast 57%; North-Central 63%; South 61%).

• Not surprisingly, those who describe themselves as extremely or very patriotic are more likely than those who describe themselves as somewhat or not especially patriotic to have engaged in any of the activities in the past year:
  − Say the pledge of allegiance (79% of extremely or very patriotic vs. 43% of somewhat or not especially patriotic)
  − Sing the national anthem (78% vs. 40%)
  − Display the American flag on their home or car (78% vs. 39%)
  − Wear patriotic clothes, pins, or ribbons (70% vs. 37%)

• The likelihood to engage in any of the four listed activities also increases with income and education; except of displaying the American flag on home or car in the last year which did not vary by education.
Another way some might express their patriotism is through participating in elections. The majority of Americans age 21 or older\textsuperscript{1} report voting in the most recent elections:

- Federal elections (70%)
- State elections (65%)
- Local elections (56%)

Twenty-three percent of those age 21 or older report not participating in any of these elections.

\textbf{VOTED IN MOST RECENT ELECTIONS}

\textbf{VOTED IN LAST ELECTIONS}

\textit{Among those age 21 or older}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart.png}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{1} The proportions of Americans age 18 or older who report voting in the most recent elections are as follows: Federal elections (67%); State elections (62%); Local elections (54%). One-quarter (26%) report not participating in any of these elections. The respondents age 18-20 are, however, excluded from the calculations in this section of the report since they might not have been eligible to vote in the last elections.
• The findings show significantly higher levels of participation in any of the three elections among those describing themselves as extremely or very patriotic compared to those who describe themselves as somewhat or not especially patriotic. While 81% of the highly patriotic adults age 21 or older voted in the last federal elections, 55% of those somewhat or not especially patriotic did. The respective percentages for the state and local elections are as follows: state – 74% vs. 52%, local – 66% vs. 42%.

• For all three types of elections, the participation rates increase with age, income, and education. For example, 54% of adults age 21-34 report voting in the last federal elections, compared to 80% of those age 50 or older. A similar pattern can be seen for the state elections (47% vs. 74%) and local elections (31% vs. 66%).

• Similarly, those age 21 or older with a formal education not beyond high school are less likely to report that they voted in the various elections compared to those with education beyond high school: federal elections (55% vs. 84%), state elections (51% vs. 77%), and local elections (49% vs. 63%).

• The self-reported participation in the last federal or local elections does not seem to vary significantly by gender. However, women age 21 or older (69%) are more likely than men (60%) to report voting in the most recent state elections.

• A higher proportion of adults age 21 or older living in the West region (77%) reports voting in the last federal elections compared to those living in the Northeast region (64%). In the last state elections, more adults voted in the West (70%) and South (69%) regions than in the Northeast region (57%). There were no regional differences with respect to reporting participation in the most recent local elections.
CURRENT PLANS FOR FOURTH OF JULY

- This Fourth of July will be marked with celebrations, parties, and getting together. The majority of Americans age 18 or older plan to do the following:
  - Get together with their family (84%)
  - Get together with their friends and/or neighbors (78%)
  - Host or attend a barbecue, picnic, or cookout (75%)
  - Attend a fireworks display (71%)
  - Display an American flag (68%)

- While getting together with family members is a plan universal across all age groups, some other activities are more appealing to younger adults than to older adults. Those age 18-34 are more likely than those age 50 or older to plan to do the following on the upcoming Fourth of July:
  - Get together with their friends or neighbors (86% of those age 18-34 vs. 70% of those age 50 or older)
  - Attend or host a barbecue, picnic, or cookout (79% vs. 69%)
  - Attend a fireworks display (77% vs. 59%)
  - Set off their own fireworks (53% vs. 17%)
  - Work (28% vs. 6%)

- In contrast, adults age 50 or older are more likely than those age 18-34 to expect to engage in more relaxed and home-based activities, such as:
  - Display an American flag (77% of those age 50 or older vs. 54% of those age 18-34)
  - Watch a Fourth of July celebration on TV (55% vs. 34%)
  - Watch a patriotic movie (46% vs. 27%)

- Men and women do not differ with respect to most of the activities, with the exception of watching a patriotic movie (43% of men vs. 30% of women) and setting off their own fireworks (40% vs. 29%), which men are more apt to plan to do than women.

- The five most popular activities planned for the Fourth of July overall are also the top five activities in each region. However, there are some interesting regional differences. Those living in the West region (67%) are the least likely to plan getting together with their friends or neighbors, particularly when compared to those living in the North-Central region (85%). Hosting or attending a barbecue, picnic, or cookout is, on the other hand, much more popular option in the North-East (85%) or North-Central (84%) regions when compared to South (71%) or West (66%). The Northeast region (57%) also has the highest percentage of those planning to watch a Fourth of July celebration on TV, particularly compared to the West region (35%). Finally, the North-Central region (53%) has a significantly higher proportion of those planning to set off their own fireworks than the remaining regions (Northeast 23%; South 34%; West 26%).
FOURTH OF JULY PLANS

- Get together with family: 84%
- Get together with friends/neighbors: 78%
- Barbecue, picnic, cookout: 75%
- Attend fireworks: 71%
- Display American flag: 68%
- Watch celebration on TV: 45%
- Watch patriotic movie: 36%
- Set off own fireworks: 34%
- Attend parade: 22%
- Work: 17%
## FOURTH OF JULY PLANS by AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Age 18-34</th>
<th>Age 35-49</th>
<th>Age 50+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get together with family</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get together with friends/neighbors</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbecue, picnic, cookout</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend fireworks</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display American flag</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch celebration on TV</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch patriotic movie</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set off own fireworks</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend parade</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Age 18-34**: The age group that plans to get together with family the most is 83%.
- **Age 35-49**: The age group that plans to attend fireworks is 77%.
- **Age 50+**: The age group that plans to display the American flag is 59%.

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*May 2006 Patriotism Survey*
CHANGE FOURTH OF JULY PLANS DUE TO GAS PRICES

- Potentially up to 20% of Americans age 18 or older might have to limit or cancel their plans for the coming Fourth of July due to the gas prices. Two percent note they will have to cancel their plans; approximately one in ten (9%) will have to reduce their plans, while a similar proportion (9%) reports that their decision will depend on the gas prices in July.

- Not surprisingly, higher household income allows many to proceed with their Fourth of July plans. While nearly three in ten (28%) of those with a total household income below $25,000 will have to potentially reduce or cancel their Fourth of July plans due to the gas prices, one in ten (10%) with household income equal to or above $50,000 will potentially have to do that.

---

CHANGE of FOURTH OF JULY PLANS DUE TO GAS PRICES

![Bar chart showing the percentage of people affected by gas prices on their Fourth of July plans.]

- Will have to reduce plans: 9%
- Will have to cancel plans: 2%
- Maybe depending on gas prices in July: 9%
- No: 80%
- DK, NA: 1%

---

2 Combining those reporting they will have to reduce or cancel their plans, and those stating that they might cancel or reduce their plans depending on the gas prices in July
Appendix: Annotated Questionnaire

(\(n=608\))

PS-1 How patriotic are you? Would you say you are, Extremely patriotic, Very patriotic, Somewhat patriotic, or Not especially patriotic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not especially</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PS-2 Have you become more patriotic, less patriotic, or remained about the same in the last five years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More patriotic</th>
<th>Less patriotic</th>
<th>Remained the same in last 5 years</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PS-3 There are many ways to show patriotism. For each of the following please tell me if it is something you have personally done in the past year? (First/Next) Have you…?

a. Displayed the American flag on your home or car

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Worn any clothes, pin, or ribbon with a patriotic theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Said the pledge of allegiance (to the flag)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d. Sang the national anthem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PS-4  Did you vote in the most recent…?(READ ELECTION TYPE) (INSERT How about…? AFTER FIRST ITEM)

a. Federal elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. State elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Local elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PS-5  Which of the following, if any, do you think you will do this Fourth of July? (First/Next) Will you…? (INSERT ITEMS)

a. Attend a fireworks display

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Set off your own fireworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Attend or march in a Fourth of July parade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d. Watch a Fourth of July celebration on TV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e. Watch a movie with a patriotic theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

f. Host or attend a barbecue, picnic, or cookout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

g. Display an American flag

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
h. Get together with family members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i. Get together with friends and/or neighbors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

j. Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

k. Do you have no particular plans (will stay home, do nothing special) (ALWAYS ASK LAST AND ONLY IF NO, DK OR RR TO ALL IN PS-5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PS-6 Do you think you will have to reduce or cancel your plans for this year’s Fourth of July due to the gas prices?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, will have to reduce plans</th>
<th>Yes, will have to cancel plans</th>
<th>Maybe. Depends on gas prices in July</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>