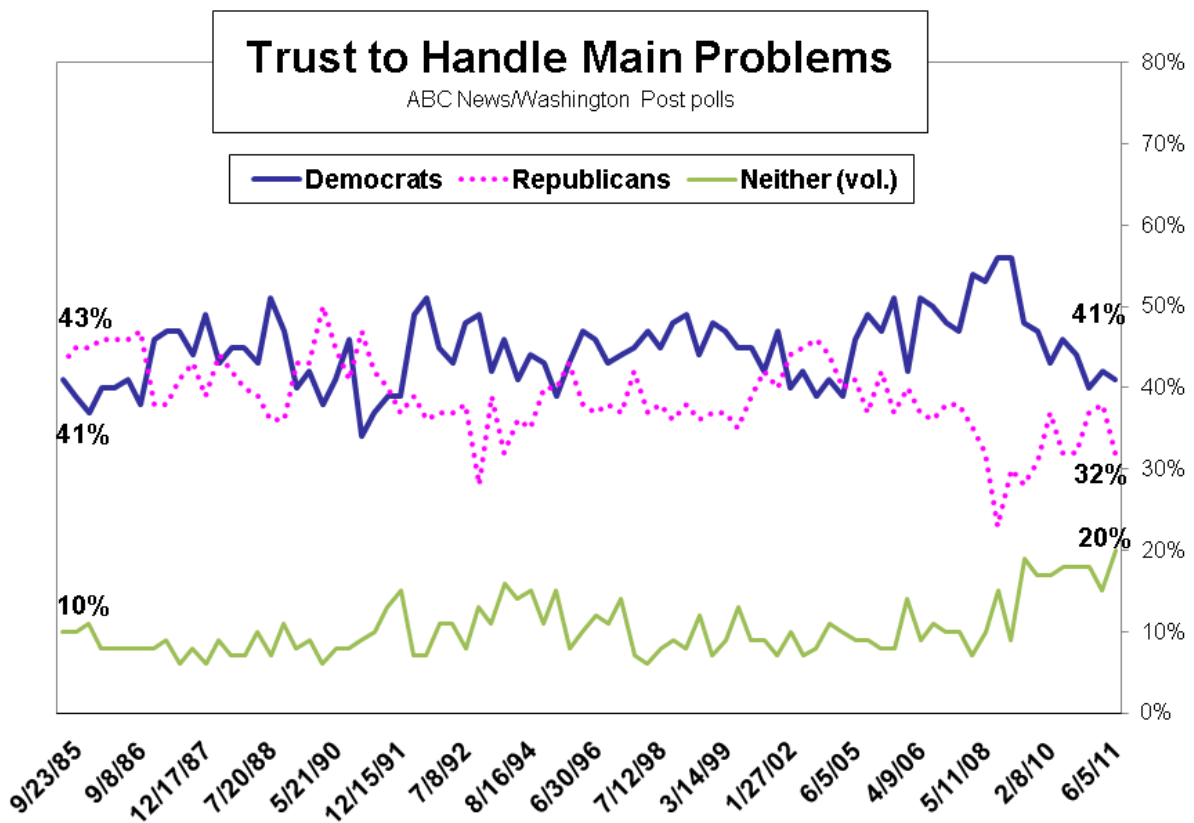


## Republicans Gain on Deficit, Economy; But Trust in ‘Neither’ Hits a 25-Year High

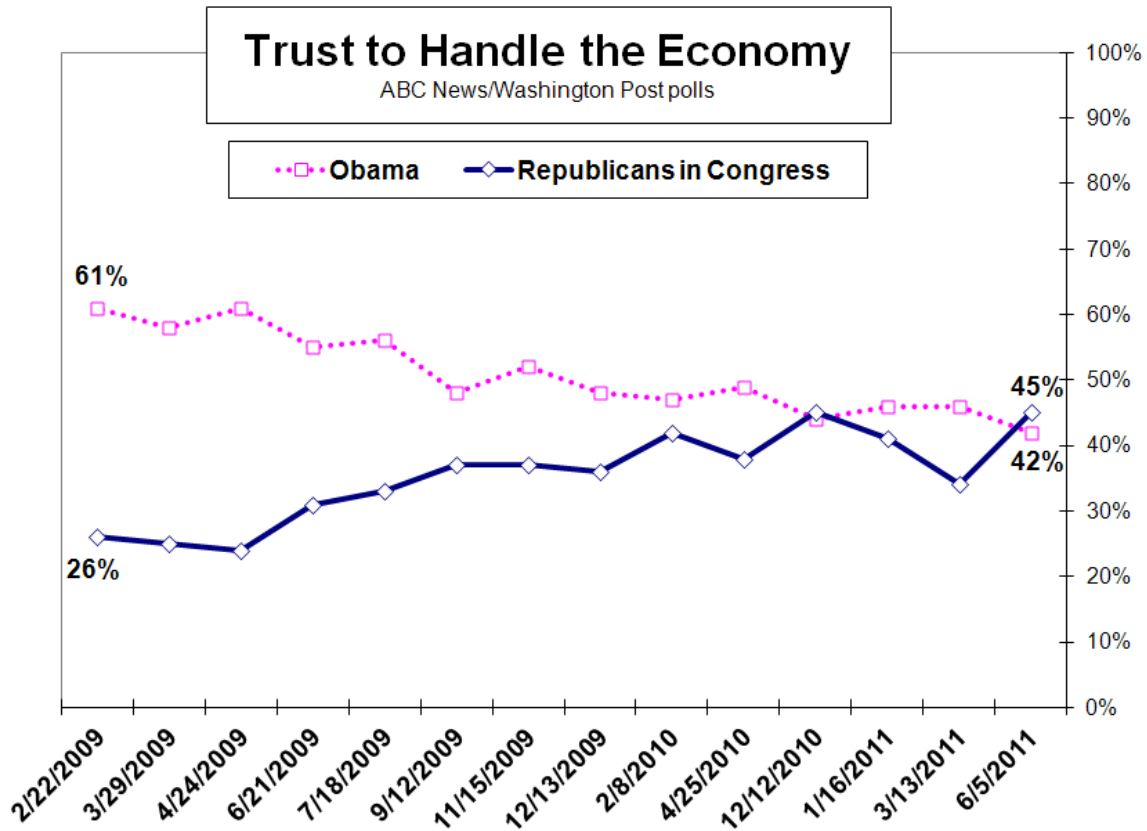
The Republicans in Congress have moved ahead of President Obama in trust to handle the deficit and battled him to parity on the economy. But another issue, Medicare, poses risks for the GOP, and both political parties are losing ground in another sense: A record number of Americans don't trust either of them to cope with the nation's main problems.

The Democrats have bragging rights on the overall measure; Americans pick them over the Republicans to handle the country's main problems by 41 to 32 percent. But 20 percent – the most in ABC News/Washington Post polls dating back to 1985 – don't trust either party. Among political independents, rejection of both parties rises to 34 percent.



That result marks the public's long-running economic discontent, and a concurrent retreat from party loyalty. Independents have outnumbered self-identified Democrats or Republicans steadily since September 2009, by far the longest run of its kind in 30 years of ABC/Post polling.

On some specific issues, in questions testing the Republicans in Congress vs. Obama, the Republicans have advanced significantly since spring. They now hold an 8-point lead in trust to handle the deficit, reversing a 9-point Obama advantage in March. And they've regained a numerical (albeit non-significant) lead in trust to handle the economy, 45-42 percent, reversing what was a 12-point lead for Obama.



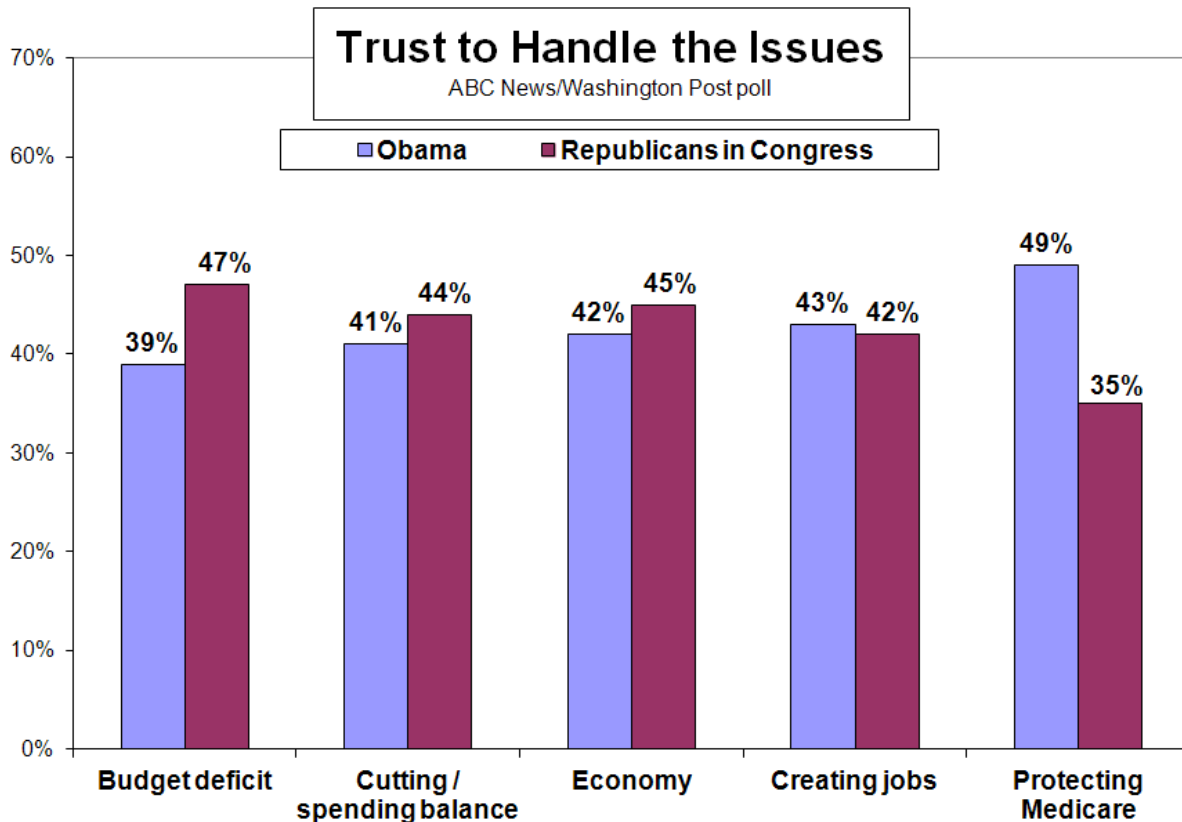
The Republicans in Congress also stand at 44-41 percent vs. Obama in trust to find the right balance between cutting spending that's not needed while still retaining spending that is needed. And the two sides are rated essentially evenly, 43-42 percent Obama-Republicans, in trust to create jobs, the central issue of the day.

DEBT – With Washington negotiators meeting again today, the poll finds broad concern about the economic impact of Congress' not raising the federal debt limit; 71 percent think this would cause serious harm to the U.S. economy. Nonetheless, far fewer, 51 percent, support proposals to raise the debt limit while also making deep cuts in spending on federal programs.

The reason is that this plan raises hackles on both sides. Twenty-three percent oppose it because they don't want the debt limit raised. But 15 percent oppose it for the opposite reason, because they don't want deep cuts in federal spending. An additional 7 percent don't support either step.

At the same time, plenty do want the deficit addressed. Sixty-four percent say efforts to reduce the deficit should be taken now, rather than waiting until the economy improves, up by 8 points

since December. Most, 57 percent, favor a combination of spending cuts and tax increases to do it; but preference for spending cuts alone is up by 6 points from its low in March, to 37 percent. And if both are used, 52 percent say the spending cuts should be bigger than the tax increases; fewer, 39 percent, favor a 50/50 approach. Naturally, partisanship strongly informs these views.



**MEDICARE** – However, this poll, produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds that Obama leads on another important policy and political matter, trust to protect the Medicare system; he’s ahead of the Republicans on this issue by 49 to 35 percent.

The Republicans have other vulnerabilities here: Americans oppose the Medicare changes in the House-passed budget by 49-32 percent, with twice as many “strongly” opposed as strongly in support. Likewise 49 percent think the plan would require future Medicare recipients to pay more for their health insurance than they would otherwise; 37 percent think they’d pay the same or less (27 and 10 percent, respectively), with the rest uncertain.

Criticism of the Medicare plan reaches 57 percent among seniors, an important group to the Republicans because seniors tend to be ill-disposed toward Obama, and reliably turn out to vote. A large group of seniors, 45 percent, “strongly” opposes the proposed Medicare changes.

**GROUPS** – The losses for Obama in trust to handle the deficit and the economy are based on two elements: independents have moved away from him, and he does less well in his own party than congressional Republicans do in theirs.

Three months ago, for example, independents favored Obama on the economy by 11 points; now they side with the Republicans in Congress by 5 points. And in March, 8 percent of Democrats trusted the congressional Republicans more than Obama on the deficit; now it's 19 percent.

That pattern is reversed, though, on Medicare. On this issue 19 percent of Republicans prefer Obama to their own party, and independents side with Obama by a 15-point margin, 47-32 percent.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone June 2-5, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,002 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

\*= less than 0.5 percent

1-3, 7-14, 22-40, 43-45 previously released.

41-42 held for release.

4. Overall, which party, the (Democrats) or the (Republicans), do you trust to do a better job in coping with the main problems the nation faces over the next few years?

	Democrats	Republicans	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
6/5/11	41	32	2	20	4
10/28/10 RV	45	40	2	11	2
10/28/10 LV	41	45	1	10	2
10/3/10	42	38	3	15	2
9/2/10	40	37	3	18	2
6/6/10	44	32	2	18	4
4/25/10	46	32	2	18	3
2/8/10	43	37	2	17	2
11/15/09	47	31	2	17	3
9/12/09	48	28	3	19	2
2/22/09	56	30	3	9	3
12/14/08	56	23	3	15	3
5/11/08	53	32	2	10	2
10/8/06	54	35	2	7	2
9/7/06	47	38	1	10	4
6/25/06	48	38	1	10	3
5/15/06	50	36	1	11	3
4/9/06	51	37	1	9	2
3/5/06	42	40	2	14	2
1/26/06	51	37	1	8	3
Call for full trend.					

5. When it comes to finding the right balance between [cutting government spending that is not needed] and [continuing government spending that is needed], who do you trust to do a better job - (Obama) or (the Republicans in Congress)?

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
6/5/11	41	44	2	11	2
4/17/11	45	44	2	7	2
3/13/11	43	42	2	10	3

6. Who do you trust to do a better job [ITEM] - (Obama) or (the Republicans in Congress)?

6/5/11 - Summary Table

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
a. Handling the economy	42	45	2	9	2
b. Handling the federal budget deficit	39	47	2	10	2
c. Protecting the Medicare system	49	35	2	10	4
d. Creating jobs	43	42	2	11	2

Trend:

a. Handling the economy

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
6/5/11	42	45	2	9	2
3/13/11	46	34	2	15	4
1/16/11	46	41	3	7	3
12/12/10	44	45	2	7	2
4/25/10	49	38	1	9	2
2/8/10	47	42	1	7	2
12/13/09	48	36	1	12	3
11/15/09	52	37	1	8	1
9/12/09	48	37	1	12	2
7/18/09	56	33	1	9	2
6/21/09	55	31	2	9	2
4/24/09	61	24	2	11	2
3/29/09	58	25	1	14	2
2/22/09	61	26	1	9	3

b. Handling the federal budget deficit

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
6/5/11	39	47	2	10	2
3/13/11	45	36	2	14	4
1/16/11	44	41	4	8	2
12/12/10	39	47	2	9	4
4/25/10	45	41	1	10	3
2/8/10	45	43	1	9	1
9/12/09	50	36	1	12	1
7/18/09	54	35	*	9	2
6/21/09	56	30	2	9	2

c. Protecting the Medicare system

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
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6/5/11	49	35	2	10	4
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Compare to:

Preserving the Medicare system

	Clinton	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/30/95	58	34	1	6	2
10/1/95	54	37	1	4	4
7/17/95*	53	36	1	6	3

\*Protecting the Medicare system

d. Creating jobs

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
6/5/11	43	42	2	11	2
2/8/10	48	41	2	8	2

15. Do you think efforts to reduce the federal deficit (should be taken now), or (should wait until after the economy improves)?

	Now	After economy improves	No opinion
6/5/11	64	33	3
12/12/10	56	40	4

16. Overall, what do you think is the best way to reduce the federal budget deficit - (by cutting federal spending), (by increasing taxes), or by a combination of both?

	Cutting federal spending	Increasing taxes	Combination of both	No opinion
6/5/11	37	4	57	2
4/17/11	36	3	59	2
3/13/11	31	3	64	3
12/12/10	36	2	60	1

17. If deficit reduction comes both from (cutting spending) and from (increasing taxes), should it be more from (cutting spending), or more from (increasing taxes), or should it be half from each?

	Cutting spending	Increasing taxes	Half from each	No opinion
6/5/11	52	8	39	2

18. As you may have heard, in August the federal government will reach its debt limit. Unless Congress raises the amount of money the government can borrow, the government would not be able to borrow more to fund its operations and pay its debts. If the limit is not raised, do you think that would or would not cause serious harm to the U.S. economy?

	Would	Would not	No opinion
6/5/11	71	22	6

19. Would you support or oppose raising the government's debt limit while also making deep cuts in spending on federal programs? IF OPPOSE: Is that because you (oppose raising the debt limit) or because you (oppose deep cuts in federal spending)?

		----- Oppose -----					
		Support	NET	Raising debt limit	Deep cuts in spending	Both (vol.)	No opinion
6/5/11		51	44	23	15	7	5

20. Republicans in the House of Representatives approved a budget plan that would change Medicare, the government health insurance program for the elderly. These changes would affect Americans currently under age 55. From what you've heard about it, do you support or oppose this new plan for Medicare? Do you support/oppose this strongly or somewhat?

		----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
		NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
6/5/11		32	16	16	49	15	35	19

21. Is it your impression that this new plan would require future generations of Medicare recipients - that is, those who are currently under age 55 - to pay (more), (less), or about the same amount for their health insurance than they would pay under the Medicare program as it works now?

		More	Less	Same amount	No opinion
6/5/11		49	10	27	13

\*\*\*END\*\*\*