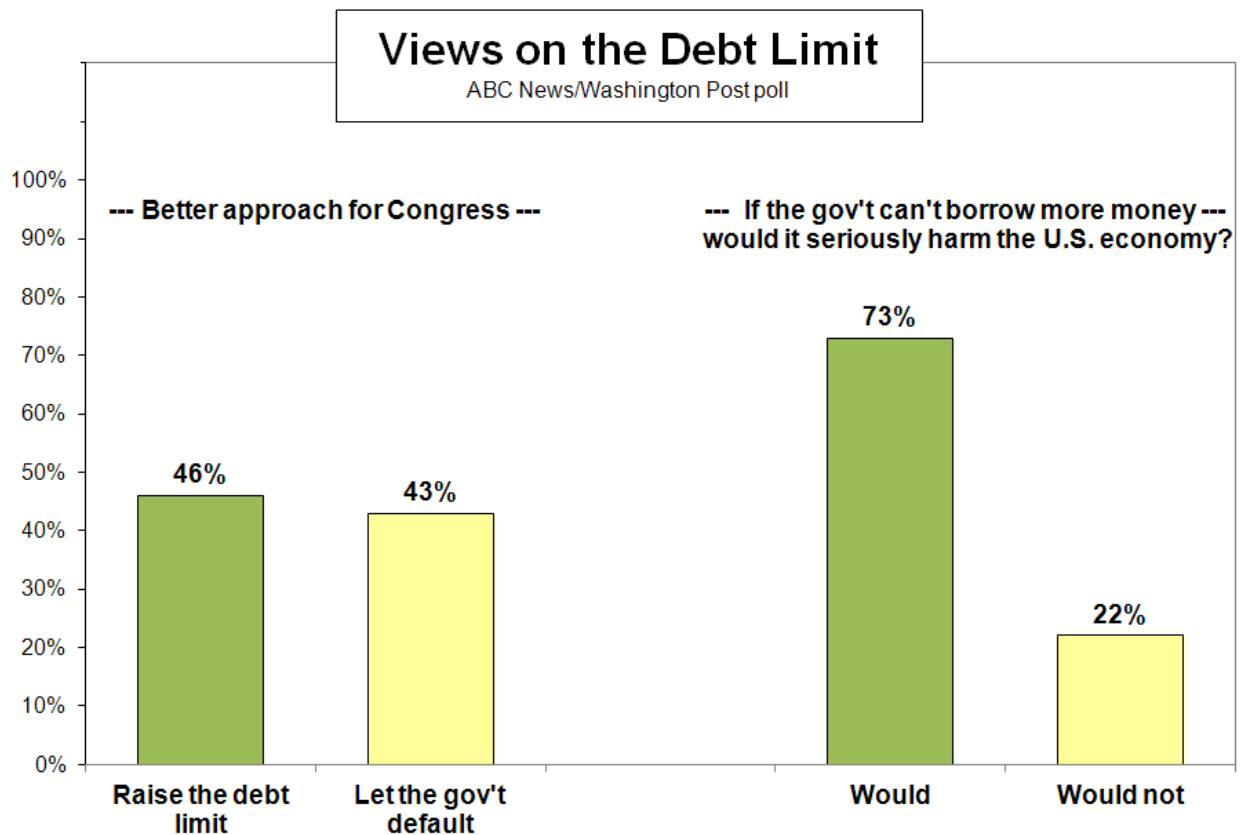


Public Splits on Debt Limit Even with Fears of Damage

Americans are expressing conflicted attitudes about the next round of budget battles in Washington, with the public evenly divided on increasing the nation's debt limit – yet also broadly concerned about economic impact of failing to do so.

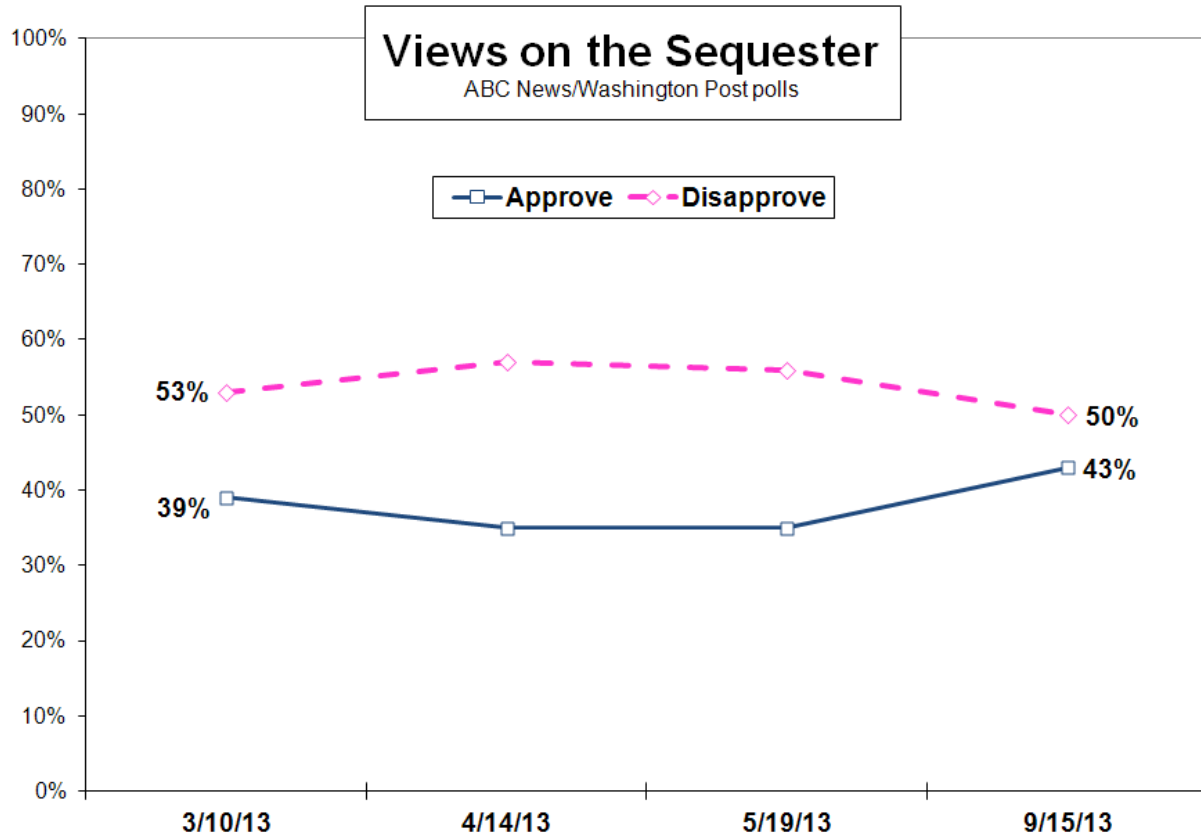
Forty-six percent in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll favor raising the debt limit, but about as many, 43 percent, oppose doing so. At the same time, 73 percent foresee serious damage to the U.S. economy if the limit isn't increased.



The results point to the bind in which the public and lawmakers alike find themselves, torn between the competing interests of controlling the nation's debt, on one hand, and not damaging the economy by defaulting on its obligations, on the other.

Indeed there's a minority for whom debt is the bigger concern: Twenty-six percent of Americans both oppose raising the debt limit, and nonetheless, also believe that not doing so will seriously harm the economy. That group includes disproportionate numbers of conservatives and Republicans – but people of all political and ideological stripes are within its ranks.

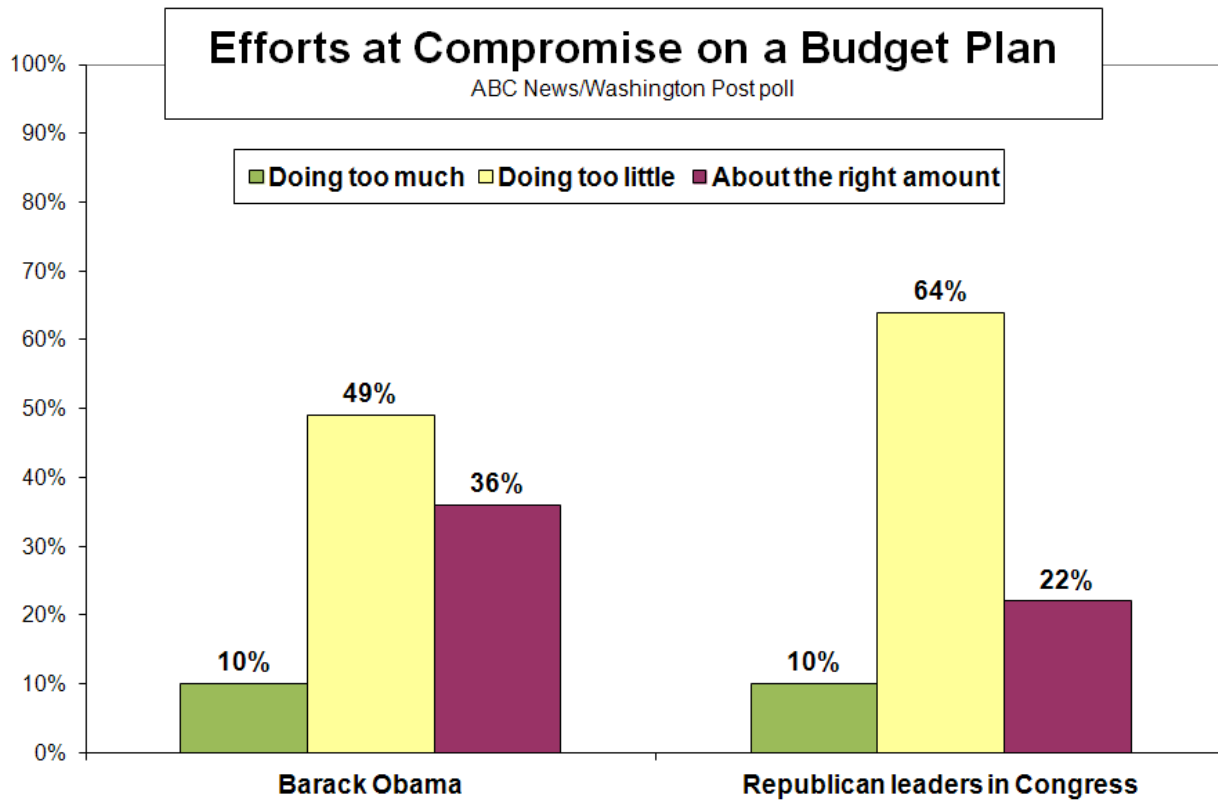
SEQUESTER IMPACT – The poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), also finds increased public acceptance of the current budget sequester – 43 percent of Americans now approve, up 8 points from spring, while 50 percent disapprove, less than a majority for the first time. (However, opinions still are more strongly negative than positive, 30 vs. 19 percent.)



That interacts with views on the debt limit. Among people who approve of the sequester, 54 percent also say the debt limit should not be increased. Among critics of the sequester, many fewer, 36 percent, oppose raising the debt limit. To the extent acceptance of the sequester grows, resistance to raising the debt limit may increase, as well.

Of course the opposite also could be true – if impacts of the sequester were more broadly felt, tolerance for cuts could potentially lessen; for example, if the sequester-related cuts in security were found to be related to the Washington Navy Yard shootings on Monday.

COMPROMISE – Mixed emotions on the debt are reflected in sharply divided trust to handle the issue: Forty-three percent of Americans prefer Barack Obama’s approach, while 40 percent hold greater trust in the Republicans in Congress, with typical partisan and ideological divisions.



That said, Obama has the upper hand on another measure, perceived willingness to compromise. While 49 percent of Americans say Obama’s doing “too little” to compromise with Republican leaders in Congress on a budget plan, far more, 64 percent, say the Republicans are doing too little to compromise with Obama.

The difference is largely among political independents. Fifty-five percent of them say Obama is doing too little to compromise – but 72 percent say that about Republican leaders. The GOP, though, also has comparative trouble in its base. Among self-identified Republicans, 43 percent say their own party is doing too little to compromise. Just half as many Democrats say that about Obama.

The president may be seeking to press his advantage in perceived willingness to compromise vs. Republican leaders. At a speech today before the Business Roundtable, he reiterated that raising the debt ceiling is non-negotiable and accused the GOP of using the debt ceiling to “extort” concessions on “issues that have nothing to do with the budget and nothing to do with the debt.”

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Sept. 12-15, 2013, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,004 adults, including

landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 4 points, including design effect. Partisan divisions are 34-23-34 percent, Democrats-Republicans-independents.

The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

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.

1-2, 3a,b,d, 4-16 and 22-26 previously released or held for release.

3c. (HALF SAMPLE) Who do you trust to do a better job handling negotiations over the federal budget - (Obama) or (the Republicans in Congress)?

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
9/15/13	43	40	1	12	4

17. What do you think is better - for Congress to raise the debt limit so the government can keep paying its bills and obligations or for Congress not to raise the debt limit and let the government default on paying its bills and obligations?

	Raise the debt limit	Not raise the debt limit	No opinion
9/15/13	46	43	10

18. If the government cannot borrow more money to fund its operations and pay its debts, do you think that would or would not cause serious harm to the U.S. economy?

	Would	Would not	No opinion
9/15/13	73	22	6
7/17/11*	82	16	2
6/5/11**	71	22	6

*included "after August second"

**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?

19. On a related issue, do you think Obama is doing too (much), too (little) or about the right amount to compromise with the Republican leaders in Congress on a budget plan?

	Too much	Too little	About the right amount	No opinion
9/15/13	10	49	36	5

20. Do you think the Republican leaders in Congress are doing too (much), too (little) or about the right amount to compromise with Obama on a budget plan?

	Too much	Too little	About the right amount	No opinion
9/15/13	10	64	22	4

21. As you may know, automatic across-the-board cuts in federal spending have taken effect because Obama and the Republicans in Congress were unable to reach a budget agreement earlier this year. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of these budget cuts taking place? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
9/15/13	43	19	24	50	21	30	7
5/19/13*	35	16	20	56	18	39	8
4/14/13	35	16	19	57	20	37	8
3/10/13**	39	16	23	53	19	34	8

*5/19 and previous have begun to take effect"

**"unable to reach a budget agreement last week"

*** END ***