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On Immigration Policy, Wider Partisan Divide Over Border Fence Than Path to Legal Status

*60% of Public Opposes Ending
'Birthright Citizenship'*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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On Immigration Policy, Wider Partisan Divide Over Border Fence Than Path to Legal Status

60% of Public Opposes Ending ‘Birthright Citizenship’

As immigration emerges as a key issue in the presidential campaign, there is little common ground between Republicans and Democrats in views of several immigration policy proposals. But partisan disagreements are much more pronounced on some issues than others.

Overall, the public continues to be divided over building a fence along the entire U.S.-Mexican border: 46% favor erecting a fence, while 48% are opposed, little changed from 2011.

A large majority of Republicans (73%) support a border fence, while 23% are opposed.

Democrats oppose building a border fence, 66% to 23%.

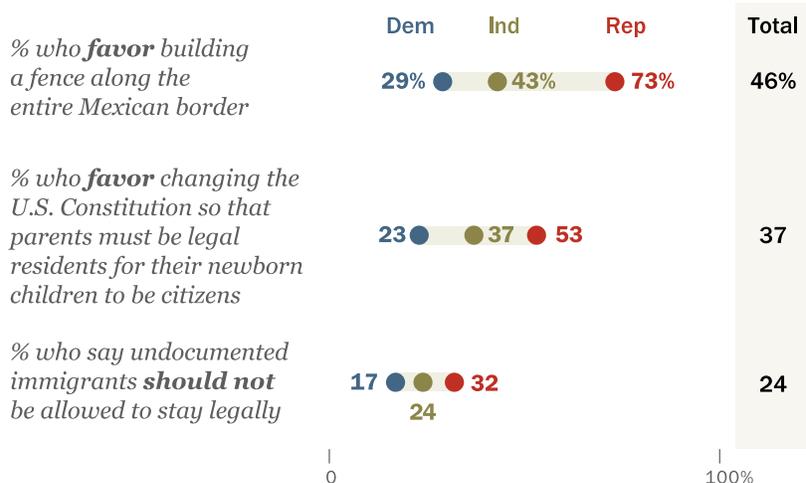
Among independents, 43% favor a border fence, while 52% oppose this idea.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted Sept. 22-27 among 1,502 adults, finds that most Americans (60%) oppose the idea of

changing the U.S. Constitution to prohibit children of those who are not legal residents from becoming citizens; 37% favor changing the Constitution to end “birthright citizenship.”

Again, Republicans and Democrats are far apart on this issue: By 75% to 23%, Democrats oppose changing the Constitution to ban birthright citizenship. Republicans are evenly divided: About half (53%) favor amending the Constitution, while 44% are opposed.

Partisan Gaps on Immigration Issues



Survey conducted Sept. 22-27, 2015.

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By contrast, large majorities in both parties continue to favor a way for allowing undocumented immigrants to stay in the U.S. legally, if certain requirements are met. About two-thirds of Republicans (66%) say people in the U.S. illegally should be allowed to stay if they meet certain requirements, while 32% say they should not be allowed to stay legally. By nearly a factor of five-to-one (80% to 17%), Democrats say undocumented immigrants should be allowed to stay in the U.S. legally, provided certain requirements are met.

Little Overall Change Since 2007 in Views of a Border Fence

Public opinion about building a fence along the entire U.S.-Mexican border has shown virtually no change since 2007 or 2011. But age and partisan differences in opinions about a proposed border fence have widened, with Republicans becoming more supportive and Democrats less so over the past four years.

Nearly three-quarters of Republicans (73%) now favor building a fence across the entire border with Mexico, up from 62% in 2011. Since then, support for a fence has increased 17 percentage points among moderate and liberal Republicans (from 54% to 71%) and eight points among conservative Republicans (66% then, 74% now).

Over the same period, the share of Democrats who favor building a border fence has declined 10 points (from 39% to 29%). Independents' views (43% favor) are unchanged since 2011 (44%) or 2007 (43%).

Today, adults 50 and older are 18 points more likely than those under 30 to favor building a fence across the entire border (52% vs. 34%). In 2011, there was a seven-point difference in support for building a fence (48% of those 50 and older vs. 41% of those younger than 30). In

Wider Age and Partisan Differences Over Building a Border Fence

% who favor building fence along entire U.S.-Mexican border ...

	Jan 2007	Oct 2011	Sept 2015	11-15 change
	%	%	%	
Total	46	46	46	0
White	49	51	54	+3
Black	35	40	33	-7
Hispanic	20	30	25	+5
18-29	44	41	34	-7
30-49	48	49	46	-3
50+	44	48	52	+4
College grad+	38	40	37	-3
Some college	50	49	51	+2
HS or less	48	49	49	0
Republican	65	62	73	+11
Cons Rep	70	66	74	+8
Mod/lib Rep	54	54	71	+17
Independent	43	44	43	-1
Democrat	37	39	29	-10
Cons/Mod Dem	39	46	34	-12
Liberal Dem	34	25	23	-2

Survey conducted Sept. 22-27, 2015. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

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2007, identical percentages of older and younger people favored building a fence.

Most Favor Continued Birthright Citizenship

There is broad awareness of birthright citizenship for children born to illegal immigrants in the United States: 90% say they are aware that these children are automatically citizens. About four-in-ten (37%) favor changing the Constitution so that parents must be legal residents of the U.S. in order for their newborn children to be citizens; 60% favor leaving the Constitution as it is.

Large majorities of those under 30 (71%) and those ages 30-49 (66%) oppose limiting birthright citizenship. Older age groups are more divided: Among those ages 50-64 as many favor (47%) as oppose (48%) this change to the Constitution. Among those 65 and older, 43% favor changing the Constitution, while 52% are opposed.

Whites are far more supportive (44% favor) of changing the Constitution to end birthright citizenship than are blacks (26%) or Hispanics (17%). There are only slight differences in opinions among those of differing levels of education.

Hispanics and Young People Broadly Oppose Changing Birthright Citizenship

Change Constitution to bar citizenship for U.S.-born children of parents who are not legal residents ...

	Favor changing Constitution	Leave Constitution as is	Other/ DK
	%	%	%
Total	37	60	4=100
White	44	53	4=100
Black	26	70	4=100
Hispanic	17	79	3=100
18-29	27	71	2=100
30-49	31	66	3=100
50-64	47	48	5=100
65+	43	52	5=100
College grad+	36	61	3=100
Some college	39	59	3=100
HS or less	35	60	5=100
Republican	53	44	3=100
Democrat	23	75	3=100
Independent	37	58	4=100

Survey conducted Sept. 22-27, 2015. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

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Opinions about birthright citizenship have changed only modestly among most sub-groups since the Pew Research Center began asking the question in 2006. But partisan differences have widened over the last four years: In 2011, 47% of Republicans and 32% of Democrats favored changing the Constitution to end birthright citizenship. Today, the gap is 30 percentage points (53% of Republicans, 23% of Democrats).

Views on Birthright Citizenship 2006-2015

% who favor changing Constitution to bar citizenship for U.S.-born children of parents who are not legal residents

	March 2006	June 2010	Feb 2011	Sept 2015
	%	%	%	%
Total	42	41	39	37
White	45	44	43	44
Black	35	38	38	26
Hispanic	23	24	23	17
18-29	33	30	25	27
30-49	46	38	39	31
50+	43	49	45	46
Republican	50	51	47	53
Cons Rep	52	55	49	56
Mod/lib Rep	47	44	44	46
Independent	44	39	39	37
Democrat	36	34	32	23
Cons/Mod Dem	41	37	37	26
Liberal Dem	27	30	22	18

Survey conducted Sept. 22-27, 2015. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

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Broad Support for Providing Legal Status to Undocumented Immigrants

The public's views on how to handle undocumented immigrants in the U.S. has changed little since May. Currently, 74% say there should be a way for them to stay in the country legally, if certain requirements are met.

About a quarter (24%) say undocumented immigrants should not be allowed to stay in the U.S. legally.

Most of those who favor providing legal status to people living in the U.S. illegally say they should be allowed to apply for U.S. citizenship (47% of the public), while 24% say they should be able to apply for permanent residency, but not citizenship.

As in the past, majorities across all demographic and partisan groups favor providing legal status to undocumented immigrants. Republicans (66%) continue to be less likely than independents (74%) or Democrats (80%) to support a path to legal status for those in the U.S. illegally.

Immigrants Living in the U.S. who Meet Certain Requirements Should ...

	Be allowed to stay legally	And be able to apply for... Citizenship	Permanent residency	Not allowed to stay legally	DK
	%	%	%	%	%
Total	74	47	24	24	3=100
White	68	43	23	29	3=100
Black	83	58	23	15	2=100
Hispanic	87	62	23	11	2=100
18-29	82	55	26	17	1=100
30-49	72	46	25	25	3=100
50-64	72	45	24	27	1=100
65+	69	44	22	26	5=100
Republican	66	37	28	32	2=100
Cons Rep	61	36	24	38	2=100
Mod/lib Rep	80	43	35	19	2=100
Independent	74	48	24	24	2=100
Democrat	80	57	21	17	3=100
Cons/Mod Dem	78	54	23	20	2=100
Liberal Dem	85	62	20	12	3=100

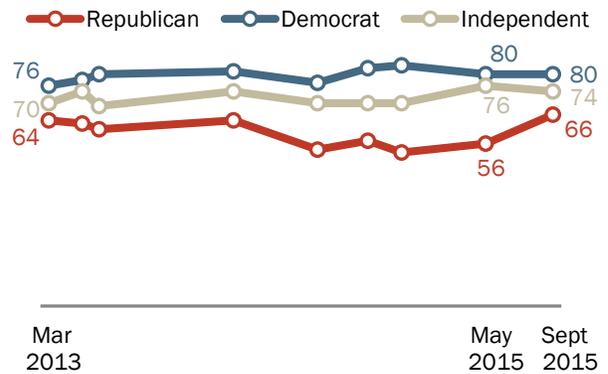
Survey conducted Sept. 22-27, 2015. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. "Don't know" responses to question about citizenship/permanent residency are not shown. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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However, Republican support for finding a way to allow undocumented immigrants to stay in the U.S. if they meet certain requirements has increased 10 percentage points since May, from 56% to 66%. There has been virtually no change in opinion among Democrats or independents.

Since May, Republicans Have Become More Supportive of Path to Legal Status

% saying there should be a way for undocumented immigrants to stay in the U.S., if requirements are met ...



Survey conducted Sept. 22-27, 2015.

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About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted September 22-27, 2015 among a national sample of 1,502 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (525 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 977 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 560 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2013 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cell phone only, or both landline and cell phone), based on extrapolations from the 2014 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,502	2.9 percentage points
Republican	421	5.5 percentage points
Democrat	456	5.3 percentage points
Independent	564	4.7 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	1,058	3.5 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	140	9.5 percentage points
Hispanic	174	8.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
SEPTEMBER 2015 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
SEPTEMBER 22-27, 2015
N=1,502**

QUESTIONS 1-2, 5, 7-9, 11, 20, 27-28, 33-36, 39, 45-47, 51-52, 54-57 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 3-4, 10, 12, 14-19, 21-26, 29-32, 37-38, 40-44, 48-50, 53

QUESTIONS 6, 13 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

Next,

Q.58 Which comes closer to your view about how to handle undocumented immigrants who are now living in the U.S.? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]** [They should not be allowed to stay in this country legally] **[OR]** [There should be a way for them to stay in the country legally, if certain requirements are met]

ASK IF ALLOWED TO STAY IN THE COUNTRY (Q.58=2) [N=1,113]:

Q.59 And do you think immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally and meet the requirements should **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]** [Be able to apply for U.S. citizenship] **[OR]** [Be able to apply for permanent residency, but not U.S. citizenship]

	Allowed to stay <u>legally</u>	<i>Apply for citizenship</i>	<i>Permanent residency, not citizenship</i>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>	Not allowed to stay <u>legally</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Sep 22-27, 2015	74	47	24	2	24	3
May 12-18, 2015	72	42	26	4	27	2
Dec 3-7, 2014 (U)	70	43	24	3	27	3
Oct 15-20, 2014	71	42	25	4	25	3
Jul 8-14, 2014	68	40	24	3	30	3
Feb 14-23, 2014	73	46	24	3	24	3
Jun 12-16, 2013	71	--	--	--	25	2
May 1-5, 2013	73	44	25	4	25	3
Mar 13-17, 2013 ¹	71	43	24	4	27	2

NO QUESTIONS 60-61

ASK ALL:

Q.62 Were you aware that a child born to illegal immigrants in the U.S. is automatically a U.S. citizen, or weren't you aware of that?

Sep 22-27 <u>2015</u>		Feb 2-7 <u>2011</u>	Jun 16-20 <u>2010</u>	March <u>2006</u>
90	Yes, aware	87	85	80
8	No, not aware	12	14	19
*	Constitution does not automatically allow newborns to be citizens (VOL.)	--	--	--
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	*	1

¹ In May 2013 and March 2013, question read "Which comes closer to your view about how to handle immigrants who are now living in the U.S. illegally?" and the second answer choice read "There should be a way for those who meet certain requirements to stay in the country legally."

ASK ALL:

Q.63 Would you favor changing the Constitution so that the parents must be legal residents of the U.S. in order for their newborn child to be a citizen, or should the Constitution be left as it is?

Sep 22-27 <u>2015</u>		Feb 2-6 <u>2011</u>	Jun 16-20 <u>2010</u>	March <u>2006</u>
37	Favor changing Constitution	39	41	42
60	Leave Constitution as is	57	56	54
1	Constitution does not automatically allow newborns to be citizens (VOL.)	--	--	--
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	4	4	4

ASK ALL:

Q.64 All in all, would you favor or oppose building a fence along the entire border with Mexico?

Sep 22-27 <u>2015</u>	
46	Favor
48	Oppose
5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:

Building a fence along the entire border with Mexico

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011 ²	46	47	6
January, 2007 ³	46	48	6
CNN: September, 2006	54	44	2

NO QUESTIONS 65-76

² In Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011, January 2007, and September 2006 surveys, item was asked as part of a list.

³ In January 2007, and September 2006 surveys, the item was worded: "Building a fence along 700 miles of the border with Mexico?"

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>No preference</u>	<u>Other party</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>
Sep 22-27, 2015	26	30	40	2	*	2	15	16
Jul 14-20, 2015	22	32	41	4	*	1	15	19
May 12-18, 2015	24	32	38	3	1	2	15	18
Mar 25-29, 2015	25	30	39	4	*	2	15	17
Feb 18-22, 2015	24	31	38	4	1	1	18	17
Jan 7-11, 2015	21	30	44	3	1	1	19	18
Dec 3-7, 2014	24	31	39	3	1	2	17	17
Nov 6-9, 2014	27	32	36	2	*	1	15	16
Oct 15-20, 2014	24	33	38	4	*	1	13	17
Sep 2-9, 2014	24	33	38	3	1	2	15	15
Yearly Totals								
2014	23.2	31.5	39.5	3.1	.7	2.0	16.2	16.5
2013	23.9	32.1	38.3	2.9	.5	2.2	16.0	16.0
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

ASK REPUBLICANS AND REPUBLICAN LEANERS ONLY (PARTY=1 OR PARTYLN=1):

TEAPARTY3 From what you know, do you agree or disagree with the Tea Party movement, or don't you have an opinion either way?

BASED ON REPUBLICANS AND REPUBLICAN LEANERS [N=406]:

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No opinion either way</u>	(VOL.) <u>Haven't heard of</u>	(VOL.) <u>Refused</u>	Not heard of/ <u>DK</u>
Sep 25-27, 2015 ⁴	28	11	58	2	1	--
May 12-18, 2015	34	13	51	1	*	--
Mar 25-29, 2015	35	11	52	1	1	--
Feb 18-22, 2015	36	9	54	*	*	--
Jan 7-11, 2015	34	9	54	1	2	--
Dec 3-7, 2014	34	9	55	2	1	--
Nov 6-9, 2014	31	10	57	1	1	--
Oct 15-20, 2014	32	8	56	2	2	--
Sep 2-9, 2014	38	10	50	1	1	--
Aug 20-24, 2014	34	10	53	*	2	--
Jul 8-14, 2014	35	12	50	2	1	--
Apr 23-27, 2014	33	11	54	1	1	--
Jan 23-Mar 16, 2014	37	11	50	1	1	--
Feb 14-23, 2014	36	9	54	1	1	--
Jan 15-19, 2014	35	12	52	1	*	--
Dec 3-8, 2013	32	9	57	1	1	--
Oct 30-Nov 6, 2013	40	9	48	2	1	--
Oct 9-13, 2013	41	11	45	2	1	--
Sep 4-8, 2013	35	9	54	1	1	--
Jul 17-21, 2013	37	10	50	2	1	--
Jun 12-16, 2013	44	9	46	1	2	--
May 23-26, 2013	41	7	48	1	3	--
May 1-5, 2013	28	8	61	2	1	--
Mar 13-17, 2013	43	7	47	1	1	--
Feb 13-18, 2013	36	9	52	1	3	--
Feb 14-17, 2013	43	9	45	1	2	--
Jan 9-13, 2013	35	10	51	2	2	--
Dec 5-9, 2012	37	11	51	1	*	--
Oct 31-Nov 3, 2012 (RVs)	40	8	49	1	2	--
Oct 4-7, 2012	38	9	50	1	3	--
Sep 12-16, 2012	39	7	52	1	1	--
Jun 28-Jul 9, 2012	40	9	47	2	1	--
Jun 7-17, 2012	42	8	48	1	1	--
May 9-Jun 3, 2012	36	9	53	1	2	--
Apr 4-15, 2012	42	8	48	1	1	--
Mar 7-11, 2012	38	10	49	2	1	--
Feb 8-12, 2012	40	7	51	1	1	--
Jan 11-16, 2012	42	8	47	1	1	--
Jan 4-8, 2012	37	8	52	1	1	--
Dec 7-11, 2011	40	9	48	2	1	--
Nov 9-14, 2011	41	9	49	*	1	--
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011	37	11	51	1	1	--
Aug 17-21, 2011	43	7	49	*	1	--
Jul 20-24, 2011	40	7	51	*	1	--
Jun 15-19, 2011	42	9	47	1	1	--
May 25-30, 2011	37	7	52	1	3	--
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	45	9	46	*	1	--
Mar 8-14, 2011	37	7	54	1	*	--

⁴ Question asked September 25-27, N=406.

TEAPARTY3 CONTINUED...

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No opinion either way</u>	<u>(VOL.) Haven't heard of</u>	<u>(VOL.) Refused</u>	<u>Not heard of/ DK</u>
Feb 22-Mar 1, 2011	41	9	48	1	1	--
Feb 2-7, 2011 ⁵	43	8	47	1	1	--
Jan 5-9, 2011	45	6	47	1	1	--
Dec 1-5, 2010	48	5	45	1	1	--
Nov 4-7, 2010	51	5	42	1	1	--
Oct 27-30, 2010 (RVs)	58	5	27	--	1	9
Oct 13-18, 2010 (RVs)	54	5	30	--	1	10
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010 (RVs)	56	6	29	--	*	9
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	46	5	36	--	1	13
Jun 16-20, 2010	46	5	30	--	*	19
May 20-23, 2010	53	4	25	--	1	16
Mar 11-21, 2010	48	4	26	--	1	21

QUESTIONS 77-79 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**Key to Pew Research trends noted in the topline:**

(U)	Pew Research Center/USA Today polls
(WP)	Pew Research Center/Washington Post polls

⁵ In the February 2-7, 2011, survey and before, question read "...do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the Tea Party movement..." In October 2010 and earlier, question was asked only of those who had heard or read a lot or a little about the Tea Party. In May 2010 through October 2010, it was described as: "the Tea Party movement that has been involved in campaigns and protests in the U.S. over the past year." In March 2010 it was described as "the Tea Party protests that have taken place in the U.S. over the past year."