



**SOCIAL
SECURITY
WORKS.**



Changing the COLA

**Findings from a national omnibus survey of
1000 adults.**

National Committee to Preserve Social
Security and Medicare Foundation, and Social
Security Works.

November 17th, 2011

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Survey Methodology

- Lake Research Partners designed this survey that was administered by Caravan in an omnibus survey conducted by telephone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,000 adults 18 years of age and older nationwide in the continental United States. The survey was conducted from November 10-13, 2011. Completed interviews were weighted by four variables: age, sex, race and census region to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total population, 18 years of age and older. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 percent.

Key Findings

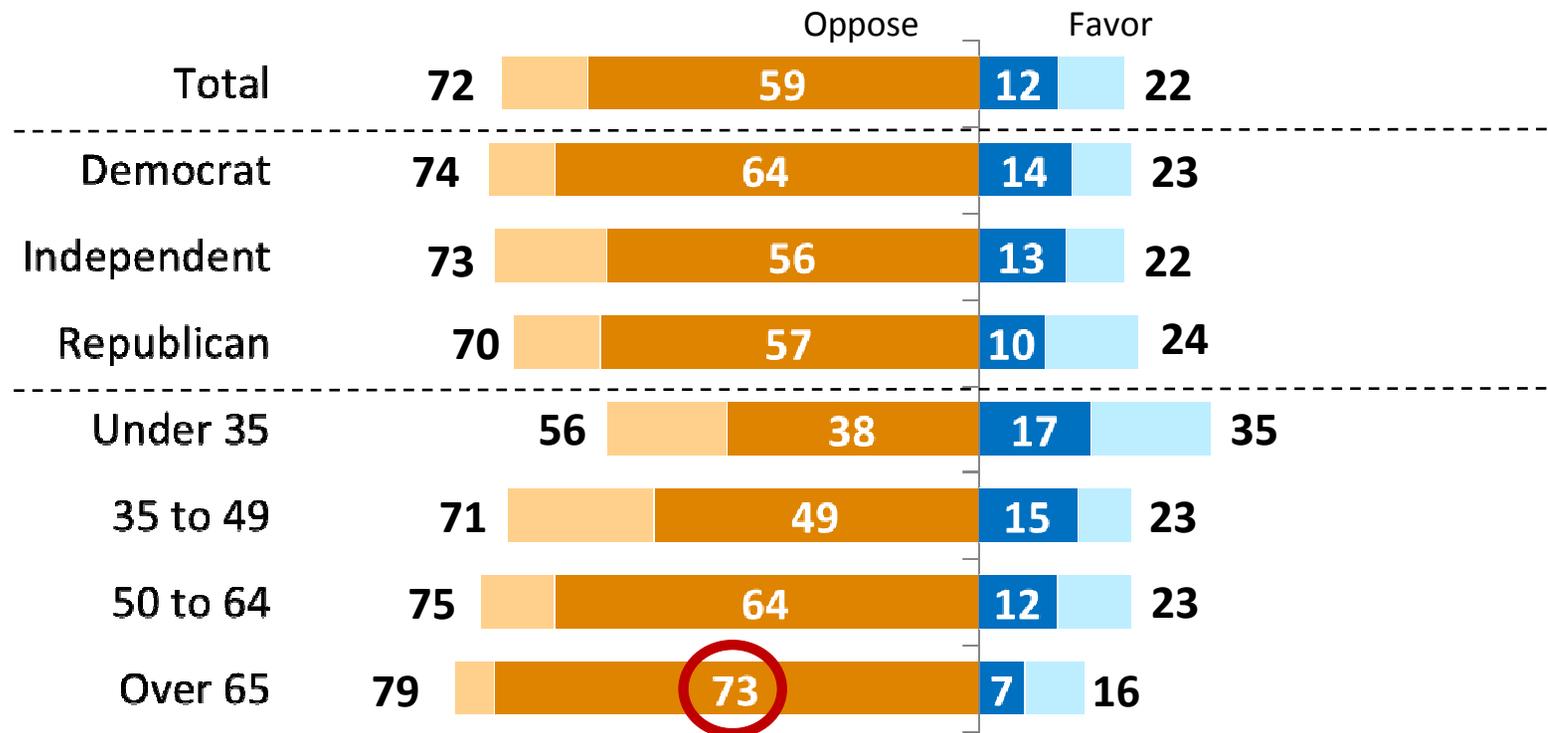
- **Americans across party lines strongly oppose changing the COLA formula in a way that curbs increases for beneficiaries now and in the future. In our November omnibus, 72 percent of Americans opposed changing the COLA formula, including 74 percent of Democrats, 73 percent of independents, and 70 percent of Republicans.**
- **Seniors are particularly opposed to changing the COLA as 79 percent of people over 65 oppose, including 73 percent who strongly oppose.**
- **Americans are more inclined to agree with a candidate who says that the proposed COLA change is actually a benefit cut than they are with the candidate who says it is a minor technical change that would extend the time Social Security can pay full benefits.**
- **Majorities of Democrats (60 percent) and Independents (55 percent) agree with the candidate who says the proposed change is actually a benefit cut, as do a plurality of Republicans (48 percent).**
- **Cutting the Social Security COLA has electoral consequences. After hearing argumentation, a 58 percent majority say they would be less likely to vote for their member of Congress if he or she votes to change the COLA in a way that reduces benefits, and just 14 percent would be more likely. Backlash to a vote on changing the COLA extends across party lines as 69 percent of Democrats, 56 percent of independents, and 52 percent of Republicans say they would be less likely to vote for their member of Congress. Just 11 percent of Democrats, 15 percent of Republicans, and 17 percent of Independents say they are more likely to vote for their member of Congress.**

Americans strongly oppose reducing COLA increases, especially those older than 65 years old, when given a description of the proposed change.

Currently, Social Security benefits increase to adjust for inflation in the price of goods and services that occurred over the year. This annual increase is known as a cost of living adjustment, or COLA.

Congress is now considering a proposal to reduce the federal deficit by reducing COLA increases for beneficiaries now and in the future. Do you support or oppose this proposal? (IF CHOICE) And is that strongly or not so strongly?

Support For Reducing COLA Increases – WITH EXPLANATION OF COLA's



Darker colors indicate intensity

*Split sampled question

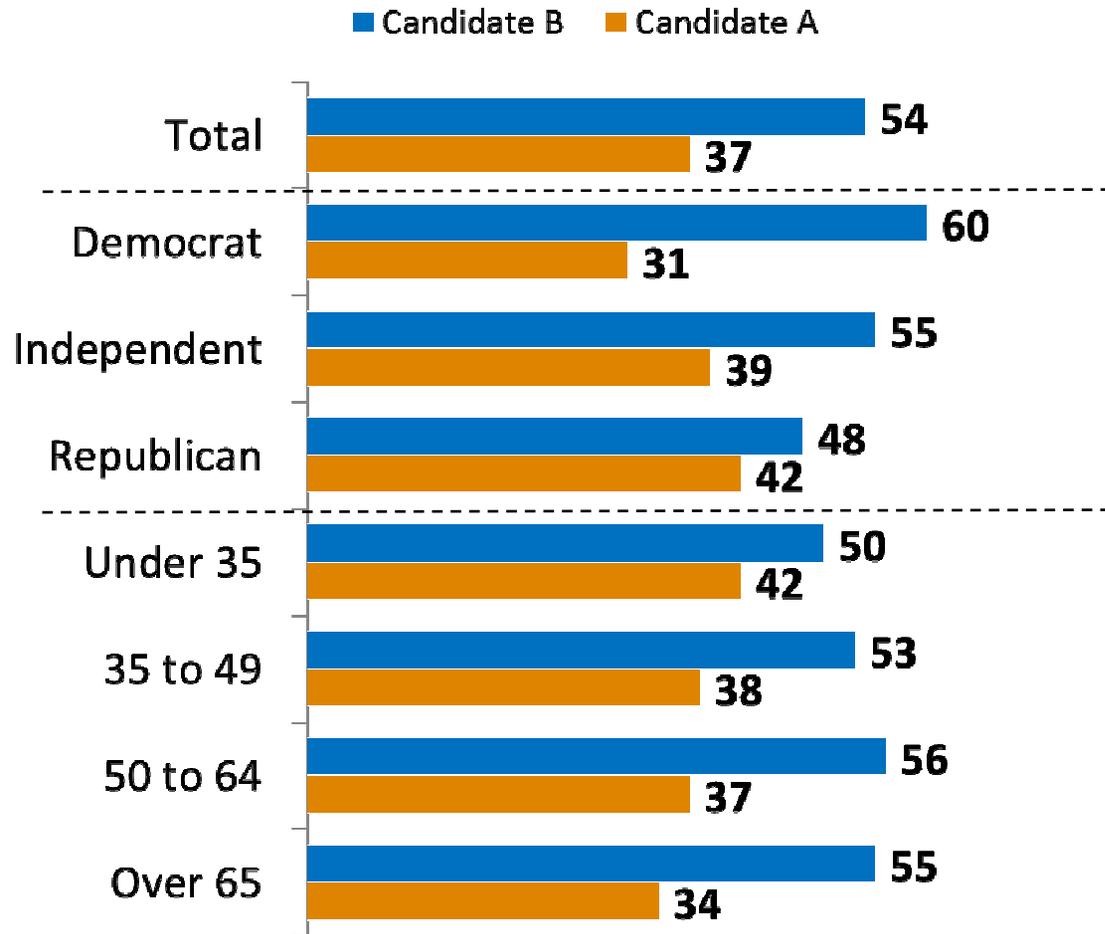
Across party and generational lines, Americans agree with the candidate who says that changing the COLA is a benefit cut.

Social Security has been using one measure of inflation to calculate cost of living increases, and some are proposing using a different measure of inflation.

CANDIDATE A says this is a **minor technical change** that makes the cost of living adjustment **more accurate**, allowing benefits to continue to grow but just at a slower rate. The change would **reduce the overall deficit**, saving over 100 billion dollars in the next 10 years, and it **would extend the time that Social Security can continue to pay full benefits**.

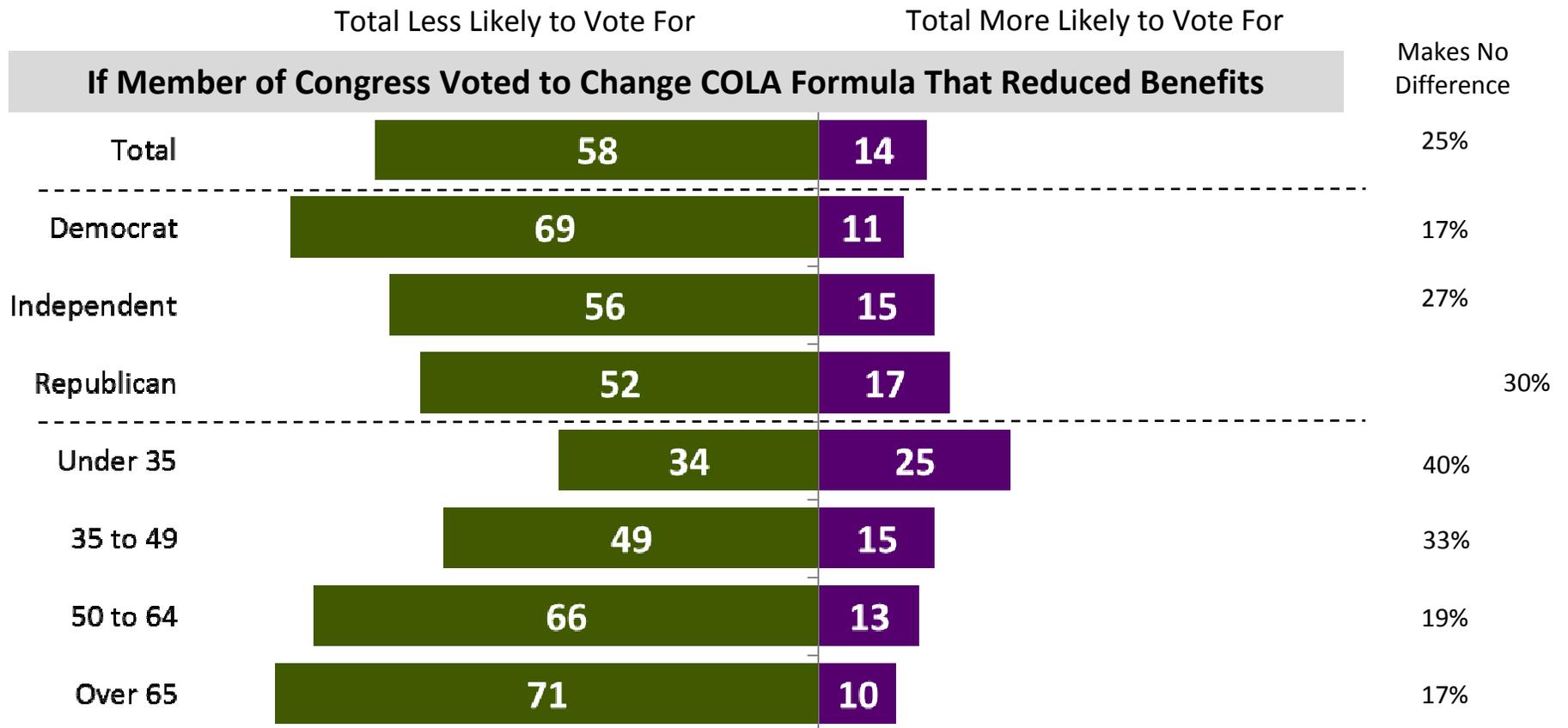
CANDIDATE B says that inflation is higher for seniors because they spend **more of their money on health care costs which have been rising faster than other costs**. This so-called minor technical change **is really a cut in Social Security benefits** that hurts people who depend on Social Security by **making it harder for them to make ends meet**.

Statements Rotated



Americans across partisan lines, and especially retirees and near retirees, would be less likely to vote for their member of Congress if he or she votes to change COLA's in a way that reduces benefits.

If your member of Congress votes to change the cost of living adjustment formula in a way that reduces Social Security benefits now and in the future, would you be more or less likely to vote for them or would it make no difference to you?





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