

National Rural Survey Results

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Interviews: 803 rural voters
 Dates: June 10-15, 2005

47 Male
 53 Female
[109]

FINAL
 Study #7647
 Social Security Rural Survey

June 2005

Please note: all results are shown as percentages unless otherwise stated.

1a. Did you get a chance to vote in last November's presidential election, or were you not able to vote?

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|------------------|--------------|
| Yes, voted..... | 100 | CONTINUE | [138] |
| No, did not vote..... | - | TERMINATE | |
| Not sure..... | - | | |

1b. In the 2004 presidential election, did you vote for George W. Bush or John Kerry?

(IF "REFUSED," READ:) I understand the confidentiality of your vote and the privacy of the voting booth, but I want to assure you that this poll is being completed for research purposes only and that all responses given will remain strictly confidential. To help me do the best research possible, would you please reconsider and tell me which candidate you voted for?

| | | | |
|--|----|--------------|--|
| Voted for George W. Bush..... | 57 | [139] | |
| Voted for John Kerry..... | 37 | | |
| Voted for Ralph Nader/other (VOL)..... | 2 | | |
| Refused (VOL)..... | 4 | | |
| Not sure..... | - | | |

2. Do you think that the country would be better off if the Republicans controlled Congress, or if the Democrats controlled Congress?

| | | | |
|-------------------------|----|--------------|--|
| Democrats..... | 33 | [142] | |
| Republicans..... | 33 | | |
| Neither/both (VOL)..... | 20 | | |
| Not sure..... | 14 | | |

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3. Which one or two of the following issues do you think should be the highest priorities for Congress and the President this year?

THIS TABLE HAS BEEN RANKED BY THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|------------------|
| Dealing with health care costs..... | 33 | [143-144] |
| Reforming Social Security..... | 25 | > |
| Improving the economy..... | 24 | |
| Fighting terrorism..... | 24 | |
| Improving education..... | 20 | |
| Reducing the budget deficit..... | 15 | |
| Reducing taxes..... | 9 | |
| All (VOL)..... | 9 | |
| None (VOL)..... | 1 | |
| Not sure..... | 1 | |

4. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the issue of Social Security?

| | | |
|-----------------|----|--------------|
| Approve..... | 31 | [145] |
| Disapprove..... | 52 | |
| Not sure..... | 17 | |

5. Do you think that the federal government should make major changes in the Social Security system to ensure its long-term future in the next year or two, within the next ten years, or do you think that major changes are not needed within the next ten years?

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----|--------------|
| In the next year or two..... | 45 | [146] |
| Within the next 10 years..... | 35 | |
| Changes not needed..... | 15 | |
| No opinion/not sure..... | 5 | |

- 6a. If you had to choose one of the following approaches to ensuring Social Security's long-term future, would you rather raise Social Security taxes or reduce the amount of benefits for future Social Security recipients?

| | | |
|----------------------|----|--------------|
| Raise taxes..... | 59 | [147] |
| Reduce benefits..... | 19 | |
| Not sure..... | 22 | |

- 6b. Currently, people pay Social Security taxes only on the first ninety thousand dollars of their income. Would you favor or oppose raising the amount of income that is subject to Social Security taxes?

| | | |
|----------------------------|----|--------------|
| Favor raising amount..... | 72 | [148] |
| Oppose raising amount..... | 21 | |
| Not sure..... | 7 | |

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6c. Some people have proposed that Social Security benefits for future retirees should be reduced, in exchange for providing people with more tax breaks when they save for retirement. Which do you think should be the higher priority for Congress—maintaining guaranteed Social Security benefits or increasing tax breaks for retirement savings?

| | | |
|--------------------------|----|--------------|
| Maintain benefits..... | 66 | [149] |
| Increase tax breaks..... | 26 | |
| Not sure..... | 8 | |

7. Now here are some statements about Social Security, and for each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement.

THIS TABLE HAS BEEN RANKED BY THE PERCENTAGE WHO SAY STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT AGREE

| | <u>Strongly Agree</u> | <u>Somewhat Agree</u> | <u>Somewhat Disagree</u> | <u>Strongly Disagree</u> | <u>Not Sure</u> | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| People have a right to their Social Security benefits, because they earned them by paying payroll taxes..... | 82 | 14 | 2 | 1 | 1 | [154] |
| A lot of people in my community depend on Social Security for their financial security..... | 67 | 22 | 4 | 4 | 3 | [151] |
| Social Security has been very important to people in my family..... | 65 | 20 | 8 | 5 | 2 | [152] |
| I feel that Social Security is consistent with my moral values..... | 51 | 27 | 8 | 5 | 9 | [150] |
| Social Security is a bad deal for young workers..... | 17 | 15 | 23 | 41 | 4 | [153] |
| Social Security should provide a chance for a better rate of return, even if that means people's guaranteed benefits are put at risk. | 12 | 20 | 25 | 36 | 7 | [155] |
| Social Security benefits should be reduced in order to strengthen the system's finances | 5 | 16 | 18 | 58 | 3 | [156] |

8a. When it comes to Social Security, which party do you think would do a better job—the Democratic Party or the Republican Party? *

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|--------------|
| Democratic Party would do better..... | 40 | [157] |
| Republican Party would do better..... | 32 | |
| Both/neither (VOL)..... | 16 | |
| Not sure..... | 12 | |

* Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM A).

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8b. Who would do a better job handling Social Security—George W. Bush or the Democrats in Congress? **

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----|--------------|
| Bush would do better..... | 31 | [158] |
| Democrats would do better..... | 41 | |
| Both equally/neither (VOL)..... | 13 | |
| Not sure..... | 15 | |

** Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM B).

9. How much have you heard about George W. Bush's ideas and proposals for changing Social Security—a great deal, a fair amount, just a little, or not much?

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----|--------------|
| Heard a great deal..... | 32 | [159] |
| Heard a fair amount..... | 43 | |
| Heard just a little..... | 16 | |
| Not heard much..... | 8 | |
| Heard nothing at all (VOL)..... | 1 | |
| Not sure..... | - | |

10. From what you have heard so far, do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose George W. Bush's proposals for changing Social Security?

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Total Favor | 39 | [160] |
| Strongly favor..... | 12 | |
| Somewhat favor..... | 27 | |
| Total Oppose | 53 | |
| Somewhat oppose..... | 17 | |
| Strongly oppose..... | 36 | |
| Haven't heard anything (VOL)..... | 2 | |
| Not sure..... | 6 | |

11a. Based on what you have heard or read, do you think that the proposals for Social Security made by George W. Bush would cut the amount of Social Security benefits you, personally, will receive, OR protect the amount of Social Security benefits you, personally, will receive?

| | | |
|-----------------------|----|--------------|
| Cut benefits..... | 50 | [161] |
| Protect benefits..... | 33 | |
| Not sure..... | 17 | |

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11b. Do you think that George W. Bush's Social Security proposal would make the financial condition of Social Security stronger or weaker?

| | | |
|----------------------|----|--------------|
| Stronger..... | 32 | [162] |
| Weaker..... | 53 | |
| No change (VOL)..... | 3 | |
| Not sure..... | 12 | |

12a. One part of George W. Bush's Social Security proposal would allow people who retire in future decades to invest some of their Social Security taxes in the stock market and bonds, but would reduce the guaranteed benefits they get when they retire. Do you favor or oppose this provision?

| | | |
|-----------------------|----|--------------|
| Favor provision..... | 33 | [163] |
| Oppose provision..... | 60 | |
| Not sure..... | 7 | |

12b. George W. Bush's plan also would reduce Social Security benefits for most future retirees, whether or not they choose to have a private account. His proposal reduces benefits for future retirees who made more than twenty thousand dollars per year while working, but there would be no change in benefits for lower-income workers. Do you favor or oppose this proposed change in benefits?

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----|--------------|
| Favor proposed change..... | 27 | [164] |
| Oppose proposed change..... | 62 | |
| Not sure..... | 11 | |

12c. Before I mentioned this, were you aware that President Bush's Social Security proposal would reduce future Social Security benefits in this way?

| | | |
|------------------------|----|--------------|
| Yes, was aware..... | 55 | [165] |
| No, was not aware..... | 41 | |
| Not sure..... | 4 | |

13. This year, do you think that Congress should—pass the Bush Social Security plan, OR wait and develop a different plan for Social Security?

| | | |
|------------------------------------|----|--------------|
| Pass Bush plan..... | 16 | [166] |
| Wait/develop a different plan..... | 71 | |
| Neither (VOL)..... | 3 | |
| Not sure..... | 10 | |

14. Would you say that the changes George W. Bush is proposing in Social Security are mainly consistent with the values of people who live in your community, or mainly out of step with the values of people who live in your community?

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----|--------------|
| Consistent with values..... | 27 | [167] |
| Out of step..... | 61 | |
| Not sure..... | 12 | |

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15. Here are some things that you might learn about a candidate for Congress. For each one, please tell me whether this fact would make you more likely to support the candidate, less likely to support the candidate, or would not affect your vote either way. (IF "MORE/LESS LIKELY," ASK:) Is that much (more/less) likely or somewhat (more/less) likely?

THIS TABLE HAS BEEN RANKED BY THE PERCENTAGE WHO SAY MUCH OR SOMEWHAT MORE LIKELY TO SUPPORT

| | <u>Much More Likely To Support</u> | <u>Somewhat More Likely To Support</u> | <u>Not Affect Either Way</u> | <u>Somewhat Less Likely To Support</u> | <u>Much Less Likely To Support</u> | <u>Not Sure</u> | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|---------------------|------------------|
| The candidate is strongly committed to protecting Social Security, and opposes cutting benefits for retirees, disabled workers, or surviving families..... | 52 | 22 | 13 | 5 | 6 | 2 | [170/174] |
| The candidate voted in favor of George W. Bush's Social Security privatization plan... | 11 | 14 | 17 | 14 | 37 | 7 | [168/172] |
| The candidate voted to raise the Social Security retirement age..... | 7 | 10 | 23 | 17 | 40 | 3 | [169/173] |
| The candidate voted to cut Social Security benefits for future retirees who earned more than twenty thousand dollars during their working years * | 2 | 7 | 18 | 20 | 48 | 5 | [171] |
| The candidate voted to cut Social Security benefits for the middle class ** | 2 | 4 | 11 | 22 | 58 | 3 | [175] |

* Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM A).

** Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM B).

Now I have a few more questions about George W. Bush's Social Security plan.

- 16a. Do you think that George W. Bush is proposing changes in Social Security mainly because he believes that this is the best way to strengthen Social Security, OR because he and other Republicans want to replace Social Security with a privatized system? *

| | | |
|---|----|--------------|
| Best way to strengthen Social Security..... | 32 | [223] |
| Wants to replace Social Security..... | 49 | |
| Some of both (VOL)..... | 8 | |
| Not sure..... | 11 | |

* Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM A).

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- 16b. Do you think that George W. Bush is proposing changes in Social Security mainly because he believes that this is the best way to strengthen Social Security, OR because he needs to cut Social Security benefits to pay for his tax cuts for big business and the wealthy? **

| | | |
|---|----|--------------|
| Best way to strengthen Social Security..... | 32 | [224] |
| Needs to pay for tax cuts..... | 48 | |
| Some of both (VOL)..... | 8 | |
| Not sure..... | 12 | |

** Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM B).

17. As you may know, the Democrats in Congress oppose George W. Bush's proposal to privatize Social Security. From what you have read or heard, would you say that the Democrats in Congress are mostly raising legitimate concerns about Bush's proposal, or are mostly making unfair political attacks on the proposal? **

| | | |
|--|----|--------------|
| Raising legitimate concerns..... | 58 | [225] |
| Making unfair political attacks..... | 31 | |
| Haven't heard/read anything (VOL)..... | 3 | |
| Not sure..... | 8 | |

** Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM B).

18. Now I'd like to read you a pair of statements made by Democrats and Republicans about Social Security, and I'd like you to tell me which one you agree with more.

President Bush and the Republicans say that the main obstacle to strengthening Social Security for the future is Democrats' decision to make partisan attacks on President Bush's plan without making any proposals of their own to fix the system. A failure to act will mean large cuts in benefits or higher payroll taxes, but still Democrats refuse to put a plan on the table.

The Democrats say that the main obstacle to strengthening Social Security for the future is the refusal by George W. Bush and Republicans to support any plan other than privatization. Privatization means risk, huge benefit cuts, and lots of new federal debt. If the Republicans will drop their demand for privatization and huge benefit cuts, a bi-partisan solution for Social Security can be found.

On this issue, do you agree more with the Democrats or more with the Republicans? **(IF RESPONDENT MAKES A CHOICE, ASK:)** Do you agree with the (Democrats/Republicans) somewhat more or much more? **

| | | | |
|--|----|--------------|--|
| Agree with Democrats | | 57 | |
| Much more..... | 37 | [226] | |
| Somewhat more..... | 20 | | |
| Agree with Republicans | | 30 | |
| Somewhat more..... | 14 | | |
| Much more..... | 16 | | |
| | | | |
| Agree with both equally/neither (VOL)..... | 8 | | |
| Not sure..... | 5 | | |

** Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM B).

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FACTUALS: Now I am going to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes only.

F1. For statistical purposes only, would you please tell me how old you are? (IF "REFUSED," ASK:) Well, would you tell me which age group you belong to?

| | | |
|--------------|----|------------------|
| 18- | 6 | [140-141] |
| 24..... | | |
| 25- | 8 | |
| 29..... | | |
| 30- | 8 | |
| 34..... | | |
| 35- | 8 | |
| 39..... | | |
| 40- | 10 | |
| 44..... | | |
| 45- | 12 | |
| 49..... | | |
| 50- | 8 | |
| 54..... | | |
| 55- | 9 | |
| 59..... | | |
| 60- | 9 | |
| 64..... | | |
| 65- | 7 | |
| 69..... | | |
| 70- | 7 | |
| 74..... | | |
| 75 and | 8 | |
| over..... | - | |
| Refused..... | | |

F2. What is the last grade that you completed in school?

| | | |
|---|----|------------------|
| Grade school..... | 1 | [238-239] |
| Some high school..... | 7 | |
| High school graduate..... | 34 | |
| Some college, no degree..... | 16 | |
| Vocational training, 2-year college..... | 11 | |
| 4-year college/bachelor's degree..... | 18 | |
| Some postgraduate work, no degree..... | 2 | |
| 2-3 years' postgraduate work/master's degree..... | 9 | |
| Doctoral/law degree..... | 1 | |
| Not sure/refused..... | 1 | |

F3. Are you currently single and never married, single and living with partner, married, separated, widowed, or divorced?

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|--------------|
| Single and never married..... | 14 | [240] |
| Single and living with partner..... | 3 | |
| Married..... | 62 | |
| Separated..... | 2 | |
| Widowed..... | 9 | |
| Divorced..... | 9 | |
| Other (VOL)..... | - | |
| Not sure/refused..... | 1 | |

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F4. Thinking about your general approach to issues, do you consider yourself to be liberal, moderate, or conservative?

| | | |
|-------------------|----|--------------|
| Liberal..... | 17 | [241] |
| Moderate..... | 36 | |
| Conservative..... | 42 | |
| Not sure..... | 5 | |

F5. Regardless of how you may be registered, how would you describe your overall point of view in terms of the political parties? Would you say that you are mostly Democratic, leaning Democratic, completely independent, leaning Republican, or mostly Republican?

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----|--------------|
| Mostly Democratic..... | 26 | [242] |
| Leaning Democratic..... | 10 | |
| Completely independent..... | 23 | |
| Leaning Republican..... | 12 | |
| Mostly Republican..... | 27 | |
| Not sure..... | 2 | |

F6. Are you a member of a labor union? **(IF "NO," ASK:)** Is anyone else in this household a member of a labor union?

| | | |
|----------------------------|----|--------------|
| Labor union member..... | 10 | [243] |
| Labor union household..... | 5 | |
| Nonunion household..... | 84 | |
| Not sure..... | 1 | |

F7. Would you describe yourself as either a fundamentalist or born-again Christian, or would you not describe yourself in that way?

| | | |
|--|----|--------------|
| Fundamentalist/born-again Christian..... | 48 | [244] |
| Neither fundamentalist nor born-again Christian..... | 48 | |
| Not sure..... | 4 | |

F8. How often do you attend services at a church, synagogue, or other place of worship?

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----|--------------|
| Never..... | 14 | [245] |
| Once a year..... | 4 | |
| A few times a year..... | 15 | |
| Once a month..... | 6 | |
| About twice a month..... | 10 | |
| Once a week or more often..... | 48 | |
| Not sure..... | 3 | |

F9. Are you currently retired?

| | | |
|----------------------|----|--------------|
| Yes, retired..... | 31 | [246] |
| No, not retired..... | 67 | |
| Not sure..... | 2 | |

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F10. If you added together the yearly income of all the members of your family who were living at home last year, would the total be less than \$10,000, between \$10,000 and \$20,000, between \$20,000 and \$30,000, between \$30,000 and \$40,000, between \$40,000 and \$50,000, between \$50,000 and \$75,000, between \$75,000 and \$100,000, or would the total be more than that?

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|--------------|
| Less than \$10,000..... | 6 | [247] |
| Between \$10,000 and \$20,000..... | 12 | |
| Between \$20,000 and \$30,000..... | 16 | |
| Between \$30,000 and \$40,000..... | 12 | |
| Between \$40,000 and \$50,000..... | 13 | |
| Between \$50,000 and \$75,000..... | 17 | |
| Between \$75,000 and \$100,000..... | 8 | |
| More than \$100,000..... | 7 | |
| Not sure/refused..... | 9 | |

F11. Are you from a Hispanic or Spanish-speaking background? **(IF "NO," ASK:)** What is your race--white, black, Asian, or something else?

| | | |
|-----------------------|----|--------------|
| Hispanic..... | 3 | [248] |
| White..... | 86 | |
| Black..... | 6 | |
| Asian..... | - | |
| Other..... | 3 | |
| Not sure/refused..... | 2 | |

The rural sample for this survey is comprised of all non-MSA counties (metropolitan statistical areas) as well as any counties defined by the census as micropolitan statistical areas that have populations of less than 10,000 people.