



To: Interested Parties  
Fr: Lake Research Partners  
Re: Support for Medicare and Social Security  
Date: February 13, 2017

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Voters strongly reject policies that would cut benefits to Social Security and Medicare, and overwhelmingly favor policies that would increase benefits.

### **Medicare**

**Voters have clear and strong preferences on Medicare. They nearly unanimously favor allowing Medicare to negotiate with prescription drug companies to reduce prices and overwhelmingly oppose raising the eligibility age.**

#### **Support for Negotiating Prescription Drug Prices**

A near unanimous 93 percent majority of voters favor allowing Medicare to negotiate to bring down the price of prescription drugs, with 84 percent who strongly favor this. Support for this policy has increased 5-points since 2012, when 88 percent of voters were in favor. Overwhelming majorities across party lines favor this including 94 percent of Democrats (85 percent strongly favor), 91 percent of Republicans (81 percent strongly favor), and 94 percent of Independents (85 percent strongly favor).

#### **Opposition to Raising the Eligibility Age**

A strong 65 percent majority oppose raising the eligibility age to 67, including majorities across party lines, though Republicans are more divided. Seventy-five (75) percent of Democrats oppose as do 65 percent of Independents. A 52 percent majority of Republicans oppose, including 41 percent who strongly oppose, while 43 percent favor.

### **Social Security**

**On Social Security, there is overwhelming bi-partisan support for increasing benefits, giving credit for caring for a family member, and raising the cap on earnings. Strongly bi-partisan majorities oppose raising the retirement age or means testing benefits.**

#### **Support for Increasing Social Security Benefits**

On Social Security, strong majorities across party lines favor increasing Social Security benefits. Seventy-three (73) percent of voters favor increasing Social Security benefits, including 57 percent who strongly favor, while just 19 percent oppose. By party, 84 percent of Democrats, 66 percent of Republicans, and 70 percent of Independents favor increasing Social Security benefits.

Support for increasing benefits for Social Security is even larger when coupled with “pay[ing] for that increase by having wealthy Americans pay the same rate into Social Security as everybody else. Seventy-nine (79) percent favor this, including 69 percent who strongly favor, a 12-point increase in intensity. Strong majorities across party lines favor this including 86 percent of Democrats, 72 percent of Republicans, and 81 percent of Independents.

#### **Support for the Caregiver Credit**

A 75 percent majority of voters favor including credit for up to 5 years of time spent outside of the paid work force caring for family when calculating benefits. Majorities across party lines support the caregiver credit, including 56 percent who strongly favor, while only 19 percent oppose. Strong majorities favor this across party lines including 81 percent of Democrats, 67 percent of Republicans, and 74 percent of Independents.

#### **Support for Raising the Cap**

Voters overwhelmingly favor gradually requiring employees and employers to pay Social Security taxes on wages above \$127K, including majorities across party lines. Overall, 74 percent of voters favor this, 61

percent strongly. Eighty-one (81) percent of Democrats favor this, as do 67 percent of Republicans and 74 percent of Independents.

### **Opposition to Raising the Retirement Age**

Voters strongly oppose raising the retirement age to 69. Overall, 77 percent of voters oppose raising the retirement age to 69, including 83 percent of Democrats, 72 percent of Republicans, and 70 percent of Independents. Younger voters are more likely to oppose this than older voters, with 83 percent of voters under 50 oppose, as do 78 percent of voters between age 50 and 64, and 65 percent of voters over the age of 65.

### **Opposition to Means Testing**

A 69 percent majority oppose reducing benefits for workers whose average annual lifetime earnings today are 60 thousand dollars or more, again including majorities across party lines. Seventy-three (73) percent of Democrats oppose this, as do 70 percent of Republicans and 63 percent of Independents.

### **Anxieties around Retirement**

People have strong concerns for Social Security being there when they retire and for having prescription drug prices that they cannot afford. Sixty-five (65) percent say they are worried about prescription drug prices they cannot afford, and 64 percent say they are worried about Social Security being there when they retire. Roughly the same number (63 percent) say they are worried about having enough money in retirement to be financially secure. Just 53 percent say they are worried about not being able to retire when they want for financial reasons. These concerns help drive voters strong support for protecting each program, and for policies that would increase benefits and reduce the price of prescription drugs.

### **Social Security Customer Service**

Voters prefer to communicate with a live person at the Social Security Administration. If they needed to contact the SSA because they wanted to apply for benefits, replace a lost Social Security card, or had questions about their earnings records, 65 percent prefer to communicate with a person, either with a staff person in person at a local Social Security office (39 percent) or by telephone through a toll-free number (26 percent). Thirty-one (31) percent prefer to communicate online at the Social Security website. Majorities of voters across age groups prefer to communicate with a person including 51 percent of voters under 50, 68 percent of voters age 50-64, and 84 percent of voters over 65.

Voters prefer to receive their Social Security statement by mail. Overall 64 percent of voters prefer to receive this by mail and 32 percent prefer an electronic statement by email. By age, 49 percent of voters under 50 prefer a paper statement and 45 percent prefer by email, compared to 67 percent of those age 50 to 64 who prefer a paper statement and 30 percent who prefer by email. Seniors overwhelmingly prefer a paper statement (83 percent), with just 13 percent preferring email.

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*Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey that was conducted by professional interviewers from January 4-8, 2017. The survey reached a total of 800 likely 2018 voters nationwide with oversamples of 25 African Americans and 50 Latinos. Telephone numbers were randomly drawn from national database of registered voters. Of the 800 interviews, 463 were from the landline sample and 337 were from the cell phone sample. The data were weighed slightly by region, age, party identification and race to reflect attributes of the actual population. The margin of error for the entire survey is +/-3.5%. It is larger for some subgroups.*

[Poll Toplines By Age](#)

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