



This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your

colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit [www.nytreprints.com](http://www.nytreprints.com) for

samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

August 4, 2011

# Disapproval Rate for Congress at Record 82% After Debt Talks

By MICHAEL COOPER and MEGAN THEE-BRENAN

The debate over raising the [debt ceiling](#), which brought the nation to the brink of default, has sent disapproval of Congress to its highest level on record and left most Americans saying that creating jobs should now take priority over cutting spending, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News Poll.

A record 82 percent of Americans now disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job — the most since The Times first began asking the question in 1977, and even more than after another political stalemate led to a shutdown of the federal government in 1995.

More than four out of five people surveyed said that the recent debt-ceiling debate was more about gaining political advantage than about doing what is best for the country. Nearly three-quarters said that the debate had harmed the image of the United States in the world.

Republicans in Congress shoulder more of the blame for the difficulties in reaching a debt-ceiling agreement than President Obama and the Democrats, the poll found.

The Republicans compromised too little, a majority of those polled said. All told, 72 percent disapproved of the way Republicans in Congress handled the negotiations, while 66 percent

disapproved of the way Democrats in Congress handled negotiations.

The public was more evenly divided about how Mr. Obama handled the debt ceiling negotiations: 47 percent disapproved and 46 percent approved.

The public's opinion of the **Tea Party movement** has soured in the wake of the debt-ceiling debate. The Tea Party is now viewed unfavorably by 40 percent of the public and favorably by just 20 percent, according to the poll. In mid-April 29 percent of those polled viewed the movement unfavorably, while 26 percent viewed it favorably. And 43 percent of Americans now think the Tea Party has too much influence on the Republican Party, up from 27 percent in mid-April.

"I'm real disappointed in Congress," Ron Raggio, 54, a florist from Vicksburg, Miss., said in a follow-up interview. "They can't sit down and agree about what's best for America. It's all politics."

There were signs that the repeated Republican calls for more spending cuts were resonating with the public: 44 percent of those polled said the cuts in the debt-ceiling agreement did not go far enough, 29 percent said they were about right and only 15 percent said they went too far. More than a quarter of the Democrats polled said that the cuts in the agreement did not go far enough.

But by a ratio of more than two to one, Americans said that creating jobs should be a higher priority than spending cuts.

Though Republicans prevented tax increases from being included in the debt-ceiling deal, half of those polled said the agreement should have included increased tax revenue, while 44 percent said it should have relied on cuts alone. That issue is likely to be revisited soon: Congress is preparing to appoint a special committee to recommend ways to reduce the deficit. Sixty-three percent of those polled said that they supported raising taxes on households that earn more than \$250,000 a year, as Mr. Obama has sought to do — including majorities of Democrats (80 percent), independents (61 percent) and Republicans (52 percent).

The poll found that Mr. Obama was emerging from the crisis less bruised than the Republicans in

## Congress.

The president's overall job approval rating remained relatively stable, with 48 percent approving of the way he handles his job as president and 47 percent disapproving — down from the bump up he received in the spring after the killing of Osama bin Laden, but in line with how he has been viewed for nearly a year. By contrast, Speaker John A. Boehner, an Ohio Republican, saw his disapproval rating shoot up 16 points since April: 57 percent of those polled now disapprove of the way he is handling his job, while only 30 percent approve.

Americans said that they trusted Mr. Obama to make the right decisions about the economy more than the Republicans in Congress, by 47 percent to 33 percent. They were evenly divided on the question of whether he showed “strong qualities of leadership” during the negotiations, with 49 percent saying he did and 48 percent saying he did not. And they were still more likely to blame President George W. Bush for the bulk of the nation's deficit: 44 percent said that the deficit was mostly caused by the Bush administration, 15 percent said it was mostly caused by the Obama administration and 15 percent blamed Congress.

The growing fears about the economy — amid a sinking stock market and warnings that the nation risks sliding back into **recession** — were reflected in the nationwide telephone poll, which was conducted Tuesday and Wednesday with 960 adults and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points.

The number of Americans who rated the economy “very bad” was the highest it had been in a year. But there was uncertainty about whether the debt-ceiling deal would help or hurt the economy: nearly half said it would have no effect, while 24 percent said it would make the economy worse and 22 percent said it would improve it.

Americans were evenly divided on the parameters of the debt-ceiling deal, in which Congress agreed to allow the federal government to borrow the money needed to pay its current obligations and avoid

default on the condition that it reduce the deficit by at least \$2.1 trillion over the next 10 years. Over all, 46 percent of those polled approved of the deal, while 45 percent disapproved of it.

Most of those polled said that the spending cuts included either did not go far enough or were about right. But with the nation's unemployment rate at a stubborn 9.2 percent, 62 percent of those polled said that creating jobs should be the priority.

“Cutting spending is important, but getting people back to work is more important,” said Diane Sherrell, 56, a Republican from Erwin, N.C. “If people are working, they are more productive. There is less crime, there is less depression, there is less divorce. There are less hospital and medical bills. If you put people back to work, you are cutting spending.”

Stanley Oland, 62, a Republican from Kalispell, Mont., said that the government needed new jobs to generate the economic activity and the revenue it requires.

“That revenue supports the basic foundation for the economy, creates more jobs and stimulates the economy,” he said. “Unless you have working people you don't have revenue from taxes. If you cut spending, jobs will be eliminated and you won't get any revenue. Every dollar spent creates jobs.”

*Marjorie Connelly, Allison Kopicki and Marina Stefan contributed reporting.*



More in Politics (2 of 27 articles)

OPEN

## Poll Shows Negative View of Tea Party on the Rise

[Read More »](#)