

Independent Voter Project

Wave 11 Findings



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Background & Research Objective

- Independents are a critical voting bloc in American politics. About one-third of registered voters identify as independents, so swings among this group towards one party or another often determine election outcomes. Significant attitudinal differences exist, however, within the independent bloc. Grouping them together misses important patterns and potential opportunities for both political parties.
- To better understand the political landscape of the country, this effort builds on previous waves of research to track the political attitudes and views of registered voters, particularly Independent and unaffiliated voters. Wave 11 includes modules testing voter opinions on the general election.
- The following presentation is commissioned and prepared by Altria Client Services and contains data from eleven waves of public opinion surveys conducted on the political landscape and the attitudes of self-identified independent voters.



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Methodology

- Trained interviewers at Voter / Consumer Research's (V/CR) phone center in Houston, Texas conducted this survey of n=1,368 registered voters nationwide between July 8th and 15th, 2012. The total sample consists of a base sample of n=800 registered voters plus an oversample of 568 self-identified independent voters to reach a total of n=1,368. The margin of error for the base and independent sample is +/- 3.5% at the 95% confidence interval. This increases to +/- 4.9% for split samples (n~400), and to +/- 5.0% for pure independents (n=382).
- VCR selected respondents randomly from a registered voter sample including both cell phone and landline telephone numbers. All respondents confirmed that they are registered to vote. Quotas were set for gender, age, race and census region to ensure consistency with previous waves and national demographic trends. Party identification for the base sample of registered voters is 36% Democrat, 29% independent, and 32% Republican, and is weighted to align with national party identification for consistency with previous waves.



Executive Summary

The latest wave of data from the Independent Voter Research Project indicates that both President Obama and challenger Mitt Romney have their work cut out moving into the general election phase of the campaign.

- While voters see President Obama as the solid favorite to win the election (50% Obama to 31% Romney), they are highly disapproving of his job performance on the pocketbook issues of seminal importance.
 - Majorities of voters disapprove of how the President has handled the economy (56%), jobs (58%), and the federal budget and spending (64%).
 - Further, 59% of voters and 65% of pure independents say his economic policies have not impacted, or negatively impacted, what is perceived to be a stalled or failing economy.
- A statistically tied ballot (44% Obama, 45% Romney) suggests that voters do not yet see Mitt Romney as the candidate who will succeed where President Obama failed. However, Mitt Romney transitioned well from the Republican primary.
 - He consolidated most of his Party's vote (90% of self-identified Republicans say they will vote for Romney), and the broader electorate feels he is at least as capable of handling the economy and jobs as the President.
 - With a solid majority of voters (60%), and 66% of pure independents saying the country is headed down the wrong track, Mitt Romney is well-positioned to make a compelling case for a referendum on the current President.



Executive Summary

The results of key indicators point to a close race. These include parity in party loyalty and vote intensity, and independents' dissatisfaction with President Obama.

- Largely due to a highly polarized political climate, the partisan bases of both candidates are statistically equally intense about voting.
 - Fully 83% of self-identified Republicans say they are extremely likely to vote, compared with 80% of Democratic-identifiers.
 - Each partisan coalition also supports their candidate by similar margins on the presidential ballot. Romney wins among his Republican base by 86-points, while President Obama wins among his Democratic base by 84-points.
- Data from this wave also show an independent vote that is less favorable to Barack Obama than it was in 2008. The independent shift away from the President closes up the ballot margin by counterbalancing the Democratic Party's identification advantage (DEM+4) among registered voters nationally.
 - Only 69% of independents who voted for Obama in 2008 say they will vote for him now. Sixteen-percent (16%) of 2008 Obama voters say they will vote for Romney. In contrast, 80% of independents who voted for McCain in 2008 say they will vote for Romney now. Only 7% of these voters switch to Obama this year.
 - Additionally, President Obama's approval ratings are significantly lower among independents than the electorate as a whole. His overall job approval measure is upside down among registered voters (51% disapprove, 46% approve), but worsens among pure independents (53% disapprove, 41% approve). Independents also give the President more negative ratings on his handling of salient issues including the economy, the federal budget deficit and spending, Social Security and Medicare, and immigration.

Executive Summary

Unlike the presidential race, voter preferences for Congress are slightly more one-sided. While voters remain highly disapproving of Republican (67% disapprove) and Democratic members of Congress (61% disapprove), data from the most recent wave does not suggest that the electorate is not calling for large-scale system change.

- On the ballot, the generic Republican leads the generic Democrat by 5-points (46% to 41%), and by 10-points among pure independents (34% to 24%).
- Further, a majority or plurality of voters say Republicans will do a better job handling seven out of 11 issues tested, including the economy, jobs, foreign policy, federal budget and spending, tax reform, health care, and sharing your values. Voters give the issue-handling advantage to Democrats only on standing up for the middle class and women's issues.

Ultimately, the Party with the greater credibility on the economy will be the most likely to emerge victorious on November 6th. And, while many measures in this wave suggest a fight for Democratic candidates at both the presidential and congressional levels, economic indicators showing improvement or decline will likely have more influence on the eventual outcome than any other factor.

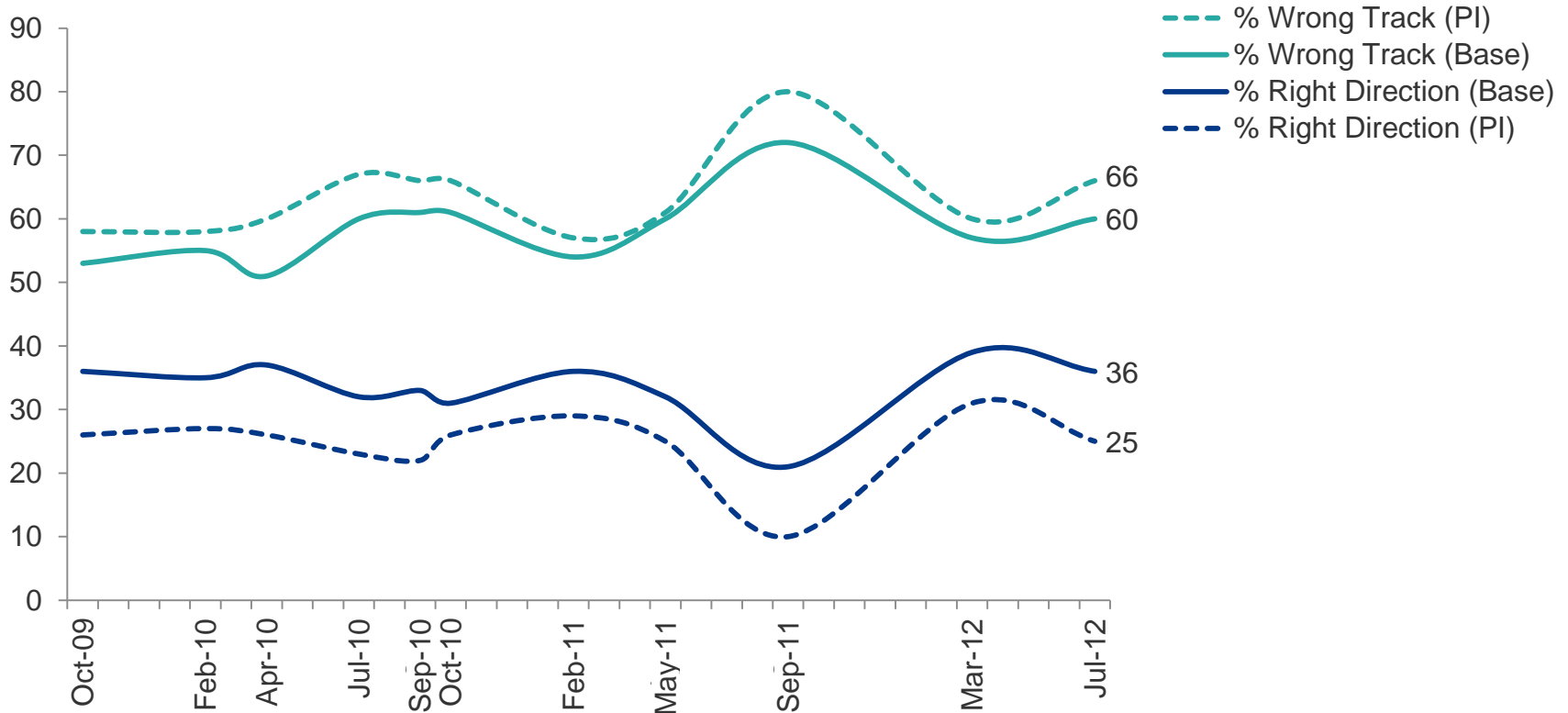


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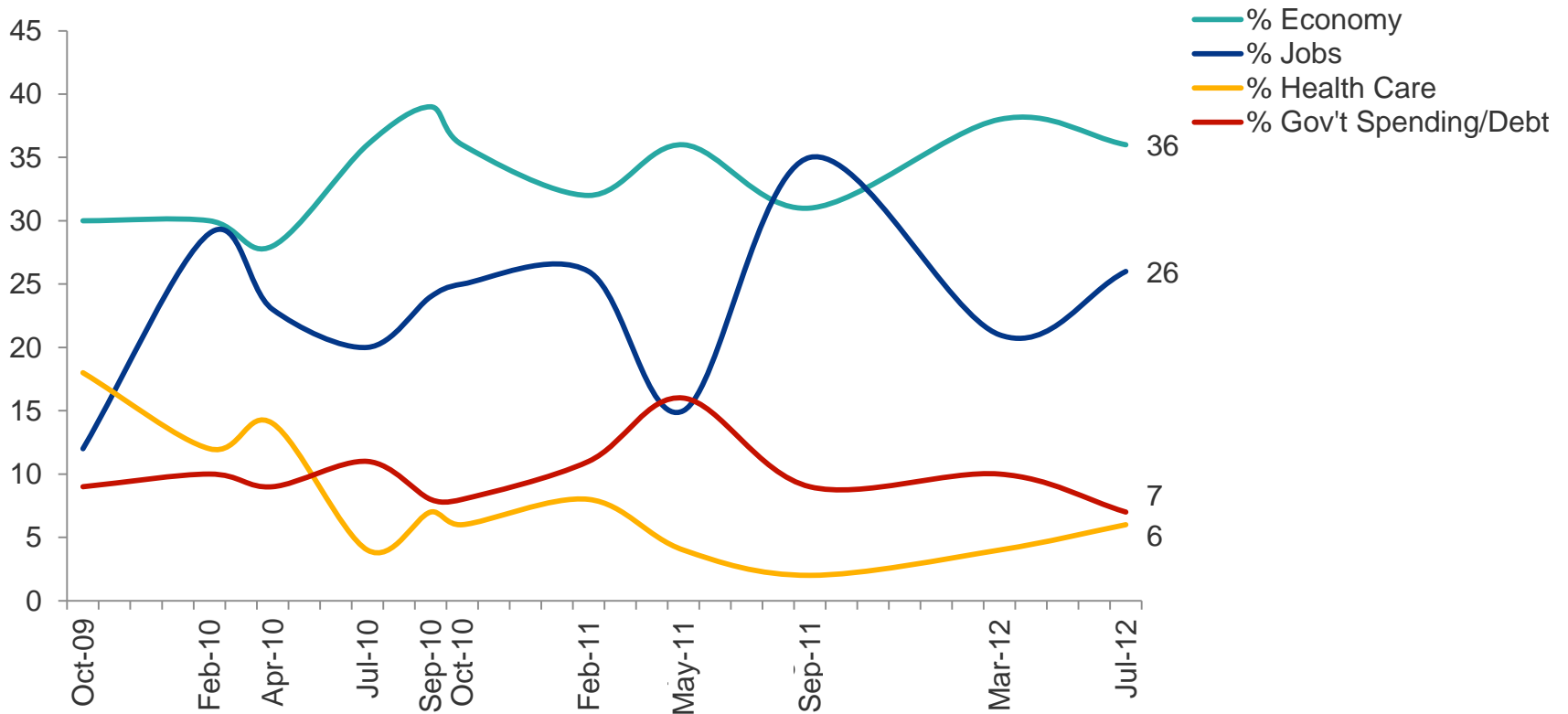
Direction of the Country

Now thinking more generally about the direction of the country, would you say things in this country are [ROTATE] heading in the right direction ...or... off on the wrong track?



Most Important Problem

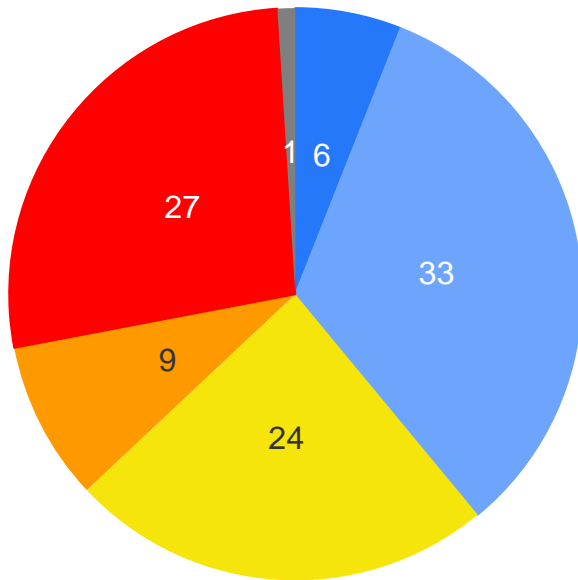
What would you say is the single most important problem facing the nation [OPEN-ENDED]?



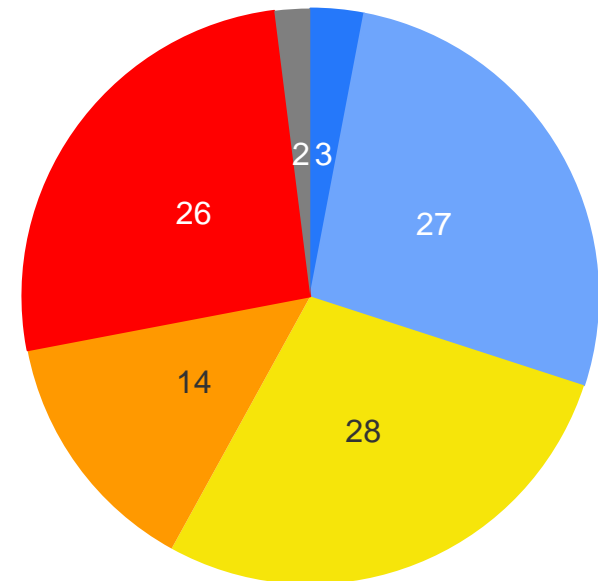
State of the Economy

Still thinking about the national economy...which of the following would you say most closely describes your view of the national economy: [ROTATE FRONT TO BACK, BACK TO FRONT] Strong and growing, In a recovery, Not moving, Approaching recession, or In a recession?

Base



Pure Independent



- % Strong and Growing
- % In a Recovery
- % Not Moving
- % Approaching Recession
- % In a Recession
- % DNK/Ref.

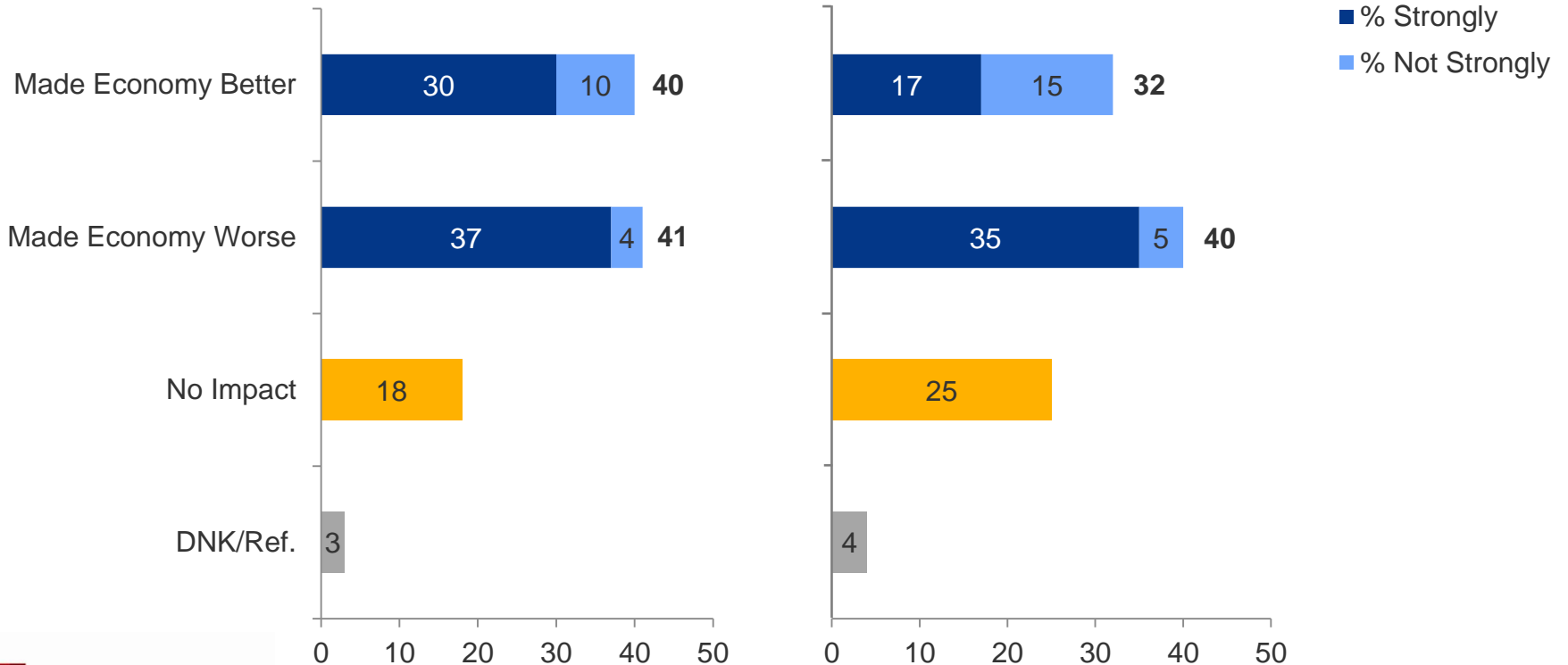


Impact of the President's Economic Policies

And thinking for a moment about the economic policies of President Obama and his Administration...Do you believe that President Obama's economic policies have [ROTATE FRONT TO BACK, BACK TO FRONT] Helped make the economy better, Had no impact on the economy, or Made the economy worse? [IF "BETTER" OR "WORSE", ASK] And, do you feel strongly about that?

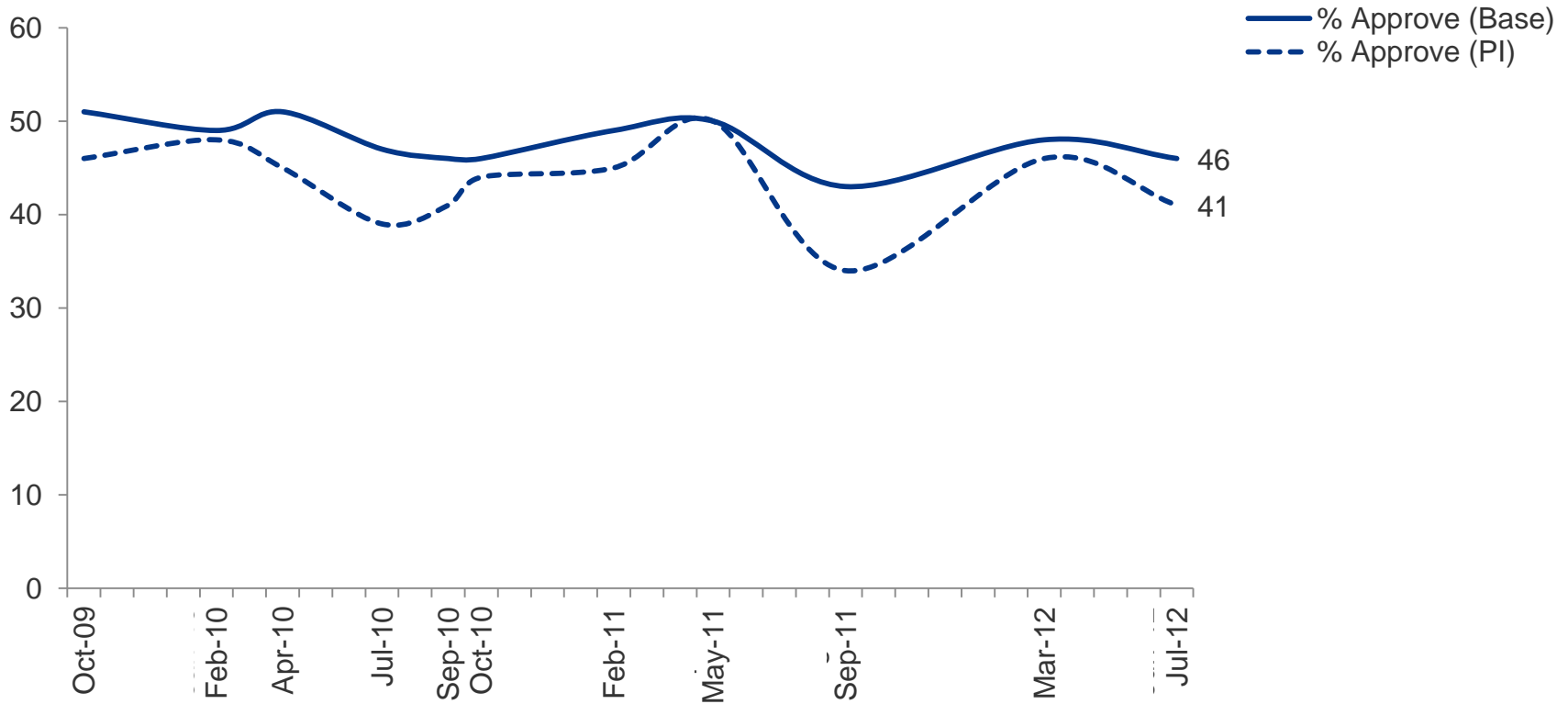
Base

Pure Independent



Job Approval: President Obama

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?



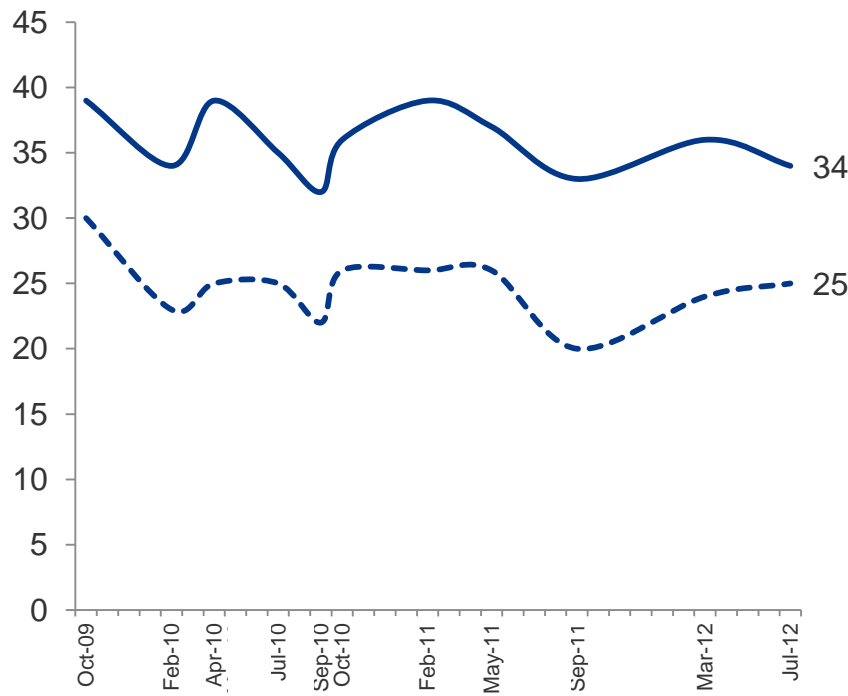
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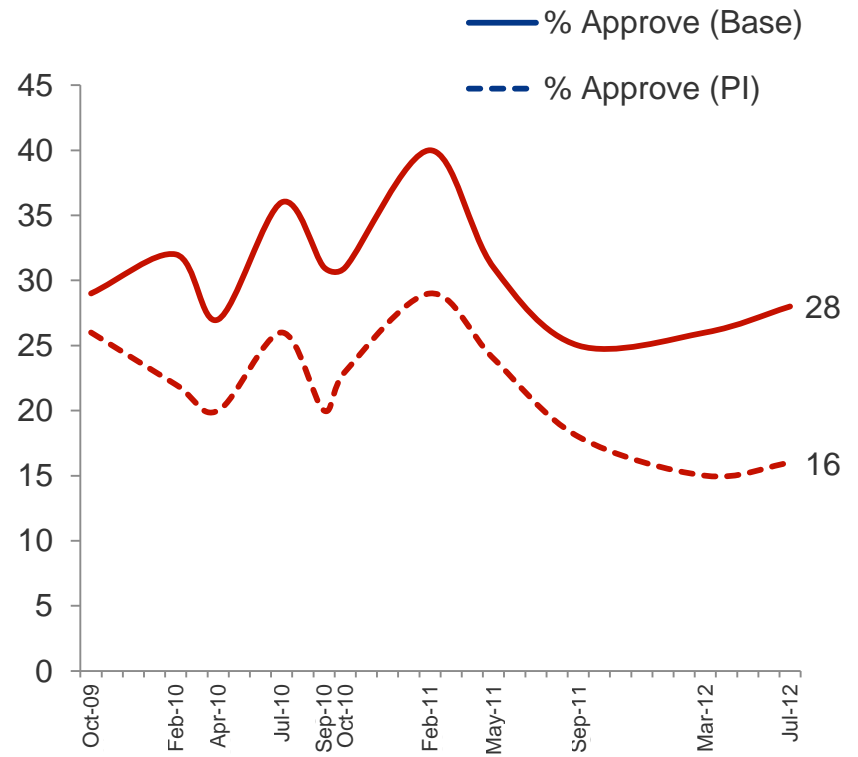
Job Approval: Democrats and Republicans in Congress

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Republicans/Democrats in the U.S. Congress are handling their job?

Democrats

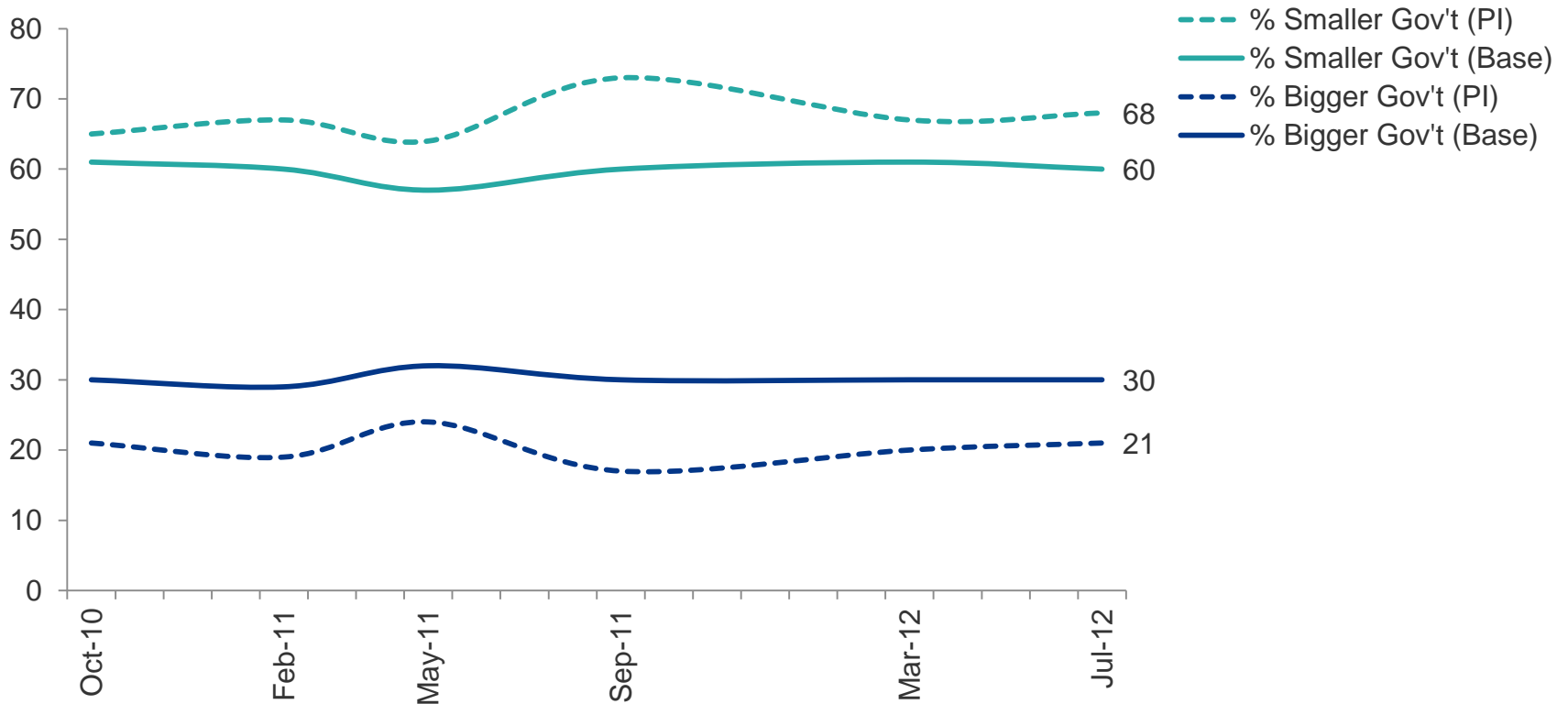


Republicans



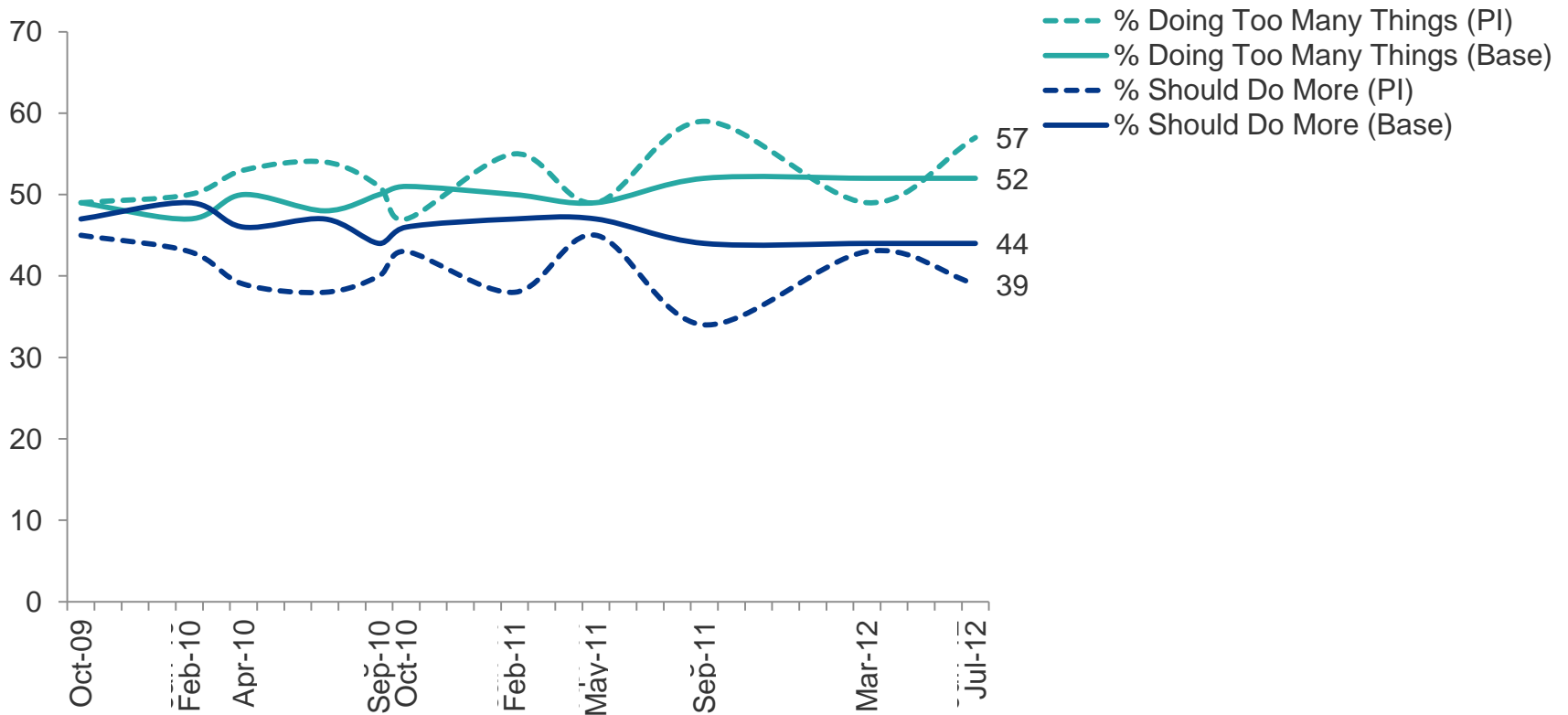
Preference for Government Size

In general, do you prefer [ROTATE]: Bigger government with more services; OR Smaller government with fewer services?



Preference for Government Role

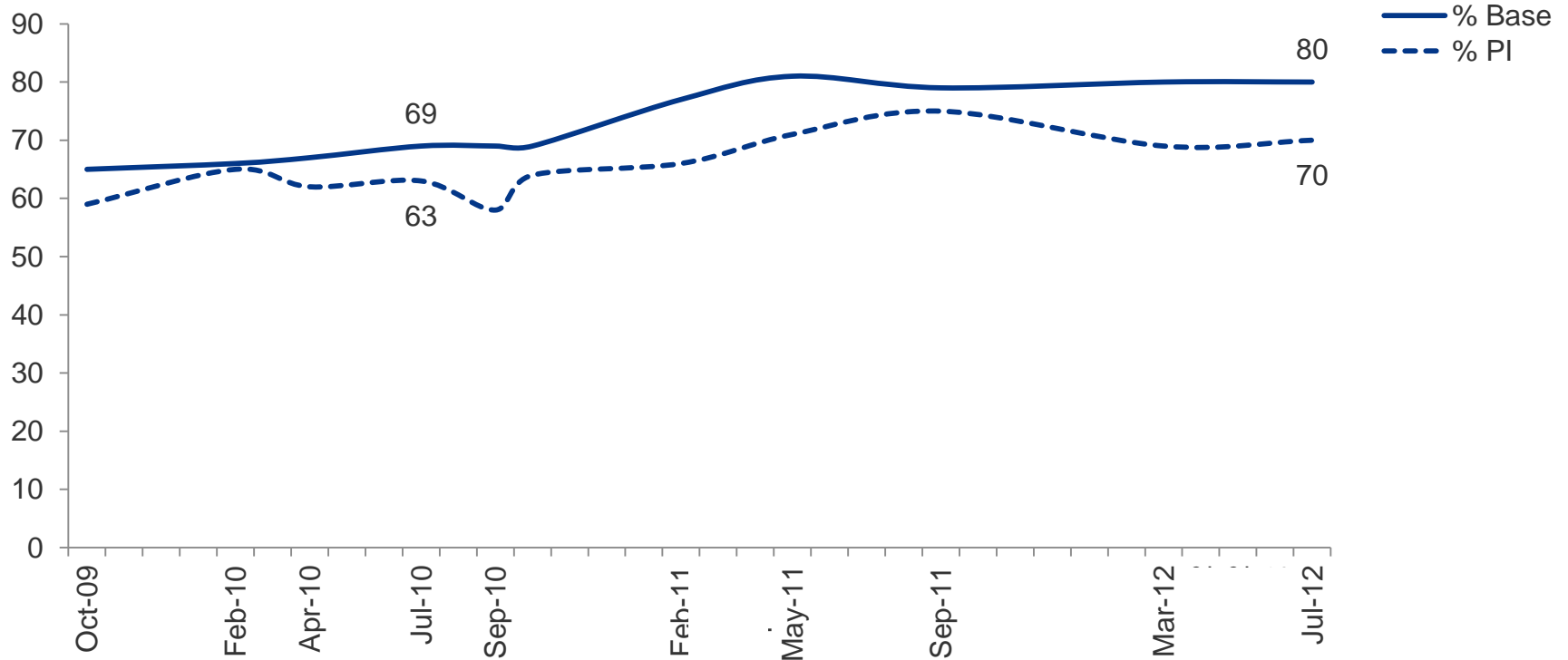
Which statement comes closer to your point of view: [ROTATE:] Government should do more to solve problems and help meet the needs of people; OR Government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals?



Likelihood to Vote

As you may know, there will be a general election for president and U.S. Congress this November. I know it's still a ways off, but would you say you are extremely likely to vote, very likely to vote but not extremely likely, somewhat likely to vote, or not too likely to vote in the November election? (*Question in 7/10 wave: "...there will be a general election for U.S. Congress in November 2010. I know it's still a ways off, but would you say you are....")

% "Extremely Likely" to Vote



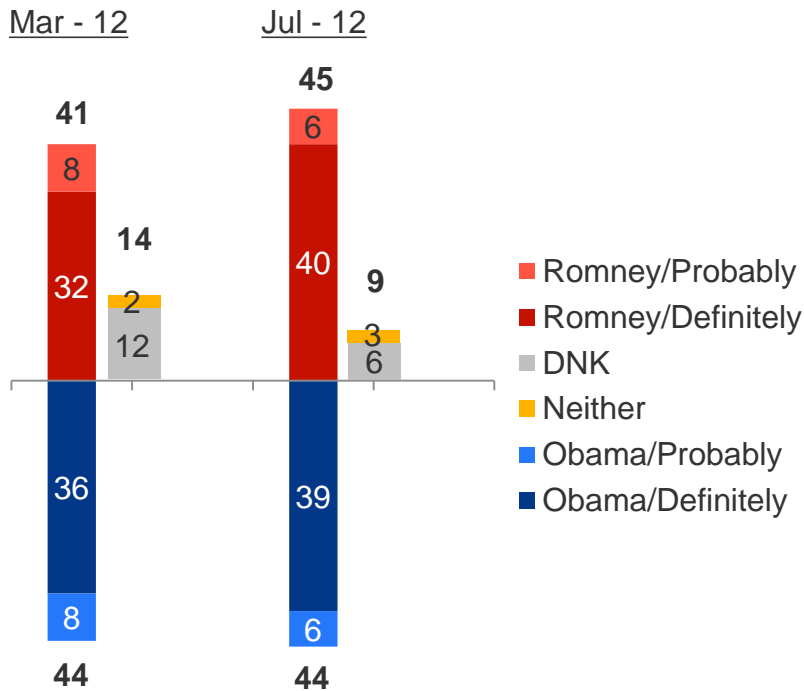
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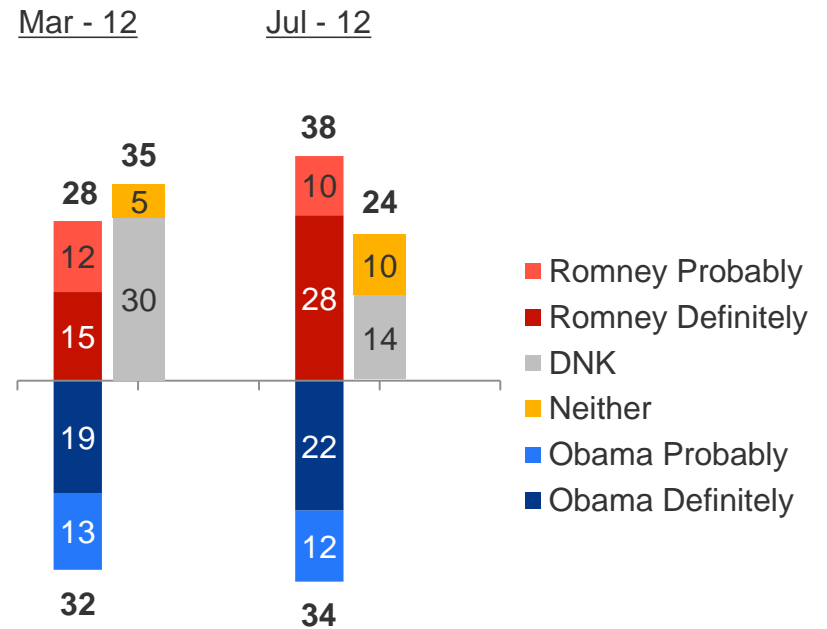
Presidential Ballot

And, if the election for president were being held today and you had to make a choice, would you vote for [ROTATE] President Obama, the Democrat ...or...Mitt Romney, the Republican? [IF OBAMA, ASK:] Would that be definitely Obama or probably Obama? [IF ROMNEY, ASK:] Would that be definitely Romney or probably Romney? (Question prior to wave 11 reads: "...would you vote for President Obama, the Democrat...or...the Republican candidate...")

Base



Pure Independent

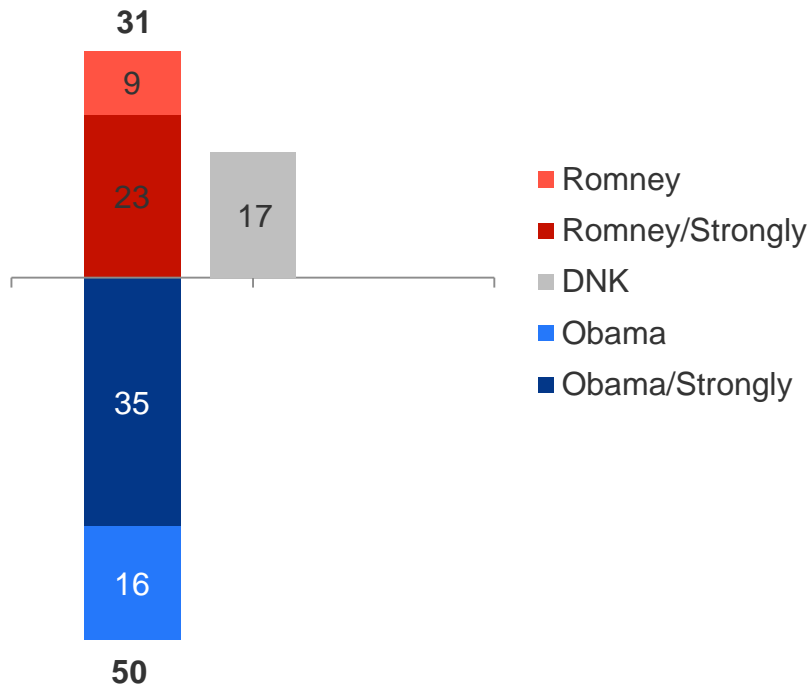


Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

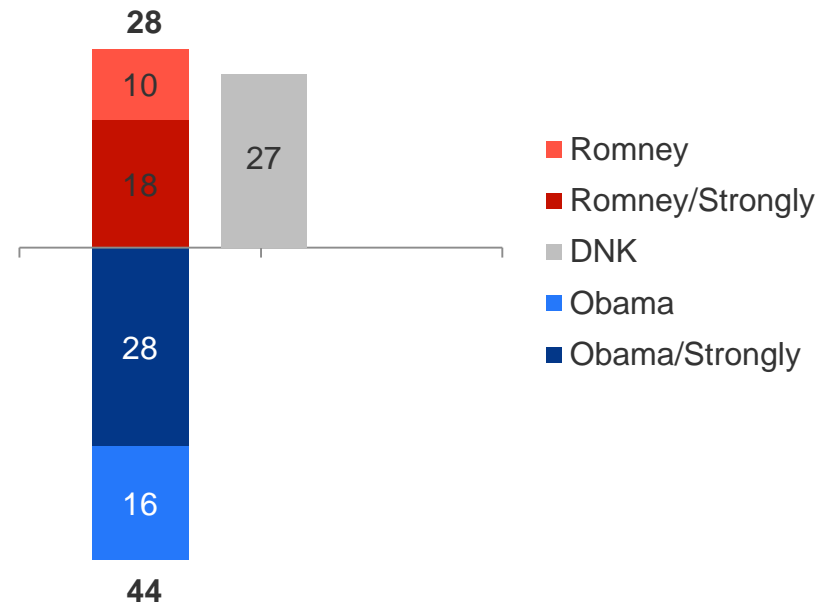
Presidential Election Prediction

Regardless of whom you support, and trying to be as objective as possible, who do you think will win the presidential election in November [ROTATE:] President Obama...or...Mitt Romney? [IF CHOICE MADE, ASK:] And do you feel strongly about that?

Base



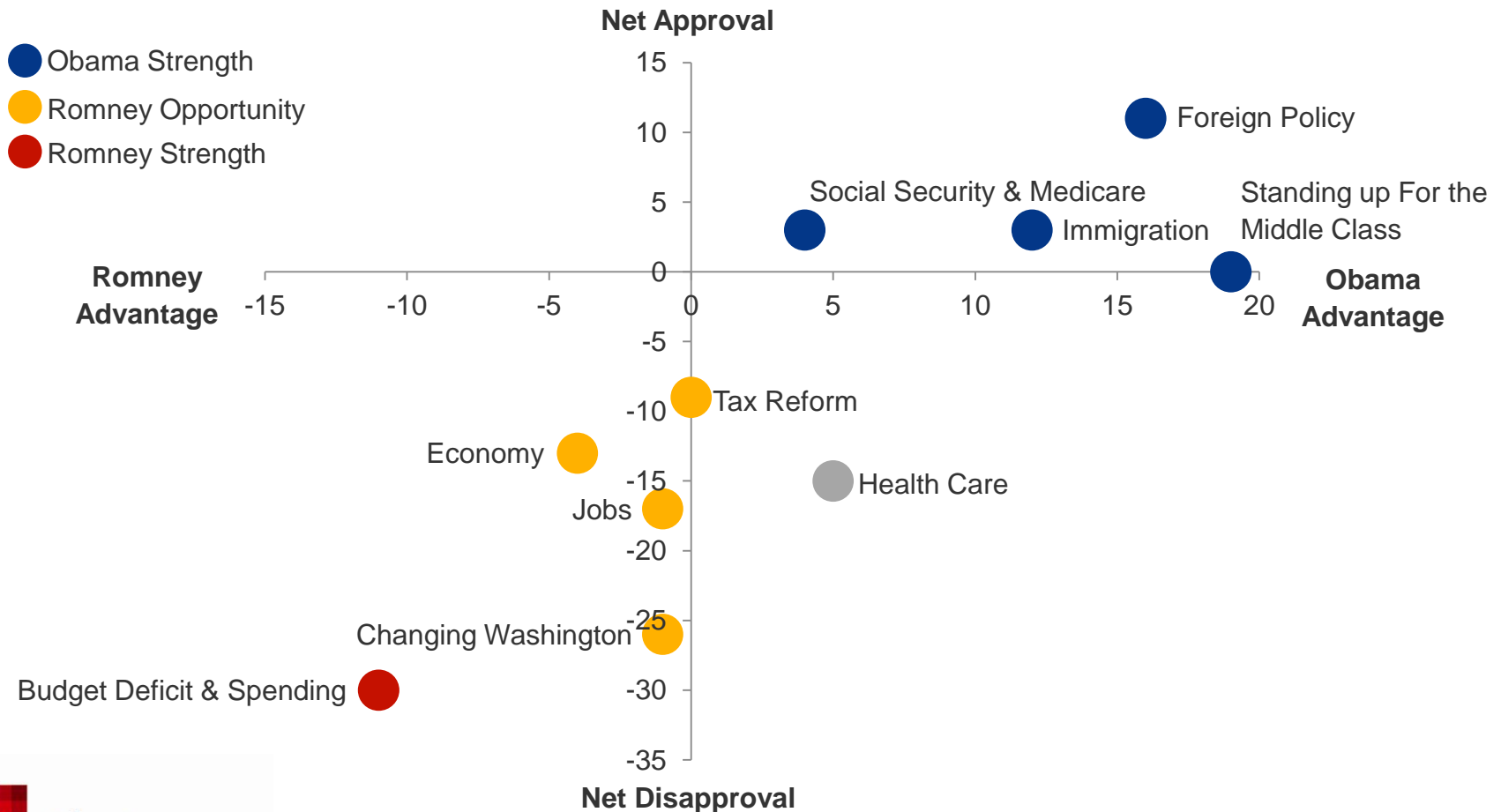
Pure Independent



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

Job Approval and Issue Handling

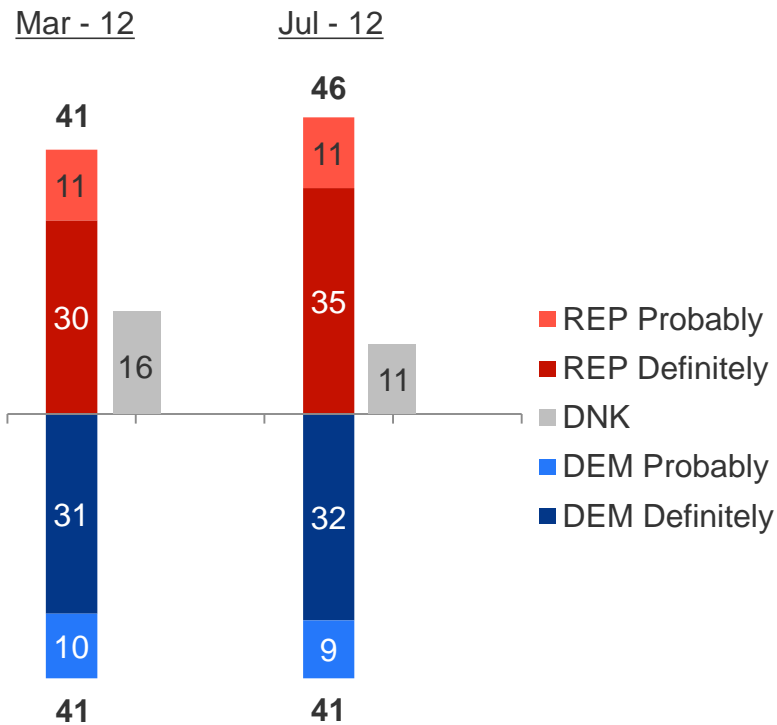
Y-Axis: Thinking about how President Obama is handling national issues...I'm going to read you several issues. For each one, please tell me if you approve or disapprove of the job President Obama is doing on the issue.
 X-Axis: And now thinking about national issues in a different way...I would like to read you another list of issues. Please listen and tell me, for each one, who you think will better handle this issue [ROTATE] Mitt Romney...or...President Obama.



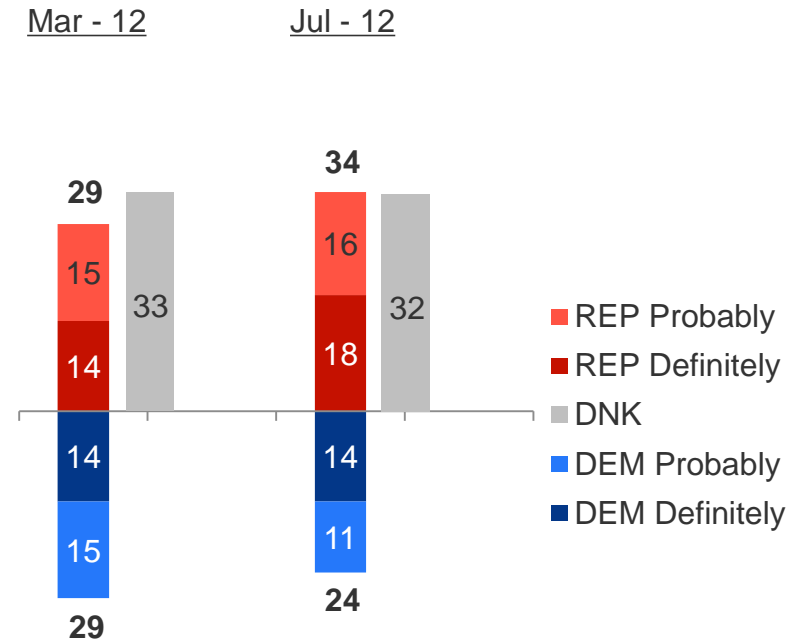
Generic Congressional Ballot

And, if the elections for U.S. Congress were being held today, and you had to make a choice, would you vote for [ROTATE] the Republican candidate ...or... the Democratic candidate in your Congressional district? [IF REPUBLICAN/DEMOCRAT, ASK:] Would that be definitely the [Republican/Democrat] or probably the [Republican/Democrat]?

Base



Pure Independent



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

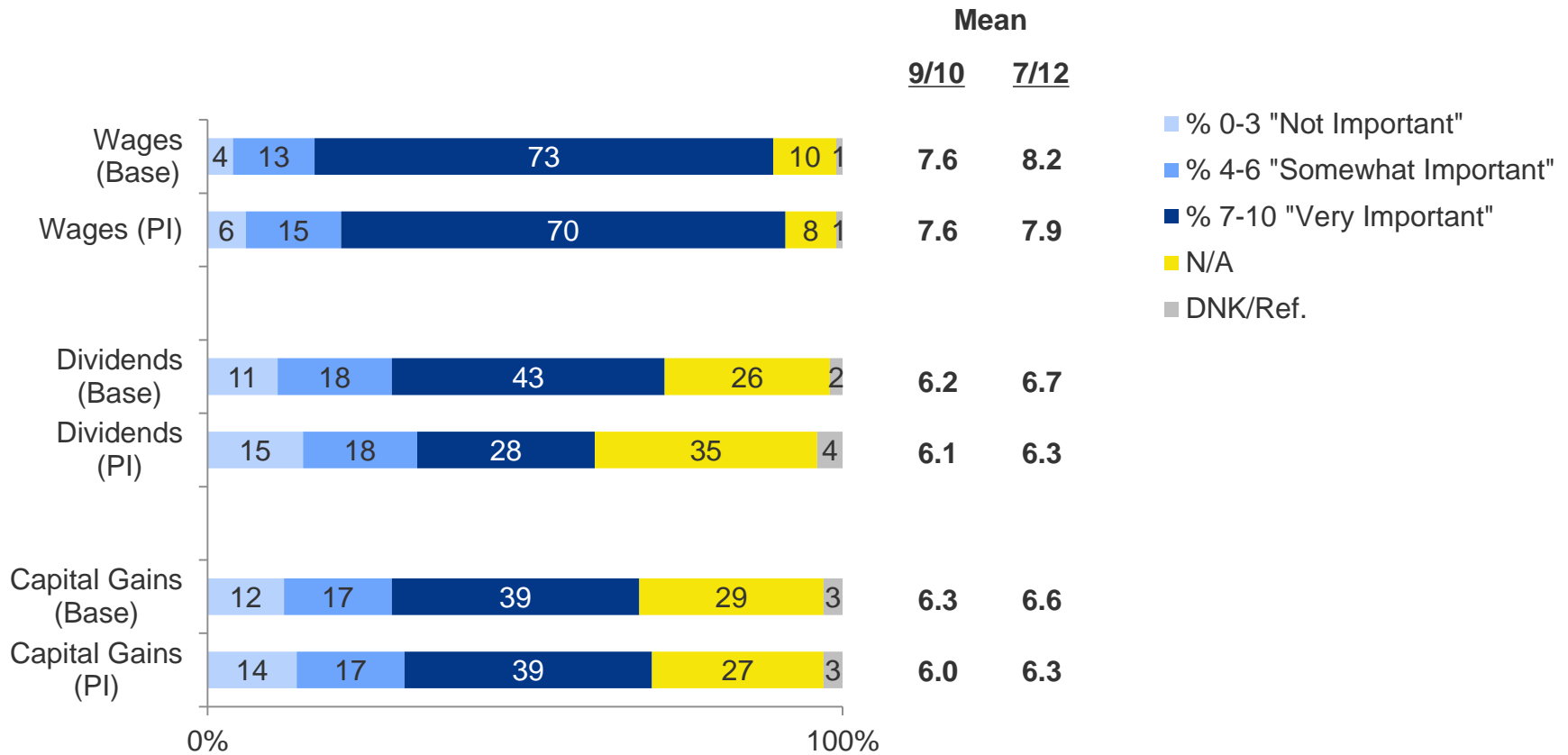
Congressional Issue Handling

And now thinking about national issues in a different way...I would like to read you another list of issues. Please listen and tell me, for each one, who will better handle the issue [ROTATE] the Republicans in Congress OR the Democrats in Congress. (n=401, m.o.e. +/- 4.9%)

	TOTAL %			ALL IND %		
	GOP	DEM	Advantage	GOP	DEM	Advantage
17.B The economy	52	41	GOP: 11	52	33	GOP: 19
18.B Jobs	52	40	GOP: 12	49	33	GOP: 16
19.B Foreign policy	49	41	GOP: 8	48	37	GOP: 11
20.B The federal budget deficit and spending	54	33	GOP: 21	56	22	GOP: 34
21.B Tax reform	50	40	GOP: 10	50	34	GOP: 16
22.B Standing up for the middle class	40	50	DEM: 10	34	50	DEM: 16
23.B Social Security and Medicare	43	47	Tie	38	44	DEM: 6
24.B Health care	50	42	GOP: 8	44	42	Tie
25.B Sharing your values	48	41	GOP: 7	43	34	GOP: 9
26.B Changing Washington	39	36	Tie	31	32	Tie
27.B Women's issues, like reproductive issues and equal pay for equal work	34	53	DEM: 19	26	55	DEM: 29

Importance of Maintaining Tax Rates

Unless Congress takes action before the end of the year, the federal tax rates on income from [RANDOMIZE]: wages, dividends, and capital gains will increase. On a scale from zero to ten, with zero meaning not at all important and ten meaning extremely important, please tell me how important maintaining the current tax rate on each of the following is to you. If any of the following don't apply to you, please just say so.



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