



Subject: Economic Policy Preferences  
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Half of all consumers thought more international trade and less income inequality would result in a stronger economy. Compared with the campaign rhetoric, the data indicate a strong preference for increased trade to improve economic growth. Immigration policy was more contentious, with just one-in-five that thought increasing immigration would benefit economic growth prospects. On entitlements, six-in-ten preferred tax increases to benefit cuts for Social Security and Medicare. The questions, asked in July to October surveys, were phrased in general terms, without specifying the exact mechanisms that would be used to accomplish the policy goals. The intent was to determine the expected impact of the various policy goals on growth prospects for the overall economy. The table below shows the distribution of the responses across all households as well as across political party affiliations, income, age, and education. Note that “don’t knows” are not shown in the table.

**Trade Policy.** Consumers were asked whether increases or decreases in trade would be better for the national economy. In response, 60% thought that increased trade would be better for domestic economy, while 21% favored less trade. Indeed, half or more of every subgroup, except the least educated, thought more trade would benefit the domestic economy. Increased trade was more frequently favored as incomes increased, at higher education levels, and surprisingly, among Democrats.

**Immigration Policy.** Just 21% of all consumers thought that increased immigration would benefit the economy, while 37% favored decreased immigration as best for the economy. Interestingly, this policy drew the largest no difference response, as 37% thought that whether immigration increased or decreased, it would have no significant impact on the economy. Indeed, the no difference response ranged from 34% to 42% for every income, education and age group. The most opposition to immigration was among Republicans, with nearly two-thirds holding that more immigration would hurt the national economy.

**Income Inequality.** Nearly half of all consumers thought that higher taxes on the wealthy would benefit the overall economy, with the other half of consumers split between the views that higher taxes would harm the economy and those who thought it would not make much difference. Those with lower incomes were more in favor of reducing inequality, but even among those with incomes in the top 10%, 34% reported it would help the economy, slightly under the 38% who thought it would harm the economy. Democrats provided by far the highest degree of support for taxing the wealthy to reduce inequality.

**Social Security and Medicare.** Consumers were asked whether they would prefer to cut benefits or increase taxes as the best means to sustain Social Security and Medicare. Increasing taxes dominated, favored by 64% of all consumers and by a majority in every demographic subgroup. There were differences across parties, with Democrats more in favor of raising taxes, although half of all Republican were in favor of tax increases rather than cutting benefits. Not surprisingly, those that more often opposed benefit cutbacks were consumers over age 65, those with the lowest incomes, and Democrats.

	Social Security		Income Inequality			Immigration Policy			Trade Policy		
	Cut Benefits	Raise Taxes	Tax Wealthy Help the Economy	Tax Wealthy Hurt the Economy	No Diff to the Economy	Increase Better for Economy	Decrease Better for Economy	No Diff to the Economy	More Trade Better for Economy	Less Trade Better for Economy	No Diff to the Economy
<b>All Households</b>	24	64	48	23	26	21	37	37	60	21	15
<b>Party</b>											
Democrat	11	83	74	5	19	33	17	47	67	16	14
Independent	27	59	45	22	31	21	36	39	58	23	16
Republican	35	51	25	45	27	7	64	24	56	25	15
<b>Income</b>											
Bottom Third	19	68	54	16	27	15	39	40	50	26	19
Middle Third	23	67	50	24	25	19	40	37	61	21	14
Top Third	30	60	42	29	27	29	33	35	69	17	11
Top 10%	35	55	34	38	27	30	31	36	77	11	10
<b>Age</b>											
Under 35	31	63	52	21	26	33	23	42	62	24	12
35 to 49	29	59	47	25	27	21	37	37	60	24	12
50 to 64	21	65	47	26	25	17	43	36	60	20	16
65 or older	15	70	48	19	30	15	45	36	58	18	19
<b>Education</b>											
High sch or less	22	66	48	17	32	12	46	37	46	30	19
Some college	22	64	47	25	26	16	46	34	56	25	16
College degree	26	65	49	25	25	28	28	40	70	15	12

The questions were: We hear a lot of talk these days about the increasing cost of Social Security and Medicare. Which do you think is the better way to handle the cost increases: cutting benefits or raising taxes? These days we hear a lot of talk about income inequality in the U.S., and some have suggested raising taxes on the wealthy to reduce income inequality. Do you think such a tax increase on the wealthy to reduce income inequality would help the overall economy, hurt the overall economy, or wouldn't it make much difference? Which would be better for the economy as a whole -- if immigration into the U.S. increased, if immigration into the U.S. decreased, or wouldn't it make much difference to the national economy? Which would be better for the economy as a whole -- more trade with other countries, less trade with other countries, or wouldn't it make much difference to the national economy? Total sample size was 2,243 cases in the July to October surveys.