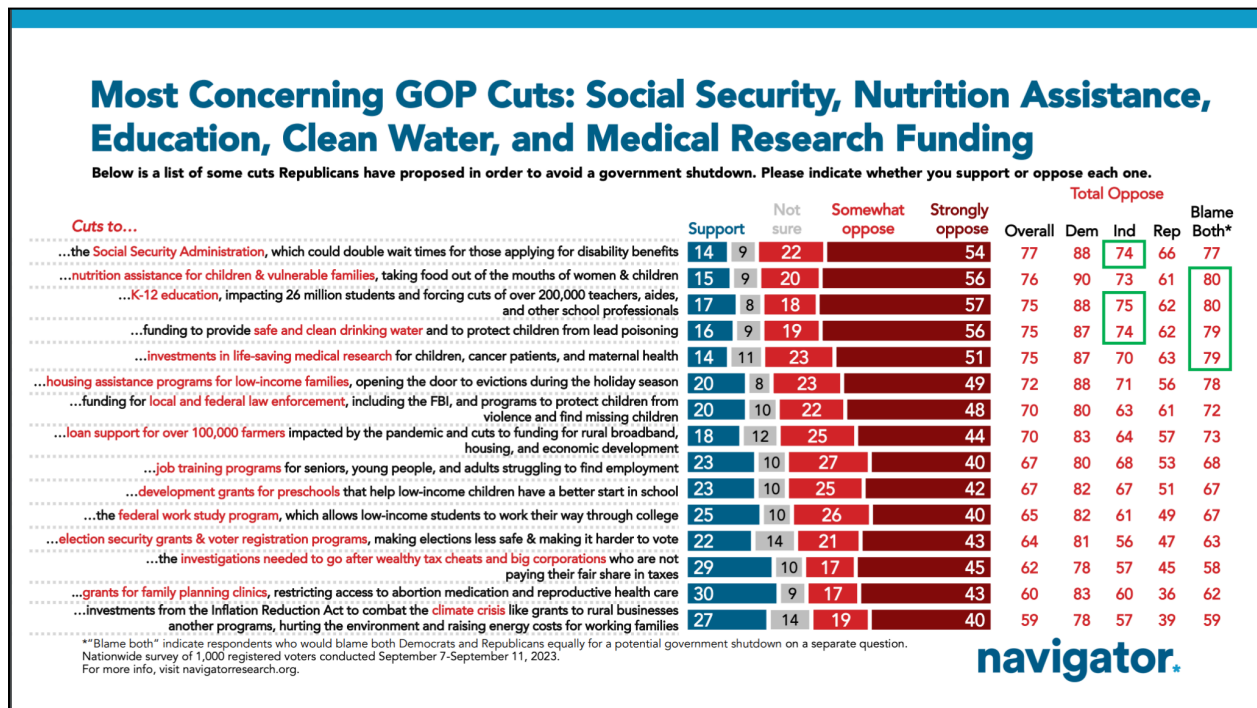


From: Navigator Research  
 To: Interested Parties  
 Re: Revisiting Public Opinion on Government Shutdowns  
 Date: January 16, 2024

With Congress in another debate over government funding and the risk of a shutdown on the table, it is worth revisiting some of the key findings and insights [Navigator Research](#) has uncovered through months of seeking to understand Americans' perceptions of a potential shutdown. Back in September, [we argued that there were three guiding principles](#) for how progressives should communicate about a government shutdown that we revisit here.

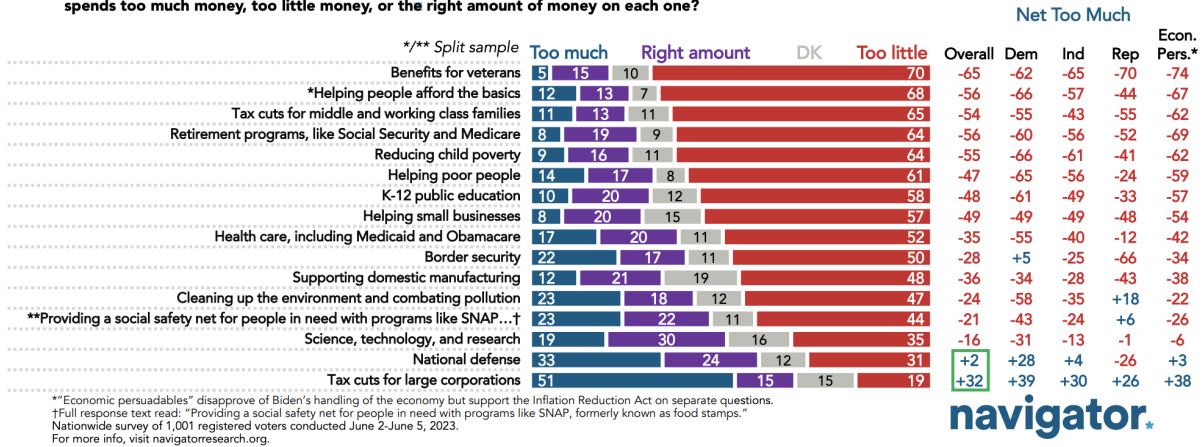
First, the public wants more—not less—public investment in programs like Social Security, Medicare, education, veterans' benefits, and many more: [Our research in September 2023](#) found that more than seven in ten Americans oppose cuts to programs like Social Security (77 percent), nutrition assistance (76 percent), K-12 education (75 percent), funding for safe and clean drinking water (75 percent), and investments in life-saving medical research. Moreover, among a list of 15 different things tested in [a June 2023 survey](#), majorities of Americans said the federal government spent *too little* on almost all of those programs, with the only one where a majority said we spent too much was on "tax cuts for large corporations."



## Most Think Government Spends Too Little on Veterans, Affording the Basics, Tax Cuts for Working Americans, SS/Medicare

More than two in three say the U.S. government spends too little on benefits for veterans (70% too little) and helping people afford the basics (68%). By contrast, most say the government spends too much on tax cuts for large corporations (net +32 too much).

Below is a list of items. When you think about how much money the U.S. government spends on the following things, would you say the government spends too much money, too little money, or the right amount of money on each one?



Second, arguments that put the impacts on people front-and-center will always be more effective than arguments about process: Making the argument that we should be increasing spending in programs like veterans' benefits, health care, child care, and education is a more effective rebuttal against arguments about "out of control" government spending by 18 points, while arguments that criticized Republican lawmakers for going back on their spending deal only won against the conservative spending arguments by just 6 points.

## When GOP Argues On Spending/Shutdown, Strongest Response Is Cutting Investments, Raising Costs, & Delaying Social Security

Among independents and Americans who would blame both parties equally for a shutdown\*, a message that Democrats oppose spending cuts because they want to increase public investments (net +22 and net +30 more convincing) and one that hits Republicans for spending cuts that will "make working families pay even more" (net +16 and net +28) are strongest.

Which statement do you agree with more?

Statement 1: Republicans who say that government spending is out of control. If Congress can't come to an agreement to cut spending, we need to shut the government down.

Statement 2: Democrats who oppose Republicans' proposed spending cuts because Democrats want to increase, not decrease, public investment in veterans' benefits, healthcare, child care, and education.

Statement 1: 41%  
 Statement 2: 59%  
 Net Statement 2 Overall: +18  
 Independents: +22  
 \*Blame Both: +30

Statement 3: Democrats who say Republicans' proposed spending cuts will make working families pay even more for the things they need at a time where the cost of living is already too high.

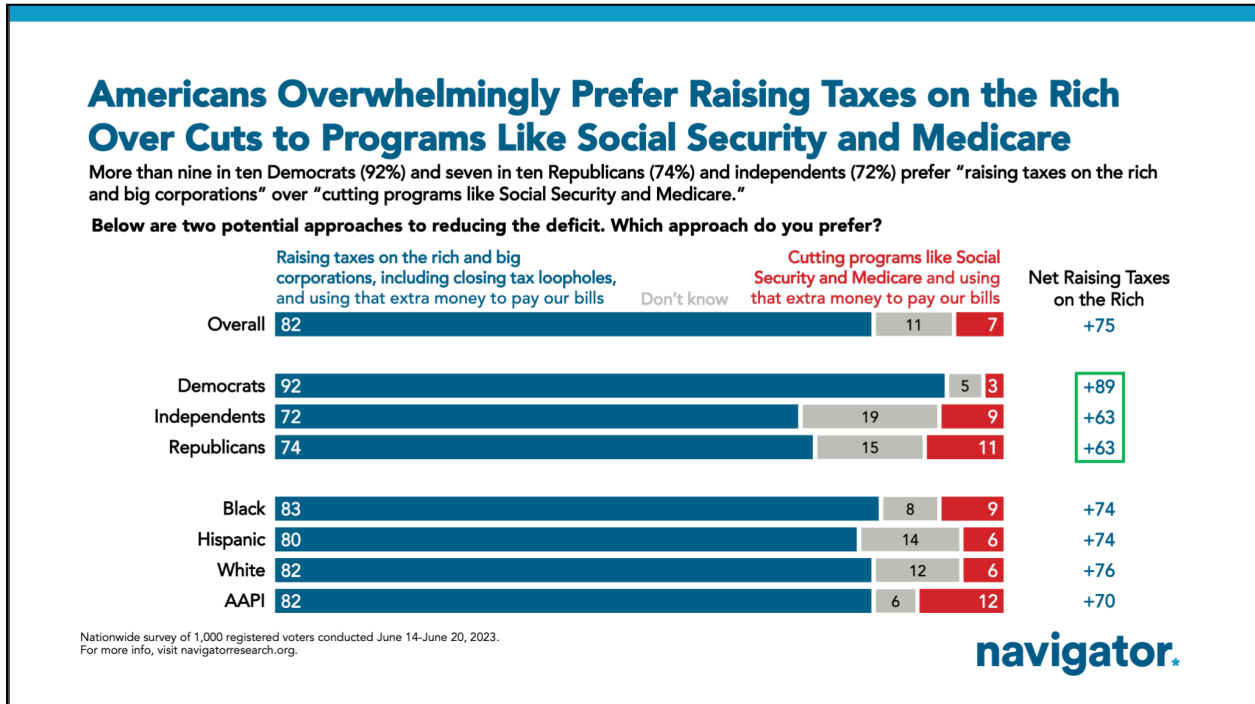
Statement 1: 41%  
 Statement 3: 59%  
 Net Statement 3 Overall: +18  
 Independents: +16  
 \*Blame Both: +28

Statement 4: Democrats who say Republicans' proposed spending cuts to Social Security could double wait times for those applying for disability benefits, hurting seniors in particular.

Statement 1: 42%  
 Statement 4: 58%  
 Net Statement 4 Overall: +16  
 Independents: +8  
 \*Blame Both: +22

\*"Blame both" indicate respondents who would blame both Democrats and Republicans equally for a potential government shutdown on a separate question.  
 Nationwide survey of 1,000 registered voters conducted September 7-September 11, 2023.  
 For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

Third, Americans have a clear preference for raising taxes on the wealthiest Americans and big corporations over spending cuts. In our June 2023 research, by a 75-point margin, over four in five Americans preferred “raising taxes on the rich and big corporations, including closing tax loopholes, and using that extra money to pay our bills” (82 percent) over the conservative approach of “cutting programs like Social Security and Medicare and using that extra money to pay our bills” (just 7 percent).



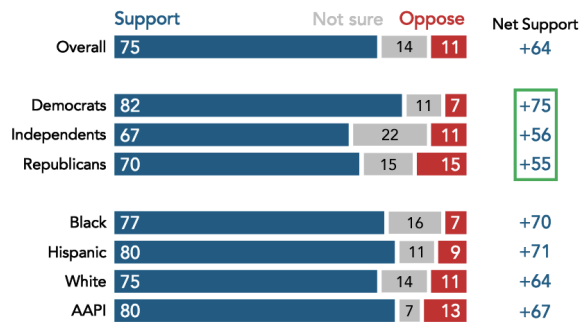
Beyond these principles, it is essential to understand that the American people simply have no more patience for the constant brinkmanship being put forward by Republican lawmakers over funding the government. In July 2023, our research, found by a 22-point margin, 61 percent of Americans agreed more with the statement: “Enough with the shutdowns – it is never right to shut down the federal government, even if it’s for an important issue or cause that I believe in,” compared to just 39 percent who agreed more with the statement: “I would support shutting down the federal government in the future if it meant making progress on reducing government spending and debt.” [By October](#), right as a shutdown threat had been diffused, there was a net 12 point increase favoring the “enough with the shutdowns” sentiment (67 percent) over shutting the government down to reduce spending (33 percent).

There is no reason to expect that there would not be a similar backlash toward a government shutdown today than there was three months ago, nor would there be any reason to expect blame wouldn’t start shifting toward Republican lawmakers as it did last fall.

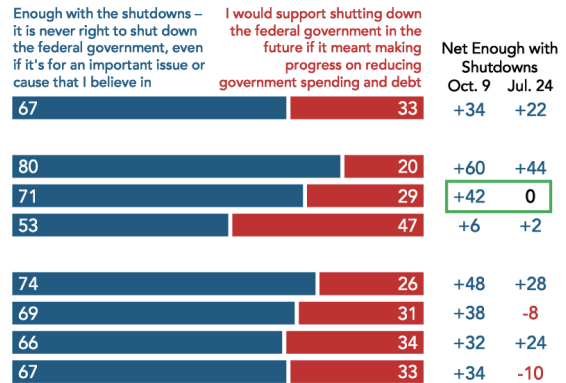
## Three in Four Support the Decision to Keep the Government Open, and Growing Shares Say "Enough With the Shutdowns"

Large bipartisan majorities support the decision to keep the government open, and growing shares say "enough with the shutdowns."  
 • Independents now say "enough with the shutdowns" by a 42-point margin (up from even in late July).

As you may know, Congress narrowly voted to keep the government open for 6 more weeks, rather than shut down at the end of September. Do you support or oppose this decision?



Which of the following statements do you agree with more?



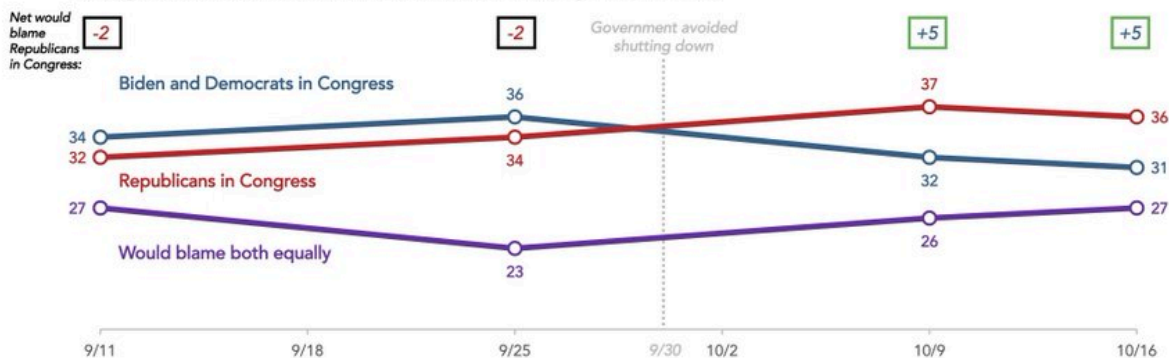
Nationwide surveys of registered voters; Each wave represents approximately 1,000 interviews taken over the prior three-five days. Latest wave conducted October 5-October 9, 2023. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

## More Americans Still Would Blame GOP for a Shutdown

Since early September, the share who would blame Republicans in Congress for a shutdown has increased to 36%, while the share who would blame Biden and Democrats in Congress has declined (from a high of 36% in late September to 31% now).

• By a five-point margin, Americans would now blame Republicans more than Biden and Democrats (36% to 31%).

If the government were to shut down this fall, who would you blame most?



Nationwide surveys of registered voters; Each wave represents approximately 1,000 interviews taken over the prior three-five days. Latest wave conducted October 12-October 16, 2023. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.