

Cornell National Social Survey 2011

Report 2: General Results

Prepared by Sherry Xian, Yasamin Miller, Darren Hearn,
Survey Research Institute

Introduction

This report summarizes the findings of the 2011 Cornell National Social Survey (CNSS), conducted by the Survey Research Institute (SRI) at Cornell University. The 2011 CNSS queried continental United States residents regarding a wide range of topics through questions developed by Cornell University faculty and researchers. Questions were presented as modules that included topics on:

- Public Education
- Family Meals and Eating Habits
- Electronic Medical Records and Health Care
- Legal and Political Issues
- Foreign policy
- Voting and voter registration
- Employment
- Mobile Phone Usage
- Social Discounting

Methodology¹

- A total of 1,000 telephone interviews were conducted between September 10, 2011 and December 10, 2011. All participants were asked core demographic questions as well as all questions from the omnibus modules.
- The CNSS utilizes a random digit dial (RDD) sample of all telephone exchanges within the continental United States. Eligible respondents must be at least 18 years old.
- The cooperation rate was 62.4% using American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) standards.
- The margin of error (MOE) for questions with two response options is 3.1% among the 1,000 respondents.

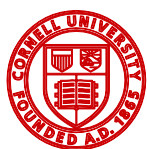
Some highlights of results from the CNSS are described below. All results are reported as un-weighted percentages of respondents who provided valid answers. Those who refused to answer and those who responded that they did not know how to answer are excluded.

¹ See *Report 1: Introduction & Methodology* for a full description at www.sri.cornell.edu. A copy of the questionnaire and data file is available at: <http://sri.cornell.edu/sri/CNSS.cfm>.

Public Education and Economic Threat

The vast majority of the respondents believe that China is the largest economic threat to the U.S. and they also believe that the U.S. public education system is losing ground to China. Only a quarter gave a grade of A or B to the quality of the work of the public schools nationwide, whereas the majority gave an A or B to their local public schools. Nearly a third of them hardly have any confidence at all in people running the U.S. public education system. The majority of them believe that the U.S. is spending too little money to improve the nation's education system.

- About half of the respondents (47.1%) were randomly chosen and asked which country is the largest economic threat to the states and the majority of them (84.1%) chose China over other countries (5.7% for Japan, 4.2% for Russia, and 3.8% for Germany).
- For those who were asked which country was the largest economic threat, they were then asked how much our public education is losing ground to them. Less than one out of ten respondents (9.5%) believes that the U.S. public education system is *not* losing ground. The majority of them (53.5%) believe that the U.S. public education system is losing quite a bit or a great deal of ground to the country posing the biggest economic threat to us.
- All respondents were then asked to grade the quality of public schools in their community using an A, B, C, D, and Fail grading system. Respondents were less likely to give a grade of A to the public schools in their community if they were asked the economic threat question first (16.4% vs. 23.7% of those who were not



Cornell University
Survey Research Institute

Survey Research Institute • Cornell University • (607) 255-3786 • Fax (607) 255-7118 • www.sri.cornell.edu

asked the economic threat question). Overall, the majority of the respondents (59.5%) gave their community public schools a grade of A or B for quality of their work, while only 27.5% gave an A or B to the public schools nationwide.

- Overall, nearly one-third of the respondents (31.7%) have hardly any confidence at all in people running the U.S. public education system.
- The majority of the respondents (59.0%) believe that the U.S. is spending too little money to improve the nation's education system, while 16.6% of them think that we are spending too much.
- A quarter of the respondents (25.4%) currently have children attending the public schools and were more likely to give their local public schools a grade of A (27.2%) compared to those who didn't have children attending the public schools (17.5%).

Family Meals and Eating Habits

The plurality of respondents did not dine with any of their children on a daily basis on any of the past seven days when surveyed.

- Half of the respondents (51.0%) were selected randomly and asked on how many of the past seven days they ate their evening meal with at least one of their children. Among those who have at least one dependent child in their household, the majority (57.0%) ate the evening meals with children on all seven days, but 43% reported not dining with their children on a daily basis. Only 4.1% of them never had dinner with their children during the past seven days.
- The other half of the respondents (49.0%) were asked on how many of the past seven days did they eat the evening meal with at least one of their children *in the room*. Again, the 56.0% said they were in the same room with their child while eating dinner for each of the past seven days, 44% did not dine with their children in the same room on a daily basis.
- Among respondents with at least one child, three quarters of them (75.8%) very often or always have the whole family present for dinner. Two out of three (60.5%) never or seldom have disagreements at mealtime, whereas almost one out of 10 (9.1%) said they always or very often have disagreements at mealtime. The majority (87.6%) said that everyone eating takes part in conversation. More than half of them (54.1%) never or seldom have TV or other electronic devices on. Nearly half of them (48.5%) very often or always have children help with chores around mealtime.

Electronic Medical Records and Health Care

Electronic Medical Records

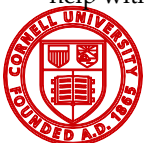
An electronic medical record (EMR) is a computer-based version of a patient's medical record. The vast majority of respondents have an EMR and believe EMR will improve the quality of medical care, while half of them worry that EMR will worsen the privacy and security of medical information. Respondents hold similar opinions for computers being used to share medical information between different places where patients receive medical care.

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.9%) reported that their doctor uses an EMR for them, though 18.1% were not sure about their doctor's use of EMRs. Regardless of their doctor's EMR use, two-thirds of respondents (66.3%) believe that the usage of EMR will improve the quality of medical care. Only 7.3% of them think that the usage of EMR will worsen the quality of medical care.
- As for the privacy and security of medical information, about half of the respondents (49.5%) believe that the usage of EMR will worsen it and 17.9% of them believe the usage of EMR will actually improve it.
- Computers are used to share medical information between different places where patients receive medical care. More than three quarters of the respondents (78.7%) believe such practice will improve the quality of medical care, while about half of them (47.8%) believe it will worsen the privacy and security of medical information.

Health Status and Weight

Half of the respondents described their weight as "about right", while less than half of respondents describe themselves as overweight. Two out of five respondents are trying to lose weight.

- Nearly nine out of ten respondents (87.5%) rate their overall health as good, very good or excellent. 15.0% of them are currently caring for or making healthcare decisions for a family member or a close friend with a serious or chronic illness.
- About half of the respondents (51.1%) describe their weight as "about right", while 3.9% of the respondents describe themselves as underweight and 45.0% described themselves as overweight.
- The majority of the respondents (53.3%) are neither trying to gain nor lose weight, while 42.0% of them are actively trying to lose weight.
- More than two-thirds of those respondents (71.5%) who describe themselves as overweight are currently trying



to lose weight, while 5.1% of those who describe themselves as underweight are also trying to lose weight.

- More than half of the respondents (54.3%) disagree that religious organizations should help to deal with obesity in the United States.

National Health Care Policy

The majority of respondents oppose recent changes to the health care system and would like to go back to the previous health care system. Although more than a third of the respondents think the new health care bill will make things worse for their families, nearly half of the respondents believe it will make things better for lower-income families.

- More than half of the respondents (56.7%) would choose to go back to the health care system that existed before passage of the 2010 health care bill.
- Half of the respondents (48.6%) were asked if they support or oppose the changes to the health care system that *were enacted by Congress and the Obama administration in 2010*. The other half of the respondents (51.4%) were asked if they support or oppose the changes to the health care system that *became law in 2010*. Regardless of how the question was worded, the respondents are divided almost equally with 48.1% somewhat or strongly supporting the changes to the health care system and 51.9% somewhat or strongly opposing the changes. When asked about the impact of the changes for themselves, more than one out of three (36.6%) think the new health care bill will make things worse for them and their family, while less than a quarter of them (23.0%) think the new bill will make things better.
- On the other hand, nearly half of the respondents (48.6%) believe the new health care bill will make things better for lower-income families, while 30.2% of them think it will make things worse for lower-income families.

Legal and Political Issues

Sometimes, respondents react differently to statements carrying the same message but phrased differently.

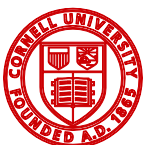
- More than two-thirds of the respondents (70.6%) agree with the statement: “Jurors should uphold the law exactly as it is written”, while one-fifth of them (20.4%) disagree.
- Three out of five (60.7%) of the respondents agree with the statement: “If the punishment required by law seems too severe, jurors should consider that when deciding if

a defendant is guilty of a minor drug offense,” and 28.4% of them disagree.

- Among those who agree with the first statement, the majority (56.0%) surprisingly also agree with the second statement.
- The majority of the respondents (56.2%) agree that liberal writers should not use heated and violent rhetoric because it may incite violence, while 30.7% of them disagree with that.
- Later, when given the following statement “Some crimes are against politicians. One example was the shooting of Democratic Congresswoman Gabby Giffords in Tucson. These crimes are the deeds of individuals who act alone. Other people’s political language does not provoke them,” half of the respondents (51.0%) agree with it, while 38.1% of them disagree.
- Among those who agree with the first statement, the majority (52.7%) surprisingly also agree with the second statement.
- The majority of the respondents (55.6%) agree that president Obama’s elegant speaking skills are not enough to influence major international issues, while 34.2% of them disagree.
- Four out of ten respondents (40.9%) agree that President Obama has done too little with his speaking skills to create regime change in Iran, while 37.7% of them disagree.
- Among those who agree with the first statement, the majority (53.5%) surprisingly also agree with the second statement.
- Nearly half of the respondents (47.8%) disagree with statement “Previous republican president passed many statutes and regulations and these have made it impossible for President Obama to revive the economy”, while 41.3% agree.
- About two-thirds of the respondents (65.5%) disagree with the statement “President Obama has passed many policies. These have led to a strong economic revival”, while only a quarter of them (25.4%) agree.

Foreign Policy

The majority of the respondents approve of Arab profiling by law enforcement agencies and they do not think that military force makes problems worse. On the other hand, there is an even division of opinions about whether the United States should play an active role in world conflicts. The majority of them do not think the war in Afghanistan will make America safer and they strongly disapprove of the idea of a war tax.



- The majority of the respondents (55.0%) approve of Arab profiling by law enforcement agencies (e.g. stopping or searching people of Arab or Middle Eastern descent to see if they may be involved in potential terrorist activities).
- One out of three respondents (35.4%) agree or strongly agree with the statement “The use of military force only makes problems worse”, while two out of three (64.6%) disagree .
- Respondents are evenly split on the role the US should play in solving conflicts around the world, with half (49.3%) agreeing it should play an active role, and half (50.8%) disagreeing.
- Only one out of three respondents (35.4%) believes that the war in Afghanistan will make American safer, the majority (64.6%) do not believe this.
- The majority (78.9%) do not agree that Congress should pass a tax to finance the war in Afghanistan. When asked to imagine that Congress passed a war tax to help pay for the war in Afghanistan the plurality (40.2%) of the respondents prefer this tax be paid equally by everyone. One out of three (33.9%) prefer a tax that rises as income rises. One out of four (25.9%) prefer that this tax be paid only by the wealthy.
- The majority of the respondents (56.0%) oppose using the U.S. military to destroy potential terrorist bases in Yemen without the permission of Yemen’s government. On the other hand, one out of five (22.2%) of them strongly favor such a proposal.

Mobile Phone Usage

The majority of respondents use the Internet or e-mail almost every day. Nearly half of them use several services on their mobile phone including text messaging, web browsing and calling. The majority of them have had their phone for two years or more and they check their phone within one hour upon waking up.

- Three out of four respondents (75.6%) use the Internet or e-mail almost every day, while 12.2% of them never use it.
- Only about one out of four (27.2%) use their mobile phone to make phone calls only, another one out of four (26.5%) do both text messaging and calling. The plurality (46.2%) use services including text messaging, web browsing and calling.
- The majority of the respondents (57.7%) have had their mobile phone for two years or more. The majority of the respondents (53.3%) check their phone within one hour after they wake up, with 21.1% of them checking their phone within five minutes of waking up.
- The majority of the respondents (58.7%) never sleep with their phone in bed or bring it into bed during the night, although 24.5% always do.
- Only 15.0% of the respondents find it difficult to not use their phone in places where it is socially frowned upon, such as on public transportation, in restaurants, in the cinema or in place of worship.
- 18.5% of the respondents would be more upset leaving their phone at home than leaving their wallet.
- More than one-third of the respondents (38.5%) have experienced “phantom vibrations/phantom calls” in which they imagined their phone vibrating or ringing when in fact it was not.

Voting and Voter Registration

The vast majority of respondents have a government-issued ID, or a benefit card, and a bank check book or ATM card. Less than half of them have a work or student related ID. Most of them voted in the presidential elections in 2008. They would be as likely or more likely to vote if a federally issued ID is required.

- Almost all the respondents (98.9%) have a government-issued ID, like a driver’s license, passport, birth certificate, or military ID. Nine out of ten respondents (90.5%) have a benefit card, like one for health insurance, prescription benefits, Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare or TANF. Less than half of them (45.8%) have a work or student related ID. The vast majority (92.5%) have a bank check book or ATM card.
- The vast majority of the respondents (84.0%) voted in the last presidential elections in 2008.
- More than two-thirds of the respondents (77.7%) would be just as likely to vote if a federally issued ID is required at the voting booth.

For More Information:

Yasamin Miller, Director
 Survey Research Institute at Cornell University
 Ithaca, New York 14850
 Email: yd17@cornell.edu, Web: www.sri.cornell.edu
 Phone: 607-255-0148, Fax: 607-255-7118

Citing Results from the CNS:

The appropriate attribution language shall appear: “Copyright © 2012, Survey Research Institute, Ithaca, New York Reprinted with permission.” Public reporting of data results must adhere to rigorous statistical guidelines such as not citing any result where the segmented sample size is too small to be a reliable result and may not be misleading in any way. All citations must have written consent from the Survey Research Institute. All third party inquires must be directed to the Survey Research Institute.

