



REASON-RUPE

Public Opinion Survey

PENSION POLL 2015 TOPLINE RESULTS

RELEASED: FEBRUARY 6, 2015

The Reason-Rupe Pension Poll interviewed 1,003 adults on both mobile (501) and landline (502) phones, including 290 respondents without landlines, from January 29 – February 2, 2015 from the continental United States and the District of Columbia using live telephone interviews. The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.8%. Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI) conducted the survey. Interviews were done in English by Princeton Data Source. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. When feasible, answer choices within questions were rotated or randomized. For more methodological information, please visit <http://reason.com/reason-rupe-poll-methodology>.

The poll questionnaire, crosstabs, and analysis can be found at reason.com/poll

Don't know and Refused responses are voluntary.

Due to rounding, accumulated responses may not total 100%.

Responses less than 1% are denoted by a “*”.

1. Generally speaking, would you say things in this country are heading in the right direction or in the wrong direction?
 - Right Direction..... 43%
 - Wrong Direction 49%
 - (VOL.) Neither..... 3%
 - Don't Know..... 3%
 - Refused..... 1%
 - Total..... 100%

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?
 - Approve 50%
 - Disapprove..... 44%
 - Don't Know..... 4%
 - Refused..... 2%
 - Total..... 100%

3. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the U.S. Congress is doing?
 - Approve 23%
 - Disapprove..... 69%
 - Don't Know..... 7%
 - Refused..... 2%
 - Total..... 100%

READ TO ALL: As you may know, a public employee pension is typically a regular guaranteed monthly payment made to public employees for the rest of their lives after they retire based on their salary and years of work.

4. How concerned are you about your local and state governments' ability to fund public employee pensions as currently promised?
 - *NET CONCERNED*..... 72%
 - *NET UNCONCERNED*..... 26%
 - Very concerned 39%
 - Somewhat concerned..... 33%
 - Not too concerned 15%
 - Not at all concerned 11%
 - Don't Know..... 2%
 - Refused..... 1%
 - Total..... 100%

5. How important a priority do you think pension reform should be for government? Should it be...
 - A top priority 35%
 - An important but lower priority 41%
 - Not too important 13%
 - Or does it not need to be done? 7%
 - Don't Know..... 3%
 - Refused..... 1%
 - Total..... 100%

6. Do you have a strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, neutral, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable opinion of public employees?
 - *Net Favorable* 54%
 - *Neutral* 28%
 - *Net Unfavorable* 14%
 - Strongly favorable..... 24%
 - Somewhat favorable..... 30%
 - Neutral..... 28%
 - Somewhat unfavorable 9%
 - Strongly unfavorable 5%
 - Don't Know..... 3%
 - Refused..... 1%
 - Total..... 100%

7. On average, do you think public employees receive better, worse, or the same in retirement benefits compared to workers with similar jobs in the private sector?
 - Better..... 52%
 - Worse 19%
 - Same..... 24%
 - Don't Know..... 4%
 - Refused..... *%
 - Total..... 100%

8. Generally speaking, do you feel public employees are paying more than their fair share toward retirement costs, less than their fair share, or about their fair share?
 - More than fair share..... 14%
 - Less than fair share..... 31%
 - About their fair share 48%
 - Don't Know..... 7%
 - Refused..... *%
 - Total..... 100%

9. Generally speaking, how old should most government workers be before they are eligible to begin receiving lifetime retirement benefits?
- MEAN 61 years
 - MEDIAN 65 years
 - (VOL.) Never *%
 - Don't Know 3%
 - Refused 1%
 - Total 100%

10. What about police officers and fire fighters specifically? How old should police officers and firefighters be before they are eligible to begin receiving lifetime retirement benefits?
- MEAN 56 years
 - MEDIAN 55 years
 - (VOL.) Never *%
 - Don't Know 4%
 - Refused 1%
 - Total 100%

11. Would you favor or oppose setting a cap on the dollar amount of ANNUAL pension payments retired public employees can receive?
- Favor 58%
 - Oppose 35%
 - Don't Know 5%
 - Refused 1%
 - Total 100%

12. About how much should that ANNUAL cap be in dollars? (ASKED OF THOSE WHO FAVOR SETTING CAP¹)
- MEAN \$57,121
 - MEDIAN \$50,000
 - Don't Know 40%
 - Refused 4%
 - Total 100%

13. Do you think public employee pensions should be based on their salary alone, or should they be able to increase their pension by counting unused sick time, vacation time, and specialty pay?
- Salary Alone 54%
 - Salary, Unused Sick Time, Vacation Time, Specialty Pay 42%
 - Don't Know 3%
 - Refused 1%
 - Total 100%

14. In your opinion, do you think the public should or should NOT get to vote on increases to public employees' pension and benefits?
- Should get to vote 78%
 - Should NOT get to vote 20%
 - Don't Know 2%
 - Refused *%
 - Total 100%

READ TO ALL: As you may know, public employees will typically get pension payments for the rest of their lives after retirement while private sector workers will typically get payments from 401(k)-style accounts based on the amount they saved for retirement and investment returns.

15. Would you favor or oppose shifting CURRENT public employees from guaranteed pensions to 401(k)-style accounts? [Q15 and Q16 ROTATED]
- Favor 59%
 - Oppose 36%
 - Don't Know 4%
 - Refused 1%
 - Total 100%

16. Would you favor or oppose shifting FUTURE public employees, who have not been promised pension benefits, from guaranteed pensions to 401(k)-style accounts? [Q15 and Q16 ROTATED]
- Favor 67%
 - Oppose 28%
 - Don't Know 4%
 - Refused 1%
 - Total 100%

¹Was asked to only half sample from 1/30 – 2/2. N=333

17. When it comes to the idea of shifting public employees from guaranteed pensions to 401k style retirement plans, which of the following statements do you agree with more?
- Shifting public employees is a bad idea because benefits would not be guaranteed and would depend on how well the employees and governments saved and how the market performs..... 29%
 - Shifting public employees is a good idea because 401k style accounts give employees flexibility to take the plan with them from job to job and are less costly to taxpayers..... 66%
 - Don't Know..... 4%
 - Refused..... 1%
 - Total..... 100%

18. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose shifting public employees from guaranteed pensions to 401K style accounts if this meant [Retirement benefits were not guaranteed and would depend on how well the employees and governments save and invest]?
- NET FAVOR..... 50%
 - NET OPPOSE 45%
 - Strongly favor 24%
 - Somewhat favor 26%
 - Somewhat oppose..... 19%
 - Strongly oppose..... 26%
 - Don't Know..... 3%
 - Refused..... 1%
 - Total..... 100%

19. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose shifting public employees from guaranteed pensions to 401K style accounts if this meant [Breaking a contract made with public employees when they first accepted their jobs]?
- NET FAVOR..... 38%
 - NET OPPOSE 58%
 - Strongly favor 17%
 - Somewhat favor 21%
 - Somewhat oppose..... 23%
 - Strongly oppose..... 35%
 - Don't Know..... 3%
 - Refused..... 2%
 - Total..... 100%

20. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose shifting public employees from guaranteed pensions to 401K style accounts if this meant [Taxes would not have to be raised]?
- NET FAVOR..... 66%
 - NET OPPOSE 31%
 - Strongly favor 39%
 - Somewhat favor 27%
 - Somewhat oppose..... 15%
 - Strongly oppose..... 16%
 - Don't Know..... 2%
 - Refused..... 1%
 - Total..... 100%

21. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose shifting public employees from guaranteed pensions to 401K style accounts if this meant [Government would not have to reduce services]?
- *NET FAVOR*..... 59%
 - *NET OPPOSE* 37%
 - Strongly favor 30%
 - Somewhat favor 29%
 - Somewhat oppose 18%
 - Strongly oppose..... 19%
 - Don't Know 4%
 - Refused..... 1%
 - Total..... 100%

22. If your elected representative voted in favor of shifting public employees from guaranteed pensions to 401-K style accounts, would this make you more likely to vote for him or her, less likely, or would this not affect your vote?
- More likely 27%
 - Less likely 22%
 - Would not affect your vote..... 50%
 - Don't Know 2%
 - Refused..... *
 - Total..... 100%

READ TO ALL: On to a different subject...

23. How concerned are you that your local or state government will raise taxes in order to pay for public employee pension obligations in the future?
- *NET CONCERNED* 74%
 - *NET UNCONCERNED* 26%
 - Very concerned 42%
 - Somewhat concerned..... 32%
 - Not too concerned 17%
 - Not at all concerned 9%
 - Don't Know *
 - Refused..... *
 - Total..... 100%

24. To your knowledge, has your local or state government already cut or have plans to cut government services in order to help pay for public employee pension costs, or not?
- Yes 24%
 - No 50%
 - Don't Know 25%
 - Refused..... *
 - Total..... 100%

25. To your knowledge, has your local or state government already raised or have plans to raise taxes in order to help pay for public employee pension costs, or not?
- Yes 28%
 - No 49%
 - Don't Know 23%
 - Refused..... *
 - Total..... 100%

26. Some state and local governments are finding they do not have enough money to fund public employee retirement benefits, including pensions and health care benefits. If your local or state government faced this situation, would you favor or oppose the following options to help fund these retirement benefits?

(First,/Next,) how about...[Raising property, sales, and/or income taxes so that public employee benefits could be paid at current levels]?

- Favor 25%
- Oppose 74%
- Don't Know 1%
- Refused..... *
- Total..... 100%

27. If your local or state government faced this situation, would you favor or oppose the following options to help fund these retirement benefits? (First,/Next,) how about...[Reducing spending on services, like education, health care or infrastructure so that public employee benefits could be paid at current levels]?

- Favor 21%
- Oppose 77%
- Don't Know 1%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

28. If your local or state government faced this situation, would you favor or oppose the following options to help fund these retirement benefits? (First,/Next,) how about...[Reducing current public employees' future pension benefits]?

- Favor 44%
- Oppose 53%
- Don't Know 3%
- Refused *%
- Total 100%

29. If your local or state government faced this situation, would you favor or oppose the following options to help fund these retirement benefits? (First,/Next,) how about...[Reducing pension benefits being paid to already retired public employees]?

- Favor 27%
- Oppose 71%
- Don't Know 1%
- Refused *%
- Total 100%

30. If your local or state government faced this situation, would you favor or oppose the following options to help fund these retirement benefits? (First,/Next,) how about...[Requiring current public employees to contribute more towards their own future pensions and benefits]?

- Favor 82%
- Oppose 17%
- Don't Know 1%
- Refused *%
- Total 100%

31. If your local or state government did not have enough money to fund public employee retirement benefits, including pensions and health care benefits, what would you like your local or state government to do FIRST?²

- Raise property, sales, and/or income taxes so that public employee benefits could be paid at current levels 8%
- Reduce spending on services, like education, health care or infrastructure so that public employee .and benefits could be paid at current levels 6%
- Reduce current public employees' future pension benefits 9%
- Reduce pension benefits being paid to already retired public employees 5%
- Require current public employees to contribute more towards their own future pensions and benefits 63%
- (VOL.) Don't favor any 7%
- Don't Know 2%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

² Question was asked of those who favored 2 or more options in Q26-Q30. Those who only favored a single option in Q27-Q31 were automatically categorized into the corresponding response in Q31.

32. If your city or state did not have enough money to fund public employee retirement benefits, including pensions and health care benefits, what would be the LEAST DESIRABLE way to address the problem?³

- Raise property, sales, and/or income taxes so that public employee benefits could be paid at current levels..... 24%
- Reduce spending on services, like education, health care or infrastructure so that public employee and benefits could be paid at current levels..... 27%
- Reduce current public employees' future pension benefits 13%
- Reduce pension benefits being paid to already retired public employees..... 21%
- Require current public employees to contribute more towards their own future pensions and benefits..... 6%
- (VOL.) Don't oppose any..... 2%
- Don't Know 5%
- Refused..... 2%
- Total..... 100%

33. If you had to choose which of the following would you rather do to address this problem?

- Reduce public services ranging from police and fire protection to recreation so that pension promises can be maintained to past and present public employees 15%
- Renegotiate public employee contracts to reduce pension benefits and make current employees contribute more to their own pension..... 80%
- (VOL.) Other 1%
- Don't Know 2%
- Refused..... 1%
- Total..... 100%

34. If you had to choose, which of the following would you rather do to address this problem?

- Raise property, sales, and/or income taxes ... 16%
- Renegotiate public employee contracts to reduce pension benefits and make current employees contribute more to their own pension..... 81%
- (VOL.) Other 1%
- Don't Know..... 1%
- Refused..... 1%
- Total..... 100%

35. Would you favor or oppose a proposal requiring public employees to contribute at least 50 percent of the cost of their retirement benefits?

- Favor..... 53%
- Oppose 43%
- Don't Know..... 3%
- Refused..... 1%
- Total..... 100%

36. If your state or local government did not have enough money to pay the pension benefits of ALREADY retired public employees, would you favor or oppose raising taxes so that benefits could be paid at current levels?

- Favor..... 32%
- Oppose 66%
- Don't Know..... 2%
- Refused..... *%
- Total..... 100%

37. If your state or local government did not have enough money to pay the pension benefits of ALREADY retired public employees, would you favor or oppose reducing spending on government services so that benefits could be paid at current levels?

- Favor..... 43%
- Oppose 54%
- Don't Know..... 3%
- Refused..... 1%
- Total..... 100%

³Question was asked of those who opposed 2 or more options in Q26-Q30. Those who only favored a single option in Q27-Q31 were automatically categorized into the corresponding response in Q32.

38. Please tell me whether you think each of the following is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason why many public employee pension plans are underfunded. (First/Next), [State and local governments failed to contribute to pensions each year like they were supposed to]

- Major reason 60%
- Minor reason 25%
- Not a reason 10%
- Don't Know 4%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

39. Please tell me whether you think each of the following is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason why many public employee pension plans are underfunded. (First/Next), [State and local governments underestimated how much they would need to contribute each year]

- Major reason 65%
- Minor reason 21%
- Not a reason 11%
- Don't Know 2%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

40. Please tell me whether you think each of the following is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason why many public employee pension plans are underfunded. (First/Next), [State and local governments did not tax enough]

- Major reason 17%
- Minor reason 42%
- Not a reason 39%
- Don't Know 2%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

41. Please tell me whether you think each of the following is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason why many public employee pension plans are underfunded. (First/Next), [Public employees did not contribute enough]

- Major reason 46%
- Minor reason 34%
- Not a reason 17%
- Don't Know 2%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

42. Please tell me whether you think each of the following is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason why many public employee pension plans are underfunded. (First/Next), [Public employee benefits are too high]

- Major reason 44%
- Minor reason 27%
- Not a reason 24%
- Don't Know 4%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

43. Please tell me whether you think each of the following is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason why many public employee pension plans are underfunded. (First/Next), [The country's economic recession]

- Major reason 53%
- Minor reason 26%
- Not a reason 19%
- Don't Know 1%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

44. Generally speaking, when considering whether to take a new job or stay at your existing job, which of the following is MOST important?

- Flexible work schedule 7%
- Earning the highest pay possible 17%
- Making a difference in society 13%
- A pension 9%
- Work that you find interesting 20%
- Benefits such as healthcare and 401k savings 30%
- Don't Know 3%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

45. If you had to choose, would you rather take a higher salary with less health and retirement benefits or a lower salary with more health and retirement benefits?

- Higher Salary/Less Benefits 33%
- Lower Salary/More Benefits 65%
- Don't Know 1%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

46. Generally speaking, do you feel you are saving enough or have saved enough money to live a comfortable life during retirement, or not?

- Yes, saving enough/have save enough 33%
- No 65%
- Don't Know 2%
- Refused *%
- Total 100%

47. Next...as I read the following pairs of statements, please tell me which comes closer to your own opinion.

- “We need a strong government to handle today’s complex economic problems” 50%
- “People would be better able to handle today’s problems within a free market with less government involvement.” 48%
- Don't Know 2%
- Refused 1%
- Total 100%

48. Next...as I read the following pairs of statements, please tell me which comes closer to your own opinion.

- “The less government the better” 47%
- “There are more things government should be doing” 51%
- Don't Know 2%
- Refused *%
- Total 100%

49. Some people think the government (should promote traditional values in our society.) Others think the government (should not favor any particular set of values.) Which comes closer to your own view?

- Government should promote traditional values 49%
- Government should not favor any particular set of values 48%
- Don't Know 2%
- Refused *%
- Total 100%

DEMOGRAPHICS

50. GENDER

- Male 49%
- Female 51%
- Total 100%

51. Which of the following BEST describes your current employment status?

- Employed Full Time 41%
- Employed Part Time 11%
- Small Business Owner or self-employed 6%
- Taking Care of Home and Family 7%
- Retired 20%
- Student 5%
- Unemployed 6%
- (VOL.) Disabled 3%
- Don't Know/Refused 1%
- Total 100%

52. Are you employed by local, state, or the federal government? (ASKED OF THOSE WHO ARE EMPLOYED)

- Yes 17%
- No 81%
- Don't Know/ Refused 2%
- Total..... 100%

53. Before retiring, were you ever primarily employed by local, state, or the federal government? (ASKED OF THOSE WHO ARE RETIRED)

- Yes 36%
- No 63%
- Don't Know/Refused *%
- Total..... 100%

54. Have you or anyone in your household ever been part of a labor union? [IF YES: Is that you, another member of your household, or both?]

- Yes, you..... 14%
- Yes, another member of household 11%
- Yes, both 5%
- No 70%
- Don't Know 1%
- Refused..... *%
- Total..... 100%

55. AGE

- 18-24 13%
- 25-34 17%
- 35-44 16%
- 45-54 18%
- 55-64 17%
- 65+..... 18%
- Don't Know/Refused 1%
- Total..... 100%

56. In politics today, do you consider yourself a:

- Republican 21%
- Democrat..... 38%
- Independent 33%
- Or what? 7%
- Don't Know 1%
- Refused..... *%
- Total..... 100%

57. Party Identification (DERIVED, Independent Leaners Sorted)

- Democrat..... 38%
- Independent-Lean Democrat 14%
- Independent 13%
- Independent-Lean Republican..... 13%
- Republican 21%
- Don't Know..... 1%
- Refused..... *%
- Total..... 100%

58. Thinking about your overall political philosophy, would you describe yourself as:

- Conservative..... 29%
- Moderate..... 26%
- Liberal..... 14%
- Libertarian 5%
- Progressive 7%
- Or something else? 16%
- Don't Know..... 2%
- Refused..... *%
- Total..... 100%

59. Do you consider yourself to be a supporter of the Tea Party movement, or not?

- Supporter 23%
- Not a supporter 70%
- Don't Know..... 7%
- Refused..... *%
- Total..... 100%

60. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- High school or less..... 41%
- Some college 31%
- College..... 17%
- Post-Grad 11%
- Don't Know..... *%
- Refused..... 1%
- Total..... 100%

61. Race/Ethnicity

- White..... 66%
- African-American..... 12%
- Hispanic 13%
- Other 8%
- Don't Know/Refused 2%
- Total..... 100%

62. What is your household income category?

- <\$30,000..... 29%
- \$30,000 but less than \$45,000 15%
- \$45,000 but less than \$60,000 16%
- \$60,000 but less than \$75,000 9%
- \$75,000 but less than \$90,000 7%
- \$90,000 but less than \$110,000 6%
- \$110,000 but less than \$150,000 5%
- \$150,000 but less than \$250,000 6%
- \$250,000 or more..... 1%
- Don't Know..... 2%
- Refused..... 4%
- Total..... 100%

63. Region

- Northeast 19%
- Midwest..... 22%
- South 37%
- West 22%
- Total..... 100%

64. Community Type

- Rural 18%
- Suburban 50%
- Urban..... 32%
- Total..... 100%