

To: **Interested Parties**
From: **The Winston Group**
Date: **April 1, 2010**
Re: **Tea Party Voters**



In the current political climate, observers on both sides of the aisle have become interested in identifying and understanding an emerging group of voters: “Tea Party members.” The Winston Group conducted three national surveys for New Models of 1000 registered voters and within each survey captured a subgroup of respondents identifying themselves as a part of the “Tea Party movement.” These respondents are identified by their response of “yes” to the question “Do you consider yourself to be a part of the Tea Party movement?”

The surveys, conducted monthly from December 2009 through February 2010, shed light on two critical questions confronting those hoping to understand this movement:

Who are “Tea Party members” and what ideas matter to them?

Each survey asked a variety of questions - policy and demographic - that have been trended across the three months. The three surveys can be aggregated for a total of 511 interviews of respondents identifying themselves as Tea Party members. Furthermore, each survey contains stand-alone questions that illustrate the policy positions and beliefs that make the “Tea Party members” unique.

In short, the Tea Party movement is an economically conservative coalition that is not homogenous in its makeup and includes those of all political parties. While the movement tends to be made up of Republicans and conservatives, the movement’s defining feature is its unique brand of economic conservatism.

Who They Are

Some 17% of respondents to the three surveys say that they consider themselves “a part of the Tea Party movement.” Within each survey, the percentage ranged from 16% to 18%. They are more likely to be male, slightly older, middle income, and - they tend to be conservative and Republican.

Politically, it comes as no surprise that more Republicans and conservatives tend to be drawn to the Tea Party movement. However, independents make up a sizable portion of the Tea Party movement as well. While 57% of Tea Party members say they are Republican, another 28% say they are independent. Additionally, 13% identify themselves as Democrats.

Party ID	Tea Party (Dec - Feb)	Overall (Dec - Feb)
Republican	57	33
Democrat	13	38
Independent	28	27
Other	1	1

Almost two-thirds of the Tea Party movement identifies as conservative, while only 33% of the electorate as a whole does the same. In the three New Models surveys, 65% of Tea Party members say they are conservative, while 26% say they are moderate and 8% say they are liberal.

Ideology	Tea Party (Dec - Feb)	Overall (Dec - Feb)
Conservative	65	33
Moderate	26	45
Liberal	8	20
DK/Refused	1	2

While 52% of registered voters are female, the gender balance tips the other way with the Tea Party movement. Some 56% of Tea Party members are male while 44% are female.

Gender	Tea Party (Dec - Feb)	Overall (Dec - Feb)
Male	56	48
Female	44	52

The Tea Party movement is also made up of a slightly older group of voters than the electorate as a whole. Only 14% of Tea Party members identify themselves as age 18-34 compared to 20% of the sample overall. Furthermore, the older age groups - 55-64 and 65+ are more represented in the Tea Party movement than in the electorate overall.

Age	Tea Party (Dec - Feb)	Overall (Dec - Feb)
18-34	14	20
35-44	14	17
45-54	24	23
55-64	24	21
65+	22	17

Tea Party members tend to get their news about national issues from Fox News - some 47% of Tea Party members in the December - February surveys list Fox News as one of their top one or two sources of news, compared to 19% of the sample overall. However, only 10% say that talk news is one of their top two sources, higher than the overall sample (3%) but still less than other sources like CNN, a news source for 14% of Tea Party members.

Tea Party members have an income breakdown that concentrates slightly around the middle class. Fewer Tea Party members in the December - February surveys say they have household incomes under \$50,000 a year than voters overall, 29% of Tea Party members compared to 34% of voters overall. More Tea Party members fall in the \$50,000-\$75,000 range - 23% compared to 17% of voters overall. Furthermore, slightly fewer Tea Party members report incomes over \$75,000 - 32% compared to 34% among voters overall.

What Matters To Them

Put simply, the Tea Party movement espouses economic conservative values. This impacts their priorities in terms of policy. When asked to name their top issue, rather than prioritize a variety of items, Tea Party members again assert their economic conservatism. While voters overall are extremely concerned with the economy and jobs, Tea Party members are over twice as likely to name “national deficit/spending” as their top issue. The economy remains a top priority, but concern about the deficit is pronounced with this group, underscoring the unifying thread of economic conservatism that runs through the Tea Party movement. Additional questions illustrate that the Tea Party movement strongly links deficit with economic outcomes and as a result, the concern about the deficit/spending is a subset of concerns under economy and jobs.

Top Issue (top 5 for Tea Party respondents)	Tea Party (Feb 2010)	Overall (Feb 2010)	Republicans (Feb 2010)	Conservatives (Feb 2010)
Economy/Jobs	36	45	43	39
National Deficit/Spending	21	10	15	15
Health Care/Rx	14	17	12	11
Nat'l Defense/Foreign Affairs	6	5	5	6
Social Security	4	5	4	5

Tea Party members are more concerned about rates of taxation and see more negative consequences to increased taxes. In the December 2009 New Models survey, when asked if they are “aware of anything that might occur to federal tax rates next year,” some 56% of Tea Party members say that next year “taxes will go up/tax cuts will expire,” a response given by only 33% of respondents overall. They also identify a personal consequence: 82% say that when tax provisions expire next year, taxes on people like them will increase, compared to 62% of overall respondents.

They also see serious consequences to higher taxes; 83% of Tea Party members say they believe increasing taxes will cause job losses.

Belief Statements	Tea Party (Dec 2009)	Overall (Dec 2009)	Republicans (Dec 2009)	Conservatives (Dec 2009)
Increasing taxes will cause job losses	83	53	73	75
When tax provisions expire next year, taxes on people like me will increase	82	62	82	79

Concern about how government gets its revenue is matched by concern over how the government spends it. While 54% of the overall population feels that the stimulus package is not working, a full 87% of Tea Party members doubt the stimulus' impact - higher than even Republicans (83%) or conservatives (76%).

Despite the concern over taxing and spending, there is tension that exists as a result of balancing the priorities of fiscal conservatism and job creation. Like voters overall, jobs are a major factor in Tea Party members' policy positions. When asked whether the deficit or the unemployment rate is more important, the unemployment rate wins by a slim majority among Tea Party members. Yet when Tea Party members are asked to choose between two desirable outcomes - a balanced budget or a 5% unemployment rate - their choice is no different from the electorate as a whole.

Which is more important to you?	Tea Party (Jan 2010)	Overall (Jan 2010)	Republicans (Jan 2010)	Conservatives (Jan 2010)
Balancing the budget	32	32	33	36
Reducing unemployment to 5%	63	64	62	59

In the abstract, the deficit is a serious concern of Tea Party members, yet a concrete reduction in unemployment is able to outweigh that concern. However, for many Tea Party members, it is precisely those fiscally conservative items like lower taxes and spending that will enable the economy to create jobs. Tax cuts are the preferred job creation strategy for Tea Party members. Tea Party members lean towards tax cuts for small businesses (37%) and expanding development of all energy resources (31%). This is why concern about the deficit remains closely tied to concern about the economy/jobs - because the deficit issue is linked to tangible economic outcomes.

What is the best way to create jobs?	Tea Party (Jan 2010)	Overall (Jan 2010)	Republicans (Jan 2010)	Conservatives (Jan 2010)
Tax cuts for small businesses	37	28	43	36
Increased government spending on infrastructure	3	13	4	6
Cracking down on illegal immigration	19	16	19	18
Reducing health care costs for small businesses	5	11	8	10
Expanding development of all energy resources	31	24	22	25

When only offered two options and asked to choose between the two competing proposals for job creation, Tea Party members strongly favor economically conservative solutions rather than increased spending. Over 4 out of 5 Tea Party members (85%) say tax cuts for small businesses would do more to create jobs than increased government spending on infrastructure, compared to 61% of voters overall.

“___ would create more jobs	Tea Party (Jan 2010)	Overall (Jan 2010)	Republicans (Jan 2010)	Conservatives (Jan 2010)
Tax cuts for small businesses	85	61	83	79
Increased government spending on infrastructure like roads and bridges	9	31	12	15

Tea Party members also believe that cutting spending is key to job creation. Some 56% of Tea Party members believe that cutting spending will create jobs, while only 21% think increased government spending will create jobs. However, it is critical to note that 61% of Tea Party members think infrastructure spending creates jobs. Given that strong belief, it makes it all the more revealing that they still prefer tax cuts for small businesses as a means of job creation.

“___ will create jobs” (% “Believe”)	Tea Party (Dec 2009)	Overall (Dec 2009)	Republicans (Dec 2009)	Conservatives (Dec 2009)
Cutting spending	56	36	46	47
Increased government spending	21	40	19	18
Inc. gov’t spending on infrastructure	61	79	68	66

The economic conservatism of the Tea Party movement, woven with its serious concern for the state of the economy, has lead Tea Party members to express serious dissatisfaction with the direction of the country and leaders in government. Only 15% think the nation is on the right track, a far more pessimistic assessment than voters overall.

Direction of Country	Tea Party (Feb 2010)	Overall (Feb 2010)
Right Direction	15	37
Wrong Track	82	53
DK/Refused	3	11

Furthermore, Tea Party members express very little approval of Barack Obama’s job as president, with 81% saying they disapprove, exceeding disapproval levels held among Republicans (77%) and conservatives (79%). They are also highly opposed to Obama’s health care plan, with 82% of Tea Party members opposing, far higher than the overall sample (48% oppose).

Obama Job Approval	Tea Party (Feb 2010)	Overall (Feb 2010)
Approve	17	49
Disapprove	81	44
DK/Refused	2	6

While Tea Party members have a favorable view of congressional Republicans (57%), their favorability is not as high as that of Republicans (71%). Favorability is also soft, with only 15% of Tea Party members expressing a “strongly favorable” view, compared to 43% with a “somewhat favorable” view.

Yet Congressional Democrats get a much colder reception by Tea Party members. Three out of four (75%) Tea Party members says they are “strongly unfavorable” toward Democrats in Congress, and total unfavorables come in at 81%. Tea Party members are unique in the strength of their unfavorable impression for congressional Democrats, as only 60% of Republicans are strongly unfavorable toward congressional Democrats, and only 63% of conservatives feel the same.

Republicans in Congress	Tea Party (Feb 2010)	Overall (Feb 2010)	Republicans (Feb 2010)	Conservatives (Feb 2010)
Favorable	57	39	71	56
Unfavorable	37	54	24	37
Strongly Favorable	15	10	23	18

Democrats in Congress	Tea Party (Feb 2010)	Overall (Feb 2010)	Republicans (Feb 2010)	Conservatives (Feb 2010)
Favorable	16	41	11	18
Unfavorable	81	53	83	77
Strongly Unfavorable	75	34	60	63

A likely source of this disdain is on issues of fiscal conservatism; the January 2010 New Models survey showed 95% of Tea Party members believe that “Democrats are taxing, spending, and borrowing too much” compared to only 61% of voters overall or even 89% of Republicans. This plays out in the February 2010 ballot test by giving Republicans a serious advantage among Tea Party members. This November, almost three out of four Tea Party members anticipate that they will vote for a Republican candidate for Congress. On the congressional generic ballot, Tea Party members break 74-19 for Republicans, compared to the overall sample that breaks just slightly for the Democrats, 44-46.

In the end, the item that unites the Tea Party movement is its commitment to fiscal conservatism. Tea Party members prioritize job creation over deficit, spending, and tax issues. However, they view these items as critical precisely *because* they are seen as a means to reducing unemployment and improving the economy. Tea Party members are very dissatisfied with the current direction of the country, the policies of the administration, and those currently in office, and as a result the Tea Party movement is breaking heavily in favor of the Republican Party. **This is a movement defined by its focus not just on the policies of economic conservatism but on the desired economic outcomes.**