

New Models
Messaging on GOP Statements, the President's Final
Two Years in Office, Response to Ebola, and the Economy

November 2014

OVERVIEW

Presentation Testing conducted two mixed-gender focus groups with moderate Independents in Southfield, MI (suburban Detroit) on November 6, 2014. One group was comprised of 11 Romney-voting moderate Independents, and the other was comprised of 12 Obama-voting moderate Independents. All respondents had at least some college education, and were age 22 or older.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1) Overall, the highest-scoring GOP messaging statement was: “Our national debt has us stealing from our kids and grandkids, robbing them of benefits they’ll never see and leaving them with burdens that are nearly impossible to repay.”**

During each session, we asked respondents to score a series of GOP messaging statements for how strongly they agreed or disagreed on a scale from zero to 10. Zero means they totally disagreed, and 10 means they totally agreed. The highest-scoring statement overall was:

	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total (avg.)
Our national debt has us stealing from our kids and grandkids, robbing them of benefits they’ll never see and leaving them with burdens that are nearly impossible to repay.	9.1	8.1	8.6

Romney-voting Independents were very concerned about our national debt. They identified factors such as our jobs being sent overseas and our products being imported from overseas as evidence that we no longer have the economy that we once did. In their view, those factors are contributing to our national debt.

We asked Obama-voting Independents if they were satisfied with the steps that President Obama has taken to solve our national debt problem. None responded in the affirmative. However, some respondents defended the President by asserting that the problem is so massive that one person cannot solve the problem by himself or herself.

- 2) Independents were split along ideological lines on the issue of whether there is an emerging sense of resignation that our country is on the decline. Romney-voting**

Independents were far more convinced than Obama-voting Independents that that emerging sense of resignation does exist.

During each session, we asked respondents to evaluate the following statement:

	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total (avg.)
Throughout the country, there is an emerging sense of resignation that our country is on the decline.	7.0	3.2	5.1

Although Romney-voting Independents are seeing *some* improvements in our economy, their personal experiences have generated concerns about the long-term prospects of our nation. One respondent told us that she sees empty strip malls everywhere, and she is still pinching every penny after losing her job during the 2008 recession.

Another respondent told us that while jobs are coming back, they are not the same jobs that were lost during the recession. He said that in recent years, he has had to reinvent himself to gain employment. A third respondent told us that he is troubled by the general sense of apathy and disillusionment in our country. He explained that people have lost faith in our government and the economy. People get laid off now and they are comfortable with applying for unemployment benefits. In his view, it used to be considered shameful to utilize those benefits and food stamps, but today, they are commonplace, which is a sign of our national apathy.

When we asked Obama-voting Independents about this statement, half (six of 12) interpreted this “decline” as referring to our economy, which is why they disagreed with this statement. During our session (as shown later in this report), 11 of 12 respondents expressed their belief that the economy is improving. As a result, they rejected the notion that our nation is in decline based on economic factors. Others indicated to us that they thought that the statement could be referring to moral values.

For the purpose of our discussion, we pointed out that in the past year, our nation has encountered new challenges, including Ebola, ISIS, and a national debt approaching \$18 trillion. We asked if those issues indicate that our country is on the decline. Respondents in that group rejected the idea that those issues suggest that our country is on the decline. Respondents told us that history tends to repeat itself and other crises have occurred throughout history, including stock market crashes, which seem cyclical to them. Respondents also pointed out that unlike in the past, we have social media and a 24-hour news cycle now, suggesting that our problems are more magnified than ever before. Therefore, even though we may have had similar challenges in the past, our current problems appear to be more troubling because they are receiving more coverage than ever before.

- 3) Overall, the lowest-scoring GOP statement was: “With Republicans in control of both the House and Senate starting in January 2015, their priorities will be your priorities.”**

During each session, we asked respondents to evaluate the following statement:

	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total (avg.)
With Republicans in control of both the House and Senate starting in January 2015, their priorities will be your priorities.	7.0	2.3	4.7

Romney-voting Independents generally agreed with this statement, but they did not score it higher because they were not 100 percent sure about what Republicans' priorities are, and they know that Republicans are thinking about their next re-election campaign. Respondents in that group *think* that their own priorities and Republicans' priorities are the same, but some were skeptical that they could take campaign rhetoric seriously.

One respondent told us that a shared priority is likely reforming healthcare to make it more affordable, but she had not heard any specific proposals from Republicans for doing so. Respondents told us that they will not truly know what Republicans' priorities are until they start advancing their agenda. One respondent told us that he hopes that Republicans leave the social issues, including the personhood issue, to states, and instead, focus on key issues, including expanding healthcare choice, reducing regulations, reforming our tax code, and addressing economic issues.

Unsurprisingly, this was the lowest-scoring statement among Obama-voting Independents. They believe that their priorities do not matter under Republican leadership in Congress, describing them as "out of touch." Interestingly, only four of 12 Obama-voting Independents believe that if Democrats were in control of Congress in January 2015, that Democrats' priorities would be their own priorities, which suggests distrust for both political parties. From our discussion, this distrust appears to be caused by lobbying and money's influence in politics.

When we asked Obama-voting Independents if any of their priorities were aligned with Republicans' priorities, respondents in that group cited Alzheimer's support and research and lower taxes as points of agreement.

- 4) While Independents generally believed that we must focus on jobs and the economy, there was less enthusiasm, especially among Obama-voting Independents, for renewing efforts to implement the many bills that passed the Republican-led House in recent years that were never brought to a vote by the outgoing Senate majority. Instead, they wanted the next Congress to re-evaluate those bills to determine if those proposals are still relevant in our current environment.**

During each session, we asked respondents to evaluate the following statement:

	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total (avg.)
Looking ahead to the next Congress, we must focus, first and foremost, on jobs and the economy. Among other things, that means a renewed effort to implement the many bills that passed the Republican-led House in recent years with bipartisan support, but were never even brought to a vote by the outgoing Senate majority.	7.5	6.2	6.9

Romney-voting Independents told us that jobs and the economy are very important. However, that did not translate automatically into support for advancing a renewed effort to implement the bills that the Republican-led House passed with bipartisan support in recent years.

Respondents told us that circumstances may have changed in the past two years and we should re-evaluate the bills that were passed to determine if they would work in today’s environment. Many respondents were unfamiliar with the bills that Republicans had passed. Some informed us that they could have scored this statement higher if the statement had provided more details about what the bills entailed.

Obama-voting Independents indicated to us that they were not very concerned about whether Congress was renewing old efforts or starting new efforts. They just wanted our nation’s challenges to be addressed.

5) Obama-voting Independents generally rejected the idea that our “complex” tax code is driving American jobs overseas. They asserted that cheap labor abroad and higher taxes here at home were sending our jobs overseas.

During each session, we asked respondents to evaluate the following statement:

	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total (avg.)
Our complex tax code is driving American jobs overseas.	8.0	5.5	6.8

Obama-voting Independents objected to the idea that our “complex” tax code is driving American jobs overseas for two reasons. First, they believe that jobs are going overseas because people there are willing to work for less money. Second, they would not describe our tax code as “complex.” In fact, some respondents told us that they do their own taxes by hand (without the help of an accountant or an online program). Instead, they described our tax code as too “expensive.” In other words, we are paying too much in taxes.

Our discussion in this session revealed that almost all of our respondents would have scored this statement higher if it had read:

Our tax code that taxes businesses higher in the U.S. is driving American jobs overseas.

Note: We did not discuss this issue with Romney-voting Independents.

6) Independents were hesitant to embrace the idea that we should authorize the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline because they were skeptical that it would be as beneficial to our nation as its supporters suggest.

During each session, we asked respondents to evaluate the following statement:

	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total (avg.)
We should authorize the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, which will mean lower energy costs for families and more jobs for American workers.	6.5	4.3	5.4

Although Romney-voting Independents would like our nation to develop energy resources, some told us that they were concerned about the environmental impact that the Keystone XL pipeline would have. One respondent pointed out that the pipeline would go through our country and the oil would be shipped out to other countries. As a result, our nation would not benefit from that oil. Another respondent told us that we need to develop new energy technologies for the 21st Century, and he suggested that building the Keystone XL pipeline would further reinforce our dependence on oil.

Obama-voting Independents were skeptical that the Keystone XL pipeline would benefit our nation, as well. Respondents told us that Keystone’s supporters were “glamorizing” the supposed benefits of the project, including the creation of jobs and lower energy prices. One respondent argued that constructing solar panels would lower our energy costs, too. Respondents also told us that they were concerned about the environmental impacts of this project, especially after the BP oil spill, and they did not believe that this project would benefit our nation because the oil would be exported to other nations.

7) Independents generally rejected the idea that our government bureaucracy is “antiquated.” They described our government bureaucracy as more “cumbersome” and “bloated.”

During each session, we asked respondents to evaluate the following statement:

	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total (avg.)
Our antiquated government bureaucracy is ill-equipped to serve a citizenry facing 21 st Century challenges, from disease control to caring for our veterans.	6.9	5.5	6.2

Romney-voting Independents disagreed with the idea that our government bureaucracy is “antiquated.” They believe that there are problems, especially with caring for our veterans, and we have the technology to do better. They attributed those problems more to the duplication in government and “bloated” government bureaucracy. One respondent told us that the “right hand” does not know what the “left hand” is doing in government. In his view, government is trying to involve itself with everything and that is why there is so much duplication. He believes that government should do certain things, and citizens should be responsible for certain things.

Obama-voting Independents expressed skepticism that our government bureaucracy is “antiquated,” which to them means “old.” Respondents told us that sometimes our government does a good job handling matters, such as disease control. Other times, our government is not doing a good job, such as caring for our veterans. When our government does not do a good job, they believe it is because our government bureaucracy is too “cumbersome.” They told us that we have the technology to operate a better government bureaucracy, and our discussion revealed that none of them believe that our government is running as efficiently as it should be, given all of the technological advances that we have experienced in recent years.

8) Obama-voting Independents generally believe that terrorists want to wage war against our nation and our way of life as a whole—not “every American,” which they described as “too personalized”

During each session, we asked respondents to evaluate the following statement:

	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total (avg.)
A savage global terrorist threat seeks to wage war on every American.	7.8	5.7	6.8

Obama-voting Independents described this statement as “too personalized.” They believe that terrorists want to attack our nation or our way of life, not us as individuals. One respondent indicated to us that this statement sounded like someone in Syria wanted to kill her personally, which she did not believe was the case. Another respondent pointed out that the terrorist threat is not really “global.” The threat comes from a contained part of the world—the Middle East.

Note: We did not discuss this issue with Romney-voting Independents.

9) When the Republicans control both the House of Representatives and Senate early next year following the 2014 midterm elections, Romney-voting Independents would most like to see the President work with Republicans in Congress on making healthcare more affordable and balancing the budget. Obama-voting Independents would most like to see the President work with Republicans in Congress on developing a broader strategy to deal with ISIS and the Middle East and fixing Social Security for young Americans.

In each session, we conducted two whiteboard exercises, which were based on the fact that Republicans had just taken control of the U.S. Senate and retained control of the U.S. House following the 2014 midterm elections.

For the first whiteboard exercise, we asked respondents to make a list of all the things they think President Obama should work on in his last two years as President, knowing he will have to deal with a Republican-led Congress.

Romney-voting Independents compiled the following list (with their top two choices in **bold** and the number of votes in parentheses):

- Corporate tax reform (1)
- Immigration reform (2)
- Campaign finance reform (1)
- **Balance the budget (4)**
- **Make healthcare more affordable (8)**
- Restore due process and end domestic spying (0)
- Protect Social Security (3)
- Establish a clearer objective for foreign policy (1)
- Reform Social Security Disability to help the neediest (1)
- Restore cuts to military—sequestration cuts (1)
- Private Social Security accounts for young Americans (0)

Obama-voting Independents offered the following list (with their top two choices in **bold** and the number of votes in parentheses):

- Address climate change (4)
- Immigration reform (3)
- Tweak healthcare law (2)
- **Broader strategy for dealing with ISIS and Middle East (5)**
- Increase education funding (0)
- Tweak food service in education—optional (0)
- Make student loans more affordable—address high tuition rates (2)
- Improve technology in government programs (1)
- Increase the minimum wage (0)
- **Fix Social Security for young Americans (5)**
- Reduce the national debt (2)

10) When the Republicans control both the House of Representatives and Senate early next year following the 2014 midterm elections, Romney-voting Independents would most like to see Republicans in Congress working on making healthcare more affordable and reforming our trade policies. Obama-voting Independents would most like to see Republicans in Congress working on fixing Social Security for young Americans and implementing tax breaks to keep manufacturing in the U.S.

For the second whiteboard exercise, we asked respondents to make a list of all the things that they think the Republicans in Congress should work on during President Obama's last two years as President. For this exercise, we utilized the first list in each session as a starting point.

Romney-voting Independents compiled the following list (with their top two choices in **bold** and the number of votes in parentheses):

- Corporate tax reform (1)
- Immigration reform (2)
- Campaign finance reform (2)
- Balance the budget (0)
- **Make healthcare more affordable (8)**
- Restore due process and end domestic spying (0)
- Protect Social Security (2)
- Establish a clearer objective for foreign policy (0)
- Reform Social Security Disability to help the neediest (0)
- Restore cuts to military—sequestration cuts (0)
- Private Social Security accounts for young Americans (0)
- Tax reform, including Social Security (2)
- End pork barrel spending (0)
- Reduce business regulations (1)
- **Reform trade policies—auto, electronics, etc. (3)**
- Reform government contracting (0)
- Reform lobbying—increase transparency (1)

Obama-voting Independents offered the following list (with their top two choices in **bold** and the number of votes in parentheses):

- Address climate change (3)
- Immigration reform (2)
- Tweak healthcare law (2)
- Broader strategy for dealing with ISIS and Middle East (3)
- Increase education funding (0)
- Tweak food service in education—optional (0)
- Make student loans more affordable—address high tuition rates (0)
- Improve technology in government programs (0)
- Increase the minimum wage (0)
- **Fix Social Security for young Americans (6)**
- Reduce the national debt (0)
- Make housing more affordable (0)
- Address the hunger crisis (2)
- **Tax breaks for keeping manufacturing in the U.S. (4)**
- Increase transparency with food and all products—i.e. cleaning (0)
- Address underemployment (2)
- Address data breaches (0)
- Pass legislation to make gay marriage legal in all 50 states (0)

11) Most Obama-voting Independents want to see the incoming Republican-controlled Congress pass a steady stream of responsible legislation on jobs and the economy and spending, with modest reforms the President can conceivably embrace rather than going bold and pushing the envelope in these areas with aggressive reforms, risking presidential vetoes and another two years of gridlock between the President and Congress. Romney-voting Independents were more split, with a slight majority (six of 11) indicating their preference for more aggressive reforms.

In each session after the whiteboard exercises, we asked respondents:

Given the choice, would you want to see Congress pass a steady stream of responsible legislation on jobs and the economy and spending, with modest reforms the President can conceivably embrace—or go bold and push the envelope in these areas with aggressive reforms, risking presidential vetoes and another two years of gridlock between the President and Congress?

Nine of 12 Obama-voting Independents wanted to see the incoming Republican-controlled Congress pass a steady stream of responsible legislation on jobs and the economy and spending, with modest reforms the President can conceivably embrace rather than going bold and pushing the envelope in these areas with aggressive reforms, risking presidential vetoes and another two years of gridlock between the President and Congress.

Two Obama-voting Independents disagreed, preferring that the incoming Republican-controlled Congress push aggressive reforms, because they believe there is too much back and forth between the President and Congress with few results and a more modest approach only prolongs the process. One of those respondents pointed out that the President can veto any bill that Congress passes, whether it is a modest or an aggressive reform, suggesting that more aggressive reforms could elicit quicker decision-making and positive results for the American people.

Lastly, the remaining Obama-voting Independent told us that she would prefer a healthy balance between modest and aggressive reforms, depending on the issue. She expressed her support for more aggressive reforms on issues that truly affect the livelihood of the American people, including jobs and hunger issues.

Romney-voting Independents were more split on the issue, with six of 11 preferring that the incoming Republican-controlled Congress go bold and pursue more aggressive reforms. Respondents conveyed that they trust Republicans in Congress more than President Obama, and they were generally concerned that if the Republicans did not start big, they would end up compromising too much and make bad deals with the President. One respondent explained:

“I just think from the last six years, any time Republicans tried to work something out with [the President], he always went back on his word. He’s very slimy. I don’t think he could be trusted. If you make a deal with him and you’re just trying to get a moderate proposal, I think the Republicans are going to get screwed, and we’re going to end up

with more government regulation and higher taxes. [Republicans in Congress] need to start from a strong negotiating position and maybe compromise down the road, but be careful. They called [former President Richard] Nixon 'Tricky Dick.' I think it's Obama that's the slime ball...Right now in everyone's head, there's a clear distinction between the Obama Democrats and the Republicans, and the Republicans need to keep that separate identity. When they compromise too much, then why vote for Republicans?" – Marc B., Romney-voting Independent

The other five Romney-voting Independents disagreed, indicating that they were tired of the gridlock and suggesting that more gridlock would be detrimental to Republicans' chances of reclaiming the White House in 2016. Respondents explained:

"Sometimes if you take smaller steps, you get to the end of the road instead of taking giant steps and going backwards." – Laura, Romney-voting Independent

"The gridlock gets you nowhere. A little bit of reform changing things towards a more conservative approach fiscally, even if it's not what we're hoping for, it's better than nothing. You have to look at the bigger picture two years down the road. If we spend two years in gridlock, then who's to say you get a Republican in office [as President] in 2016? If you get something done, you show some positive movement. Then you have something to sell to the voters in 2016 trying to get a Republican in office." – Marc C., Romney-voting Independent

12) Independents were generally split along ideological lines about how they viewed the issue of Ebola. Romney-voting Independents were less satisfied with the President's response than Obama-voting Independents, and were more supportive of implementing heightened measures to address the issue.

At the end of each session, we held a discussion with respondents about the issue of Ebola, which revealed an ideological split between Romney-voting Independents and Obama-voting Independents.

Romney-voting Independents suggested that the President's leadership on the issue of Ebola has been weak, with only one of 11 respondents in that group expressing confidence that he could describe what the Obama administration's response to the Ebola crisis has been. He explained:

"The response [by the Obama Administration] was basically not to have a quarantine [and] to check people's temperatures at the airports, which doesn't really do anything because there's a 21 day gestation period. Mr. Duncan from Liberia, who died, didn't have a temperature when he came in [to the United States], but he got it afterwards. I think [the President's response] is politically correct. It's his political calculation that this will not hurt people's feelings. If he's concerned about the healthcare in the United States, he should be preventing Ebola from coming here as much as possible. If that means not allowing tourists to come here from those countries, so be it." – Marc B., Romney-voting Independent

We asked Romney-voting Independents who has shown the best leadership during the crisis, if anyone. They identified uninfected African countries that have been blocking people who may have been exposed to Ebola from coming into their countries, the governors of New Jersey and Maine for wanting to quarantine health workers returning from Africa, and some Republican senators for the same reason.

While a majority (seven of 11) of Romney-voting Independents believe that the crisis is being overblown by the media, they maintained that this is a serious issue and there are several ways that they think we can respond to this problem, as presented in the list below:

- Enforce strict guidelines for quarantining
- Enforce more restrictive guidelines for people traveling between the U.S. and affected countries
- Make more information available to educate the public
- Closely monitor those who may have been infected with Ebola for 21 days
- Conduct more medical research to guide us in creating solutions, such as a vaccine
- Impose a travel ban on West African countries until they get the Ebola situation under control because we do not know enough about the disease yet and it is easily spreadable (nine of 11 support the travel ban)
- Make health workers who travel to Africa sign an agreement that they will enter a 21 day quarantine if they are in direct contact with Ebola patients as a condition for working overseas

Respondents in that group believe that the government has the authority to impose a 21 day quarantine on someone over Ebola concerns if that person presents a health risk because protecting people is a “basic role of government.” In fact, when we asked respondents in that group how we should address someone who refuses to be quarantined after having direct contact with Ebola patients, all 11 respondents supported the idea of issuing a warrant for that person’s arrest to bring them into a quarantine, citing the nation’s safety as more important than giving up some personal freedoms for a relatively short period of time.

Obama-voting Independents were far more supportive of the actions that the Obama administration has taken to address the Ebola problem, expressing their belief that the issue has been blown out of proportion by the media. Respondents identified the President and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as those who have shown the best leadership during this crisis. One respondent explained:

“I think [the President’s] response was correct. I think the procedures that are in place are correct. I think that the administration did everything that it could. I don’t think it’s necessary to stop people that are working as doctors in Liberia and quarantine them for 21 days. That’s a Republican overreaction. [The President’s policy] is measured. It’s based on science. I think [the President] could have been out-front a little more and a little more forceful in selling it to the American people, saying, ‘Look. These decisions that I’m making or that the CDC is making are based on good, solid science.’ We only had at that time one person in the United States that had it, which was the gentleman that

had come over from West Africa. People panic way too much. There's no reason for it.”
 – Kerry, Obama-voting Independent

Obama-voting Independents generally believe that as a nation, we should continue to address the issue as we have been by following our current procedures in place, including screening people at airports and monitoring people who may have been infected twice per day, because those measures seem to be working. Other measures that Obama-voting Independents support include standardizing care, identifying the facilities that can manage Ebola patients appropriately, and educating the public about the issue, emphasizing that Ebola is not going to kill you.

Respondents in that group did not support the idea of imposing a travel ban on nations in West Africa. One respondent described a ban as “overblown.”

The majority of Obama-voting Independents believe that the government has the authority to impose a 21 day quarantine on someone over Ebola concerns if that person has been working directly with Ebola patients and is showing symptoms—a lower standard than what Romney-voting Independents would be comfortable with implementing. Respondents in that group pointed out that a person is not contagious until he or she is symptomatic.

When we asked respondents in that group how we should address someone who refuses to be quarantined after having direct contact with Ebola patients, only one of 12 supported the idea of issuing a warrant for that person’s arrest to bring them into a quarantine—unless that person is already symptomatic.

13) Obama-voting Independents were optimistic about the direction of the U.S. economy compared to one year ago, with 11 of 12 saying that the economy is getting somewhat better. Romney-voting Independents were more split, with four saying the economy is getting at least somewhat worse, five saying that it is staying as is, and two saying it is getting somewhat better.

In the beginning of each session, we asked respondents the following question:

Compared to one year ago, is the U.S. economy...

Answer choices	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total
1=getting much worse	2	0	2
2=getting somewhat worse	2	0	2
3=staying as is	5	1	6
4=getting somewhat better	2	11	13
5=getting much better	0	0	0

We asked respondents in each session who believe that compared to one year ago, the U.S. economy is getting at least somewhat worse or at least somewhat better what evidence they have for their belief.

Romney-voting Independents who believe that compared to one year ago, the U.S. economy is getting at least somewhat worse cited:

- The U.S. is shipping jobs overseas
- Americans are buying more foreign products rather than American-made products
- Companies are downsizing—people are losing their jobs
- The federal government is making easy credit available for homes and higher education, which is increasing Americans' debt load
- The Federal Reserve is continuing its quantitative easing program
- Healthcare costs are skyrocketing
- Costs of living are increasing
- Increasing gridlock leaves problems unresolved, such as fixing our infrastructure, education system, and healthcare system (which impacts our economy)
- Our national debt is increasing

Romney-voting Independents who believe that compared to one year ago, the U.S. economy is getting somewhat better cited:

- More people are working, including in the construction industry
- More people are spending money
- The housing market has improved—more people are buying homes
- People have been restoring their personal credit
- People are becoming more financially secure

Obama-voting Independents who believe that compared to one year ago, the U.S. economy is getting somewhat better cited:

- One respondent told us that she could not get an offer for her house at her asking price one year ago, but she just received an offer for \$12,000 above her asking price recently
- The stock market is increasing
- The unemployment rate is declining
- Shopping centers are more crowded—increased economic activity and optimism
- Rush hour in the morning and the evening is getting more crowded
- Auto sales have increased
- One respondent is a payroll processor and she is processing three times the number of checks than she was completing one year ago
- Some organizations are lifting their hiring freezes
- Housing activity has increased
- Commercial construction activity has increased

Note: None of the Obama-voting Independents believe that the U.S. economy is getting at least somewhat worse compared to one year ago.

14) Obama-voting Independents were far more optimistic than Romney-voting Independents about where they believe the unemployment rate will be one year from today, with 10 of 12 expressing their belief that the unemployment rate will be

at 6% or below at that point. Slightly more than half (six of 11) of Romney-voting Independents believe that the unemployment rate will increase from its current level of 5.9% to between 6% and 8% one year from today.

In the beginning of each session, we asked respondents the following question:

The unemployment rate in the U.S. now stands at 5.9%. A year from today, do you expect it to be...

Answer choices	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total
1=Under 5%	1	4	5
2=Between 5% and 6%	4	6	10
3=Between 6% and 7%	5	2	7
4=Between 7% and 8%	1	0	1
5=Between 8% and 9%	0	0	0
6=Between 9% and 10%	0	0	0
7=Above 10%	0	0	0

ADDENDUM

During each session, we presented a series of 17 GOP messaging statements to respondents and asked them to evaluate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each one, on a scale from zero to 10. Zero means they totally disagreed, and 10 means they totally agreed. They could be anywhere on the scale from zero to 10.

The following chart shows how respondents in each group scored each of the statements, in descending order by the overall average:

	Romney INDs	Obama INDs	Total (avg.)
Our national debt has us stealing from our kids and grandkids, robbing them of benefits they'll never see and leaving them with burdens that are nearly impossible to repay.	9.1	8.1	8.6
Middle Class Americans are frustrated by a growing lack of opportunity, stagnant wages, and a government that seems incapable of performing even basic tasks.	8.0	7.8	7.9
The inability of the government to accomplish its most basic tasks has eroded the public's trust in government.	8.4	6.5	7.5
We should pass the Hire More Heroes Act, legislation encouraging employers to hire more of our nation's veterans.	7.1	7.6	7.4
Frivolous lawsuits and excessive regulations are driving up costs for families and preventing our economy from growing.	8.3	6.3	7.3
We should restore the traditional 40-hour definition of full-time employment, removing an arbitrary and destructive government barrier to more hours and better pay created by the health care law of 2010.	7.5	6.3	6.9
Looking ahead to the next Congress, we must focus, first and foremost, on jobs and the economy. Among other things, that means a renewed effort to implement the many bills that passed the Republican-led House in recent years with bipartisan support, but were never even brought to a vote by the outgoing Senate majority.	7.5	6.2	6.9
Our complex tax code is driving American jobs overseas.	8.0	5.5	6.8
A savage global terrorist threat seeks to wage war on every American.	7.8	5.7	6.8
Government's role in our lives must be measured, limited in its ambitions, constitutionally based, and focused on the big things that only governments can address. Unfortunately, the federal government today interferes too often in too many aspects of our daily lives, both big and small.	8.6	4.8	6.7

Restoring competency in government requires both shrinking government to its appropriate scope and mission and reforming how government operates in its core sphere.	8.5	4.6	6.6
Health costs are continuing to rise under a flawed law Americans have never supported.	9.2	3.6	6.4
Our antiquated government bureaucracy is ill-equipped to serve a citizenry facing 21 st Century challenges, from disease control to caring for our veterans.	6.9	5.5	6.2
Our education system denies choice to parents and isn't educating enough of our kids.	7.2	5.1	6.2
We should authorize the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, which will mean lower energy costs for families and more jobs for American workers.	6.5	4.3	5.4
Throughout the country, there is an emerging sense of resignation that our country is on the decline.	7.0	3.2	5.1
With Republicans in control of both the House and Senate starting in January 2015, their priorities will be your priorities.	7.0	2.3	4.7