

IPSOS-REID EXPRESS POLL RESULTS: Interviews September 7-9, 2001, with 1000 adults

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Between Friday, September 7 and Sunday, September 9, 2001, Ipsos-Reid Express interviewed a representative sample of 1000 adults nationwide by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire U.S. adult population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual U.S. adult population according to the most recent Census data.

**WHEN IT COMES TO SPENDING THE SOCIAL SECURITY SURPLUS,
BY AN ALMOST 3-TO-1 MARGIN, AMERICANS SAY, "KEEP IT IN THE LOCK BOX";**

MOST SAY THE BUSH TAX CUT REBATE CHECKS "NOT A MISTAKE";

**OPINION ABOUT WHETHER REBATE CHECKS WERE A "MISTAKE" IDENTICAL AMONG
THE 45% WHO RECEIVED TAX CUT REBATE CHECK AND 55% WHO HAVE NOT;**

2-IN-5 ARE SAVING TAX CUT REBATE CHECK AND THE REST ARE SPENDING IT

(WASHINGTON, D.C. September 10)—Most Americans say "No" to using the Social Security fund surplus to pay for current programs, a poll by Ipsos-Reid, the independent polling firm, has found.

"Barely one-in-four Americans (26%) are comfortable with the idea, recently suggested by Republican Senator Pete V. Domenici of New Mexico (the ranking Republican on the Senate Budget Committee), that the current Social Security fund surplus should fund current federal programs, such as education or defense. Almost three times as many (72%) say, 'Keep it in a lock box,'" reports Thomas Riehle, President, U.S. Public Affairs at Ipsos-Reid.

Another poll question explicitly links talk of using Social Security funds for current budget needs with the red-ink budget effect of sending tax relief rebate checks to most American taxpayers. All Americans with an income tax liability—individuals with taxable income of \$6,000 and couples with taxable income of \$12,000—are slated to receive tax rebate checks being mailed out in August and September. As of this past weekend, 45% say they have received one, and 55% have not, according to the Ipsos-Reid poll.

In the poll, when the rebate checks are described as one reason (along with the slow economy) for the budget problems that are leading to talk of using Social Security funds for current budget needs, 40% say the tax rebate checks were a mistake, and 58% say they were not a mistake.

"When you send people roughly \$300 apiece, you hope for better than a 3-to-2 endorsement of that policy, but not even 60% will defend the program to send the checks and say it was NOT a mistake, while 40% say it WAS a mistake. Republicans endorse the rebate program by a four-to-one margin, 79%-19%, but only 54% of Independents defend the program as not being a mistake. Democrats are mildly opposed, with 57% of Democrats saying it was a mistake, but 41% of Democrats saying it was not a mistake," says Riehle. "While most Americans endorse the Bush tax rebate program, many disagree with it in the context of budget pressures its opponents might claim it caused.

“In this case, money does not talk. The views of those who have already received their checks are precisely identical to the views of those who have not—in each case, 58% say it was not a mistake, and 40% say it was,” Riehle adds. “Overall, Americans age 55 and older and lower-income Americans—those most likely to be counting on Social Security checks as an important near-term part of their own family budgets—are the most likely to be opposed to the Bush rebate check program on federal budget grounds.”

Slightly fewer than half (45%) report having received an extra rebate tax refund check in the poll. Of those who have received a check, 21% say they spent it on new things, 37% spent it to pay old bills, and 41% saved it.

“Fears that the tax rebate check program will hurt the ability of the federal government to pay its bills, and might force the government to dip into the Social Security trust fund, proves a strong inducement for Americans to set the money aside themselves in private savings,” Riehle says. Most of those who say it was a mistake for the government to send rebate checks say they saved the money themselves (52%). Among those who say it was NOT a mistake for the government to send out rebate checks to individuals, only 34% saved the money themselves, and the rest spent it on old bills or new things, according to the poll.

RESULTS: SEPTEMBER 7-9 POLL OF 1000 ADULTS NATIONWIDE, BY IPSOS-REID

Which statement comes CLOSEST to your point of view:

- Social Security currently has a huge surplus, and a small portion of that surplus should be used to fund programs we need today, such as education or defense
- Social Security funds should be kept in a lock box, and none of the Social Security surplus should be used to fund current programs

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds	Got Check	Did Not Get Check
Spend small portion for education, defense	26%	31%	24%	19%	22%	30%
Keep it in a lock box	72	67	75	79	77	69
Not sure	2	2	1	2	2	1

Part of the reason this has come up is because of the tax refund Americans are receiving now, as well as the fact that the slow economy means there is less tax revenue for the government to spend. Every year some Americans receive a tax refund from the Federal Government. This year almost all Americans are going to receive an additional, special refund check, as part of President Bush's tax cut.

Looking back, do you think it was a mistake to send Americans an additional, special tax refund, or not?

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds	Got Check	Did Not Get Check
Mistake to send Americans additional, special tax refund	40%	19%	57%	44%	40%	40%
Not a mistake	58	79	41	54	58	58
Not sure	2	2	2	3	1	2

	AGE				HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
	All	18-34	35-54	55+	<\$25K	\$25K-<\$50K	\$50K+
Mistake to send Americans additional, special tax refund	40%	32%	39%	52%	41%	40%	37%
Not a mistake	58	67	59	45	55	60	63
Not sure	2	1	2	3	3	-	-

Have you received an additional, special tax refund check from the federal government yet, or not?

	REGION				
	All	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Yes, received it	45%	48%	46%	43%	45%
No, did not receive it	55	52	54	57	55
Not sure	-	1	1	-	-

And what did you do with your refund check? Did you use it to buy new things, use it to pay old bills, or save it? (Respondents can give more than one answer.)

	AGE				Mistake to send check	Not mistake to send check
	All	18-34	35-54	55+		
Buy new things	21%	22%	21%	21%	11%	28%
Pay old bills	37	42	39	29	32	41
Save it	41	36	39	52	52	34
Other/Not sure	5	5	6	3	7	4