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For The People & The Press

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2012

Support for U.S. Troop Presence Hits New Low

Most Swing Voters Favor Afghan Troop Withdrawal

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Support for U.S. Troop Presence Hits New Low

Most Swing Voters Favor Afghan Troop Withdrawal

Public support for maintaining U.S. forces in Afghanistan has reached a new low. And as the general election campaign begins, swing voters, by nearly two-to-one, favor removing U.S. troops from Afghanistan as soon as possible.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of voters who say they are certain to support Barack Obama in the general election favor a rapid U.S. troop withdrawal. But support for a troop pullout is nearly as extensive (59%) among swing voters - those who are either undecided in their general election preferences, lean toward a candidate or say they may still change their minds. Swing voters make up [nearly a quarter \(23%\)](#) of all registered voters.

Voters who express certainty about voting for Mitt Romney in the fall are divided over what to do about U.S. troops in Afghanistan: 48% favor removing them as soon as possible, while 46% support maintaining U.S. forces there until the situation has stabilized.

The latest survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted April 4-15, 2012 among 1,494 adults, including 1,164 registered voters, finds that public support for keeping troops in Afghanistan has reached a new low.

Just 32% of the public now says that the U.S. should keep troops in Afghanistan until the situation there has stabilized, while 60% favor removing the troops as soon as possible. In May 2011, the public was evenly divided over removing U.S. troops from Afghanistan (48% remove troops vs. 47% keep troops there).

On Afghanistan, Romney Voters Are Split, Swing Voters Want Out

	<i>U.S. troops in Afghanistan</i>			
	Keep until stable	Remove as soon as possible	DK	N
2012 vote preference	%	%	%	
Obama	29	64	6=100	550
Romney	43	49	8=100	517
Committed and swing voters				
Certain Obama	28	65	7=100	441
Swing voters	31	59	10=100	279
Certain Romney	46	48	6=100	444

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 4-15, 2012. Based on registered voters. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

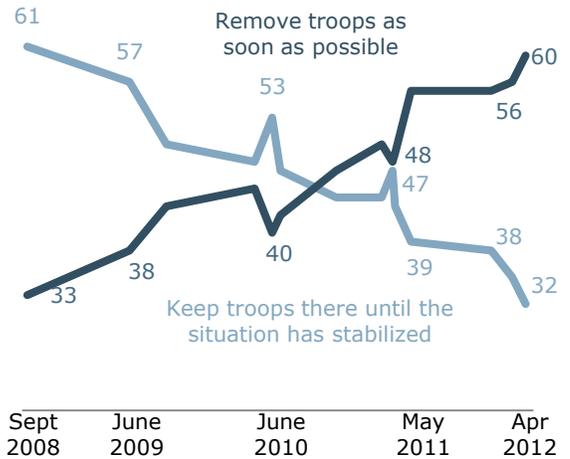
Support for keeping U.S. forces in Afghanistan has declined over the past year among Republicans, Democrats and independents. For the first time in a Pew Research Center survey, as many Republicans (48%) favor removing U.S. forces from Afghanistan as soon as possible as support keeping the troops there until the situation is stabilized (45%).

As recently as a month ago, a majority of Republicans (53%) said they favored staying in Afghanistan until the situation stabilized, while 41% favored a troop withdrawal.

Currently, 66% of Democrats and 62% of independents say the U.S. should remove troops as soon as possible, while about three-in-ten (29%) in each group favors keeping forces in Afghanistan.

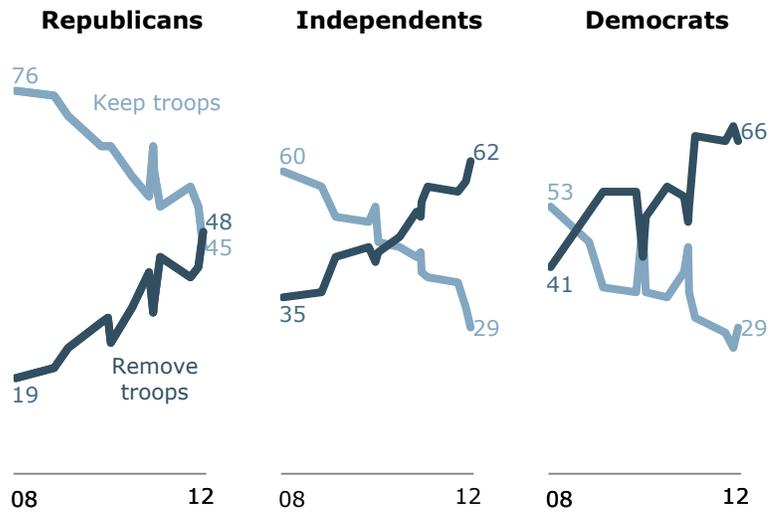
The proportion of independents who favor a troop pullout has increased 11 points since last May (from 51%) immediately after the killing of Osama bin Laden. Over this period, the percentage of Democrats favoring a troop withdrawal has increased 16 points (from 50% in May)

Record-Low Support for Keeping U.S. Troops in Afghanistan



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 4-15, 2012.

Republicans Now Split Over U.S. Troop Presence



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 4-15, 2012.

Growing support for a troop pullout comes as public assessments of the war effort have reached their lowest point since the fall of 2009. Currently, just 38% say the military effort is going very or fairly well, while almost half (49%) say that it is going not too or not at all well. Just a month ago, about half (51%) said that things were going very or fairly well there.

Among partisans, just four-in-ten Democrats (41%) and Republicans (40%) offer positive assessments of the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan, while about half offer negative assessments. Last month, majorities of Democrats (56%) and Republicans (52%) said the military effort was going well.

Views of Afghan War Turn More Negative Over Past Month

	Mar 2012	Apr 2012	Change
<i>How well is the U.S. military effort going?</i>	%	%	
Very/fairly well	51	38	-13
Not too/at all well	41	49	+8
Don't know	<u>9</u>	<u>12</u>	
	100	100	

% Very/fairly well among ...

Republican	52	40	-12
Democrat	56	41	-15
Independent	44	37	-7

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 4-15, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

About the Surveys

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted April 4-15, 2012, among a national sample of 3,008 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (1,805 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,203 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 603 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2011 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus...
Total Form A	1,494	3.0 percentage points
Form A sample sizes:		
Republicans	397	5.7 percentage points
Democrats	442	5.4 percentage points
Independents	558	4.8 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
2012 VALUES SURVEY
April 4-15, 2012
N=3008

QUESTIONS 1FB-2FA, 7-8, 35-36 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED
QUESTIONS 3FA-5FB, 9FA-16FB, 19FA-30, 40F1-41F2, 45FB-46FB, 54FA, 55FB-59 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK FORM A ONLY [N=1494]:

Thinking about Afghanistan...

Q.17FA How well is the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan going? **[READ IN ORDER]**

	Very <u>well</u>	Fairly <u>well</u>	Not too <u>well</u>	Not at <u>all well</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Apr 4-15, 2012	7	31	31	18	12
Mar 7-11, 2012	13	38	25	16	9
Jan 11-16, 2012	10	45	26	11	8
Jun 15-19, 2011	10	43	28	12	7
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	7	43	29	15	7
Dec 1-5, 2010	8	39	28	15	10
Jul 8-11, 2010	9	40	31	9	11
Jun 16-20, 2010	8	40	32	13	7
Mar 10-14, 2010	9	43	22	13	13
Dec 9-13, 2009	7	39	32	11	10
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009	4	32	41	16	6
Jan 7-11, 2009	7	38	34	11	10
February, 2008	10	38	31	10	11

ASK FORM A ONLY [N=1494]:

Q.18FA Do you think the U.S. should keep military troops in Afghanistan until the situation has stabilized, or do you think the U.S. should remove troops as soon as possible?

	Keep troops <u>in Afghanistan</u>	Remove <u>troops</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Apr 4-15, 2012	32	60	8
Mar 7-11, 2012	35	57	7
Jan 11-16, 2012	38	56	6
Jun 15-19, 2011	39	56	4
May 5-8, 2011	43	49	8
May 2, 2011	47	48	4
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011 ¹	44	50	6
Dec 1-5, 2010	44	47	8
Jul 8-11, 2010	47	42	11
Jun 16-20, 2010	53	40	6
Apr 15-May 5, 2010 (GAP)	48	45	7
Sep 10-15, 2009 (GAP)	50	43	7
June, 2009 (GAP)	57	38	5
Mid-Sep, 2008	61	33	6
April, 2008 (GAP)	50	44	6
Late Feb, 2008	61	32	7
May, 2007 (GAP)	50	42	7

NO QUESTIONS 6, 22-29, 31-34, 37-39, 42-44, 47-53

¹ In surveys conducted March 30-April 3, 2011 and before, the question was worded "Do you think the U.S. and NATO should keep military troops in Afghanistan until the situation has stabilized, or do you think the U.S. and NATO should remove their troops as soon as possible?"