

Working paper series

**Americans Informed About the Distributional Effects
of Republicans' Budget Bill Overwhelmingly Oppose It**

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Americans Informed About the Distributional Effects of Republicans' Budget Bill Overwhelmingly Oppose It

By Jacob S. Hacker and Patrick Sullivan

June 25, 2025

Republicans in the Senate are currently considering the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, championed by President Trump and passed by the House in May. As we have argued in [a companion report](#), this enormous bill would, if enacted, be the most regressive U.S. tax and budget law in at least the past four decades—and possibly ever.

The core of the Republican bill is \$3.7 trillion in tax cuts that overwhelmingly benefit the affluent. These tax cuts are financed in part by spending cuts focused on middle- and lower-income Americans, including \$300 billion in cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), \$350 billion in cuts to income-driven repayment loans and Pell grants for lower-income college students, and more than \$900 billion in cuts to publicly funded health insurance (Medicaid, affordable coverage in the ACA marketplaces, and Medicare for dually eligible beneficiaries who receive assistance through Medicaid).

Polls indicate that the One Big Beautiful Bill Act is [highly unpopular](#). Indeed, the only law passed since 1990 that was as unpopular as the current bill before it passed is the 2017 tax cuts that Republicans are now seeking to extend and expand. However, most Americans admit they know relatively little about the bill, with two-thirds responding to a [Washington Post poll](#) on June 9 that they had heard “a little” (40%) or “nothing at all” (26%) about it.

How are Americans' views of the bill affected by information about its regressive effects? Current polling cannot reliably tell us, for two reasons. First, no poll has presented Americans with precise estimates of the bill's distributional effects. Second, existing polls are not designed to assess the *causal* effect of information. To make causal claims about how the bill's regressivity affects public support, respondents must be randomized into groups that receive varying amounts of information about the bill's effects.

This is the approach we took in a survey experiment asking Americans about the One Big Beautiful Bill Act roughly two weeks after it passed the House. We asked our “control” group about the bill without any distributional details, whereas two “treatment” groups received specific estimates of the bill's distributional effects, based on [microsimulation](#)

[modeling by the Yale Budget Lab](#).¹ Both treatment groups learned about the regressivity of the bill. The first, however, was shown the regressive effects of the tax cuts alone, while the second saw the more regressive effects of the bill's combined tax and spending cuts.

In line with recent non-experimental surveys, we found that baseline opposition to bill was high, with 2-to-1 opposition. Opposition was much higher, however, in the first treatment group (tax cuts only), and higher still in the second (combined tax and spending cuts). When shown the combined effects, the ratio of opposition to support increased to more than 7 to 1, and only 11% of Americans supported the bill. Among Republicans, the difference across groups was even larger: support and opposition flipped between the control group and combined treatment group, from nearly 3 to 1 support to nearly 3 to 1 opposition.

Our results confirm that the One Big Beautiful Bill Act is broadly unpopular. They also show, however, that Americans have not yet learned about the bill's regressive distributional effects, and those who are informed about these effects overwhelmingly oppose the bill.

The Distributional Effects of Republicans' Budget Bill

What makes the current bill [distinctive](#) is that it would cut taxes mostly on the affluent *and* impose large spending cuts that disproportionately hurt less affluent Americans. Because of these combined tax and spending cuts, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act dwarfs the overall regressivity of the 2017 Trump tax cuts and is more regressive than even the famously upwardly skewed Bush tax cuts of 2001, as we show in our [report](#).

According to the Yale Budget Lab, the tax cuts in the Republican bill would increase disposable incomes among households in the top 1% of the income distribution by nearly 4%, on average. By contrast, the tax cuts would boost disposable incomes by just 0.5%, on average, among households in the lowest income quintile (hereafter, "bottom 20%"). When the spending cuts are factored in, however, the bottom 20% experience an average income loss of nearly 4%, on average, while the top 1% are unaffected. (See Table 1.)

¹ The numbers we used come from preliminary distributional estimates of the House version of the OBBBA by the Yale Budget Lab. We chose to use these well-respected estimates because they were the only ones available that estimated effects by quintile and separately considered the tax cuts and spending cuts.

Table 1: Changes in After-Tax and -Transfer Income as a Result of the Tax Cuts and Spending Cuts in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA)

	OBBBA: Tax + Spend (2027)	OBBBA: Tax Only (2027)
Lowest Quintile	-3.8	0.5
Second Quintile	-0.1	1.8
Middle Quintile	2.2	2.9
Fourth Quintile	2.8	3.1
Top Quintile	3.7	3.7
Top 5%	4.2	4.2
Top 1%	4.0	4.0

Sources: [Yale Budget Lab](#).

Notes: OBBBA estimates are for 2027, at which point most Medicaid and SNAP cuts will have been phased in, though there are still ongoing debates about the phase-in timeline.

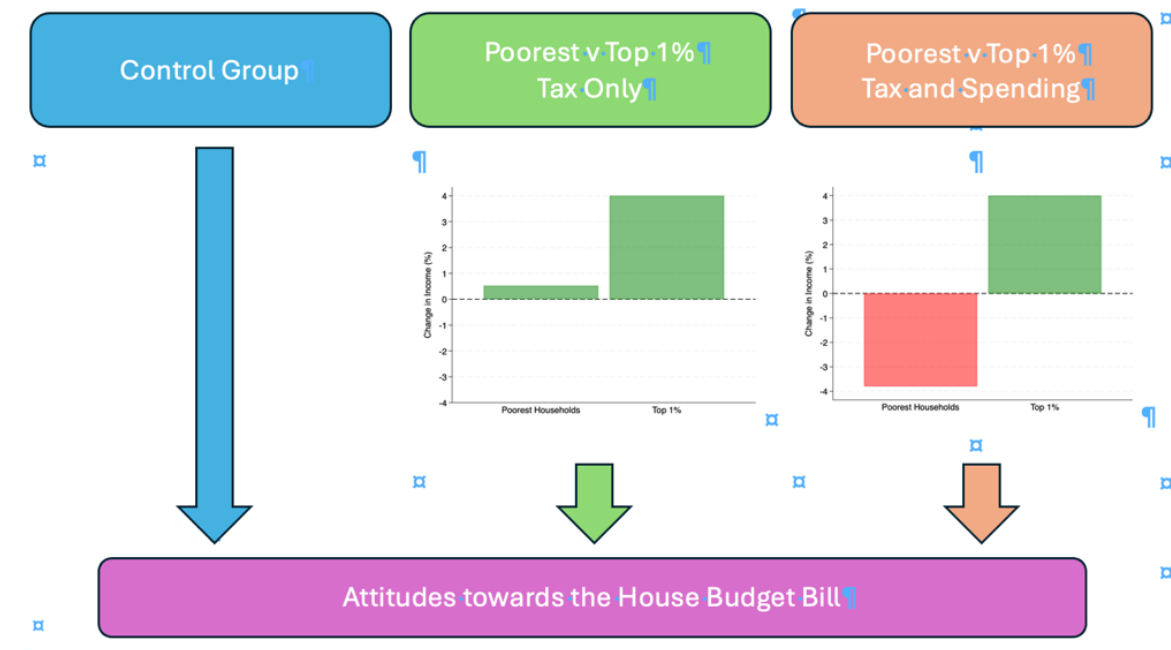
Design of Experimental Survey

Our survey was structured as follows. We started with a few questions regarding respondent demographics. Then, we noted that the House had recently passed a budget bill that would make changes to taxes and spending over the course of the upcoming decade. Given all of the recent developments regarding tariffs and trade deals, we clarified that in the questions that follow, we were not referring to those types of policies.

Before we asked respondents about their opinions of the bill, we randomly assigned them to one of three groups, which provided varying degrees of information regarding the bill. Figure 1 provides a visual diagram of how we designed the experiment.

Figure 1

Design of Experimental Survey Assessing Effects of Distributional Information



First, our control group was just given minimal context—that the budget bill had recently passed in the House. They then were asked to answer several questions regarding their attitudes towards the bill.

The other two groups received information about its distributional components. The first treatment group was shown the average percentage change in disposable income that the bill's tax cuts would produce among households in bottom 20%, compared with their effects on households in the top 1 percent. The second treatment group was shown how the tax *and* spending cuts would affect the bottom 20% and top 1%.

In both cases, we presented our results visually, in ways that previous research has suggested respondents can better understand.² (The large treatment effects—as well as open-ended responses that we collected—suggest that those who took the survey grasped the basic implications of the figures we displayed.) We showed the percentage change in income, rather than dollar changes in income, because the we feared dollar amounts would give a misleading impression. Moreover, assessing percentage changes in disposable income at different points in the income distribution is widely considered the gold standard for distributional analysis.

² For instance, some researchers have argued that those who have lower levels of education and lower levels of literacy may be better able to make sense of political information when text is paired with visuals. See Markus Prior. "Visual political knowledge: A different road to competence?." *The Journal of Politics* 76.1 (2014): 41-57.

Following these informational interventions, we asked respondents to indicate their support or opposition towards the bill. We also asked them to indicate how their Senator voting “yes” on the bill would affect the likelihood of their voting to re-elect them. As a second measure of political commitment, we asked respondents if they would be interested in receiving additional information on a pro- or anti-budget bill petition.

Finally, we asked respondents whether they had previously heard about certain provisions included in the bill. We turn first to these knowledge questions, then discuss the effects of the information we provided.

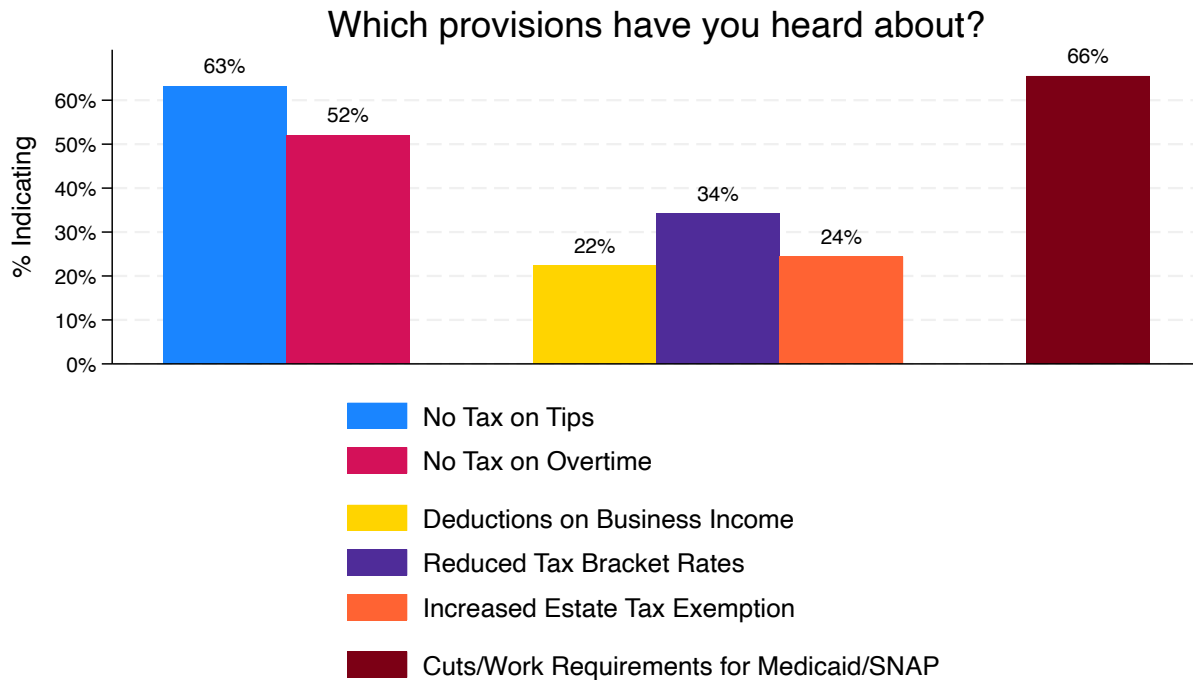
Limited Information about the Most Regressive Tax Provisions

As shown in Figure 2, Americans who responded to our survey had heard very little about the big-ticket regressive tax cuts in the bill, which account for most of its costs. For example, just 22% had heard anything about the expanded and permanent deduction for pass-through business income in the bill.

By contrast, Americans were much more likely to have heard about Trump-supported tax provisions, such as “no tax on tips” or “no tax on overtime” —provisions that Vice President JD Vance recently [pointed to](#) as proof of the party’s populist priorities. These tax cuts are a rounding error compared with the big-ticket tax cuts focused on the rich, and they do little or nothing to reduce the bill’s regressive effects. But our survey results suggest that Republicans have been relatively effective at focusing attention on these ideas, or at the very least that our survey respondents can more easily recall them.

Figure 2

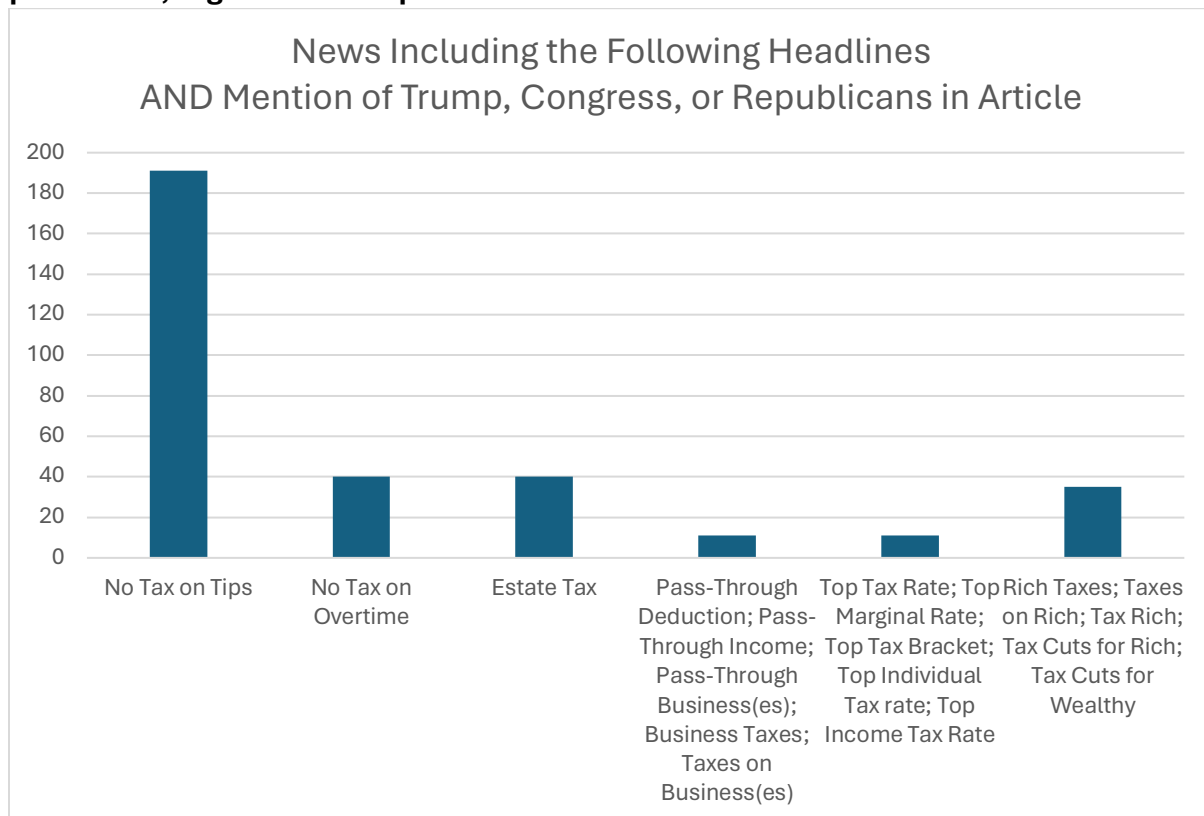
Americans had heard a lot about “no tax on” ideas and less about regressive tax cuts



Media coverage of the bill provides further suggestive evidence of successful framing. We looked at news headlines from the beginning of 2025 until the day the One Big Beautiful Bill Act was passed by the House of Representatives, counting the number of articles featuring the phrases listed in Figure 3, as well as also some mention of “Trump”, “Congress”, or “Republicans” in the body of the article. As shown in the figure, the “no tax on tips” provision garnered a great deal of media attention, and even “no tax on overtime” headlines exceeded references to some of the more regressive provisions.

Figure 3

Media mentions regarding tax provisions largely focused on putatively populist tax provisions, regressive components less so



Notes: Nexis Uni search conducted on May 22

While the regressive tax cuts in the bill were neither well-covered by the media nor well-understood by the public, our survey suggests that Americans were more aware of the spending cuts in the bill. Returning to Figure 2, around two-thirds of our respondents had heard about proposed cuts to SNAP and Medicaid. Nonetheless, as we show in the next section, they still responded negatively to learning about the adverse distributional effects of these cuts, as we show in the next section.

Information about the Distributional Effects of the Bill Greatly Increased Opposition

Despite many respondents having little familiarity with the more regressive tax provisions in the bill, baseline opposition already outpaced support in our control group by nearly 20 percentage points, as shown in Figure 4.³ Nearly 50% of respondents opposed the bill

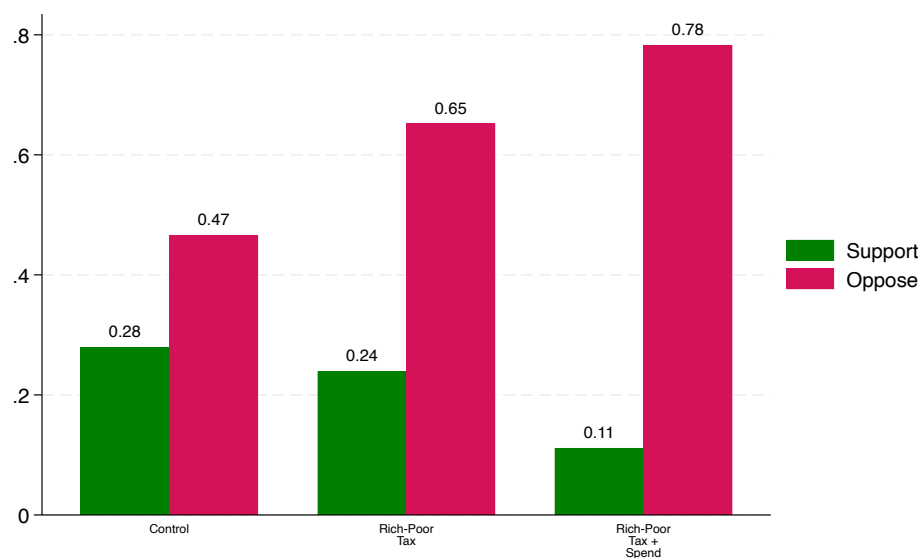
³ The ratio of those opposing to supporting is roughly the same as recent polling. For instance, a recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll from June 17, which asked respondents directly about whether they viewed the One Big Beautiful Bill favorably or unfavorably, found that negative views outnumbered positive ones by a ratio of 1.8:1 (64% unfavorable to 35% favorable). Within our control group, opposition outnumbers support by a ratio of about 1.7:1. The results of the Kaiser Family Foundation poll can be found at <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/poll-finding/kff-health-tracking-poll-views-of-the-one-big-beautiful-bill/>

while only slightly over one-fourth supported it (those who answered “neither support nor oppose” are excluded from the figure).

However, for the group seeing the skewed tax provision effects—that is, seeing that the bill would cause incomes for the top 1% to increase by nearly 4%, on average, while only increasing by 0.5% for the poor—opposition increased by 18 percentage points relative to our control group, from 47% to 65%. In other words, in our control group that received no distributional information just under half of Americans opposed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Among those who were shown how regressive the bill’s tax cuts are, almost two-thirds of Americans opposed the legislation.

Finally, we saw even larger effects among those who received our second treatment, which showed respondents the combined effects of the tax cuts and spending cuts. For the group seeing these even more skewed distributional results—that is, seeing that the bill would cause incomes for the top 1% to increase by nearly 4%, on average, while incomes for the poorest would drop by nearly 4 percent—opposition increased by over 30 percentage points relative to our control group, from 47% to 78%. Additionally, relative to the control group, support dropped by over half (from 28% to just 11%). As a result, the proportion of respondents opposing the bill was seven times higher than those supporting it.

Figure 4
Support and Opposition towards the House Budget Bill



Notes: Those who answered “neither support nor oppose” are excluded from the figure.

Information Increased Opposition Most among Self-Identified Republicans

Given the tendency for partisans to resist negative information about their party, we were particularly interested in how the effect of providing distributional information varied by political affiliation—that is, among Democrats, Independents, and Republicans.

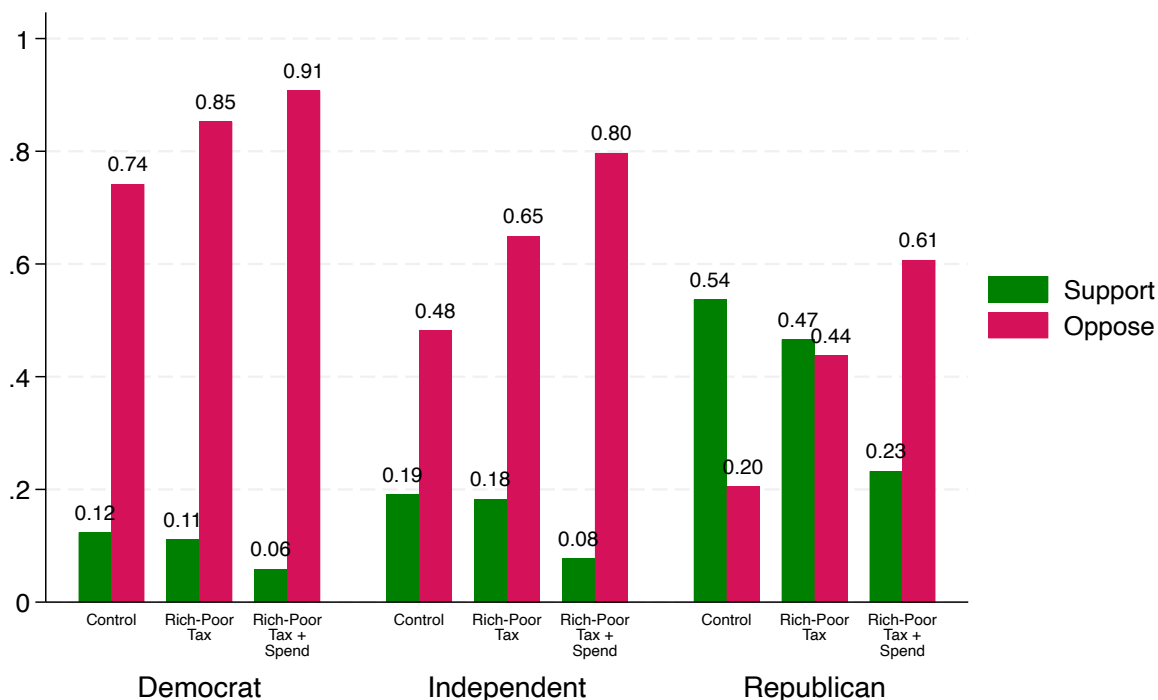
As shown in Figure 5, baseline support for the One Big Beautiful Bill Act among Democrats and Independents was already low. For Democrats in the control condition, just over 10% supported the bill, with nearly three-fourths opposed. Among self-identified Independents, opposition still exceeded support by nearly 30 percentage points.

In both cases, however, opposition was higher in the treatment groups that received distributional information. Among Democrats, opposition was 17 percentage points higher among those who received information about the combined effects of the tax cuts and spending cuts, while support dropped by half, compared with the control group. Among Independents, opposition was 32 percentage points higher among those who received information about the combined effects, while support dropped by more than half.

Most striking, however, are the results for Republican support. In the control group given no distributional information, 54% of Republicans supported the bill and only 20% opposed it—a ratio of 2.7 to 1. However, among Republicans shown the skewed tax provisions, support and opposition became nearly identical. And among those shown the even more regressive combined effects to the tax cuts and spending cuts, opposition tripled relative to the control group, increasing by 41 percentage points, while support dropped by more than half. As a result, the ratio of opposition to support increased to 2.65 to 1—nearly the exact opposite of the baseline ratio.

In short, simply showing Republicans how the bill would affect the incomes of the bottom and top quintiles caused support and opposition to flip. A bill with (slim) majority support among Republicans became a bill with strong majority opposition. These are striking effects for a bill backed by President Trump and supported by a majority of House Republicans.

Figure 5
Support and Opposition towards the House Budget Bill, by partisanship



Notes: Those who answered “neither support nor oppose” are excluded from the figure

How Support for the Bill Might Affect Political Behavior

Lastly, we examined how distributional information affected two additional outcomes: whether Americans would be more or less likely to vote for their Senator if he or she came out in support of the bill, and whether they would be interested learning more about a petition by a group urging Senators to oppose the bill.

Respondents in groups who received information on the regressivity of the OBBBA indicated they would be less likely to vote for their Senator if they were to vote “yes” on the bill, and they were far more interested in obtaining more information regarding an anti-bill petition (see Appendix Figures A1-A2).

These effects were directionally consistent across Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. As with support for the bill, however, the biggest effects were seen among Republicans. For example, 45 percent of Republicans in the control group said they would be *more* likely to vote for their Senator if he or she supported the bill. Among Republicans shown the combined distributional effects of the tax cuts and spending cuts, just 27 percent said they would, while 45 percent said they would be *less* likely to vote for their Senator if he or she supported the bill (see Appendix Figures A3-A4).

Americans Do Not Want Republicans' Bill

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act is the most regressive policy package in living memory. With its distinctive mix of tax cuts that help the rich and spending cuts that hurt middle- and low-income Americans, it shifts more resources up the income ladder than any bill passed since fiscal scorekeepers started keeping track.

The public is already against the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Yet our survey results show that when its historic regressivity becomes clearer and more concrete, Americans across the partisan spectrum become overwhelmingly opposed.

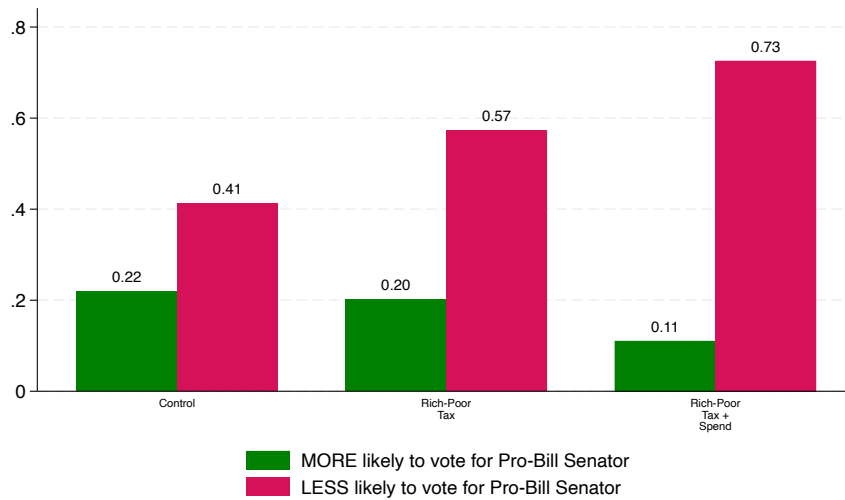
This should not be surprising. Only two major bills since 1990 rivaled the unpopularity of the Republicans' current bill when they were debated. The first, as noted, was the tax cuts of 2017, which the current bill seeks to extend and expand. The second was the failed effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. That ill-fated effort, like Republicans' current bill, threatened the largest increase in the share of Americans without health insurance in U.S. history. It fell short of the necessary votes in the Senate amid widespread public backlash, and Republicans' lost their House majority in the next election.

Republicans are, in effect, seeking to combine two remarkably unpopular bills into one historically regressive one, combining top-heavy tax cuts like those pursued in the 2017 Trump tax law with draconian spending cuts like those pursued in the repeal and replace bill. Little wonder that Americans oppose the One Big beautiful Bill Act, or that the more they know about its regressive distributional effects, the more they reject it.

Appendix – Additional Results

Figure A1

Proportion indicating they would be More/Less likely to vote for their Senator if they voted YES on budget bill passed by House



Notes: Those who answered “neither more nor less likely” are excluded from the figure

Figure A2

Proportion indicating interest in signing a Pro-/Anti-Bill Petition

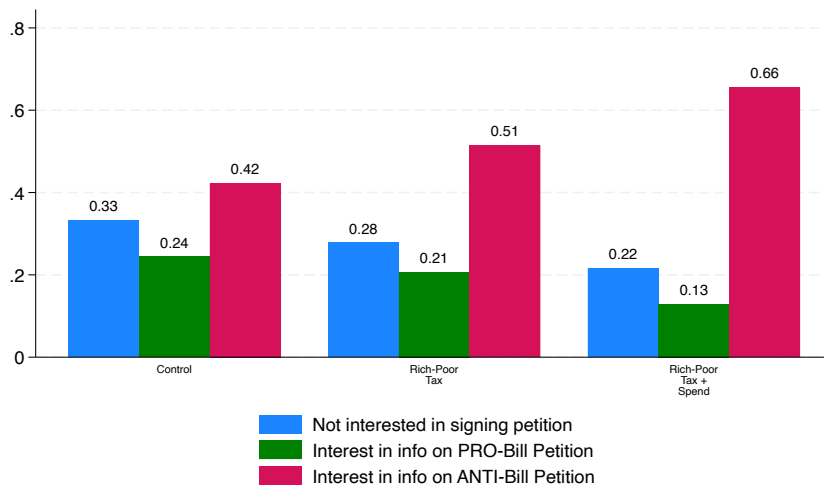
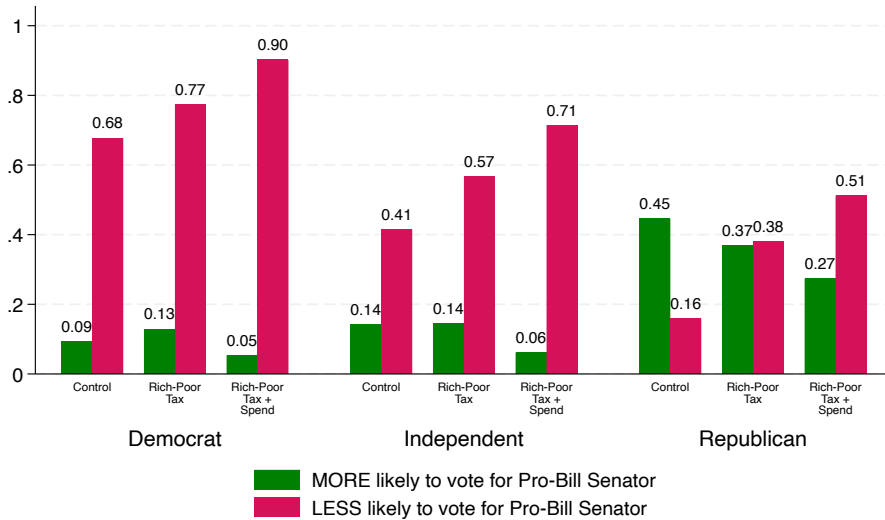


Figure A3

Proportion indicating they would be More/Less likely to vote for their Senator if they voted YES on budget bill passed by House (by Political Affiliation)



Notes: Those who answered “neither more nor less likely” are excluded from the figure

Figure A4

Proportion indicating interest in signing a Pro-/Anti-Bill Petition (by Political Affiliation)

