

# Do facts change public attitudes about fiscal policy?

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# Today's questions

1. Can information about the fiscal consequences of the GOP tax bill change opinions about it?
2. Does this information activate people's general concern about deficits?

*The New York Times*

# The Senate's Official Scorekeeper Says the Republican Tax Plan Would Add \$1 Trillion to the Deficit

By JUGAL K. PATEL and ALICIA PARLAPIANO **UPDATED** DEC. 1, 2017



## CRFB Reaction to Senate Tax Bill

DEC 1, 2017 | [TAXES](#)



### For Immediate Release

*The Senate unveiled a revised tax reform bill Friday. The following is a statement from Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget:*

The Senate tax bill would do too little to grow the economy and a lot to grow the debt. Given that tax reform is a once in a generation occurrence, it is a lost opportunity that will have consequences for years to come. And given that our debt is at near-record levels, it is a reckless gamble that could jeopardize our fiscal health for decades.

# Obligatory data slide

YouGov survey  
N=1,500  
January 9-18, 2018

# Concern about deficits is prevalent

|   | Not at all        | Not very | Somewhat | Very           |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------|----------------|
| Issue importance of deficit   | 5%                | 12       | 40       | 44             |
|   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree    | Strongly agree |
| The federal government should balance its budget just like ordinary people have to balance their household budgets.         | 4%                | 14       | 40       | 42             |
| The federal deficit can stay at its current level without dramatically hurting the economy.                                 | 9%                | 41       | 40       | 10             |
| A rising federal deficit would threaten American national security.   | 6%                | 31       | 46       | 17             |
| During an economic downturn, the federal government should act to stimulate the economy even if that increases the deficit. | 6%                | 32       | 46       | 15             |

# Concern about deficits is higher among GOP

Mean on 0-1 scale where 1=higher concern

|              |      |
|--------------|------|
| Democrats    | 0.55 |
| Independents | 0.60 |
| Republicans  | 0.65 |

# Lots of opposition and uncertainty about tax bill

Overall, do you favor or oppose the tax bill passed by the Republicans in Congress and signed into law by President Trump?

|            |     |
|------------|-----|
| Favor      | 33% |
| Oppose     | 42% |
| Don't know | 25% |

# Lots of opposition and uncertainty about tax bill

From what you know of this law, do you think it will make you and your family better off, worse off, or about the same?

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| Better off     | 22% |
| Worse off      | 30% |
| About the same | 28% |
| Don't know     | 20% |

# Lots of opposition and uncertainty about tax bill

What effect do you think this law will have on the federal budget deficit?

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Deficit get larger     | 36% |
| Deficit get smaller    | 14% |
| Deficit about the same | 18% |
| Don't know             | 32% |

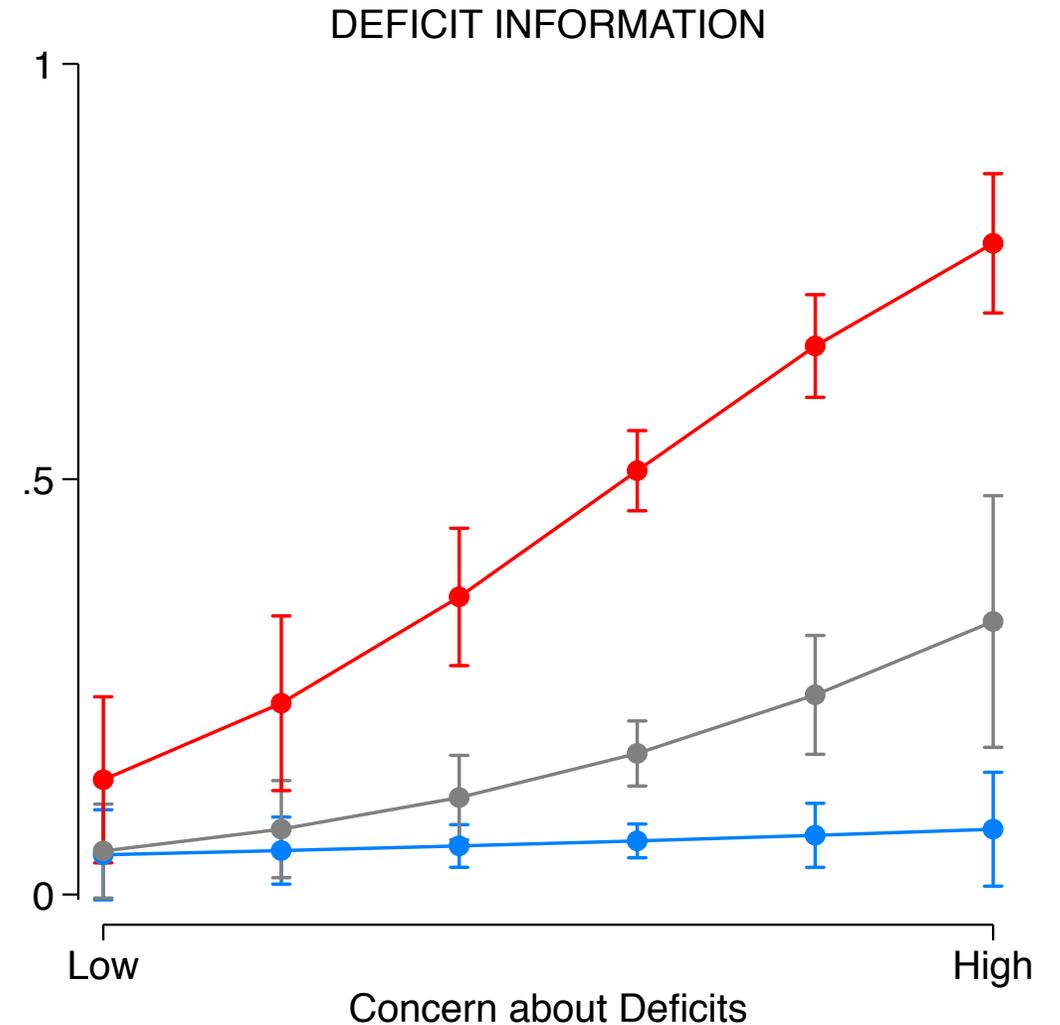
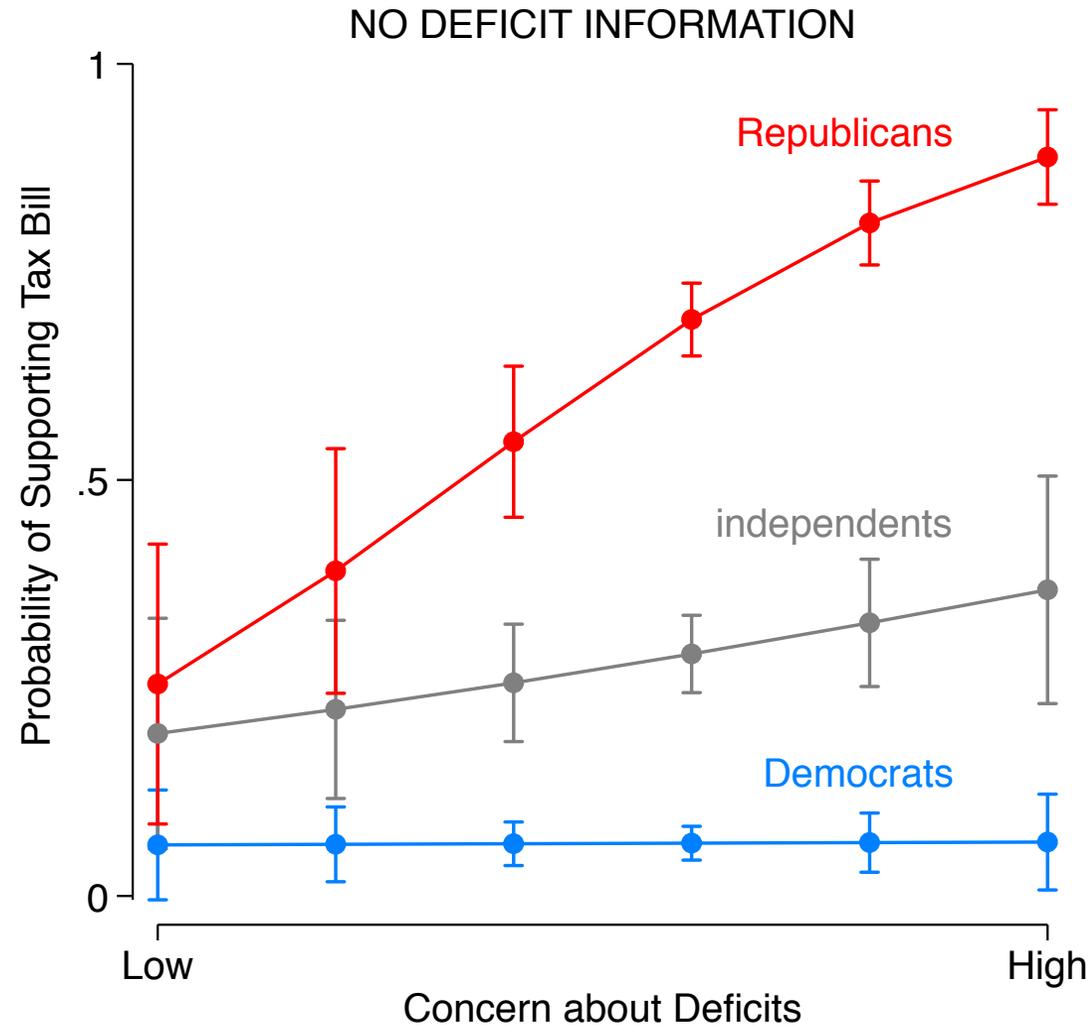
# Concern about deficits = more support for tax bill!

|                              | Favor | Oppose | Don't know |
|------------------------------|-------|--------|------------|
| Lower concern about deficit  | 27%   | 48%    | 25%        |
| Higher concern about deficit | 39%   | 36%    | 25%        |

# Impact of information about fiscal impact

|   | Favor | Oppose | Don't know |
|---|-------|--------|------------|
| Overall, do you favor or oppose the tax bill passed by the Republicans in Congress and signed into law by President Trump?  | 33%   | 42     | 25         |
| Non-partisan studies have found that this tax law could add \$1-1.5 trillion to the national debt over the next 10 years. Knowing this information, do you favor or oppose the law? | 25%   | 49     | 26         |

# Deficit information lowers support among Republicans, but doesn't prime concern about deficits



# Initial conclusions

- Facts can change opinions—especially when opinions are not crystallized and uncertainty abounds.
- General concern about deficits doesn't translate into opposition to deficit-increasing policies—even when those increases are made plain.