

NEWS RELEASE

Release: Immediate, Sept. 25, 2002
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2002 Health Confidence Survey:

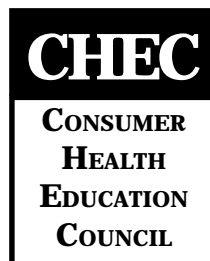
Confidence & Satisfaction in Health Care System Show Little Change Over Time, But Americans Still Worry About Its Future

WASHINGTON, DC—Despite news reports about the troubled state of health care in America, characterized by cost hikes, insurance coverage changes, and quality issues, Americans still have confidence in and satisfaction with health care, according to the 2002 Health Confidence Survey (HCS) released today. But HCS respondents also are still concerned about the future.

This year's HCS is the fifth round of an annual survey to assess attitudes regarding the U.S. health care system. Certain key questions that have been asked from year to year reflect little change over time. But health care is a growing concern, the 2002 HCS finds: Americans are more likely now than in 1998 to identify health care as a critical national issue, and more are dissatisfied now than in 1998 with the costs of health insurance and health care not covered by insurance.

These and other findings are contained in the 2002 HCS, sponsored by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI), Consumer Health Education Council (CHEC), and Mathew Greenwald & Associates. The HCS examines a broad spectrum of health care issues, including American satisfaction with and confidence in health care today, confidence in the future of the health care system and Medicare, health care quality, choice in health care, retiree health benefits, and prescription drugs.

“While Americans continue to have confidence in today's health care system,” said EBRI President and CEO Dallas Salisbury, “they also show understandable apprehension about the future.”



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Ray Werntz, president of CHEC, noted the lack of a decline in satisfaction and confidence levels, saying, "We learn from this survey that Americans do not seem to have been affected very much by the reported turbulence in health care costs and coverage arrangements. It is surprising that attitudes have not changed more dramatically."

Among the major findings of the 2002 HCS:

Confidence/Satisfaction:

- Forty-four percent of Americans who received health care in the past two years are *extremely* or *very* satisfied with the care they have received in general (46 percent in 1998).
- More than half of Americans continue to be *extremely* or *very* satisfied with the quality of the medical care they receive (57 percent in 1998, 55 percent in 2002).
- More than half also continue to be *extremely* or *very* satisfied with their ability to choose their doctor (54 percent in 1998, 57 percent in 2002).
- Just one-third of respondents are *extremely* or *very* confident that they will be able to get the treatments they need during the next 10 years (33 percent in 1998, 34 percent in 2002), while fewer are confident they will be able to get needed treatments once they are eligible for Medicare (18 percent in 1998, 21 percent in 2002).
- Americans are more likely than in 1998 to identify health care as a critical issue for the nation (14 percent in 1998, 19 percent in 2002). This places health care behind terrorism and national security (29 percent) and about equal to education (18 percent), which for years has been the issue considered most critical.

Health Care Costs:

- Thirty-eight percent of those who received care in the past two years say they are not satisfied with the cost of their health insurance, compared with 32 percent in 1998.
- Forty-four percent are not satisfied with the costs of health care not covered by their insurance (up from 37 percent in 1998).

Employment-Based Health Coverage:

- Half of those receiving coverage through an employment-based plan report being *extremely* or *very* satisfied with their health plan (50 percent in 1998 and 2002).

Retiree Health Benefits:

- Sixty percent of workers who expect both to receive retiree health benefits and to retire before age 65 would not retire before becoming eligible for Medicare if their former employer or union did not provide retiree health benefits.

Prescription Drugs:

- Thirty-nine percent of Americans are *extremely* or *very* confident that they are able to afford prescription drugs without financial hardship today; 24 percent are confident that they will be able to afford prescription drugs in the next 10 years; and only 17 percent of those not yet on Medicare are *extremely* or *very* confident that they will be able to afford prescription drugs once they become eligible for Medicare.

HCS materials and a list of underwriters may be accessed at the EBRI Web site: www.ebri.org/hcs/

EBRI is a private, nonprofit, public policy research organization based in Washington, DC. Founded in 1978, its mission is to contribute to, to encourage, and to enhance the development of sound public policy through objective research and education. EBRI does not lobby and does not take positions on legislative proposals.

CHEC is part of the Employee Benefit Research Institute Education and Research Fund (EBRI-ERF), a 501(c) (3) organization. Like its parent organization, CHEC is a nonpartisan group that does not lobby and does not take positions on specific policy proposals.

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