

FACTS **from EBRI**

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Highlights From the 2003 Health Confidence Survey

The 2003 Health Confidence Survey (HCS) finds that almost one-half of Americans continue to be extremely or very satisfied with their health care they are receiving in general—but it also finds that confidence continues to wane, and Americans are growing increasingly concerned about their ability to get needed treatments and to afford health care. More Americans cite health care as the most critical issue for the nation, and more are dissatisfied with health care costs than in previous years.

The 2003 HCS represents the sixth wave of an annual survey to assess the attitudes of the American public regarding the health care system in the United States. It reflects Americans' relative satisfaction with health care in the United States as well as their growing concerns about costs of health care and health insurance.

Among the key findings of the 2003 HCS:

- Among Americans who received health care in the past two years, 49 percent are extremely or very satisfied with the care they have received in general.
- Just 3 in 10 Americans are extremely or very confident that they will be able to get the treatments they need during the next 10 years, while 2 in 10 are confident they will be able to get needed treatments once they are eligible for Medicare.
- Few Americans give today's health care system top marks. Just 5 percent say it is excellent and another 9 percent say it is very good. Instead, one-quarter (26 percent) describe it as good, 3 in 10 (30 percent) say it is fair, and 28 percent say it is poor. Moreover, the percentage rating it as poor has been increasing over time, from 15 percent in 1998 and 21 percent in 2001.
- Americans are increasingly likely to report being dissatisfied with health care costs. More than 4 in 10 (44 percent) say they are not too or not at all satisfied with the costs of their health insurance in 2003 compared with one-third in 1998 and 2001 (32 percent and 33 percent, respectively). Almost half (48 percent) report being not too or not at all satisfied with the costs of health care not covered by their insurance, compared with 37 percent each in 1998 and 2001.
- One-half of Americans (51 percent), say they are extremely or very confident that they are able to get the treatments they need. However, less than one-half (47 percent) are extremely or very confident that their medical records are confidential and that they have enough choice about who provides their medical care (43 percent).
- Only about one-third are extremely or very confident of being able to afford prescription drugs without financial hardship (35 percent) and being able to afford health care without financial hardship (31 percent). Moreover, the percentage saying they are not too or not all confident in their ability to afford health care has increased over the past year, from 31 percent in 2002 to 37 percent in 2003. Over the same time period, the percentage saying

they are not too or not at all confident in their ability to afford prescription drugs has increased from 27 percent to 32 percent.

- Satisfaction levels with employment-based health benefits have remained relatively stable since the inception of the HCS. Most Americans receiving health benefits through an employment-based plan continue to be satisfied with their current health benefits. One-half are extremely (13 percent) or very (37 percent) satisfied with their current plan and 4 in 10 are somewhat satisfied (41 percent). Only 1 in 10 say they are not too satisfied (7 percent) or not at all satisfied (2 percent).

Full results of the 2003 HCS are available at EBRI Online at www.ebri.org/hcs/2003/

For more information, contact Ken McDonnell, (202) 775-6342, or see EBRI's Web site at www.ebri.org

Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Matthew Greenwald & Associates, Inc., 2003 Health Confidence Survey.

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