

Knowledge About Public Programs

Decrease in Awareness of Programs for Uninsured

Despite efforts to educate and enroll uninsured persons in public programs, awareness of the programs is low and has decreased over the past year (table1).

- In 1999, only one in five uninsured persons was aware of low-cost or free insurance programs for uninsured adults or children in their state (22 percent).
- By 2000, awareness had increased, with 37 percent of the uninsured aware of public programs for health insurance.
- In 2001, awareness of programs decreased but remained above the 1999 level. About one-third of the uninsured (31 percent) were aware of public programs in 2001.

Table 1
Awareness of Public Insurance Programs

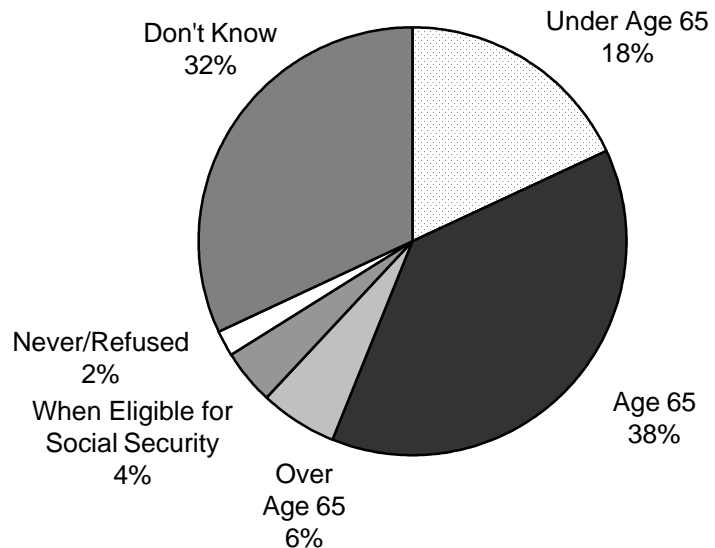
	Yes	No
1999	22%	77%
2000	37%	62%
2001	31%	68%

Many Americans Do Not Know When They Will Be Eligible for Medicare Benefits

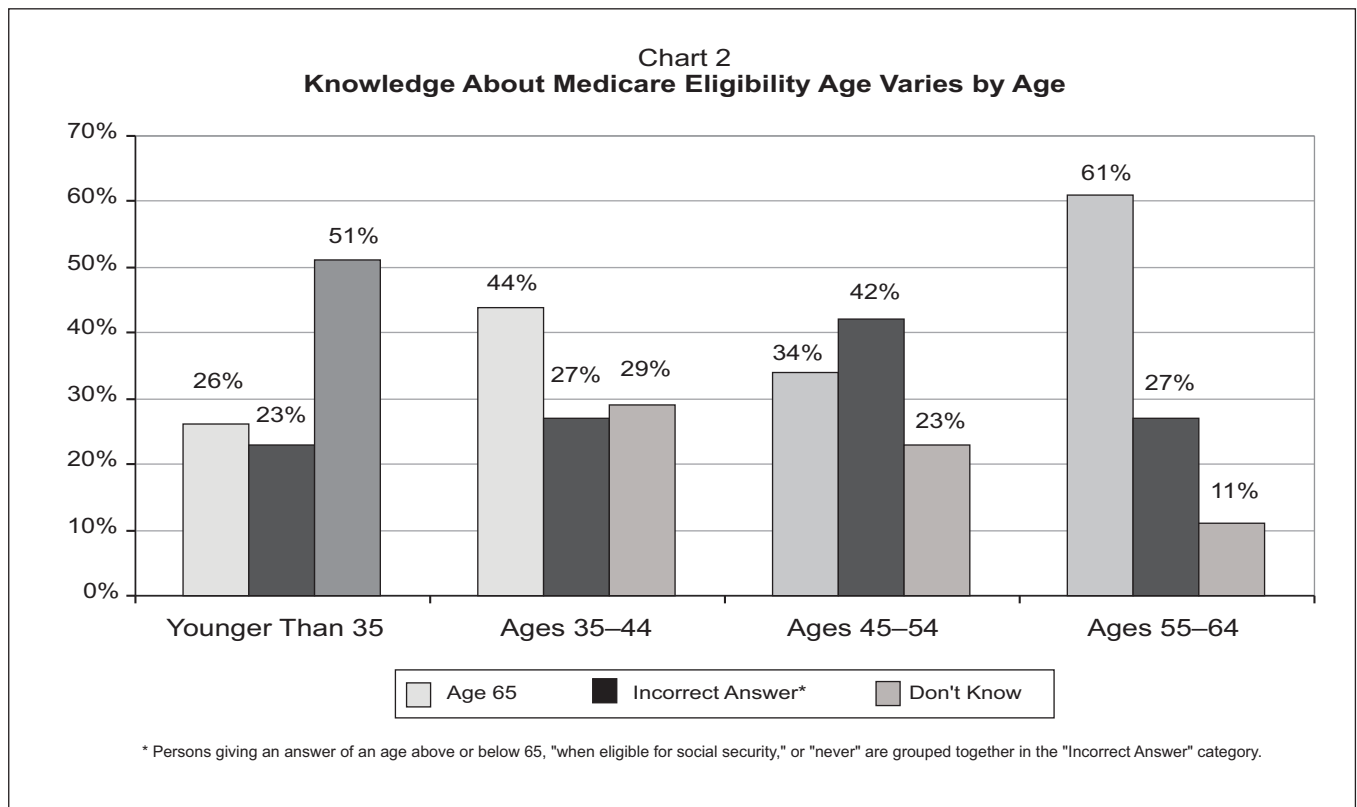
Most Americans become eligible for Medicare at age 65 (approximately 15 percent of beneficiaries become eligible at younger ages by reason of disabilities or End-Stage Renal Disease, permanent kidney failure treated with dialysis or a transplant). The eligibility age has remained constant since 1965, when the Medicare program was established; however, people are still unsure when they will qualify.

- Thirty-eight percent of Americans said they would be eligible for Medicare at age 65, the correct answer. Another third (32 percent) answered that they didn't know (chart 1).

Chart 1
Knowledge About Medicare Eligibility Age
(Correct Answer: Age 65)



- Americans ages 55–64, those on the verge of Medicare eligibility, were the most likely to give the correct answer about Medicare eligibility age (61 percent).
- The proportion reporting that they didn't know the Medicare eligibility age *decreased* as the age of the respondent *increased* (chart 2). Among Americans under age 35, a majority (51 percent) indicated that they didn't know, while among those ages 55–64, only 11 percent said they were unaware of the age at which they would qualify for Medicare.



Source: 2001 Health Confidence Survey.