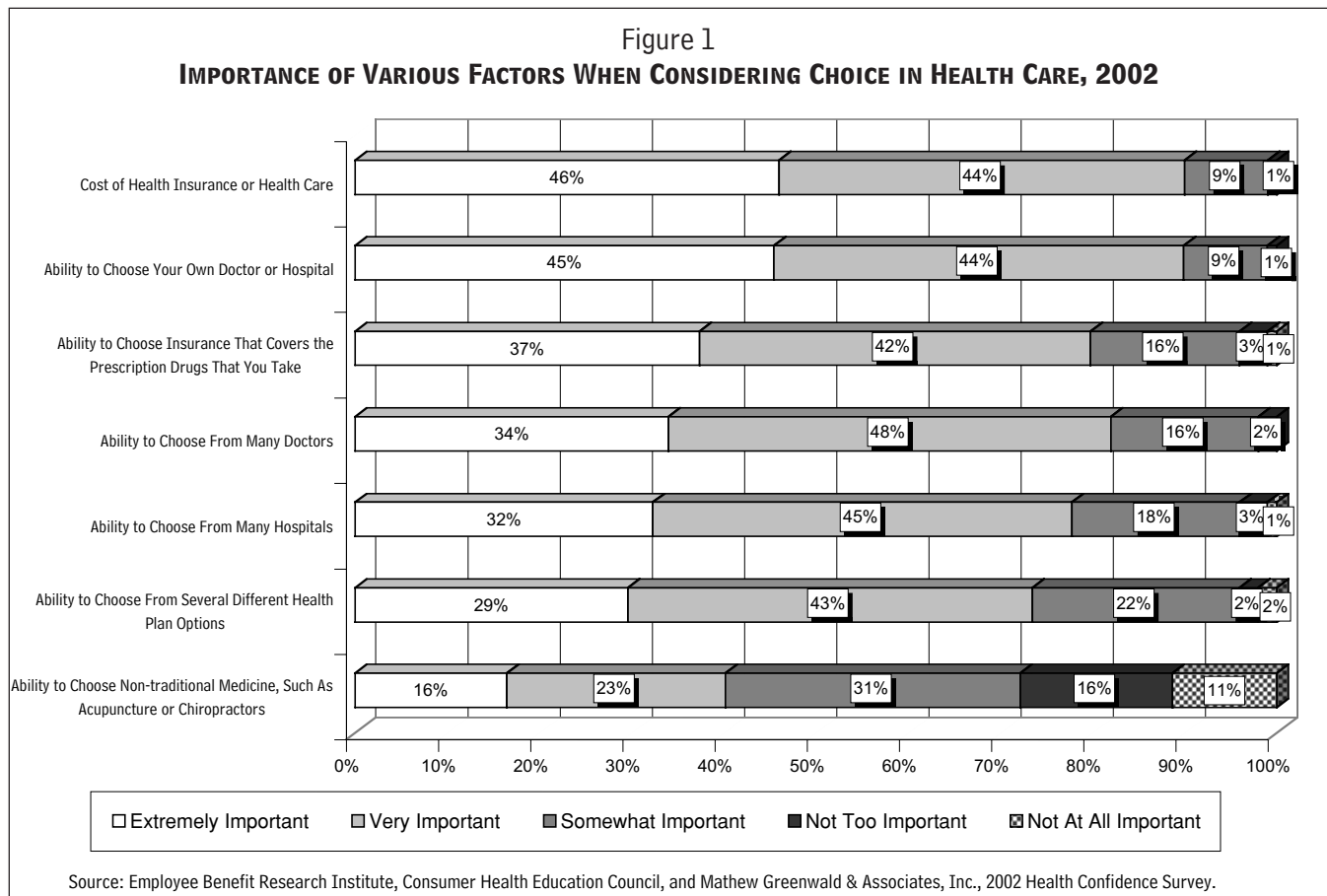


Choice in Health Care

Many Factors Important in Americans' Desire for Choice in Health Care

Americans consistently say they want freedom of choice in health care. Part of the “managed care backlash,” in fact, is in response to restrictions (perceived or real) placed on consumer choice by health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and other managed care companies.

The 2002 Health Confidence Survey (HCS) finds that when Americans consider choice in health care, they see many different aspects of choice as highly important (Figure 1).



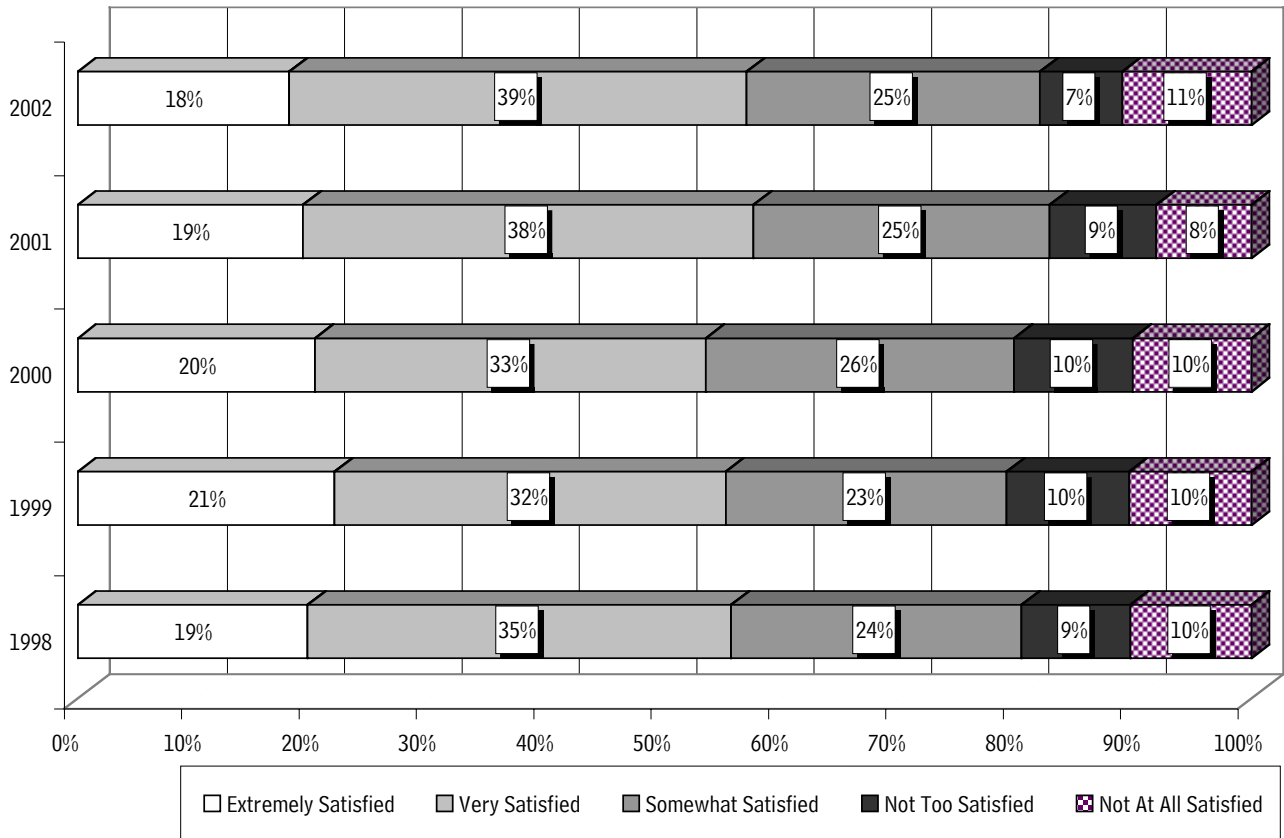
- Nine out of 10 Americans find the cost of health insurance or health care and the ability to choose their own doctor or hospital to be *extremely* or *very* important when considering choice in health care (90 percent and 89 percent, respectively).
- About 8 in 10 cite the ability to choose from many doctors (81 percent), the ability to choose insurance that covers the prescription drugs they take (79 percent), and the ability to choose from many hospitals (77 percent) as *extremely* or *very* important.

Satisfaction With Ability to Choose Doctor Consistent Over Time

We asked Americans who had received health care in the past two years how satisfied they were with their ability to choose their doctor during those two years. There has been no significant change in the level of satisfaction between 1998 and 2002 (Figure 2).

- In 2002, 57 percent of HCS respondents said they were *extremely* or *very* satisfied with their ability to choose their doctor, nearly unchanged from 54 percent in 1998.
- Only 18 percent were *not too* or *not at all* satisfied with their ability to choose their doctor in the 2002 HCS.

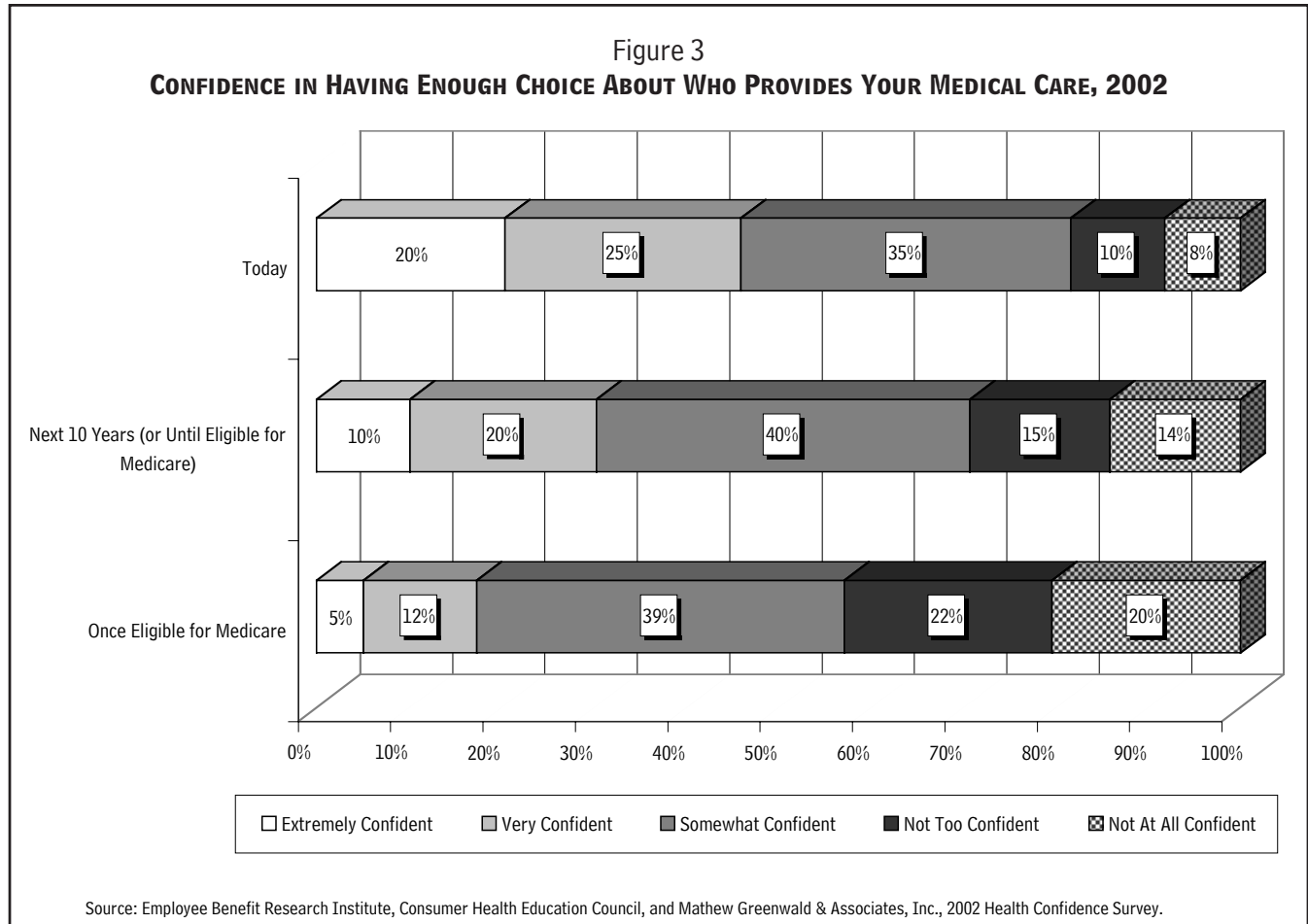
Figure 2
**SATISFACTION WITH ABILITY TO CHOOSE DOCTOR,
 AMONG THOSE RECEIVING CARE IN PAST TWO YEARS,
 1998-2002**



Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute, Consumer Health Education Council, and Mathew Greenwald & Associates, Inc., 1998-2002 Health Confidence Surveys.

Confidence in Having Enough Choice About Health Care Providers Declines As Americans Look Toward the Future

While more than half of Americans who have received health care in the past two years are satisfied with their ability to choose their doctor, less than half of all Americans are confident that they have enough choice about who provides their medical care, and their confidence reaches lower levels as they consider their health care in the future.



- Forty-five percent of HCS respondents are *extremely* or *very* confident that they have enough choice about their medical care providers.
- Three in 10 are *extremely* or *very* confident that they will have enough choice about who provides their medical care in the next 10 years or until they are eligible for Medicare (30 percent).
- Only 17 percent are *extremely* or *very* confident that they will have enough choice about medical care providers once they are eligible for Medicare.
- The proportion of Americans who are confident in having enough choice about their medical providers, both during the next 10 years and once eligible for Medicare, remained fairly consistent between 1998 and 2002.
- At the same time, the percentage who are *not too* or *not at all* confident that they will have enough choice about who provides their medical care in the next 10 years decreased from 36 percent in 1998 to 29 percent in 2002.

Source: 1998–2002 Health Confidence Surveys.