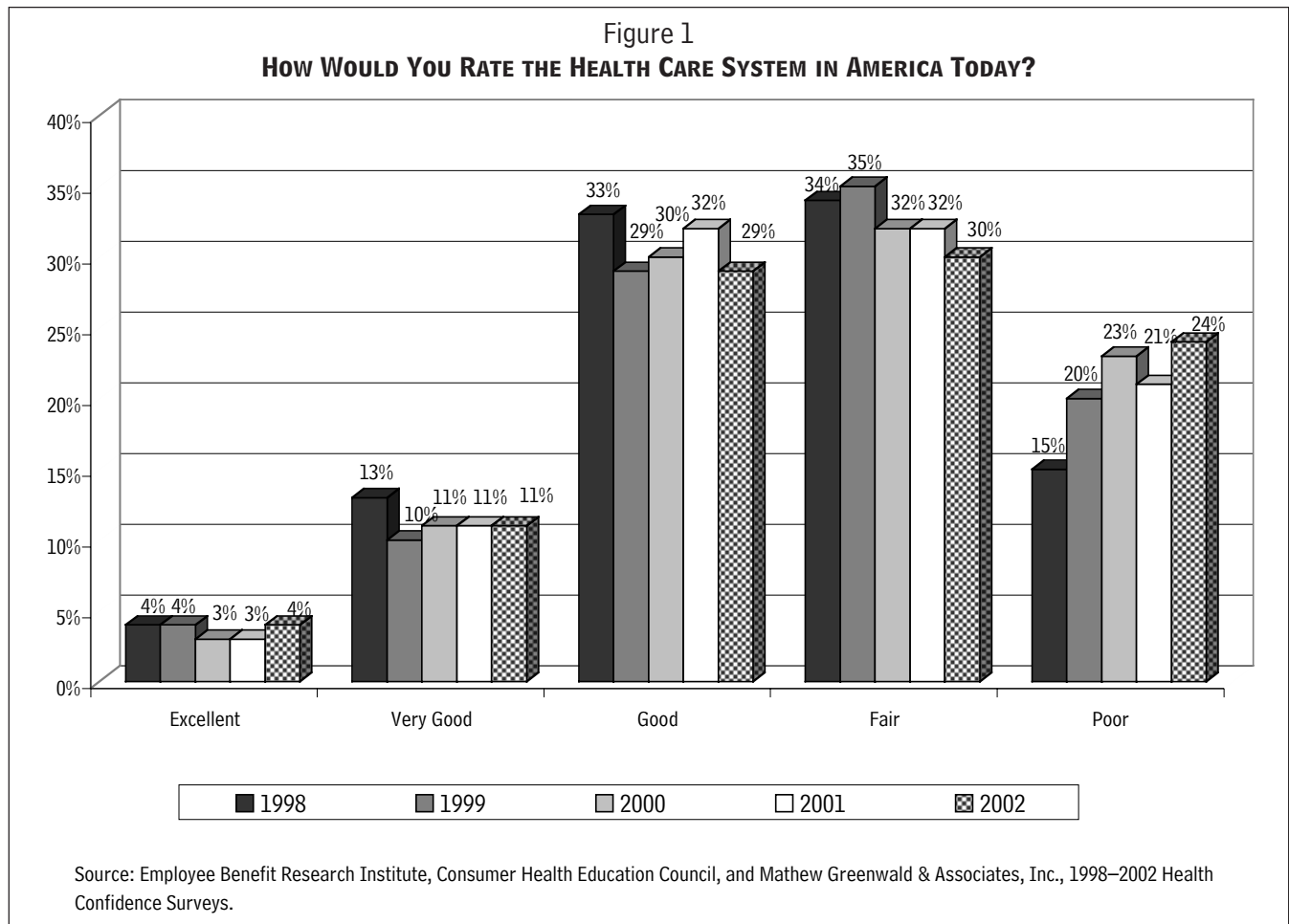


Confidence in U. S. Health Care System

Americans Consistently Give the U.S. Health Care System Low Ratings

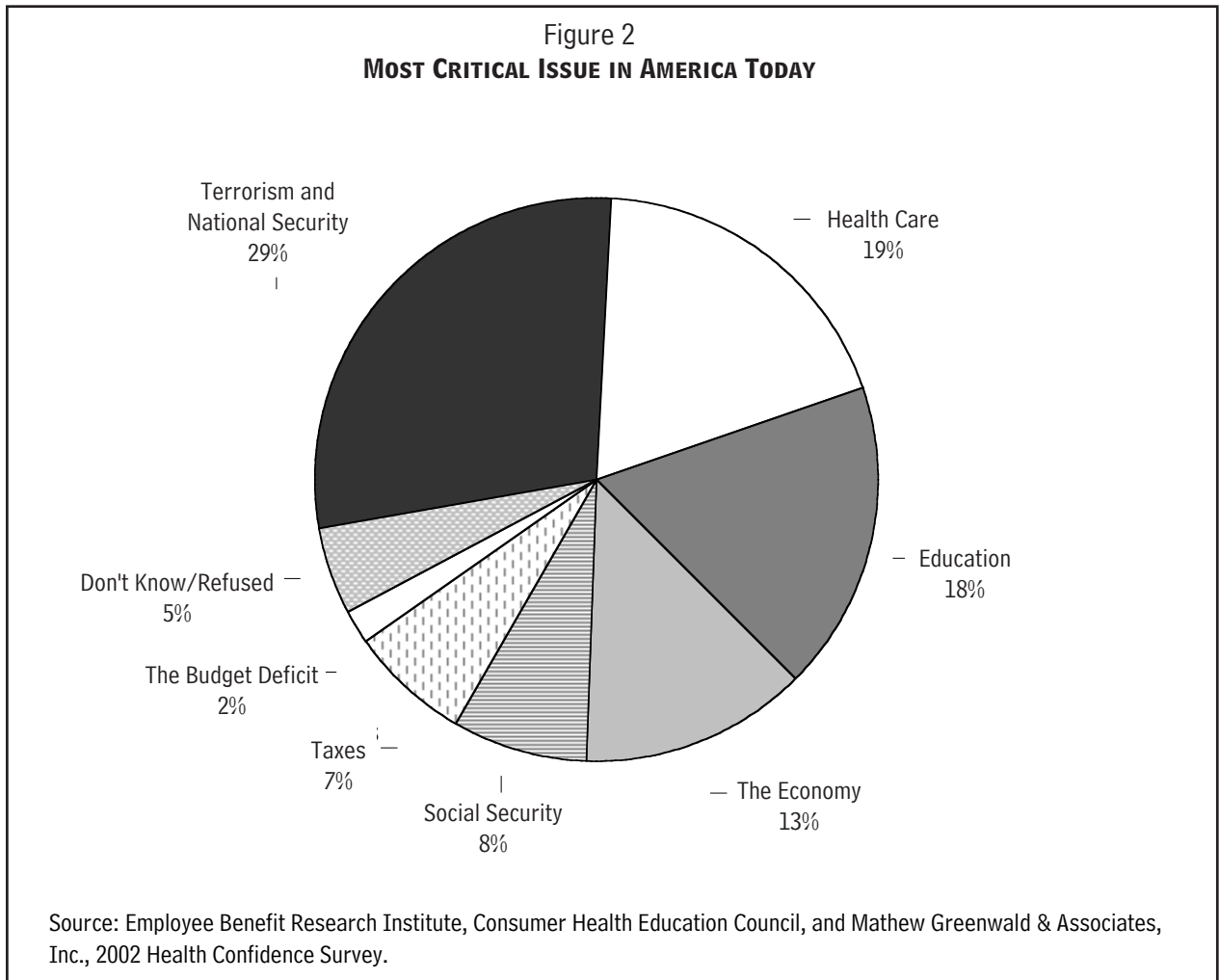
The 2002 Health Confidence Survey (HCS) finds that Americans continue to give the country's health care system low ratings (Figure 1).

- The proportion of Americans giving the health care system a poor rating continues on a general upward trend. In 2002, 24 percent of HCS respondents rated the American health care system as poor, up from 15 percent in 1998.



Health Care More Likely to Be Viewed As Most Critical Issue in America

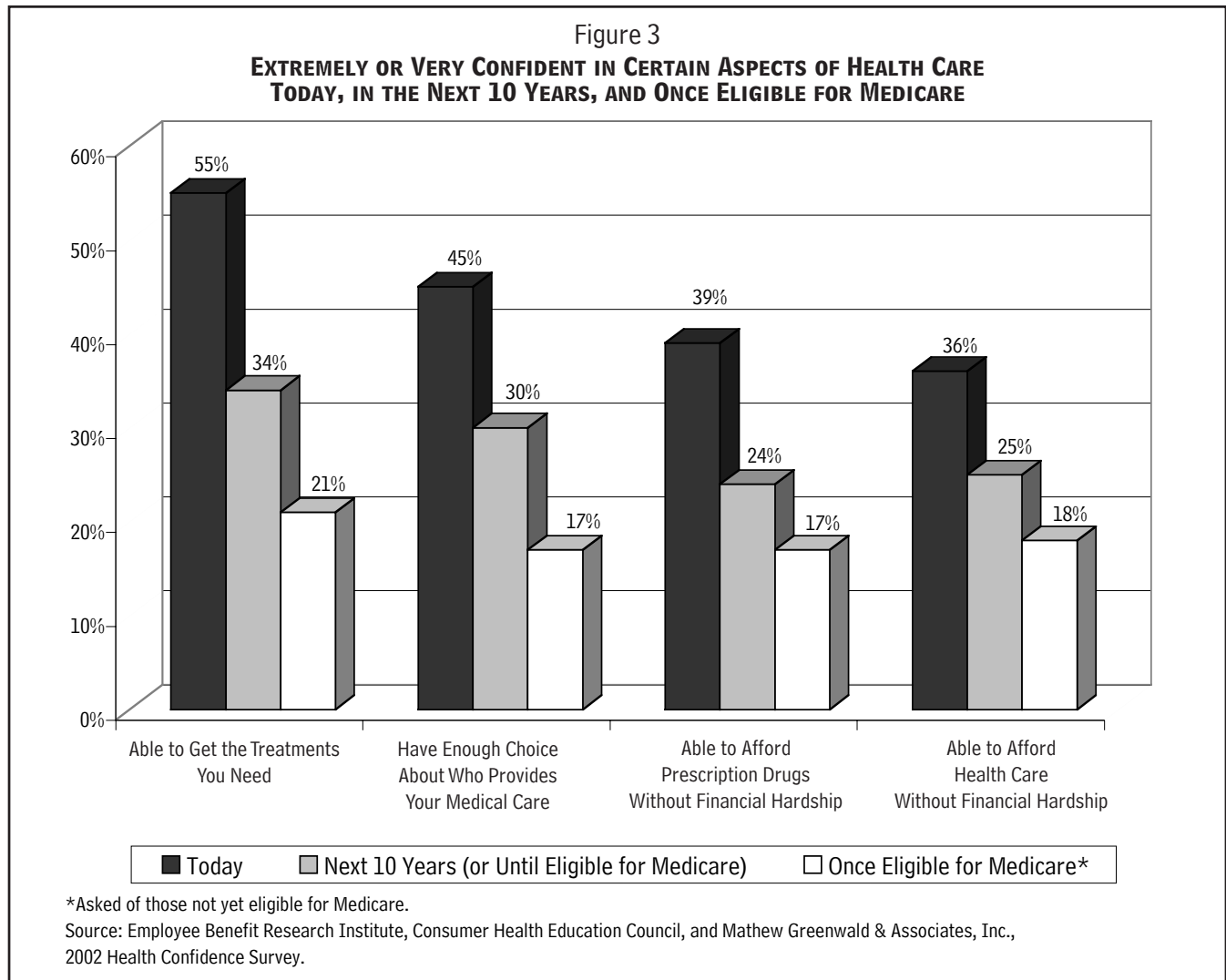
Americans are more likely now than in 1998 to identify health care as a critical issue for the nation.



- Nineteen percent of respondents to the 2002 HCS said health care is the single most critical concern facing America today, while in 1998 just 14 percent said so. In 2002, health care is second only to terrorism and national security (29 percent) and about equal to education (18 percent) as the most critical issue (Figure 2).
- Americans ages 45 and older, those with annual household incomes less than \$35,000, and women are more likely to identify health care as the most critical issue in America today.

Confidence in Specific Aspects of Health Care Wanes As Americans Look Toward the Future

Americans express a moderate degree of confidence in health care today, but as they look forward to the next 10 years and to Medicare, their confidence declines (Figure 3).



- While more than half (55 percent) of Americans are *extremely* or *very* confident that they are able to get the treatments they need today, only one-third (34 percent) are confident in this aspect in the next 10 years (or until eligible for Medicare), and only 21 percent are confident of their ability to get the treatments they need once they are eligible for Medicare.
- Forty-five percent are *extremely* or *very* confident that they have enough choice about their health care providers today, but for the next 10 years (or until eligible for Medicare), only 30 percent are confident, and only 17 percent are confident they will have enough choice about their health care providers once they are eligible for Medicare.
- Fewer than 4 in 10 Americans are *extremely* or *very* confident in their ability to afford prescription drugs without financial hardship or to afford health care without financial hardship today (39 percent and 36 percent, respectively). Only one-fourth are confident in each of these two aspects in the next 10 years or until they are eligible for Medicare. And fewer than 2 in 10 are confident that they will be able to afford prescription drugs (17 percent) or health care (18 percent) without financial hardship once they are eligible for Medicare.

However, Americans are less pessimistic than they used to be about certain aspects of health care.

- The percentage of Americans saying they are *not too* or *not at all* confident in their ability to afford health care without financial hardship in the next 10 years or until they are eligible for Medicare decreased from 44 percent in 1998 to 35 percent in 2002.
- The percentage saying they are *not too* or *not at all* confident of their ability to afford health care once they are eligible for Medicare decreased from 51 percent in 1998 to 44 percent in 2002.
- The percentage of Americans *not too* or *not at all* confident in their ability to afford prescription drugs without financial hardship once eligible for Medicare decreased from 51 percent in 2001 to 44 percent in 2002.
- The percentage of those *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.