Tracking Public Opinion on Health Care Policy During a Year of Reform

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Where there’s a will… (and there IS a will)

Which comes closer to describing your own views? Given the serious economic problems facing the country…

- **It is more important than ever to take on health care reform now**
  - Oct08: 62%
  - Dec08: 61%
  - Feb09: 62%
  - Apr09: 59%
  - Jun09: 61%
  - Jul09: 56%
  - Aug09: 53%
  - Sep09: 57%
  - Oct09: 55%
  - Nov09: 58%

- **We cannot afford to take on health care reform right now**
  - Oct08: 34%
  - Dec08: 37%
  - Feb09: 34%
  - Apr09: 37%
  - Jun09: 35%
  - Jul09: 39%
  - Aug09: 42%
  - Sep09: 39%
  - Oct09: 41%
  - Nov09: 36%

Note: Asked of half sample in Nov09. “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.
Sources: Kaiser Family Foundation polls
CHART 2

The will differs, though

It is more important than ever to take on health care reform now

We cannot afford to take on health care reform right now

Democrats
- 77% agree
- 19% disagree
- 4% don’t know/refused

Independents
- 56% agree
- 39% disagree
- 5% don’t know/refused

Republicans
- 33% agree
- 58% disagree
- 9% don’t know/refused

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll (conducted November 5-12, 2009)
**What Americans prioritize in a reform bill**

Percent who say it is EXTREMELY or VERY important to them personally that each of the following be a feature of any final reform plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability of affordable health insurance plans</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guaranteed issue</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit neutrality</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filling the Medicare donut hole</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing government financial help to cover more of the uninsured</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual mandate</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limiting medical malpractice awards</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public plan</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Question wording abbreviated.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted November 5-12, 2009)
### Affordability in common

Percent who say it is EXTREMELY or VERY important to them personally that each of the following be a feature of any final reform plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th><strong>Democrats</strong></th>
<th><strong>Independents</strong></th>
<th><strong>Republicans</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Affordable health insurance (87%)</td>
<td>Affordable health insurance (78%)</td>
<td>Deficit neutrality (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Providing gov't $ to help cover more of uninsured (82%)</td>
<td>Guaranteed issue (70%)</td>
<td>Affordable health insurance (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Guaranteed issue (80%)</td>
<td>Deficit neutrality (69%)</td>
<td>Medicare donut hole (66%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Question wording abbreviated.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted November 5-12, 2009)
CHART 5

Devilish details

Which comes closer to describing your views?

The president and Congress need to take on health care reform now …

… and I LIKE what I’m hearing about the proposals currently being considered

… but I DON’T LIKE what I’m hearing about the proposals currently being considered

I don’t think the president and Congress should take on health care reform right now

Don’t know/Refused

35%

6%

33%

26%

Note: Asked of half sample.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll (conducted November 5-12, 2009)
Thumbs up/thumbs down: the aggregator’s version

Do you think (you and your family/the country as a whole) would be better off or worse off if the president and Congress passed health care reform, or don’t you think it would make much difference?

...you and your family
- Better off: 42%
- It wouldn’t make much difference: 27%
- Worse off: 24%
- It depends (vol.): 3%

...the country as a whole
- Better off: 54%
- It wouldn’t make much difference: 11%
- Worse off: 27%
- It depends (vol.): 3%

Note: “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll (conducted November 5-12, 2009)
Views of personal impact

CHART 8

You/family better off with reform

Won’t affect you

You/family worse off with reform

Sources: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking polls
Major differences across demographic groups

% who responded “you and your family would be BETTER off if the president and Congress passed health care reform”

**By age**

- **Feb**: 28% (18-64), 0% (65+)
- **Apr**: 31% (18-64), 20% (65+)
- **Jun**: 30% (18-64), 21% (65+)
- **Jul**: 27% (18-64), 32% (65+)
- **Aug**: 23% (18-64), 31% (65+)
- **Sep**: 39% (18-64), 44% (65+)
- **Oct**: 44% (18-64), 44% (65+)
- **Nov**: 40% (18-64), 45% (65+)

**By race/ethnicity**

- **Non-white**: 53% (Feb), 63% (Nov)
- **White**: 33% (Feb), 35% (Nov)

**By income**

- **<40K**: 47% (Jun), 35% (Aug)
- **$40-$90K**: 51% (Jun), 33% (Aug)
- **$90K+**: 43% (Jun), 36% (Aug)

**By party identification**

- **Dem**: 50% (Feb), 60% (Nov)
- **Ind**: 37% (Feb), 37% (Nov)
- **Rep**: 19% (Feb), 24% (Nov)

As asked of half sample in Nov09.
Sources: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking polls
Do you think seniors, that is those 65 years and older would be better off or worse off if the president and Congress passed health care reform, or don’t you think it would make much difference?

- Under 65 years old:
  - Better off: 46%
  - Wouldn’t make much difference: 17%
  - Worse off: 27%
  - It depends (vol.): 4%

- 65 years and older:
  - Better off: 27%
  - Wouldn’t make much difference: 27%
  - Worse off: 39%
  - It depends (vol.): 2%

Note: “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll (conducted November 5-12, 2009)
### Many approaches to coverage expansion popular

Now I'm going to read you some different ways to increase the number of Americans covered by health insurance. Please tell me whether you would favor or oppose it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Strongly favor</th>
<th>Somewhat favor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expanding state government programs for low-income people, such as Medicaid and CHIP</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding Medicare to those uninsured who are ages 55 to 64</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requiring all Americans to have health insurance, with financial help for those who can't afford it</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requiring employers to either offer health insurance or pay money into a government fund</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering tax credits to help people buy private health insurance</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a government-administered public health insurance option to compete with private insurance plans*</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a government-administered public health insurance option similar to Medicare to compete with private insurance plans*</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a national health plan – or single-payer plan – in which all Americans would get their insurance from a single government plan</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Various items based on half samples. Items marked with an asterisk (*) asked of separate half samples as a wording experiment. Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll (conducted September 11-18, 2009)
Examples of continuing support

Percent who favor a public option*:

- Apr09: 67%
- Jul: 59%
- Aug: 59%
- Sep: 59%
- Oct: 57%
- Nov: 59%

Percent who favor expansion of state programs:

- Dec08: 73%
- Apr: 77%
- Jun: 77%
- Jul: 75%
- Aug: 74%
- Sep: 80%
- Oct: 82%

Percent who favor an individual mandate:

- Dec08: 67%
- Apr: 72%
- Jun: 71%
- Jul: 68%
- Aug: 68%
- Sep: 66%
- Oct: 73%

* Note wording has changed slightly over time. Source: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys
Opinions on a range of topics malleable (i.e., public plan)

Would you favor or oppose creating a government-administered public health insurance option similar to Medicare to compete with private health insurance plans?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRO CHALLENGE:**
What if you heard that a public health insurance option was a fallback that would only kick in if not enough people had affordable health plans available through the private marketplace?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Still favor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CON CHALLENGE:**
What if you heard that a public health insurance option could give the government an unfair advantage over private insurance companies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Still oppose</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Follow up questions asked of those who initially opposed. Responses shown on all graphs are based on total; on bottom graphs, “favor” includes those who initially favored and those who favored after hearing the follow up. “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown. Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll (conducted October 8-15, 2009)
Do you favor or oppose the federal government requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies, even if they have a prior illness?

**Favor**
- 80%

**Oppose**
- 17%

Supporters were asked: What if you heard this requirement might mean that healthier people would end up paying somewhat more for their health insurance than they do now, while sicker people would pay somewhat less?

Still favor: 56%
Oppose: 36%

Opponents were asked: What if you heard that some people with very expensive illnesses like cancer would have no way of getting insurance otherwise?

Favor: 86%
Still oppose: 9%

Note: Follow up question on left asked of those who initially favored. Graph below it based on total, where “oppose” includes those who initially opposed along with those who opposed after hearing the follow up. Follow up question on right asked of those who initially opposed. Graph below it based on total, where “favor” includes those who initially favored along with those who favored after hearing the follow up. “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll (conducted September 11-18, 2009)
Willingness to pay

Would you be willing to pay more -- either in higher health insurance premiums or higher taxes -- in order to increase the number of Americans who have health insurance, or not?

Note: Asked of half sample July - November 2009. “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.
Many say reform can happen without spending

Which comes closer to your opinion:

If policymakers make the right changes they could reform the health care system **without spending more money** to do it

- 55% Won’t have to change my existing arrangements
- 39% Will have to change my arrangements
- 6% Don’t know/Refused

To make any real reforms to the health care system, policymakers **will need to spend more money**, either by raising some taxes, taking from other programs or increasing the deficit

Source: Kaiser Health Tracking Poll (conducted July 7-14, 2009)
Some tax options

Please tell me if you would favor or oppose each of the following to help pay for health care reform and provide coverage for more of the uninsured.

- **Increasing income taxes for people from families making more than $1 million a year and individuals making more than $500,000**
  - Strongly favor: 47%
  - Somewhat favor: 22%
  - Somewhat oppose: 12%
  - Strongly oppose: 16%

- **Having health insurance companies pay a tax for offering very expensive policies**
  - Strongly favor: 29%
  - Somewhat favor: 34%
  - Somewhat oppose: 14%
  - Strongly oppose: 16%

- **Having health insurance companies pay a fee based on how much business they have**
  - Strongly favor: 23%
  - Somewhat favor: 34%
  - Somewhat oppose: 16%
  - Strongly oppose: 17%

Note: Based on half sample. “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll (conducted November 5-12, 2009)
Public attention: Reform often top story

How closely have you been following discussions in Washington about health care reform?

Sources: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking polls
Balance tilts somewhat to ads opposed

As far as you could tell, were those ads in favor of or opposed to passing some sort of health care reform this year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Saw ads in favor</th>
<th>Saw ads opposed</th>
<th>Saw both (vol)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug09</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep09</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct09</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov09</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Based on 45 percent of the population in Aug. and Oct., and 54 percent in Sep. “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.
Sources: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking polls