
The More People Think They Know about Obama's Health Care Reform Proposals The More They Oppose Them

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – August 10, 2009 – In late January only 17% of the public claimed to know much about President Obama's health care reform proposals. By late July, just before the president's press conference on July 22nd, that number had more than doubled, to 36%, while fully 72% felt they knew "a lot" or "some." The full importance of this question is that **how much people feel they know about the president's proposals are strongly correlated with opposition to them.**

These are some of the results from The Harris Poll, a new study of 2,029 U.S. adults surveyed online between July 20 and 22, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

This survey also repeated another question that we asked in January to measure support and opposition to the president's health reform proposals. In January, a 50% to 20% plurality supported them (while in most cases admitting that they did not know a lot about them). In our late July survey the public was almost equally divided, with only a slender 42% to 38% plurality supporting the president's proposals

More bad news for the president comes from the results to another question on what people believe would be the impact of his plans if they were implemented. All of the changes since January show increasing numbers of people who are not convinced about the benefits of the plans.

Those who think that the plans would be "**good**" for each of the following have fallen:

- For the quality of medical care, from 47% to 35%;
- For "people like you" from 45% to 34%;
- For containing costs, from 49% to 39%;
- For providing more people with adequate insurance, from 61% to 52%;
- For strengthening the economy, from 42% to 30%;
- For making care more cost effective, from 54% to 42%.

The numbers who think that the president's proposal would be "**bad**" for each of these six items have jumped, and in some cases, doubled. For example:

- 34% of adults now think that Obama's proposed reform would be bad for "people like you," compared to only 18% in January; and
- 35% believe that they would be bad for "strengthening the economy," compared to only 19% in January.

However, the really bad news for President Obama and the Democrats is that opposition to his proposals increases from 22% of those who feel they know only a little about them to a 54% majority of those who feel they know a lot. Only 42% of these "well informed" people support the plan.

Unsurprisingly, given all these findings, the public is divided about how important it is to pass “a major health care bill to expand health insurance coverage” in President Obama’s first year in office. Only 23% think that it is extremely or very important, 34% think it is not important, and 21% think it only somewhat important.

TABLE 1
SEEN, HEARD OR READ ABOUT OBAMA’S HEALTH REFORM PROPOSALS

“How much have you seen, heard or read about possible health care reforms that are likely to be proposed by President Barack Obama?”

Base: All Adults

	January	July
	%	%
Know at lot or some (NET)	54	72
A lot	17	36
Some	37	36
A little	25	18
I don’t know anything about President Obama’s proposals for health care reform.	21	10

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 2
SUPPORT OR OPPOSE OBAMA’S REFORM PROPOSALS

“Even if you don’t know the details of his plan, how do you feel about President Obama’s proposals for health care reforms?”

Base: All Adults

	January	July
	%	%
Support (NET)	50	42
Support strongly	25	20
Support somewhat	26	21
Oppose (NET)	20	38
Oppose somewhat	9	12
Oppose strongly	12	27
Not sure	29	20

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 3
SUPPORT OR OPPOSE OBAMA’S REFORM PROPOSALS – BY HOW MUCH IS KNOWN ABOUT THEM

“Even if you don’t know the details of his plan, how do you feel about President Obama’s proposals for health care reforms?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	How much people know about proposals			
		A Lot	Some	A Little	Nothing
	%	%	%	%	%
Support (NET)	42	42	42	47	20
Strongly support	20	27	22	11	8
Support somewhat	21	15	25	32	12
Oppose (NET)	38	54	39	22	8
Oppose somewhat	12	8	18	12	2
Oppose strongly	27	45	22	10	6
Not sure	20	4	13	35	72

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 4
OBAMA’S REFORMS WOULD BE GOOD OR BAD FOR . . .

“Even if you don’t know the details of his plan, do you believe that President Obama’s proposals for health care reforms, if implemented, would be good or bad for...?”

Base: All adults

			Good	Bad	Not Sure
The quality of medical care in America	January	%	47	20	33
	July	%	35	36	25
People like you	January	%	45	18	36
	July	%	34	34	32
Containing the cost of health care	January	%	49	18	33
	July	%	39	32	30
Providing many more people with adequate health insurance	January	%	61	11	29
	July	%	52	22	26
Strengthening the economy	January	%	42	19	39
	July	%	30	35	35
Making health care more cost-effective	January	%	54	16	31
	July	%	42	30	27

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 5
HOW IMPORTANT THAT OBAMA PASS A MAJOR HEALTH INSURANCE BILL TO EXPANCE COVERAGE IN HIS FIRST YEAR

“How important is it to you that President Obama passes a major health care bill to expand health insurance coverage in his first year in office?”

Base: All adults

	Total	How much people know about proposals			
		A Lot	Some	A Little	Nothing
	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely/Very Important/ Important (NET)	45	39	45	47	61
Extremely important	12	16	10	11	10
Very important	11	11	12	7	15
Important	21	12	23	30	36
Somewhat important	21	14	25	29	19
Not at all important	34	46	30	24	19

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Methodology

The Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States between July 20 and 22, 2009, among 2,029 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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