

Majorities Support Health Care Reforms

Negotiating for lower drug prices most favored idea

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – February 11, 2009 – Most U.S. adults are aware that President Obama proposes to reform the health care system – many (79%) say they know at least a little about the possible health care reforms likely to be proposed by President Obama, but only 17% say they know a lot. People often have strong feelings on issues even when they are not well informed, and this poll shows that Americans have positive expectations for President Obama’s reforms.

These are some of the results of a Harris Interactive/HealthDay Poll conducted online within the United States between January 27 and 29, 2009 among a national cross section of 2,491 adults age 18 and over.

When asked about President Obama’s proposals for health care reform in general half (50%) of all adults supports his plan and 20% opposes it. Replies to this question are highly polarized by political party (75% Democrat, 26% Republican and 48% Independent).

When presented with specific concepts that might be included in the President’s reform plan, majorities find them all “good ideas” and only one-fifth or less say they are “bad ideas.” The most popular proposal is to allow Medicare and other government health plan administrators the right to negotiate with drug companies for lower prices (78% say it’s a good idea), and this is favored regardless of political affiliation. Requiring all children be covered by insurance is considered a good idea by 69% of adults, including majorities of all parties (87% Democrat, 53% Republican and 62% Independent).

Even three-fifths (60%) think a national health insurance exchange is a good idea. A national health insurance exchange would offer a range of private insurance options as well as a new public plan that will allow individuals and small businesses to buy affordable health care coverage. This is considered a step toward universal coverage, which has not been appealing in the past, especially with Republicans. Now, half of Republicans (49%) and Independents (56%) and three-fourths (73%) of Democrats react favorably to this reform.

The national health insurance exchange is based on the system in place in Massachusetts, which is generally popular. According to Humphrey Taylor, Chairman of *The Harris Poll*®, “This concept is sometimes associated with socialized medicine, which is a phrase often used to attack health care reform in the U.S. The fact that majorities of all parties support it shows a real desire for change in the American public.”

The key benefit of reform is providing more people with adequate health insurance coverage (61% say the reforms would be good for this), closely followed by making health care more cost-effective (54%). Only one-fifth (20%) believe the reforms would be bad for the quality of medical care in America.

Throughout this survey we see that the more people know about the President’s proposals, the more positive they are about reform in general and to specific ideas. The cost to the individual will most likely be of concern as these proposals are rolled out, particularly in view of the financial uncertainty many people are experiencing. Taylor adds, “One thing is certain, these attitudes will surely change as reform proposals are presented, debated, supported and attacked.”

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

	Total
	%
Know at least a little (NET)	79
A lot	17
Some	37
A little	25
I don’t know anything about President Obama’s proposals for health care reform.	21

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

		Less Than \$15,000	\$15,000 - \$24,999	\$25,000 - \$34,999	\$35,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$75,000 And Over
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Support (NET)	50	59	50	60	49	51	51
Support strongly	25	34	30	31	25	25	24
Support somewhat	26	25	15	11	24	20	25
Oppose (Net)	20	12	15	11	24	20	25
Oppose somewhat	9	3	5	5	10	8	11
Oppose strongly	12	9	10	6	14	12	15
Not sure	29	29	35	29	27	29	24

	Total	Seen/Heard/Read				Political Affiliation		
		A Lot	Some	A Little	Don't Know Anything	Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Support (NET)	50	62	62	48	23	26	75	48
Support strongly	25	52	27	15	8	6	46	17
Support somewhat	26	10	34	32	15	20	29	31
Oppose (Net)	20	36	22	16	11	43	4	24
Oppose somewhat	9	8	10	11	5	15	2	12
Oppose strongly	12	28	12	5	6	27	1	13
Not sure	29	2	16	37	66	32	22	28

TABLE 3-A
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	%	47	20	33
People like you	%	45	18	36
Containing the cost of health care	%	49	18	33
Providing many more people with adequate health insurance	%	61	11	29
Strengthening the economy	%	42	19	39
Making health care more cost-effective	%	54	16	31

TABLE 3-B

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...?”

Summary of Good

Base: All adults

	Total	Income					
		Less Than \$15,000	\$15,000 - \$24,999	\$25,000 - \$34,999	\$35,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$75,000 And Over
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Providing many more people with adequate health insurance	61	70	59	70	60	60	61
Making health care more cost-effective	54	60	57	61	52	50	54
Containing the cost of health care	49	54	55	55	51	47	48
The quality of medical care in America	47	60	52	53	51	44	43
People like you	45	56	53	55	45	44	41
Strengthening the economy	42	55	50	43	43	37	39

	Total	Seen/Heard/Read				Political Affiliation		
		A Lot	Some	A Little	Don't Know Anything	Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Providing many more people with adequate health insurance	61	68	70	60	40	40	83	58
Making health care more cost-effective	54	63	60	50	38	30	77	49
Containing the cost of health care	49	61	55	46	33	28	70	45
The quality of medical care in America	47	54	51	45	33	25	69	39
People like you	45	56	51	42	29	22	69	38
Strengthening the economy	42	51	47	37	30	22	61	38

TABLE 3-C

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...?”

Summary of Bad

Base: All adults

	Total	Income					
		Less Than \$15,000	\$15,000 - \$24,999	\$25,000 - \$34,999	\$35,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$75,000 And Over
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
The quality of medical care in America	20	14	13	18	19	19	24
Strengthening the economy	19	14	13	16	19	19	23
People like you	18	14	11	12	18	19	23
Containing the cost of health care	18	12	10	14	18	16	21
Making health care more cost-effective	16	11	10	12	16	14	20
Providing many more people with adequate health insurance	11	8	11	6	11	10	12

	Total	Seen/Heard/Read				Political Affiliation		
		A Lot	Some	A Little	Don't Know Anything	Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
The quality of medical care in America	20	34	20	17	12	39	5	25
Strengthening the economy	19	33	21	16	8	37	4	25
People like you	18	30	20	14	11	37	3	25
Containing the cost of health care	18	28	20	14	10	36	4	23
Making health care more cost-effective	16	29	16	11	9	34	3	17
Providing many more people with adequate health insurance	11	23	10	7	6	21	1	14

TABLE 4-A
WHETHER ELEMENTS OF OBAMA'S REFORMS ARE GOOD OR BAD

"There are many proposals for improving or reforming the health care system. Please indicate if you think each of the following is a good idea, a bad idea, or if you are not sure."

Base: All adults

		Good Idea	Bad Idea	Not Sure
Setting up a "national health insurance exchange" that would offer employers and individuals a choice of private insurance that anyone could purchase	%	60	13	27
Requiring insurance plans to accept all applicants for coverage regardless of illness or disability	%	61	17	22
Allowing Medicare and other government health plans to negotiate with drug companies to get lower prices	%	78	7	15
Requiring that all children be covered by health insurance, with subsidies for people with low incomes to make this insurance affordable	%	69	14	17
Requiring employers to provide adequate health insurance or pay a fee into a fund to enable employees to purchase affordable insurance	%	59	18	23

TABLE 4-B

WHETHER ELEMENTS OF OBAMA’S REFORMS ARE GOOD OR BAD

“There are many proposals for improving or reforming the health care system. Please indicate if you think each of the following is a good idea, a bad idea, or if you are not sure.”

Summary of Good

Base: All adults

	Total	Income					
		Less Than \$15,000	\$15,000 - \$24,999	\$25,000 - \$34,999	\$35,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$75,000 And Over
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Allowing Medicare and other government health plans to negotiate with drug companies to get lower prices	78	80	73	75	83	82	82
Requiring that all children be covered by health insurance, with subsidies for people with low incomes to make this insurance affordable	69	75	69	72	72	72	68
Requiring insurance plans to accept all applicants for coverage regardless of illness or disability	61	72	70	67	61	67	57
Setting up a “national health insurance exchange” that would offer employers and individuals a choice of private insurance that anyone could purchase	60	66	57	65	61	64	59
Requiring employers to provide adequate health insurance or pay a fee into a fund to enable employees to purchase affordable insurance	59	64	62	59	60	61	60

TABLE 4-B (Con't)

	Total	Seen/Heard/Read				Political Affiliation		
		A Lot	Some	A Little	Don't Know Anything	Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Allowing Medicare and other government health plans to negotiate with drug companies to get lower prices	78	82	82	76	71	70	87	78
Requiring that all children be covered by health insurance, with subsidies for people with low incomes to make this insurance affordable	69	70	71	71	62	53	87	62
Requiring insurance plans to accept all applicants for coverage regardless of illness or disability	61	67	62	61	56	48	76	57
Setting up a "national health insurance exchange" that would offer employers and individuals a choice of private insurance that anyone could purchase	60	62	62	60	55	49	73	56
Requiring employers to provide adequate health insurance or pay a fee into a fund to enable employees to purchase affordable insurance	59	56	60	63	55	47	73	53

TABLE 4-C

WHETHER ELEMENTS OF OBAMA’S REFORMS ARE GOOD OR BAD

“There are many proposals for improving or reforming the health care system. Please indicate if you think each of the following is a good idea, a bad idea, or if you are not sure.”

Summary of Bad

Base: All adults

	Total	Income					
		Less Than \$15,000	\$15,000 - \$24,999	\$25,000 - \$34,999	\$35,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$75,000 And Over
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Requiring employers to provide adequate health insurance or pay a fee into a fund to enable employees to purchase affordable insurance	18	16	11	16	16	20	22
Requiring insurance plans to accept all applicants for coverage regardless of illness or disability	17	14	8	11	14	17	21
Requiring that all children be covered by health insurance, with subsidies for people with low incomes to make this insurance affordable	14	12	11	13	12	13	19
Setting up a “national health insurance exchange” that would offer employers and individuals a choice of private insurance that anyone could purchase	13	10	14	7	12	11	16
Allowing Medicare and other government health plans to negotiate with drug companies to get lower prices	7	8	5	7	6	7	8

TABLE 4-C (Con't)

	Total	Seen/Heard/Read				Political Affiliation		
		A Lot	Some	A Little	Don't Know Anything	Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Requiring employers to provide adequate health insurance or pay a fee into a fund to enable employees to purchase affordable insurance	18	29	21	12	13	32	8	23
Requiring insurance plans to accept all applicants for coverage regardless of illness or disability	17	23	19	14	12	30	7	19
Requiring that all children be covered by health insurance, with subsidies for people with low incomes to make this insurance affordable	14	24	15	9	11	27	3	19
Setting up a "national health insurance exchange" that would offer employers and individuals a choice of private insurance that anyone could purchase	13	23	14	7	8	21	5	16
Allowing Medicare and other government health plans to negotiate with drug companies to get lower prices	7	11	7	7	5	16	2	8

Methodology

Harris Interactive conducted this online survey within the United States between January 27 and 29, 2009 among a national cross section of 2,491 adults age 18 and over. Figures for age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income and region were weighted where necessary to align with population proportions. 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 U.S. adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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