

TNS Healthcare Research Shows Healthcare Positions of Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates

Contributed by TNS
Monday, 27 October 2008
Last Updated Saturday, 03 January 2009

August 26th 2008 - New York

New Study Finds Voters Agree Healthcare Issues Are Important in Choosing a President, But Are Split by Age and Income on Which Candidate Best Represents Their Views

New TNS Healthcare Research Shows Healthcare Positions of Both Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates Are Key in Determining Voting Decisions

Most Americans say that healthcare issues will be very important in determining which presidential candidate will get their vote, according to new TNS Healthcare research. Healthcare concerns are particularly important to voters 65 or older, with 75% indicating health issues will play a major role in their presidential choice. Even among the youngest voters—those 18 — 29—59% give very high importance to health topics.

Concerns around healthcare issues are strong across genders, as well as across age groups. Almost 70% of women and 63% of men say that they will give high importance to healthcare topics when deciding which presidential candidate to support.

The healthcare views of the candidates'™ running mates also hold great importance to Americans. Almost 60% say they will strongly consider the healthcare positions of potential vice presidents when deciding how to cast their votes.

In fact, among all the issues voters are considering in choosing the next president, healthcare ranks fourth, after economy/jobs, the war in Iraq and energy/alternative fuels. Voters give healthcare higher importance than terrorism, the financial crisis, social security, immigration, education, the environment and the trade deficit.

“Clearly, the candidates'™ views on healthcare and prescription drug issues will be extremely important in determining who will win in November,” says Jonathan Kay, President, US Portfolio for TNS Healthcare. “Out of 12 major issues, more than 50% of voters put healthcare in the top third, when asked which they will consider in choosing a president—and almost 70% put it in the top half.”

Age and Income Determine Preferences though Many Voters Are Not Satisfied with Either Candidate on Health Issues
Age is a key factor in determining which candidate voters believe best represents them on healthcare issues. The majority of Americans 40 and older believe that John McCain best represents their views on healthcare and prescription drug issues. Conversely, most voters younger than 40 think that Barack Obama best represents their healthcare positions. The split is most noticeable at the two ends of the age spectrum, with about 60% of voters over 75 favoring McCain's™ healthcare views and an almost equal percent of voters 18 — 29 favoring Obama's™.

Income also plays a part in whether voters believe McCain or Obama is the better candidate on healthcare issues. Voters with incomes of less than \$50,000 a year are more likely to believe that Obama best represents their healthcare and prescription drug interests, while those earning more than \$50,000 annually give higher marks to McCain.

“Interestingly, across all income levels, a significant portion of voters don't™ think either major party candidate is a good choice for meeting their healthcare and prescription drug needs,” says Kay. “In fact, more than a third of our highest-income respondents—those making \$75,000 or more a year—don't™ see either McCain or Obama as representing their healthcare views. Clearly, both the Republicans and the Democrats need to do a better job communicating their healthcare positions and convincing Americans they can effectively address the country's™ healthcare challenges.”

Candidates'™ Healthcare Messages Are Not Getting through to Most Americans

Most voters—70%—do not recall seeing or hearing political campaign ads on healthcare-related topics. Of those who do recall healthcare-focused ads, two-thirds saw them on network TV. The vast majority—91%—remember seeing healthcare ads featuring Obama. Two-thirds recall ads with McCain sharing his healthcare views.

The healthcare messages that are resonating with voters vary by age group. Americans who are 18 — 29 or 50 — 64 consider “making health insurance coverage universal” the most important healthcare message. Voters who are 40 — 49 are more likely to consider “All Americans will ultimately have access to meaningful and affordable coverage” most important. Almost 40% of those 65 or older say that “making prescription drugs more affordable for more people” is the most important issue they are seeing addressed in political ads.

Voters with chronic health conditions indicate a different set of priorities, with almost two-thirds choosing “those who need it will receive income-related subsidies to keep health premiums affordable” as the most important issue. That was followed closely in importance by “providing insurance for catastrophic coverage.” More than 60% of those with chronic medical problems also give high importance to messages around improving disease prevention and management of chronic conditions, receiving tax credits toward healthcare coverage and addressing rising drug costs.

“TNS Media Intelligence cmag data tells us that in June alone, political and advocacy groups ran healthcare-focused messages 23,000 times in 161 markets across 47 states at a cost of \$16.6 million” yet few healthcare ads appear to be sticking in consumers’ minds,” according to Kay. “Though which specific healthcare messages are most important to voters vary by age group, overall, themes of coverage and affordability are of universal interest.”

Voters Share Their Healthcare Views

TNS Healthcare’s findings are based on an Internet survey with 300 Americans, 18 and older, conducted between July 24 and July 29, 2008. More than 90% of participants are planning to vote in the November presidential election. All respondents are members of TNS’s Chronic Ailment Panel, which includes information on more than 100,000 US consumers across more than 100 medical conditions.