Majorities Support Health Care Reforms

Contributed by Harris Interactive
Wednesday, 11 March 2009
Last Updated Wednesday, 11 March 2009

Negotiating for lower drug prices most favored idea

Most U.S. adults are aware that President Obama proposes to reform the health care system â€“ 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 Obamaâ€™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 Obamaâ€™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 Presidentâ€™s reform plan, majorities find them all â€œgoo ideasâ€• and only one-fifth or less say they are â€œbad ideas.â€• 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 itâ€™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

â€œThis 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.â€•

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 Presidentâ€™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
â€œOne thing is certain, these attitudes will surely change as reform proposals are presented, debated, supported and attacked.â€•

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 â€œmargin of errorâ€• 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 Councilon Public Polls.

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Rochester, N.Y. â€“ FebruaryÂ 2009