

Healthcare Still Tops The List Of Most Important Issues

Contributed by Harris Interactive
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However, in total, many more people mention either "the economy" or "jobs/employment" than mention healthcare.

When asked to say, without being prompted or shown a list, what "are the two most important issues for government to address," more people (45%) mention healthcare than any other issue.

However, many more people, in total, mention either the economy (32%) or employment or jobs (31%). No other issue comes close.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,576 adults surveyed online between January 18 and 25, 2010 by Harris Interactive.

The only other issues to be mentioned as most important by more than five percentage points are government spending or the budget (7%), and terrorism (6%). Five percent each mention immigration and education.

Leaders' ratings

This Harris Poll also measures the ratings of political leaders and parties in Washington just before the State of the Union speech.

None of these changed significantly from December.

A few points to note include:

- The public remains overwhelmingly critical of Congress (84% negative).
- Many more people give negative than positive ratings to both the Democrats in Congress (by 54% to 17%) and the Republicans in Congress (by 50% to 16%). Until a few months ago more people were critical of the Republicans than the Democrats.
- Majorities are not familiar with either Defense Secretary Robert Gates (53%) or Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner (57%) and substantial numbers are not familiar with Vice-President Joe Biden (33%), and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (32%). And, in spite of her many years of high profile visibility, a remarkable 18% are not familiar with Hillary Clinton.

So what?

1. While there is evidence in other polls of "health reform fatigue," almost half of all adults still think health care is a major priority that the government should address.
2. The large number of people who are not familiar with powerful and important leaders in Washington is consistent with a recent Pew survey which measured the political knowledge of the public and suggested that large numbers of people are politically illiterate.

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States January 18 to 25, 2010 among 2,576 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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