



CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
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THE STATE OF HEALTH CARE REFORM
JUST BEFORE THE CONGRESSIONAL RECESS
July 24-28, 2009

Passage of any health care reform legislation appears unlikely before Congress breaks for its summer recess, but a majority of Americans thinks reform is likely by year's end.

President Obama gets much more credit for reaching across the aisle, as well as for having better ideas for reform, than Republicans do.

Americans continue to view the health care system as needing widespread change, and most still support a government health care option. But the poll suggests uncertainty; the public has concerns both about what will happen if the government does create a system of providing care, and also about what will happen if it does not.

THE IMPACT OF REFORM

Most Americans - 59% - see health care reform as likely in 2009, although just 16% call it "very" likely. Four in 10 think it is not likely this year.

WILL HEALTH CARE REFORM HAPPEN IN 2009?

Table with 2 columns: Likelihood and Percentage. Rows: Very likely (16%), Somewhat likely (43%), Not likely (40%).

But with no single piece of health care reform legislation at the moment, many Americans don't see how they would personally benefit from the proposals currently under discussion in Congress.

WOULD THE CURRENT CONGRESSIONAL REFORM PROPOSALS HELP YOU?

Table with 2 columns: Response and Percentage. Rows: Yes (31%), No (59%).

As Americans look to the future, worries about health care abound - whether the government acts on reform, or not.

Echoing the President's call for action, Americans widely worry that health care will worsen if the government doesn't act.

Three-quarters (75%) of Americans are concerned that their own insurance costs will eventually rise if the government fails to create a system covering everyone. Also, 66% fear they could someday be uninsured themselves without reform. 80% of Americans also fret that the number of uninsured will rise if reform fails.

IF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT ACT TO COVER ALL AMERICANS...

	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not Concerned
Ranks of uninsured will rise	43%	37	18
Your own costs will rise	41%	34	23
You will someday be w/out coverage	37%	29	33

On the other hand, the thought of government action brings worries, too. The public is especially concerned that a government plan for full coverage would lead to job cuts (81%), and to a lesser extent that their own quality (69%) and access to care (73%) would go down. Fewer Americans, but still a majority, are concerned that they'd need to change doctors (62%). Three in four are concerned their taxes will rise.

IF GOVERNMENT DOES ACT TO COVER ALL AMERICANS...

	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not Concerned
Businesses will cut jobs	56%	25	18
Your taxes will go up	45%	31	24
Access to care will diminish	43%	30	27
Your own costs will rise	42%	35	22
Quality of care will diminish	41%	28	29
You will have to change doctors	37%	25	38

59% also expect to see added costs for most Americans as a result of the legislation current under discussion in Congress, while just 15% think the legislation would decrease most Americans' health care costs.

IMPACT OF CURRENT HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION ON AMERICANS' PERSONAL COSTS

Increase	59%
Decrease	15
No effect	16
Don't know	10

CONGRESS AND THE POLITICS OF REFORM

There are mixed assessments of the pace of the current debate. 46% call the President's pacing about right, though 38% call it too quick. Congress, by contrast, is seen by 39% as moving too slowly, with fewer, 33%, saying it is moving at the right pace.

PACE OF HEALTH CARE REFORM

	Obama is moving...	Congress is moving...
Too quickly	38%	23%
About right pace	46	33
Too slowly	13	39

Democrats have enough votes to pass a bill without Republican support, but the public overwhelmingly (73%) wants a bipartisan bill.

A HEALTH CARE REFORM BILL SHOULD...

Be the way the Democrats want it	17%
Have Republican support	73

But at this point, Americans see only President Obama - not Congressional Republicans -- reaching across the aisle. 59% think the White House is trying to work with Republicans on the issue, but only 33% say Republicans are working with the President.

WHO IS TRYING FOR BIPARTISANSHIP ON HEALTH CARE?

	Yes	No
Obama is trying	59%	30
Republicans are trying	33%	51

And by a two to one margin, Americans feel President Obama has better ideas for reforming health care than Congressional Republicans. Views on this are partisan, but independents side with the President.

WHO HAS BETTER IDEAS FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM?

	All	Dems	Reps	Inds
President Obama	55%	81%	27%	48%
Republicans	26	10	52	26

But Mr. Obama's approval rating on handling the overall issue remains under 50%. Many still don't have a view yet.

OBAMA APPROVAL RATING ON HEALTH CARE

	Now	7/13/2009	6/2009
Approve	46%	49%	44%
Disapprove	38	37	34
Don't know	16	14	22

Mr. Obama gains positive assessments from most members of his own party on handling health care - though many remain undecided - while independents are divided. Republicans disapprove.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S HANDLING OF HEALTH CARE

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Approve	46%	22%	65%	43%
Disapprove	38	67	18	41
Don't know	16	11	17	17

President Obama's overall approval rating, 58%, is unchanged since earlier this month.

Neither Congressional party receives majority favorable marks overall. Democrats have seen a slight dip in positive assessments since the spring to below the 50% mark. Views of Republicans in Congress remain more negative than positive, by more than two to one.

VIEWS OF THE PARTIES IN CONGRESS...

	Now	3/2009
Democrats		
Favorable	47%	50%
Unfavorable	42	40
Republicans		
Favorable	28%	29%
Unfavorable	61	61

HEALTH CARE POLICY PREFERENCES

A majority of Americans continues to support a government health plan option. Two-thirds favor the government offering everyone a health insurance plan like Medicare to compete with private health insurers, unchanged since earlier this month but down slightly since June.

GOVT. HEALTH PLAN TO COMPETE WITH PRIVATE INSURERS

	Now	7/13/2009	6/2009
Favor	66%	64%	72%
Oppose	27	29	20

Fewer Americans now -- but still a majority -- think the government should guarantee health coverage for all Americans. A growing percentage - 38% - thinks this is not the government's responsibility. Support for a health coverage guarantee dropped in the last month, after hovering at just over 60% for nearly ten years.

SHOULD GOVT. GUARANTEE HEALTH INSURANCE FOR ALL AMERICANS?

	Now	6/2009	2/2007	1/2006	7/2000	8/1996
Yes	55%	64%	64%	62%	62%	56%
No	38	30	27	31	29	38

Many of those who support such a guarantee would do so even if it meant that the cost of their own health insurance would rise.

Republicans and Democrats do not agree on a government guarantee of health coverage: 31% of Republicans support it, compared to 76% of Democrats.

Just over half the public thinks the government should require all Americans to be insured, up slightly from 48% in June.

SHOULD GOVT. REQUIRE EVERYONE TO HAVE INSURANCE?

	Now	6/2009
Yes	53%	48%
No	43	38
Don't know	4	14

Again, partisanship affects views; just 38% of Republicans favor this requirement, while 71% of Democrats do.

Three in four Americans think that insurers should cover anyone who applies, regardless of any pre-existing medical condition.

REQUIRE HEALTH INSURERS TO COVER ANYONE

Approve	76%
Disapprove	19

FINANCING HEALTH CARE REFORM

Part of the debate over health care reform has been how to pay for it. While President Obama has said that changes made to the U.S. health care system must not be financed by an increase in the federal budget deficit, Americans are divided as to whether this is possible. 46% think it is possible to provide health care coverage for more Americans without increasing the deficit, while about as many, 48%, think that is not possible.

POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE WITHOUT INCREASING DEFICIT?

Yes	46%
No	48

The public is also uncertain as to whether any savings in health care costs resulting from reform would make up for the costs involved in changing the system. 37% think savings would cover costs, but 43% think the costs would outweigh any savings.

WOULD SAVINGS COVER COSTS FOR REFORM?

Yes	37%
No	43
No savings	4
Don't know	16

57% of Republicans think the savings would not cover the costs, while 52% of Democrats think the savings would do so.

As they did in June, Americans continue to disapprove of taxing the health insurance benefits provided by employers. 36% are unsure, up from 31% in June.

TAXING EMPLOYER-PROVIDED HEALTH BENEFITS

	Now	6/2009
Approve	16%	20%
Disapprove	47	46
Unsure	36	31

Nearly two thirds would support financing health care reform by raising taxes on high-income Americans. Even 59% of those with incomes of \$100,000 or more support this.

HEALTH CARE: DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Americans continue to think the health care system needs an overhaul; eight in ten say major reform - at a minimum - is in order. 49% think the system needs fundamental changes, and another 33% think there are so many things wrong with the U.S. healthcare system that it needs to be completely rebuilt. Just 16% say only minor changes are necessary. These percentages have been stable for many years.

U.S. HEALTH CARE SYSTEM NEEDS:

	Now	7/2007	7/2003	7/1998	1/1994
Minor changes	16%	11%	13%	13%	9%
Fundamental changes	49	50	56	55	52
To be rebuilt	33	38	30	30	38

More Democrats than Republicans think the system needs to be completely rebuilt, but only 28% of Republicans see the health care system as needing just minor changes.

When asked specifically whether keeping costs down or covering the uninsured is the higher health care priority, more Americans choose covering those without insurance. However, the percentage interested in keeping costs down has risen since June, and has now returned to levels seen in April.

WHICH IS MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM?

	Now	6/2009	4/2009	2/2007
Keeping health care costs down	43%	26%	40%	31%
Providing coverage for uninsured	53	65	54	65

Again, there are large partisan differences. 70% of Republicans think costs are more serious, while 71% of Democrats choose covering the uninsured.

As the health care debate continues, more Americans have paid attention to the issue. In this poll, 32% say they have heard or read a lot about it, up from 22% in June.

THE CURRENT HEALTH CARE SYSTEM AND THE ECONOMY

The President has said that in order for the economy to improve, the health care system must be fixed. But just half of Americans agree, about the same as earlier this month. 52% think the country must fix health care as part of fixing the overall economy, while 44% say that because the economy is in bad shape, the country cannot afford to fix health care now.

BECAUSE OF THE BAD ECONOMY, THE U.S.

	Now	7/13/2009
Must fix health care	52%	49%
Cannot afford to fix health care	44	46

Three in four Americans view the rising cost of health care as a serious threat to the economy. While that's a drop since June, when 86% felt that way, views of the economy have also improved since last month.

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1,050 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone July 24-28, 2009. Phone numbers were dialed from random digit dial samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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q1-9 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q10 In general, is your opinion of the Democrats in Congress favorable or not favorable?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Mar09a
	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	47	14	75	40	50
Not favorable	42	81	15	45	40
DK/NA	11	5	10	15	10

q11 In general, is your opinion of the Republicans in Congress favorable or not favorable?

Favorable	28	52	15	26	29
Not favorable	61	41	77	58	61
DK/NA	11	7	8	16	10

q12-q35 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q36 How much have you heard or read about current proposals in Washington to reform health care -- a lot, some, not much, or nothing at all?

					Jun09a
A lot	32	37	27	34	22
Some	37	37	38	36	50
Not much	23	20	30	19	23
Nothing at all	8	5	5	11	5
DK/NA	0	1	0	0	--

q37 Which of the following three statements comes closest to expressing your overall view of the health care system in the United States? 1. On the whole, the healthcare system works pretty well and only minor changes are necessary to make it work better, 2. There are some good things in our health care system, but fundamental changes are needed, 3. Our healthcare system has so much wrong with it that we need to completely rebuild it.

Minor changes	16	28	6	17	13
Fundamental changes	49	55	51	45	51
Rebuild	33	15	42	34	34
DK/NA	2	2	1	4	2

q38 Regardless of how you usually vote, who do you think has better ideas about reforming the health care system -- Barack Obama, or the Republicans in Congress?

Barack Obama	55	27	81	48
Republicans	26	52	10	26
Both (vol.)	1	2	2	1
Neither (vol.)	7	9	2	9
DK/NA	11	10	5	16

q39 Which comes closest to your view? 1. The U.S. needs to fix its health care system now as part of fixing the overall economy. OR 2. Because of the state of the economy, the U.S. cannot afford to fix its health care system right now.

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jul09a
	%	%	%	%	%
Need to fix now	52	39	64	48	49
Can't afford to fix now	44	55	35	46	46
DK/NA	4	6	1	6	5

q40 Do you think it's possible or not possible to provide health care coverage for most Americans without increasing the budget deficit?

Yes	46	34	51	48
No	48	63	43	45
DK/NA	6	3	6	7

q41 Do you think Barack Obama is trying to work with Republicans in Congress in order to reform the health care system, or isn't he?

Work with Republicans	59	45	72	56
Not work with Republicans	30	45	16	35
DK/NA	11	10	12	9

q42 Do you think Republicans in Congress are trying to work with Barack Obama in order to reform the health care system, or aren't they?

Work with Obama	33	46	20	37
Not work with Obama	51	37	63	47
DK/NA	16	17	17	16

q43 BLANK

q44 In addressing health care reform, do you think Congress is moving too quickly, too slowly, or at about the right pace?

Too quickly	23	39	11	26
Too slowly	39	23	48	39
Right pace	33	33	37	29
DK/NA	5	5	4	6

q45 In addressing health care reform, do you think the Obama administration is moving too quickly, too slowly, or at about the right pace?

Too quickly	38	58	22	41
Too slowly	13	9	12	15
Right pace	46	30	64	39
DK/NA	3	3	2	5

q46 How likely do you think it is that Congress will pass and President Obama will sign into law a health care reform bill by the end of the year -- very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Very likely	16	16	17	16
Somewhat likely	43	36	50	41
Not very likely	30	29	26	32
Not at all likely	10	17	6	10
Don't know/No answer	1	2	1	1

q47 From what you know, how serious a threat is the rising cost of health care to the nation's economy? Is it very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not at all serious or don't you know enough to say?

					Jun09a
					%
Very serious	49	40	55	49	61
Somewhat serious	27	32	25	27	25
Not too serious	6	10	3	7	3
Not at all serious	2	4	1	2	2
Don't know enough	15	13	16	15	8
DK/NA	1	1	0	0	1

q48 As long as the federal government provides financial help to those who cannot afford health insurance, do you think the federal government should or should not require all Americans to have health insurance?

Should	53	38	71	46	48
Should not	43	55	27	49	38
DK/NA	4	7	2	5	14

q49 Would you favor or oppose the government offering everyone a government administered health insurance plan -- something like the Medicare coverage that people 65 and older get -- that would compete with private health insurance plans?

					Jul09a
Favor	66	49	85	60	64
Oppose	27	41	9	34	29
DK/NA	7	10	6	6	7

q50 If you had to say, which do you think is a more serious problem right now -- keeping health care costs down for average Americans, OR providing health insurance for Americans who do not have any insurance?

					Jun09a
Keeping costs down	43	70	26	43	26
Providing for the uninsured	53	26	71	51	65
DK/NA	4	4	3	6	9

q51-52 BLANK

q53 Do you think the federal government should guarantee health insurance for all Americans, or isn't this the responsibility of the federal government?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jun09a
	%	%	%	%	%
Should guarantee	55	31	76	49	64
Not responsibility	38	59	19	43	30
DK/NA	7	10	5	8	6

q54 What if that meant that the cost of your own health insurance would go up? Then, do you think the federal government should guarantee health insurance for all Americans, or not?

Should guarantee	43	15	62	40	47
Not	48	74	30	50	40
DK/NA	9	11	8	10	13

q55 In order to help pay for health care reform, would you favor or oppose increasing taxes on Americans with high incomes?

Favor	65	43	80	64
Oppose	32	51	19	33
DK/NA	3	6	1	3

q56 How concerned are you that if the government CREATES a system of providing health care for all Americans, the quality of your own health care will get worse -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

Very concerned	41	57	33	41	28
Somewhat concerned	28	25	29	30	35
Not too concerned	18	11	23	17	21
Not at all concerned	11	6	16	10	15
DK/NA	2	1	0	2	1

q57 How concerned are you that if the government CREATES a system of providing health care for all Americans, your own access to medical tests and treatment would be more limited than it is now -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?

Very concerned	43	58	33	44	34
Somewhat concerned	30	22	37	28	34
Not too concerned	17	13	19	17	19
Not at all concerned	10	6	10	11	13
DK/NA	0	1	1	0	--

q58 How concerned are you that if the government CREATES a system of providing health care for all Americans, you would be required to change doctors -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **					
*** Party ID ***					
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jun09a
	%	%	%	%	%
Very concerned	37	52	34	33	33
Somewhat concerned	25	17	21	30	20
Not too concerned	21	19	27	17	27
Not at all concerned	17	10	18	19	19
DK/NA	0	2	0	1	1

q59 How concerned are you that if the government CREATES a system of providing health care for all Americans, the cost of your own health care would go up -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?

Very concerned	42	58	38	38
Somewhat concerned	35	29	32	40
Not too concerned	14	7	21	11
Not at all concerned	8	5	9	9
DK/NA	1	1	0	2

q60 How concerned are you that if the government CREATES a system of providing health care for all Americans, your taxes would go up -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?

Very concerned	45	63	36	43
Somewhat concerned	31	28	36	29
Not too concerned	18	7	18	22
Not at all concerned	6	0	9	6
DK/NA	0	2	1	0

q61 How concerned are you that if the government CREATES a system of providing health care for all Americans, many businesses would have to cut jobs because they wouldn't be able to afford to provide insurance to all of their employees -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?

Very concerned	56	68	48	56
Somewhat concerned	25	23	23	27
Not too concerned	11	6	16	10
Not at all concerned	7	1	10	7
DK/NA	1	2	3	0

q62 How concerned are you that if the government does NOT create a system of providing health care for all Americans, that the number of uninsured people in the U.S. will continue to increase -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

Very concerned	43	32	55	40
Somewhat concerned	37	42	31	40
Not too concerned	11	15	8	11
Not at all concerned	7	10	6	7
DK/NA	2	1	0	2

q63 How concerned are you that if the government does NOT create a system of providing health care for all Americans, that you might be without health coverage at some point -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Very concerned	37	29	46	35
Somewhat concerned	29	22	28	34
Not too concerned	18	27	15	16
Not at all concerned	15	21	10	15
DK/NA	1	1	1	0

q64 How concerned are you that if the government does NOT create a system of providing health care for all Americans, that the cost of your own health care will eventually go up -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

Very concerned	41	38	50	36
Somewhat concerned	34	35	32	36
Not too concerned	15	15	10	19
Not at all concerned	8	11	7	8
DK/NA	2	1	1	1

q65-67 BLANK

q68 Currently, workers do not pay taxes on health insurance benefits they receive from their employers. Lawmakers have proposed taxing some employees on some of the money that their employers pay toward their health insurance. The tax money would then be used to help provide health insurance to people who do not have it. In general, would you approve or disapprove of taxing employer paid health insurance benefits, or are you unsure?

					Jun09a
					%
Approve	16	11	21	15	20
Disapprove	47	59	32	52	46
Unsure	36	29	46	32	31
DK/NA	1	1	1	1	3

q69 Some lawmakers have proposed requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies for health insurance regardless of whether or not they have an existing medical condition or a prior illness. Do you approve or disapprove of requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies?

Approve	76	62	90	71	75
Disapprove	19	30	7	22	17
DK/NA	5	8	3	7	8

q70 What if that meant that the cost of your health insurance would go up, then would you approve or disapprove of requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies?

Approve	52	39	65	49	56
Disapprove	38	52	26	39	32
DK/NA	10	9	9	12	12

q71 In the long run, do you think the money spent to reform the health care system will be made up for by the amount of money that is eventually saved or don't you think the money spent to reform health care will be made up for by the amount of money that is eventually saved?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Savings will make up for costs	37	26	52	31
Savings will not make up	43	57	29	48
Won't create savings (vol.)	4	4	5	4
DK/NA	16	13	14	17

q72 From what you've heard or read, do you think the health care legislation under consideration in Congress will or will not benefit you personally?

Will	31	20	41	29
Will not	59	73	48	61
DK/NA	10	7	11	10

q73-77 BLANK

q78 Looking ahead, which comes closer to your view? 1. The Democrats won a majority in Congress and should try to pass a health care reform bill that they think is right for the country, even if many Republicans don't support it. OR 2. The Democrats should try to pass a health care reform bill that receives support from Republicans in Congress, even if it means compromising on some provisions of the bill.

Pass own legislation	17	7	22	17
Pass legislation with Rep.	73	82	72	69
Should not pass legislation	3	5	1	4
DK/NA	7	6	5	10

q79 From what you've heard or read, do you think the health care legislation under consideration in Congress will increase health care costs for most Americans, decrease health care costs for most Americans, or will it have no effect on health care costs for most Americans?

Increase	59	71	55	57
Decrease	15	10	19	15
No effect	16	10	18	17
DK/NA	10	9	8	11

q80-82 BLANK

q83-q84 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

q85 How would you describe the affordability of basic medical care for you and your family under your current health insurance plan -- would you say basic medical care is affordable or is it a hardship?

	** THOSE WITH HEALTH INSURANCE **				Jun09a
					%
Affordable	75	77	74	76	77
Hardship	23	22	25	22	22
DK/NA	2	1	1	2	1

q86-89 RELEASED SEPARATELY
q90-q91 HELD FOR RELEASE
q92-94 BLANK
q95-96 RELEASED SEPARATELY

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1050	
Total Republicans	248	208 (20%)
Total Democrats	335	355 (34%)
Total Independents	467	487 (46%)