

THE PUBLIC AND HIGH U.S. HEALTH CARE COSTS

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SUMMARY

A few months before the political parties begin their primary debates, a new poll by POLITICO and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health finds that a majority of American adults believe that health care costs are a serious problem in the U.S. Most blame the nation's high health care costs on high prices charged by drug companies, insurance companies, hospitals, and health professionals, and actions taken by the federal government that raise health care prices, while relatively few point to overuse of health care.

When asked about ways to reduce high health care costs, six in ten Americans favor a number of different approaches. These include: making greater efforts to prevent diseases and having people live healthier lives; making it easier for health care professionals and hospitals to compete based on price and quality; government price controls; and Medicare buy-in programs for those age 50 to 64. However, of significance, less than half of adults believe these efforts will substantially reduce the nation's health care costs.

In general, Americans do not see the behavior of patients as among the main reasons for high health care costs, so relatively few support proposals that would focus on changing patients' behaviors by making health care more costly for them or harder for them to obtain, such as high-deductible health plans or coverage limits determined by cost-effectiveness criteria. Even fewer adults believe these measures would substantially reduce health care costs.

Although there has been increasing discussion about patients shopping around for less expensive health care, when asked about actions to reduce their personal health care costs, most Americans have done little shopping around. Just under half of the public says they have switched from a brand name to a generic prescription drug in the past year to save money. But less than a quarter of Americans say they have price-shopped or negotiated prices with hospitals or health professionals in the last year. Of note, more than one-fourth of Americans say that in the past year they have not sought care for a particular illness or not gotten a prescription drug because of the high cost.

PART I: REASONS FOR THE NATION’S HIGH HEALTH CARE COSTS

The poll shows that more than half of American adults (54%) believe that health care costs are a very serious problem in the U.S. Concern is particularly acute among Democrats, nearly two-thirds (65%) of whom characterize high health care costs as very serious. Meanwhile, less than half of Republicans (45%) agree.

Respondents were given a list of 17 possible causes for high health care costs in the U.S., identified by the media and policy experts. Because the cost of health care has many contributing factors, people were asked whether or not each item was a “major reason” for high health care costs in the nation.

Table 1 shows that the top five “major reasons” for high health care costs in the U.S., according to the public, all center on high prices charged by health care professionals, institutions, and private companies. These include: high prices charged by drug companies (79%), insurance companies (75%), hospitals (74%), and doctors and other health professionals (66%), and actions taken by the federal government that raise health care prices (64%). There are differences between Democrats and Republicans on the extent of blame for each of these groups, but a majority of both parties see them as major reasons for the nation’s high health care costs.

Table 1. The Public’s Views about the Reasons for High Health Care Costs in the Nation, by party identification

% saying each of the following is a “major reason”

	Total	Dems	Reps	Inds
High prices charged by drug companies	79	87	78	75
High prices charged by insurance companies	75	83	66	76
High prices charged by hospitals	74	73	70	77
High prices charged by doctors and other health professionals	66	72	64	64
Actions taken by the federal government that raise health care prices	64	71	64	61
People not taking good enough care of their own health	58	56	65	57
Waste in the health care system	56	56	65	53
Fraud in the health care system	55	51	56	58
Administrative costs in handling insurance claims	52	55	46	54
The American population is aging and needs more medical care	51	55	47	51
Unnecessary use of expensive new drugs, treatments, and medical technology	49	48	44	52
Too many malpractice lawsuits	46	38	51	52
People are receiving more advanced medical treatments and prescription drugs	45	51	37	45
Doctors recommending health care that patients often do not need	43	42	45	42
The American population is getting sicker, regardless of age	41	42	34	45
Patients seeking health care that they often do not need	33	29	42	31
Patients not taking responsibility to find the lowest-cost health care	31	26	29	38

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The Public and High U.S. Health Care Costs, February 26 – March 3, 2019. Base: U.S. adults.

Although a majority of Americans blame waste (56%) and fraud (55%) for the nation’s high health care costs, these are not seen as top reasons. Most recognize that people not taking good enough care of their own health is an important reason (58%), but this is also not seen as the dominant one.

Likewise, the majority of Americans do not see overuse of health care by patients as the dominant reason for high health care costs in the nation. Less than half see unnecessary use of expensive new drugs, treatments, and medical technologies (49%), doctors recommending health care that patients do not need (43%), or patients seeking health care that they do not need (33%) as major reasons.

Additionally, as seen in Table 2, when asked to think of the causes of high health care costs, 60% of Americans say it is more because prices are too high for health care services and drugs, while 23% say it is because Americans are getting more health care and prescription drugs than they need. Just over one in ten say both are to blame (11%).

Table 2. The Public’s Views on Whether High Prices or Overuse Is the More Important Cause of High Health Care Costs, by party identification (in percent)

	Prices too high for health care services and drugs	Americans are getting more health care and Rx drugs than they need	Both (vol)	Neither (vol)	Don’t know/Refused
Total	60	23	11	3	3
Dems	65	20	8	2	5
Reps	55	28	11	4	2
Inds	62	21	11	4	2

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The Public and High U.S. Health Care Costs, February 26 – March 3, 2019. Base: U.S. adults.

Taken together, the public mostly blames the nation’s high health care costs on institutions, health care professionals, and government, less so on the overuse of care by patients.

PART II: REDUCING THE NATION’S HIGH HEALTH CARE COSTS

How would Americans solve the nation’s health care cost problem? The poll asked Americans for their views on seven proposed ways, identified by the media and policy experts, to reduce the nation’s health care costs. As Table 3 shows, more than six in ten Americans favor four approaches: making greater efforts to prevent future diseases and to have people live healthier lives (84%), having the government make it easier for health care professionals and for hospitals to compete with each other based on price and quality (67%), having the government establish limits on what health care professionals and hospitals can charge (65%), and allowing people age 50 to 64 to buy into Medicare (61%).

Table 3. The Public’s Views About Proposed Ways to Reduce the Nation’s Health Care Costs, by party identification

% favoring each proposal

	Total	Dems	Reps	Inds
Make greater efforts to prevent future diseases and to have people live healthier lives	84	85	81	86
Have the government making it easier for health care professionals and for hospitals to compete with each other based on price and quality	67	66	74	67
Have the government establish limits on what health care professionals and hospitals can charge	65	73	54	68
Allow people age 50 to 64 to buy into Medicare	61	73	49	61
Change our health care system so that most people have Medicare and there is little or no private health insurance	52	70	30	56
Have government and private health insurance plans NOT pay for some high-cost prescription drugs and medical or surgical treatments, which have been shown to be safe and effective, but whose high cost many experts feel is not justified by the amount of benefit they provide	37	38	43	35
Give individuals tax incentives to buy high-deductible health plans. High-deductible plans require consumers to spend several thousand dollars out of pocket before their insurance kicks in to help cover the cost of drugs and services. Some think these plans would encourage consumers to shop for lower-priced health care and use fewer unnecessary tests and treatments	37	40	40	34

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Even though experts see competition and government regulation as fundamentally different ways of controlling health care costs, Americans are nearly equally supportive of both. The public has not reached any judgment about which approach they favor more.

Two approaches are favored by a majority of Democrats, but not of Republicans: a Medicare buy-in for people age 50 to 64 (favored by 73% of Democrats, 49% of Republicans) and Medicare-for-all (favored by 70% of Democrats, 30% of Republicans).

The public does not favor two proposals that would make it harder to get care doctors say they need: having government and private health insurance plans not pay for some services if their costs could not be justified by their clinical benefit and giving individuals tax incentives to buy high-deductible plans. Each of these proposals was favored by only 37% of the public. Of note, opposition does not change, regardless of whether limiting care depends on a panel of experts or on market-based decisions.

The poll included an unusual follow-up, which reveals an important aspect of the public’s views about ways of reducing the nation’s health care costs. After asking whether they favored or opposed each policy, Americans were asked whether or not they thought each policy would be effective in reducing health care costs. This is important because even if Americans support the principle, they are not likely to be very active in supporting its enactment if they do not think it would be effective.

Table 4. The Public’s Views About the Effectiveness of Proposed Ways to Reduce the Nation’s Health Care Costs, by party identification

% saying each proposal would reduce the nation’s health care costs “a lot”

	Total	Dems	Reps	Inds
Make greater efforts to prevent future diseases and to have people live healthier lives	41	40	37	43
Change our health care system so that most people have Medicare and there is little or no private health insurance	36	51	20	35
Have the government establish limits on what health care professionals and hospitals can charge	34	42	26	34
Have the government making it easier for health care professionals and for hospitals to compete with each other based on price and quality	32	33	38	31
Allow people age 50 to 64 to buy into Medicare	25	26	18	29
Give individuals tax incentives to buy high-deductible health plans. High-deductible plans require consumers to spend several thousand dollars out of pocket before their insurance kicks in to help cover the cost of drugs and services. Some think these plans would encourage consumers to shop for lower-priced health care and use fewer unnecessary tests and treatments	19	19	24	17
Have government and private health insurance plans NOT pay for some high-cost prescription drugs and medical or surgical treatments, which have been shown to be safe and effective, but whose high cost many experts feel is not justified by the amount of benefit they provide	18	23	19	16

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As shown in Table 4, the public does not think any of the seven proposals would reduce the nation’s health care costs “a lot.” Because of this lack of belief that policy changes would be very effective in reducing health care costs, there is likely to be less active support for specific policies for changing the health care system to try to address this problem.

Of note, given the attention being paid in the upcoming political season to a Medicare-for-all proposal, most Americans do not believe that such a change would reduce the nation’s health care costs a lot. Among Democrats, a slim majority (51%) believes that changing the health care system so that people have Medicare and there is little or no private health insurance would reduce the nation’s health care costs a lot; however, Republicans (20%) had little faith that these proposals would substantially lower costs.

Although there has been considerable focus among experts on the possibility that Medicare Part A will run out of money in the next ten years, less than half (46%) believe this will happen, and only 25% of the adult population are very concerned about it (Table 5). This suggests that, at least for now, most Americans are unlikely to prioritize solving Medicare Part A’s long-term financial problems.

Table 5. The Public’s Views About Whether Medicare Part A Will Run Out of Money in the Next 10 years, and How Concerned They Are About It, by party identification (in percent)

	Total	Dems	Reps	Inds
Medicare will run out of money in next 10 years	46	50	44	47
Very concerned	25	30	20	26
Somewhat concerned	13	13	13	14
Not too concerned	6	4	9	5
Not at all concerned	2	3	2	2
Medicare will not run out of money in next 10 years	46	42	52	44
Don’t know/Refused	8	8	4	9

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The Public and High U.S. Health Care Costs, February 26 – March 3, 2019. Base: U.S. adults.

The poll shows there is not a consensus about who would do a better job reducing the nation’s health care costs. As shown in Table 6, 47% believe government would do a better job, 38% that private health insurance plans would. Nearly two-thirds of Democrats (65%) believe government would do a better job, while 61% of Republicans think private health insurance plans would.

When those who thought that government establishing limits on what health care professionals and hospitals can charge would reduce the nation’s health care costs at least a little were asked which level of government would do a better job of establishing these limits, the poll found a similar lack of consensus: 51% said the federal government, while 45% said state governments. Once again, as shown in Table 7, the partisan split is evident. More than two-thirds (69%) of Democrats said the federal government would do a better job, while a similar proportion (63%) of Republicans said state governments would.

Table 6. The Public’s Views About Whether Government or Private Health Insurance Plans Would Do a Better Job at Reducing the Nation’s Health Care Costs, by party identification (in percent)

	Government	Private health insurance plans	Both equally (vol)	Neither (vol)	Don’t know/ Refused
Total	47	38	6	5	4
Dems	65	25	6	*	4
Reps	25	61	6	7	1
Inds	51	31	6	5	7

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The Public and High U.S. Health Care Costs, February 26 – March 3, 2019. Base: U.S. adults.

Table 7. The Public’s Views About Whether the Federal Government or State Governments Would Do a Better Job at Establishing Limits on What Health Professionals and Hospitals Can Charge, by party identification (in percent)

	Federal Government	State Governments	Don’t know/ Refused
Total	51	45	4
Dems	69	31	-
Reps	32	63	5
Inds	44	48	8

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The Public and High U.S. Health Care Costs, February 26 – March 3, 2019. Base: U.S. adults who thought establishing limits on what health professionals and hospitals can charge would reduce the nation’s health care costs a lot or a little.

This suggests that which political party is dominant in the future will lead to very different approaches to cost containment. If Democrats are in control, we are likely to see more intervention by government; with Republicans in control, more emphasis on private insurance company competition. When it comes to government’s role in regulation, Democrats would likely rely more on the federal government, Republicans more on state governments.

Although there has been increasing discussion about patients shopping around for less expensive health care, when asked about actions to reduce their personal health care costs, most Americans have done little shopping around. Table 8 shows that about half (49%) of the public say they have switched from a brand name to a generic prescription drug in the past year to save money. But less than a quarter of Americans say they have price-shopped or negotiated prices with hospitals or health professionals in the last year. These behaviors varied little by party.

Table 8. The Public's Actions to Lower Their Own Health Care Costs

% saying they have done each of the following in the past 12 months

	Total
Switched from a brand name to a generic prescription drug to save money	49
Gone on the Internet to try to find a lower price for prescription drugs	23
Gone on the Internet to try to find a lower price for health care services	23
Negotiated with a hospital or other facility to try to get a lower price for health care services	19
Switched doctors to lower the amount you pay directly out of your own pocket	17
Negotiated with a physician or other health care professional to try to get a lower price for health care services	17

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The Public and High U.S. Health Care Costs, February 26 – March 3, 2019. Base: U.S. adults.

Of note, more than one-fourth of Americans (28%) say that in the past year they have not sought care for a particular illness or not gotten a prescription drug because of the high cost.

Table 9. Americans' Reports of Their Not Seeking Health Care or Not Getting a Prescription Drug Because of the High Cost, by political party (in percent)

	Yes, have done this	No, have not done this	Don't know/Refused
Total	28	70	2
Dems	32	68	-
Reps	24	73	3
Inds	25	73	2

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The Public and High U.S. Health Care Costs, February 26 – March 3, 2019. Base: U.S. adults.

METHODOLOGY

The results are based on polling conducted by *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Representatives of the two organizations worked closely to develop the survey questionnaires and analyze the results of the polls. *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health paid for the surveys and related expenses.

The project team was led by Robert J. Blendon, Sc.D., Richard L. Menschel Professor of Health Policy and Political Analysis at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Joanne Kenen, Executive Editor, Health Care at *Politico/Politico Pro*. Harvard research team also included John M. Benson, Caitlin L. McMurtry, and Justin M. Sayde.

Interviews were conducted with a nationally representative sample of 1,003 randomly selected adults, ages 18 and older, via telephone (including cell phones and landlines) by SSRS of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. The interviewing period was February 26 – March 3, 2019. The data were weighted to reflect the demographics of the national adult population as described by the U.S. Census.

When interpreting these findings, one should recognize that all surveys are subject to sampling error. Results may differ from what would be obtained if the whole U.S. adult population had been interviewed. The margin of error for the full sample is ± 3.6 percentage points. For questions asked of half-samples, the margin of error is ± 5.1 percentage points.

Possible sources of non-sampling error include non-response bias, as well as question wording and ordering effects. Non-response in telephone surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population. To compensate for these known biases and for variations in probability of selection within and across households, sample data are weighted by household size, cell phone/landline use and demographics (sex, age, race/ethnicity, education, and region) to reflect the true population. Other techniques, including random-digit dialing, replicate subsamples, and systematic respondent selection within households, are used to ensure that the sample is representative.



Politico/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Poll

THE PUBLIC AND HIGH U.S. HEALTH CARE COSTS

This survey was conducted for *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health via telephone by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted via telephone (cell phone and landline) **February 26 – March 3, 2019**, among a nationally representative sample of **1,003**

U.S. adults. The margin of error for total respondents is ± 3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For questions asked of half-samples, the margin of error is ± 5.1 percentage points.

More information about SSRS can be obtained by visiting www.ssrs.com.

POLQ1. Do you think health care costs are a problem in the U.S., or not? (IF YES:) Are they a very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not too serious?

	Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not a problem	Don't know/Refused
Total	54	22	6	15	3
Dems	65	16	5	12	2
Reps	45	27	8	19	1
Inds	51	27	5	14	3

POLQ2. For each of the following, please tell me if you think it is a major reason for high health care costs in the nation, a minor reason, or not a reason. How about (INSERT ITEM)?

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

- a. High prices charged by drug companies

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/Refused
Total	79	15	5	1
Dems	87	8	3	2
Reps	78	19	3	-
Inds	75	17	7	1

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

b. High prices charged by hospitals

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/ Refused
Total	74	19	5	2
Dems	73	21	4	2
Reps	70	20	8	2
Inds	77	17	4	2

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

c. Doctors recommending health care that patients often do not need

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/ Refused
Total	43	40	15	2
Dems	42	43	14	1
Reps	45	39	14	2
Inds	42	39	15	4

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

d. Waste in the health care system

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/ Refused
Total	56	28	13	3
Dems	56	30	13	1
Reps	65	22	11	2
Inds	53	32	11	4

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

e. Too many malpractice lawsuits

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/ Refused
Total	46	32	17	5
Dems	38	37	23	2
Reps	51	28	17	4
Inds	52	32	10	6

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

f. Unnecessary use of expensive new drugs, treatments, and medical technology

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/Refused
Total	49	30	18	3
Dems	48	32	19	1
Reps	44	33	20	3
Inds	52	30	15	3

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

g. The American population is getting sicker, regardless of age

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/Refused
Total	41	33	24	2
Dems	42	33	24	1
Reps	34	36	26	4
Inds	45	33	20	2

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

h. Patients not taking responsibility to find the lowest-cost health care

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/Refused
Total	31	39	29	1
Dems	26	43	30	1
Reps	29	42	27	2
Inds	38	34	26	2

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

i. High prices charged by insurance companies

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/Refused
Total	75	16	7	2
Dems	83	11	5	1
Reps	66	24	8	2
Inds	76	16	7	1

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

- j. High prices charged by doctors and other health professionals

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/Refused
Total	66	25	8	1
Dems	72	21	6	1
Reps	64	25	10	1
Inds	64	28	7	1

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

- k. Patients seeking health care that they often do not need

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/Refused
Total	33	45	19	3
Dems	29	48	20	3
Reps	42	38	20	*
Inds	31	51	17	1

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

- l. Fraud in the health care system

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/Refused
Total	55	28	13	4
Dems	51	27	19	3
Reps	56	25	14	5
Inds	58	32	8	2

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

- m. Administrative costs in handling insurance claims

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/Refused
Total	52	33	12	3
Dems	55	29	13	3
Reps	46	38	12	4
Inds	54	34	11	1

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

n. The American population is aging and needs more medical care

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/ Refused
Total	51	30	18	1
Dems	55	22	21	2
Reps	47	34	19	-
Inds	51	36	13	*

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

o. People are receiving more advanced medical treatments and prescription drugs

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/ Refused
Total	45	35	17	3
Dems	51	32	16	1
Reps	37	43	17	3
Inds	45	36	17	2

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

p. Actions taken by the federal government that raise health care prices

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/ Refused
Total	64	20	11	5
Dems	71	15	10	4
Reps	64	19	15	2
Inds	61	23	10	6

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

q. People not taking good enough care of their own health

	A major reason	A minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know/ Refused
Total	58	27	15	*
Dems	56	26	18	-
Reps	65	26	9	-
Inds	57	29	13	1

Summary (% saying each of the following is “a major reason” for high health care costs)

a = asked of half-sample A, n=505; b = asked of half-sample B, n=498

	Total	Dems	Reps	Inds
High prices charged by drug companies ^a	79	87	78	75
High prices charged by insurance companies ^b	75	83	66	76
High prices charged by hospitals ^a	74	73	70	77
High prices charged by doctors and other health professionals ^b	66	72	64	64
Actions taken by the federal government that raise health care prices ^b	64	71	64	61
People not taking good enough care of their own health ^b	58	56	65	57
Waste in the health care system ^a	56	56	65	53
Fraud in the health care system ^b	55	51	56	58
Administrative costs in handling insurance claims ^b	52	55	46	54
The American population is aging and needs more medical care ^b	51	55	47	51
Unnecessary use of expensive new drugs, treatments, and medical technology ^a	49	48	44	52
Too many malpractice lawsuits ^a	46	38	51	52
People are receiving more advanced medical treatments and prescription drugs ^b	45	51	37	45
Doctors recommending health care that patients often do not need ^a	43	42	45	42
The American population is getting sicker, regardless of age ^a	41	42	34	45
Patients seeking health care that they often do not need ^b	33	29	42	31
Patients not taking responsibility to find the lowest-cost health care ^a	31	26	29	38

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

POLQ3. When you think of the causes of high health care costs, do you think it is more because prices are too high for health care services and drugs, or because Americans are getting more health care and prescription drugs than they need?

	Prices too high	More healthcare/ Rx drugs	Both (vol)	Neither (vol)	Don't know/ Refused
Total	60	23	11	3	3
Dems	65	20	8	2	5
Reps	55	28	11	4	2
Inds	62	21	11	4	2

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ4. Which do you think would do a better job at reducing the nation's health care costs - government or private health insurance plans?

	Government	Private health insurance plans	Both equally (vol)	Neither (vol)	Don't know/ Refused
Total	47	38	6	5	4
Dems	65	25	6	*	4
Reps	25	61	6	7	1
Inds	51	31	6	5	7

(Read to half-sample A; n=505)

A number of people have suggested different possible ways to try to reduce the nation's health care costs in the future.

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ5a1. (One/Another) suggestion is to have the government establish limits on what health care professionals and hospitals can charge. Do you favor or oppose this as a way to reduce the nation's health care costs?

	Favor	Oppose	Don't know/ Refused
Total	65	32	3
Dems	73	25	2
Reps	54	45	1
Inds	68	31	1

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ5a2. Do you think this would reduce the nation's health care costs, or not? IF REDUCE: Do you think it would reduce the nation's health care costs a lot or a little?

	Reduce a lot	Reduce a little	Would not reduce	Don't know/ Refused
Total	34	36	25	5
Dems	42	35	20	3
Reps	26	34	36	4
Inds	34	39	22	5

(Asked of half-sample A respondents who believe this would reduce the nation's health care costs a lot or a little; n=344)

POLQ5a3. Which do you think would do a better job of establishing limits on what health professionals and hospitals can charge – the federal government or state governments?

	Federal Government	State Governments	Don't know/ Refused
Total	51	45	4
Dems	69	31	-
Reps	32	63	5
Inds	44	48	8

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ5b1. (One/another) suggestion is to have the government making it easier for health care professionals and for hospitals to compete with each other based on price and quality. Do you favor or oppose this as a way to reduce the nation's health care costs?

	Favor	Oppose	Don't know/ Refused
Total	67	29	4
Dems	66	33	1
Reps	74	25	1
Inds	67	25	8

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ5b2. Do you think this would reduce the nation's health care costs, or not? IF REDUCE: Do you think it would reduce the nation's health care costs a lot or a little?

	Reduce a lot	Reduce a little	Would not reduce	Don't know/ Refused
Total	32	36	27	5
Dems	33	35	30	2
Reps	38	31	24	7
Inds	31	40	24	5

(Read to half-sample A; n=505)

As you may know, people currently become eligible for health insurance through Medicare when they turn 65.

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ6a1. (Another way some people have suggested to try to reduce the nation's health care costs in the future/Another suggestion) is to change our health care system so that most people have Medicare and there is little or no private health insurance. Do you favor or oppose this as a way to reduce the nation's health care costs?

	Favor	Oppose	Don't know/ Refused
Total	52	44	4
Dems	70	30	*
Reps	30	70	*
Inds	56	40	4

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ6a2. Do you think this would reduce the nation's health care costs, or not? IF REDUCE: Do you think it would reduce the nation's health care costs a lot or a little?

	Reduce a lot	Reduce a little	Would not reduce	Don't know/ Refused
Total	36	22	37	5
Dems	51	19	24	6
Reps	20	21	57	2
Inds	35	26	33	6

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ6b1. (Another suggestion/Another way some people have suggested to try to reduce the nation's health care costs in the future) is to allow people age 50 to 64 to buy into Medicare. Do you favor or oppose this as a way to reduce the nation's health care costs?

	Favor	Oppose	Don't know/ Refused
Total	61	34	5
Dems	73	22	5
Reps	49	47	4
Inds	61	33	6

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ6b2. Do you think this would reduce the nation's health care costs, or not? IF REDUCE: Do you think it would reduce the nation's health care costs a lot or a little?

	Reduce a lot	Reduce a little	Would not reduce	Don't know/ Refused
Total	25	34	35	6
Dems	26	44	23	7
Reps	18	24	54	4
Inds	29	35	29	7

(Read to half-sample B; n=498)

A number of people have suggested different possible ways to try to reduce the nation's health care costs in the future.

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

POLQ7a1. (One/another) suggestion is to give individuals tax incentives to buy high-deductible health plans. High-deductible plans require consumers to spend several thousand dollars out of pocket before their insurance kicks in to help cover the cost of drugs and services. Some think these plans would encourage consumers to shop for lower-priced health care and use fewer unnecessary tests and treatments. Do you favor or oppose this as a way to reduce the nation's health care costs?

	Favor	Oppose	Don't know/ Refused
Total	37	59	4
Dems	40	58	2
Reps	40	58	2
Inds	34	60	6

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

POLQ7a2. Do you think this would reduce the nation's health care costs, or not? IF REDUCE: Do you think it would reduce the nation's health care costs a lot or a little?

	Reduce a lot	Reduce a little	Would not reduce	Don't know/ Refused
Total	19	25	52	4
Dems	19	26	51	4
Reps	24	19	56	1
Inds	17	28	50	5

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

POLQ7b1. (One/another) suggestion is to make greater efforts to prevent future diseases and to have people live healthier lives. Do you favor or oppose this as a way to reduce the nation's health care costs?

	Favor	Oppose	Don't know/ Refused
Total	84	15	1
Dems	85	14	1
Reps	81	17	2
Inds	86	12	2

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

POLQ7b2. Do you think this would reduce the nation's health care costs, or not? IF REDUCE: Do you think it would reduce the nation's health care costs a lot or a little?

	Reduce a lot	Reduce a little	Would not reduce	Don't know/ Refused
Total	41	34	24	1
Dems	40	35	25	*
Reps	37	31	31	1
Inds	43	37	18	2

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

POLQ7c1. (One/another) suggestion is to have government and private health insurance plans NOT pay for some high-cost prescription drugs and medical or surgical treatments, which have been shown to be safe and effective, but whose high cost many experts feel is not justified by the amount of benefit they provide. Do you favor or oppose this as a way to reduce the nation's health care costs?

	Favor	Oppose	Don't know/ Refused
Total	37	56	7
Dems	38	56	6
Reps	43	49	8
Inds	35	59	6

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

POLQ7c2. Do you think this would reduce the nation's health care costs, or not? IF REDUCE: Do you think it would reduce the nation's health care costs a lot or a little?

	Reduce a lot	Reduce a little	Would not reduce	Don't know/ Refused
Total	18	26	49	7
Dems	23	26	45	6
Reps	19	23	51	7
Inds	16	28	49	7

Summary (% favoring each of the following proposed ways to reduce the nation's health care costs)

^a = asked of half-sample A, n=505; ^b = asked of half-sample B, n=498

	Total	Dems	Reps	Inds
Make greater efforts to prevent future diseases and to have people live healthier lives ^b	84	85	81	86
Have the government making it easier for health care professionals and for hospitals to compete with each other based on price and quality ^a	67	66	74	67
Have the government establish limits on what health care professionals and hospitals can charge ^a	65	73	54	68
Allow people age 50 to 64 to buy into Medicare ^a	61	73	49	61
Change our health care system so that most people have Medicare and there is little or no private health insurance ^a	52	70	30	56
Have government and private health insurance plans NOT pay for some high-cost prescription drugs and medical or surgical treatments, which have been shown to be safe and effective, but whose high cost many experts feel is not justified by the amount of benefit they provide ^b	37	38	43	35
Give individuals tax incentives to buy high-deductible health plans. High-deductible plans require consumers to spend several thousand dollars out of pocket before their insurance kicks in to help cover the cost of drugs and services. Some think these plans would encourage consumers to shop for lower-priced health care and use fewer unnecessary tests and treatments ^b	37	40	40	34

Summary (% saying each of the following proposals would reduce the nation's health care costs a lot)

^a = asked of half-sample A, n=505; ^b = asked of half-sample B, n=498

	Total	Dems	Reps	Inds
Make greater efforts to prevent future diseases and to have people live healthier lives ^b	41	40	37	43
Change our health care system so that most people have Medicare and there is little or no private health insurance ^a	36	51	20	35
Have the government establish limits on what health care professionals and hospitals can charge ^a	34	42	26	34
Have the government making it easier for health care professionals and for hospitals to compete with each other based on price and quality ^a	32	33	38	31
Allow people age 50 to 64 to buy into Medicare ^a	25	26	18	29
Give individuals tax incentives to buy high-deductible health plans. High-deductible plans require consumers to spend several thousand dollars out of pocket before their insurance kicks in to help cover the cost of drugs and services. Some think these plans would encourage consumers to shop for lower-priced health care and use fewer unnecessary tests and treatments ^b	19	19	24	17
Have government and private health insurance plans NOT pay for some high-cost prescription drugs and medical or surgical treatments, which have been shown to be safe and effective, but whose high cost many experts feel is not justified by the amount of benefit they provide ^b	18	23	19	16

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ8. The Medicare program has four main parts. The first, called Part A, covers inpatient care in a hospital and short-term skilled nursing facility care. This part of Medicare is supported by a special fund which is supposed to be adequate to keep paying for these services into the future. From what you have heard, do you think that in the next 10 years Medicare Part A will run out of money and have trouble paying people's hospital and skilled nursing home bills, or don't you think this will happen in the next 10 years?

	Yes, will run out of money	No, won't run out of money	Don't know/ Refused
Total	46	46	8
Dems	50	42	8
Reps	44	52	4
Inds	47	44	9

(Asked of half-sample A respondents who believe Medicare will run out of money in the next 10 years; n=222)

POLQ9. How concerned are you about this: very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not too concerned	Not at all concerned	Don't know/ Refused
Total	54	29	12	5	*
Dems	60	26	7	6	1
Reps	46	29	20	4	1
Inds	55	30	10	4	1

**POLQ8/POLQ9 Combo Table
Based on half-sample A; n=505**

	Total	Dems	Reps	Inds
Medicare will run out of money in next 10 years	46	50	44	47
Very concerned	25	30	20	26
Somewhat concerned	13	13	13	14
Not too concerned	6	4	9	5
Not at all concerned	2	3	2	2
No- Medicare won't run out of money in next 10 years	46	42	52	44
Don't know/Refused	8	8	4	9

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

POLQ10. In order to lower your health care costs, please tell me whether or not you have done any of the following things in the past 12 months.?

- a. Negotiated with a physician or other health care professional to try to get a lower price for health care services

	Yes, have done this	No, have not done this	Don't know/ Refused
Total	17	83	-
Dems	17	83	-
Reps	20	80	-
Inds	15	85	-

- b. Negotiated with a hospital or other facility to try to get a lower price for health care services

	Yes, have done this	No, have not done this	Don't know/ Refused
Total	19	81	*
Dems	22	78	-
Reps	20	78	2
Inds	16	84	-

- c. Gone on the Internet to try to find a lower price for prescription drugs

	Yes, have done this	No, have not done this	Don't know/ Refused
Total	23	76	1
Dems	24	75	1
Reps	21	79	-
Inds	24	75	1

- d. Switched doctors to lower the amount you pay directly out of your own pocket

	Yes, have done this	No, have not done this	Don't know/ Refused
Total	17	82	1
Dems	16	84	-
Reps	23	76	1
Inds	12	87	1

- e. Switched from a brand name to a generic prescription drug to save money

	Yes, have done this	No, have not done this	Don't know/ Refused
Total	49	51	*
Dems	52	48	-
Reps	50	50	-
Inds	46	54	-

- f. Gone on the Internet to try to find a lower price for health care services

	Yes, have done this	No, have not done this	Don't know/ Refused
Total	23	77	*
Dems	28	72	-
Reps	21	79	-
Inds	23	76	1

Summary (% saying they have done each of the following in the past 12 months to lower their health care costs)

Based on half-sample B; n=498

	Total	Dems	Reps	Inds
Switched from a brand name to a generic prescription drug to save money	49	52	50	46
Gone on the Internet to try to find a lower price for prescription drugs	23	24	21	24
Gone on the Internet to try to find a lower price for health care services	23	28	21	23
Negotiated with a hospital or other facility to try to get a lower price for health care services	19	22	20	16
Switched doctors to lower the amount you pay directly out of your own pocket	17	16	23	12
Negotiated with a physician or other health care professional to try to get a lower price for health care services	17	17	20	15

(Asked of half-sample B; n=498)

POLQ11. Have you (INSERT ITEM), or not?

- a. Called your health insurance company to try to get them to cover more of a health care service or procedure

	Yes, have done this	No, have not done this	Don't know/ Refused
Total	19	81	*
Dems	16	84	-
Reps	24	76	-
Inds	17	82	1

- b. Not sought care for a particular illness or not gotten a prescription drug because of the high cost

	Yes, have done this	No, have not done this	Don't know/ Refused
Total	28	70	2
Dems	32	68	-
Reps	24	73	3
Inds	25	73	2

(Asked of half-sample A; n=505)

POLQ12. Please tell me if you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party could do a better job of controlling rising health care costs in the U.S.?

	Republican	Democratic	Don't know/ Refused
Total	36	47	17
Dems	16	76	8
Reps	73	16	11
Inds	32	45	23

POLQ13. Are health care costs a problem for you and your family, or not? IF YES: Are they a very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not too serious?

	Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not a problem	Don't know/ Refused
Total	17	21	14	47	1
Dems	20	17	14	48	1
Reps	17	19	11	53	*
Inds	14	27	15	43	1