



The Morning Call
Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion

**Survey of Pennsylvanians on the
Issue of Health Care Reform**

KEY FINDINGS REPORT

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KEY FINDINGS:

1. As the national debate on how to properly handle health care continues, roughly the same amount of Pennsylvania residents approve of the job President Barack Obama is doing as the amount who don't approve of the job he is doing, while over a fourth of them are unsure about his handling of the health care issue.
2. Nearly 6 out of 10 Pennsylvania residents generally disapprove of the job Republicans in Congress are doing on the issue of health care
3. Nearly half of Commonwealth residents think Barack Obama has better ideas about reforming health care than the Republicans in Congress, while only 2 out of 10 Pennsylvanians think the Republicans have better ideas than Obama.
4. Over 6 out of 10 Pennsylvania residents find the health care reforms under consideration in Congress confusing.
5. One fourth of Commonwealth residents have been following the health care debate in Washington D.C. very closely, while slightly less than half of them are following it somewhat closely.
6. Over half of Pennsylvanians believe fundamental changes are necessary to the health care system in the United States, while over a fourth of them believe the system needs to be completely rebuilt.
7. Half of Pennsylvania residents are very satisfied with the quality of health care they receive, while another 35 percent of them are somewhat satisfied. Less than 2 out of 10 Pennsylvanians express some type of dissatisfaction with the health care they receive.
8. Half of Pennsylvanians would favor 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.

METHODOLOGY: The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of residents of the state of Pennsylvania between October 27 and November 10, 2009. Individual households throughout Pennsylvania were selected randomly for inclusion in the study. The sample of phone numbers used in the survey was generated by Genesys Sampling Systems of Ft. Washington, PA. Interviewing was conducted by the staff of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, with 402 surveys completed. This number of completions results in a margin of error of +/- 4.5% at the 95% confidence interval. However the margin of errors for sub groups (i.e. women, income groups, age categories) is larger due to smaller sample size. Percentages throughout the survey have been rounded upward at the .5 mark, thus many totals in the results will not equal 100%. The survey questionnaire was designed by Christopher Borick, Ph.D of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion in consultation with staff members of the *Morning Call*. The analysis was written by Joseph Caporoso, Assistant Director of the MCIPO and Dr. Borick.

OVERVIEW: The issue of health care is one of the most debated topics in contemporary American public policy. A number of national surveys have shown significant desire for some type of change to the current system. This increased public concern has been answered by the recent passing of historic legislation advocating health care overhaul in the House of Representatives. However, a large debate is still forthcoming in the Senate over the particulars of the legislation and how to properly modify our current health care system. In this study we examine the perspective of Pennsylvanians regarding the general issue of health care and the views of state residents regarding government efforts to handle current health care issues in the United States.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROBLEM: Americans have become increasingly concerned about the issue of health care. An AP-GfK Poll released this month showed 78 percent of people either found the issue of health care “very important” or “extremely important.” In our survey of Pennsylvanians an identical 78 percent found the issue “very important or “extremely important.” Showing a desire for some type of change, over half of Pennsylvania residents in our survey expressed a desire for fundamental changes to our current health care system.

Pennsylvania residents opinions are generally more divided about Barack Obama’s handling of health care than His approval and disapproval ratings in Pennsylvania on this matter are nearly identical, with 36% of state residents approving of his handling of the matter and 38 disapproving of his efforts on the issue.

TABLE ONE

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling health care?”

	Approve	Disapprove	Not Sure
Pennsylvanians (November 2009)	36%	38%	26%

As would be expected the partisan affiliation of Pennsylvanians directly effects their views on the President’s handling of this issue. The survey findings indicate 74 percent of Republicans in Pennsylvania disapprove of the job Obama is doing, compared with only 14 percent of Democrats who don’t like the job Obama is doing in this area.

TABLE TWO

Approval of Barack Obama’s handling of health care by party affiliation

	Approve	Disapprove	Not Sure/Refused	Refused
Democrat	58%	14%	28%	0%
Republican	11%	74%	14%	1%

Despite having a somewhat higher percentage of people being “unsure” Pennsylvania resident’s opinions of how Republicans in Congress are handling health care reform generally mirror the national averages. The low approval rate compared to the high disapproval rate is similar. The exact same percentage (17) approve the job the Republicans are doing in the MIPO and CBS News Poll, In terms of respondents disapproving the job the Republicans are doing, Pennsylvania residents have a lower percentage than the national average shown in the CBS national poll primarily because a higher percentage of Pennsylvania residents are “unsure” about the job they are doing.

TABLE THREE

“Do you generally approve or disapprove of the way the Republicans in Congress are handling the issue of health care reform?”

	Approve	Disapprove	Not Sure
Pennsylvanians (November 2009)	17%	58%	25%
Americans (October 2009)	17%	67%	16%

PA results from Muhlenberg/Morning Call; National results from CBS News Poll

As would be expected, Pennsylvania Republicans approve the job Republicans in Congress are doing at a much higher percentage than the national averages, still less than 50 percent (42%) approve. Pennsylvania Democrats have a fairly lower approval rating for the Republicans in Congress than the national average, with only 7 percent approving compared to 17 percent in the CBS Poll. They also have a fairly higher disapproval rating with 75 percent disapproving, compared to 67 in the CBS Poll. A similar number of Democrats and Republicans in Pennsylvania answered unsure, which was slightly higher than the national averages.

TABLE FOUR

Approval of Republicans in Congress handling of health care by party affiliation

	Approve	Disapprove	Not Sure	Refused
Democrat	7%	75%	18%	0%
Republican	42%	36%	21%	1%

Pennsylvanians belief that Barack Obama has better ideas about reforming the health care system mirrors national numbers, with slightly lower overall support to both Obama and Republicans due to a higher number of people being unsure. This trend was seen in previous questions that focused individually on the jobs Obama and Republicans were doing

TABLE FIVE

“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	Republicans	Equally Good	Neither	Not Sure
Pennsylvanians (November 2009)	47%	21%	2%	13%	18%
Americans (September 2009)	52%	27%	2%	11%	8%

PA results from Muhlenberg/Morning Call; National results from CBS News Poll

. Only 3 out of 10 Pennsylvania residents think they understand the health care reforms under consideration in Congress. A small amount stated they were unsure about their knowledge level, while over 6 out of 10 admitted they found the reforms confusing.

TABLE SIX

“Do you think you understand the health care reforms under consideration in Congress, or are they confusing to you?”

Understand	30%
Confusing	62%
Not Sure	8%

There is not a substantial discrepancy in understanding health care reforms between college graduates and non college graduates in Pennsylvania. Nearly 6 out of 10 people with a college degree still find the reforms confusing, only 9 percent more of people without a degree find it confusing.

TABLE SEVEN

Understanding of health care reforms by education level

	Understand	Confusing	Not Sure	Refused
No College Degree	26%	66%	8%	0%
College Degree	37%	57%	6%	>1%

The number of Pennsylvanians who think there should be minor changes, fundamental changes, or a completely rebuilt health care system mirrors the national numbers in all three categories. There is a strong desire for change with over a fourth of residents wanting the system completely rebuilt and over half wanting fundamental changes.

TABLE EIGHT

“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 health care system works pretty well and only minor changes are necessary to make it work better. OR, (2) There are some good things in our health care system, but fundamental changes are needed. OR, (3) Our health care system has so much wrong with it that we need to completely rebuild it.”

	Minor Changes	Fundamental Changes	Completely Rebuild	Not Sure
Pennsylvanians (November 2009)	14%	56%	28%	2%
Americans (October 2009)	15%	53%	31%	1%

PA results from Muhlenberg/Morning Call; National results from CBS News Poll

Pennsylvania Republicans are generally more hesitant towards change in the health care system than Democrats. Less than half the amount of Republicans wants the system completely rebuilt and a much larger amount of them would settle for minor changes to the system.

TABLE NINE

Desire for degree of health care system change by party affiliation

	Minor Changes	Fundamental Changes	Completely Rebuild	Not Sure	Refused
Democrat	6%	60%	32%	1%	>1%
Republican	26%	57%	15%	2%	0%

Pennsylvania residents offer a comparable level of support for a government administered health insurance plan to Americans in national polls. A slight majority (51%) of Commonwealth residents would like to see a government administered health insurance plan, compare with 1 in 3 residents of the state who oppose such a plan.

TABLE TEN

“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?”

	Favor	Oppose	Not Sure
Pennsylvanians (November 2009)	51%	36%	13%
Americans (October 2009)	55%	44%	1%

PA results from Muhlenberg/Morning Call; National results from CNN News Poll

CONCLUSION: This research project provides some baseline indicators on the attitudes and beliefs of Pennsylvania residents regarding health care issues in the United States. Despite not having overwhelming support from Pennsylvania residents, Barack Obama’s policies and handling of health care is preferred to the Republicans in Congress. Pennsylvanians express a general satisfaction with the quality of health care they are currently receiving, but over half of Pennsylvanians still believe fundamental changes are necessary to the health care system in the United States. As a means of addressing health care issues, over half of Pennsylvania residents support some type of government health insurance plan to compete with private ones.

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QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

Pennsylvania Public Health Survey
Health Care Questions (Qs 3 to 36)
Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion/Morning Call
Field Dates – October 27, 2009 to November 10, 2009
Population – Pennsylvanians 18 or Older
Sampling Procedure - RDD
402 Completed Surveys
Margin of Error = +/- 5% at 95% Level of Confidence
Percentages are rounded at .5 level; totals may not equal 100%

Question 3: Over the last six months there has been a large amount of debate in Washington D.C. about the issue of health care in the United States. Would you say you have been following the health care debate in Washington D.C. very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely or not at all?

Very Closely.....24%
Somewhat Closely...44%
Not Too Closely.....23%
Not At All.....8%
Not Sure.....>1%

Question 4: Do you think you understand the health care reforms under consideration in Congress, or are they confusing to you?

Understand...30%
Confusing.....62%
Not Sure.....8%

Question 5: How important is the issue of health care to you personally? Not At All Important, Slightly Important, Moderately Important, Very Important, Extremely Important.

Not At All Important.....2%
Slightly Important.....5%
Moderately Important...15%
Very Important.....44%
Extremely Important.....34%
Not Sure.....>1%

Question 6: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling health care?

Approve.....36%
Disapprove.....38%
Not Sure.....26%

Question 7: 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 health care system works pretty well and only minor changes are necessary to make it work better. OR, (2) There are some good things in our health care system, but fundamental changes are needed. OR, (3) Our health care system has so much wrong with it that we need to completely rebuild it.

Minor Changes.....14%
Fundamental Changes.....56%
Completely Rebuild It.....28%
Not Sure.....2%

Question 8: Are you generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of health care you receive? Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the health care you receive?

Very Satisfied..... 49%
Somewhat Satisfied..... 35%
Somewhat Dissatisfied...8%
Very Dissatisfied..... 7%
Not Sure..... >1%

Question 9: 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.....47%
Republicans.....21%
Equally Good.....2%
Neither.....13%
Not Sure.....18%

Question 10: Do you mostly support or mostly oppose the changes to the health care system proposed by Barack Obama, or don't you know enough about them yet to say?

Mostly Support....30%
Mostly Oppose.....26%
Not Sure.....44%

Question 11: And from what you have heard about Barack Obama's health care plan, do you believe it will result in the quality of your health care getting better, worse, or staying about the same as now? If you do not have an opinion please just say so.

Getting Better.....19%
Getting Worse.....33%
Staying About the Same....27%
Not Sure.....22%

Question 12: Do you generally approve or disapprove of the way the Republicans in Congress are handling the issue of health care reform?

Approve.....17%
Disapprove.....58%
Not Sure.....25%

Question 13: 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?

Favor.....51%
Oppose.....36%
Not Sure.....13%

Question 14: What if changes to the health care system do not include the option of a government-administered health insurance plan? In that case, would you favor or oppose the changes under consideration?

Favor.....35%
Oppose.....32%
Not Sure....33%

Question 15: Congress is considering many different items as part of health care reform legislation. I am going to read you some of the items they are considering that may or may not end up in the final legislation. For each one, please tell me whether you feel this absolutely must be included as part of health care legislation, you would prefer it be included, you would prefer it NOT be included, or you feel it absolutely must NOT be included: First, requiring that health insurance companies cover people with pre-existing medical conditions.

Must Be Included.....69%
Prefer It Be Included.....26%
Prefer It Not Be Included....1%
Must Not Be Included.....3%
Not Sure.....2%

Question 16: Creating a law that limits the amount of money someone can collect if they win a lawsuit after being injured by bad medical care.

Must Be Included.....38%
Prefer It Be Included.....32%
Prefer It Not Be Included....12%
Must Not Be Included.....9%
Not Sure.....9%

Question 17: Requiring that all but the smallest employers provide health coverage for their employees, or pay a percentage of their payroll to help fund coverage for the uninsured.

Must Be Included.....34%
Prefer It Be Included.....35%
Prefer It Not Be Included....13%
Must Not Be Included.....11%
Not Sure.....7%

Question 18: Creating a public health care plan administered by the federal government that would compete directly with private health insurance companies

Must Be Included.....24%
Prefer It Be Included.....24%
Prefer It Not Be Included....11%
Must Not Be Included.....26%
Not Sure.....14%

Question 19: Creating a law that requires everyone to have health insurance coverage. Those people with low and moderate incomes would receive government assistance. Those people who can afford it would have to buy their own health insurance or pay a penalty or fine if they do not.

Must Be Included.....19%
Prefer It Be Included.....23%
Prefer It Not Be Included....21%
Must Not Be Included.....29%
Not Sure.....9%

Question 20: In 2010 there will be elections for members of both the House of Representatives and United States Senate. Which of the following best describes the effect of a candidate's positions on health care reform in terms of your vote in next year's election?

I will only for a candidate that shares my views.....26%
I prefer candidates that share my views on healthcare but might vote for one that differs with me on the issue.....50%
A candidate's position will not have a big impact on my vote.....13%
Not Planning to Vote.....4%
Not Sure.....7%

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKOUTS

Over the last six months there has been a large amount of debate in Washington D.C. about the issue of health care in the United States. Would you say you have been following the health care debate in Washington D.C. very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely or not at all?

	Very Closely	Somewhat Closely	Not Too Closely	Not At All	Not Sure	Refused
Overall	24%	44%	23%	8%	>1%	>1%
Male	30%	39%	19%	10%	>1%	>1%
Female	19%	49%	26%	6%	>1%	0%
Democrat	21%	47%	26%	6%	0%	0%
Republican	29%	57%	8%	6%	0%	0%
18-39	13%	42%	30%	14%	2%	0%
40-64	28%	47%	20%	5%	0%	0%
65+	24%	40%	24%	10%	>1%	>1%
No College Degree	20%	44%	27%	10%	>1%	0%
College Degree	33%	47%	15%	5%	>1%	0%

Do you think you understand the health care reforms under consideration in Congress, or are they confusing to you?

	Understand	Confusing	Not Sure	Refused
Overall	30%	61%	9%	>1%
Male	31%	59%	9%	2%
Female	29%	63%	8%	0%
Democrat	33%	58%	8%	0%
Republican	32%	64%	5%	0%
18-39	33%	56%	9%	2%
40-64	33%	60%	7%	0%
65+	23%	66%	10%	>1%
No College Degree	26%	66%	8%	0%
College Degree	37%	57%	6%	>1%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling health care?

	Approve	Disapprove	Not Sure	Refused
Overall	36%	37%	26%	1%
Male	33%	40%	26%	>1%
Female	38%	35%	25%	2%
Democrat	58%	14%	28%	0%
Republican	11%	74%	14%	1%
18-39	34%	39%	26%	2%
40-64	40%	39%	21%	>1%
65+	30%	33%	34%	3%
No College Degree	32%	39%	28%	1%
College Degree	43%	37%	21%	0%

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 health care system works pretty well and only minor changes are necessary to make it work better. OR, (2) There are some good things in our health care system, but fundamental changes are needed. OR, (3) Our health care system has so much wrong with it that we need to completely rebuild it.

	Minor Changes	Fundamental Changes	Completely Rebuild	Not Sure	Refused
Overall	14%	56%	28%	2%	>1%
Male	15%	53%	29%	2%	>1%
Female	13%	58%	27%	2%	>1%
Democrat	6%	60%	32%	1%	>1%
Republican	26%	57%	15%	2%	0%
18-39	19%	47%	30%	5%	0%
40-64	14%	57%	28%	>1%	>1%
65+	11%	59%	27%	3%	>1%
No College Degree	12%	52%	33%	3%	>1%
College Degree	17%	63%	20%	>1%	0%

Are you generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of health care you receive? Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the health care you receive?

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Sure	Refused
Overall	49%	35%	8%	7%	>1%	>1%
Male	53%	32%	7%	8%	0%	>1%
Female	46%	38%	9%	7%	1%	0%
Democrat	45%	38%	8%	10%	0%	0%
Republican	64%	30%	6%	1%	0%	0%
18-39	43%	37%	12%	5%	3%	0%
40-64	47%	36%	7%	9%	>1%	0%
65+	56%	32%	6%	5%	0%	>1%
No College Degree	45%	37%	7%	10%	1%	0%
College Degree	56%	31%	9%	4%	0%	0%

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?

	Obama	Republicans	Equally Good	Neither	Not Sure	Refused
Overall	46%	20%	1%	12%	18%	2%
Male	44%	21%	>1%	16%	18%	2%
Female	48%	20%	2%	10%	17%	3%
Democrat	74%	3%	1%	7%	15%	>1%
Republican	13%	55%	1%	19%	13%	0%
18-39	48%	26%	3%	3%	20%	0%
40-64	47%	22%	1%	13%	16%	1%
65+	43%	14%	>1%	17%	20%	5%
No College Degree	43%	21%	1%	15%	19%	1%
College Degree	52%	22%	2%	8%	15%	>1%

Do you generally approve or disapprove of the way the Republicans in Congress are handling the issue of health care reform?

	Approve	Disapprove	Not Sure	Refused
Overall	17%	57%	24%	3%
Male	15%	60%	22%	2%
Female	18%	53%	26%	3%
Democrat	7%	75%	18%	0%
Republican	42%	36%	21%	1%
18-39	22%	52%	24%	2%
40-64	17%	57%	25%	1%
65+	12%	60%	23%	6%
No College Degree	16%	53%	29%	2%
College Degree	19%	65%	15%	>1%

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?

	Favor	Oppose	Not Sure	Refused
Overall	50%	35%	13%	2%
Male	49%	40%	8%	2%
Female	50%	31%	18%	2%
Democrat	70%	17%	13%	0%
Republican	21%	66%	13%	1%
18-39	59%	28%	11%	2%
40-64	53%	34%	12%	1%
65+	39%	41%	16%	4%
No College Degree	45%	36%	18%	1%
College Degree	58%	37%	5%	0%

