

Transforming Health Care: American Attitudes On Shared Stewardship



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

AN ASPEN INSTITUTE-ZOGBY INTERNATIONAL SURVEY



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Building Blocks to a Healthier Nation

Report Overview

A new Aspen Institute/Zogby interactive survey indicates that most Americans believe increased access to health care is not enough to improve health outcomes.

The results of this poll show that almost half of all respondents (45%) believe universal health insurance would not improve Americans' health and 48% reported having suffered or know someone who has suffered an illness, injury or death that they believe could have been prevented by better health care. The rate is highest among African-Americans (63%) and those with incomes below \$25,000 (56%). Further, a majority of those surveyed (58%) agree that Americans with unhealthy lifestyles should pay more for health care and almost half of all respondents cite either providing preventative health care to all Americans (48%) or having access to more affordable health insurance (47%) as the top mark for a successful reform proposal.

Americans overwhelmingly support rewarding those who make healthy lifestyle choices. In addition to strong support for making healthy lifestyle choices more personally rewarding, more than three in four Americans (78%) said they believe those who make poor health choices should be held responsible for them.

The survey also finds strong support for access to information that can help Americans make decisions about their health:

- 79% believe **hospitals** should be required to publicly report the success rates of the treatments they provide to their patients.
- 73% believe **doctors** should be required to publicly report the success rates of the treatments they provide to their patients.
- 64% believe better tools to judge the accuracy of health information would help them better access health information on the Internet.

The survey indicates that the vast majority of Americans are focused on extending their healthy years, as opposed to living as long as possible – 91% said how long they live a healthy life is more important than longevity.

Nearly half (49%) said they spend too much on health care for themselves and their family and even more (54%) believe the United States spends too much money on health care. Finally, 56% of those polled said they would be willing to pay higher taxes so all children under the age of 18 can have health insurance.

Methodology and Sample Characteristics

Methodology

Zogby International was commissioned by the Aspen Institute to conduct an online survey of 8,218 adults. The survey ran from 5/1/08 thru 5/5/08.

A sampling of Zogby International's online panel, which is representative of the adult population of the US, was invited to participate. Slight weights were added for region, party, age, race, religion, and gender to more accurately reflect the population. The margin of error is +/- 1.1 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Sample Characteristics

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample Size	8218	100
East	1882	23
South	2127	26
Central/Great Lakes	2536	31
West	1636	20
Did not answer region	36	--
Democrat	3094	38
Republican	2931	36
Independent	2117	26
18-29	1639	20
30-49	3278	40
50-64	1885	23
65+	1393	17
18-24	446	5
25-34	1615	20
35-54	3467	42
55-69	1970	24
70+	695	9
Did not respond age	24	--
White	6014	75
Hispanic	802	10
African-American	882	11
Asian	160	2
Other	160	2
Did not respond race	200	--
Large City	2922	36
Small City	1774	22
Suburbs	2140	26
Rural	1300	16
Did not respond location	82	--

* Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.

Sample Characteristics (continued)	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	8218	100
1 person household	1438	18
2 people household	3367	42
3 people household	1332	17
4 people household	1225	15
5 people household	453	6
6 or more people household	263	3
Not sure	5	--
Did not respond household size	136	--
1 Child <17	1014	13
2 Children <17	890	11
3 Children <17	319	4
4 Children <17	101	1
5 Children <17	26	--
6 or more Children <17	35	--
No Children <17	5703	70
Not sure	12	--
Did not respond Children <17	117	--
< \$25,000	628	9
\$25-35K	580	8
\$35-50K	930	13
\$50-75K	1520	21
\$75-100K	1344	19
\$100K+	2146	30
Did not respond Income	1070	--
Male	3922	48
Female	4215	52
Did not respond Gender	81	--

* Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.

Executive Summary

This interactive survey of adult Americans nationwide covers five principal topics: (1) the state of health care, (2) health care spending, (3) overall health, (4) health information and (5) medical research priorities.

State of Health Care

Table 1: Rating Quality of Health Care in America

	2008	2006	2008			
			18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Excellent	27	25	18	28	27	33
Good	42	38	40	41	43	47
Positive	69	63	58	69	70	80
Fair	25	28	34	25	24	17
Poor	6	10	7	7	6	3
Negative	31	37	41	32	30	20

- Asked to rate the quality of health care in America, just over two-thirds (69%) give the system a positive rating. A slight improvement in public opinion has been registered since 2006, when only sixty-three percent of respondents rated America's health care positively. While a majority of nearly all subgroups hold a positive opinion of the quality of health care in America, younger Americans are more likely to hold a negative opinion than are older Americans.

Table 2: Suffered or Known Someone Who Has Suffered an Illness, Injury or Death That You Believe Could Have Been Prevented by Better Health Care

	Overall	White	Hispanic	African-American	Asian
Yes	48	45	56	63	46
No	45	48	40	30	48
Not sure	7	8	5	8	6

- Nearly half of all respondents (48%) report having suffered or knowing someone who has suffered an illness, injury, or death that they believe could have been prevented by better health care. That rate is highest among African-Americans (63%) and those with incomes below \$25,000 (56%). A slightly lower number (45%) say that they have not had such an experience and that they do not know anyone who has.

Table 3: Expected Impact of Universal Health Insurance on America's Health

	<i>Overall</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-49</i>	<i>50-64</i>	<i>65+</i>
Strongly Improve	35	41	33	36	28
Somewhat Improve	21	22	21	19	19
IMPROVE	56	63	54	55	47
Only Slightly Improve	13	13	13	13	15
Not At All Improve	32	24	33	32	38
NOT IMPROVE	45	37	46	45	53

- A majority of Americans (56%) believe that universal health insurance would improve American's health. Fewer than half (45%) believe that having universal health insurance would not improve the average American's health. Younger Americans are slightly more likely to believe universal health insurance would improve America's health.

Health Care Spending and Health Insurance

Table 4: Health Care Spending

	<i>Personal Spending on Your Health Care</i>	<i>U.S. Spending on Health Care</i>
Too Much	49	54
Too Little	6	29
Appropriate Amount	45	17

- Americans are divided between those who believe they spend too much on health care (49%) and those who feel they spend the appropriate amount on health care (45%) for themselves and their family. There is no significant variation across age or income.
- The majority of Americans (54%) believe the United States as a whole spends too much on health care. Only 17 percent believe the nation spends an appropriate amount. Females (37%) and those with incomes below \$35,000 (46%) are much more likely to believe that U.S. spends too little on health care.

Table 5: Health Insurance Coverage

		<i>Overall</i>
I would be willing to pay higher taxes so that everyone could have health insurance.	<i>Agree</i>	46
	<i>Disagree</i>	54
I would be willing to pay higher taxes so that children under 18 could have health insurance.	<i>Agree</i>	56
	<i>Disagree</i>	44
Health insurance ensures me and my family the ability to receive health care when I need it.	<i>Agree</i>	71
	<i>Disagree</i>	26
Health insurance alone makes health care affordable.	<i>Agree</i>	43
	<i>Disagree</i>	57

- While a majority of Americans (56%) would support paying higher taxes to ensure that all children under 18 could have health insurance, slightly less than half (46%) would be willing to do so for universal health insurance.
- The great majority of those surveyed (71%) believe that health insurance insures that they and their family have the ability to receive health care when they need it. Only 43 percent of respondents agree that health insurance alone makes health care affordable.

Table 6: Defining Success of Health Care Reform

	<i>Overall</i>
Providing preventative health care to all Americans	48
Having access to more affordable health insurance	47
Protecting Americans from cost of catastrophic illness	38
Keeping as many Americans as healthy as possible	29
Having access to better quality health care	28
Having health insurance	22
Other	12
No reform is needed	9

- Asked how they would measure successful health care reform, almost half of all respondents cite either providing preventative health care to all Americans (48%) or having access to more affordable health insurance (47%) as the top mark of successful reform.
- Over a third of respondents (38%) also cite “protecting Americans from the cost of catastrophic illness” as a success in health care reform. Only nine percent of respondents report that no health care reform is needed.

Table 7: Basis for Physician Pay

	<i>Overall</i>
Exceeding accepted standards of care	28
Meeting accepted standards of care	26
Success rate in patient treatment	17
Types of procedures provided	11
Number of patients	5
Level of education	2
Number of procedures	1
Other	9

Table 8: What You Value Most in Health Care

	<i>Overall</i>
Having health insurance that covers most costs	40
Seeing doctor of my choice	30
Covering preventive health services	11
Reducing unneeded procedures and tests	7
Having generally accepted standard of care	3
Paying for alternative healthcare services	3
Paying for mental health services	1
Other	4

- Respondents most commonly cite standard of care as the preferred basis for physician pay. Asked what they value the most in health care, most Americans cite either having health insurance that covers most costs (40%) or having the ability to see a doctor of their choice (30%).

Table 9: How Do You Determine If Health Care Is High Quality

	<i>Overall</i>
My health improves	73
Whether they take time to answer my questions	60
Whether they take my preferences for care into account	35
Whether I understand their directions and advice	21
Whether it is easy to schedule an appointment	16
Whether they perform latest tests and offer newest drugs	15
Courteous during office visits	11
Whether doctors themselves accept phone calls	4
Whether it is easy to get to their offices	4
Whether doctors accept emails	2
Other	6

- Asked how they determine if the health care received from their doctor(s) is high quality, almost three quarters of respondents (73%) say that it depends on whether their health improves. Whether the doctors take the time to answer their patients' questions was the second most frequently cited factor-- the only other factor that was cited by a majority or respondents.

Table 10: Health Care and Personal Responsibility

		<i>Overall</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>GOP</i>	<i>Ind.</i>
Americans who make poor health choices should be held responsible for them.	<i>Agree</i>	78	70	86	79
	<i>Disagree</i>	22	30	14	21
We should establish financial incentives such as lower health insurance premiums, deductibles, or co-pays to help people adopt healthier lifestyles	<i>Agree</i>	80	82	75	81
	<i>Disagree</i>	20	18	23	19
We should assess financial penalties for Americans who fail to improve their health	<i>Agree</i>	29	31	26	31
	<i>Disagree</i>	71	69	75	70
If unhealthy behavior is fined, should exceptions be made for family predisposition	<i>Agree</i>	64	69	54	68
	<i>Disagree</i>	36	31	46	32
Americans with unhealthy lifestyles should pay more for health care	<i>Agree</i>	58	49	65	61
	<i>Disagree</i>	42	51	35	39
We should restrict foods sold in schools to healthy options	<i>Agree</i>	80	88	71	81
	<i>Disagree</i>	21	12	30	19
Employers should be able to base hiring decisions on applicant's health	<i>Agree</i>	29	16	43	30
	<i>Disagree</i>	71	85	58	70

- The great majority of respondents (78%) agree that Americans who make poor health choices should be held responsible for them. A similar number also agree that we should establish financial incentives such as lower health insurance premiums, deductibles, or co-pays to help people adopt healthier lifestyles.
- Only 29 percent of respondents believe we should assess financial penalties for Americans who fail to improve their health. About two thirds of respondents (64%) believe that if unhealthy behavior is fined, then exceptions should be made for family predisposition.
- Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed agree that Americans with unhealthy lifestyles should pay more for health care, while forty-two percent disagree.
- Most Americans (80%) agree only healthy food options should be sold in schools.
- The large majority of Americans (71%) disagree that employers should be able to base hiring decisions on an applicant's health.

Overall Health

Table 11: Equity of Health Outcomes

	<i>Some Groups of People Are Less Healthy Than Other</i>
Yes	71
No	14
Not Sure	16

Table 12: Group(s) With Lower Than Average Health

	<i>Overall</i>
Those with low income	84
African-American	44
Those who live in rural areas	26
Latinos	25
Men	14
Women	6
Other	10

- The majority of Americans (71%) believe that some groups of people are less healthy than others.
- Nearly all those who believe that some groups are less healthy (84%) cite low-income individuals as having below average health; forty-four percent cite African-Americans, and about a quarter (26%) cite those who live in rural areas. With the exception of individuals living in rural areas respondents in the demographic groups cited are more likely to believe their group has poorer overall health than the average American.

Table 13: Why Is Their Health Worse

	<i>Overall</i>
Poor socio-economic status	62
Poor personal choices	57
Limited access to health insurance	47
Limited access to healthy choices/environment	30
Greater stress	17
Limited health education in schools	14
Differential treatment of minority patients	11
Few hospitals or physicians in rural areas	11
Other	6
None of the above	1

- Sixty-two percent of those who think that some groups are less healthy than others think that the reason for this disparity is the poor socio-economic status of some groups. Fifty-seven percent cite poor personal choices, and nearly half (47%) say the cause is limited access to health insurance.

Health Information

Table 14: Treatment Success Rate

	<i>Hospitals are Required to Publicly Report Their Treatment Success Rates</i>	<i>Doctors Should Be Required To Publicly Report Their Treatment Success Rates</i>
Yes	79	73
No	21	27

- The great majority of respondents believe that hospitals (79%) and doctors (73%) should be required to publicly report the success rates of treatments they provide to their patients.

Table 15: Use of Internet to Gather Information

	<i>Overall</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-49</i>	<i>50-64</i>	<i>65+</i>
Weekly	21	28	18	20	18
Monthly	23	21	24	25	23
At Least Once in Six Months	27	21	28	27	30
Only When I am Ill	24	28	26	20	20
Never	6	3	5	8	10

Table 16: Internet Information

Ease of getting health information over the Internet	<i>Easy</i>	93
	<i>Not Easy</i>	7
Reliability of health information on the internet	<i>Reliable</i>	85
	<i>Not Reliable</i>	12

- Forty-four percent of Americans use the internet at least once a month to access information about health and health care. The vast majority (93%) say obtaining such information is easy and most (85%) believe it is reliable.

Table 17: What Decisions Did You Use Internet For

	<i>Overall</i>
Which treatment to pursue for a mild-moderate health problem	54
Nutritional Choices	51
Which exercise/preventative health steps to take	47
Whether to go see a doctor	34
Which over-the-counter medication to take	29
Which recommended test/procedure to have	29
Which treatment to pursue for a serious health problem	19
Which doctor to see	17
Which prescription medication to ask for	17
I would not use information found on the internet	9
Which sexual health options to use	8
Other	9

- Respondents report gathering health information on the internet for a wide variety of reasons, including a majority who look for potential treatments or nutritional choices.

Table 18: What Would Help Improve Access to Internet Health Information

	<i>Overall</i>
Better tools to judge the accuracy of health information	64
Easier to understand health information	37
More personalized health advice	30
A greater volume of health information	24
More privacy when I make health inquiries	13
More privacy when I use email to contact my physician	6
More health information available on my mobile device	2
Other	14

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) say having better tools to judge the accuracy of health information would help improve their level of access to that information. Other frequently cited improvements include having easier to understand information (37%) and more personalized health information (30%).

Table 19: Medical Records

	<i>Tried to Obtain Copy of Medical Records</i>	<i>Able to Obtain Copy of Medical Records</i>	<i>If Needed, Do You Know How to Get Them</i>
Yes	48	90	66
No	53	10	20
Not Sure	--	--	13

- About half of all respondents (48%) say that they have tried to obtain a copy of their medical records in the past; the great majority of them (90%) were successful.
- Asked whether they would know how to obtain their medical records if they were to need them, two-thirds of respondents (66%) say that they would know how to access their records. One-in-five (20%) say that they would not.

Table 20: Prescriptions

	<i>Received an Illegible Prescription</i>	<i>18-24</i>	<i>25-34</i>	<i>35-54</i>	<i>55-69</i>	<i>70+</i>
Yes	64	49	58	66	69	64
No	32	41	39	31	27	30
Not Sure	4	10	3	3	4	--

Table 21: Medications

	<i>Received Wrong Medication</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Yes	12	9	15
No	81	85	78
Not Sure	7	6	7

- About two-thirds of Americans (64%) report having received an illegible prescription in the past. Twelve percent of respondents report having received the wrong medication either in the hospital or as an outpatient.

Medical Research

Table 22: Medical Research Funding

		<i>Overall</i>
I would be willing to pay higher taxes to advance medical research.	<i>Agree</i>	50
	<i>Disagree</i>	51

- Americans are evenly divided on whether they would be willing to pay higher taxes to advance medical research.

Table 23: Medical Research Priorities

	<i>Highest Priority</i>	<i>2nd Priority</i>
Research on how to prevent disease	31	35
Research on how to cure disease	45	30
Research on how to treat disease	11	33
Not Sure	13	3

- Asked to prioritize America’s budget for medical research, our respondents report that the highest priority should be to do research on how to cure (or eliminate) disease. Prevention ranks as the second-highest priority. Investigation of how to treat (or manage) disease ranks third.

Table 24: Experienced Change in Quality of Health Care Due to Shortage of Health Care Professionals

	<i>Overall</i>
Yes, often	10
Yes, sometimes	34
No, never	47
Not Sure	9

- Nearly half of all respondents (47%) say that they have never personally experienced a change in the quality of the health care received for reasons that could be attributed to a shortage of health care professionals. Ten percent of respondents have experienced a change in the quality of their health care as a result of such a shortage.

Other Health Care Topics

Table 25: Health Insurance Portability

	<i>Overall</i>
Very Important	58
Somewhat Important	29
IMPORTANT	87
Not Very Important	9
Not At All Important	3
NOT IMPORTANT	12

- Almost all respondents (87%) agree that health insurance portability is an important issue.

Table 26: Health Coverage

		<i>Overall</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-49</i>	<i>50-64</i>	<i>65+</i>
<i>Gov't Should Ensure That Every Person Has Health Coverage</i>	<i>Yes</i>	48	52	49	50	40
	<i>No</i>	42	38	41	41	50
<i>All Employers Should Provide Health Insurance to Every Employee</i>	<i>Yes</i>	33	39	32	33	27
	<i>No</i>	50	44	51	50	55
<i>Has Someone in Your Household Been Without Health Insurance for More Than 3 Months</i>	<i>Yes</i>	60	67	60	62	49
	<i>No</i>	37	28	38	36	48

- Sixty percent of respondents have had a member of their household go without health insurance for more than 3 months. Less than half support universal health care (48%) or making employer sponsored health care mandatory (33%).
- Younger Americans are more likely to support both Universal health care and mandatory employer sponsored health care. They are also more likely to have had a member of their household go without health insurance for more than 3 months.

Table 27: Concern Over Medical Care

	<i>Family Member Unable to Get Appropriate Medical Care</i>	<i>Medical Errors Affecting You Or Your Family</i>
Very Concerned	29	21
Somewhat Concerned	27	38
CONCERNED	55	59
Only Slightly Concerned	24	35
Not At All Concerned	21	6
NOT CONCERNED	45	41

- The majority (55%) of respondents are either very concerned (29%) or somewhat concerned (27%) that they or their family may not receive appropriate health care. A similar number (59%) are concerned about the possibility of medical errors affecting them or their family.

Table 28: Attitudes Toward Health Issues

		<i>Overall</i>
I am in charge of my health . . . I determine my health and well being more than anybody else.	<i>Agree</i>	93
	<i>Disagree</i>	7
How long I live a healthy life is more important than longevity.	<i>Agree</i>	91
	<i>Disagree</i>	9
We must strive for equity in health.	<i>Agree</i>	70
	<i>Disagree</i>	30
With respect to rising childhood obesity . . . we should not have to tell our children that they won't live as long as we will.	<i>Agree</i>	67
	<i>Disagree</i>	33

- Nearly all respondents believe that they determine their personal health (93%) and that a healthy life is more important than longevity (91%).