

# A National Opinion Poll on Consumers' Views of Health Care, Reform Options and Prospects for Change

*Conducted by Harris Interactive®  
for the Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center  
December 2007*

YOUR  
VOICE  
*New  
Vision*

ENSURING THE FUTURE OF QUALITY PATIENT CARE



In December 2007, Mayo Clinic commissioned Harris Interactive, an international market research firm, to conduct an online consumer survey. The research is part of the Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center's *Your Voice, New Vision* initiative to ensure that the voices of patients are represented in health care reform discussions.

The goal of the research was to learn more about:

- American health care consumers and:
  - Their views on health care now
  - Their reactions to health care reform options
  - Their views on the importance of reform and prospects for change
- How health care issues affect the 2008 presidential race

There were 1,018 respondents, all of whom were U.S. residents, 25 to 75 years old and were involved in health care decision-making for their households.

#### KEY FINDINGS: A PROFILE OF AMERICAN HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS

**Chronic illness** — More than half (53 percent) reported having a chronic medical condition requiring ongoing care. Conditions most often cited were arthritis, diabetes, depression, heart disease and chronic pain.

**Health status** — 19 percent of respondents said their health was fair or poor; 41 percent reported good health; 40 percent reported very good or excellent health.

**Uninsured** — 12 percent of respondents were uninsured. (In comparison, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates 16 percent of Americans were uninsured in 2006. This figure includes younger adults, many of whom are uninsured.) Only 3 percent of all respondents reported ever being denied coverage by an insurance company.

**Use of medical care:** More than three-fourths of those with insurance had seen a doctor in the last six months. Thirty percent of uninsured had seen a doctor in the same time frame.

**Caregivers:** 16 percent said they were caregivers for a household or family member with a serious health condition.

#### KEY FINDINGS: THE STATE OF AMERICAN HEALTH CARE

##### 1. Overwhelmingly, costs were the most pressing concern.

The vast majority of respondents (91 percent) said health care costs are too high. Nearly all (99 percent) of uninsured respondents believed health care costs are too high.

- Consumers at the highest income level (more than \$75,000 annually) and Caucasians were most critical of high costs.
- Without prompting, 54 percent identified some form of cost pressure as the most important concern in health care today. Concerns with access to care were a distant second, with 24 percent listing availability of health care as the most pressing concern.

##### 2. While consumers are satisfied with the quality of care from their own doctors, generally they are not particularly satisfied with the overall quality of care in the United States.

- About 84 percent indicated they were satisfied, very satisfied or completely satisfied with their personal experience with their care providers.
- Only about half as many, or 43 percent, assigned a rating of satisfied, very or completely satisfied with health care in America as it is practiced today.

- Those who rate their health as fair and those with no insurance were the most dissatisfied. Fifty-six percent of those in poorer health and 57 percent of the uninsured rated the overall quality of US health care as fair or poor.

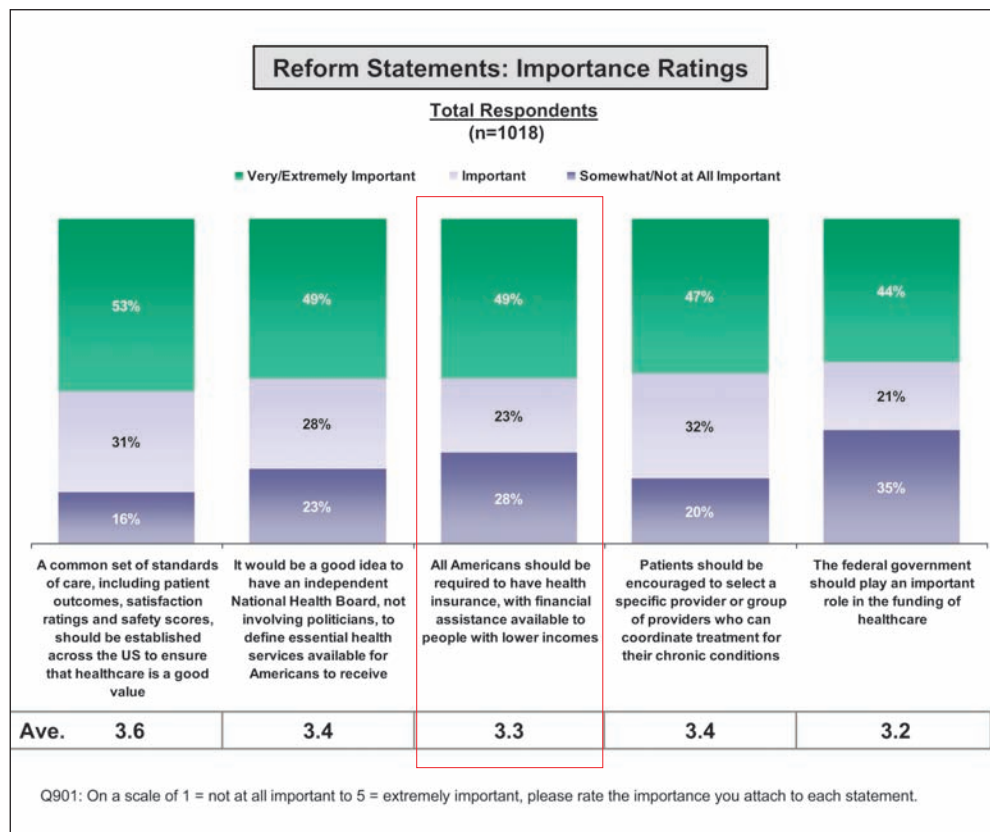
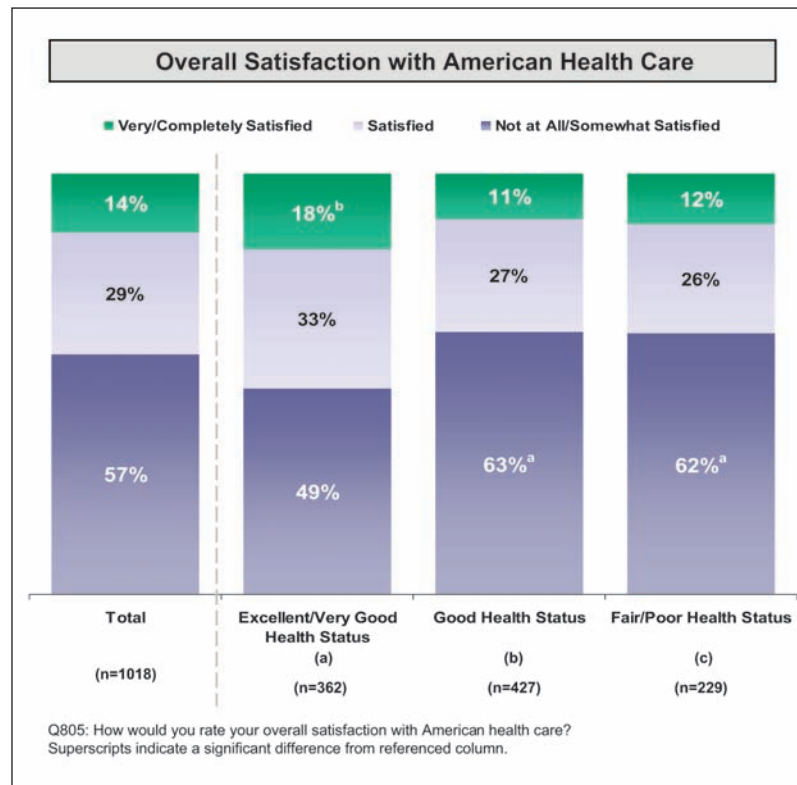
### 3. Overall, about half of all respondents rated quality, coordination and value of care as fair or poor.

- Insured American adults, those with a chronic health condition and those who visit their physician frequently gave higher ratings on coordination of care than other respondents.
- In total nearly 60 percent said access to care was fair or poor.

### 4. The views of the uninsured and sick differ from those who are healthier and have insurance.

The results consistently showed that patients don't speak with one voice. Findings highlighted differences of opinions based on health and insurance status. Education and income also were factors that showed differences in opinions.

- The uninsured, more than others, rated these areas poorly: coordination of care, access to care and value.
- Women and part-time workers put more importance on access to affordable insurance.
- Those with poorer health were more likely to express dissatisfaction with American health care as it exists today.
- Those with a fair or poor health status assigned the highest priority to health care as a critical issue facing the next president.
- Less healthy people are significantly more likely to believe that no one should be denied health insurance due to a pre-existing condition.



- About half of the less-healthy Americans said that health problems affected their lives frequently or always. About the same number of less-healthy Americans said they worried about their health frequently or always.

### KEY FINDINGS: REACTIONS TO HEALTH CARE REFORM OPTIONS

Respondents were asked about 23 different health care reform ideas, many of which have been developed through the Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center. Key findings included:

**1. American adults want tools, information and access to providers to better manage their own health. At the same time, they expected to be able to obtain insurance and deal with an efficient health care system.**

The most-favored reform options at right reflect those views.

**2. Most American adults believe the government should not play an important role in overseeing health care.**

Just 32 percent of respondents said it is very or extremely important for the government to play an important role in oversight.

**3. But, government may have a role to play in requiring health insurance.**

Just under half of respondents believed that it was very or extremely important that all Americans should be required to have health insurance, with financial assistance available for those with lower incomes. An additional 23 percent rated this idea as important.

**4. American adults oppose paying more in taxes to achieve health care reform.**

Only 15 percent favored paying more in taxes.

### MOST-FAVORED REFORM OPTIONS

Percent of respondents who rated a reform idea as extremely or very important:

79%	Patients should be able to obtain accurate and complete information on their own health
79%	Patients should have freedom of choice when they select doctors, hospitals and insurance
72%	No one should be denied health insurance due to a pre-existing condition
72%	Efforts to improve the U.S. health system should increase efficiency and decrease waste
70%	Medical care should always be centered on the needs and preferences of the patient
69%	Any person should be able to buy affordable health insurance

**5. Respondents don't want to financially reward patients or providers for quality improvements.**

Among the least appreciated reform ideas were topics focused on financial incentives to encourage change. Less than one-third of those surveyed assigned high importance to:

- Financially rewarding consumers for selecting health care plans and providers that offer high quality care
- Paying medical centers for encouraging patients to be more involved in treatment decisions

## KEY FINDINGS: PROSPECTS FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM

### 1. American adults believe they have a role as change agents in making health care reform happen.

- U.S. adults agree that one of the best ways to have an impact on the health care system is to assume responsibility for their own health, spending more time researching providers and studying coverage options. However, those most likely to take responsibility were those most healthy and able to do so.
- Three in 10 respondents believed consumers have the best potential to affect improvement in health care in the next 10 years.
- Overall, consumers ranked themselves as more likely to make change happen than the U.S. president, hospitals, state legislators and large employers.
- Noted as most likely to effect change were health insurers, health care providers and Congress.

### 2. Nearly 80 percent agreed that it was very important to increase the quality of health care and reduce costs, but many are pessimistic that change is possible.

- Only one in six respondents were optimistic about improvements in health care quality, access to insurance, coordination of care and controlling costs.
- Sixty-six percent felt these changes were unlikely to occur in the next 10 years.
- The most-cited barriers to achieving reform were politics, insurers, costs and too much government involvement. Insurance companies, ranked second most often as a barrier to change, were the most-cited group as able to influence change.

Greatest Ability to Affect Change (those mentioned by at least 5%; multiple responses accepted)				
	Total	Excellent/ Very Good Health Status (a) (n=362)	Good Health Status (b) (n=427)	Fair/Poor Health Status (c) (n=229)
Insurance companies	36%	29%	40% <sup>a</sup>	41% <sup>a</sup>
Doctors and other health care providers	32%	31%	35%	27%
Congress	31%	23%	39% <sup>a</sup>	31%
Consumers	29%	33% <sup>c</sup>	30% <sup>c</sup>	18%
The President	16%	15%	18%	16%
Hospitals	16%	14%	20% <sup>c</sup>	11%
Individual state legislatures	16%	11%	18%	19%
Large employers	15%	19% <sup>c</sup>	15%	9%
News Media	6%	4%	8%	6%
Other	2%	1%	3%	3%
None/Don't Know/No answer	9%	10%	8%	9%

Q930: Of all those involved in influencing health care improvement in the country, which of the following do you feel has the greatest ability to affect significant change in the next 10 years?

Superscripts indicate significant difference from referenced column.

**KEY FINDINGS:  
THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND  
THE DIRECTION OF AMERICA**

**1. Health care was ranked as the second most important issue that a new president should address, after the war in Iraq and before terrorism.** (Note: Survey was conducted before significant decline in the stock market.)

Twice as many American adults feel that presidential candidates are putting too little focus on health care compared to too much.

**2. Respondents aren't likely to vote for a candidate based solely on health care.**

Twenty percent said they will not consider a candidate's position on health care in their voting decision. The vast majority consider health care along with many other issues in making their decision.

**3. The vast majority of American adults are dissatisfied with the overall direction of the country, but the most dissatisfied people don't vote.**

Overall, 7 percent of American adults are very or completely satisfied with the direction of the country. For those with fair or poor health, it's just 3 percent. Among the uninsured, just 1 percent were satisfied with direction of the country.

Those consumers most dissatisfied with the general direction of the country — the less healthy and the less educated — were significantly less likely to have voted in the 2004 presidential election.



200 First Street SW  
Rochester, Minnesota 55905  
[www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)

©2007 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER). All rights reserved. MAYO, MAYO CLINIC and the triple-shield Mayo logo are trademarks and service marks of FMFER.

**WHY THIS SURVEY?  
PUT PATIENTS' VIEWS IN  
REFORM DEBATE**

Two years ago, Mayo Clinic launched the Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center to advance patient-centered health care reform. Mayo Clinic's approach to health care reform reflects its approach to patient care.

**Team work:** When a Mayo Clinic patient has complex health needs, a team of experts works together to provide coordinated, quality care. Working together is also the approach of Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center. In a series of events, Mayo has brought together more than 400 people from business, health care, government, academia and patient advocacy to find common ground for change. These leaders have developed many ways to advance change around four cornerstones: coordination of care, payment reform, insurance for all and value. Patients were asked about those reform options in this survey.

**Patient perspective:** At Mayo Clinic, the needs of the patient guide every decision made. In most health care reform discussions, patients aren't at the table. The Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center has created several initiatives to bring the patient perspective into the discussion, including this research, focus groups, a national listening tour and a Web site ([www.yourvoicenewvision.org](http://www.yourvoicenewvision.org)) where anyone can share ideas for better health care.

**For complete survey results, go to**  
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthpolicycenter/>

**Methodology**

This health care survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of the Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center between December 14, 2007 and December 21, 2007 among 1,018 US residents, 25-75 years of age, who are involved in health care decision-making for their household. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated; a full methodology is available.