Consumers for Quality Care

Findings from an Online Nationwide Poll

February 2021
ALG Research and Public Opinion Strategies conducted an online survey of registered voters nationwide.

The survey consisted of N=1200 total respondents. Overall results were weighted to reflect the composition of registered voters across the country.

Interviews for this survey were conducted January 22-28, 2021.
Cost drove the health care debate pre-COVID and it continues to drive the debate today.

- Americans are overwhelmingly concerned about costs, especially out-of-pocket costs, like deductibles.
- Cost is the issue voters most want Congress and the President to address with health care reform.

Voters are wary of trading quality for cost.

- Americans want affordability and access. They support removing barriers preventing affordable, high-quality care.

Voters don’t want dramatic changes while the health care system is stressed from COVID-19.

- They do not support radical changes at the current time such as shifting to a fully government-run system.
- However, they think the health care system was overwhelmed by the pandemic and support increased investment to make it more resilient.

The health care industry receives high marks in the COVID-19 environment.

- Overall, 70% of Americans approve of how the health care industry generally has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.
THE COVID EFFECT
More than 8-in-10 Americans believe COVID-19 has exposed flaws in our current health care system.

A majority (56%) agree that COVID-19 has shown racial disparities in our system, and more agree it has exposed disparities along wealth / class lines (75%)
In an open-ended question, people say their takeaway from COVID-19 is that the system is broken or was unprepared for the pandemic. However, those who personally had COVID-19 were more likely to volunteer how well they thought it worked.

What is the most surprising thing you have learned about our health care system during the COVID-19 crisis? [OPEN-ENDED]

- **Health care is broken / inefficient / doesn’t work**
  - Overall: 21
  - Personally Contracted: 18
- **Health care system was unprepared / quickly overwhelmed**
  - Overall: 6
  - Personally Contracted: 18
- **The health care system works good / handled it well**
  - Overall: 12
  - Personally Contracted: 27
- **Care is too expensive / costs too much**
  - Overall: 8
  - Personally Contracted: 8
- **How hard doctors / nurses / first responders work**
  - Overall: 4
  - Personally Contracted: 1

- “The many gap[s] and lack of willingness to address these various issues, which do include the lack of coverage and lack of trust others have with the System”
- “How easily overwhelmed the system is when dealing with pandemic dynamics such as increased patient load, higher care requirements, need for additional staffing etc. I did not realize how fragile our healthcare system has become.”
- “How courageous our essential health care workers have been in meeting the challenge!”
- “quality care is still available and the medical field has been very adaptable in how to accommodate patients”
Voters think we need to be cautious about changes we make to the stressed health care system coming out of COVID-19. Those changes should include making the system stronger and more resilient.
CONSUMER CONCERNS
Premiums, copays, and deductibles top the list of concerns with Americans’ own health care. Very few are worried about their current ability to access quality care.

What concerns you the most, when it comes to your own personal health care coverage?

- The cost of your coverage, including premiums, copays, and deductibles: First Choice 36, Second Choice 57
- How unpredictable your medical bills are when you go to the doctor or hospital: First Choice 17, Second Choice 38
- Cost of prescription medicines: First Choice 16, Second Choice 32
- Difficult to understand my plan and coverage: First Choice 8, Second Choice 18
- Lack of access to quality doctors and treatments: First Choice 7, Second Choice 17
Overall, 80% of voters agree their health care costs keep going up every year, and more than 70% struggle with out-of-pocket costs. These cost related issues more acutely affect those with private health insurance.
Costs – deductibles and unpredictable bills – are the most serious concerns, both now and in the future.
Generally, voters' future concerns track with their current concerns.

How concerned are you about the following happening to you…*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Now (Total Concern)</th>
<th>In the next 5 years (Total Concern)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'll be unable to afford a high deductible for care I need</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll get a surprise medical bill that is thousands of dollars</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-quality care will cause me serious health problems or complications</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll have to delay needed care because I can't afford the out-of-pocket costs</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll be unable to afford my monthly health care premium</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An illness or medical emergency in my family will force me into bankruptcy</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll need to delay seeking care</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll be kicked off my health care coverage and unable to get similar care</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My employer will make me pay a bigger portion of monthly premiums</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some items not asked for both questions
Voters most pressing concern over the next 5 years is not being able to afford a high deductible for their care. This concern is especially high among people of color, those with private insurance, under 50, and who don’t describe themselves as healthy.
Access and quality are second tier legislative priorities, followed by a simpler system.

When it comes to health care, what would you like to see Congress and the President work on most?

- **First Choice**
  - Reducing the cost of care: 45
  - Increasing access to coverage: 19
  - Improving the quality of care: 20
  - Simplifying the system and making it easier to navigate: 12

- **Second Choice**
  - Reducing the cost of care: 67
  - Increasing access to coverage: 45
  - Improving the quality of care: 44
  - Simplifying the system and making it easier to navigate: 31

Voters to President, Congress: Get costs under control.
Potential policies focused on improving coverage to lower costs receive the most support.

63% of voters *strongly* agree with deductibles being low enough to not get in the way of getting care, the most of any statement we tested in the survey.

**HEALTH CARE STATEMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Net Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insurance deductibles should be low enough that they don’t get in the way of getting the health care you need.</td>
<td>+87</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance companies should not be allowed to sell plans that cover so little that going to the doctor isn’t affordable even with insurance.</td>
<td>+72</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ensuring deductibles are low enough to not get in the way of getting care receives near unanimous support across party lines. There is less intensity from Republican men, but 88% still agree overall, and Republican women are on par with Democrats and Independents.

*Insurance deductibles should be low enough that they don’t get in the way of getting the health care you need.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democrat</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent</strong></td>
<td>95</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Republican Men</strong></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Republican Women</strong></td>
<td>93</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Net Agree

- Overall: +87
- Democrat: +88
- Independent: +91
- Republican Men: +79
- Republican Women: +88
A majority (55%) of Americans are not willing to give up quality for lower costs when forced to choose between the two. They want their current care to be cheaper, not lower-quality, low-cost plans.

When it comes to your personal health care, if you had to choose between the two, which of the following would be more important to you?

- Lower cost care
- Higher quality care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Lower cost care</th>
<th>Higher quality care</th>
<th>Net Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninsured</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty paying bills</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>+14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No difficulty paying bills</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A majority (55%) have used telehealth, and many like it more than in-person care, with 69% saying they’re likely to use it even after the pandemic.

Most (67%) have used it during COVID-19 as a result of doctors not seeing patients in-person.
More than 80% of voters agree we should strengthen protections and guarantee coverage for people with pre-existing conditions, including COVID-19.

This stems less from a specific concern that insurers will try to deny people who have had COVID-19.
Thank you -
For more information, please contact:

Neil Newhouse
neil@pos.org

Jarrett Lewis
jarrett@pos.org

John Anzalone
john@algpolling.com

Brian Stryker
brian@algpolling.com

Luke Martin
luke@algpolling.com