MONTANA
STATEWIDE POLL
ON HEALTH CARE QUALITY,
ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

Key Findings

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consumers4qualitycare.org
INTRODUCTION

Before the pandemic, Consumers for Quality Care (CQC) research showed that Americans were more concerned with health care costs than costs related to retirement, housing, childcare and higher education. The pandemic put even more stress on our nation’s health care infrastructure and exposed serious flaws in the system for patients; at the center of the issue is how much Americans are paying for care.

Recent research conducted by ALG Research and Lake Research Partners, conducted on behalf of Consumers for Quality Care, shows voters in Montana and across the U.S. want elected officials to get those costs down, so that they can feel confident that they have access to the quality health care they want, when they need it.

SURVEY RESULTS

Voters in ALG Research and Lake Research Partner’s recent Montana poll see affordability as a major issue in the state’s health care system. While voters generally believe the health care system is meeting their needs and want to be cautious making changes to it as we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s clear out-of-pocket costs are having a serious impact. As a result, voters – even those with insurance – are struggling to afford quality care and are racking up medical debt as costs continue to climb.
MONTANANS’ BIGGEST PROBLEM WITH HEALTH CARE: IT’S TOO EXPENSIVE.

In an open-ended question about what word most describes health care in Montana, the quality of the system is evident as the word “good” is the second-most mentioned. However, “expensive” is the word that dominates their associations with the health care system.

MULTIPLE NUMBERS THROUGHOUT THIS DATA POINT TO WHY COST HAS BECOME SUCH AN ISSUE FOR VOTERS:

- More than four-in-five voters (82%) agree that the amount they pay for health care seems to be going up every year.
- A majority (68%) agree that at some point they have struggled to pay a medical bill even while they had health insurance.
- A quarter of voters (25%) actively have unpaid or overdue medical bills that they are having difficulty paying off. Among voters who are already struggling financially, this number climbs to 44%.

VOTERS WANT ELECTED OFFICIALS TO GET THOSE COSTS DOWN, BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF ACCESS TO QUALITY CARE.

Voters cite cost (49%) as the thing they want their leaders to work on most—more voters choose cost than those choose improving access (16%), quality (15%), or ease-of-navigation (14%) combined. However, in an open-ended question, it’s clear they’re not willing to give up quality as nearly the same number of voters said “good health care” would mean access to good health care providers (39%) as said it would mean more affordable care (43%).
Majorities are concerned about being able to afford high deductibles (77% concerned), getting a surprise medical bill (75%), or being able to afford their monthly premium (62%). When it comes to reducing the costs of health care, Montana voters would most like to see lower premiums (24%), lower prescription medication costs (17%), and lower deductibles (11%).
A majority of voters across the partisan spectrum agree with this sentiment, including more than 2-in-3 Democrats (67% agree).

**LEGISLATION THAT ALIGNS WITH THEIR PRIORITIES AND HAS HIGH SUPPORT ACROSS THE BOARD WOULD:**

- Prevent closures of rural VA hospitals and offices across Montana (92% believe this is important).
- Make sure insurance deductibles are low enough that they don’t get in the way of getting quality care (95% agree with this).
- Prevent insurance companies from selling plans that cover so little that it isn’t affordable to get care (88% agree with this).
- Improve broadband internet across Montana so people can access telehealth medicine. (82% believe this is important).
- Do away with insurance pre-authorization for tests and treatments that doctors prescribe to diagnose and treat cancer and other life-threatening diseases (70% support this).
- Make the current Medicaid expansion permanent (63% support this).
DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

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

- Strongly agree: 95
- Somewhat agree: 74
- Somewhat disagree: 4
- Strongly disagree: 1

Insurance companies should not be allowed to sell plans that cover so little that going to the doctor isn’t affordable.

- Strongly agree: 88
- Somewhat agree: 71
- Somewhat disagree: 9
- Strongly disagree: 4

[Do] away with insurance pre-authorization for tests and treatments that doctors prescribe to diagnose and treat cancer and other life-threatening diseases

- Strongly favor: 70
- Somewhat favor: 46
- Somewhat oppose: 20
- Strongly oppose: 9
ABOUT CONSUMERS FOR QUALITY CARE (CQC)

Consumers for Quality Care (CQC) is a coalition of advocates and former policymakers working to provide a voice for patients in the health care debate as they demand better care. CQC is led by a board of directors that includes the Honorable Donna Christensen, physician and former Member of Congress; Jim Manley, former senior advisor to Senators Edward Kennedy and Harry Reid; and Jason Resendez, community advocate, and health care strategist.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CONSUMERS FOR QUALITY CARE AND THE ISSUES CONSUMERS ARE EXPERIENCING, VISIT CONSUMERS4QUALITYCARE.ORG
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Key Findings

These findings are from a multimodal survey, designed by ALG Research and Lake Research Partners and conducted by ALG Research July 21-25, 2021 among N=601 registered voters in Montana. Overall results were weighted to reflect the composition of registered voters in the state.