

Large Majorities of Public Blame Health Insurers, Drug Industry, Republicans and Business for Problems with Our Current Health Care System

New York, N.Y. — September 9, 2009 — Whatever the public may think about proposals for health care reform, they blame many different parties for the problems with the system we have now. The health insurance and pharmaceutical industries are the most widely blamed, with most people believing they deserve a “great deal of blame.” However, more than 60% of all adults believe that both Republicans and Democrats in Congress, business, hospitals, former President George W. Bush and doctors should all get at least some blame.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,498 U.S. adults surveyed online between August 10 and 18, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

Fully 90% of all adults blame the health insurance industry, and 60% believe it deserves a “great deal” of blame. Almost as many, 84% of adults blame the pharmaceutical industry and 53% think it deserves a “great deal” of the blame.

Substantial but smaller majorities believe that all of the following are to blame: Republicans in Congress (74%), business (72%), hospitals (70%), Democrats in Congress (69%), President George W. Bush (66%), and doctors (61%). However, less than 30% believe any of these deserve a “great deal” of blame.

A 58% to 42% majority does *not* think President Bill Clinton is to blame.

Majority Believes Obama’s Proposals Would Create a Government-run Health Care System

This Harris Poll also tested the impact of the health care debate on public perceptions of President Obama’s proposals. This poll was conducted in August, before the President’s address to Congress on September 9th. It found that:

- A 49% to 40% plurality of adults support President Obama’s proposals, compared to a 42% to 38% plurality in July and a 50% to 20% plurality in January;
- A slender 54% to 46% majority rates Obama’s proposals as “good” but only 19% believe they are “very good”;
- However, a 54% majority rates the proposals by the Democrats in Congress as “bad” and a larger 69% majority rates the proposals of the Republicans in Congress as “bad” (it should be noted, of course, that there are, as yet, no one set of proposals coming from either the Democrats or the President – nor, of course, from the Republicans).
- A 58% to 19% majority believes that President Obama’s plans would create a “government-run health care system”;
- A 28% minority believe that President Obama’s plans would not allow anyone, “who wants to, keep the health insurance they have now.”

So What?

These poll findings illustrate the tangled nature of public opinion on health care reform. Doubts about President Obama’s proposals have increased but nobody else – certainly not the Congressional Republicans – is seen as having anything better to offer.

In general the low level of support for any proposal, and the large number who blame both the public and the private sectors provide a gloomy picture of public distrust and low expectations.

TABLE 1
HOW MUCH VARIOUS INDUSTRIES AND ELECTED OFFICIALS ARE BLAMED FOR PROBLEMS WITH CURRENT SYSTEM

“How much do you blame each of the following for the problems with the current health care system?”

Base: All adults

		BLAME (NET)	A Great Deal of Blame	Some Blame	DO NOT BLAME (NET)	Not That Much Blame	No Blame at All
Health insurance industry	%	90	60	30	10	7	3
Pharmaceutical industry	%	84	53	30	16	12	4
Republicans in Congress	%	74	26	49	26	18	7
Business	%	72	28	44	28	20	7
Hospitals	%	70	29	42	30	22	7
Democrats in Congress	%	69	19	50	31	22	9
Former President George W. Bush	%	66	27	39	34	22	11
Doctors	%	61	21	41	39	27	11
Former President Bill Clinton	%	42	8	34	58	32	26
President Barack Obama	%	27	9	18	73	28	45

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 2
SUPPORT OR OPPOSE OBAMA’S REFORM PROPOSALS

“Even if you don’t know the details of his plan, how do you feel about President Obama’s proposals for health care reform?”

Base: All Adults

	January	July	August
	%	%	%
Support (NET)	50	42	49
Support strongly	25	20	24
Support somewhat	26	21	25
Oppose (NET)	20	38	40
Oppose somewhat	9	12	11
Oppose strongly	12	27	29
Not sure	29	20	11

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 3

ATTITUDES TO PROPOSALS OF OBAMA, CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS

"Based on what you're read, seen or heard, how would you rate the health care plans proposed by each of the following?"

Base: All adults

	President Obama	Democrats in Congress	Republicans in Congress
	%	%	%
GOOD (NET)	54	46	31
Very good	19	6	2
Somewhat good	35	40	29
BAD (NET)	46	54	69
Somewhat bad	17	26	42
Very bad	29	28	27

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 4

WOULD OBAMA'S PROPOSALS CREATE A GOVERNMENT-RUN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM?

"Do you believe that President Obama's health care proposals would do the following – Create a government-run health care system?"

Base: All adults

	Total	Political Party		
		Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%
Would	58	80	43	64
Would not	19	8	27	20
Not sure	22	12	30	16

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 5

WOULD OBAMA'S PLAN LET ANYONE WHO WANTS TO KEEP THE INSURANCE THEY HAVE NOW?

"Do you believe that President Obama's health care proposals would do the following – Let anyone who wants to keep the health insurance they have now?"

Base: All adults

	Total	Political Party		
		Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%
Would allow	47	19	70	48
Would not	28	58	8	32
Not sure	24	23	22	20

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

The Harris Poll #99, September 9, 2009

By Humphrey Taylor, Chairman, The Harris Poll, Harris Interactive

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States August 10 and 18, 2009, among 2,984 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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