



UW Badger Poll™ #29, Release #1  
University of Wisconsin Survey Center  
University of Wisconsin Madison  
FOR RELEASE ON DECEMBER 1, 2009

NOTE: When using material from this release please cite the UW Badger Poll™ conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center. Poll results compiled by Chad J. Kniss, Project Director, UW Survey Center. [ckniss@ssc.wisc.edu](mailto:ckniss@ssc.wisc.edu) (office phone: 608.262.4157)

Questions about Poll content and results can be directed to:  
Associate Professor Katherine Cramer Walsh, Department of Political Science (cell: 608.347.8528)

## **WISCONSINITES' VIEWS ON HEALTH CARE REFORM**

The latest UW Badger Poll asked Wisconsin residents about their opinions on the current state of the health care system in the United States and their support (or opposition) to the current debate about health insurance reform in Washington D.C. A brief summary is below with additional information and analysis on the following pages.

- 72% of Badger state residents describe the health care system in the U.S. as either being in a state of crisis or having major problems.
- Only 40% are satisfied with the current health care system in the U.S. today (including those who lean toward satisfaction).
- 56% think that the costs of health care are either quite or extremely problematic for residents of Wisconsin.
- Nearly 86% think the federal government bears at least some responsibility for making sure that all Wisconsinites have access to both affordable and high quality health care, with 46% saying the federal government should be either quite or extremely responsible.
- 58% said they favored the creation of a health insurance plan that would be available to most Americans and administered by the federal government that would compete with plans offered by private health insurance companies.
- However, when asked if they favored or opposed the proposed changes to the health care system being developed in Washington D.C., Wisconsinites were almost evenly split with 46% opposing and 44% favoring based on what they had heard or read.

Additional results are presented on the following pages.

## Current Health Care Coverage among Wisconsinites

92% of Badger State residents currently have some kind of health care coverage or plan. 8% do not currently have any kind of health care coverage. 7% of those respondents who currently have health care coverage said that at some point in time over the past two years they had gone without any health care coverage or plan.

<b>Health Insurance Coverage in Wisconsin</b>				
	Nov. 2009	Oct. 2008	Apr. 2008	Dec. 2007
Have Some Type of Insurance	92%	92%	93%	92%
Does not have Insurance	8%	7%	7%	8%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>521</b>

  

<b>Ever Been without Coverage in the Past Two Years (for those with insurance currently)</b>				
	Nov. 2009	Oct. 2008	Apr. 2008	Dec. 2007
Yes	7%	9%	8%	14%
No	93%	87%	88%	80%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>464</b>

A majority of those respondents who currently have coverage said they are either extremely or very satisfied, and another 28% said they either lean toward being satisfied or are slightly or somewhat satisfied. Only 20% of those respondents who currently have health care insurance said they were at least leaning toward being dissatisfied with their plan.

<b>Satisfaction with Personal Health Insurance or Health Care Plan (for those with insurance currently)</b>	
	Nov. 2009
Extremely/Very Satisfied	51%
Somewhat/Slightly Satisfied	13%
Lean Towards Satisfied	15%
Mixed Feelings	1%
Lean Towards Dissatisfied	9%
Somewhat/Slightly Dissatisfied	6%
Extremely/Very Dissatisfied	5%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	0%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>465</b>

We also asked those respondents who had health care coverage how worried they were about losing their health care coverage over the next 12 months. A majority of those with health insurance coverage said they were not at all worried about losing their coverage, while 36% said they were slightly or somewhat worried and 13% are either very or extremely worried.

<b>How Worried about Losing Health Care Coverage in the Next Two Years (for those with insurance currently)</b>	
	Nov. 2009
Extremely Worried	7%
Very Worried	6%
Somewhat Worried	18%
Slightly Worried	18%
Not at all Worried	51%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	<1%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>465</b>

The table below shows some of the differences between groups of respondents based on whether or not they are old enough to be enrolled in Medicare (65 years or over). As we would expect, among those respondents 65 and over, nearly all reported they have some type of health care coverage and plan (only 4% of that group of respondents said they did not), compared to 10% of all those under 65 years old who said they did not currently have health care coverage. Wisconsinites 65 years old and over were also more likely to say they were satisfied with their current coverage (90%) than those under 65 years old (77% satisfied when leaners included). Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of respondents over the age of 64 said they were either very or extremely satisfied with their coverage compared to only 47% of those under 65 who said they were either very or extremely satisfied.

<b>Comparisons of Current Health Care Coverage by Age</b>		
	Under 65	65 & Over
Currently have Coverage	90%	99%
If have coverage went without in the past 2 years	7%	4%
Dissatisfied with Current Coverage	23%	9%
Satisfied with Current Coverage	77%	90%
Not at all worried about losing Health Care Coverage in the next 12 months	51%	51%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>285</b>

## Badger State Views on the U.S. Health Care System

All respondents were asked if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the health care system is working in the United States today. 58% of Wisconsinites gave a dissatisfied response, while 40% gave a satisfied response. Further, when asked about the intensity of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, 29% were either very or extremely dissatisfied, compared to only 10% who were either very or extremely satisfied. In fact, a majority (52%) of those who are satisfied are only leaning towards satisfied after originally saying they had mixed feelings (21% of the 40% who gave a satisfied response).

<b>Satisfaction with the Health Care System in the United States today (with leaners)</b>	
	Nov. 2009
Extremely/Very Satisfied	10%
Somewhat/Slightly Satisfied	9%
Lean towards Satisfied	21%
Mixed Feelings	1%
Lean towards Dissatisfied	18%
Somewhat/Slightly Dissatisfied	11%
Extremely/Very Dissatisfied	29%
Don't Know	<1%
Refused	0%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>507</b>

The last time the UW Badger Poll asked a similar question was in October of 2008; however, that question asked about the satisfaction with the health care system in the state of Wisconsin. Comparing the table above (on the U.S.) and the table below (on WI) there are striking similarities. In October 2008, 59% of Badger State residents were more dissatisfied with the health care system in Wisconsin and this fall a very similar portion (58%) of Wisconsin residents feel the same way about the health care system across the nation.

<b>Satisfaction with the Health Care System in Wisconsin today (with leaners)</b>	
	Oct. 2008
Very Satisfied	10%
Somewhat Satisfied	11%
Lean Toward Satisfied	19%
Mixed Feelings	1%
Lean Toward Dissatisfied	28%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	10%
Very Dissatisfied	21%
Don't Know	<1%
Refused	<1%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>538</b>

When asked about how problematic the costs of health care are for the people of Wisconsin, 56% of adults in Wisconsin think that the costs are either quite or extremely problematic while only 1% think they are not at all problematic. The portion of adults in Wisconsin who think that health care costs are either quite or extremely problematic for Wisconsinites had declined from 76% in October of 2008 to 56% in the fall of 2009.

<b>How Problematic are the Costs of Health Care for the People of Wisconsin?</b>			
	Nov. 2009	Oct. 2008	Apr. 2008
Extremely	24%	40%	50%
Quite	32%	36%	25%
Somewhat	25%	14%	13%
Slightly	17%	8%	7%
Not at All	1%	1%	2%
Don't Know	1%	1%	2%
Refused	<1%	0%	1%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>521</b>

## Wisconsinites' Description of the Health Care System in the United States Today

A plurality of Badger state residents (49%) feel that the health care system in the United States has major problems. Another 23% said the U.S. health care system was in a state of crisis. 27% thought that the national health care system only has minor problems and less than 1% said there are currently no problems.

<b>Description of the Health Care System in the United States today</b>	
	Nov. 2009
State of Crisis	23%
Major Problems	49%
Minor Problems	27%
No Problems	<1%
Don't Know	<1%
Refused	<1%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>507</b>

The last time the UW Badger Poll asked a similar question was in October of 2008; however, that question asked about the health care system in Wisconsin. Comparing the most recent figures from the table above and the table below, Wisconsinites think the health care system in the state is somewhat better than in the nation as a whole. Although, as noted previously, the level of satisfaction with the health care systems in Wisconsin in the fall of 2008 is very similar to the level of satisfaction with the national health care system this fall.

<b>Description of the Health Care System in Wisconsin</b>			
	Oct. 2008	Apr. 2008	Dec. 2007
State of Crisis	9%	7%	12%
Major Problems	53%	45%	50%
Minor Problems	35%	44%	35%
No Problems	2%	2%	2%
Don't Know	1%	2%	2%
Refused	0%	0%	<1%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>507</b>

## Responsibility of the Federal Government to Make Sure All Wisconsinites have Access to Health Care

The survey then asked respondents about their feelings toward health care reform efforts under way in Washington D.C. 46% said that the federal government should be either quite or extremely responsible for making sure that all residents of Wisconsin have access to both high quality and affordable health care. Another 40% thought the federal government should be less than extremely or very responsible, but still bears some responsibility.

Only 14% of respondents think that the federal government should be not at all responsible to ensure that all residents of Wisconsin have access to both high quality and affordable health care. Additionally, a smaller group of Wisconsinites feel the federal government should be extremely responsible than gave this response one year ago, while more people think that it should be not at all responsible compared to October of 2008.

<b>How responsible should the federal government be in making sure that all residents of Wisconsin have access to both high quality and affordable health care?</b>			
	Nov. 2009	Oct. 2008	Apr. 2008
Extremely	20%	27%	27%
Quite	26%	27%	28%
Somewhat	28%	28%	27%
Slightly	12%	9%	11%
Not at All	14%	9%	7%
Don't Know	0%	<1%	<1%
Refused	<1%	<1%	0%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>521</b>

## Many in Wisconsin Favor a Federal Government Run Health Insurance Plan

One of the more debated items in the potential health care reforms at the national level is a so-called “public option”. We asked Wisconsinites whether they opposed or favored the creation of a health insurance plan that would be available to most Americans and administered by the federal government that would compete with plans offered by private health insurance companies. This would be a version of the so-called “robust public option”.

58% of Badger state adults said they favored the creation of health insurance choice run by the federal government. 37% opposed this idea and nearly 4% said they neither favored or opposed the plan or didn’t know enough to offer an opinion. When asked about how intensely respondents favor or oppose a federal government-run health insurance option, just under one-third (32%) said they favored the public option either very much or extremely, while 27% said they opposed the public option either very much or extremely.

---

<b>Favor or Oppose a Federal Government Run Health Insurance Plan to Compete with Private Health Insurance Plans</b>	
	Nov. 2009
Extremely/Very Much Favor	32%
Somewhat/Slightly Favor	26%
Neither Favor nor Oppose	2%
Somewhat/Slightly Oppose	10%
Extremely/Very Much Oppose	27%
Don't Know	2%
Refused	1%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>507</b>

---



## Wisconsin is Not Sure about Washington’s Proposed Changes to the Health Care System

Finally, we asked a very general and broad question about whether Wisconsinites favored or opposed the proposed changes to the health care system being developed in Washington D.C. (based on what they had heard or read about them). The results for this question stand in some contrast to the theoretical question above about a widely available public option – 46% said they opposed the potential changes and 44% said they favored them. An additional 9% said they neither favored nor opposed the changes or didn’t know enough about them to decide.

When it comes to intensity of support or opposition, more people said they were either very much or extremely opposed (30%) than those that said they very much or extremely favored the proposed changes (20%).

<b>Favor or Oppose the Proposed Changes to the Health Care System being developed in Washington D.C.</b>	
	Nov. 2009
Extremely/Very Much Favor	20%
Somewhat/Slightly Favor	24%
Neither Favor nor Oppose	3%
Somewhat/Slightly Oppose	16%
Extremely/Very Much Oppose	30%
Don't Know	6%
Refused	1%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>507</b>

Further, we used that last question to do an experiment about whether or not people are more likely to favor or oppose potential health care reforms in development in Washington D.C. if the President’s name was explicitly used. For this, the sample was randomly split into two groups (of equal size). One half of the sample received the question as, “Overall, given what you know about them, do you favor or oppose the proposed changes to the health care system being developed by Congress and the Obama administration?” The other half received the question as, “Overall, given what you know about them, do you favor or oppose the proposed changes to the health care system being developed by the federal government?”

As the table on the next page shows, there is very little change in the level of opposition -- 47% oppose with Obama’s name added and 46% oppose with the general “federal government.” There is a very small and statistically insignificant change in the level of those that favor the changes – 45% with Obama’s name and 42% without.

---

**Favor or Oppose the Proposed Changes to the Health Care System being developed by...**

---

	...Congress and the Obama administration.	...the federal government.
Extremely/Very Much Favor	19%	20%
Somewhat/Slightly Favor	26%	22%
Neither Favor nor Oppose	2%	4%
Somewhat/Slightly Oppose	14%	19%
Extremely/Very Much Oppose	33%	27%
Don't Know	6%	6%
Refused	<1%	2%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>253</b>

Pearson's  $r$  is 0.007 and the t-test for equality of means is -0.165. Both are far from being statistically significance.

**APPENDIX:**

<b>Satisfaction with the Health Care System in the U.S. Today</b>							
		<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Mixed Feelings</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Refused</b>	<b>(N)</b>
<b>Overall</b>		<b>19%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>(507)</b>
Likely Voters		19%	38%	43%	<1%	0%	(299)
Gender	Men	23%	34%	43%	0%	0%	(213)
	Women	15%	45%	39%	1%	0%	(294)
Party ID	Democrats	10%	43%	46%	1%	0%	(172)
	Independents & Others	18%	39%	42%	0%	0%	(203)
	Republicans	33%	34%	33%	0%	0%	(113)
Age	18-29*	17%	41%	42%	0%	0%	(28)
	30-44	21%	44%	35%	0%	0%	(76)
	45-59	16%	39%	45%	1%	0%	(157)
	60 plus	24%	34%	41%	1%	0%	(246)
Education	Never attended college	20%	40%	39%	<1%	0%	(197)
	Some college	16%	43%	41%	0%	0%	(146)
	College graduate	21%	36%	43%	<1%	0%	(164)
Income	Under \$40,000	19%	37%	44%	<1%	0%	(194)
	\$40,000 to \$80,000	18%	38%	44%	0%	0%	(164)
	Over \$80,000	22%	40%	37%	1%	0%	(90)

(\*Caution should be taken when interpreting the findings of subgroups with smaller numbers of respondents due to the potential for larger variation.)

**Favor or Oppose a Federal Government-Run Health Insurance Plan to Compete with Private Health Insurance Plans**

		<b>Favor</b>	<b>Neither (vol.)</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Refused</b>	<b>(N)</b>
<b>Overall</b>		<b>58%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>(507)</b>
Likely Voters		53%	2%	43%	1%	1%	(299)
Date Interviewed**							
	On or before Nov. 7th	54%	4%	40%	1%	1%	(277)
	On or after Nov. 8th	63%	1%	33%	2%	1%	(230)
Gender	Men	54%	1%	43%	2%	0%	(213)
	Women	63%	3%	30%	2%	2%	(294)
Party ID	Democrats	85%	2%	11%	1%	1%	(172)
	Independents & Others	54%	2%	40%	3%	1%	(203)
	Republicans	33%	0%	66%	0%	1%	(113)
Age	18-29*	73%	4%	20%	3%	0%	(28)
	30-44	56%	1%	41%	1%	1%	(76)
	45-59	56%	2%	40%	0%	2%	(157)
	60 plus	52%	2%	43%	3%	0%	(246)
Education	Never attended college	61%	2%	35%	1%	1%	(197)
	Some college	53%	4%	39%	3%	0%	(146)
	College graduate	60%	1%	37%	1%	1%	(164)
Income	Under \$40,000	72%	1%	23%	3%	<1%	(194)
	\$40,000 to \$80,000	56%	2%	41%	0%	<1%	(164)
	Over \$80,000	52%	1%	45%	1%	1%	(90)

(\*Caution should be taken when interpreting the findings of subgroups with smaller numbers of respondents due to the potential for larger variation.)

(\*\* By coincidence the most recent UW Badger Poll was in the field during the time the U.S. House of Representatives Voted on the "Affordable Health Care for America Act" on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009.)

<b>Favor or Oppose the Proposed Changes to the Health Care System Being Developed in Washington D.C.</b>							
		<b>Favor</b>	<b>Neither (vol.)</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Refused</b>	<b>(N)</b>
<b>Overall</b>		<b>44%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>(507)</b>
Likely Voters		40%	2%	50%	7%	1%	(299)
Date Interviewed**							
	On or before Nov. 7th	40%	5%	50%	4%	1%	(277)
	On or after Nov. 8th	47%	2%	43%	8%	<1%	(230)
Gender	Men	38%	2%	53%	7%	<1%	(213)
	Women	49%	5%	40%	4%	2%	(294)
Party ID	Democrats	79%	2%	13%	5%	1%	(172)
	Independents & Others	36%	4%	55%	4%	1%	(203)
	Republicans	11%	2%	79%	7%	1%	(113)
Age	18-29*	63%	4%	25%	8%	0%	(28)
	30-44	38%	3%	56%	2%	1%	(76)
	45-59	40%	2%	49%	7%	2%	(157)
	60 plus	36%	5%	51%	7%	1%	(246)
Education	Never attended college	39%	2%	48%	10%	1%	(197)
	Some college	45%	5%	48%	2%	0%	(146)
	College graduate	47%	3%	44%	4%	1%	(164)
Income	Under \$40,000	51%	2%	37%	9%	1%	(194)
	\$40,000 to \$80,000	45%	3%	48%	3%	1%	(164)
	Over \$80,000	40%	3%	52%	4%	1%	(90)

(\*Caution should be taken when interpreting the findings of subgroups with smaller numbers of respondents due to the potential for larger variation.)

(\*\* By coincidence the most recent UW Badger Poll was in the field during the time the U.S. House of Representatives Voted on the "Affordable Health Care for America Act" on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009.)

## SURVEY QUESTION WORDING

- HCQ10 Currently, do you have any kind of coverage for health care, including health insurance, prepaid HMO plans, or government plans such as Medicare, Medicaid, or BadgerCare? (INT: TITLE 19 IS THE SAME AS MEDICAID)
- HCQ11 Since October 2007, have you been without health insurance at any time?
- HCQ12 [NOTE: only asked if the answer to HCQ10 was yes]  
Are you satisfied, dissatisfied, or do you have mixed feelings about your current health insurance or health care plan?
- HCQ12b [NOTE: only asked if the answer to HCQ12 was mixed feelings]  
Overall, do you lean more toward being satisfied or dissatisfied?
- HCQ12a [NOTE: only asked if the answer to HCQ12 was satisfied or dissatisfied]  
Would you say you are extremely [satisfied/dissatisfied], very [satisfied/dissatisfied], somewhat [satisfied/dissatisfied], or are you only slightly [satisfied/dissatisfied]?
- HCQ13 [NOTE: only asked if the answer to HCQ10 was yes]  
How worried are you about losing your coverage for health care in the next 12 months: not at all worried, slightly worried, somewhat worried, very worried, or extremely worried?
- HCQ01\_v2 Overall, are you satisfied, dissatisfied, or do you have mixed feelings about the way the health care system is working in the [bold]United States[n] today?
- HCQ01c\_v2 [NOTE: only asked if the answer to HCQ01\_v2 was mixed feelings]  
Overall, do you lean more toward being satisfied or dissatisfied?
- HCQ01b\_v2 [NOTE: only asked if the answer to HCQ01\_v2 was either satisfied or dissatisfied]  
Would you say you are extremely [satisfied/dissatisfied], very [satisfied/dissatisfied], somewhat [satisfied/dissatisfied], or are you only slightly [satisfied/dissatisfied]?
- HCQ04\_v2 Which of these statements do you think best describes the health care system in the **United States** today: it does not have any problems, it has minor problems, it has major problems, or it is in a state of crisis?
- ECON10c\_v2 Would you say that the costs of health care for the people of Wisconsin are: not at all problematic, slightly problematic, somewhat problematic, quite problematic, or extremely problematic?
- HCQ07\_b How responsible should the federal government be in making sure that all residents of Wisconsin have access to **both** high quality and affordable health care: not at all responsible, slightly responsible, somewhat responsible, quite responsible, or extremely responsible?
- HCQ14 Do you favor or oppose creating a health insurance plan that would be available to most Americans and administered by the federal government that would compete with plans offered by private health insurance companies?
- HCQ14\_a [NOTE: only asked if the answer to HCQ14 was either favor or oppose]  
Would you say you [favor/oppose] this: extremely, very much, somewhat or only slightly?
- HCQ15\_rnd [NOTE: computer generated random assignment into two groups]

[Group 1 = "Congress and the Obama administration"]  
[Group 2 = "the federal government"]

HCQ15 [NOTE: the phrases "Congress and the Obama administration" OR "the federal government" were rotated in the question below based on the random assignment in HCQ15\_rnd]

Overall, given what you know about them, do you favor or oppose the proposed changes to the health care system being developed by [Congress and the Obama administration[OR]the federal government]?

HCQ15\_a [NOTE: only asked if the answer to HCQ15 was either favor or oppose]  
Do you [favor/oppose] the proposed changes: extremely, very much, somewhat or only slightly?

### HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

This UW BADGER POLL™ was conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center as part of its ongoing program of research designed to benefit the research community and the people of Wisconsin. The Director of the poll operations is Chad J. Kniss, UW Survey Center. The Faculty Director of the Poll content is Associate Professor Katherine Cramer Walsh, Department of Political Science, UW-Madison. The UW BADGER POLL™ is intended to be a "poll of record" for the state, investigating matters of concern to Wisconsinites including politics, culture, and their daily lives, adhering to the highest standards of polling methodology and rigorous independence.

Results shown here are based on 507 persons who were randomly chosen within households with working landline telephone numbers and interviewed between October 29 and November 20, 2009, inclusive. During this time period, the UWSC made 10,847 phone calls to 2,026 telephone numbers. Additionally, advance letters describing the survey and its procedures were sent to 841 households whose randomly chosen telephone numbers were matched to a known listed address. The response rate for this survey was 38.3%, as defined by the American Association of Public Opinion Research Response Rate 3. Calls were made between 9AM and 9PM Monday through Friday and between 10AM and 5PM on Saturday and from 12 noon to 9PM on Sunday. All telephone numbers were randomly generated by computer. The UWSC made up to 11 attempts on each number in order to confirm if it was a residential number, select an eligible respondent and/or to convert first time refusals. Approximately 73% of the 507 interviews were completed in the first two weeks of calling.

Theoretically, results from this survey have a "margin of error" of a little over +/- 4%. This means that, had we asked every resident in Wisconsin, exactly these questions at the time the survey was conducted, there is only a one in twenty chance that the answers would differ by more than that in either direction from what we report here. There could be differences because of changes in question wording, events occurring in the meantime, or any of the practical difficulties involved in taking a scientific survey. Results based on subgroups are subject to a larger "margin of error". Results reported here are based on weighted data (weighted to reflect statewide gender and age groups).