

# Health Care: **Where Next**



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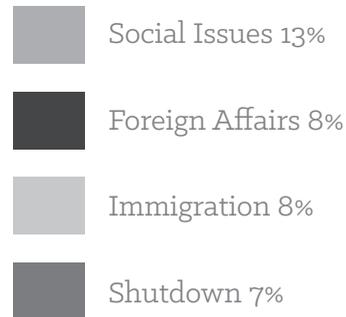
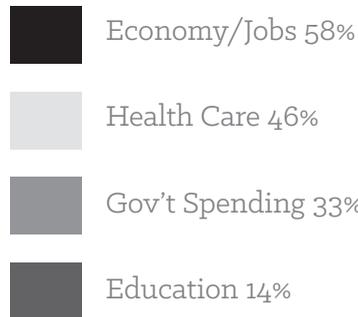
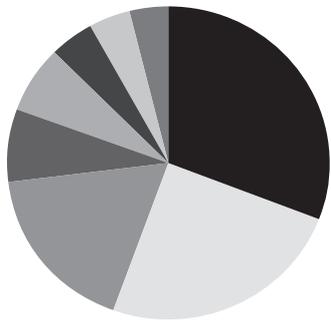
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FreedomWorks' Health Care: Where Next survey is part of an occasional series of polls that aim to capture voters' attitudes on the role of government and key policy issues.

FreedomWorks is a grassroots service center to a community of over 6 million activists dedicated to advancing the ideas of liberty and constitutionally-limited government.



# Health Care a Top Concern, Shutdown Is Not



A new FreedomWorks nationwide poll reveals that health care is the American public's No. 1 concern after the economy and jobs and is firmly on top of voters' minds heading into 2014.

The same poll finds last fall's contentious government shutdown has been largely forgotten by voters, an event that affected few Americans directly and which has been swamped by negative news surrounding the rollout of the so-called Affordable Care Act, also known as the ACA or Obamacare.

Health care is a "top three" concern for both supporters and opponents of the health

care law. Among women, the issue has narrowed the gap with the economy and jobs as the top issue; among seniors, it has overtaken it.

The nationwide survey of 1,000 registered voters, conducted for FreedomWorks by the polling co., inc./WomanTrend in mid-December 2013, challenges the conventional wisdom on this issue in several areas.

**Obamacare Is Dragging Obama Down.** Health care appears to be the biggest drag on the president's sagging approval rating. Many voters now view him through the lens of Obamacare — negatively.

**Not Quite the "Law of the Land."** Americans are dissatisfied with Obamacare so far, and are not resigned to its permanence.

They expect and want further health care reforms.

**Voters Support a Delay.** Voters across the political spectrum — including Obamacare supporters — support a delay of the troubled program, in the wake of its

## From the Focus Group

*"My concern is with the inequity that [the health law] puts on the younger generation."*

Bruce R., 57-year-old moderate Democrat

fumbled implementation and widely reported negative impacts on millions of families.

**“Repeal” Beats “Fix.”**

*(And “delay” beats both.) A majority of voters surveyed would prefer to repeal Obamacare and start over than try to “fix” it.*

**Shutdown Forgotten.** Voters have clearly put last fall’s government shutdown behind them. Eight weeks after the high-profile “defunding” fight, while 87 percent of those surveyed knew about the shutdown, only 7 percent of voters named the shutdown as a top concern.

This finding is confirmed by the results of a FreedomWorks focus group, also conducted in December, where during more

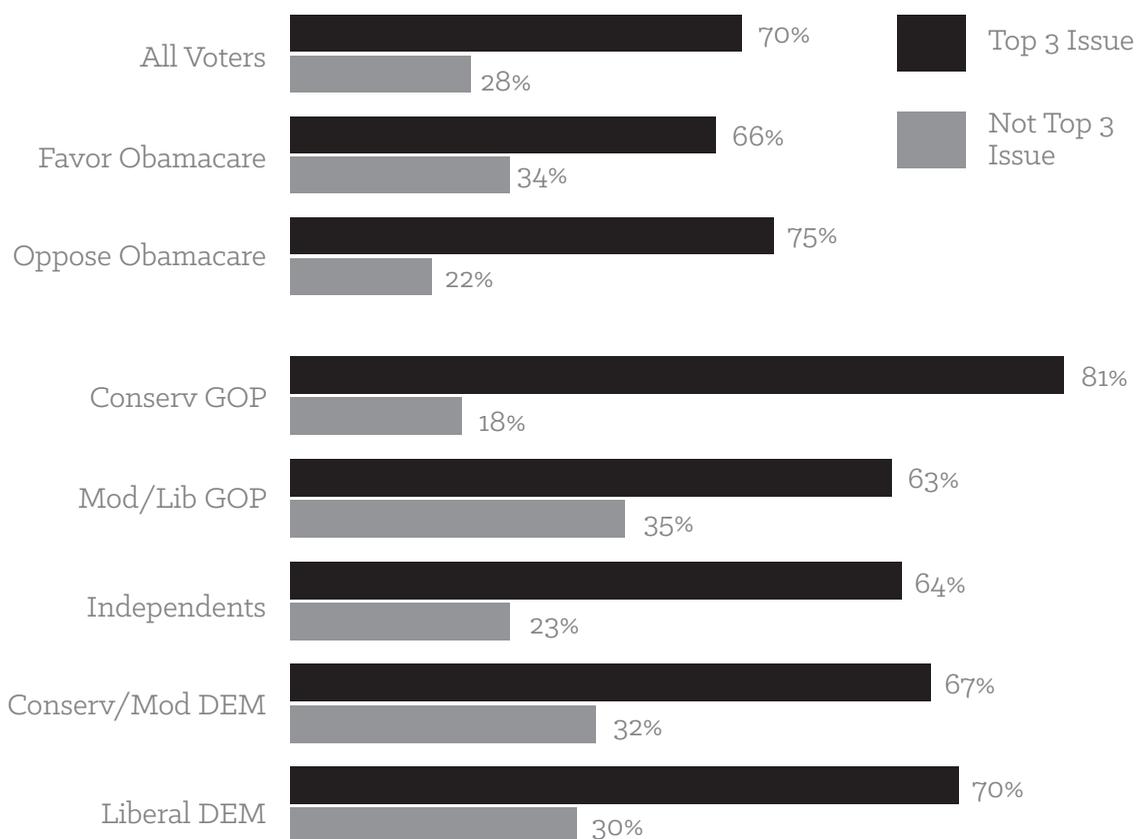
than three hours of intense conversation about Obamacare and health care reform not a single person mentioned the shutdown. (The group included 17 middle-of-the-road voters who reside in the D.C. area, including several federal employees.)

Obamacare is a top issue heading into 2014, for both supporters and opponents, and is a drag on Obama’s job rating.

From the following list, what are the two most important issues to you personally when considering for whom to vote for Congress? (ACCEPT TWO CHOICES)

	All Voters	Men	Women	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	GOP	IND	DEM
Economy/Jobs	58%	59%	57%	63%	57%	61%	61%	46%	56%	53%	62%
Health Care	46%	44%	48%	42%	42%	45%	46%	55%	53%	40%	44%
Gov’t Spending	33%	38%	29%	33%	30%	32%	33%	38%	48%	39%	17%
Education	14%	11%	16%	19%	18%	13%	13%	10%	5%	16%	20%
Social Issues	13%	11%	15%	13%	15%	16%	13%	9%	9%	13%	17%
Foreign Affairs	8%	9%	7%	10%	8%	5%	9%	7%	6%	8%	10%
Immigration	8%	9%	6%	5%	9%	7%	6%	12%	8%	10%	6%
Shutdown	7%	6%	8%	8%	5%	7%	8%	6%	2%	5%	12%

When considering how to vote for Congress, how important to your vote is the issue of health care, specifically the new health care law known as “The Affordable Care Act” or “Obamacare”?



# Voters Pessimistic About Obamacare

In terms of public opinion, the troubled health care law has suffered a steady and precipitous decline in favorability since it went from “on paper” to “in practice.”

A majority of Americans continue to disapprove of the law, but in recent months there has been a marked rise in the number of those who say they will be “worse off” under it.

*55 percent of voters currently say they oppose the law — a finding consistent with most national health care polls conducted over the past four years.*

But since last summer, the share of those who say they will be “worse off” under Obamacare has risen by 6 points — and is now the answer of a clear plurality.

The more people learn about the law, the more concerned they become.

**Obamacare’s remaining support may be thin.** Of the minority (32 percent) of voters who think it will “make no difference” to them or their family personally, only a slight majority, 55 percent, support the law. To staunch the bleeding, the law’s most ardent supporters must persuade voters that it will actually benefit them personally. That will be a tough sell, in the wake of months of negative headlines detailing Obamacare’s numerous broken promises.

From double-digit premium hikes to millions of insurance-policy cancellations to the disastrous rollout of the Obamacare website, Healthcare.gov — it’s hard to see a positive development that can neutralize the fallout in voters’ minds by November.

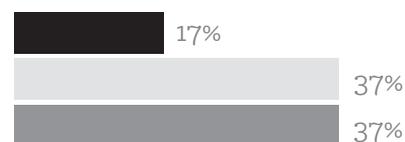
We found that political party identification is a more powerful predictor of one’s position on the health care law than

ideology, with “liberal/moderate” Republicans lining up with “conservative” Republicans and “conservative/moderate” Democrats lining up with “liberal” Democrats.

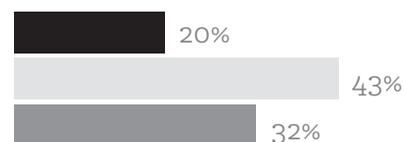
Do you think you and your family will be better off or worse off under the health reform law, or do you think it will not make much of a difference?



August 2013



December 2013



Do you favor or oppose the Affordable Care Act, also known as “Obamacare”?



# Obama Has Lost the Middle

*Dozens of national surveys, including this one, show that the president's approval ratings are "under water." This one shows that health care appears to be the biggest drag. Many voters now view Obama through the lens of Obamacare — negatively.*

Approval of President Obama's performance has fallen to just 43 percent, while disapproval has risen to 54 percent. And 45 percent "strongly" disapprove.

Depending on how you ask the question, voters say Obama is doing either a bad job or a really bad job. When grading him, only 12 percent of voters say

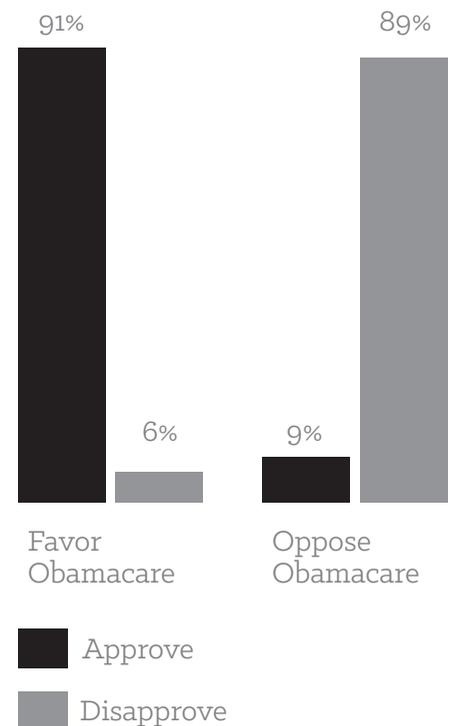
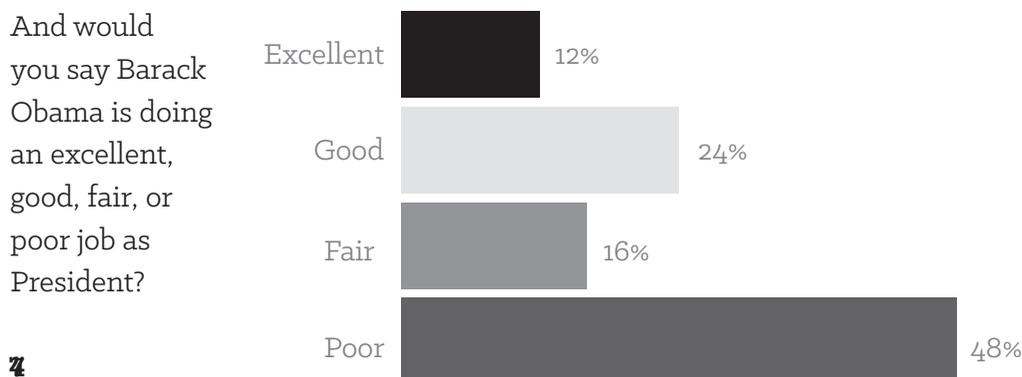
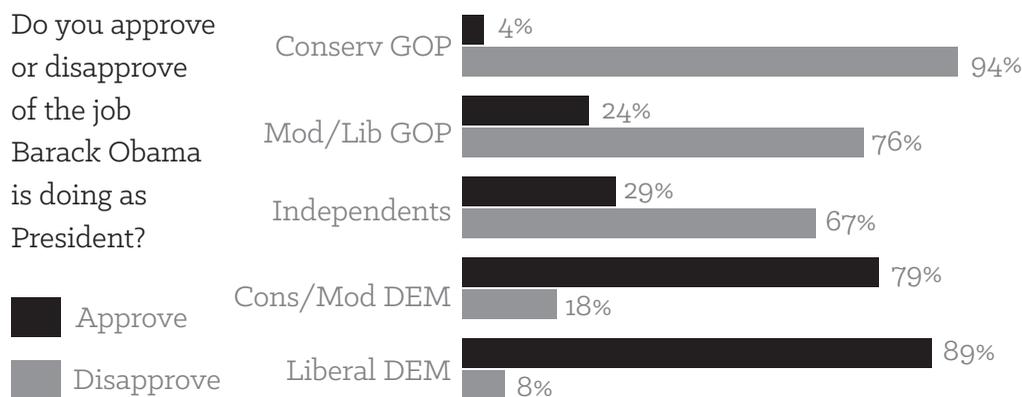
his performance is "excellent"; 24 percent call it "good." By contrast, 15 percent describe his performance as "fair," while 48 percent say it's "poor." Overall, voters nationwide are four times as likely to say that his performance is "poor" than "excellent."

Support is polarized along party

lines. Even "soft" partisans are moving towards their respective bases on Obama. 94 percent of "conservative" Republicans disapprove; so do 76 percent of "moderate/liberal" Republicans. On the other side, 89 percent of "liberal" Democrats approve; and so do 79 percent of "conservative/moderate" Democrats.

The bad news for Mr. Obama is that he has lost the middle, with just 29 percent of independents approving the job he's doing, versus 67 percent disapproving.

The Northeast is currently the president's only bastion of



support. Of the nine geographic regions of the country, disapproval exceeds approval by double digits in five and single digits in two:

Mountain = -39 points  
SW Central = -52 points  
NW Central = -14 points  
NE Central = -19 points  
SE Central = -18 points  
Pacific = -2 points  
South Atlantic = -1 point

In just two regions does the president's performance enjoy more approval than disapproval:

Mid-Atlantic = +19 points  
New England = +3 points

(Note: The individual states in each region are listed at the end of this report.)

Women and minorities are keeping Mr. Obama afloat. While 39 percent of men approve of his job performance and 59 percent disapprove, the respective figures for women are 47 percent approving versus 49 percent disapproving. For whites, the figures are 31 percent approve, 67 percent disapprove. For Hispanics: 75 percent approve, 23

percent disapprove. For blacks: 85 percent approve, 12 percent disapprove.

**Voters' view of the President's job performance is very strongly correlated with their view of Obamacare.** Among those who favor the law, 91 percent approve and just 6 percent disapprove the job the president is doing. Among those who oppose Obamacare, the numbers are very nearly the reverse: just 9 percent approve, while 89 percent disapprove of his performance.

# Both Sides Agree Delay Is Prudent

From the Focus  
Group

*"I like giving people access to health care, but not the way they did it. It should be repealed. The idea of this law is good, but the practice needs some major changes."*

Wailun C., 29-year-old woman, Independent

*A solid majority of voters — including the law's supporters — support a delay of the ACA.*

Among all voters, 60 percent favor a delay "to make sure the law is fair and workable for everyone." 64 percent of Obamacare opponents support a delay; so do 54 percent of the law's supporters.

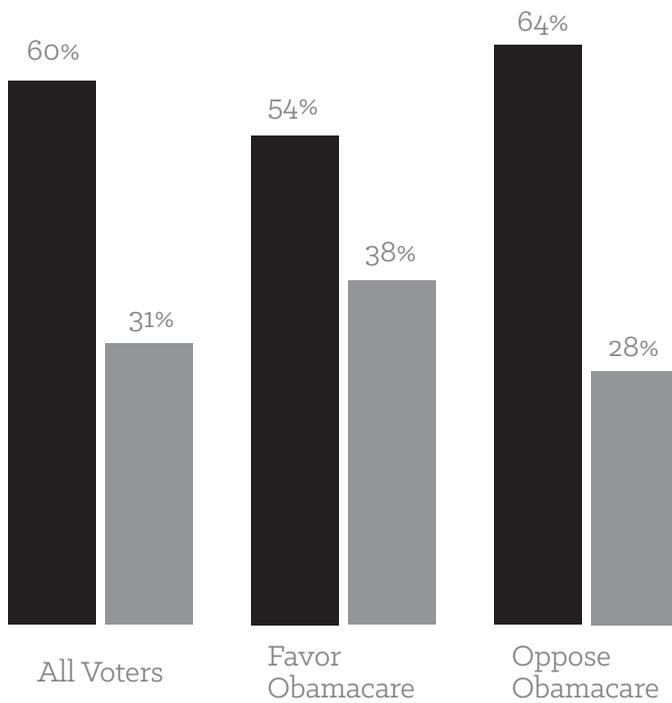
*Partisan affiliation makes no difference on this question. More than 50 percent of*

*Republicans, Democrats, and independents all support a delay. (The figure for independents is 58 percent.)*

Similarly, a solid majority support a delay of the law's least popular provision, the individual mandate to purchase health insurance, which took effect January 1.

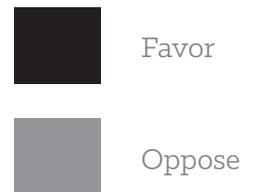
The House has passed a one-year delay of the ACA several times, only to see it die in the Senate and earn a veto threat from President Obama. These results suggest that the House has the public's back on the delay issue.

## Support delaying the whole law

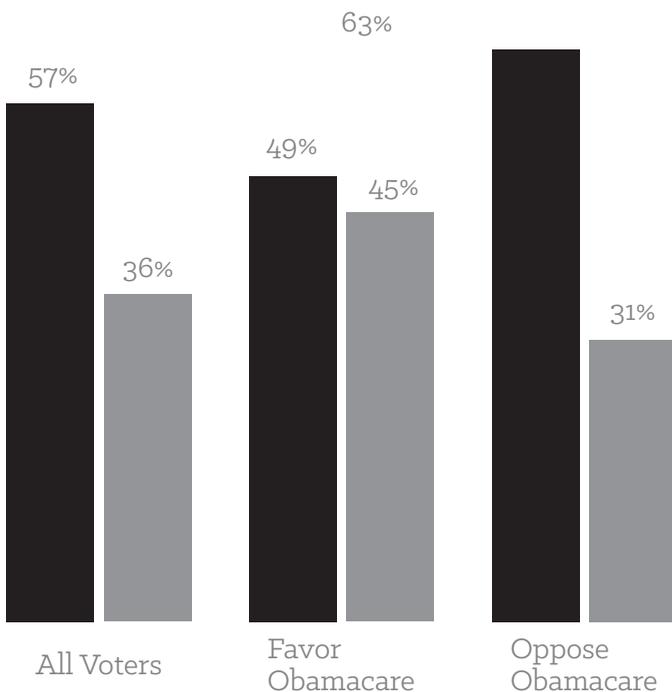


The Obama Administration has given out temporary waivers from parts of the health care law to hundreds of companies and labor unions, and has also announced long-term delays of at least 19 major provisions—including the employer mandate and the small business exchange—which will delay these provisions for one year.

*Do you favor or oppose delaying the overall implementation of Obamacare for one year, in order to give Congress more time to make sure the law is fair and workable for everyone?*



## Support delaying the individual mandate



# Test Messages: “Replace” Beats “Fix”

Voters are more open than ever to replacing Obamacare, as opposed to “fixing” it.

Among tested messages regarding what to do with Obamacare overall, “start over and reform health care” and “repeal and replace Obamacare” beat “fix it” or “give it a chance to work” — and rather decisively.

Voters said the “start over and reform health care” message made them 34 percent more likely to vote for a hypothetical candidate, while the “give it a chance to work” message made them 16 percent *less* likely to do so.

While the usual partisan and demographic patterns are visible in the data (e.g., Republicans and Independents tending to favor “repeal,” Democrats and minorities tending to favor “fix”), the preference against trying to

merely “fix” the law holds for all subcategories of voters. Even the uninsured say “start over”!

“Persuadable” voters, i.e., those who think the law will “make no difference” to them personally, were almost evenly split among these four messages. 50 percent of them support getting rid of the law.

(Note on “persuadables”: We asked respondents whether they and their family would be better or worse off under Obamacare, or if it won’t make much of a difference. Those who answered “no difference” are not as likely to be hard critics of Obamacare, but are not ardent defenders either. This group has more self-identified Democrats and liberals than average, but contains a fair amount of self-identified Republicans and conservatives. We consider these

voters to be our best analogue for “persuadables” on Obamacare — those who aren’t completely on board with “repeal and replace,” but are open to new ideas.)

We also tested five messages relating to specific criticisms of the law:

## **Congressional hypocrisy**

## **Medicare Part C cuts**

## **Identity theft / [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) privacy and security**

## **Premium hikes**

## **Insurance plan cancellations**

All five of these messages test well. The most effective are those relating to congressional hypocrisy and Medicare Part C cuts.

Dialing down on Medicare Part C, we also tested two versions of a potential argument regarding the 500,000 seniors who are losing their Medicare Part C coverage as a result of Obamacare. The results show that an argument emphasizing seniors’ right to choose their plan is more effective (61 percent of voters) than one focused on opposition to “government-run” health care (51 percent).

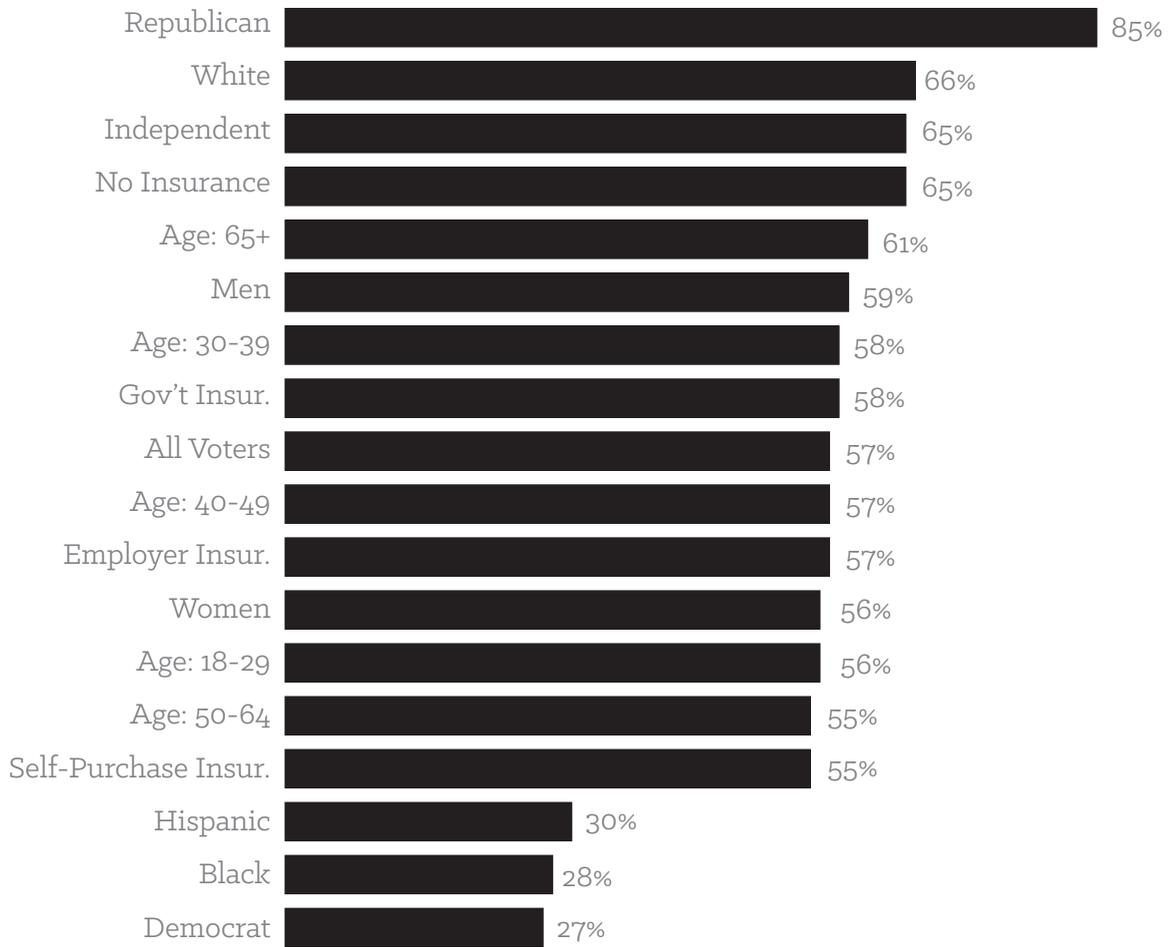
Consider a hypothetical campaign for Congress between four candidates. I'm going to read you four positions on the new health care law; for each one, please tell me if that statement makes you more likely or less likely to vote for that candidate for Congress?

	Total More Likely	Total Less Likely	Net More Likley	Much More Likely
We need to learn from the lessons of the past four years and <b>start over and reform</b> health care with a new law that allows people to keep their doctor and focuses on policies most Americans can agree with, such as allowing increased tax exemptions for medical expenses and allowing patients to purchase insurance across state lines.	63%	29%	+34%	38%
We need to <b>repeal</b> Obamacare <b>and replace it</b> with market-based solutions that enable everyone—including people with preexisting medical conditions—to obtain the health care they need at a price they can afford.	63%	31%	+32%	44%
We need to <b>fix Obamacare</b> by keeping the things that work, such as its policy on pre existing conditions, finding a new solution for problems like the individual mandate and the increased government involvement in health care.	46%	45%	+1%	22%
We need to <b>give</b> the President's health care law <b>a chance</b> to work.	40%	56%	-16%	28%

Does \_\_\_\_\_ make you more likely or less likely to support the Affordable Care Act, also known as “Obamacare”?

	Total More Likely	Total Less Likely	Net Less Likley	Much Less Likely
Despite Congress passing the law that results in some other people losing their care, Members of Congress still keep their health benefits that allow them to receive a 75% discount for the health care they buy on the exchanges, a benefit not available to any of their constituents.	11%	70%	-59%	60%
Part of the way that the law pays for itself is by cutting \$200 billion in funding for Medicare Part C, also known as Medicare Advantage, which is an option under which seniors can receive all of their Medicare benefits, plus additional benefits, from a private health insurer, often at no additional cost to the senior. These cuts mean over 500,000 seniors are losing their health plans and in some cases are also losing benefits or access to their preferred doctors, and will be forced to pick another private insurance option or revert to regular Medicare.	13%	69%	-56%	57%
Some people trying to sign up for health care on the new exchanges are being targeted by scam artists, and the Department of Health and Human Services' own Inspector General said that the health care website does not provide adequate protection of privacy for the people that sign up.	11%	67%	-56%	56%
In a state-by-state analysis, 41 states and the District of Columbia saw average health insurance premiums rise since the new law was passed. Premiums have increased an average of 41% nationwide.	16%	65%	-49%	54%
As you may know, the President repeatedly promised over a number of years, “If you like your health care, you can keep it.” After 5.5 million Americans had their plans cancelled, the President apologized that what he said was not true.	19%	62%	-43%	50%

*Medicare  
Part-C Cuts  
- Much Less  
Likely*

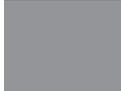


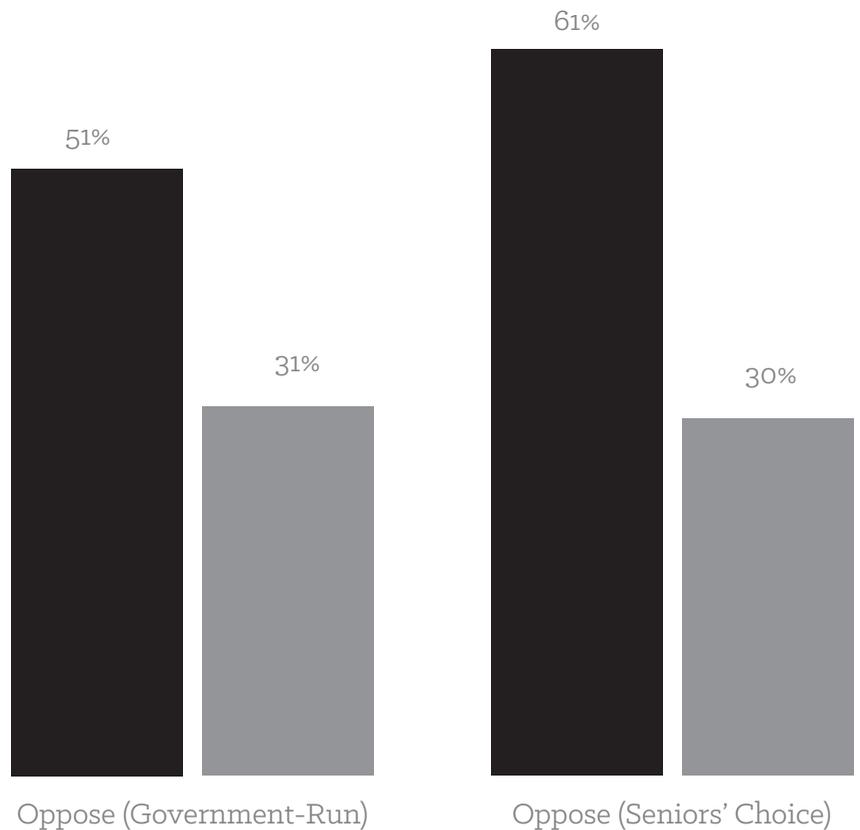
**GOVERNMENT-RUN: SENIORS' CHOICE:**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I believe Medicare Advantage was targeted for cuts, to help pay for the new health care law, because proponents of the new health care law want to push seniors into the government-run Medicare Parts A and B, and away from private insurers."

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I believe it is wrong for the government to force seniors away from plans they have chosen, with their doctors and specialized benefits that meet their individual needs, into generic Medicare in order to pay for the new health care law."

 Agree

 Disagree



# Voters Are Open to Alternatives

*Obamacare defenders are open to alternative health care reforms.*

Both our focus group and survey findings confirm that those who call for repeal are expected by voters to have their own plan. The plan must be easy to understand, workable, and not be seen as moving backward on items people value, such as covering people with preexisting medical conditions.

*We tested a large number of possible health care reform ideas that would replace or supplement Obamacare.*

Among all voters, the most popular ideas are:

**Individual / small business purchasing groups (78 percent)**

**Portability (67 percent)**

**Tort reform (64 percent)**

**Purchasing across state lines (62 percent)**

**Reduce insurance company interference (62 percent)**

**100% tax deductions for medical expenses (61 percent)**

Among Obamacare supporters, the most popular ideas are:

**Individual / small business purchasing groups (72 percent)**

**Portability (59 percent)**

**Reduce insurance company interference (60 percent)**

**100% tax deductions for medical expenses (58 percent)**

**Tort reform (52 percent)**

**Purchasing across state lines (48 percent)**

The comparable figures for “persuadable” voters (i.e., those who think the law will “make no difference” to them personally) tend to fall somewhere between the two foregoing sets of figures.

Notably, majorities of voters favor less involvement in health care by lawyers, insurers, and the government.

*One alternative voters do not support: single-payer. Among focus group participants, this idea found almost no supporters, perhaps because the idea of “government-run” health care has taken on a bad odor.*

I'm going to read you some policy ideas for how to reform health care. For each one, please rate it on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being "do not support that idea at all" and 10 being "strongly support that idea."

	Mean	% of "10" - Strongly Support	% of 8-10
Let individuals, small businesses, and other groups join together to get health insurance at lower prices, the same way large businesses and labor unions do	8.6	56%	78%
Make health insurance portable from job to job by allowing workers to buy individual coverage that meets their needs without having to pay a tax penalty	8.0	46%	67%
Get lawyers out of health care by reforming medical malpractice tort law and discouraging frivolous lawsuits	7.8	47%	64%
Promote competition by allowing consumers to buy health insurance across state lines	7.7	44%	62%
Greatly reduce the ability of <b>insurance companies</b> to interfere in individuals' free choice of insurance, doctors, and therapies	7.7	42%	62%
Help make health care more affordable by allowing all Americans to receive a 100% tax deduction for legitimate medical expenses	7.7	42%	59%
Greatly reduce the ability of the <b>government</b> to interfere in individuals' free choice of insurance, doctors, and therapies	7.6	50%	63%
Let employees become consumers of health care by allowing them to put money, tax free, into a Health Savings Account (HSA) that they own and control for health expenses	7.3	39%	58%
Create new federal grants to states that reduce the number of uninsured in their state, putting the responsibility in the hands of the state governments, which are closer to the people	6.1	20%	38%

## Conclusion

# Health Care: Where Next



The results of this survey strongly suggest health care will be a dominant — perhaps the dominant — issue in 2014.

Regardless of where voters stand on Obamacare, they are very concerned about health care.

Health care is simply a big issue for voters, especially among women and seniors, and therefore one that the GOP should be addressing head-on.

Obamacare's rocky rollout, premium hikes, and insurance cancellations have measurably depressed support for the law — and the president.

Previously, some voters were

willing to give Mr. Obama the benefit of the doubt. But today, the public no longer believes Obamacare can work as promised.

As a result, voters across the spectrum think a delay is prudent and are also willing to consider sensible alternatives that can plausibly improve health care, assuming no harm comes to those with preexisting medical conditions.

Democrats find themselves on the defensive on Obamacare, and there appears to be no plausible way for them to make it a winning issue by November. The best they can hope to do

is neutralize it by changing the subject.

Last year's government shutdown fight over Obamacare funding has dropped from voters' minds, as GOP warnings about Obamacare's failings have been dramatically validated.

In the current environment, the midterm elections are likely to be won by those candidates who turn out their motivated "base" supporters, rather than those who follow a more "play it safe," "run to the center" strategy.

Finally, throughout the survey we find that on questions of policy voters tend to favor less government and more freedom.

# In light of these results, our advice for congressional supporters of a market-oriented, patient-centered approach is: press your advantage.

## 1) Keep fighting to get rid of the law.

- Giving up on repeal now would be a mistake.
- “Replace” beats “fix,” and “delay” beats both.

## 2) Stay on offense.

- Continue aggressive oversight of the law’s implementation.
- Educate the public on the law’s unfairness (waivers, exemptions, congressional hypocrisy, burdens on young people) and personal impacts (higher premiums, cancelled

plans, job cutbacks and economic uncertainty for employers).

## 3) Fight for principled changes to the law that will help expedite its ultimate repeal. For example:

- Delay the individual mandate.
- Apply the law fairly to Members of Congress and their staff.
- Repeal the law’s built-in bailouts for the health insurance companies.

## 4) Nationalize the midterm elections with a unified health care reform message:

- Begin a national conversation on alternative ideas for making health care better.
- Coalesce around a common platform of bold, thoughtful, and sensible health care reform ideas — one that promotes less government and more freedom.

# About the Report

## Methodology

The polling company, inc./WomanTrend, on behalf of FreedomWorks, conducted interviews for the nationwide survey of 1,000 registered voters between December 15 and 18, 2013. The sample was drawn using lists of registered voters. All interviews included 85 percent landlines and 15 percent cell phone interviews. The dual-frame survey was conducted using live interviewers at a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing facility. Sampling controls were used to ensure a proportionate and representative number of interviews across gender, age, racial/ethnic, and regional lines. Survey data were weighted by party self-identification. The margin of error (MoE) for this survey is  $\pm 3.0\%$  overall at the 95% confidence interval. MoEs for subgroups are larger.

## Demographics

- 52 percent female, 48 percent male.
- 12 percent between the ages of 18-29, 15 percent between the ages of 33-39, 21 percent between the ages of 40-49, 42 percent between the ages of 50-64, and 20 percent over the age of 65.
- 71 percent of the base survey were white/Caucasian, 11 percent black, 11 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Asian, and 5 percent other.
- A 9-region geographic break was used, separating the states into New England, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, East and West North Central, East and West South Central, Mountain, and Pacific. Using a more traditional, four-way geographic split, 18 percent of those surveyed were from the Northeast, 23 percent from the Midwest, 37 percent from the South, and 21 percent from the West.

Here is a list of the nine regions, with their respective percentages of the U.S. population and their individual states:

- 5% | New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)
- 13% | Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA)
- 16% | East North Central (IN, IL, MI, OH, WI)
- 7% | West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)
- 20% | South Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)
- 6% | East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN)
- 11% | West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX)
- 7% | Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT, UT, NV, WY)
- 14% | Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)

36 percent of respondents self-identified as Republican, while 39 percent self-identified as Democrats and another 19 percent considered themselves Independent. Respondents who initially answered “Independent” were asked if they lean in the direction of either party, and if so, those leaners were included as “Republican” or “Democrat.”

44 percent of respondents self-identified as “conservative,” while 29 percent called themselves “moderate” and 19 percent called themselves “liberal.”

## Demographics cont.

69 percent of respondents were married, 8 percent were divorced. 1 percent separated, and 7 percent widowed, while 13 percent were single and had never been married.

33 percent of respondents had children living with them at home, another 48 percent had children who are no longer living at home, and 16 percent have never had children.

10 percent of the base survey described their yearly income as below \$25,000, 11 percent from \$25,000 to \$39,999, 11 percent from \$40,000 to \$49,999, 8 percent from \$50,000 to \$59,999, 7 percent from \$60,000 to \$69,999, 5 percent from \$70,000 to \$74,999, 11 percent from \$75,000 to \$99,999, 11 percent from \$100,000 to \$149,999, and 9 percent as \$150,000 and above.

43 percent of the base survey receive their health insurance through their employer, 35 percent receive it through a government program like Medicare, Medicaid or the VA, 12 percent have purchased it on their own through the individual market, and 6 percent are uninsured.

