

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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For more commentary from Professor Redlawsk see
<http://eagletonpoll.blogspot.com>

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**RUTGERS-EAGLETON POLL FINDS NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS CONCERNED
ABOUT HEALTH CARE AND BELIEVE SYSTEM NEEDS CHANGE**

Two-thirds of respondents favor public option described ‘like Medicare’

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – While half of New Jersey residents with private health insurance are very satisfied with their coverage, 90 percent still say changes are needed and almost as many – 86 percent – consider health care reform at least “somewhat important,” according to a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll released today.

About two-thirds of respondents offer at least some support for a public option to compete with private insurance, but support varies depending on how the question is asked. Support for reform is greater for plans described as “like Medicare” rather than as “government-run.”

“As the health care debate gets underway in the U.S. Senate, these results suggest New Jerseyans have keen interest in reform,” said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers. “A public option of some type is supported by residents, regardless of their satisfaction with their current insurance.”

The poll of 903 New Jersey adults was conducted Nov. 6-10 and has a margin of error of +/- 3.3 percentage points. Half the respondents also were interviewed before the Nov. 3 election, however, the health care questions reported here are based only on post-election interviews.

Access to Health Care and Insurance

Only 9 percent of New Jerseyans say they currently have no insurance. An additional 8 percent say they were without insurance at some point in the past 18 months. “While the state of health insurance coverage in New Jersey appears pretty good, about one in six adults – as many as 1.0 million – are or were without insurance coverage in the past 18 months,” Redlawsk said.

Access to health insurance coverage is much more problematic for those without full-time jobs and those who are younger: 16 percent of part-time employees and 20 percent of unemployed respondents are currently without insurance, while only 7 percent of full-time employed adults do not have coverage.

Because of Medicare, however, virtually all older residents have insurance coverage, while 14 percent of those under 40 are currently uncovered. An additional 12 percent of those under 40 have been without insurance sometime during the past 18 months, compared to only 5 percent over 40.

The poll found health insurance coverage varies significantly by race. Latinos are four times more likely to have had a gap in coverage in the past 18 months compared to whites (21 percent to 5 percent), while 12 percent of blacks have recently been without coverage.

When asked if they ever have had difficulty accessing needed health care, 26 percent of blacks and 24 percent of Latino respondents said they had, compared to 13 percent of whites. One-third of the respondents earning less than \$30,000 annually reported difficulty, while only 7 percent of those earning \$100,000 or more experienced problems. Overall, 16 percent of all New Jerseyans have at some point found it difficult to access the health care they needed.

“Insurance gaps and health care access issues fall disproportionately on low income and minority residents in New Jersey,” said Redlawsk. “Health care reform, while important to many New Jerseyans, is a critical quality of life issue for those who find insurance difficult to get and access to health care hard to come by.”

New Jersey Residents think Reform is Needed

Almost two-thirds of New Jerseyans – 63 percent – say the health care system “could work better” and of these, 92 percent say change is needed, while 8 percent say change is too risky. Of the 37 percent who believe the system “works well,” most still support reform, with 80 percent saying “some change is needed anyway.”

“One very clear finding in this poll is that nearly all New Jersey residents believe some reform is needed to the health care system,” said Redlawsk. “While there is disagreement on details, there is near unanimity that some change is necessary.”

Blacks (79 percent), Latinos (69 percent) and Asians (69 percent) are much more likely than whites (51 percent) to say the system “could work better and change is needed.” Not surprisingly, 72 percent of the currently insured who were not covered at some point during the past 18 months say change is needed, while 53 percent of those who have had continuous coverage agree. Meanwhile, 83 percent of the currently uninsured want change.

Support for a Public Option

A key component of the health care reform bill under debate in the Senate is the “public option,” a government-managed insurance plan in competition with private insurers. About two-

thirds of New Jersey residents support some kind of public option in health care reform, but support is contingent on how the public option is described.

Those who need insurance most are the strongest supporters: 49 percent of those making less than \$30,000 per year are very likely to support a public option, and another 33 percent say they are somewhat likely. Of those earning \$100,000 or more, only 35 percent are very likely to support a public option with 25 percent more somewhat likely.

Respondents covered by a private insurance company are less likely to support a public option, with 36 percent very likely to support reform, compared to 57 percent of uninsured New Jerseyans. Minorities also are more likely to support a public option: 62 percent of blacks, 52 percent of Asians and 48 percent of Latinos are very likely to support a public option, compared to 33 percent of whites.

Different characterizations of the public option have made it difficult to judge public opinion on the subject, Redlawsk said. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll asked one-third of respondents about their support of “a *government-run* insurance option anyone can choose,” a second third about “an insurance option *like Medicare* anyone can choose no matter what their age” and the final third about “a *government-run insurance option like Medicare* anyone can choose no matter what their age.”

The poll found that the different wording matters. Respondents were less likely to support a *government-run* plan (61 percent very or somewhat likely to support) than they were to support a public option *like Medicare* (70 percent support). When the phrase “like Medicare” is included, support for a public option increases noticeably. Simply adding the words “like Medicare” makes a public option plan more acceptable.

Medicare/Medicaid Recipients More Satisfied

The majority of New Jerseyans on Medicare are very satisfied with their health insurance coverage, with 60 percent saying they are very satisfied, while another 29 percent are somewhat satisfied. Only 9 percent are not satisfied. In comparison, 53 percent of the privately insured say they are very satisfied, while 37 percent are somewhat satisfied and 9 percent are not satisfied.

Increased satisfaction among those on Medicare leads to slightly stronger support for a public option: 41 percent say they are very likely to support a public option in health care reform, compared to 36 percent of those with private insurance.

“Satisfaction with the existing government-run insurance plans is very high among those who use them,” said Redlawsk. “Most of these respondents are senior citizens who get access to Medicare, and most of them are quite happy with what they have.”

**Rutgers-Eagleton Poll November 6-10, 2009
Questions and Tables**

The questions covered in the release of December 2, 2009 are list below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. All percentages are of New Jersey adults.

Now I would like to ask you about health care issues. There has been a lot of talk about plans for health care reform. How likely are you to support a plan that includes [Insert Version]?
[Randomly assign to one of three versions]

**[VERSION A]
a government run insurance option anyone can choose.**

**[VERSION B]
an insurance option like Medicare anyone can choose no matter what their age.**

**[VERSION C]
a government run insurance option like Medicare anyone can choose no matter what their age.**

	Combined (N=901)	Govt Run (N=309)	Like Medicare (N=314)	Govt Run Like Medicare (N=278)
Very likely	40%	34%	42%	42%
Somewhat likely	27%	27%	27%	26%
Not at all likely	30%	34%	28%	28%
Don't Know	3%	5%	3%	3%

Crosstabs Combine All Three Question Versions

	Party ID			Age				Gender		Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55-64	65+	M	F	High School	Some College	College Degree	Grad Work
Very Likely	58%	30%	15%	42%	39%	44%	33%	41%	38%	42%	37%	34%	47%
Somewhat Likely	29%	33%	21%	34%	25%	22%	23%	23%	30%	31%	30%	26%	20%
Not at all Likely	9%	32%	60%	22%	32%	30%	39%	33%	27%	25%	29%	36%	29%
Don't Know	3%	6%	3%	3%	3%	4%	5%	3%	4%	2%	4%	5%	3%
N	457	130	308	274	361	105	162	430	471	246	227	233	194

**Health Care Reform and New Jersey
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

	Respondent Race				Income					Employment			
	White	Black	Asian	Latino	< 30K	30-49K	50-74K	75-99K	100K+	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Employed
Very Likely	33%	62%	52%	48%	49%	37%	43%	43%	35%	37%	34%	41%	46%
Somewhat Likely	23%	31%	25%	43%	33%	33%	28%	16%	26%	27%	32%	22%	27%
Not at all Likely	39%	4%	22%	9%	14%	29%	26%	38%	35%	33%	28%	34%	22%
Don't Know	4%	3%	0%	0%	4%	2%	3%	3%	4%	3%	5%	4%	4%
N	615	96	50	118	138	124	131	121	246	443	107	158	191

	Current Type of Insurance			
	No Insurance	Medicare	Medicaid	HMO/PPO/ Other
Very likely	57%	41%	64%	36%
Somewhat likely	25%	23%	22%	28%
Not at all likely	13%	32%	14%	33%
Don't Know	5%	4%	0%	3%
N	84	161	36	612

Which of the following best describes the kind of health insurance you, yourself, currently have? Is it: [READ FIRST FOUR OPTIONS]

(N=894)

Medicare	18%
Medicaid	4%
An HMO, PPO, or other kind health insurance	65%
You do not have any health insurance	9%
Something else (Vol)	1%
More than one kind (Vol)	2%

**Health Care Reform and New Jersey
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

[Asked of those with insurance]

How satisfied are you with your health insurance coverage? Are you:

(N=809)

Very satisfied	55%
Somewhat satisfied	36%
Not satisfied	8%
Don't Know (Vol)	1%

	Party ID			Age				Gender		Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55-64	65+	M	F	High School	Some College	College Degree	Grad Work
Very Satisfied	51%	55%	60%	56%	50%	53%	63%	53%	56%	54%	55%	49%	62%
Somewhat Satisfied	36%	38%	35%	31%	41%	37%	30%	37%	35%	34%	37%	43%	29%
Not Satisfied	12%	3%	4%	12%	7%	7%	5%	9%	8%	10%	6%	8%	8%
Don't Know	1%	3%	1%	0%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%
N	410	105	290	219	336	98	157	377	434	212	194	214	190

	Respondent Race				Income					Employment			
	White	Black	Asian	Latino	< 30K	30-49K	50-74K	75-99K	100K+	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Employed
Very Satisfied	59%	50%	37%	47%	52%	56%	42%	56%	63%	53%	50%	63%	52%
Somewhat Satisfied	34%	34%	53%	37%	40%	29%	44%	38%	31%	40%	32%	29%	34%
Not Satisfied	6%	16%	10%	13%	7%	13%	10%	6%	4%	6%	17%	6%	12%
Don't Know	1%	0%	0%	4%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
N	576	78	44	95	107	104	123	111	244	412	87	157	153

	Current Type of Coverage		
	Medicare	Medicaid	Private
Very satisfied	60%	61%	53%
Somewhat satisfied	29%	36%	37%
Not satisfied	9%	3%	9%
Don't Know	2%	0%	1%
N	161	36	588

*Health Care Reform and New Jersey
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

[Asked of those with private insurance, not Medicare/Medicaid]

Who pays for your health insurance? Does your employer pay the full cost, do you pay the full cost yourself, or do you pay only some of the cost?

(N=588)

My employer pays the full cost	26%
I pay the full cost	11%
I pay some of the cost	59%
Spouse/Parent/Other person pays (vol)	4%

[Asked of those with insurance]

Has there been any time in the past 18 months that you personally did not have health insurance?

(N=809)

Yes	8%
No	92%

	Party ID			Age				Gender		Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55-64	65+	M	F	High School	Some College	College Degree	Grad Work
Yes	10%	8%	5%	16%	6%	6%	2%	8%	8%	6%	12%	10%	4%
No	89%	92%	95%	84%	94%	94%	97%	91%	92%	94%	88%	90%	96%
N	410	105	290	219	336	98	157	377	434	212	194	214	190

	Respondent Race				Income					Employment			
	White	Black	Asian	Latino	< 30K	30-49K	50-74K	75-99K	100K+	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Employed
Yes	5%	12%	13%	21%	19%	12%	9%	3%	4%	7%	5%	2%	20%
No	95%	88%	87%	79%	81%	88%	90%	96%	96%	93%	95%	97%	80%
N	576	78	44	95	107	104	123	111	244	412	87	157	153

*Health Care Reform and New Jersey
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

Do you ever find it difficult to get access to the health care you need, for any reason?

(N=899)

Yes 16%
No 82%
Sometimes/Depends (Vol) 1%

	Party ID			Age				Gender		Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55-64	65+	M	F	High School	Some College	College Degree	Grad Work
Yes	18%	21%	12%	20%	17%	14%	9%	15%	17%	21%	19%	12%	11%
No	80%	78%	87%	78%	82%	84%	90%	84%	81%	76%	80%	86%	88%
Sometimes	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	2%	1%	0%	3%	1%
Total N	459	129	309	273	362	105	163	431	472	247	229	232	194

	Respondent Race				Income					Employment			
	White	Black	Asian	Latino	< 30K	30-49K	50-74K	75-99K	100K+	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Employed
Yes	13%	26%	15%	24%	32%	17%	15%	10%	7%	14%	21%	10%	23%
No	86%	68%	85%	76%	64%	83%	84%	88%	93%	84%	74%	88%	76%
Sometimes	1%	4%	0%	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	5%	2%	0%
Total N	616	96	50	118	138	124	131	121	248	445	106	159	191

Which of the following statements about health care reform is closest to your opinion? [READ FIRST FOUR OPTIONS]

(N=903)

The system works well so we do not need to change it 7%
 The system works well, but some change is needed anyway 30%
 The system could work better, but change is too risky 5%
 The system could work better and change is needed 58%
 Don't Know/None of them (Vol) 1%

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	Party ID			Age				Gender		Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55-64	65+	M	F	High School	Some College	College Degree	Grad Work
Works Well; No Change	3%	6%	13%	7%	5%	6%	12%	7%	7%	7%	9%	6%	6%
Works Well; Some Change	22%	31%	41%	26%	29%	30%	39%	31%	29%	25%	33%	32%	30%
Could work better; Change too risky	2%	4%	9%	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%
Could Work Better; Change Needed	72%	58%	36%	62%	60%	60%	42%	56%	59%	61%	54%	56%	60%
Don't Know	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%
N	459	130	309	274	362	105	163	431	473	247	229	233	194

	Respondent Race				Income					Employment			
	White	Black	Asian	Latino	< 30K	30-49K	50-74K	75-99K	100K+	FT	PT	Retired	Not
Works Well; No Change	9%	4%	9%	0%	7%	10%	7%	5%	8%	6%	10%	13%	3%
Works Well; Some Change	34%	17%	20%	24%	24%	28%	28%	36%	32%	31%	23%	40%	23%
Could work better; Change too risky	6%	0%	3%	6%	1%	5%	6%	6%	4%	4%	11%	3%	5%
Could Work Better; Change Needed	51%	79%	68%	69%	65%	57%	58%	52%	56%	59%	57%	43%	67%
Don't Know	1%	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%
N	617	96	50	118	138	124	131	121	248	445	107	159	191

	Current Insurance Coverage				Coverage Gap Last 18 Mo.	
	Medicare	Medicaid	Private	None	Yes	No
Works Well; No Change	13%	0%	6%	0%	2%	8%
Works Well; Some Change	33%	25%	32%	11%	22%	33%
Could work better; Change too risky	4%	3%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Could Work Better; Change Needed	49%	69%	56%	83%	72%	53%
Don't Know	2%	3%	0%	1%	0%	1%
N	162	36	588	84	65	745

*Health Care Reform and New Jersey
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

**How important is the issue of health care reform to you personally? Is it: [READ FIRST
THREE OPTIONS]**

(N=901)

Very important	60%
Somewhat important	26%
Not too important	13%
Not at all important (Vol)	1%
Don't Know (Vol)	1%

	Party ID			Age				Gender		Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55-64	65+	M	F	High School	Some College	College Degree	Grad Work
Very important	68%	60%	47%	59%	59%	60%	60%	58%	61%	65%	64%	54%	54%
Somewhat important	23%	25%	31%	30%	27%	29%	16%	25%	27%	24%	25%	28%	29%
Not too important	8%	14%	20%	11%	12%	9%	20%	16%	10%	10%	10%	17%	15%
Not at all important (VOL)	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Don't Know (VOL)	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
N	459	130	307	274	362	104	161	428	473	247	229	233	192

	Respondent Race				Income					Employment			
	White	Black	Asian	Latino	< 30K	30-49K	50-74K	75-99K	100K+	FT	PT	Retired	Not
Very important	52%	89%	74%	71%	74%	62%	61%	60%	49%	57%	54%	64%	66%
Somewhat important	31%	7%	15%	22%	21%	23%	27%	26%	31%	29%	33%	15%	25%
Not too important	16%	3%	9%	7%	3%	12%	11%	13%	19%	13%	10%	18%	9%
Not at all important (VOL)	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Don't Know (VOL)	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%
N	615	96	50	118	138	123	131	121	247	445	105	159	191

	Current Insurance Coverage				Coverage Gap Last 18 Mo.	
	Medicare	Medicaid	Private	None	Yes	No
Very important	63%	76%	56%	73%	74%	57%
Somewhat important	17%	18%	30%	20%	18%	27%
Not too important	17%	6%	13%	7%	9%	14%
Not at all important (VOL)	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Don't Know (VOL)	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
N	160	36	588	84	65	742

**Health Care Reform and New Jersey
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted from November 6-10, 2009 with a scientifically selected random sample of 903 New Jersey adults. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, including gender, age, race, education, and Hispanic ethnicity. All results are reported with these weighted data.

This Poll included two samples. One was a random sample of 452 New Jersey adults, selected via random digit dialing of landline telephones in the state. The second sample was collected through call backs to a randomly selected 451 respondents from the 903 respondents in the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll of October 15-20, 2009. The original sample was randomly selected via random digit dialing of landlines in New Jersey. The two samples are combined for this report and weighted to reflect the demographics of the State of New Jersey as described above.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for a sample of 903 adults is +/- 3.3 points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adults favored a particular position, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 45.9 and 54.1 percent (50 + 3.3) had all New Jersey adults been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects.

Weighted Sample Characteristics (n=903)			
37% Dem	48% Male	31% 18-34	68% White
40% Independent	52% Female	40% 35-54	11% Black
22% Republican		29% 55+	13% Hispanic
			6% Asian
			2% Other