

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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Release #2221

Release Date: **Wednesday, January 3, 2007**

IMPORTANT: Contract for this service is subject to revocation if publication or broadcast takes place before release date. (ISSN 0195-4520)

CALIFORNIA VOTER VIEWS OF THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM (Part 1 of 2):

WHILE HALF ARE GENERALLY SATISFIED, VOTERS REPORT HIGH LEVELS OF CONCERN ABOUT THE STATE'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM. NUMEROUS FACTORS SEEN AS RESPONSIBLE FOR RISING HEALTH CARE COSTS. WANT GOVERNMENT ROLE TO ASSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE COVERAGE.

by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

According to the results of a special statewide *Field Poll* funded by a grant from The California Wellness Foundation, a broad spectrum of health care issues are troubling to many California voters.

While about half (51%) of all California voters say they are generally satisfied with the state's health care system, voters express a wide range of concerns about the health care system as it relates to their own lives. And, while just one in ten voters (10%) are themselves uninsured, another 39% are very concerned that they or someone close to them will be without health coverage sometime in the near future.

Voters also offer some definite opinions as to the factors responsible for rising health care costs, and eight in ten (81%) believe government should be responsible for assuring that all Californians have access to affordable coverage.

Mixed views of the state's health care system; concerns about the future

California voters have mixed views of the state's health care system overall. Statewide, 51% report being satisfied with the health care system today, while 44% are dissatisfied. There is a sense of foreboding about the future, however, as more than three times as many believing the system will be worse five years from now (39%) than think it will be better (12%). Another 40% expect no change, while 9% have no opinion. (*Tables 1a-b*)

Variety of health care worries

Voters offer a wide range of concerns about the health care system as it relates to their own lives. For example, greater than three in four voters (77%) worry that they might not be able to pay for the costs of a major illness and injury, and another 75% are concerned about employers potentially cutting back on the amount they contribute for a worker's health care.

The possibility of not having or losing health care coverage troubles seven in ten (71%). A similar majority (71%) is worried about being able to pay the costs of their health care premiums, deductibles and co-payments.

Concerns about having access to quality doctors and health service services (68%) or having to wait or put off getting needed care (67%) are also cited by greater than two in three voters statewide.

The inability to pay for needed prescription drugs (64%) or not being able to obtain affordable health insurance due to a pre-existing health condition (62%) is also seen a possible problem by more than six in ten. (*Tables 2a-b*)

Why costs are rising

Voters have some definite opinions about what factors are responsible for driving up health care costs. Four factors are cited by majorities as being very important reasons for rising health care costs. These include:

- High profits made by drug and insurance companies (65%)
- Waste, fraud, and inefficiencies in the current system (60%)
- Paying for the health care costs of the uninsured (57%)
- People not doing enough to keep healthy, like exercising and eating right (54%)

Slightly less than half of California voters also believe two other factors as being very important reasons for increasing health care costs.

- The increasing number of older age residents and the higher costs associated with providing them care (47%)
- Too many malpractice lawsuits against doctors, hospitals, and health plans (46%).

Other factors viewed by fewer than four in ten voters as being very important reasons for rising health care costs include.

- People getting too many unnecessary treatments and medications (38%)
- The use of new and expensive medical technologies, procedures and treatments (36%)
- Little incentive or ability for insured residents to comparison shop for health services (31%)
- Doctors and hospitals making too much money (28%) (*Tables 3a-b*)

Insecurities about going without health insurance

While only one in ten California voters (10%) are themselves without health insurance, another 39% report being very concerned that they or someone close to them will be without health coverage in the near future. In addition, nearly half (48%) say that either they or someone close to them has been without health insurance at some point in the past two years.

There are large differences in the levels of health coverage insecurity across different age subgroups of the voting population. For example, more than twice as many voters under age 40 (60%) as those age 65 or older (29%) say they or someone close to them has gone without health insurance in the past two years.

Voter insecurities about going without future coverage are strongly tied to income. Greater than eight in ten voters with annual household incomes of \$20,000 or less (81%) are very concerned that they or someone close to them will be without health insurance in the near future. This compares to just one in three voters (33%) earning \$80,000 or more annually who report this. (Tables 4a-b)

Government responsibilities for assuring access to health coverage

There is widespread voter agreement that government should assure access to affordable health care insurance. Statewide, 81% of voters agree (59% strongly) with the statement “it should be public policy that government guarantee that all Californians have access to affordable health care insurance or other health care coverage.” In addition, 78% agree (44% strongly) that government has a responsibility for providing health care coverage for people who can’t afford to pay for it themselves.

These views are shared by large majorities across all demographic subgroups. (Tables 5a-b)

Insure as many as possible to keep the insurance system functioning well

Greater than eight in ten voters (81%) are in agreement (47% strongly) that the health insurance system works best when the costs and risks are shared by as many people as possible. Another 77% agree (48% strongly) that we need to insure as many people as possible because when uninsured residents need care they usually can only get it at more expensive hospital emergency rooms, increasing the costs to everyone. (Table 6)

(Editor: Data from the survey are summarized in the attached graphics packet. In addition, the marginal results and exact wording of all questions cited in this report are shown in a separate attachment.)

Information About the Survey

This survey was conducted by *The Field Poll* under a grant from The California Wellness Foundation. *Field Poll* staff benefited from discussions and background information provided by the Foundation and its staff. However, final responsibility for all questions developed and the data analysis presented in this report rested with *The Field Poll*.

The findings are based on a random sample survey of 1,200 California registered voters. Interviewing was conducted November 17- December 12, 2006 in English and Spanish from Field Research Corporation's central location telephone interviewing centers in San Francisco and San Diego. Up to eight attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. When drawing samples from registration-based lists, *The Field Poll* employs a stratified random selection procedure giving all voters within each of seven regions of the state and within four age categories an equal chance of being selected. Once a voter's name and telephone number are selected, interviews are attempted only with the specific voter selected. Interviews are conducted on either a voter's landline phone or cell phone, depending on the preference of the voter. After the completion of interviewing, results were weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depend upon its sample size. According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from findings based on the total sample of 1,200 registered voters are subject to a sampling error of 2.9 percentage points. There are other possible sources of error in any survey other than sampling error. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, the sequencing of questions, the rigor with which sampling procedures were implemented, as well as through undetected errors or omissions in interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

About The California Wellness Foundation

The California Wellness Foundation is an independent, private foundation created in 1992, with a mission to improve the health of the people of California by making grants for health promotion, wellness education and disease prevention. The Foundation prioritizes eight issues for funding: diversity in the health professions, environmental health, healthy aging, mental health, teenage pregnancy prevention, violence prevention, women's health, and work and health. It also responds to timely issues or special projects outside these funding priorities.

For more information, visit the Foundation's website, www.tcwf.org. Contact: Ruth Holton-Hodson, director of public policy at (916) 648-9673 or Cecilia Laiché, communications officer at (818) 702-1900.

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Field Health Policy Survey

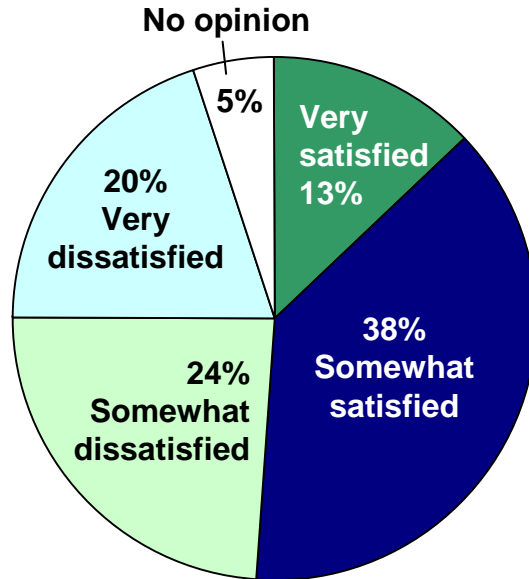
(Part 1):

Voter Satisfaction with and Concerns About the Health Care System

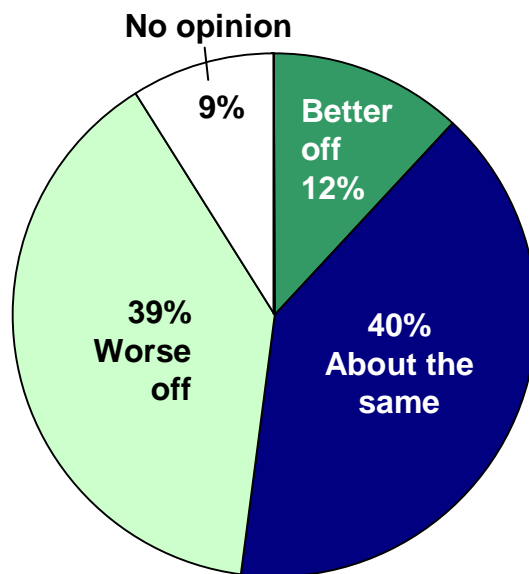
(December 2006)

-Graphics Packet-

Table 1a
Satisfaction with California's health care system and outlook for the future



Satisfaction with health care system in California



Outlook for health care system five years from now

Table 1b
**Satisfaction with California's health care system
and outlook for the future**
- by demographic subgroups -

	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Will get Better</u>	<u>Stay the Same</u>	<u>Will get Worse</u>
Total voters	<u>51%</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>39</u>
<u>Gender</u>					
Male	51%	44	11%	42	38
Female	50%	45	14%	38	39
<u>Age</u>					
18 - 39	56%	39	17%	46	30
40 - 49	46%	48	5%	35	52
50 - 64	42%	54	7%	38	46
65 or older	58%	36	19%	38	29
<u>Household income</u>					
Less than \$20,000	60%	36	19%	43	23
\$20,000 - \$39,999	54%	42	17%	43	31
\$40,000 - \$79,999	46%	49	13%	39	41
\$80,000 or more	48%	47	7%	39	49

Table 2a

Health care worries facing voters and their families

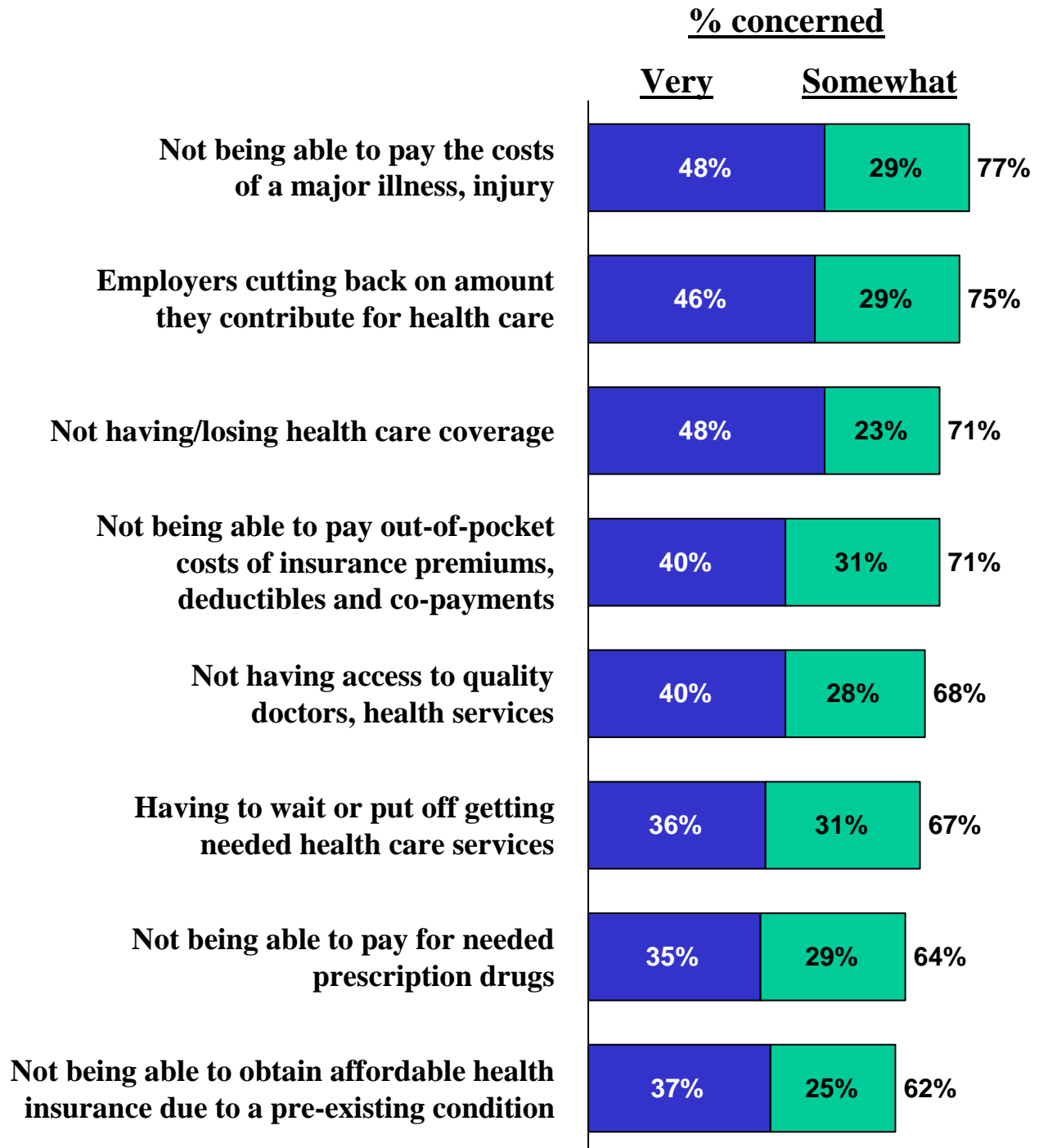


Table 2b

**Health care worries facing voters and their families
- by demographic subgroups -**

- % Concerned (very concerned) -

	<u>Paying for a major illness</u>	<u>Employer cutbacks to health care</u>	<u>Losing health care coverage</u>	<u>Paying for costs of insurance</u>
Total voters	<u>77% (48)</u>	<u>75% (46)</u>	<u>71% (48)</u>	<u>71% (40)</u>
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	73 (43)	72 (42)	67 (46)	67 (34)
Female	81 (53)	78 (50)	74 (49)	76 (46)
<u>Age</u>				
18 - 39	78 (46)	79 (47)	73 (50)	71 (39)
40 - 49	81 (47)	81 (52)	73 (45)	76 (40)
50 - 64	82 (55)	81 (53)	76 (54)	79 (48)
65 or older	73 (41)	55 (27)	56 (38)	56 (30)
<u>Household income</u>				
Less than \$20,000	89 (72)	80 (52)	90 (73)	86 (59)
\$20,000 - \$39,999	86 (56)	77 (49)	78 (57)	80 (52)
\$40,000 - \$79,999	78 (48)	79 (48)	71 (48)	75 (41)
\$80,000 or more	68 (35)	71 (42)	59 (35)	61 (29)

Table 2b (con't.)

**Health care worries facing voters and their families
- by demographic subgroups -**

- % Concerned (very concerned) -

	<u>Access to quality MDs/ health care</u>	<u>Waiting, putting off needed care</u>	<u>Paying for prescription drugs</u>	<u>Access to affordable insurance due to preexisting condition</u>
Total voters	<u>68% (40)</u>	<u>67% (36)</u>	<u>64% (35)</u>	<u>62% (37)</u>
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	66 (37)	65 (32)	59 (30)	57 (32)
Female	72 (42)	68 (39)	69 (40)	66 (41)
<u>Age</u>				
18 - 39	68 (44)	70 (36)	64 (33)	62 (34)
40 - 49	68 (36)	69 (37)	60 (33)	67 (39)
50 - 64	74 (43)	71 (41)	74 (42)	70 (45)
65 or older	56 (32)	52 (26)	54 (31)	47 (28)
<u>Household income</u>				
Less than \$20,000	85 (62)	88 (58)	84 (60)	80 (57)
\$20,000 - \$39,999	71 (44)	76 (43)	76 (47)	70 (41)
\$40,000 - \$79,999	69 (40)	69 (37)	62 (33)	61 (39)
\$80,000 or more	58 (30)	54 (24)	52 (25)	52 (29)

Table 3a

Factors voters believe are “very important” reasons why health care costs are increasing

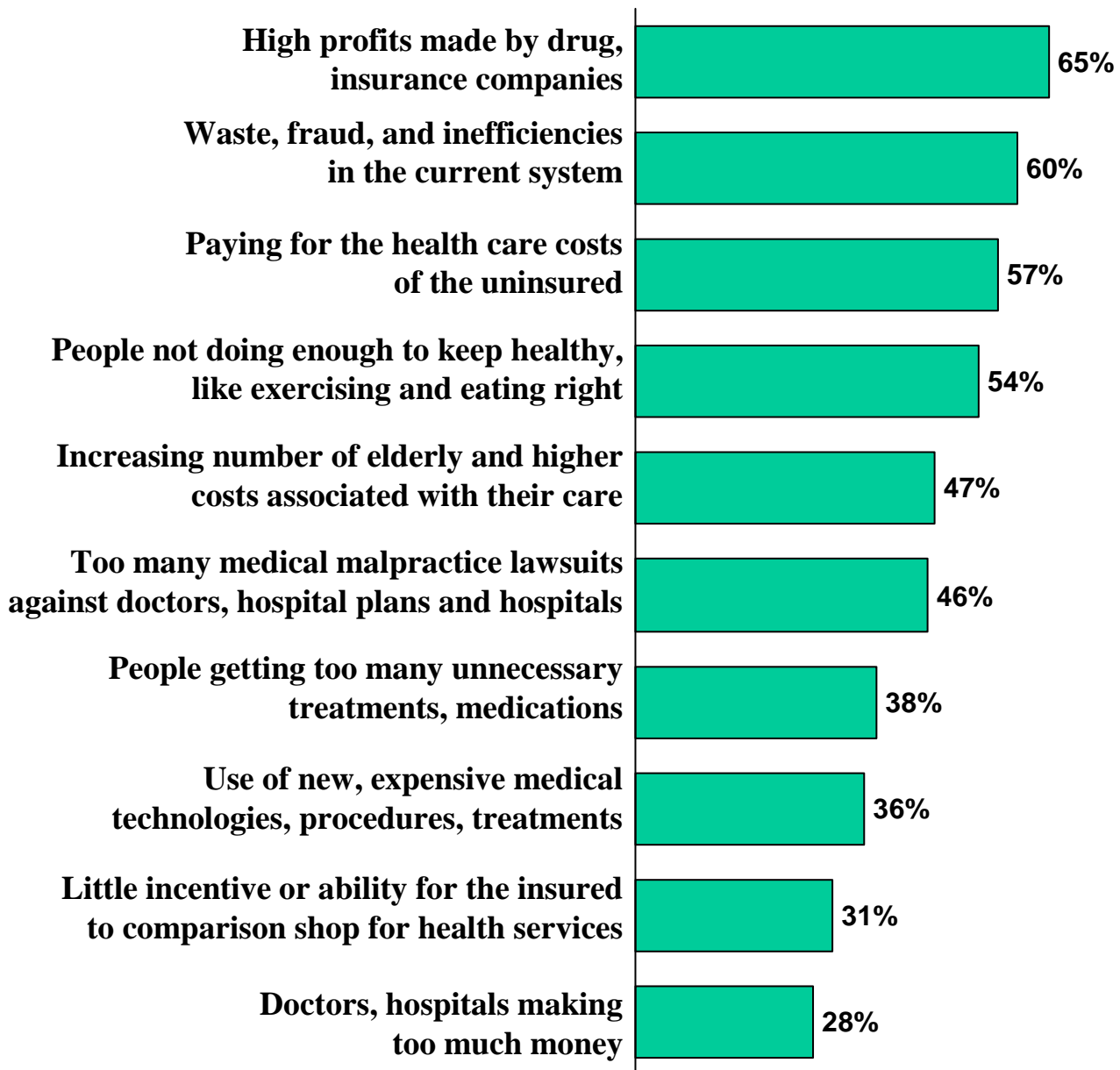


Table 3b

Factors voters believe are “very important” reasons why health care costs are increasing - by demographic subgroups -

	High drug, insurance company profits	Waste, fraud, and inefficiencies	Paying health costs of the uninsured	People not exercising/eating right
Total voters	<u>65%</u>	<u>60%</u>	<u>57%</u>	<u>54%</u>
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	59	58	50	54
Female	70	62	63	55
<u>Age</u>				
18 - 39	57	54	49	52
40 - 49	62	62	58	55
50 - 64	70	64	61	55
65 or older	72	62	62	56
<u>Household income</u>				
Less than \$20,000	63	60	58	51
\$20,000 - \$39,999	67	59	52	53
\$40,000 - \$79,999	71	64	60	58
\$80,000 or more	57	56	57	54

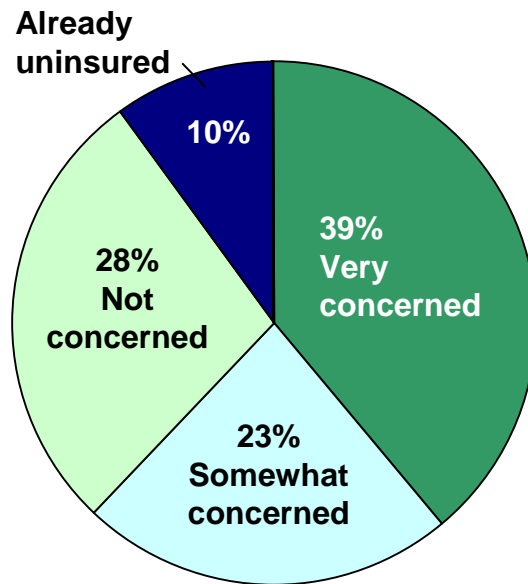
Table 3b (con't.)

Factors voters believe are “very important” reasons why health care costs are increasing - by demographic subgroups -

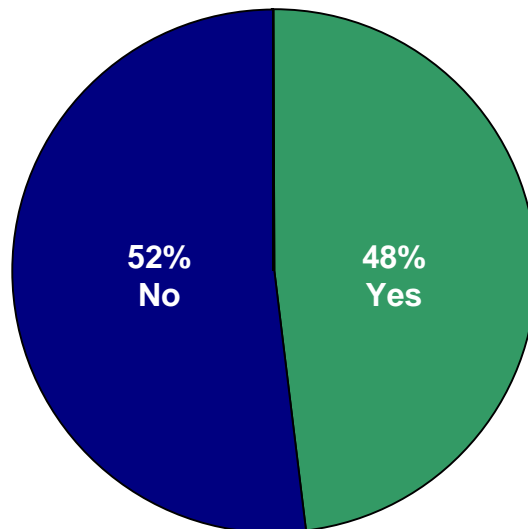
	Treating growing # of elderly	Too many malpractice lawsuits	Too many unnecessary treatments	New expensive medical procedures, treatments	Little comparison shopping	MDs, hospitals making too much
Total voters	<u>47%</u>	<u>46%</u>	<u>38%</u>	<u>36%</u>	<u>31%</u>	<u>28%</u>
Gender						
Male	46	47	38	34	28	25
Female	49	46	39	38	33	30
Age						
18 – 39	42	40	37	32	31	27
40 – 49	42	51	32	29	26	24
50 – 64	50	46	37	39	34	28
65 or older	57	53	46	46	32	31
Household income						
Less than \$20,000	54	49	51	46	39	46
\$20,000 - \$39,999	54	47	44	41	42	39
\$40,000 - \$79,999	44	44	43	32	30	26
\$80,000 or more	44	49	27	31	23	16

Table 4a

Voter insecurities about going without health insurance



Voter concerns that they or someone close to them will go without insurance in the near future



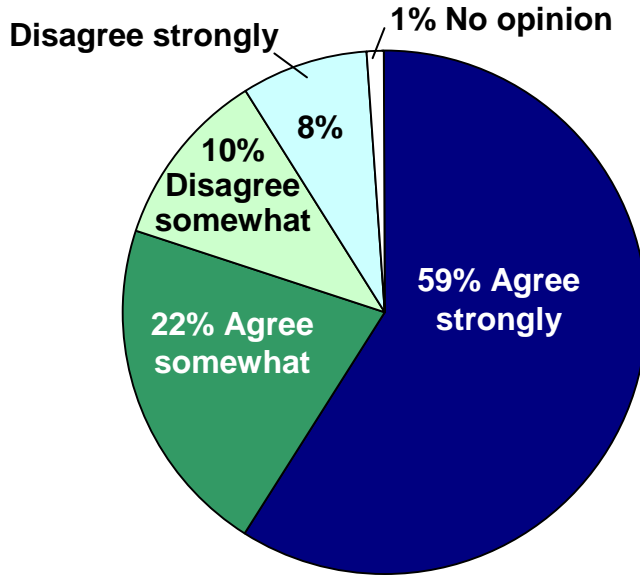
Have you/someone close to you been without insurance at any time in the past 2 years?

Table 4b
**Voter insecurities about being without
 health insurance**
- by demographic subgroups -

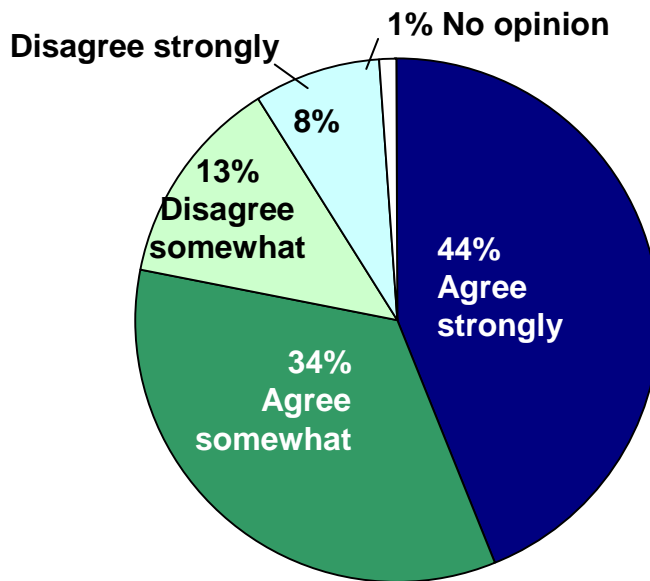
	<u>Already uninsured or very concerned</u>	<u>Gone without health insurance in past 2 years</u>
Total voters	<u>49%</u>	<u>48%</u>
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	43	42
Female	54	53
<u>Age</u>		
18 – 39	57	60
40 – 49	47	45
50 – 64	54	47
65 or older	34	29
<u>Household income</u>		
Less than \$20,000	81	64
\$20,000 - \$39,999	62	60
\$40,000 - \$79,999	48	49
\$80,000 or more	33	37

Table 5a

Responsibilities of government in providing access to health care coverage



“It should be public policy that government guarantee that all Californians have access to affordable health care insurance or other health care coverage.”



“The government has a basic responsibility to provide health care coverage for people who don't have enough money to pay for it themselves.”

Table 5b
Responsibilities of government in providing
access to health care coverage
- by demographic subgroups -

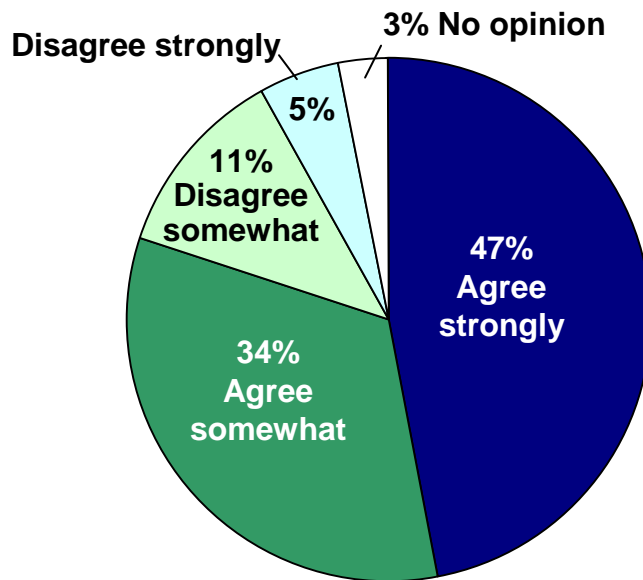
- % agree (agree strongly) -

	<u>Government guarantee of access to affordable coverage</u>	<u>Government responsibility for providing health coverage for the poor</u>
Total voters	<u>81% (59)</u>	<u>78% (44)</u>
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	77% (55)	77% (43)
Female	84% (62)	79% (45)
<u>Age</u>		
18 – 39	87% (65)	86% (51)
40 – 49	77% (55)	75% (41)
50 – 64	81% (58)	76% (42)
65 or older	74% (51)	70% (38)
<u>Household income</u>		
Less than \$20,000	89% (73)	89% (68)
\$20,000 - \$39,999	89% (69)	87% (55)
\$40,000 - \$79,999	84% (60)	78% (41)
\$80,000 or more	71% (49)	71% (34)

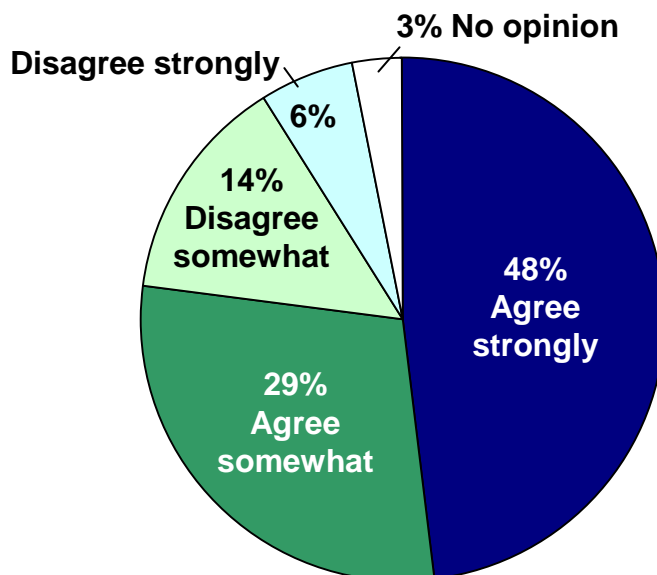
Note: Differences between 100% and sum of percentages for each item equals proportion with no opinion.

Table 6a

Factors associated with making the health insurance system work better



“The health insurance system works best when the costs and risks are shared among as many people as possible.”



“We need as many people as possible to be insured because when uninsured people need care they usually can only get treatment at more expensive hospital emergency rooms or trauma centers, increasing the cost to everyone.”

Table 6b

**Factors associated with making the health insurance system work better
- by demographic subgroups -**

- % agree (agree strongly) -

	Insurance system works best when costs/risks shared among <u>as many as possible</u>	Need to insure as many as possible to reduce costs of <u>treating the uninsured</u>
Total voters	<u>81% (47)</u>	<u>77% (48)</u>
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	81% (49)	76% (45)
Female	80% (45)	78% (52)
<u>Age</u>		
18 – 39	80% (36)	77% (39)
40 – 49	76% (44)	74% (45)
50 – 64	84% (57)	78% (57)
65 or older	83% (54)	79% (55)
<u>Household income</u>		
Less than \$20,000	86% (45)	81% (55)
\$20,000 - \$39,999	84% (49)	78% (51)
\$40,000 - \$79,999	83% (47)	76% (49)
\$80,000 or more	78% (48)	77% (44)

Note: Differences between 100% and sum of percentages for each item equals proportion with no opinion.

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Field Health Policy Survey (Part 1): Voter Satisfaction with and Concerns About the Health Care System

– Marginal Results to Questions Asked –

How satisfied are you with the way the health care system is working in California? Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?	VERY SATISFIED.....	13%
	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	38
	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	24
	VERY DISSATISFIED.....	20
	NO OPINION	5

Looking ahead, do you think that five years from now California's health care system will be better off, worse off or just about the same as now?	BETTER OFF	12%
	WORSE OFF.....	40
	SAME AS NOW.....	39
	NO OPINION	9

I am going to read some concerns that people have about health care and for each, please tell me how much of a concern this is to you and your family. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER) Is this something you and your family are very concerned about, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned about?

	VERY CONCERNED	SOMEWHAT CONCERNED	NOT TOO CONCERNED	NOT AT ALL CONCERNED	NO OPINION
() a. not having or losing health care coverage.....	48%	23	16	13	*
() b. not being able to pay for all the costs associated with a major illness or injury	48%	29	14	9	*
() c. not being able to pay for needed prescription drugs	35%	29	19	17	*
() d. not being able to pay for all the out-of-pocket costs associated with health insurance, such as premiums, deductibles and co-payments.....	40%	31	16	12	1
() e. not having access to quality doctors and health care services.....	40%	28	18	14	*
() f. employers cutting back on the amount they contribute for health care coverage	46%	29	11	12	2
() g. having to wait a long time or having to put off getting needed care.....	36%	31	17	16	*
() h. not being able to obtain affordable health insurance because of a pre-existing condition.....	37%	25	18	19	1

* Less than ½ of 1%

I am going to read some factors that have been cited as reasons for rising health care costs today. For each, please tell me whether you think this is very important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important in causing higher health care costs. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER) How important is this as a reason health care costs are rising today – very important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?

	<u>VERY</u> <u>IMPORTANT</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT</u> <u>IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NOT TOO</u> <u>IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL</u> <u>IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NO</u> <u>OPINION</u>
() a. the use of new and expensive medical technology, procedures and drug treatments.....	36%	40	16	6	2
() b. paying for the health care costs of people without health insurance.....	57%	29	8	3	3
() c. the increasing number of older people and the higher treatment costs associated with their care.....	47%	38	11	3	1
() d. fraud, waste and inefficiency in the current health care system.....	60%	28	8	2	2
() e. high profits made by drug companies and insurance companies.....	65%	22	8	3	2
() f. doctors and hospitals making too much money.....	28%	33	24	12	3
() g. too many medical malpractice lawsuits against doctors, health plans and hospitals.....	46%	33	12	6	3
() h. people getting too many unnecessary treatments, medications and operations they don't really need.....	38%	29	21	9	3
() i. people with health insurance having little incentive or ability to comparison shop for doctors and health services.....	31%	37	21	7	4
() j. people needing more medical care because they aren't doing enough of the things that will keep them healthy, like exercising and eating right.....	54%	32	10	3	1

I am going to read some statements about the health care system and for each, please tell me whether you agree or disagree. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER) Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or disagree strongly?

	<u>AGREE</u> <u>STRONGLY</u>	<u>AGREE</u> <u>SOMEWHAT</u>	<u>DISAGREE</u> <u>SOMEWHAT</u>	<u>DISAGREE</u> <u>STRONGLY</u>	<u>NO</u> <u>OPINION</u>
1. the government has a basic responsibility to provide health care coverage for people who don't have enough money to pay for it themselves	44%	34	13	8	1
2. we need as many people as possible to be insured because when uninsured people need care they usually can only get treatment at more expensive hospital emergency rooms or trauma centers, increasing the cost to everyone	48%	29	14	6	3
3. the health insurance system works best when the costs and risks are shared among as many people as possible	47%	34	11	5	3
4. it should be public policy (that is, a policy goal set out in state law) that government guarantee that all Californians have access to affordable health care insurance or other health care coverage	59%	22	10	8	1
Do you currently have any kind of health care coverage, including health insurance, prepaid HMO plans like Kaiser, or government plans such as Medicare or Medi-Cal?	YES	90%			
	NO	10			
	DON'T KNOW				

IF YES OR DON'T KNOW:

Have you or has anyone close to you been without health insurance coverage at any time in the past two years?	<u>90%</u>
YES	38
NO	52
NO OPINION	*
How concerned are you that there could be a time in the near future when you or someone close to you will be without health insurance – very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?	<u>90%</u>
VERY CONCERNED	39%
SOMEWHAT CONCERNED	23
NOT TOO CONCERNED	16
NOT AT ALL CONCERNED	12
NO OPINION	*

* Less than 1/2 of 1%