

HEALTH COVERAGE 2001

Key Survey Findings

New York

1. Of all the nine states we have surveyed, New York is the MOST concerned about making sure all families and children have access to affordable health insurance and are the most supportive of making sure all families and children have access to affordable health insurance.
2. An overwhelming 83% of New York adults favor "making sure all families and children have access to affordable health insurance, even if it costs you more (83% favor/14% oppose)." This is the highest support of all of the nine states we have surveyed. Three out of four respondents (75%) say they would be willing to pay as much as \$50 per year in additional taxes "to assure all Americans had health insurance coverage." Support for paying \$50 more in taxes is 82% yes/15% no among Gore voters, but a majority of Bush voters also favor this proposal as well (58% yes/37% no).
3. We asked respondents about using the surplus "to assure all Americans had health insurance coverage" and more than eight out of ten New Yorkers support using the surplus for this proposal (85% yes/11% no). New York men and women have the same high level of support for this proposal.
4. Comparing additional taxes to using the surplus, intensity of support is high for both options. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of New Yorkers strongly support additional taxes and more than six out of ten (68%) respondents strongly support using the surplus "to assure all Americans had health insurance coverage."
5. When asked about things the new president and new Congress might try to do in the next year, clearly the issue of "passing laws to help families and children who today have no insurance receive health care coverage" is an important priority. Of the eight critical national issues tested, the most important priorities are concern about the families with no insurance (69% a top priority) and making sure Social Security is financially sound (69% top priority). New York is the first state where the uninsured issue has been listed as the first priority. Increasing federal funding for public schools (63% a top priority), adding a prescription benefit to Medicare (61% top priority), and making Medicare financially sound (56% top priority), are the next level of priorities. These issues finish ahead of cutting federal taxes (47%), passing HMO reform (43% top priority) and significantly ahead of passing campaign finance reform laws (31% a top priority). Support for health coverage being a top priority is highest among women, African Americans, Hispanics, households with income under \$40K, Democrats, Independent Women, Gore voters, respondents who are not registered to vote, respondents with a high school or less education level, respondents who are divorced/separated or widowed, respondents with no health care coverage, respondents covered by Medicaid/Champus, respondents whose children are uncovered, respondents who sometime in the last three years did not have coverage and respondents who have had to postpone medical coverage sometime in the last three years.

6. There's a clear reason why the issue of the uninsured scores so highly among New York respondents: Fifty-eight percent (58%) say the number of New Yorkers without health insurance has increased in the last decade (compared to 17% decrease/20% stay the same) and 57% say the number of uninsured New Yorkers will continue to increase over the next decade compared to 18% decrease/20% stay the same.
7. When asked to describe uninsured Americans, New York respondents believe the uninsured are poor (39%), unemployed (31%), elderly (30%), new immigrants (29%), children (29%) and minority groups (28%). But only twenty-three percent (23%) of respondents choose "working families."
8. And although a slight majority (53%) of New York adults wrongly say most uninsured are unemployed, (43%) do correctly identify the uninsured as "employed people and people from families in which someone is employed." The sub-groups most likely to correctly identify the uninsured as being employed include working women, respondents age 30-50, women age 18-49, Hispanics, respondents living in households making \$20K-\$40K, respondents living in households making \$60K-\$80K, weak Democrats, Independent women, Democratic women, Buffalo and Syracuse media market residents, women with a college degree or higher, Gore Voters, and respondents whose children are uncovered.
9. New York respondents believe they know why so little progress has been made addressing this issue. Thirty percent (30%) say it is because "politicians are not interested enough in this issue" and twenty-one percent (21%) say it is because of "partisan bickering in Congress." Eighteen percent (18%) say it's because "special interests block much needed reform" and 14% say it's because "some politicians believe the federal government should not be more involved in providing health care." Nine percent (9%) say "there's not enough money in the federal budget" and 5% say "it's too big of a problem."
10. Currently 10% of the adults in New York interviewed say they do not have any health coverage at all either through private health insurance, Medicare or Medicaid. Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents say either they or someone in their household have not had health care coverage sometime in the last three years. In other words, more than one quarter of adults are either uninsured now or had some period in the last three years where either they or another family member lacked coverage. The sub-groups most likely to not have coverage include men age 18-49, Hispanics, respondents with household incomes under \$40K, Independents, weak Democrats, Democratic men, Albany media market residents, respondents who are single, men with less than a college education level, non-registered voters, respondents whose children are uninsured and respondents who have had to postpone medical care sometime in the last three years due to lack of coverage.
11. Among the 41% of New York adults with children, ten percent (10%) have no coverage for their child/children.

12. Twenty percent (20%) of adults tell us they or a family member have had to postpone medical care or treatment in the last three years because they lacked private or other health care coverage. Income cuts this data as more than one-third (37%) of respondents with household income of under \$20,000 a year have had to postpone care versus thirteen percent (13%) in a household earning over \$80,000 a year. Health insurance status is the key as 41% of people without coverage today have had to postpone care as did roughly two-thirds of respondents (62%) who have lacked coverage sometime in the last three years compared to only 6% among those who have had coverage for the past three years without interruption.
13. People who have had to postpone medical care or treatment are most likely to report missing doctor's visits (56%), filling prescriptions (44%), postponing medical tests (27%), emergency room care (24%), shots (20%), surgery (19%), hospital overnight stays (15%) and examinations for heart disease or blood pressure (15%).

METHODOLOGY:

Public Opinion Strategies and Lake Snell Perry and Associates conducted a survey of 500 adults in New York on December 13-14, 2000. The sample was drawn proportional to the adult population in each county. The margin of error for a sample of this size is $\pm 4.38\%$.