
KEY STRATEGIC FINDINGS from Polling on Healthcare

MARTTILA STRATEGIES

May 9, 2011

to

*The National Council of Women's Organizations Women's Health Task Force
and The Jacobs Institute of Women's Health*

Introduction

On the following pages, you will find a power point presentation used to support a briefing I made to the Women's Health Task Force of the National Council of Women's Organizations and The Jacobs Institute of Women's Health. The briefing was on May 9, 2011.

The theme of my remarks was "Key Strategic Findings from years of polling on health care" – and my comments were meant to help inform a winning strategy for preserving the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

The findings are backed up by extensive survey data from our own work (see slide 3) -- and from independent polling of major news organizations and academic research centers. But the presentation minimizes the number of specific poll results. Instead, it maximizes key conclusions about American public opinion that I believe are an essential foundation for successful strategic planning. Some of my conclusions may be surprising, but they are based on accurate readings of American public opinion.

In particular, I have attempted to identify poll results that have endured over multiple years (slides 25-27). For example, Americans are/have been surprisingly happy with the their health care generally, and their health insurance coverage, specifically.

These findings have endured for more than a decade – and they have important strategic implications.

One of my most important strategic judgments -- backed up by extensive polling and focus group research -- is that most Americans struggle with the substantive details of health care policy, including ACA. Therefore, any winning health care strategy must take this fundamental reality into account.

While Americans may not know much about the details of health policy, they feel very strongly about the care they and their family receive. And they bring to this consideration strongly held core beliefs and values. This judgment goes to the heart of my central strategic thesis:

My fundamental recommendation is that public strategies promoting health care reform and ACA must be built on a platform of American values about health care. And, in this regard, I believe the proponents of ACA have underutilized "values assets" (slides 22-24) that can still be effectively deployed during the coming year.

John Marttila
President, Marttila Strategies

*Survey highlights and strategic observations
are drawn, in part, from:*

National Survey for Schwartz Center for Compassionate HealthCare /
October 2010 / 1300 Interviews / Recent hospital patients & hospital doctors

National Survey for IMS Health / 2000 Voter Interviews May 2010

National Survey for PhRMA / 1600 Voter Interviews July 2009

National Survey for IMS Health / 2000 Voter Interviews February 2009

Strategic Research for the MA Universal Coverage Bill / February 2007

National Survey for PhRMA on Medicare / 2000 Voter Interviews July 2006
500 seniors on Medicare D, 500 seniors NOT on D, 1000 voters <65

Multiple focus groups in different states.

Numerous statewide surveys.

WINNING STRATEGIES

Winning strategies are derived from the most **TOUGH-MINDED ASSESSMENT** of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of *your* arguments – and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the arguments of your policy/political opponents.

NO wishful thinking—do not cook the research books.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. What do Americans **KNOW**—really know about the substance of an issue?
2. What can they **LEARN**? What can they *NEVER* learn?
3. What are their **BELIEFS/VALUES** about the issue?
4. What is the issue's political **SALIENCE**?

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT HEALTH CARE THAT MUST INFORM STRATEGY

- 1. A majority of Americans do not/will not understand the substantive details of the Affordable Care Act, or health care policy, generally. It has been ever thus.**
- 2. Given this lack of substantive understanding, a communications platform based on CORE VALUES is essential.**
- 3. Americans are surprisingly happy with their CURRENT health care, health insurance coverage, prescription coverage—even their health care costs. They believe ACA will benefit others, not them—and it will increase their own costs.**
- 4. They do have very real concerns about all aspects of their FUTURE health care.**
- 5. Americans have many concerns about our country's larger health care system – and the need for significant change but the Republican criticism regarding unaffordable costs has gained traction (at this time).**
- 6. A sharp partisan, ideological divide has existed from the earliest moments of the Obama administration. In this regard, there are 5—not 3—political parties.**
- 7. Doctors and nurses are increasingly unhappy about the changes sweeping through our health care system. These criticisms preceded the passage of ACA, but they could be used against the legislation.**
- 8. Women have been/will be more supportive of health reform and ACA, specifically.**

WOMEN HAVE BEEN MORE SUPPORTIVE OF HEALTH REFORM THAN MEN.

Women with postgraduate degrees, and single women, are among the most progressive political cohorts.

After hearing arguments for and against the health care reform law, a plurality of Americans oppose it.

The new law prevents insurance companies from denying insurance coverage because of pre-existing medical conditions or canceling policies because a policy holder becomes ill. It effectively eliminates medical bankruptcy by preventing financial limits on annual bills or financial limits for specific illnesses. Children can stay on their parents' policies until age 26. The Congressional Budget Office says the law will reduce the deficit over the next 10 years. (Positive summary)

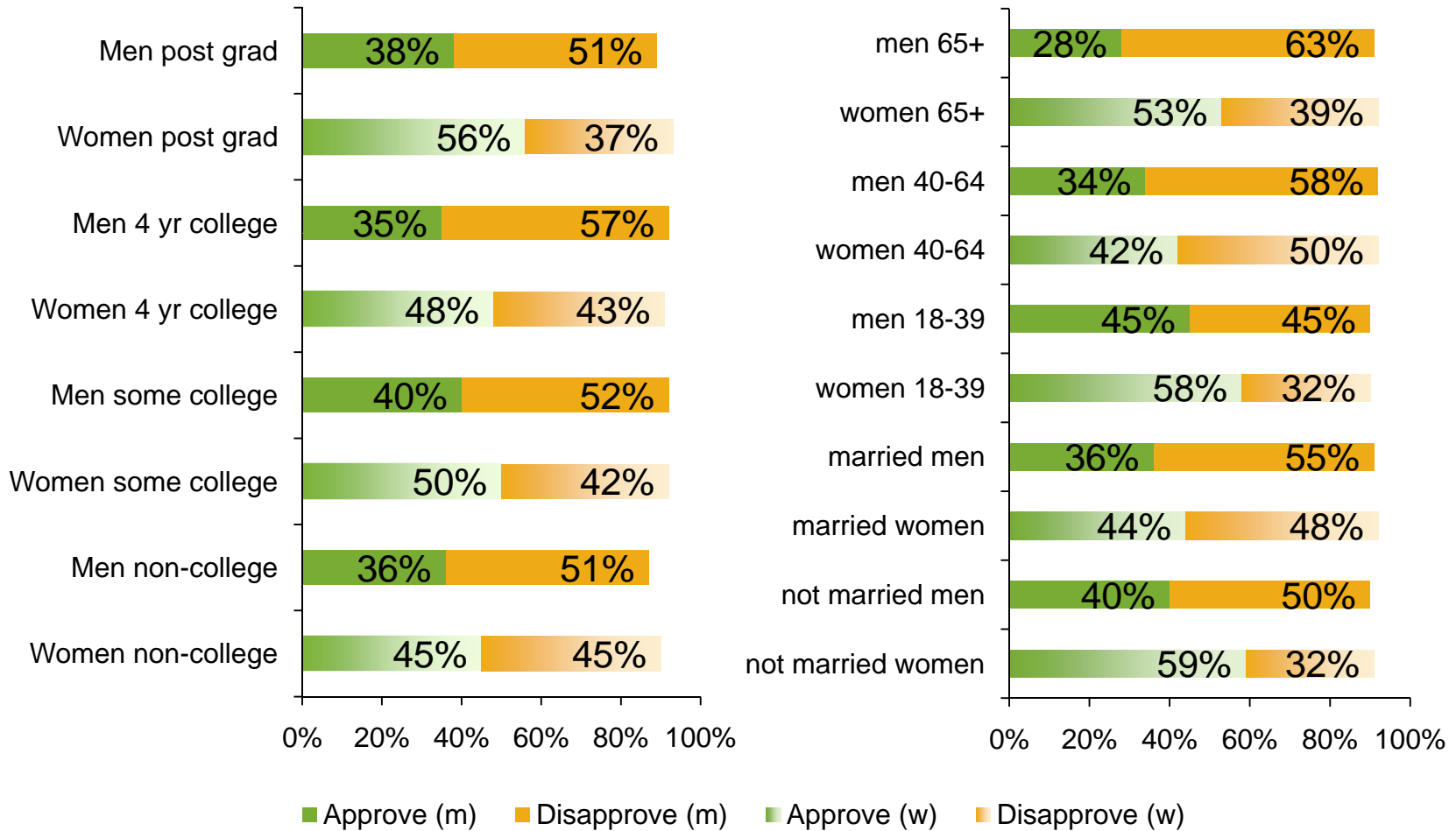
**Percent of
Americans For ACA** **43%**

The new law inserts the national government into the U.S. health care system by requiring that every American have insurance coverage and by requiring every business with more than 50 employees to provide employees insurance coverage. The directives in the bill lead to the nationalization of our health care system and take away individual freedom. The law is wildly expensive and will cause the deficit to explode. (Negative summary)

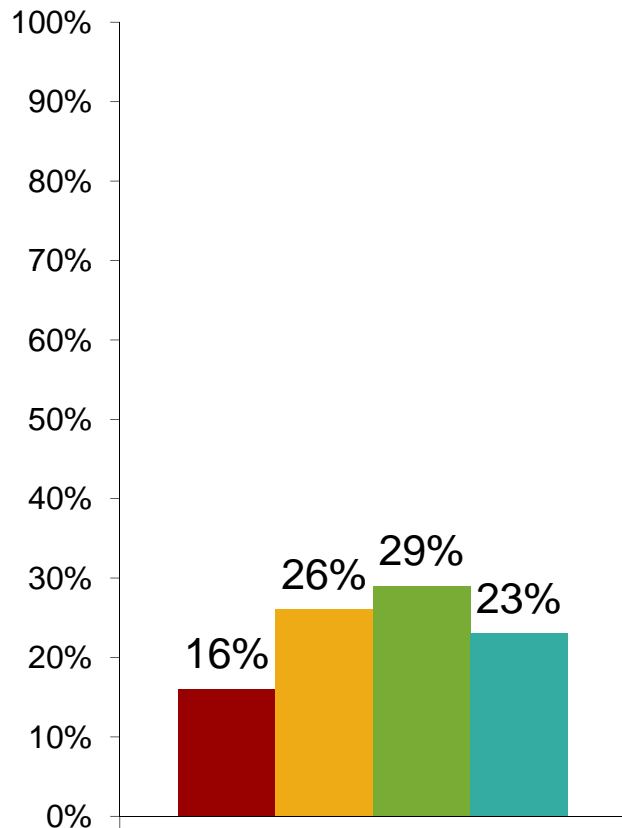
**Percent of
Americans Against** **48%**

Women were/will be the political base for saving the Affordable Care Act.

(TOTAL - APPROVE/DISAPPROVE: 43% to 48% M:37-53, W: 49-42)

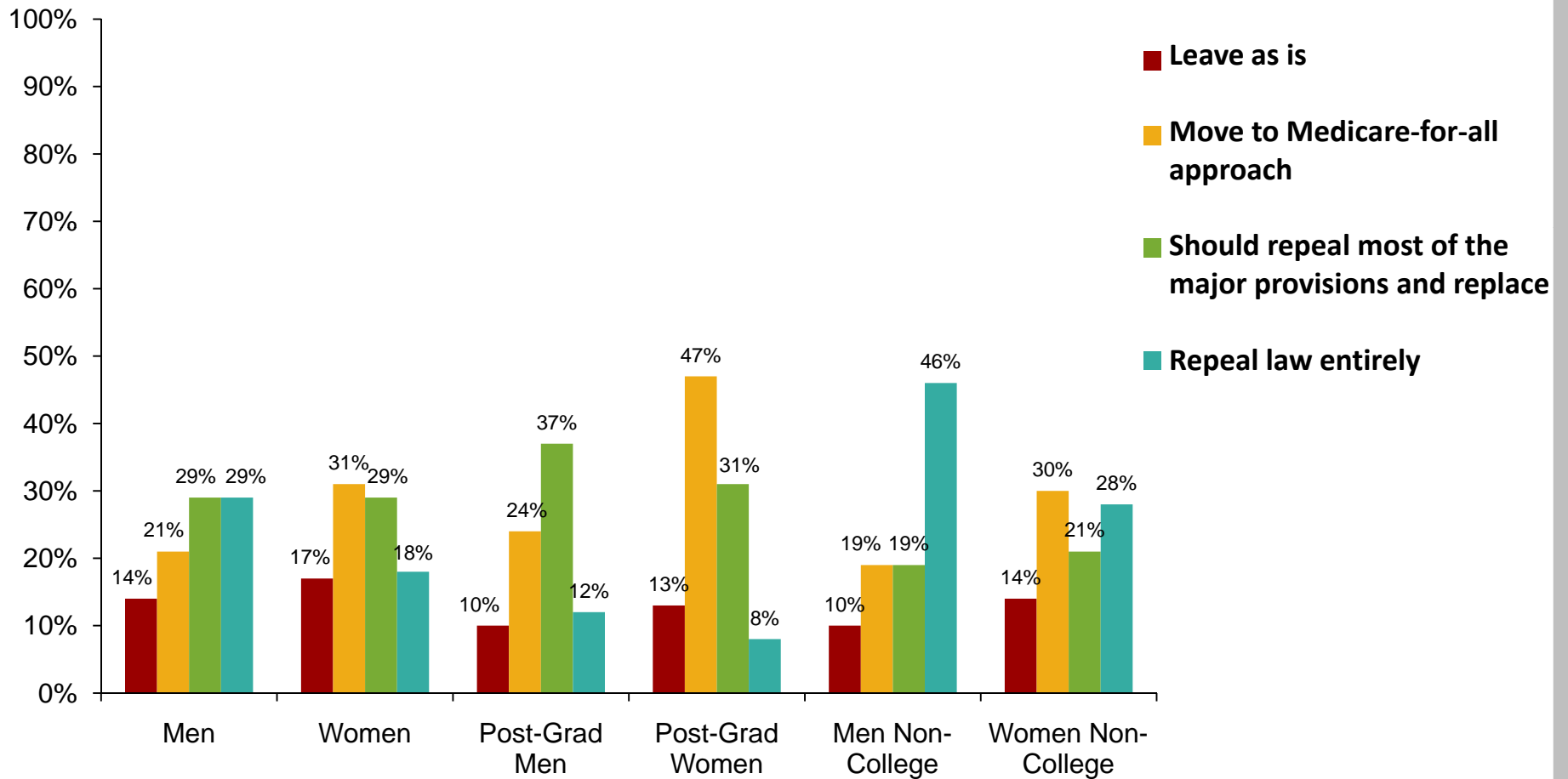


*When presented with 4 health reform scenarios,
23% favor repeal; 26% favor single payer.*



- Congress should leave the law as it is.
- Congress should make additional changes to INCREASE the government's involvement in the nation's health care system to move us toward a Medicare-for-all approach.
- Congress should repeal most of the major provisions in that law and replace them with a different set of proposals.
- Congress should repeal the law entirely and forget about health care reform for the next several years.

*When presented with 4 health reform scenarios,
23% favor repeal; 26% favor single payer.
(Leave 16%, Move to Medicare 26%, Repeal most 29%, Repeal all 23%)*



WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW? HOW DO THEY FEEL ABOUT THEIR CARE?

Americans are surprisingly satisfied with their own care and coverage but have clear concerns about the future and the health care system, generally. They don't know much about the details of health care policy generally, or ACA.

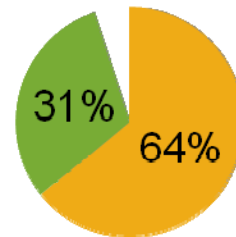
Americans believe they have a responsibility to educate themselves about their medical conditions so that they can take an active role in deciding their treatments.

Please tell me which statement you agree with more:

A. Doctors and other health care professionals should be the only people determining treatment options for patients. While Medical sites on the Internet, like Web MD, provide some useful information, average Americans are not qualified to make judgments about their own medical treatment and can be swayed by erroneous information.

B. Americans have a responsibility to learn as much as they can about health care conditions and take better care of themselves. The explosion of medical information on the Internet, at sites like Web MD, has been one of the most important advances in improving health care outcomes in the country. Americans can be trusted to use this information to complement the advice of their doctors.

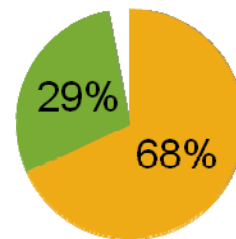
Percent who agree:



A. Doctors and other health care professionals should be the only people determining treatment options for patients. Americans have a responsibility to themselves to learn as

B. much as they can about their specific health condition, so they can better judge the treatments their doctor advises as well as making informed choices in their lives.

Percent who agree:



FIRST PRINCIPLE: Many Americans—even the best educated—have a limited understanding of the Affordable Care Act. And, some of the key substantive details will never be fully understood.

This reality must inform the public case for health reform.

1. Americans have always struggled with the **financial and policy details about health care**. For most people, it is truly arcane.

It has been no different during the past few years—as recent polling has indicated—even with the massive press coverage about the ACA debate.

2. Profound change **in news coverage**—we are going through a communications revolution— in which news is dispensed and consumed in radically different ways – sometimes with calamitous results.

FIRST PRINCIPLE: Many Americans—even the best educated—have a limited understanding of the Affordable Care Act. And, some of the key substantive details will never be fully understood.

This reality must inform the public case for health reform.

3. High levels of health insurance coverage (88% among voters) – and minimal **“financial skin in the game”** mean Americans are not drawn to the issue barricades.
4. **The high levels of satisfaction** with their health care and their health insurance coverage create/have created a disincentive for people to dig into the details of health care policy.

Americans' ongoing high level of satisfaction with their health care and health insurance coverage must inform strategy.

How satisfied are you with the quality of the health care that you and your family receive?

Satisfied: **88%**
2009: 87%

Not Satisfied: **11%**
2009: 11%

How satisfied are you with your health insurance coverage? (88% among voters)

Satisfied: **89%**
2009: 85%

Not Satisfied: **10%**
2009: 14%

How satisfied are you with your prescription drug insurance coverage?

Satisfied: **91%**
2009: 86%

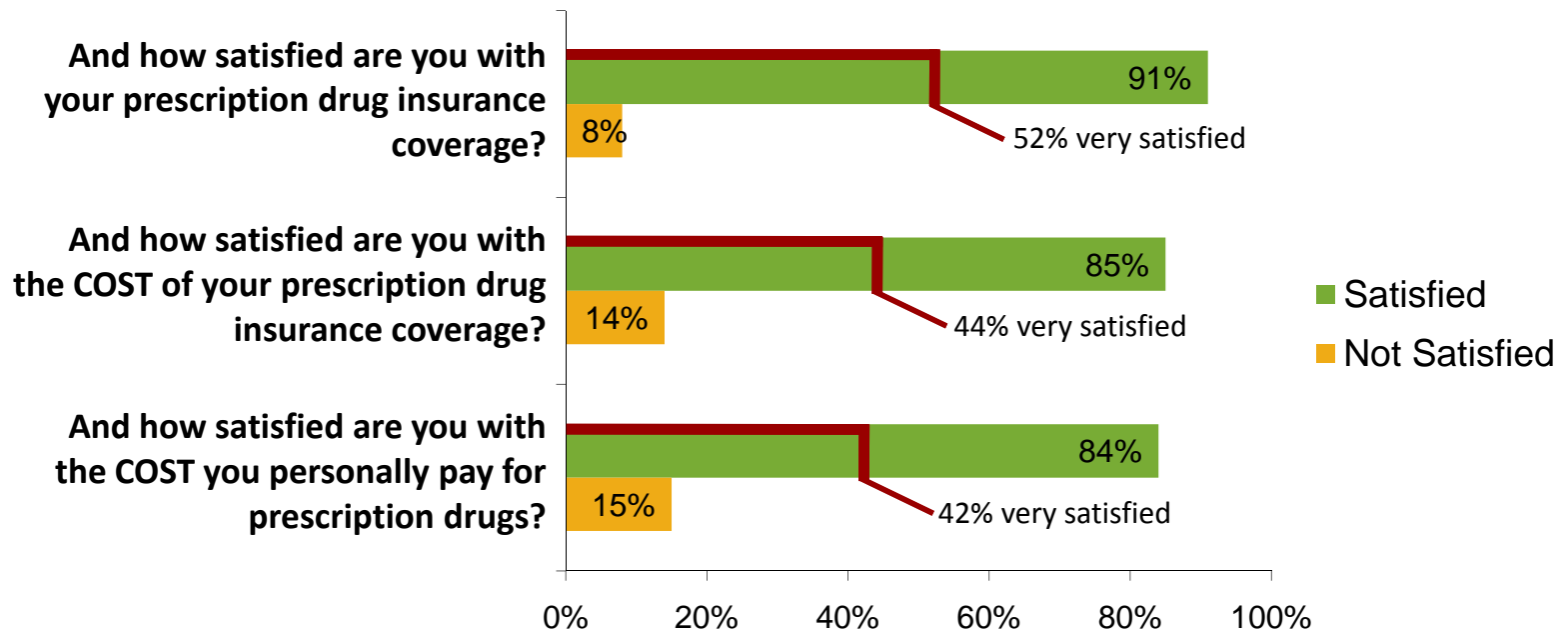
Not Satisfied: **8%**
2009: 12%

Americans are very satisfied with their prescription insurance coverage, believe their prescription medicines are vitally important to their health, and that the costs for these drugs are reasonable.

IF TAKE RX DAILY: On a scale of 1-10 with ten being the most important, and one being not important at all, how would you rate the importance of your prescription drug medication to your overall health?

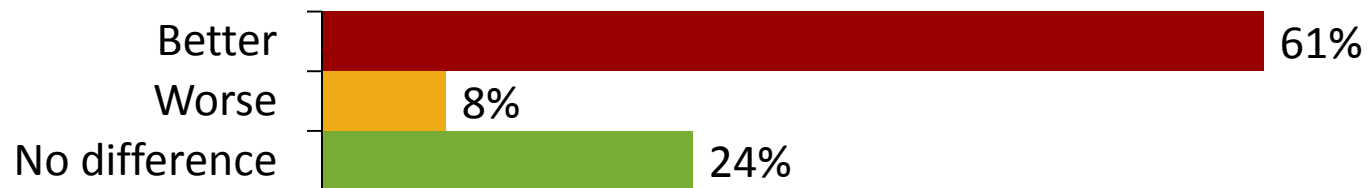
78% of daily users rate medicines as very important (8,9,10) to their overall health on a 10-point scale

61% TAKE RX DAILY

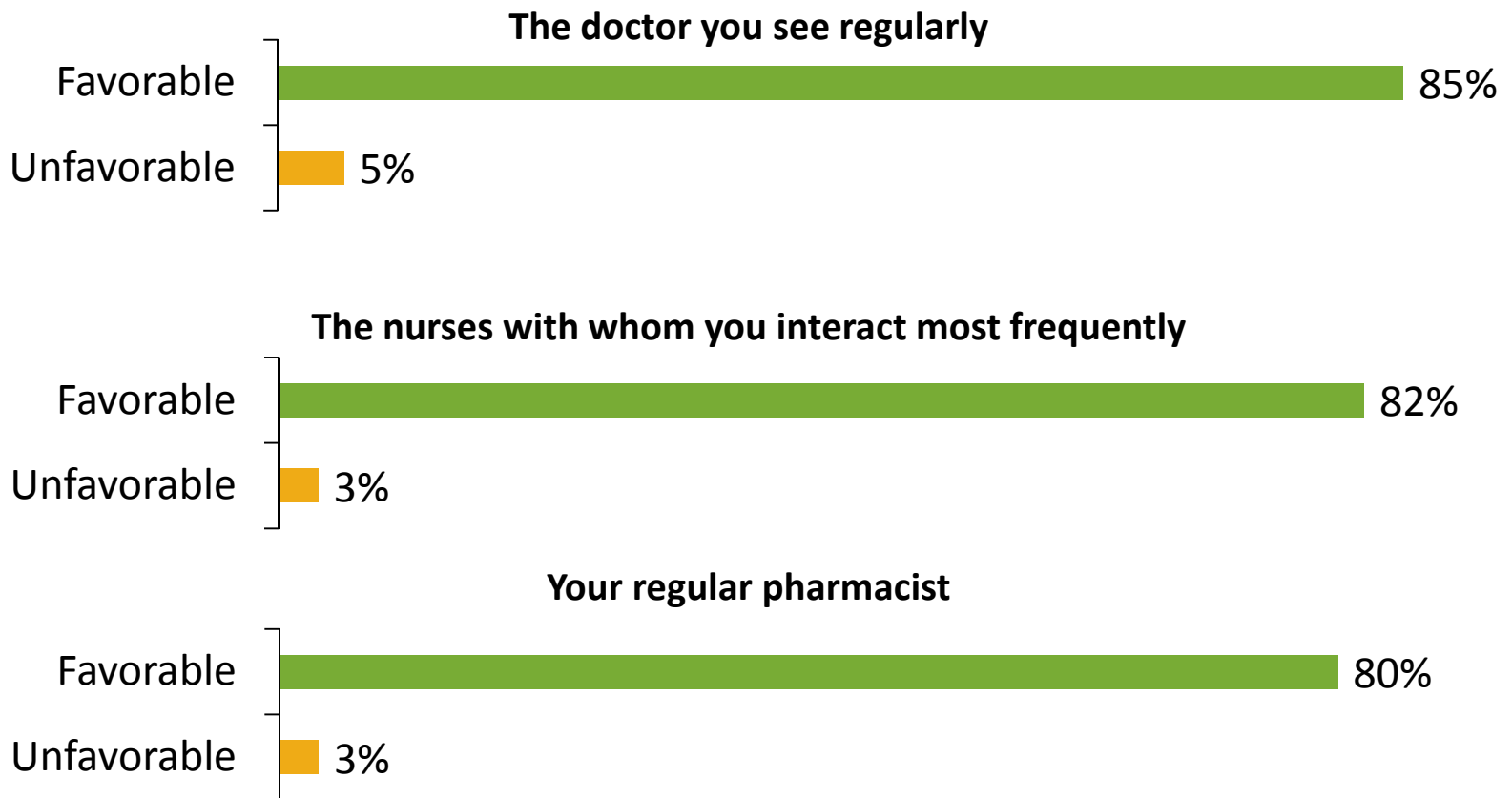


By decisive margins, Americans believe their health insurance coverage is better than most other Americans.

When you compare your health insurance to the health insurance of other Americans, would you say your health insurance is better or worse than most Americans?

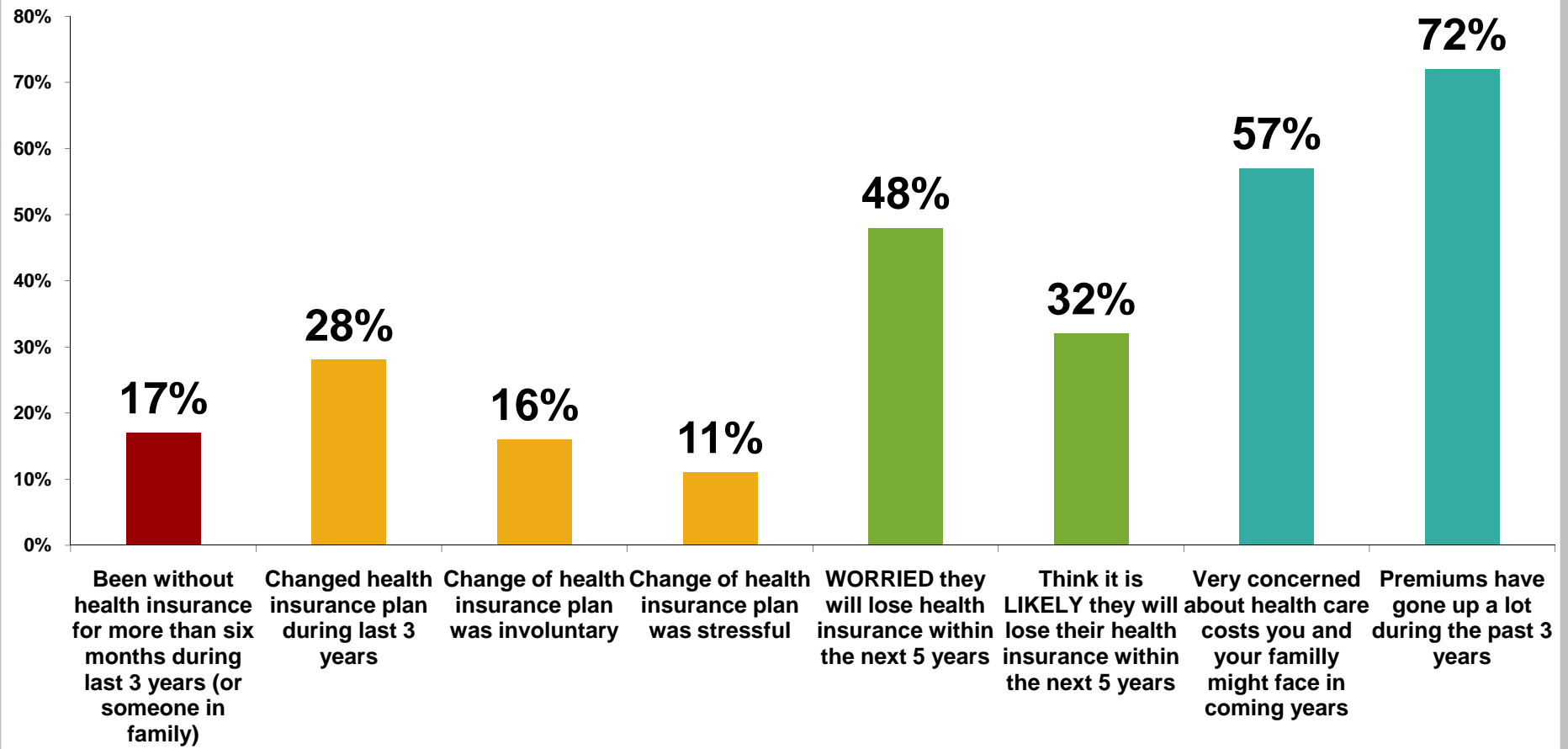


Superb ratings for “the people with whom Americans come in contact on a regular basis to receive their medical care.”



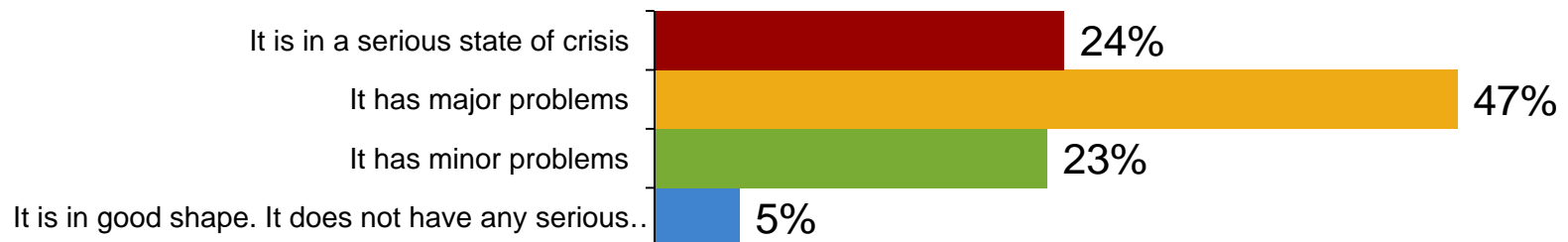
But change is sweeping through the insurance system. And deep anxieties about the stability/cost of future coverage are why skeptical Americans might still support reform:

One-third of Americans have changed insurance policies during the past three years; and, for most, it was involuntary.

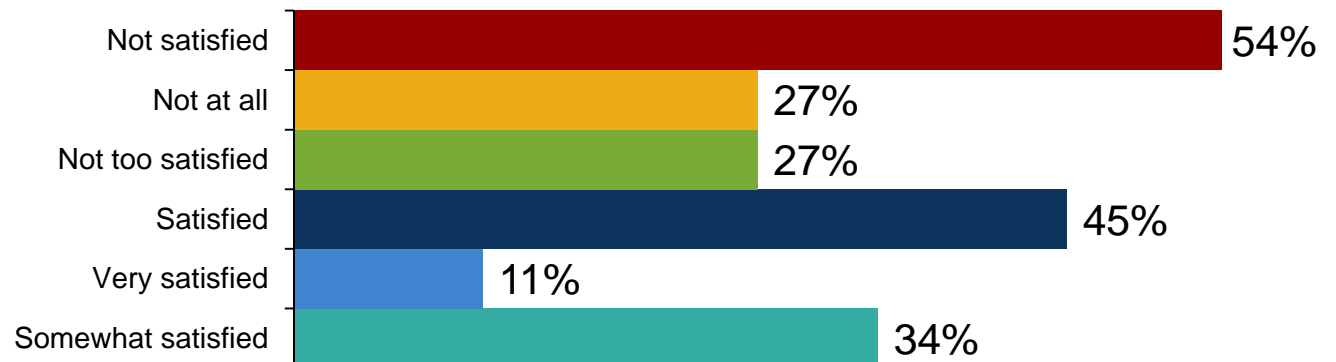


Americans believe/know the national health care system needs a serious overhaul (2010).

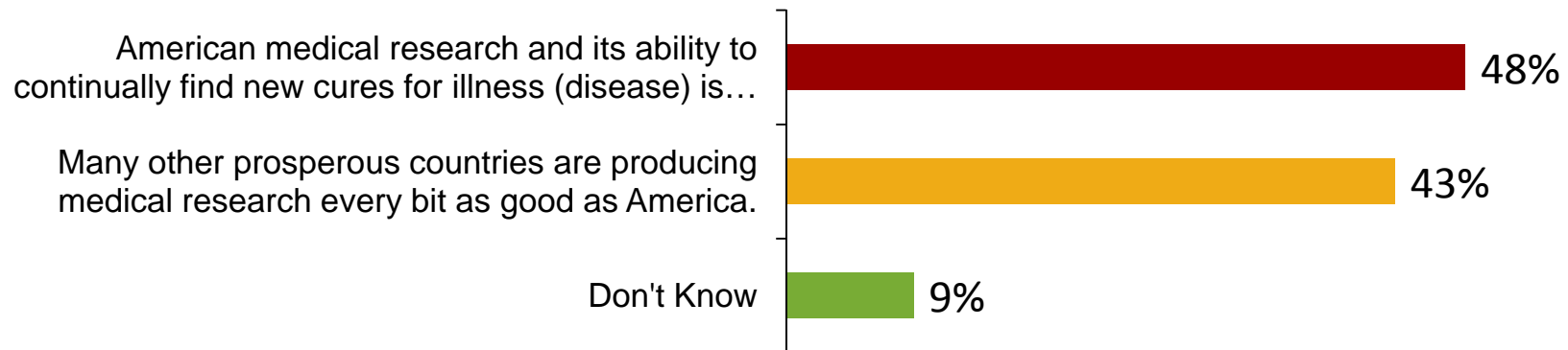
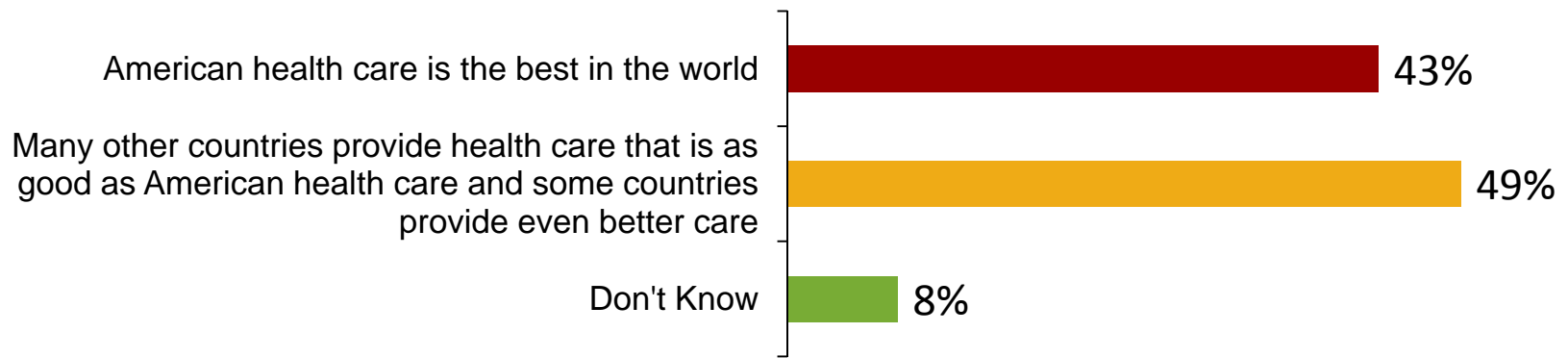
Which of the following statements do you think best describes the health-care system in America today?



Thinking about the country as a whole, are you generally satisfied with the cost of health care in this country?



American Health Care no longer seen to be the best in the world. And only narrow pluralities believe in the superiority of American medical research.



AMERICAN HEALTH CARE VALUES

When Americans think about health care, they think about it based on their own experience and VALUES—and not through the prism of policy details.

American Health Care Values

Americans don't believe any family should be financially devastated by catastrophic illness.

Americans don't believe anybody should be denied insurance coverage because of a pre-existing medical condition.

Americans want ALL American kids to have good health care coverage.

Americans hold their doctors and nurses in very high regard. And they want these health care professionals to make their medical decisions – not insurance company bureaucrats.

American Health Care Values

There is extraordinary churn in the health insurance system: Stable, enduring insurance protection is becoming increasingly important to Americans of all political persuasions.

Americans don't want the government involved in dispensing health care, but they definitely want government health guarantees, e.g., patients' bill of rights, prescriptions for seniors, full coverage, etc.

Americans support universal coverage, but they have no idea how to make it happen. Support for universal coverage crosses party and ideological lines. Americans want universal coverage because they worry about the loss of their own coverage—but support for universal coverage is also a morally based concern—Americans genuinely worry about what happens to people without coverage but concern about the cost of universal coverage is increasing.

Other American Beliefs/Judgments about Health Care

Americans give very high ratings to the health care they and their families receive, their health insurance coverage, their recent hospital care – and even their prescription insurance coverage.

Many Americans believe Medicare is at risk, and many younger Americans doubt it will be there when they need it. Also, Medicare's freestanding gold standard identity is eroding.

Americans don't know much about Medicaid, especially those parts of the program that provide coverage for poor seniors, seniors in nursing homes and for people with disabilities.

The issue of health care costs is back on the front burner. Americans believe/know/worry that they will be paying more and more, for less and less insurance coverage. Few, if any, believe their premiums will/can be reduced in the future.

Other American Beliefs/Judgments about Health Care

Americans believe/know/worry employers are likely to cut back health care benefits even further—a development they see as being largely inevitable. They also believe that in the ideal world, all employers should provide health care coverage—but employer mandates, while initially appealing, rarely survive a lengthy discussion in focus groups.

There is a widespread belief that patients have to be their own advocates in new era of managed care. But this is not a happy thought to many vulnerable audiences.

Americans believe seniors should have prescription drug coverage, but this issue has always had less political salience among the general population than many Democrats believe. Only a tiny percentage of seniors have sought prescriptions from Canada.

Other American Beliefs/Judgments about Health Care

Americans believe the current health care system is driven by the desire for profits, even among not-for-profit hospitals; Americans do not understand the distinction between for-profit hospitals and not-for-profit hospitals.

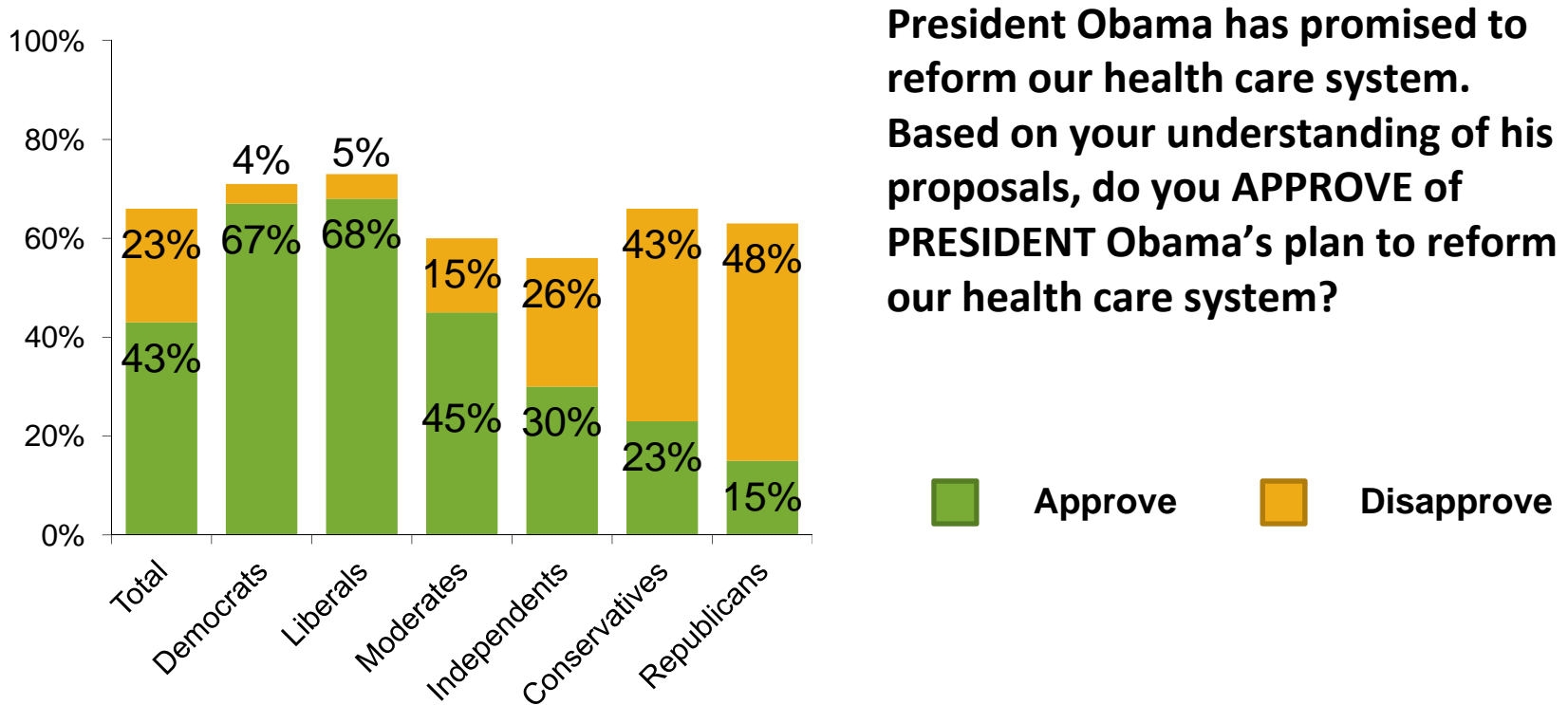
Americans continue to be sharply critical of what they believe is the pharmaceutical industry focus on profits at the expense of curing disease. However, Americans who take at least one prescription drug per day consider these medications vital to their health.

Americans are antagonistic toward insurance companies -- organizations that they believe are totally motivated by profit and have gained too much decision-making power in health care. HMOs are held in higher regard, even though many function similarly to health insurance companies.

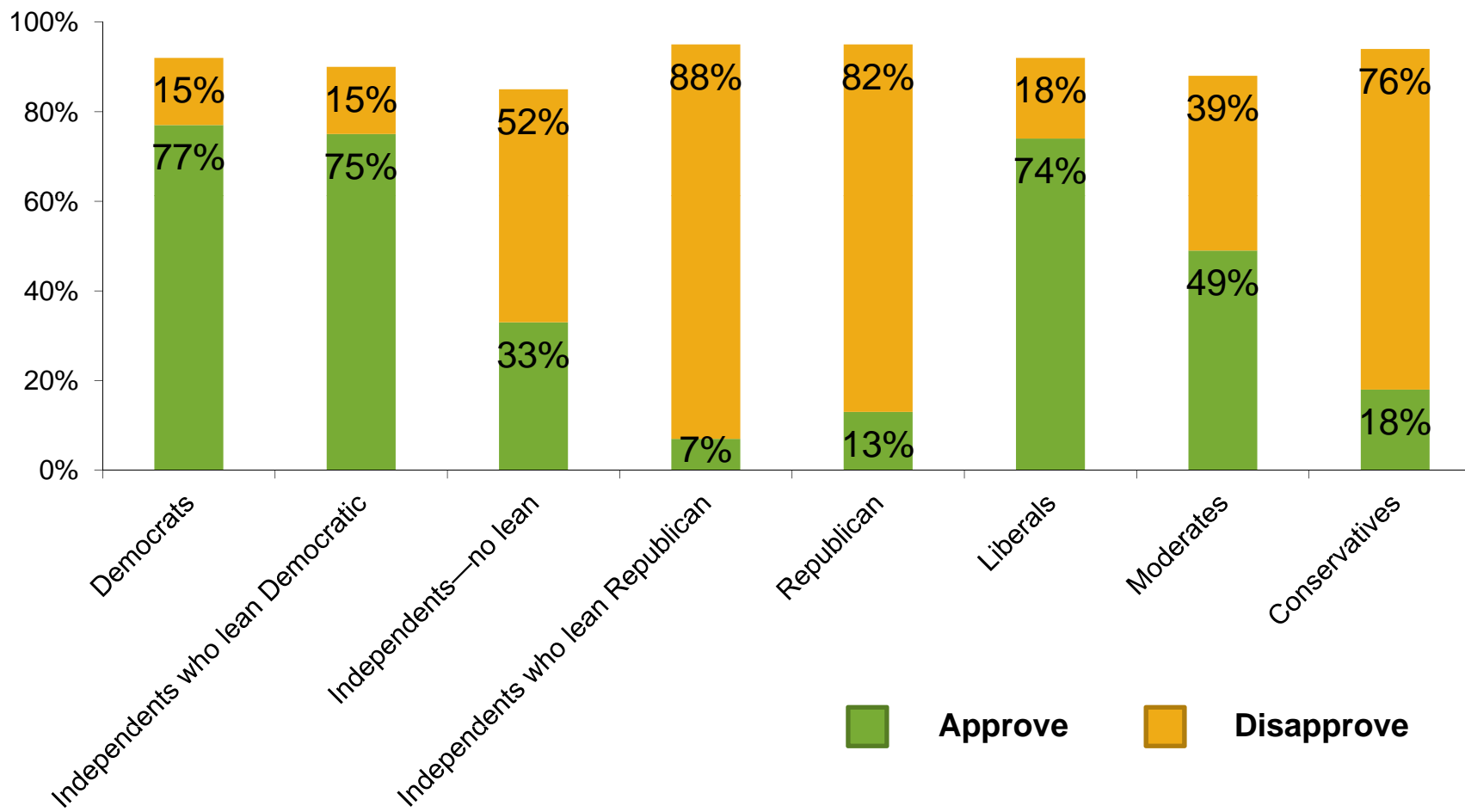
PARTISAN DIVIDE

A deep partisan and ideological divide has existed since the earliest moments of the Obama Administration.

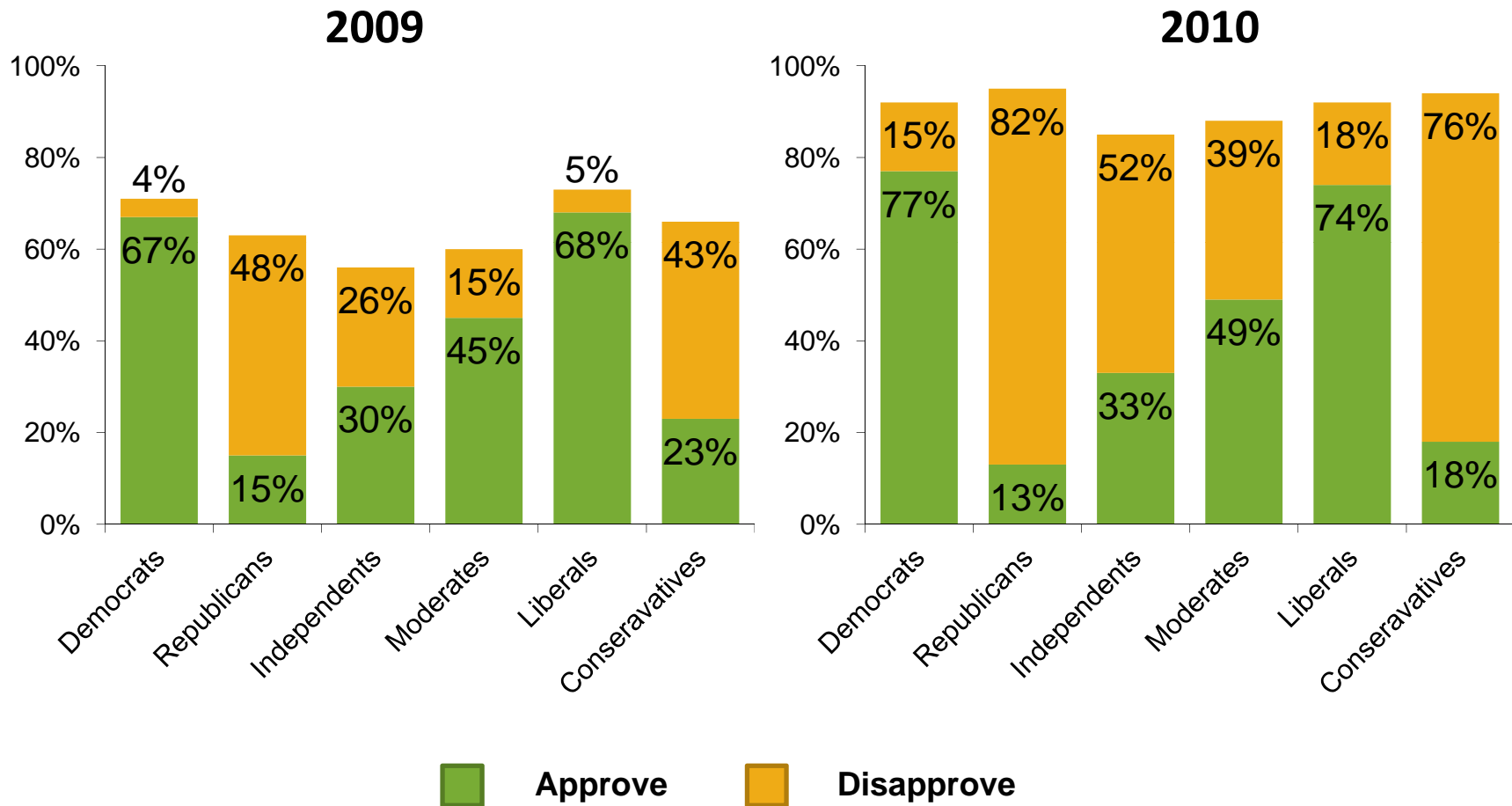
FEBRUARY 2009: Conflicting views—driven by partisanship and ideology—about the merits of the Obama Health Care plan (“era of bipartisanship is over”).



MAY 2010: Conflicting views—driven by partisanship and ideology—about the merits of the Obama Health Care plan: TOTAL 43%-48%. Independents who lean Democratic are basically Democrats. Independents who lean Republican are basically Republicans.

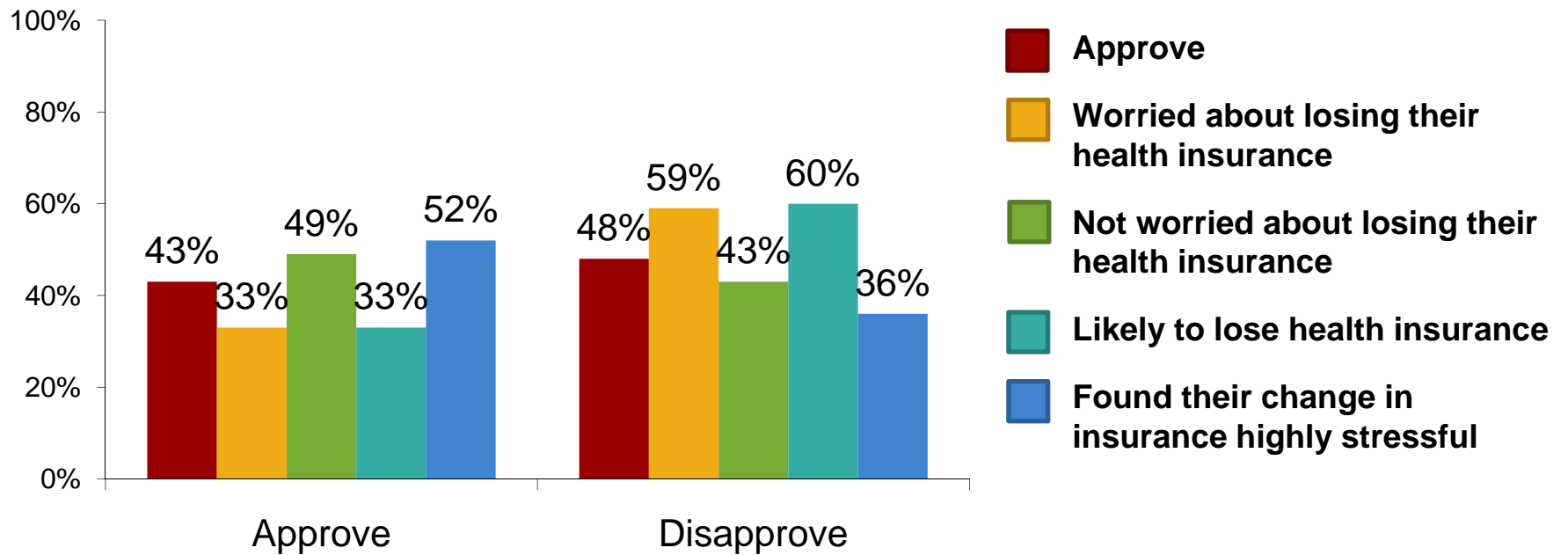


Support for the President's health care plan increased among Democrats and Liberals, and opposition intensified among Republicans and Conservatives.



Ironically, those who were most worried about losing health insurance in the next 5 years strongly opposed the health care law.

TOTAL: 43% to 48%



THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Americans want government guarantees/protections for their health care – but they are wary of an overreaching, intrusive government.

Caution: Yellow lights blinking about the role of government in national health care reform. Americans want government guarantees; they are wary of an overreaching government.

To help slow the growth of health insurance premiums, the federal government should establish a **NEW INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC BODY** which would decide whether approved medical technology, procedures, and drugs should be covered by insurance, based on whether they are proven to be more effective than existing, less expensive treatments. **Would you favor or oppose this? (GET ANSWER THEN ASK: Is that strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?)**



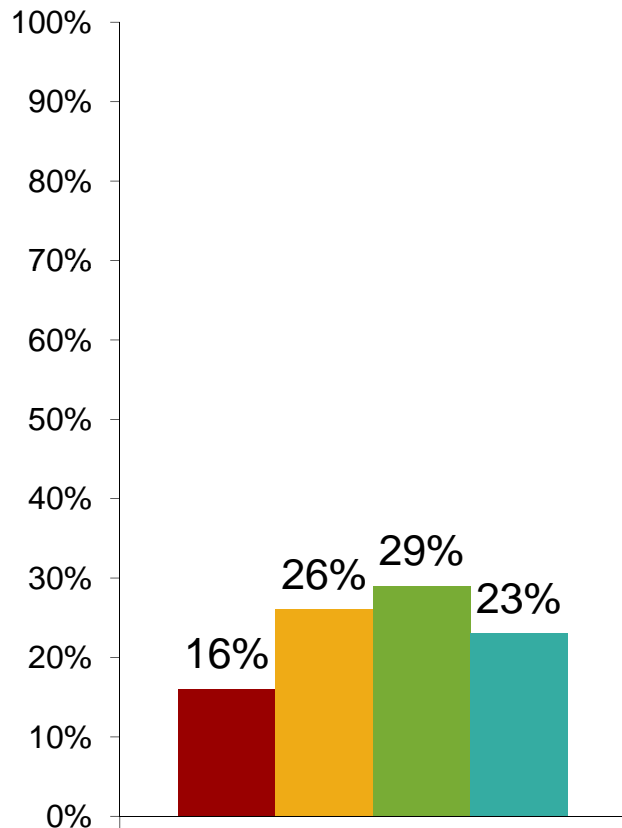
Which statement is closer to your own view:

A: To help slow the growth of health insurance premiums, the federal government should establish a new Independent scientific body, which would decide whether approved medical technology, procedures, and drugs should be covered by insurance, based on whether they are proven to be more effective than existing, less expensive treatments.

B: The federal government should NOT be involved in making decisions about which new medical technology, procedures, and drugs should be covered by insurance. This might mean that in some cases, treatments or drugs recommended by a person's own doctor wouldn't be covered by their health insurance.

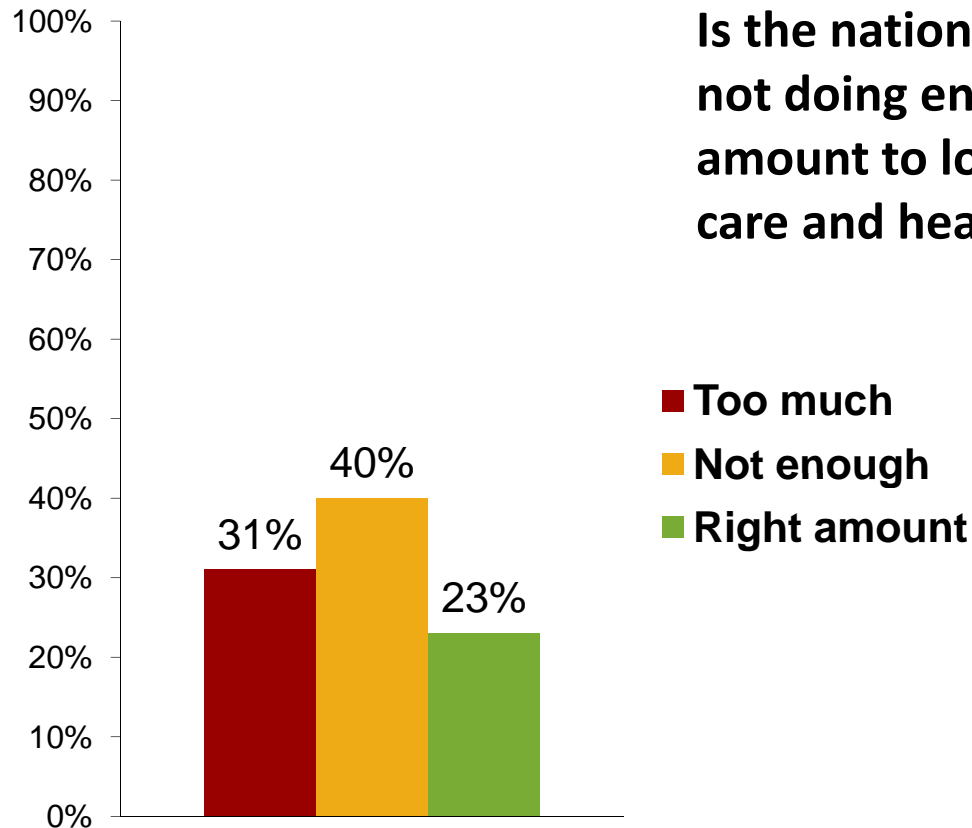


*When presented with 4 health reform scenarios,
23% favor repeal; 26% favor single payer.*



- Congress should leave the law as it is.
- Congress should make additional changes to INCREASE the government's involvement in the nation's health care system to move us toward a Medicare-for-all approach.
- Congress should repeal most of the major provisions in that law and replace them with a different set of proposals.
- Congress should repeal the law entirely and forget about health care reform for the next several years.

More than one-half of Americans believe the government is either doing too much, or the right amount to look out for health care needs of Americans.



Is the national government doing too much, not doing enough, or doing about the right amount to look out for the long term health care and health care needs of Americans?

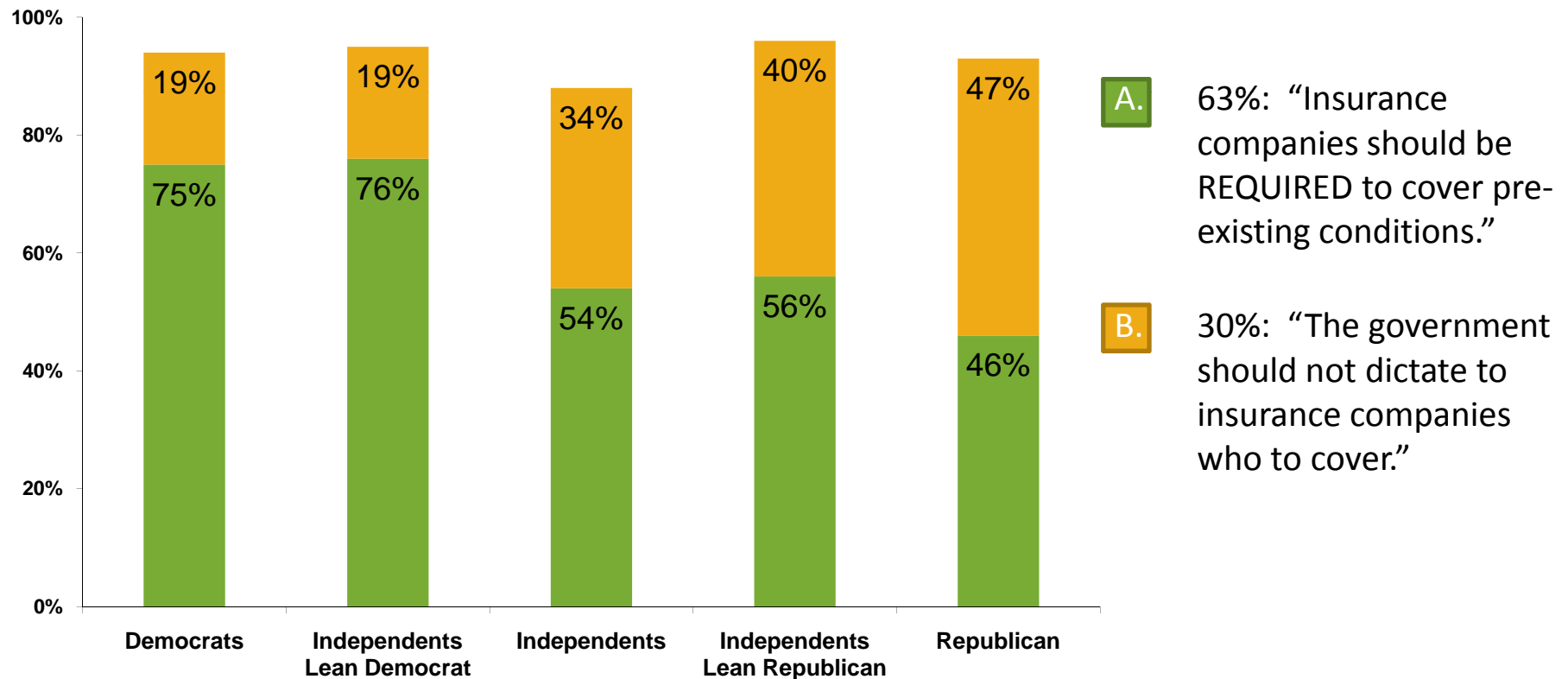
RESEARCH ABOUT VALUES

A Few Examples:

The most effective
political/public policy
communication is built upon a
platform of values.

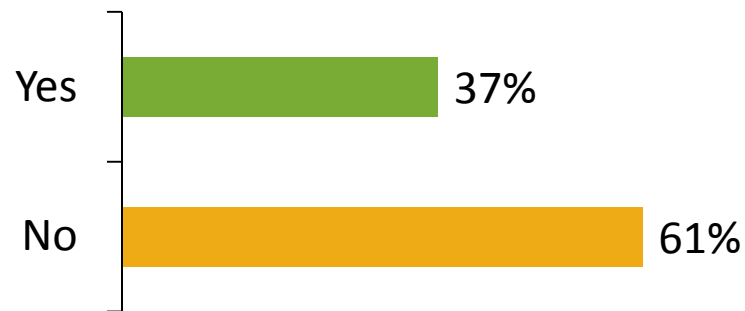
Requiring health insurance companies to cover pre-existing conditions is a deeply held consensus value.

By huge margins, Americans believe insurance companies should be **REQUIRED** to cover people with pre-existing conditions.

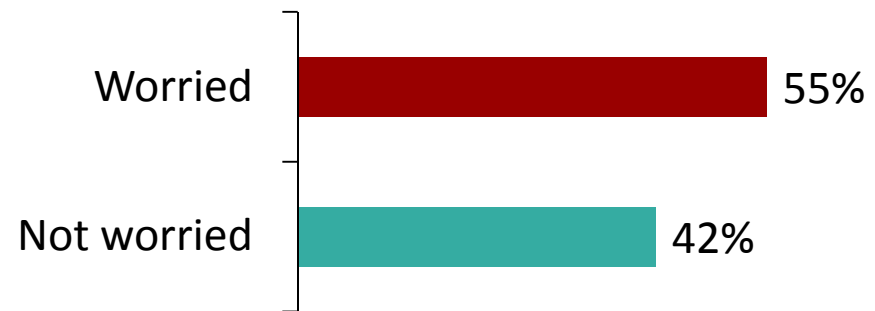


More than one-third of Americans say they know someone who was denied insurance coverage because of a pre-existing condition and more than 50% worry they might be denied coverage.

Do you know anyone who has been denied insurance coverage because of a pre-existing condition or another medical condition?

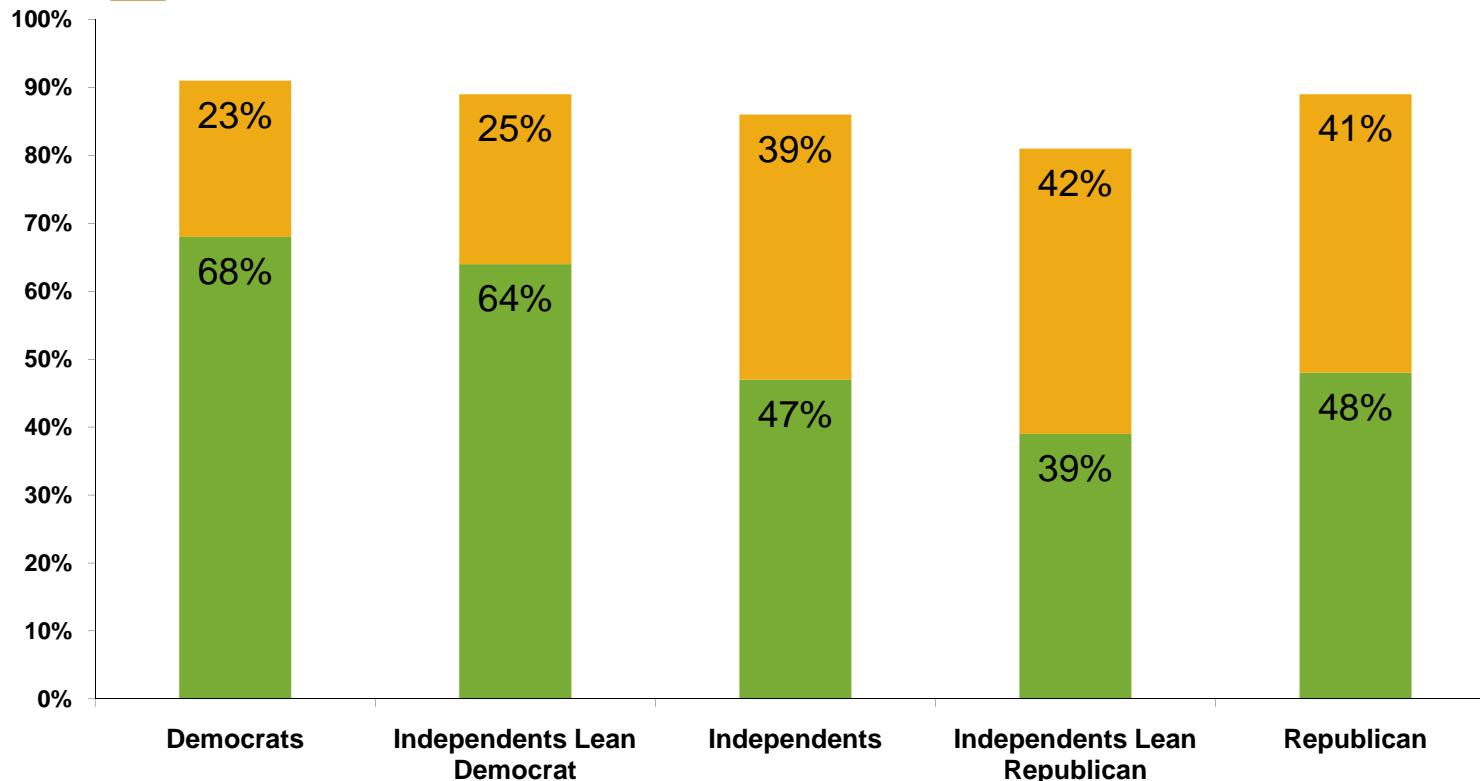


How worried are you that you or someone in your family may be denied insurance coverage because of a pre-existing condition or another medical condition?



Preventing family medical bankruptcies is another consensus value that unites most Americans.

- A.** 57%: "A cap should be set on family medical costs to prevent bankruptcy."
- B.** 31%: "Too expensive for insurance companies."



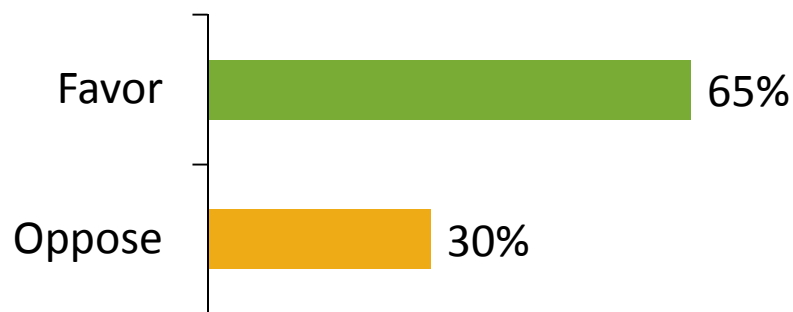
**PROBLEMS THAT EMERGED
IN EARLY RESEARCH:
A Few Examples:**

No wishful thinking:

Individual mandates: A substantive idea with widespread support in the expert community—but one that has always been controversial.

I'm going to read you one idea that has been proposed to increase the number of Americans covered by health insurance. Please tell me whether you would favor or oppose it (2010):

Require all Americans to have health insurance, either from their employer or from another source --- with financial help for those who can't afford it.



Which view is closer to your own (2010):

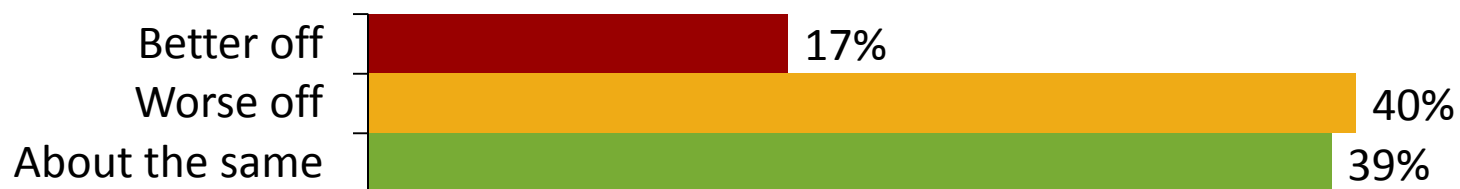
A: Require all Americans to have health insurance, either from their employer or from another source, --- with financial help for those who can't afford it.

B: It would be good if all Americans had health insurance, but the government should not be able to legally require people to purchase health insurance.



Americans believe ACA will benefit others, not them.

From what you know about new health care law, will your family be better off worse off, or about the same?



From what you know about the new health care law, who do you think will benefit? People like you, OR other people but not you.

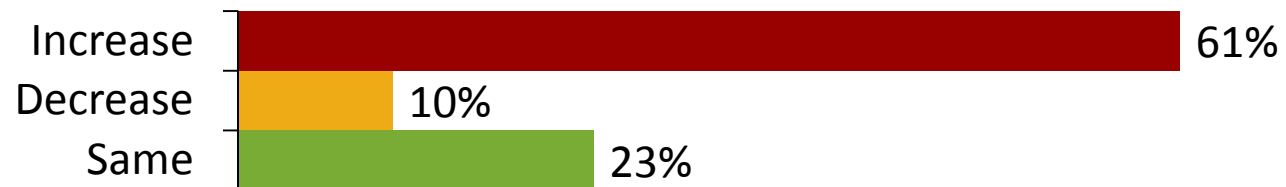


Americans believe ACA will increase their health care costs and the health care costs of the nation.

As a result of new health care bill, in long run will overall health care costs in the country increase, decrease or remain the same:



As a result of new health care bill, will YOUR health care costs increase, decrease or remain the same:

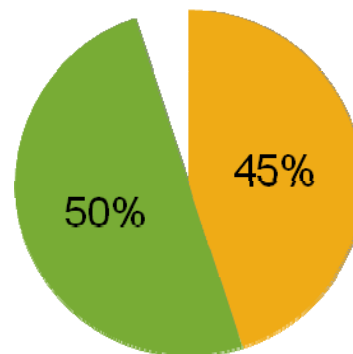


In this era of concern about privacy on Facebook, lost credit card records etc., it is not surprising that four-in-ten Americans worry about the privacy of their medical records.

Which of the following is closer to your view?

A. Computerizing the medical records of all Americans is one of the most effective ways to reduce our national healthcare costs, improve medical quality, and support ongoing healthcare research. Computerized records will reduce the growing costs of medical paperwork, minimize the potential for error, and ensure that your medical records are available when you need them, where you need them.

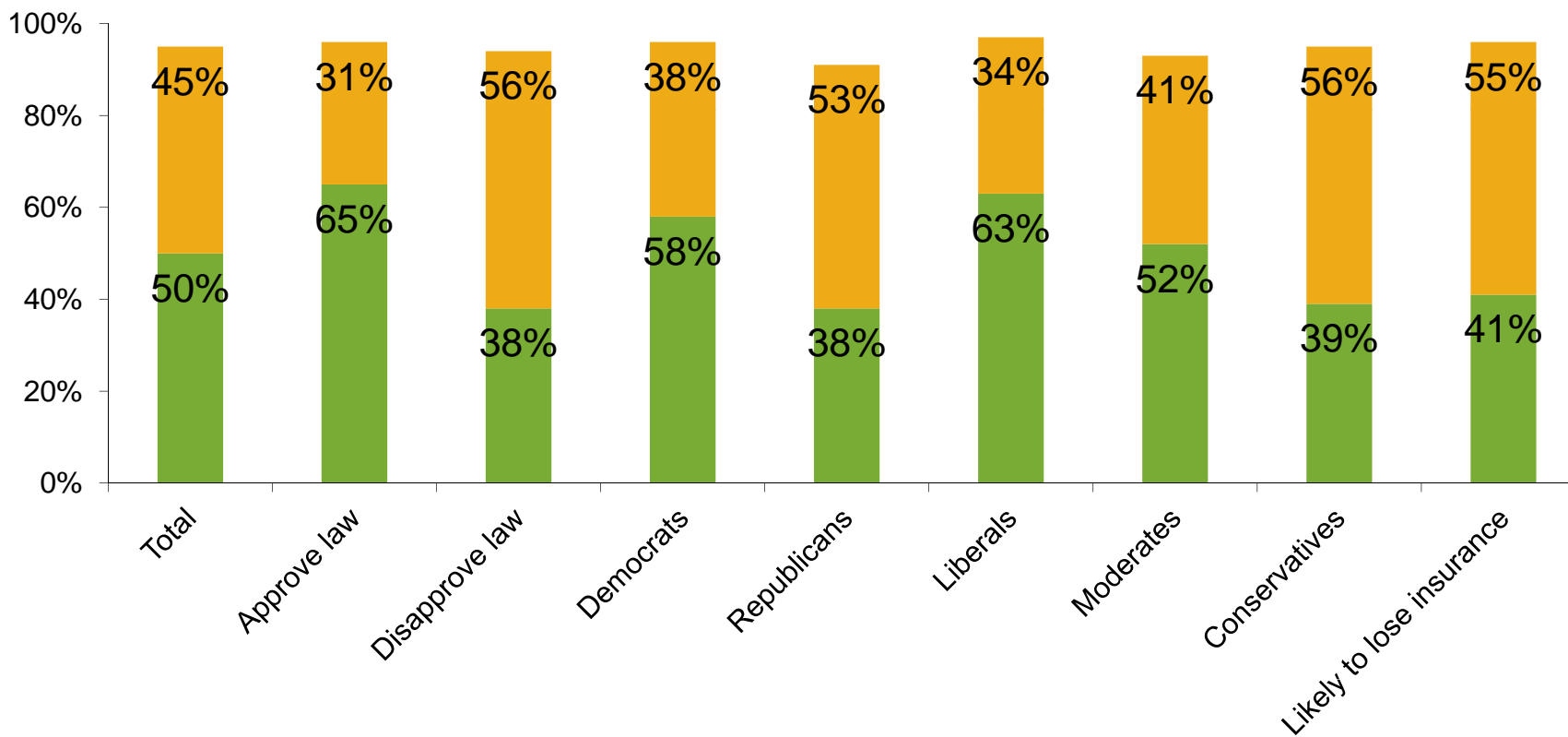
B. Computerizing the medical records of all Americans is a serious threat to the privacy of individual patients. These medical records are bound to be insecure—and could be obtained and improperly used.



Self-described conservatives, voters who disapprove of the health reform law, and those who believe they are likely to lose their health insurance are most opposed to the computerization of medical records.

A. Computerizing medical records is one of the most effective ways to reduce our national healthcare costs, improve medical quality and support ongoing medical research.

B. Computerizing the medical records is a serious threat to the privacy of individual patients.



*After hearing arguments for and against the health care reform law, a plurality of Americans oppose it.
But not a bad place to be in May 2011.*

The new law prevents insurance companies from denying insurance coverage because of pre-existing medical conditions or canceling policies because a policy holder becomes ill. It effectively eliminates medical bankruptcy by preventing financial limits on annual bills or financial limits for specific illnesses. Children can stay on their parents' policies until age 26. The Congressional Budget Office says the law will reduce the deficit over the next 10 years. (Positive summary)

**Percent of
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**Percent of
Americans Against** **48%**

KEY STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. A majority of Americans do not/will not understand the substantive details of the Affordable Care Act, or health care policy, generally. It has been ever thus. **Given this lack of substantive understanding, a communications campaign based on CORE VALUES about health care is essential.****
- 2. Americans are surprisingly happy with their CURRENT health care, health insurance coverage, prescription coverage—even their health care costs. They believe ACA will benefit others, not them—and it will increase their own costs. But they do have very real concerns about all aspects of their FUTURE health care. **They must be given 3,4,5 understandable benefits they will realize through ACA.****
- 1. In this regard, many key benefits – that speak to core values – e.g., elimination of medical bankruptcies, end of pre-existing denials, etc – have been underutilized in the public debate over ACA. Opponents of ACA have made their maximum case with “Godzilla the Government” **Proponents of ACA have key “values assets” that can/should still be effectively deployed.****
- 2. Americans want government guarantees on health care; but they are truly wary of an over-reaching government. **Proponents of ACA must not engage in wishful thinking about the role of government in health care reform. Stress guarantees/protections. The Ryan Medicare proposals have created opportunity for strategic clarification on government’s role.****

Marttila Strategies

John Marttila is the president of Marttila Strategies. He has more than twenty years of experience measuring American attitudes to a variety of health care issues—and brings a special expertise to understanding American VALUES about health care.

During 2009 and 2010, the company conducted four in-depth national surveys measuring American reaction to the debate about health care reform and other health care topics. This analysis was supported by multiple focus groups in different regions in the country and numerous statewide surveys.

In 2007, the company provided strategic research for the groundbreaking Massachusetts program to Provide health insurance coverage to all citizens of the Commonwealth—a program that has been properly described as a model for the national Affordable Care Act.

John Marttila has been a close personal advisor to

Vice President Joe Biden throughout the Vice President's entire career, including during his most recent presidential campaign. This relationship dates back to Biden's first election in 1972 when Marttila's company oversaw the strategy and produced the advertising for the upset victory. Marttila was also a senior advisor to John Kerry's 2004 presidential campaign and Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick's 2006 campaign.

His company has also worked for many other elected officials and ballot questions throughout the United States — and his company has conducted research and advised political campaigns in Russia, Israel, Hungary and Greece.

National health care clients have included: IMS Health, The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Health Care, PhRMA, The American Cancer Society, The Harvard School of Public Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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