

April - August 2024

## Nurses' Campaign to Win Medicare for All:

National Health Care Survey Final Results



[www.NationalNursesUnited.org](http://www.NationalNursesUnited.org)

# People across the United States cannot afford the care they need and view Medicare for All as the solution to the health care crisis

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## KEY FINDINGS

Despite modest gains in coverage in recent years stemming from the Affordable Care Act, cost remains a significant barrier to health care for most people, even those with insurance.

- » A majority of survey respondents report being unable to consistently afford the health care they need, when they need it.
- » A significant proportion of respondents recognize that Medicare for All — which guarantees health care and is free at the point of service — is the best way to ensure that people receive necessary medical care.
- » There is strong support for Medicare for All across political affiliations, and there is a substantial constituency that want their elected officials to support Medicare for All.

## METHODOLOGY

The survey was administered between April 6 and August 21, 2024, by trained volunteers. Surveys were conducted both in-person and over the phone. A total of 1,075 individuals from 35 states completed the survey.

The survey does not represent a random sample, nor is it a reflection of American demographics; rather, the survey sampled those respondents who were willing to participate. The goal of the survey was not to collect a representative sample of America, but to talk and hear as many people's thoughts as possible, as a foundation for organizing work.

Results are presented below for several groups: the national sample (n=1,075), Democrats (n=627), Independents (n=19), Republican (n=98), Third Party/Other (n=188), and No answer (n=143). Data is disaggregated by insurance types, including those who receive insurance through their employer (n=456) and those on a publicly funded system (n=331).

This analysis allows us to examine differences in ability to afford care between people with various types of health insurance and party affiliations.

## RESULTS

Many people in the United States cannot access the health care they need when they need it. This is true for people on publicly funded programs, people with private insurance from their employer and for those who purchase their own policies. Even when people have insurance, they often cannot access the care they need due to high copays, deductibles, and premiums.

Medicare for All would expand the cost effective and administratively efficient Medicare program to finance comprehensive, high-quality health care for everybody in the United States. Most importantly, a Medicare for All — single-payer system — would provide health care based on patient need, not on profit. Support for Medicare for All is high and widespread, and is consistent regardless of the type of insurance people have. Support is also seen from respondents across the political spectrum, regardless of party affiliation.

It is worth noting that while dissatisfaction of current coverage is high even among those people who currently receive that coverage through publicly funded programs, those same people recognize that a Medicare for All system, which would *expand and improve* upon current publicly funded coverage, is the best solution.

This support for Medicare for All is reflected in respondents' belief that members of Congress should also support the policy.

# PEOPLE CANNOT AFFORD THE HEALTH CARE THEY NEED

Of those surveyed, over half of all respondents, 55.8 percent, reported not being able to always afford the health care they need. Additionally, a full 21.9 percent — nearly a quarter of respondents — reported never, sometimes, or only in emergencies being able to afford health care. (Table 1)

Table 1 Are you able to afford the health care you need, when you need it?		
Answer choices	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Never	46	4.3%
Only occasionally or for emergencies	47	4.4%
Sometimes	143	13.3%
Usually	358	33.3%
Always	475	44.2%
No answer	6	0.5%

When we break that down further based on the source of people’s health coverage, among those on a publicly funded system (i.e. Medicare, VA, TRICARE), only 56.2 percent and 27.5 per-cent are always and usually able to afford their health care, respectively. Such publicly funded systems currently lack major areas of coverage, such as dental, hearing, vision, and long-term care.

Among those on private insurance through their employer, only 40.4 percent and 37.9 percent are always and usually able to afford their health care, respectively. Among those who acquire their health insurance through the state marketplace or purchase their own private insurance, only 23.6 percent and 44.1 percent are always and usually able to afford their health care, respectively. Despite most respondents having some sort of health insurance, the ma-jority are still not always able to get the care they need. Furthermore, despite clear room for improvement in coverage from publicly funded programs, over 30 percent more individuals on those public programs are able to afford care than those on state marketplace or individual private insurance plans. (Table 2)

Table 2 Are you able to afford the health care you need, when you need it?						
What kind of health insurance do you have?	Always	Never	No answer	Only occasionally	Sometimes	Usually
I am on a publicly funded system (Medicare, Medicaid, VA, TRICARE, etc)	56.2%	4.8%	0.6%	2.7%	8.2%	27.5%
I am on a relative or partner’s insurance plan	44.2%	1.3%	1.3%	3.9%	15.6%	33.8%
I do not currently have health insurance	9.7%	48.4%	0.0%	12.9%	25.8%	3.2%
I get my insurance through my state’s marketplace and/ or I pay for my own private health insurance	23.6%	4.7%	0.8%	9.5%	17.3%	44.1%
I have private insurance through my employer	40.4%	1.8%	0.0%	4.0%	16.0%	38.0%
Mix of public and private	77.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	20.8%
No answer	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	20.0%



Across the various forms of health coverage, a majority (54.5 percent) of our respondents said they or their immediate family have delayed or skipped medical care due to costs. This data highlights the problem of “underinsurance” in our country. Even if people have health insurance, it does not guarantee they will be able to actually get health care when they need it due to burdensome cost sharing. (Table 3)

Table 3. **Have you or anyone in your immediate family ever delayed or skipped medical care due to the cost?**

Answer choices	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	586	54.5%
Unsure	42	3.9%
No answer	4	0.4%
No	443	41.2%

## THERE IS STRONG SUPPORT FOR MEDICARE FOR ALL

To measure people’s support of Medicare for All, we asked people to respond on a scale, with 1 as strong oppose to 5 as strong support. Considering 4 as support and 5 as strong support, across respondents, 89.6 percent support Medicare for All.

Looking at those who reported strong support of Medicare for All by the type of insurance they had, we found 91.7 percent of those on private insurance through their employer were in support and 87.9 percent of those on a publicly funded plan were in support. Of the people who get their insurance through their state’s marketplace or buy their own private insurance, 91.3 percent support Medicare for All. Among those on a relative’s plan 93.5 percent are in support. Looking at those who

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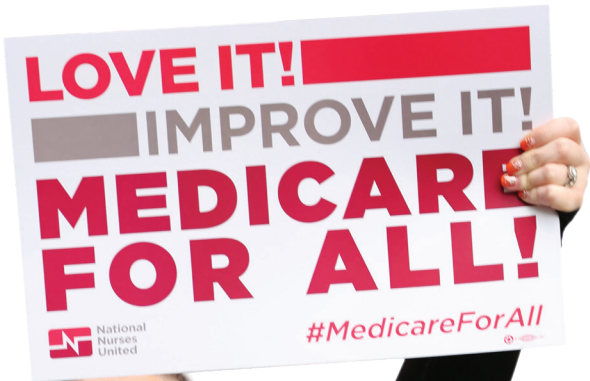
do not have health insurance, 93.5 percent support Medicare for All. (Table 4)

Opposition to Medicare for All is extremely low, and remains similar across types of insurance. When considering 1 as strongly oppose and 2

as oppose, just 3.9 percent of those on public insurance oppose Medicare for All while only 3 percent of those on private insurance through their employer oppose Medicare for All. (Table 4)

Ultimately, no matter what type of insurance people had, majorities of respondents — nearly 90 percent — supported Medicare for All.

Table 4. What kind of health insurance do you have?						
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 as strongly oppose and 5 as strongly support, would you support the passage of Medicare for All?	5	4	3	2	1	No answer
I am on a publicly funded system (Medicare, Medicaid, VA, TRICARE, etc)	79.8%	8.2%	7.6%	1.2%	2.7%	0.6%
I am on a relative or partner’s insurance plan	85.7%	7.8%	3.9%	2.6%	0%	0%
I do not currently have health insurance	90.3%	3.2%	6.5%	0%	0%	0%
I get my insurance through my state’s marketplace and/or I pay for my own private health insurance	87.4%	3.9%	5.5%	0.8%	2.4%	0%
I have private insurance through my employer	81.8%	9.9%	4.8%	0.9%	2.2%	0.4%
Mix of public and private	56.3%	12.5%	18.8%	0%	6.3%	6.3%
No answer	60.0%	20%	0%	0%	20%	0%



## SUPPORT FOR MEDICARE FOR ALL CUTS ACROSS POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS

When we break down the support for Medicare for All by party affiliation, our survey reveals that an overwhelming majority (94.9 percent) of Democrats support Medicare for All. Among those who identified as either Independent or Third Party/Other, still a supermajority (92 percent) support Medicare for All. We even found that the majority of the Republicans we surveyed (56.1 percent) support Medicare for All. (Table 5)

Opposition to Medicare for All is extremely low across all party affiliations. When considering 1 as strongly oppose and 2 as oppose, just 3.4 percent total oppose Medicare for All. While unsurprisingly, respondents who identified as Republican had the highest percentage of opposition to Medicare for All — 16.3 percent — this number is still extremely low. (Table 5)

## PEOPLE WANT THEIR ELECTED OFFICIALS TO SUPPORT MEDICARE FOR ALL

Regardless of party affiliation, 89 percent of all respondents believe their members of Congress should support Medicare for All. (Table 6)

When we look at which party affiliations believe their members of Congress should support Medicare for All, we find 95 percent of surveyed Democrats responded Yes. Among those who identified as either Independent or Third Party/Other, 87 percent responded Yes. And even among those who identified as Republicans, 59.2 percent responded Yes. Only 3.4 percent of all respondents surveyed did not believe their members of Congress should support Medicare for All. (Table 6)

Not only do our survey respondents strongly support Medicare for All, they also want their members of Congress to support Medicare for All.

Table 5. What is your party affiliation?						
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 as strongly oppose and 5 as strongly support, would you support the passage of Medicare for All?	5	4	3	2	1	No answer
Democrat	87.6%	7.3%	3.4%	0.5%	0.8%	0.5%
Independent	52.6%	21.0%	15.8%	0.0%	10.5%	0.0%
Republican	49.0%	7.1%	25.5%	5.1%	11.2%	2.0%
Third Party/Other	79.8%	12.2%	5.3%	0.5%	2.1%	0.0%
No answer	80.4%	7.7%	6.3%	1.4%	2.8%	1.4%
Total	81.1%	8.5%	6.3%	1.0%	2.4%	0.7%

Table 6. What is your party affiliation?						
Do you think your Congressmember should support Medicare for All?	Democrat	Independent	No answer	Republican	Third Party/Other	Total
Yes	87.6%	52.6%	80.4%	49.0%	79.8%	81.1%
Unsure	7.3%	21.0%	7.7%	7.1%	12.2%	8.5%
No	3.4%	15.8%	6.3%	25.5%	5.3%	6.3%
No answer	0.5%	0.0%	1.4%	5.1%	0.5%	1.0%

# *Not only do our survey respondents strongly support Medicare for All, they also want their members of Congress to support Medicare for All.*

## **CONCLUSION**

People in the United States are struggling to get the health care they need. They see Medicare for All as a solution, and they want their elected officials to represent their voice and views and fight for it. Medicare for All would address some of the biggest hardships faced by working and middle class Americans, and in an electoral context it is a potential vote winner.

The results of this survey are not outliers. These findings are corroborated by multiple polls. All serious attempts to understand the state of the health care system find public dissatisfaction and desire for change.

The findings of this survey are reinforced by Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) polling published in March 2024. They found that about half of U.S. adults say it is difficult to afford health care costs, and one in four say they or a family member had problems paying for health care in the past twelve months. This is not a new phenomenon restricted to the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic or subsequent inflation. According to KFF these results are consistent “*for many years*”. There is however reason to believe that the situation is getting worse: polling from Gallup shows that the percentage of U.S. adults readily able to access and afford quality health care when they need it has dropped six percentage points since 2022, and that the resulting rise of people who are “cost desperate” has been most pronounced for Black and Hispanic adults. Cost is affecting care, and it is impacting health outcomes.

Understanding the lived reality of people’s struggle with health care costs is essential to understanding enduring dissatisfaction

with the health of the U.S. economy, a key issue in this year’s election. Polling shows that unexpected medical bills and health care costs top the list of expenses that adults say they worry about affording. These costs continue to rise each year, while wages stagnate, making care all the more unaffordable. It is noteworthy that concerns about bills and costs are *even more* pressing than concerns about prescription drug prices.

The survey results do not just show dissatisfaction with the health care system as it currently exists. They also point to frustration with elected officials for failing to act to correct it, and towards a desire for candidates to publicly support Medicare for All. Again, these results are not outliers. Since at least 2016, a majority of Americans have been in favor of Medicare for All. Polling published by Data for Progress in August 2024 focusing on presidential battleground states show support for Medicare for All to be as high as 63 percent. The same polling showed that candidates who support Medicare for All increase the likelihood of people voting for them across the political spectrum, with Democrats (86 percent), Independents/Third Parties (62 percent) and even Republicans (39 percent).

Medicare for All is widely recognized as the right solution to a health care system which is failing too many people. It is becoming the new common sense. Elected officials and candidates from across the political spectrum are out of step with voters on this issue — but it is not too late for them to change course.

## APPENDIX 1

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1. Respondents live in the following states:  
AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IL, IN, KY,  
LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MT, NC, NE,  
NH, NJ, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, TN, TX,  
VA, WA, WI, WV.
2. A confounding variable in our survey was  
in the selection of responses we offered.  
In our survey, we did not offer an option  
of having a mix of public and private  
insurance. There may have been ambiguities  
for those who are covered by publicly  
funded, privately administered plans such as  
Medicare Advantage. There may have been  
respondents who answered public or private  
when they had both.
3. Kaiser Family Foundation, “KFF Health  
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tracking-poll-february-2024-voters-on-  
two-key-health-care-issues-affordability-  
and-aca/](https://www.kff.org/affordable-care-act/poll-finding/kff-health-tracking-poll-february-2024-voters-on-two-key-health-care-issues-affordability-and-aca/).
4. Gallup and West Health, “In U.S., Affording  
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poll/646994/affording-healthcare-  
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5. Kaiser Family Foundation, “Public Opinion  
on Single-Payer, National Health Plans, and  
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2020, [https://www.kff.org/slideshow/  
public-opinion-on-single-payer-national-  
health-plans-and-expanding-access-to-  
medicare-coverage/](https://www.kff.org/slideshow/public-opinion-on-single-payer-national-health-plans-and-expanding-access-to-medicare-coverage/).
6. Data for Progress, “Sen. Sanders: Democrats  
Should Run On a Progressive Economic  
Agenda. Americans Are Ready,” 2024,  
[https://www.dataforprogress.org/  
insights/2024/8/6/democrats-should-  
run-on-a-progressive-economic-agenda-  
americans-are-ready](https://www.dataforprogress.org/insights/2024/8/6/democrats-should-run-on-a-progressive-economic-agenda-americans-are-ready).

## APPENDIX 2

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Survey: [https://docs.google.com/forms/  
d/e/1FAIpQLSc-HajUBItOYdBJE4\\_  
J1p2kGNutfMzxCjiOCttM3\\_DuO9SSiA/  
viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc-HajUBItOYdBJE4_J1p2kGNutfMzxCjiOCttM3_DuO9SSiA/viewform).

