

Where are Voters on Healthcare?

Now more than ever, Americans are focused on health care and reassessing our health care system. As we marked the 10th anniversary of the Affordable Care Act's passage last week, the law faces continued challenges and attempts to reverse it. Donald Trump and the Republicans continue to look for ways to repeal or weaken the law, despite failing to offer practical alternatives.

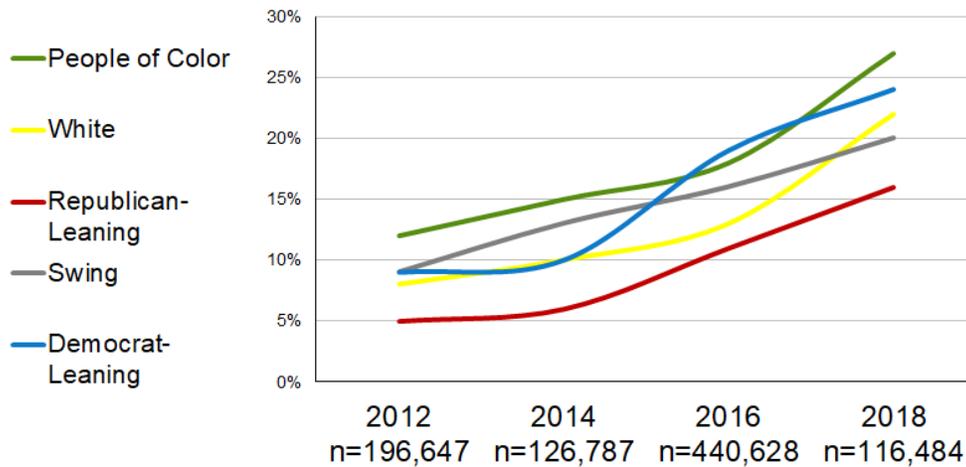
Working America organized millions of working-class voters in support of the Affordable Care Act in 2009 and 2010, and we've worked to protect it from attack and repeal since then. Since we've tracked how Americans feel about access to quality, affordable health care for more than a decade, we've used this information to examine how the politics of health care have changed and are likely to play out in the 2020 elections.

Earlier this year Working America conducted more than 1,200 in-depth, face-to-face surveys with working-class voters in the key battleground states of Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. The insights we gleaned from these conversations are bolstered by long-term surveys of voters across the country and data from millions of in-person conversations Working America canvassers have had over the past decade.

Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, health care was top of mind for voters. Our work has revealed that anxiety about the costs of and access to health care have steadily grown – regardless of demographics or political allegiance – over the past several years. While anxiety about jobs receded following the Great Recession, our data show that concerns about cost and access to health care have skyrocketed since 2012, even with the rollout of the Affordable Care Act.

The Importance of Health Care Has Increased With Everyone Over the Past Decade

Share of Voters Choosing "Health Care" As Top Voting Issue
By Race and Partisanship

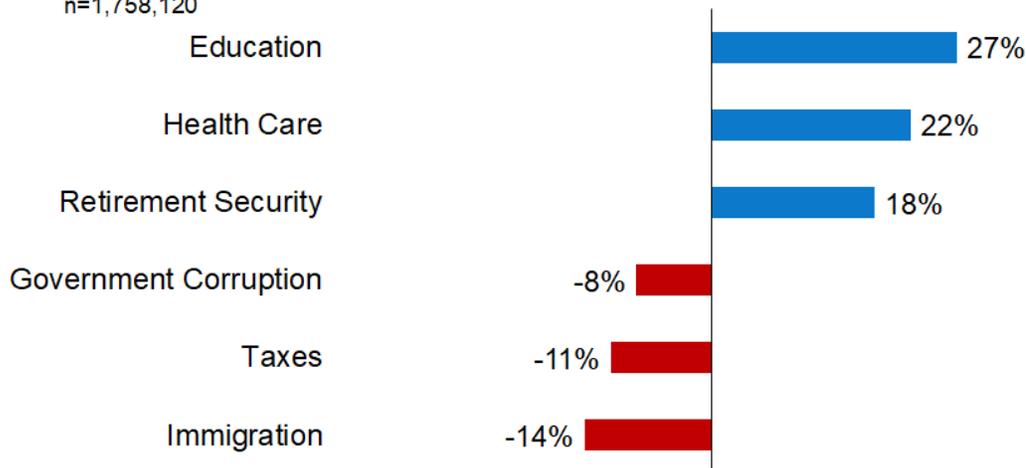


Source: Working America Canvass Conversations 2012 to 2018

Democrats have reaped the electoral benefits of that shift in priorities. We've found that working-class voters who identify health care as their top issue choose Democratic candidates more than Republican candidates at a higher rate. Put another way, if everyone in the nation were a "health care voter," Democrats would win by a 22 pp margin.

All Things Equal—Democrats Overwhelmingly Win Health Care Voters

Vote Margin Progressive vs. Conservative for Voters from 2008 to 2018
(controlling for the partisanship of the electorate)
n=1,758,120



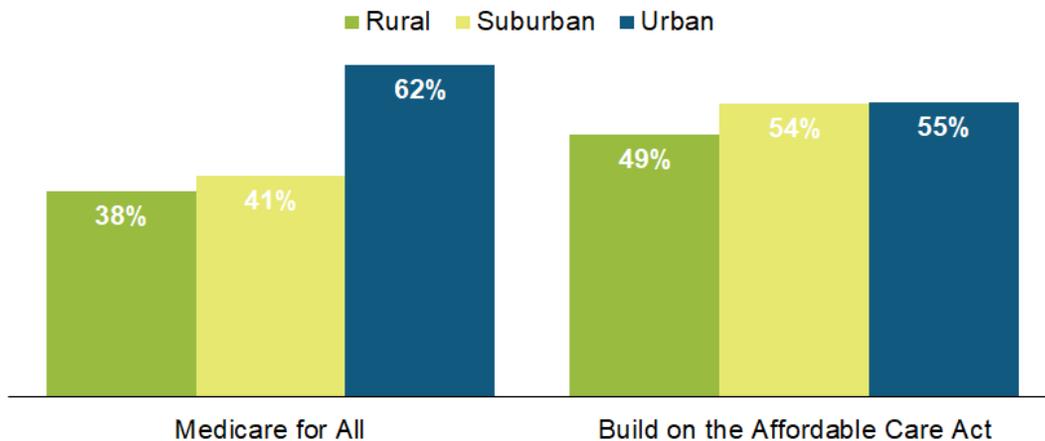
Source: Working America Canvass Conversations 2008 to 2018

Our data show that voters of all stripes are in agreement: Everyone deserves access to affordable health care. However, voters differ (or at least differed when we surveyed them prior to the COVID-19 outbreak) on the preferred policy solutions they want to see implemented to reach that goal. Even in more recent tracking surveys (conducted on the front end of the COVID-19 crisis) we see that the share of voters concerned about health care has spiked by 4 pp since February.

- Democratic base voters, particularly people of color, are more likely to say they want expansive solutions like Medicare for All.
- Opposition to Medicare for All exists among voters with higher incomes and better current coverage options.
- A substantial geographic difference highlights the dynamic between the two policies as well. Suburban and rural voters are more likely to support expansion of the Affordable Care Act more than Medicare for All.
- While it was unfathomable a few years ago, there is nearly universal agreement on expanding the ACA.

Majorities in All Geographies Support Building on the ACA

Share of Voters saying they Support Building on the Affordable Care Act
By Geography
n=1,155



Source: Working America Front Porch Focus Group, 2020

Given that these conversations took place before the COVID-19 pandemic reached public awareness, it's important to acknowledge that sentiment on Medicare for All may have changed substantially in recent weeks. With surging unemployment and the prospect of a severe economic recession, voters may be more open to a policy solution that decouples health care from employment. When we spoke with Kathryn, a 71-year-old **Tempe, Arizona** resident, earlier in the year, she said, "I worked hard for my insurance plan. People need to work for it." Voters like Kathryn may now be rethinking their positions as they or their loved ones lose jobs, and we'll continue to track opinion for evidence of these changes.

Ultimately, all voters are worried about health care costs and access to care. The support for expanding the Affordable Care Act reflects the fact that the law doesn't do enough to control costs. Those without adequate, affordable coverage are desperate for a solution, and those with decent coverage fear losing it. Whether the plan is Medicare for All or building on the Affordable Care Act, the policy solution must significantly limit costs and improve access for everyone.

Here's what we've heard from voters:

- Anselmo, a 49-year-old **Phoenix, Arizona**, resident, said, "Prices are so high, especially if you do not have healthcare, and either way medicines are too expensive."
- Antoinette, a 45-year-old **Detroit, Michigan**, resident, said, "I have insurance but I take medication. A lot of people can't afford insurance or their medication."
- Cory, a 30-year-old **Bristol, Pennsylvania**, resident, said, "'If you lose a job it's scary, you might not have health care for a few months until you find a new and then, oops, your savings are gone."
- Stacey, 33, a **Center Line, Michigan**, resident, spoke about the need for universal health care. Stacey said, "People are dying due to no insurance, and even when they do [have insurance], the insurance companies often deny coverage or procedures."
- Marcela, a 67-year-old in **Minnetonka, Minnesota**, said, "You should not be able to make money off of health care; people need care. It feels like we are in the Dark Ages."

But we also know what voters don't want: Trumpcare. Since the passage of the ACA, Republicans have marshaled more than 50 roll call votes to repeal the law.

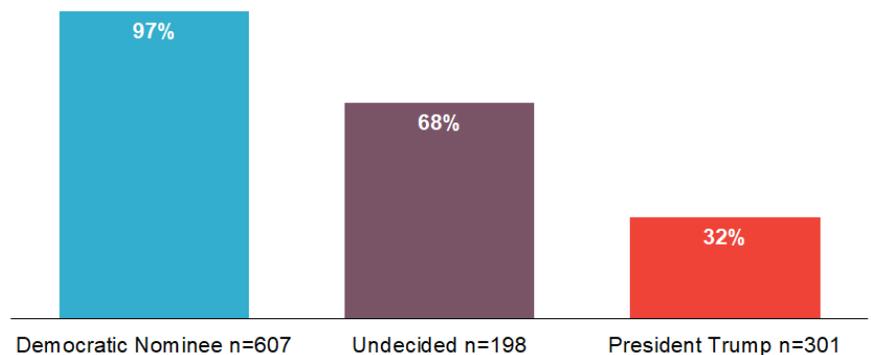
We asked voters about their thoughts on the Better Care and Reconciliation Act of 2017.

But what became clear is that the GOP solutions are not only deeply unpopular with a wide swath of voters, but that their attacks on health care and lack of a viable plan that continued to protect those with pre-existing conditions drove 2017-2018 election results, especially in delivering the House of Representatives to Democrats.

These results imply that the more voters are reminded of Republicans' ACA repeal efforts, the more unfavorable their view of officials like Sen. McConnell, Senate Republicans, and even Trump.

All Types of Voters Disagree with BCRA and Denying those with Pre-existing Conditions

Share of voters who "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with BCRA when told it would make it easier to deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions



Source: Working America Front Porch Focus Group, 2020

Health Care Views By

- **Geography**

Broadly we see that the ACA tends to have majority or solid support across geographies, with the exception of some rural areas. The ACA has more support than Medicare for All, which is not surprising as the law has been in place for years and Democrats have successfully seized on Republican repeal attempts in recent campaigns. We are seeing a geographic difference between support for Medicare for All vs. the ACA. Medicare for All is popular with Democratic-base voters in urban areas, while voters in suburban and rural areas are more likely to support building on the ACA.

- **Age**

The ACA is much more popular with older voters. Medicare for All, on the other hand, over-performs with younger voters. There is evidence of a split here. Of the folks who support the ACA, 44% support Medicare for All; whereas of the people who support Medicare for All, 50% support the ACA.

- **Economic Confidence**

Despite widespread support for expanding ACA, there are still those opposed (25%). In particular, those most confident in their personal economic future are less likely to support the ACA. This is starker when it comes to support for Medicare for All. There is almost a 30-point gap in support based on if someone is confident in their future or not.

- **Partisanship**

Among Democrats, the ACA and Medicare for All both enjoy roughly 60% support. We see a divergence in support for Medicare for All and the ACA among Republicans and swing voters - with 15-20 points higher support for the ACA than for Medicare for All.

Conclusion

People are scared about health care. This sentiment is not new, and voters' focus has been on cost. But COVID-19 now increases the focus on the role of employer-provided care. Democrats hold the clear political advantage on this issue. If these patterns hold for the broader population, this increased concern about health care could drive 123,609 more votes for Democrats in Michigan and Pennsylvania this November.



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