

SENIORS AND THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Seniors make up an important voting bloc in every presidential election, in part because they comprise a large share of the voting population but also because they are particularly engaged in the political process and are more likely to vote than their younger counterparts (around 70 percent of seniors voted in the last presidential election, compared to just under 60 percent of the population overall¹). In the 2008 presidential election, seniors were the only age group to support Senator John McCain, and with President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney sparring over the future of Medicare as they campaign for the White House, seniors’ opinions are particularly important this election cycle. This Data Note draws primarily on two national surveys, the September *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll* and the *Kaiser 2012 National Survey of Seniors* to delve into the ways health issues are playing as an election issue for seniors, how they feel about a variety of policy proposals related to Medicare—particularly the premium support model proposed by Governor Romney and his Vice Presidential running mate, Paul Ryan—and their views of the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA).

SENIORS AND THE ELECTION

Health as an Election Issue: For Seniors, Medicare a Close Second to the Economy

This election season, with the economy still sputtering along and job recovery progressing slowly, the economy remains Americans’ top voting issue, with half of registered voters saying it is ‘extremely important’ to their vote and another 42 percent saying it is ‘very important.’ Among voters 50 and over, however, Medicare rises in prominence. The economy still tops the list for senior voters, named by 50 percent as extremely important, but Medicare follows as a close second (45 percent). For seniors and younger voters alike, President Barack Obama’s signature health care law falls lower on the priority list, with 33 percent of seniors saying it will be extremely important. Following closely behind is Medicaid at 29 percent. It’s worth noting that Medicaid stands out as particularly important to pre-retirees, with four in ten saying the program is extremely important to their vote, compared to 29 percent of senior voters and 23 percent of younger voters.

Importance Of Top Issues By Age: Percentage Who Say Each Of The Following Issues Is ‘Extremely Important’ To Their Vote For President			
Total RV	18-49 RV	50-64 RV	65+ RV
The economy (50%)	The economy (48%)	The economy (53%)	The economy (50%)
Federal budget deficit (41%)*	Federal budget deficit (34%)*	Federal budget deficit (52%)*	Medicare (45%)
Medicare (36%)	ACA (28%)	Medicare (46%)	Federal budget deficit (42%)*
ACA (31%)	Spending on the military (27%)*	Medicaid (40%)	Taxes (38%)*
Spending on the military (31%)*	Medicare (25%)	Spending on the military (38%)*	Spending on the military (34%)*
Taxes (29%)*	Taxes (24%)*	ACA (37%)	ACA (33%)
Medicaid (29%)	Medicaid (23%)	Taxes (33%)*	International affairs (30%)*
International affairs (26%)*	Immigration (22%)*	International affairs (29%)*	Medicaid (29%)
Immigration (23%)*	Social issues (22%)*	Immigration (28%)*	Social issues (19%)*
Social issues (21%)*	International affairs (21%)*	Social issues (19%)*	Immigration (18%)*

*Item asked of half sample.

RV stands for self-reported registered voter.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted September 13-19, 2012)

¹ In 2008, the percent reporting they voted by age was as follows: 41.0 percent of 18 to 20 year olds, 46.6 percent of 21 to 24 year olds, 48.5 percent of 25 to 34 year olds, 55.2 percent of 35 to 44 year olds, 65.0 percent of 45 to 64 year olds, and 68.1 percent of those 65 or older. U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012, Table 399. Voting-Age Population-Reported Registration and Voting by Selected Characteristics: 1996 to 2010.

Seniors, like the rest of the population, however, vary in their policy priorities depending on whether they see themselves as Democrats or Republicans. So Medicare tops the priority list among seniors who identify as Democrats, with over half (53 percent) saying the issue is extremely important to their vote, followed by the economy (42 percent), Medicaid (41 percent) and the ACA (37 percent). By comparison, the top issue among Republican seniors is the economy (61 percent) while Medicare and the ACA fall behind in a distant second place (36 percent each). For seniors identifying as independent, Medicare ranks highly, near the economy, with almost half saying that the issue is extremely important to their vote.

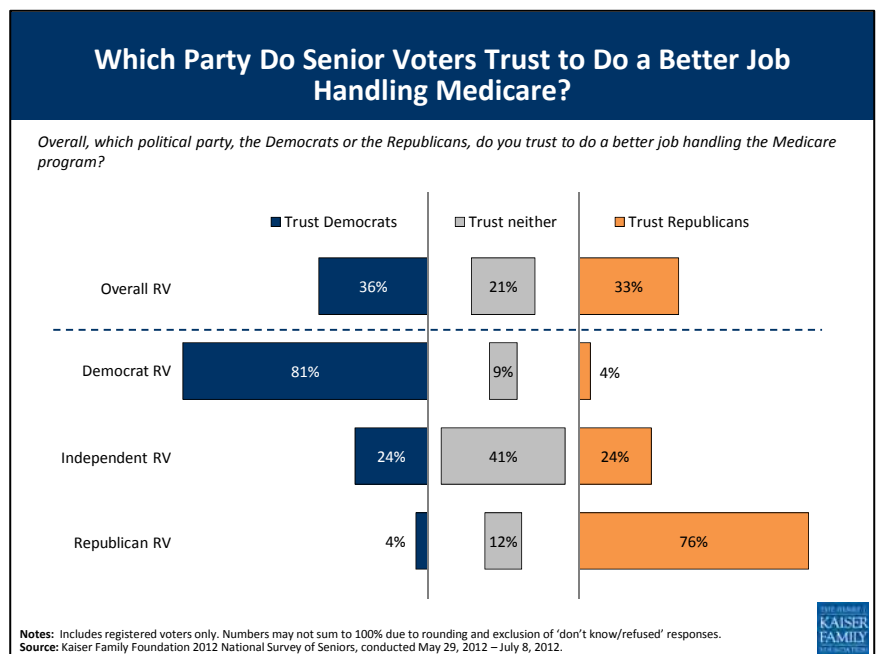
Importance Of Top Issues To Seniors By Party: Percentage Of Seniors Who Say Each Of The Following Issues Is 'Extremely Important' To Their Vote For President		
65+, Dem RV	65+, Ind RV	65+, Rep RV
Medicare (53%)	The economy (50%)	The economy (61%)
The economy (42%)	Medicare (46%)	Medicare (36%)
Medicaid (41%)	Medicaid (27%)	ACA (36%)
ACA (37%)	ACA (25%)	Medicaid (15%)

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted September 13-19, 2012)

Who Do Senior Voters Trust to Handle Health Issues?

Democrats or Republicans? Seniors are currently roughly divided in terms of which political party they trust to do a better job

handling Medicare, Medicaid and the future of the Affordable Care Act, according to the July *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll*² and the *Kaiser National Senior Survey* conducted in early summer, both conducted prior to Governor Mitt Romney's selection of Representative Paul Ryan as his vice presidential running mate. At least when it comes to Medicare, the parties have been separated only by single digit margins over the past several years, after a decade or so of clear Democratic advantage among seniors.³ According to the senior survey, 36 percent of senior voters say they trust Democrats to do a better job with Medicare, 33 percent trust Republicans, and 21 percent trust neither party. This question shows a very sharp partisan divide, with 76 percent of seniors who identify as Republican saying they trust Republicans to handle Medicare, and 81 percent of seniors identifying as Democrat saying they trust Democrats on the issue. Self-identified independent seniors are split in their view of which party they trust, with the plurality of this group (41 percent) saying they don't trust either party.



Seniors Split On Which Political Party Trusted To Deal With Health Policy Issues				
Do you trust the Democrats in Congress or the Republicans in Congress to do a better job with each of the following?	Total RV	18-49 RV	50-64 RV	65+ RV
Handling the Medicaid program				
Democrats	37%	36%	39%	37%
Republicans	37	36	37	40
Dealing with the future of the 2010 health care law				
Democrats	37	39	38	33
Republicans	34	32	33	41

Note: Within age group, there are no statistically significant differences in the share who say they trust Democrats and the share who say they trust Republicans (p<0.05). Both (vol.), Neither/Other (vol.), and Don't know/Refused answers not shown.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted July 17-23, 2012)

Hardly a monolithic group, the trust issue differs somewhat among seniors of different incomes, with lower-income seniors trusting Democrats to handle Medicare more than Republicans, and higher-income seniors trusting Republicans more than Democrats. Among registered voters with incomes less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level (about \$22,300 a year for an individual), 42

² Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted July 17-23, 2012), <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8339.cfm>

³ Kaiser Family Foundation, "Whom does the public trust more on health care and Medicare?" October 2012, <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8371.cfm>

percent say they trust Democrats and 23 percent say they trust Republicans (and 21 percent trust neither party more than the other). Among those with incomes of 400 percent or more of the federal poverty level, 45 percent trust Republicans and 32 percent trust Democrats (and 19 percent trust neither more). In the 2008 presidential contest, lower-income seniors were somewhat more divided in their vote than seniors overall, though still tilted toward Senator John McCain.

President Obama or Governor Romney? According to the September Kaiser *Health Tracking Poll*, seniors are divided on which presidential candidate they trust to handle health issues, even as the public as a whole gives the edge to President Obama. Among those voters aged 65 and up—generally a more politically conservative group in modern politics⁴—44 percent currently say they trust President Obama more with the future of Medicare and 41 percent trust Governor Romney. A recent analysis of the views of seniors in all the public polls released this year found that seniors were either divided between the two candidates when it came to trust on Medicare, or were tilting toward Governor Romney.⁵

Beneath this roughly even split on Medicare in the September survey is a divide among seniors that resembles the partisan gap among the general public as a whole. The large majority of Democratic seniors choose President Obama (89 percent), the large majority of Republican seniors choose Governor Romney (83 percent), and independents give the advantage to Governor Romney 49 percent to 31 percent. Views on which candidate would do a better job determining the future of Medicaid or the ACA follow a similar pattern along partisan lines.

Seniors Split On Which Candidate Trusted To Deal With Health Policy Issues							
Which presidential candidate, Barack Obama or Mitt Romney, do you trust to do a better job with each of the following?	Total RV	18-49 RV	50-64 RV	65+ RV	RV Seniors (65+)		
					Dem	Ind	Rep
Determining the future of the Medicare program							
Barack Obama	52%*	55%*	52%*	44%	89%*	31%*	4%*
Mitt Romney	35	32	35	41	4	49	83
Determining the future of the Medicaid program							
Barack Obama	53*	56*	56*	44	87*	27*	6*
Mitt Romney	33	30	34	37	4	49	72
Determining the future of the 2010 health care law							
Barack Obama	53*	55*	56*	43	86*	29*	5*
Mitt Romney	35	34	33	40	4	51	76

* Indicates statistically significant difference within age or party category in the share who say they trust Barack Obama and the share who say they trust Mitt Romney (p<0.05). Both (vol.), Neither/Other (vol.), and Don't know/Refused answers not shown.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted September 13-19, 2012)

How Familiar Do Seniors Feel with the Candidates' Plans for Medicare

Currently, senior voters are no more likely than the non-elderly to say they feel familiar with each presidential nominee's proposed plans for the Medicare program, though a larger share say they have a sense of the incumbent president's plan than say the same of the Republican challenger, perhaps because some of President Obama's plans for Medicare are specified in the Affordable Care Act. Almost three quarters of senior voters (73 percent) say they feel at least somewhat familiar with President Obama's plans for the program, compared to about half of seniors who say they are familiar with Governor Romney's plans for Medicare (54 percent). Republican seniors (71 percent) are more likely than Democrats (44 percent) or independents (53 percent) to say they have some idea of the direction the former Massachusetts governor would go with Medicare.

Larger Share Familiar With President Obama's Plan For Medicare					
How familiar are you with [Mitt Romney's/Barack Obama's] plans for the Medicare program?	RV 18-64	RV 65+	RV Seniors 65+		
			Dem	Ind	Rep
Obama's plan for Medicare					
Very familiar	26%	28%	36%	25%	23%
Somewhat familiar	46	45	40	55	44
Not too familiar	17	12	14	9	12
Not at all familiar	9	12	11	8	14
Romney's plan for Medicare					
Very familiar	13%	14%	11%	11%	21%
Somewhat familiar	38	40	33	42	50
Not too familiar	23	22	21	27	20
Not at all familiar	25	23	34	18	9

Note: Don't know/Refused answers not shown.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted September 13-19, 2012)

⁴ According to the September Kaiser *Health Tracking Poll*, 42 percent of seniors identify as politically conservative, compared to 32 percent of 18 to 64 year olds. Also see Pew Research Center For The People & The Press, "Trends in American Values: 1987-2012, Partisan Polarization Surges in Bush, Obama Years," June 2012, <http://www.people-press.org/2012/06/04/partisan-polarization-surges-in-bush-obama-years/>

⁵ Kaiser Family Foundation, "Whom does the public trust more on health care and Medicare?" October 2012, <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8371.cfm>

SENIORS AND MEDICARE

Seniors' Views of 'Premium Support'

The Medicare proposal that has gained the most attention through the course of the campaign is Governor Romney's proposal to transform Medicare into a premium support program, rather than the defined benefit program it is now. In a premium support model, seniors are provided a fixed amount of money that could be applied toward the cost of health insurance purchased either from private insurers or the traditional Medicare program. This proposal has spurred debate between those interested in preserving the current defined benefit structure of Medicare and those who are interested in introducing greater private plan competition to Medicare. Though some proposals to convert Medicare to a premium support-style system would not affect current beneficiaries, discussions about changing the structure of the program still raise concerns among seniors today.

As of mid-September, two-thirds (65 percent) of seniors say they would prefer that Medicare stay as it is today, while 24 percent think it should be changed to a defined contribution (or premium support) system. This finding shows some partisan divide among seniors between Republicans and Democrats, but substantially less than on other health issues. Majorities of Democrats (75 percent), independents (66 percent), and Republicans (more narrowly at 52 percent) favor keeping Medicare's current system rather than changing the program to a premium support-style system.

Divisions Over Premium Support Proposal, By Party ID And Age						
Which of these two descriptions comes closer to your view of what Medicare should look like in the future?	18-49 RV	50-64 RV	65+ RV	RV Seniors (65+)		
				Dem	Ind	Rep
Medicare should continue as it is today, with the government guaranteeing all seniors the same set of health insurance benefits	49%	65%	65%	75%	66%	52%
Medicare should be changed to a system in which the government guarantees each senior a fixed amount of money to help them purchase coverage either from traditional Medicare or from a list of private health plans	46	27	24	17	23	37

Note: Other (vol.) and Don't know/Refused answers not shown.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted September 13-19, 2012)

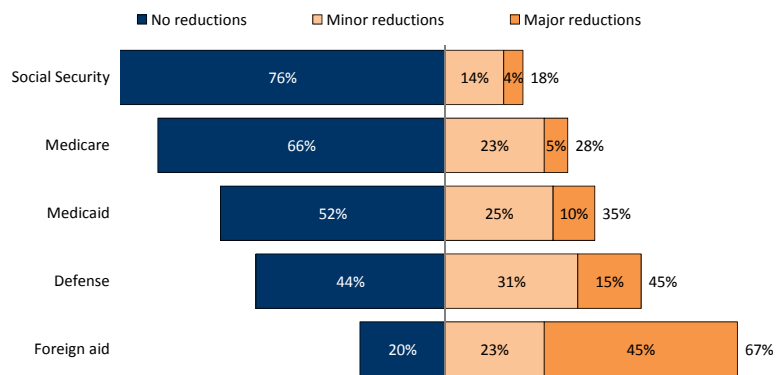
The *National Survey of Seniors* also asked seniors what Medicare should look like in the future, and finds majority support for the status quo and similar patterns in partisanship (although, support for the current system is even greater in the senior survey - 74 percent favor keeping Medicare as is, compared to 16 percent who favor changing). Due to the large sample size of seniors in this survey, it is also possible to examine responses among a larger variety of subgroups. By doing so we find that across key demographic groups, including senior men and women, seniors living in urban and rural areas, seniors in different age groups, and seniors in Medicare Advantage and other types of supplemental coverage (as well as those with no supplemental coverage), there is widespread agreement on this question, with a clear majority of seniors expressing support for keeping Medicare the way it is today. The September tracking survey suggests one reason, beyond the natural human resistance to change, for seniors' lukewarm response to premium support: a large majority of senior voters (78 percent) say the current program is working well.

Seniors' Views of Reductions in Medicare Spending & the Deficit

The federal budget deficit is one of voters' top concerns and will continue to be an important topic as the possibility of sequestration approaches, the process in which automatic spending cuts take effect in 2013 in order to reduce the deficit. Given that Medicare makes up a large share of the national budget, and that its costs continue to grow, changes or cuts to Medicare are often brought up as a way to address the deficit. However, seniors are largely opposed to the idea of cutting Medicare in the name of deficit reduction (66 percent opposed). Only the idea of cutting Social Security garners more opposition. Consistent with this view, a majority of seniors believe that such cuts are not needed to be successful at deficit reduction: 61 percent say policymakers can reduce the deficit without cutting Medicare spending, contrary to the views of many policy experts. Just over half of seniors are opposed to cuts to Medicaid (52 percent).

Seniors' Views of Federal Spending Reductions in Various Areas to Reduce the Federal Budget Deficit

In order to reduce the federal budget deficit, Congress is considering reducing federal spending in certain areas. Do you support major spending reductions, minor spending reductions, or no reductions at all in _____ as a way to reduce the federal deficit?



Notes: Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding, and exclusion of 'don't know/refused' responses.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation 2012 National Survey of Seniors, conducted May 29, 2012-July 8, 2012.



Senior are undecided on who would be the right person or group to make decisions on how to cut spending for the program, with none of the eight people or groups mentioned gaining majority of support from senior voters in the September *Health Tracking Poll*. About half of seniors say they trust each of the following groups at least “a fair amount” to find the best ways to reduce Medicare spending: “an independent panel of full-time experts appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate,”⁶ President Obama, the federal agency that now runs Medicare, and Governor Romney. The vice presidential candidates fall lower on the list, with about four in ten saying they trust each of them to keep the program sustainable. Congress and insurance companies round out the bottom of the list with about three in ten seniors saying they trust their judgment on Medicare’s future finances.

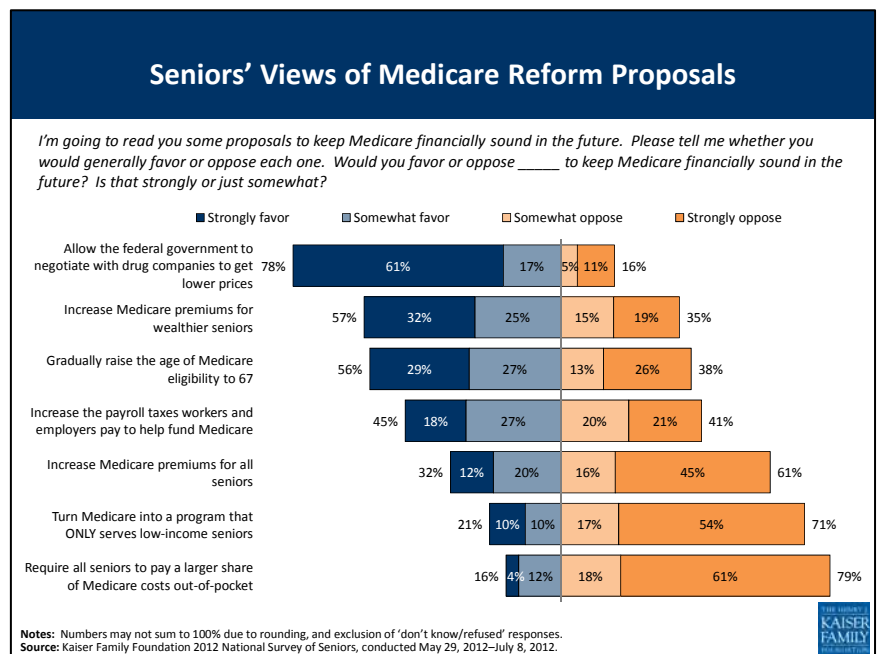
Who Do Senior Voters Trust To Make Decisions About Medicare Spending Reductions?		
Percent who trust each of the following a great deal or fair amount to find the best ways to reduce Medicare spending:	RV 18-64	RV 65+
President Barack Obama	55%	48%
An independent panel of full-time experts appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate	57	50
The federal agency that now runs Medicare	42	49
Governor Mitt Romney	39	47
Vice President Joe Biden	42	39
Vice Presidential candidate Paul Ryan	37	43
Congress	32	30
Private health insurance companies	28	28

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted September 13-19, 2012)

Seniors’ Views of Other Possible Changes to Medicare

Moving past the November election, Medicare reform options are expected to be on the federal policy agenda in 2013 in the face of rising deficits and the threat of sequestration.

Despite resistance to Medicare spending cuts, most senior voters (63 percent) believe that some sorts of changes need to be made to Medicare to keep it sustainable. In the senior survey, seniors weigh in on a number of proposals that have been floated in order to help keep Medicare financially sound in the future. The most popular option, which is favored strongly or somewhat by 78 percent of seniors, is allowing the federal government to negotiate with drug companies to try to get a lower price for prescription drugs under Medicare. Two other options are favored by a majority of seniors: increasing Medicare premiums for wealthier seniors was favored by 57 percent of seniors, and increasing Medicare’s eligibility age from 65 to 67 was favored by 56 percent of seniors. (As an aside, while Medicare already charges higher-income beneficiaries higher premium for Part B and Part D coverage, only 14 percent of seniors overall correctly report that wealthier seniors currently pay higher Medicare premiums, while 55 percent say they do not pay higher premiums and 31 percent say they don’t know.⁷ Seniors who favor charging higher premiums to higher-income people on Medicare are no more or less likely to correctly report that Medicare already does this than those who do not support this proposal.)



Among Medicare reform proposals that do not garner majority support among seniors overall, a minority of seniors say they favor requiring all seniors to pay a larger share of Medicare costs out of their own pocket (16 percent), turning Medicare into a program that only serves low-income seniors instead of all seniors (21 percent), or increasing Medicare premiums for all seniors (32 percent), while just under half of seniors say they favor increasing the payroll tax workers and employers pay to help fund Medicare (45 percent). Some subgroups of seniors express greater support for these options than seniors overall. In particular, increasing the payroll tax (that only those seniors who are still employed would actually have to pay) is favored by at least half of black seniors (53

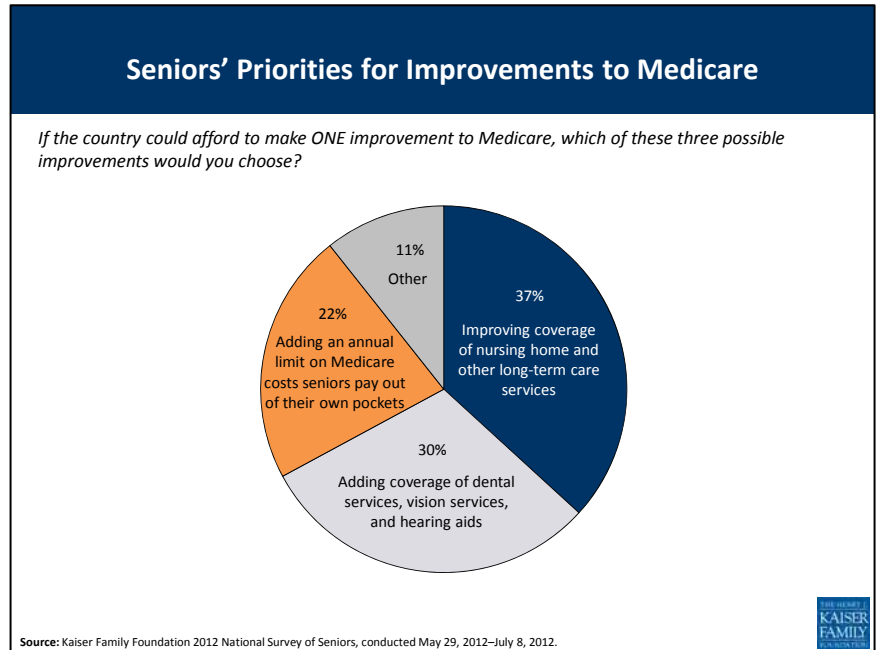
⁶ This item is intended to describe the basic setup of a body like the current Independent Payment Advisory Board, or IPAB. For more on this topic, see “The Independent Payment Advisory Board: A New Approach to Controlling Medicare Spending”, Kaiser Family Foundation, April 2011, <http://www.kff.org/medicare/8150.cfm>

⁷ Medicare beneficiaries with annual incomes greater than \$85,000/individual or \$170,000/couple pay higher monthly premiums for Part B and Part D.

percent), senior men (51 percent), and Democrats and independents (51 percent and 50 percent, respectively). Conversely, this option attracts less support among rural seniors (37 percent), Hispanic seniors (37 percent), and Republicans (38 percent).

Priorities for Medicare Improvement

Despite all the debate about changing the Medicare program and its impact on the federal budget deficit, there are still notable gaps within the current benefit package. In the *National Survey of Seniors*, seniors prioritize the following three possible improvements that would help address these gaps: 1) improving coverage of long-term care services; 2) adding coverage of vision, dental, and hearing services; or 3) adding an annual out-of-pocket spending limit. The most popular choice is improving coverage of long-term care services, with 37 percent of seniors supporting this change, followed by 30 percent wanting to improve Medicare by adding coverage of vision, dental, and hearing services, and 22 percent wanting to improve Medicare by adding an annual out-of-pocket spending limit. This ranking may reflect seniors' expectations of the cost burden in each area—most seniors may not feel a strong need for an out-of-pocket spending limit because they have some form of supplemental coverage to help cover their Medicare cost-sharing requirements, but many may be aware of the high cost of long-term care services and supports and only a small share of people have coverage for long-term care. Moreover, by definition only a small share would benefit from catastrophic coverage protection in any given year, so many seniors might not consider themselves at great risk of needing this benefit.



At the same time, the *National Survey of Seniors* shows that knowledge of current Medicare coverage policy with respect to long-term care is lacking. Most seniors either think that Medicare currently pays for long-term care services (31 percent) or aren't sure whether it does (28 percent). Four in ten correctly think the program does not pay for long-term care services, a level of familiarity that has not changed appreciably in the past decade.⁸ It may be worth noting here that while most seniors do not report that they currently need help performing activities of daily living (either basic tasks such as eating, dressing, or getting around the house, or functional tasks such as doing everyday chores, managing medications, or shopping), nearly six in ten (59 percent) of those who do need such help say they receive it from someone who is not paid to provide it, while only three in ten (31 percent) say their helper is paid (6 percent report receiving both paid and unpaid help). For those who are unaware that Medicare does not cover long-term care services and support and who ultimately need such help in the future—the likelihood of which increases with age⁹—the fact that Medicare does not provide coverage of long-term services and supports might be a rude awakening.

⁸ In a 2003 Kaiser survey, 32 percent of seniors said Medicare pays for the cost of extended long-term care and 45 percent said it does not Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health "National Survey of the Public's Views on Medicare," available at <http://www.kff.org/medicare/20030619a-index.cfm> (accessed on August 24, 2012).

⁹ In the *National Survey of Seniors*, 11 percent of seniors ages 65 to 74 reported functional impairments, compared with 18 percent of seniors ages 75 to 84 and 31 percent of seniors ages 85 and over.

SENIORS' VIEWS OF THE ACA

Just as the Republican candidates have to deal with seniors' reservations about making changes to the Medicare program, the Democratic ticket has to deal with perceptions of how the 2010 health care law is impacting seniors and the Medicare program. Among seniors, unfavorable views of the Affordable Care Act have outstripped favorable ones in all but two months since the law's passage. As of mid-September, 45 percent of senior voters report holding unfavorable views of the law, while 38 percent have favorable views and 17 percent do not have an opinion. Seniors are also divided, and tilt somewhat more negative than their younger compatriots, in their opinion of the law's impact on Medicare, with 38 percent saying the program will be worse off under the ACA compared to 31 percent that say it will be better off and 17 percent that do not anticipate there will be a difference. Similarly, 32 percent of voters 65 or older say seniors will be better off under health reform, while 40 percent say they will be worse off.

Though the ACA contains a number of provisions relevant to seniors, there is limited familiarity with many of them, and some of the misperceptions of the law—such as the idea of “death panels”—remain in wide circulation. For example, only half of voters—and 45 percent of seniors—are aware the law gradually closes the Medicare prescription drug “doughnut hole”. Roughly three in ten are aware that the law provides a bonus to Medicare primary care physicians working in underserved areas, and slightly more recognize that additional no-cost preventive care services have been made available to beneficiaries. When it comes to less popular provisions of the law, such as the increase in the Medicare payroll tax for high earners and the increase in premium costs for wealthier beneficiaries, between three and four in ten report knowing of each.

Awareness Of Medicare-Related Provisions Of ACA		
<i>Percent who are aware the law does each of the following:</i>	All RV	RV 65+
Increase premiums for higher income people on Medicare	50%	41%
Gradually close the Medicare “doughnut hole”	49	45
Increase Medicare payroll tax on upper income Americans	47	32
Reduce Medicare payments to private plans, also known as Medicare Advantage plans	42	32
Create an expert panel to recommend ways to reduce Medicare spending if costs grow to rapidly	42	37
Eliminate costs for preventive services under Medicare	40	39
Provide a bonus to Medicare primary care physicians	32	30

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted September 13-19, 2012)

Two and a half years after the law's passage, six in ten senior voters, and the same share of voters overall, either believe that the health care law establishes a government panel to make decisions about end-of-life care for Medicare beneficiaries (31 percent) or are not sure whether or not this is a provision of the ACA (29 percent). Two in three seniors say the law cuts benefits for people in the traditional Medicare program. In fact, there are no actual cuts in benefits for beneficiaries in the traditional Medicare program, though those enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans may see fewer supplemental benefits once reimbursements to those plans are reduced.

Misperceptions About ACA Remain		
<i>Percent who are unaware that the law DOES NOT do each of the following:</i>	All RV	RV 65+
Cut benefits for people in the traditional Medicare program	58%	65%
Establish a government panel to make decisions about end-of-life care for people on Medicare	60	60

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Tracking Poll* (conducted September 13-19, 2012)

METHODOLOGY

This Data Note was prepared by Juliette Cubanski, Associate Director, Program on Medicare Policy and Bianca DiJulio, Senior Survey Analyst, Public Opinion and Survey Research.

September Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: The *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll* was designed and analyzed by public opinion researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation led by Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., including Claudia Deane, Sarah Cho, and Theresa Boston. The survey was conducted September 13-19, 2012, among a nationally representative random digit dial telephone sample of 1,534 adults ages 18 and older, living in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii (note: persons without a telephone could not be included in the random selection process). Computer-assisted telephone interviews conducted by landline (1,033) and cell phone (501, including 284 who had no landline telephone) were carried out in English and Spanish by Braun Research, Inc. under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI). The combined landline and cell phone sample was weighted to balance the sample demographics to match Census estimates for the national population on sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, nativity (for Hispanics only), region, and telephone usage.

All statistical tests of significance account for the effect of weighting. The margin of sampling error including the design effect is plus or minus 3 percentage points. Margin of error for seniors (age 65 and older) who report being registered to vote is plus or minus 6 percentage points (n=434). For results based on other subgroups, the margin of sampling error may be higher. Note that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

The full question wording and methodology of the poll can be viewed online at: <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8361.cfm>

National Survey of Seniors: The *Kaiser 2012 National Survey of Seniors* was designed and analyzed by researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation, including Juliette Cubanski, Tricia Neuman, and Anthony Damico, with additional assistance from Mollyann Brodie and Claudia Deane. The survey was conducted May 29-July 8, 2012, among a nationally representative, non-institutionalized sample of 2,031 adults ages 65 and older living in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. Computer-assisted telephone interviews conducted by landline (N=1,919) and cell phone (N=112, including 27 who had no landline telephone) were carried out in English and Spanish by Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS). The study was also designed to target low-income seniors and specifically low-income black and Hispanic seniors. The sample was weighted to balance the sample demographics to match census estimates for the national senior (age 65+) non-institutionalized population based on the March supplement of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). For results based on income categories, we used a regression-based multiple-imputation methodology to impute income for the 22 percent of respondents (N=439) with missing income data. We assigned those respondents to one of five categories based on the 2012 federal poverty guidelines: income less than 100 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), 100–199 percent of the FPL, 200–299 percent of the FPL, 300-399 percent of the FPL, and 400 percent of the FPL or more.

All statistical tests account for the effect of weighting. The margin of sampling error including the design effect for the full sample is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. For results based on other subgroups, the margin of sampling error may be higher. Note that sampling error is only one of the many potential sources of error in this or any other survey.

The full question wording and methodology of the survey can be viewed online at: <http://www.kff.org/medicare/8374.cfm>.

This publication (#8372) is available on the Kaiser Family Foundation's website at www.kff.org