



A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, and the University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit

Who Do Voters Prefer for Children's Health Issues?

Health care is a leading issue of concern to voters in the 2008 Presidential election. The two major presidential candidates, Senators John McCain and Barack Obama, offer distinct approaches to problems such as the cost of health care and insurance coverage.

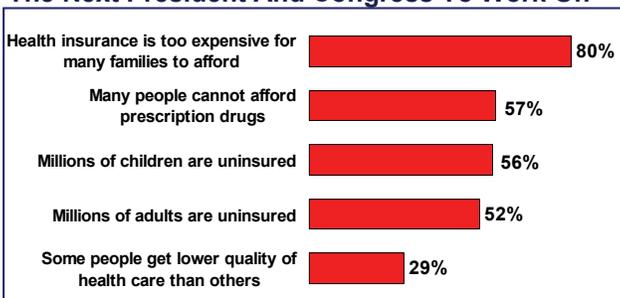
In August 2008, the CS Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked likely voters about what health problems they thought were most important for the government to address, and which candidate they thought would be more effective at handling those problems. In particular, the Poll focused on the problem of uninsurance among children, and whether the candidates' positions on child health care issues would influence voters.

The Poll sample included adults with and without children in the household who indicated they were likely or very likely to vote in November 2008. The party affiliations of likely voters were 32% Republican, 25% Independent, and 43% Democrat, very similar to other national polls.

Top Health Care Problems

Likely voters were asked to select the top three most important problems for the next President and Congress to work on, from a list of five health problems. 80% of likely voters believe that a top problem to address is *health insurance is too expensive for many families to afford*, followed by *many people cannot afford prescription drugs* (57%) and *millions of children are uninsured* (56%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Important Health Care Problems For The Next President And Congress To Work On



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, August, 2008

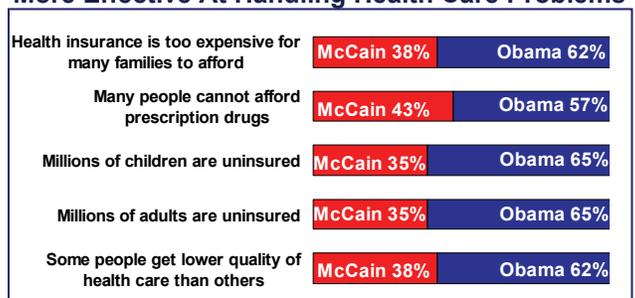
Report Highlights

- 80% of likely voters believe the problem of health insurance being too expensive is a top health problem for the government to address.
- In general, likely voters think Obama would be more effective at handling top health care problems such as coverage and costs.
- 55% of likely voters say that the candidate's position on children's health care issues will affect their vote.

Voter Preferences

Likely voters were asked which presidential candidate would be more effective at handling the three top health problems they selected. In general, likely voters think Obama would be more effective at handling all five of the top health issues presented (Figure 2); this preference was more pronounced among Democrats and Independents. The general preference for Obama on all 5 health issues did not differ by respondents' gender, income, educational level, or insurance status. However, with regard to the affordability of prescription drugs, the majority (57%) of likely voters age 65 and older believe McCain would be more effective.

Figure 2. Voters' Preferences About Who Will Be More Effective At Handling Health Care Problems

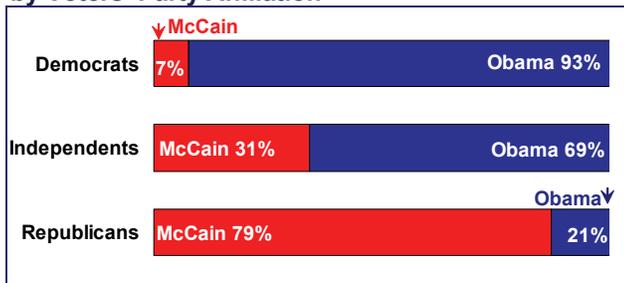


Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, August, 2008

The Problem of Uninsured Children

About 8 million children do not have health insurance. Likely voters were asked which candidate would be more effective at addressing the issue that million of children are uninsured. The majority of Democrats (93%) and Independents (69%) think that Obama would be more effective at handling this problem and the majority of Republicans (79%) believe McCain would be more effective at handling this problem (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Voters' Preference About Who Will Be More Effective at Addressing Uninsured Children, by Voters' Party Affiliation



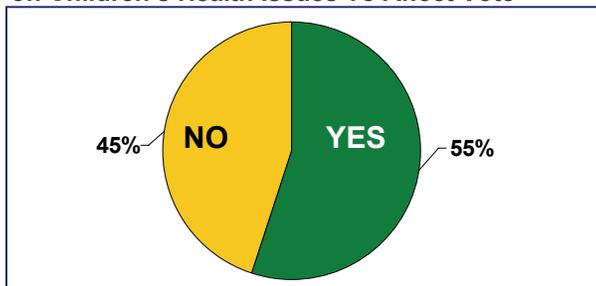
Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, August, 2008

Among likely voters who are uninsured, 84% think Obama would be more effective at dealing with the issue of uninsured children, and 59% of likely voters on public insurance also believe Obama would be better at addressing this problem.

How Candidate's Position On Children's Health Issues Would Affect Voters

Likely voters were asked to indicate if the candidate's position on children's health issues would affect their vote in November. Overall, 55% of all likely voters said the candidate's position would influence their vote (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Likelihood of Candidate's Position on Children's Health Issues To Affect Vote



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, August, 2008

Among likely voters with children in the household, 66% said that the candidate's position on children's health issues would affect their vote, compared with 51% of households without children. 61% of Democrats said that the candidate's position on children's health issues would affect their vote, compared with 45% of Republicans.

Implications

Economic times are hard for many Americans, and that fact echoes through the results of this Poll on problems with health care. The costs of health insurance dominate the concerns of likely voters, followed by worries about the costs of prescription drugs and problems with coverage. Concerns about known disparities in the quality of health care rank substantially lower on the priority list.

No matter which problem we measured with the health care system, likely voters appear convinced that Obama would do a better job as president than McCain. When it comes to the specific problem of uninsured children, Obama wants to mandate coverage for all children with subsidies for families who can't afford to pay for coverage. McCain wants to give tax credits to families to buy health insurance but wouldn't mandate coverage.

According to this Poll, each candidate has convinced likely voters in their own parties that these approaches are worthy. When it comes to crossover votes, Obama is doing better among Republicans than is McCain among Democrats. Furthermore, among all-important independent voters, Obama leads 2:1. So, while beliefs about health care problems clearly tap into voters' party loyalty, Obama is showing greater strength on children's uninsurance overall.

The majority of likely voters say that a candidate's position on children's health would influence their vote. These findings may be surprising to some who see children's health issues as outside the mainstream voter's consciousness. But in particular among parents with children in the household and among Democrats, candidates' stances on children's health issues may be quite important. For more on the candidates' platforms, go to www.health08.org.

Data Source

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Knowledge Networks, Inc, for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital via a method used in many published studies. The survey was administered from August 1-31 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults aged 18 and older (n=2,245) with and without children from the Knowledge Networks standing panel that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 62% among panel members contacted to participate. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Child Health Evaluation and Research Unit



University of Michigan

C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Director: Matthew M. Davis, MD, MAPP
Associate Director: Sarah J. Clark, MPH
Manager & Editor: Dianne C. Singer, MPH
Data Analyst: Amy T. Butchart, MPH
Contact us! Email: NPCH@med.umich.edu
<http://www.med.umich.edu/mott/npch>

This Report includes research findings from the C.S. Mott Children's National Poll on Children's Health, which do not represent the opinions of the investigators or the opinions of the University of Michigan. The University of Michigan reserves all rights over this material.