

APRIL 1999 HEALTH NEWS INTEREST INDEX
(plus health care consumer protections questions)

-- FINAL TOPLINE --
April 26, 1999

job # 99019

n=1,200 national adults, 18 years and older

Margin of error: plus or minus 3.1 percentage points (square root of design effect=1.10)

Form 1: n=598 (plus or minus 4.4) (square root of design effect=1.10)

Form 2: n=602 (plus or minus 4.4) (square root of design effect=1.10)

Field period: April 10-22, 1999

INTRODUCTION: Hello, my name is _____ and I'm calling for Princeton Survey Research. We're taking an opinion survey about some important issues in the news. I'd like to ask a few questions of the **YOUNGEST MALE** age 18 or older, who is now at home. **(IF NO MALE AT HOME NOW:** Then, may I speak with the **OLDEST FEMALE** age 18 or older who is now at home

D1. RECORD RESPONDENT'S SEX:

48 Male

52 Female

NOTE: Some results will not add to 100% because of rounding. Unless otherwise indicated in this document the trends used are from surveys conducted for the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation by Princeton Survey Research Associates. 2/99: February 1999 Health News Interest Index, 12/98: December 1998 Health Interest Index, 9/98: Medicare Survey, 8/98: The August 1998 Health News Interest Index, 5/98: April 1998 Health Interest Index, 1/98: Consumer Bill of Rights Survey, 9/97: Managed Care Survey.

1. To begin... What do you think is the most important problem in health or health care for the government to address? (OPEN-ENDED. RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE. IF RESPONDENT ONLY GIVES ONE ANSWER ASK:) Is there another health problem you think is almost as important?.

Current Total <u>Mention</u>		Feb-99 Total <u>Ment.</u>	Dec-98 Total <u>Ment.</u>	Oct-98 Total Ment.	June-98 Total <u>Ment.</u>	Apr-98 Total <u>Ment.</u>	Feb-98 Total <u>Ment.</u>	Dec-97 Total <u>Ment.</u>	Oct-97 Total <u>Ment.</u>
13	Health care costs	18	16	14	14	17	15	12	18
9	Health insurance - availability	8	11	9	9	6	8	9	8
8	Cancer/Cancer research	7	9	8	10	5	4	11	10
8	Medicare/Medicaid	10	7	8	8	8	9	7	7
8	Seniors health issues	10	8	9	7	7	6	6	8
6	HMO/Managed care concerns	7	7	12	4	5	2	5	4
5	Cost of insurance	3	6	3	5	4	4	5	5

NOTE: "Don't know" and responses mentioned by less than 5 percent are not shown

2. As you may know, the federal government has a budget surplus this year. The President and Congress have already decided to set aside some of that surplus to make Social Security financially sound. Aside from Social Security, which ONE of the following five things YOU would like to see done with the available money. Do you think this surplus money should be used...

- 18 To cut taxes
 17 To pay off the national debt more quickly
 28 To increase spending on domestic programs, such as health, education, and the environment
 6 To increase defense spending
 28 To help make the Medicare program financially sound
 2 None of these/Other (VOL.)
 2 Don't know/Refused

3. Now I'm going to read you a list of some stories covered by news organizations in the last month. As I read each one, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. (First,) how closely did you follow this story...

		<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not At All Closely</u>	<u>Don't Know Refused</u>
a.	The conclusions of a government panel studying marijuana and its medical use					
	Current:	10	26	26	36	1
b.	A new scientific study that found NO link between a high fat diet and breast cancer					
	Current:	9	22	23	44	2
c.	The trial in which a Michigan jury found Dr. Jack Kevorkian guilty of second degree murder					
	Current:	24	33	23	19	1
d.	The NATO air strikes against Serbian forces in Kosovo					
	Current:	53	31	9	6	1
	3/99 ¹ :	41	33	16	9	1
e.	A report by the SOCIAL SECURITY trustees on the condition of the Social Security trust fund					
	Current:	15	26	23	35	1

Continued...

¹ Trends in question 3 items d and h are from the March 1999 News Interest Index conducted by the Pew Research Center.

Question 3 continued...

		<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not At All Closely</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Refused</u>
f.	A report by the MEDICARE trustees on the condition of the Medicare trust fund					
	Current:	12	22	24	40	3
g.	The work of a national bipartisan commission studying the future of Medicare					
	Current:	10	23	25	40	1
	3/99:	5	16	35	43	1
	8/98:	3	10	31	55	1
h.	Reports about Monica Lewinsky's book tour and TV interviews					
	Current:	8	14	21	56	1
	3/99:	7	16	26	50	1

Now I'm going to ask you about some things that have been in the news recently. Not everyone will have heard about them. If I mention something you're not familiar with, just say so and I'll go to the next question. . .

4. Thinking again about the government panel studying marijuana... From what you've seen or heard in the news, tell me whether the panel did or did NOT reach the following conclusions. (First,) did the panel reach this conclusion, or not...?

		<u>Yes, Did</u>	<u>No, Did Not</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Refused</u>
a.	Marijuana can help cancer and AIDS patients manage pain and nausea	54	11	35
b.	There is no evidence that marijuana use leads to the use of harder drugs like cocaine	23	28	48
c.	Marijuana smoke is more toxic than tobacco smoke	22	29	49

5. Thinking again about the national bipartisan commission on Medicare... From what you've seen or heard in the news, is the commission...

- 22 Still studying the future of Medicare,
OR
- 9 Has it made its recommendation about what should be done to
preserve Medicare,
OR
- 15 Did the commission disband WITHOUT agreeing on a plan for Medicare's future?
- 54 Don't know/Refused

6. Thinking again about a recent report on the condition of the Medicare trust fund by the Medicare trustees. This is a different group than the Medicare commission I just asked you about... From what you've seen or heard in the news, did the Medicare trustees' report say the program will run out of money...

- 30 Sooner than was previously thought,
- 14 Later than was previously thought, OR
- 13 At about the same time as had been previously thought?
- 43 Don't know/Refused

7. Recently, there was also a report on the condition of the SOCIAL SECURITY trust fund by the Social Security trustees. From what you've seen or heard in the news, did the Social Security trustees' report say the program will run out of money...

- 28 Sooner than was previously thought,
- 18 Later than was previously thought, OR
- 18 At about the same time as had been previously thought?
- 36 Don't know/Refused

8. According to news reports, BOTH Social Security and Medicare are facing financial problems in the future. If Congress doesn't take any action, which of these two programs is expected to be the first to not have enough money to cover all benefits – Social Security or Medicare?

<u>Current</u>		<u>12/98</u>
38	Social Security	51
44	Medicare	38
18	Don't know/Refused	11

9. I'm going to read you some proposals to change the Medicare program and help keep it financially sound in the future. Please tell me whether you would generally favor or oppose each one. (First,) would you favor or oppose...

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Refused</u>
<i>Based on Form 1; n=598</i>			
a1. Creating a sliding scale for Medicare, so that the more income seniors have, the more they pay in Medicare premiums			
Current:	61	34	5
9/98:	64	32	4
<i>Based on Form 2; n=602</i>			
a2. Creating a sliding scale, which would be administered through the federal income tax, so that the more income seniors have, the more they pay in Medicare premiums			
Current:	55	39	5
b. Reducing payments to doctors and hospitals for treating people covered by Medicare			
Current:	55	39	6
9/98:	59	35	6
c. Increasing the payroll taxes workers now pay to fund the Medicare program			
Current:	30	64	6
9/98:	31	65	4
d. Gradually raising the age of eligibility for Medicare from 65 to 67 for future retirees			
Current:	33	64	3
9/98:	37	61	2
e. Requiring seniors to pay a larger share of Medicare costs out of their own pockets			
Current:	14	81	4
9/98:	17	80	3
f. Providing a fixed amount of money to each person on Medicare that they, in turn, would apply to the cost of health insurance from private plans or from the traditional Medicare program			
Current:	48	41	11

Continued...

Question 9 continued...

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Refused</u>
g. Requiring people on Medicare who receive home health care services to pay 10 percent of the cost Current:	40	54	6
h. Setting aside a portion of the surplus from the federal budget to finance Medicare in the future Current:	79	16	5
10. Medicare does not currently pay for prescription drugs. Would you favor a proposal to guarantee prescription drug coverage to everyone on Medicare – even if it means an increase in premiums or taxes to cover the cost of drug coverage?			

Current

64	Yes, would favor
30	No, would oppose
6	Don't know/Refused

11. Are you, yourself, now covered by any form of health insurance or health plan, including any private insurance plan as well as government programs like Medicare or (Medicaid)?

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>9/97</u>
79	Yes	78	82
19	No	21	17
1	Don't know/Refused	1	1

12. Based on all your experience with your current health insurance plan, we'd like you to grade the plan's performance. If A means excellent, B good, C average, D poor and F failing, what letter grade would you give to your health plan?

Based on all who are insured; n=971

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>	<u>9/97</u>
29	A – excellent	31	30	28
42	B – good	39	42	43
20	C – average	20	19	19
3	D – poor	5	4	6
2	F – failing	2	2	1
1	Not with plan long enough to rate (VOL.)	2	2	2
2	Don't know/Refused	1	1	1
			(n=994)	(n=991)

Questions 13-16 based on those under 65 who are insured; n=812

13. Now, I'm going to ask you about some of the characteristics of your current health insurance plan. Some plans charge less if you choose your doctor from a list, but make you pay more if you go to a doctor not on the list. Does your plan work this way, or not?

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>
59	Yes	58
37	No	36
4	Don't know/Refused	6

14. Some plans require you to sign up with a specific primary care doctor or group of doctors who provide all your routine health care. Does your plan work this way, or not?

<u>Current</u>		<u>9/98</u>
54	Yes	52
42	No	42
3	Don't know/Refused	6

15. Some plans require you to have a referral by a primary care doctor before you can see a medical specialist. Does your plan work this way, or not?

<u>Current</u>		<u>9/98</u>
62	Yes	58
32	No	33
6	Don't know/Refused	9

16. Some plans require you to have approval or a referral before they will pay for any of your costs for visiting a doctor who is not in the plan. Does your plan work this way, or not?

<u>Current</u>		<u>9/98</u>
51	Yes	54
40	No	37
9	Don't know/Refused	9

17. Now I'd like your views on HMOs and other managed care plans in general, regardless of whether you are personally in managed care. During the past few years, do you think HMOs and other managed care plans have...

Based on total Form 1; n=598

- a1. Made it easier or harder for people who are sick to see medical specialists?

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>9/97</u>
21	Easier	23	25
63	Harder	62	59
4	No effect (VOL.)	3	4
12	Don't know/Refused	12	12
		(n=604)	(n=1204)

Based on total Form 2; n=602

- a2. Made it easier or harder for people to get care in general?

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>
22	Easier	29
57	Harder	53
5	No effect (VOL.)	6
15	Don't know/Refused	12
		(n=596)

Based on total Form 1; n=598

- b1. Increased or decreased the quality of health care for people who are sick?

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>9/97</u>
29	Increased	25	32
50	Decreased	50	51
6	No effect (VOL.)	8	7
15	Don't know/Refused	17	10
		(n=604)	(n=605)

Based on total Form 2; n=602

- b2. Increased or decreased the quality of health care for patients?

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>9/97</u>
23	Increased	23	32
56	Decreased	56	45
6	No effect (VOL.)	8	8
15	Don't know/Refused	13	15
		(n=596)	(n=599)

Continued...

Question 17 continued...

- c. Made it easier or harder to get preventive services such as immunizations, health screenings, and physical exams?

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>9/97</u>
38	Easier	40	46
38	Harder	35	31
7	No effect (VOL.)	10	8
17	Don't know/Refused	15	15

- d. Helped keep health care costs down, or haven't made much difference?

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>9/97</u>
21	Easier	21	28
55	Harder	59	55
8	No effect (VOL.)	8	5
16	Don't know/Refused	12	12

- e. Increased or decreased the amount of time doctors spend with their patients?

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>9/97</u>
16	Easier	14	16
61	Harder	64	61
7	No effect (VOL.)	8	9
15	Don't know/Refused	14	14

18. If you were sick, how worried would you be that your HEALTH PLAN would be more concerned about saving money than about what is the best treatment for you? Would you be...

Based on those who are insured; n=971

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>9/97</u>
30	Very worried	33	18
28	Somewhat worried	26	29
18	Not too worried, OR	17	21
21	Not at all worried?	22	30
3	Don't know/Refused	2	2
		(n=953)	(n=991)

19. A law has been proposed that would require HMOs, other managed care plans, and health insurance companies to provide people with more information about their health plan, make it easier for people to see medical specialists, allow appeals to independent reviewers when someone is denied coverage for a particular medical treatment, and the right to sue their health plans. Do you favor or oppose such a law?

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>5/98</u>
74	Favor	78	78
18	Oppose	12	13
9	Don't know/Refused	10	9

20. Would you still favor this law if you heard it would increase the cost of health insurance premiums usually shared by employers and workers by about 200 dollars a year for a typical family?

Based on total Form 1; n=598

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>
46	Would still favor	40
43	Total would oppose	40
17	Oppose initially	
26	Switched to oppose	
11	Don't know	20
		(n=596)

21. Would you still favor this law if you heard it would increase the cost of health insurance premiums usually shared by employers and workers by about 20 dollars per month for a typical family?

Based on total Form 2; n=602

<u>Current</u>	
46	Would still favor
43	Total would oppose
18	Oppose initially
25	Switched to oppose
11	Don't know

22. Next, please tell me whether you would favor or oppose laws requiring HMOs, managed care plans and health insurance companies to do each of the following. (First,) would you favor or oppose a law requiring health plans to...?

		<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Refused</u>
a.	Allow people with serious medical conditions to see a medical specialist, such as a doctor specializing in cancer, without always having to get permission or see their regular doctor first			
	Current:	77	18	5
	8/98:	82	13	5
	1/98:	81	18	1
b.	Pay for an emergency room visit when someone might reasonably believe they need immediate medical attention -- even if the problem doesn't turn out to be serious			
	Current:	76	19	5
	8/98:	78	15	7
	1/98:	79	18	3
c.	Allow people to appeal a health plan's decision to an independent reviewer if they are denied coverage for a particular medical treatment			
	Current:	83	12	6
	8/98:	81	12	7
	1/98:	88	9	3
d.	Allow patients to sue a health plan for malpractice, like they can now sue a doctor			
	Current:	70	23	7
	8/98:	73	19	8
	1/98:	64	31	5

23. You said you favor a law requiring health plans to... **(INSERT--READ AND RANDOMIZE)**. Would you still favor this law if you heard it might increase the cost of people's health insurance premiums? **(RECORD RESPONSE)** You also said you favor a law requiring health plans to... **(INSERT NEXT ITEM)** Would you still favor this law if you heard it might increase the cost of people's health insurance premiums?

- a. Allow people to see a medical specialist without special permission

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>
56	Would still favor	58	58
35	Total would oppose	33	39
18	Oppose initially	13	21
17	Switched to oppose	20	18
9	Don't know	9	3
		(n=604)	(n=600)

- b. Pay for an emergency room visit if someone believes they need immediate medical attention

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>
57	Would still favor	60	62
34	Total would oppose	29	33
19	Oppose initially	14	19
14	Switched to oppose	15	14
10	Don't know	11	5
		(n=604)	(n=600)

- c. Allow people to appeal a plan's decision to deny coverage to an independent reviewer

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>
57	Would still favor	56	63
33	Total would oppose	33	32
12	Oppose initially	14	10
21	Switched to oppose	19	22
10	Don't know	11	5
		(n=604)	(n=600)

- d. Allow patients to sue a plan for malpractice

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>
49	Would still favor	54	48
40	Total would oppose	35	45
23	Oppose initially	21	28
17	Switched to oppose	14	17
11	Don't know	11	7
		(n=604)	(n=600)

24. We'd like to know if you or someone you know has experienced some different kinds of problems with an HMO, managed care plan or health insurance company.
25. Was this a major problem for you or the person you know, or only a minor problem? **(IF R SAYS THIS HAPPENED MORE THAN ONCE ASK ABOUT: "the LAST time you or someone you know had this problem")**

- a. Needed more information about how the health plan operates in order to choose among different health plans

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>
32	Total yes, experienced problem	36	29
13	Major problem		
18	Minor problem		
1	Don't know/Refused how much of a problem		
64	No, did not experience problem	59	69
4	Don't know/Refused	5	2

- b. Had difficulty getting permission from a health plan or regular doctor to see a gynecologist

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>
9	Total yes, experienced problem	15	6
5	Major problem		
3	Minor problem		
1	Don't know/Refused how much of a problem		
87	No, did not experience problem	81	93
4	Don't know/Refused	4	1

- c. Had difficulty getting permission from a health plan or regular doctor to see a medical specialist, such as a doctor specializing in cancer

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>
21	Total yes, experienced problem	26	18
14	Major problem		
7	Minor problem		
*	Don't know/Refused how much of a problem		
76	No, did not experience problem	71	81
3	Don't know/Refused	3	1

- d. Had difficulty getting a health plan to pay an emergency room bill

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>
21	Total yes, experienced problem	30	19
12	Major problem		
8	Minor problem		
*	Don't know/Refused how much of a problem		
76	No, did not experience problem	67	80
3	Don't know/Refused	3	1

Continued...

Question 24/25 continued...

- e. Wanted to file an appeal to an independent reviewer when a health plan denied coverage for a particular medical treatment

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>
19	Total yes, experienced problem	22	17
77	No, did not experience problem	74	82
4	Don't know/Refused	4	1

- e. Wanted to sue a health plan for malpractice

<u>Current</u>		<u>8/98</u>	<u>1/98</u>
10	Total yes, experienced problem	13	9
88	No, did not experience problem	84	90
2	Don't know/Refused	3	1

Finally, I'd like to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes only...

D2. In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

- 27 Republican
- 31 Democrat
- 35 Independent
- 4 No preference/Not interested in politics (VOL.)
- * Other party (VOL.)
- 1 Don't know
- 2 Refused

D3. What is the LAST grade or class that you COMPLETED in school?

- 5 None, or grade 1-8
- 11 High school incomplete (grades 9-11)
- 34 High school graduate (grade 12 or GED certificate)
- 3 Business, technical, or vocational school AFTER high school
- 23 Some college, no 4-year degree
- 15 College graduate (B.S., B.A. or other 4-year degree)
- 8 Post-graduate training or professional schooling after college (e.g., toward A master's degree or Ph.D.law medical school)
- 1 Refused

D4. What is your age?

Current

- 21 18 – 29
- 43 30 – 49
- 35 Total 50+
- 19 50 – 64
- 16 65+
- 83 Total under 65
- 1 Refused

D5. Last year – that is, in 1998 – what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes?
Just stop me when I get to the right category...

- 8 Less than \$10,000
- 11 \$10,000 to under \$20,000
- 12 \$20,000 to under \$30,000
- 19 \$30,000 to under \$50,000
- 16 \$50,000 to under \$75,000
- 7 \$75,000 or under \$100,000
- 6 \$100,000 or more
- 5 Don't know
- 17 Refused

D6. Are you, yourself, of Hispanic or Latino background, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Spanish background?

- 6 Yes
- 93 No
- 0 Don't know
- 1 Refused

D7. What is your race? Are you white, black, Asian or some other race? **(IF RESPONDENT SAYS HISPANIC ASK: Do you consider yourself a white Hispanic or a black Hispanic?)**

- 84 White
- 11 Black or African-American
- 1 Asian
- 2 Other or mixed race
- 1 Don't know
- 2 Refused

END OF INTERVIEW. THANK RESPONDENT:

Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions. Have a nice day/evening.