

Economy tops list of issues voters want candidates to discuss; Iraq and health care follow

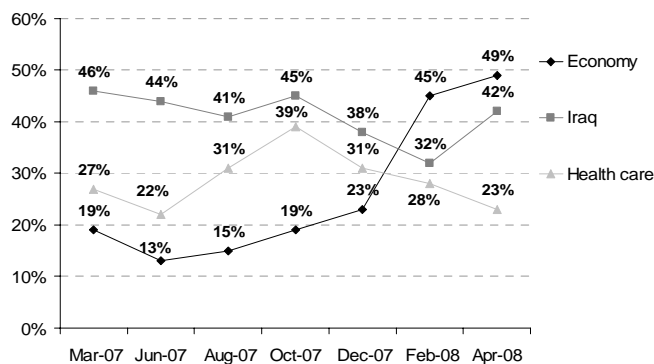
Throughout 2007, health care had been the top domestic issue, following only Iraq as the issue that voters wanted to hear the presidential candidates discuss. In February 2008, health care dropped to third place, as the economy took the lead among issues that voters wanted to hear about. In April, this ranking remains, with 49 percent of registered voters saying they want to hear candidates talk about the economy, followed by 42 percent who mention Iraq, and 23 percent who mention health care. What used to be the fourth-ranked issue, immigration (mentioned by 14 percent of voters in February), drops to 6 percent in April, and gas prices and energy issues are now mentioned by 10 percent (up from 2 percent in February). Health care now ranks third among Republicans, Democrats, and independents alike, though a larger share of Democrats (29 percent) name it as a top issue than Republicans (19 percent) and independents (18 percent).

Thinking about the campaign for the presidential election in 2008, what two issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (open-ended, among registered voters)

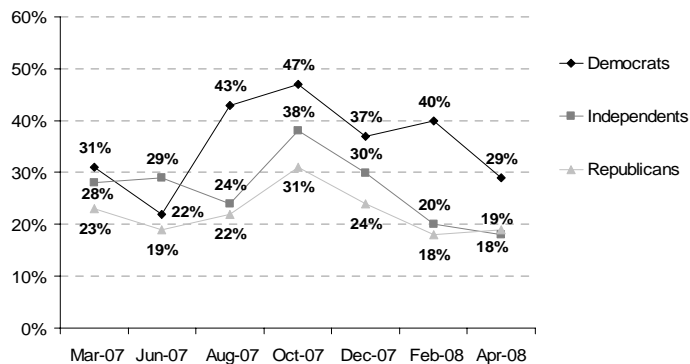
Issue Rank	Total registered voters	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
1	Economy (49%)	Economy (49%)	Economy (53%)	Economy (47%)
2	Iraq (42)	Iraq (33)	Iraq (50)	Iraq (40)
3	Health care (23)	Health care (19)	Health care (29)	Health care (18)
4	Gas prices/Energy (10)	Gas prices/Energy (11)	Gas prices/Energy (11)	Gas prices/Energy (8)
5	Immigration (6)	Immigration (10)	Education (6)	Immigration (6)

After falling in our last two tracking polls, the share of voters naming Iraq as a top issue for candidates to discuss increased ten percentage points from February to April, perhaps as a result of increased media attention on the war during this period. Focus on the economy also remains high, and in April, nearly half (49 percent) of voters name the economy as a top issue for candidates to discuss. With the focus on both of these issues, the share of voters naming health care declined somewhat, from 28 percent in February to 23 percent in April. While the shares of Republican and independent voters naming health care decreased between October 2007 and February 2008, these shares held fairly steady between February and April 2008 at around one in five each. The decrease in the share of voters naming health care appears to be driven by Democratic voters, 40 percent of whom named health care in February, decreasing to 29 percent in April.

Thinking about the campaign for the presidential election in 2008, what two issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (open-ended, top 3 responses shown among registered voters)



Percent naming HEALTH CARE as one of the top two issues they'd most like to hear presidential candidates talk about, by political party self-identification (among registered voters)



Economy, Iraq, and health care are also the top voting issues...

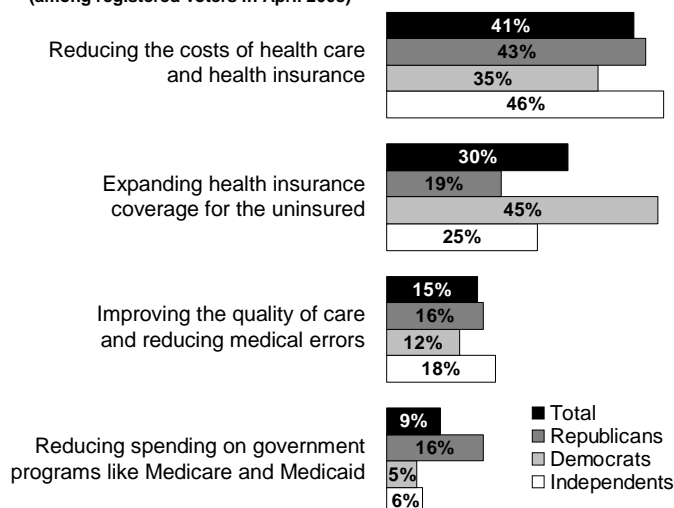
When voters are asked instead about the issues that will affect their vote for president in 2008, the top three issues are the same as those that voters want to hear candidates discuss – the economy (48 percent), followed by Iraq (30 percent) and health care (20 percent). Frustration with the government is mentioned by about one in seven (14 percent) registered voters as an important issue in their choice for president. Health care ranks third as a voting issue for Democratic and independent voters, and fourth for Republican voters.

Thinking ahead to the November 2008 presidential election, what is the single most important issue in your choice for president? Is there one other issue that's nearly as important? (open-ended, among registered voters)

Issue Rank	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
1	Economy (48%)	Economy (43%)	Economy (51%)	Economy (54%)
2	Iraq (30)	Iraq (21)	Iraq (36)	Iraq (36)
3	Health care (20)	Frustration w/gov't (19)	Health care (27)	Health care (17)
4	Frustration w/gov't (14)	Health care (16)	Frustration w/gov't (12)	Frustration w/gov't (12)
5	Gas prices/Energy (8)	Terrorism (13)	Gas prices/Energy (9)	Terrorism (8)

Voters more interested in reducing costs; change driven by independent voters

Which ONE of the following health care issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about?
(among registered voters in April 2008)

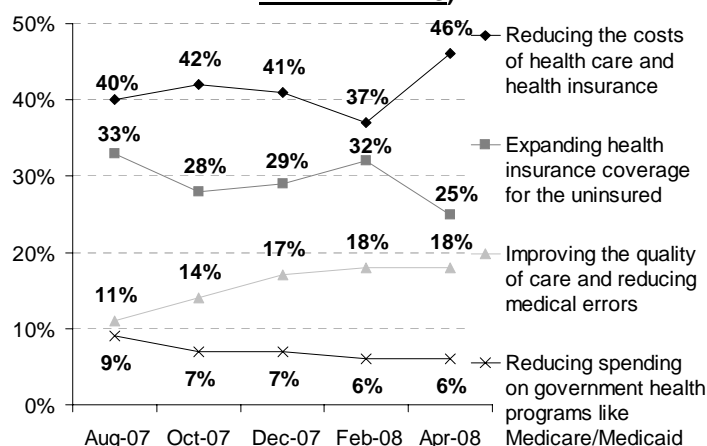


When asked specifically about health care issues, four in ten voters (41 percent) say they want to hear about reducing the costs of health care and insurance. About three in ten (30 percent) say they want to hear candidates talk about expanding coverage, followed by improving quality of care (15 percent) and reducing spending on government programs (9 percent). There are differences across political parties, with Republican voters (43 percent) and independent voters (46 percent) more likely to say they want to hear about reducing costs, and Democratic voters more likely to say they want to hear about expanding coverage (45 percent).

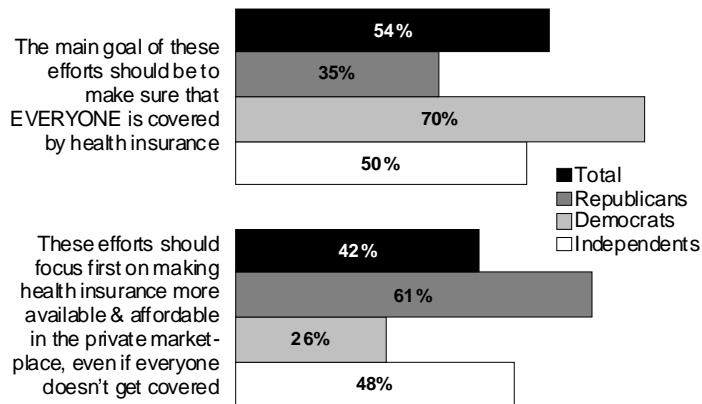
Looking at independent registered voters' responses to this question over time, there was a big shift between February and April 2008, with a much larger share of this group in April choosing reducing costs, and a smaller share interested in hearing candidates talk about expanding coverage. This may be due, at least in part, to the increasing focus on the economy overall as an issue over the last several months.

Which ONE of the following health care issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about?
(among registered voters who identify as

INDEPENDENTS)



The presidential candidates have proposed different approaches to improving the health care system in the U.S. Which of the following comes closest to your view? (among registered voters in April 2008)



evenly split between the two options, with about half (50 percent) saying improvements to the health care system should focus on covering everyone, and the other half (48 percent) saying efforts should focus on making insurance available and affordable, even if everyone doesn't get covered.

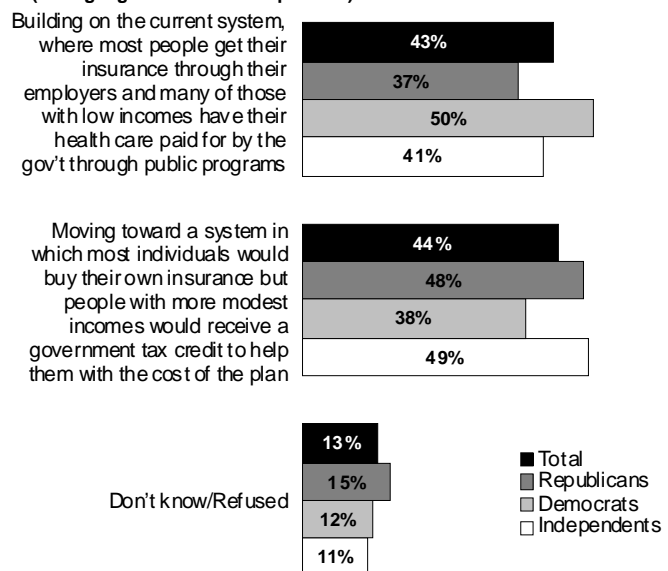
Preferences for the direction of reform in the U.S. health care system

In a question that asked about the direction the U.S. health care system should take, voters are evenly split between building on the current employer-based coverage system, where people with low incomes are eligible for coverage through government-funded programs (43 percent), and moving towards a system in which health insurance would be largely purchased by individuals, with tax incentives to help groups with more modest incomes (44 percent). Differences by political party identification are more modest on this question, though Democratic voters are somewhat more likely to favor building on the current system, while Republican and independent voters are somewhat more likely to favor moving toward a system where most insurance is purchased by individuals.

Preferences for health reform efforts

Given the discussion about changes to our health care system throughout the presidential primaries, it is interesting to examine the public's preferences. In a question about improving the U.S. health care system, a slim majority of voters (54 percent) say the main goal of reform efforts should focus on all Americans having health coverage. About four in ten (42 percent) say efforts should focus on making insurance more available and affordable in the private marketplace, even if some people remain uninsured. As in the question about health care priorities, there are clear partisan preferences, with fully seven in ten Democratic voters (70 percent) saying reform efforts should focus on expanding coverage, and six in ten Republican voters (61 percent) saying efforts should focus on making health insurance more available and affordable in the private marketplace. Independent voters are more

Which of the following best describes the direction you would like to see the country take when it comes to health care? (among registered voters in April 2008)



Methodology

This *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008*, the seventh in a series, was designed and analyzed by public opinion researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation led by Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., including Elizabeth Hamel and Carolina Gutiérrez. A nationally representative random sample of 1,759 registered voters was interviewed by telephone between April 3 and April 13, 2008. The margin of sampling error for the survey is plus or minus 3 percentage points; for results based on subgroups, the sampling error is higher.

February trends are from the sixth survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,770 registered voters interviewed February 7-16, 2008 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 3 percentage points).

December trends are from the fifth survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,063 registered voters interviewed November 28-December 9, 2007¹ (margin of sampling error plus or minus 4 percentage points).

October trends are from the fourth survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,058 registered voters interviewed October 1-10, 2007 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 3 percentage points).

August trends are from the third survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,303 registered voters interviewed August 2-8, 2007 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 3 percentage points).

June trends are from the second survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,050 registered voters interviewed May 31-June 5, 2007 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 4 percentage points).

March trends are from the first survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,013 registered voters interviewed March 8-13, 2007 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 3 percentage points).

¹ December data for question 1b comes from a parallel survey of a nationally representative random sample of 1,772 registered voters interviewed by telephone between November 28 and December 10, 2007, which has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. This question was asked on a separate survey because of the desire to track opinions about the issues people most want to hear candidates discuss and the most important issue in their choice for president. In order to avoid biasing answers to these questions by asking them of the same group, and to preserve a large enough sample for subgroup analysis, the questions were asked of separate samples on separate surveys.

Trends

1a. (Asked of half-sample) Thinking about the campaign for the presidential election in 2008, what two issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? IF R GIVES ONE ISSUE PROBE FOR SECOND: Is there another issue you'd like to hear about? (OPEN-END)
(Note: mentions less than 4 percent not shown)

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Economy				
Apr08	49	49	53	47
Feb08	45	42	47	48
Dec07	23	19	25	26
Oct07	19	16	22	20
Aug07	15	15	13	16
Jun07	13	13	20	7
Mar07	19	18	20	20
Iraq				
Apr08	42	33	50	40
Feb08	32	28	36	32
Dec07	38	31	39	42
Oct07	45	44	49	44
Aug07	41	32	45	46
Jun07	44	39	54	39
Mar07	46	44	54	43
Health care				
Apr08	23	19	29	18
Feb08	28	18	40	20
Dec07	31	24	37	30
Oct07	39	31	47	38
Aug07	31	22	43	24
Jun07	22	19	22	29
Mar07	27	23	31	28
Gas prices/Energy				
Apr08	10	11	11	8
Feb08	2	2	3	1
Dec07	6	8	3	8
Oct07	2	2	4	2
Aug07	4	8	2	4
Jun07	12	12	12	12
Mar07	3	1	5	3
Immigration				
Apr08	6	10	4	6
Feb08	14	24	7	10
Dec07	15	25	9	16
Oct07	11	17	8	11
Aug07	13	17	8	15
Jun07	17	19	13	20
Mar07	6	8	4	9
Education				
Apr08	4	2	6	5
Feb08	7	6	8	8
Dec07	6	7	7	4
Oct07	8	7	8	9
Aug07	6	3	8	7
Jun07	4	1	4	6
Mar07	6	6	6	3
Terrorism/nat'l security				
Apr08	4	9	1	4
Feb08	6	14	1	7
Dec07	7	13	3	7
Oct07	7	13	1	9
Aug07	9	18	3	9
Jun07	8	17	3	6
Mar07	7	13	3	6

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Taxes				
Apr08	4	9	3	2
Feb08	5	6	4	6
Dec07	8	10	5	10
Oct07	6	10	4	7
Aug07	8	11	8	8
Jun07	4	5	2	3
Mar07	4	3	2	7

1b. (Asked of half-sample) Thinking ahead to the November 2008 presidential election, what is the single most important issue in your choice for president? IF R GIVES ONE ISSUE PROBE FOR SECOND: Is there one other issue that's nearly as important? (OPEN-END)
(Note: mentions less than 5 percent not shown)

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Economy				
Apr08	48	43	51	54
Feb08	43	41	41	46
Dec07	23	18	23	26
Iraq				
Apr08	30	21	36	36
Feb08	29	18	37	30
Dec07	30	28	35	30
Health care				
Apr08	20	16	27	17
Feb08	21	11	27	19
Dec07	21	15	30	19
Frustration w/gov't				
Apr08	14	19	12	12
Feb08	13	13	16	11
Dec07	11	16	9	10
Gas prices/Energy				
Apr08	8	6	9	7
Feb08	1	1	2	1
Dec07	5	3	6	4
Terrorism/nat'l security				
Apr08	7	13	2	8
Feb08	9	21	1	11
Dec07	9	14	4	11
Immigration				
Apr08	5	9	3	6
Feb08	7	12	3	6
Dec07	11	12	10	13
Taxes				
Apr08	5	7	2	6
Feb08	7	9	7	4
Dec07	6	6	3	11

2. Now thinking specifically about HEALTH CARE, which ONE of the following health care issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (READ AND RANDOMIZE 1-4)²

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS:	TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Reducing the costs of health care and health insurance				
Apr08	41	43	35	46
Feb08	37	45	31	37
Dec07	40	47	36	41
Oct07	41	43	40	42
Aug07	41	50	38	40
Expanding health insurance coverage for the uninsured				
Apr08	30	19	45	25
Feb08	31	16	43	32
Dec07	29	19	39	29
Oct07	31	21	41	28
Aug07	31	16	38	33
Improving the quality of care And reducing medical errors				
Apr08	15	16	12	18
Feb08	17	21	13	18
Dec07	16	15	14	17
Oct07	14	19	11	14
Aug07	12	16	12	11
Reducing spending on gov't health programs like Medicare/Medicaid				
Apr08	9	16	5	6
Feb08	7	10	7	6
Dec07	8	10	7	7
Oct07	7	11	5	7
Aug07	8	10	6	9
None of these (VOL)				
Apr08	1	3	1	1
Feb08	3	3	2	2
Dec07	3	5	*	3
Oct07	2	3	1	3
Aug07	3	4	1	3
Other issue (VOL)				
Apr08	2	2	1	3
Feb08	2	3	1	2
Dec07	2	2	2	2
Oct07	3	3	1	4
Aug07	2	1	1	3
Don't know/Refused				
Apr08	2	2	1	1
Feb08	2	2	1	2
Dec07	2	2	2	2
Oct07	2	1	1	1
Aug07	3	3	4	2

² Question wording from August 2007 poll: Next, thinking about the campaign for the presidential election in 2008, which ONE of the following health care issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about and focus on in any health reform plan they may develop? (READ AND RANDOMIZE 1-4)

3. Thinking about all of the candidates for president in 2008, regardless of political party or who you intend to vote for, which candidate BEST represents your own views on health care?

(OPEN-END)

(Note: only remaining candidates shown)

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL		REP	DEM	IND
Named any candidate (NET)				
Apr08	70	67	84	60
Feb08	68	60	80	63
Dec07	48	42	63	41
Oct07	51	43	61	49
Aug07	43	33	59	40
Jun07	43	35	58	33
Mar07	36	29	48	31
Hillary Clinton				
Apr08	26	8	44	20
Feb08	26	7	45	22
Dec07	22	8	39	20
Oct07	22	5	36	21
Aug07	19	4	36	16
Jun07	17	1	34	12
Mar07	16	6	27	11
Barack Obama				
Apr08	20	6	33	19
Feb08	19	8	28	19
Dec07	6	2	12	3
Oct07	8	2	14	5
Aug07	6	3	9	7
Jun07	9	4	14	8
Mar07	6	3	9	5
John McCain				
Apr08	19	51	3	16
Feb08	11	24	2	11
Dec07	1	2	1	1
Oct07	1	1	1	2
Aug07	1	2	*	1
Jun07	2	6	*	2
Mar07	3	4	2	3
Don't know/No candidate				
Apr08	30	33	16	40
Feb08	32	40	20	37
Dec07	52	58	37	59
Oct07	49	57	39	51
Aug07	57	67	41	60
Jun07	57	65	42	67
Mar07	64	71	52	69

4. Thinking about how the issue of health care might affect your vote for president, would you...?
(CATEGORIES READ IN ORDER AND REVERSE ORDER)

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Consider a candidate's position on health care as just one of many important factors				
Apr08	67	66	68	69
Feb08	70	62	74	74
Dec07	73	73	73	74
Oct07	70	73	69	75
Aug07	76	76	77	75
Jun07	71	69	69	77
Mar07	74	78	72	74
Not see health care as a major issue in your vote				
Apr08	14	18	10	14
Feb08	15	24	9	11
Dec07	11	12	9	12
Oct07	12	14	10	12
Aug07	10	12	7	13
Jun07	13	20	10	10
Mar07	10	10	7	12
ONLY vote for a candidate who shares your views on health care				
Apr08	14	10	16	15
Feb08	11	9	14	10
Dec07	12	10	15	10
Oct07	13	9	18	7
Aug07	10	7	14	10
Jun07	12	8	15	10
Mar07	11	8	15	9
Don't know/Refused				
Apr08	6	6	7	2
Feb08	5	4	3	6
Dec07	4	4	4	4
Oct07	4	4	3	5
Aug07	4	5	2	3
Jun07	4	3	6	3
Mar07	6	4	6	5

5. The presidential candidates have proposed different approaches to improving the health care system in the U.S. Which of the following comes closest to your view? (READ AND ROTATE)

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
The main goal of these efforts should be to make sure that EVERYONE is covered by health insurance				
Apr08	54	35	70	50
These efforts should focus first on making health insurance more available and affordable in the private marketplace, even if everyone doesn't get covered				
Apr08	42	61	26	48
Don't know/Refused				
Apr08	4	4	4	2

6. Which of the following best describes the direction you would like to see the country take when it comes to health care? (READ AND ROTATE)

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Building on the current system, where most people get insurance through their employers and many of those with low incomes have their health paid for by the government through public programs				
Apr08	43	37	50	41
Moving toward a system in which most individuals would buy their own insurance but people with more modest incomes would receive a government tax credit to help them with the cost of the plan				
Apr08	44	48	38	49
Don't know/Refused				
Apr08	13	15	12	11

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