

The past month has seen a drop in the proportion of the public who say they feel confused about the new health reform law, though more than four in ten continue to express confusion and just over a third say they don't understand how the law will impact them personally. Overall the basic shape of opinion on the reform law is unchanged, with the nation still firmly divided along partisan lines, but the May Kaiser health tracking survey does pick up some lessening of enthusiasm. Those who look upon the law favorably mostly focus on the ways it will increase access to coverage and care, while those with unfavorable views have a more splintered array of reasons, beginning with concerns about cost and government control. Meanwhile, Americans continue to rely on a wide range of news media sources and personal connections to gather information on the new law, with cable news leading the pack of most relied upon sources.

Fewer report confusion in May. While last month more than half of the public (55 percent) said “confused” aptly described their feelings about the new health reform law, that proportion dropped by 11 percentage points in May. The drop was particularly evident among women – typically more likely to be making health care decisions for the household – 60 percent of whom felt confused in April compared to 45 percent in May, bringing them more into line with the results among men. Those with more education and higher incomes also dispelled their confusion at a higher rate this spring than those with less education and lower incomes.

Even with the decrease, however, a substantial minority – 44 percent – say they remain confused about the health reform law.

Overall, a solid majority of Americans (61 percent) report feeling they “understand what the impact of the health reform law will be” on themselves and their families, while 35 percent say they do not understand how they will be affected. Americans living in households making less than \$40,000 a year and those who are uninsured are somewhat more likely than their counterparts to say they do not understand the ways the law will impact their own families, even though many aspects of the law are targeted at them quite specifically.

Do you feel you understand what the impact of the health reform law will be on you and your family, or not?

	Yes	No/DK
Annual household income		
< \$40,000	56%	44%
\$40-90,000	67%	33%
\$90,000	73%	27%
Insurance status for those < age 65		
Insured	65%	35%
Uninsured	47%	53%

As you may know, a new health reform bill was signed into law earlier this year. Given what you know about the new health reform law, do you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable opinion of it?

	Now: ALL	Now: RV ¹	Now: LV	Dem.	Indep.	Repub.	April: ALL
NET Favorable	41%	41%	40%	72%	37%	8%	46%
Very favorable	14	15	16	30	9	1	23
Somewhat favorable	27	26	24	42	28	7	23
NET Unfavorable	44%	47%	50%	14%	49%	85%	40%
Somewhat unfavorable	12	11	10	6	14	16	10
Very unfavorable	32	36	40	8	35	69	30
Don't know/ Refused	14%	12%	9%	14%	14%	8%	14%

Public's basic position on health reform, and their views of personal impact, relatively stable over past month.

Enthusiastic support for law fades somewhat. Overall, the public continues to be divided in their views of the new health reform law, with the May tracking poll finding 41 percent holding favorable views, 44 percent unfavorable views and 14 percent undecided or unsure. These views continue to differ

¹ Sample included 1,047 self-identified registered voters and 823 self-identified likely voters. Likely voters were defined as those who said they were registered to vote and said that they always or nearly always vote in mid-term elections.

markedly by party, with most Democrats holding favorable views, most Republicans unfavorable views, and political independents tilting toward the negative. As was true last month, voters who say they are likely to vote in the midterm elections are somewhat more likely to tilt negative in their views of health reform.

In terms of the trend in opinion, over the course of the past month there has been a falloff in strong supporters, with 23 percent in April saying they held “very favorable” views of the new law, compared to 14 percent now. Most of this falloff came from Democrats themselves, whose rally round the flag feelings may have waned as passage fades into the rearview mirror: In April, 43 percent of self-identified Democrats said they had “very favorable” views of the reform law, compared to 30 percent now. Only time can tell whether this is a blip or the start of a trend. Meanwhile, the percentage with “very unfavorable” views hasn’t changed appreciably since last month, hovering at around three in ten overall, and rising to seven in ten among Republicans. Feelings continue to be stronger, then, among opponents than among proponents of the law.

Asked to explain the main reason for their favorable views in their own words, supporters clustered around reasons related to increasing Americans’ access to health insurance and to health care itself. Others offered answers focusing on their hope that costs will come down under reform, and some focused on insurance reforms such as the end of exclusions based on pre-existing conditions.

<i>Could you tell me in your own words what is the main reason you have a favorable opinion of the new health reform law?²</i>	<i>% who mentioned each</i>	<i>Example of response in FAVORABLE category</i>
Expanding access (NET)	47%	
Expanding access to health insurance	23	<i>“People die without health insurance. Everybody should have insurance.” “Because it is long overdue. There are too many people unemployed and not having health coverage.”</i>
Expanding access to health care	15	<i>“Because everyone should have a right to go to a doctor and get medical help. Isn’t the American dream about helping everyone?”</i>
Will help self or family	4	<i>“I have been unemployed for a while and don’t have insurance, but that hasn’t stopped me from needing to go to the doctor. And from what I understand, the new law will make it easier for me to get coverage until I can find work.”</i>
Will help low income families	3	<i>“I like that it helps low income families. It is a progressive bill.”</i>
Adult children will be able to get health insurance	2	<i>“I have a daughter going to grad school and she is covered by the new reform law.”</i>
Will make health care more affordable/control costs	12%	<i>“Because a lot of people can’t afford health care and prescriptions right now.”</i>
Country will be better off generally	6%	<i>“Because it takes care of the people.”</i>
Insurance reform (NET)	5%	
Will help people with pre-existing conditions	4	<i>“I have a rare kidney disease, and if something happens to my insurance it is good to know I can’t be rejected.”</i>
Insurance reform generally	1	<i>“I think change was needed, because insurance companies are horrible.”</i>
A step in the right direction	4%	<i>“Something should have been done decades ago. It’s not perfect but it’s a good working instrument. I compliment the politicians who have put it into place.”</i>

² Showing responses over 3%. For full set of responses, see topline document.

Those with unfavorable views of the law had a much more disparate group of reasons for their negative perceptions. Topping the list were concerns about the cost of the reforms and opposition to the government’s perceived role in the changes.

<i>Could you tell me in your own words what is the main reason you have an <u>UNfavorable</u> opinion of the new health reform law?³</i>	<i>% who mentioned each</i>	<i>Example of response in UNFAVORABLE category</i>
Financial and cost considerations (NET)	27%	
Will cost too much/Not paid for	15	<i>“I don’t think the country can afford it right now.” “Because Obama didn’t give enough money to pay for anything.”</i>
Health insurance and health care will become more expensive	6	<i>“I believe it will increase costs.”</i>
Taxes will go up	5	<i>“It is going to raise federal taxes and they are already high enough for all citizens working to support their families.”</i>
Government-related issues	17%	<i>“The government can’t get my mail to me. Why would I trust them with health care?” “My concern is about government control of private enterprise.”</i>
Harm to seniors/Medicare	6%	<i>“It’s not going to help us older people. [We’re] going to have trouble getting health care.”</i>
Individuals should pay for their own insurance/ People will freeload	5%	<i>“Because I paid for my health care for the last 30 years, and now you are giving it for free. That is unfair. I don’t want to pay for anybody else’s health care. Why can’t everybody else be responsible for paying for their own health care like I did?”</i>
Against individual mandate	5%	<i>“I don’t think the government should have the right to force me to buy insurance.”</i>
Opposed to process	4%	<i>“The way it was passed. It was rammed down our throats. It has good aspects, but it was not the way to do it.”</i>
Don’t understand law/Don’t know enough about it	4%	<i>“It’s too big, hard to understand. Too ambiguous.”</i>
Concerned about impact on own situation	4%	<i>“I already have good health insurance and it will cause problems for me and my business.”</i>

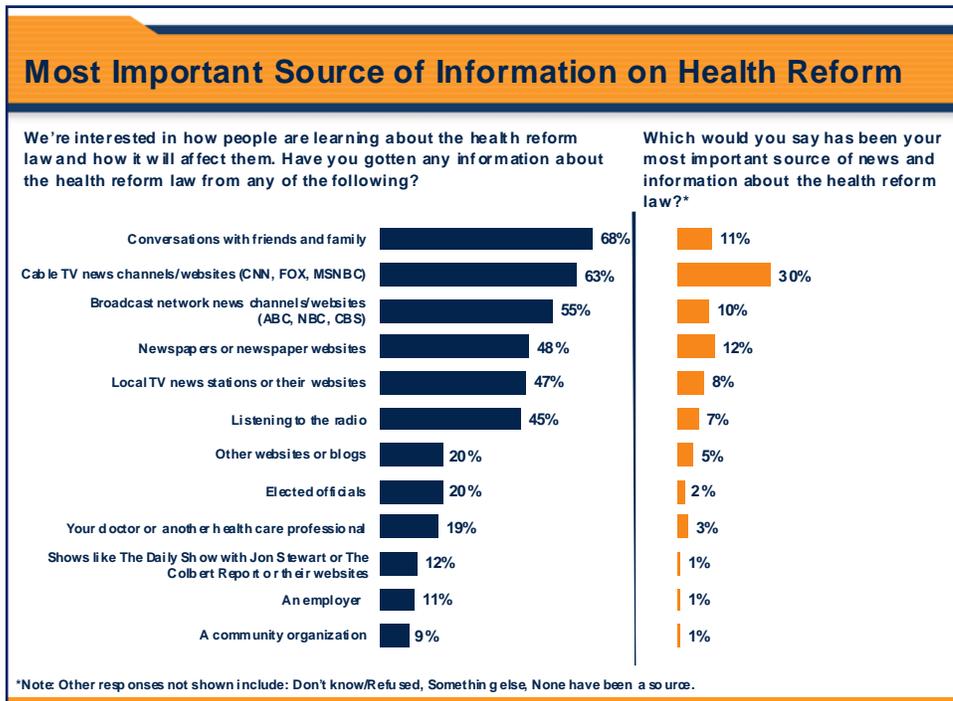
There has been little change since last month in the proportions that expect to benefit from the new law. About three in ten say they do, while just as many expect to suffer in some way and another third don’t expect to be affected.

As reform leaves the white-hot media spotlight, strong emotions are somewhat less widespread. As health reform cedes its place on the front pages of newspapers and websites to other pressing policy issues, it may also be ceding its place in the front of people’s minds: the survey suggests that fewer Americans report holding strong emotions – either positive or negative -- about the new law. In addition to the drop in the proportion who say they are confused, there was also a drop in the proportion who said they felt relieved or pleased (down eight percentage points to 32 percent and down six percentage points to 39 percent respectively), as well as a drop in those who reported feeling anxious (down six percentage points to 36 percent). The proportion who felt disappointed, however, did not change, remaining at 45 percent and now roughly tied with confusion as the most predominant emotion. Neither did the proportion who felt angry change, hovering at 30 percent.

Please tell me if each of the following does or does not describe your own feelings about the health reform law	Yes, Describes
Disappointed	45%
Confused	44%
Pleased	39%
Anxious	36%
Relieved	32%
Angry	30%

³ Showing responses over 3%. For full set of responses, see topline document.

Cable news continues to be most commonly cited “major source” of information on health reform. Americans continue to report getting information about reform from a wide variety of sources, both from the news media and from friends and professional figures.



Most widespread sources: More than half report having gotten information from friends and family, or from cable or broadcast news programs. Further breaking down those getting health reform information from cable news, 25 percent of Americans indicated their main cable source on this topic was FOX News, 22 percent said CNN, and 6 percent MSNBC.

Fairly well used: More than four in ten say they have gotten info from newspapers, local TV news or the radio.

Less commonly reported: Two in ten report getting information from websites or blogs, elected officials, or a doctor or other health professional. One in ten have gotten information from shows like The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, from an employer, or from a community organization.

That said, when asked which was their “most important source of news and information about the health reform law”, cable news topped the list this month as it did last month, named by 30 percent.

Americans who rely on different forms of news media for their information about health reform hold fairly different views of the new law, though looking at this relationship poses a classic chicken and egg question, mixing up ideological and partisan affinity, network loyalty, and views on health reform. The most dramatic example of this comes in comparing those who name cable as their top information source on health reform into those who mostly watch Fox News (41 percent of whom are self-identified Republicans) versus those who mostly watch CNN (45 percent of whom are self-identified Democrats).

Among the CNN group, most have a favorable view of the new law (52 percent versus 40 percent unfavorable), while the Fox News group has overwhelmingly unfavorable views (78 percent versus 15 percent favorable). The most commonly reported emotional reaction to health reform by those depending on CNN was feeling pleased (48 percent), followed by feeling confusion (42 percent). For Fox News viewers, the top two emotional responses were disappointment (69 percent)

and anger (60 percent). While most CNN viewers think they will either be better off (36 percent) or unaffected (34 percent) by the new law, most Fox News viewers expect to be worse off (59 percent).

	<i>Rely mostly on cable TV for info on reform: Mainly CNN</i>	<i>Rely mostly on cable TV for info on reform: Mainly FOX News</i>
	<i>{representing 11% of total sample}</i>	<i>{representing 12% of total sample}</i>
Opinion of health reform law		
NET favorable	52%	15%
NET unfavorable	40	78
Don't know/Refused	7	6
Reported feelings about law		
Pleased	48%	19%
Confused	42%	36%
Relieved	39%	17%
Disappointed	35%	69%
Anxious	30%	53%
Angry	26%	60%
Law's effect on you/family		
Better off	36%	17%
No difference	34	20
Worse off	24	59
Don't know/Refused	6	4
Party ID		
Democrat	45%	22%
Independent	34	31
Republican	14	41

NOTE: The sample size for people reporting mainly getting information about the health care reform law from other cable stations is too small to report on.

Methodology

This *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll* was designed and analyzed by public opinion researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation. The survey was conducted May 11 through May 16, 2010, among a nationally representative random sample of 1,210 adults ages 18 and older. Telephone interviews conducted by landline (803) and cell phone (407, including 125 who had no landline telephone) were carried out in English and Spanish. The margin of sampling error for the total sample is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on subgroups, the margin of sampling error may be higher. The full question wording, results, charts and a brief on the poll can be viewed online at <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/trackingpoll.cfm>

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