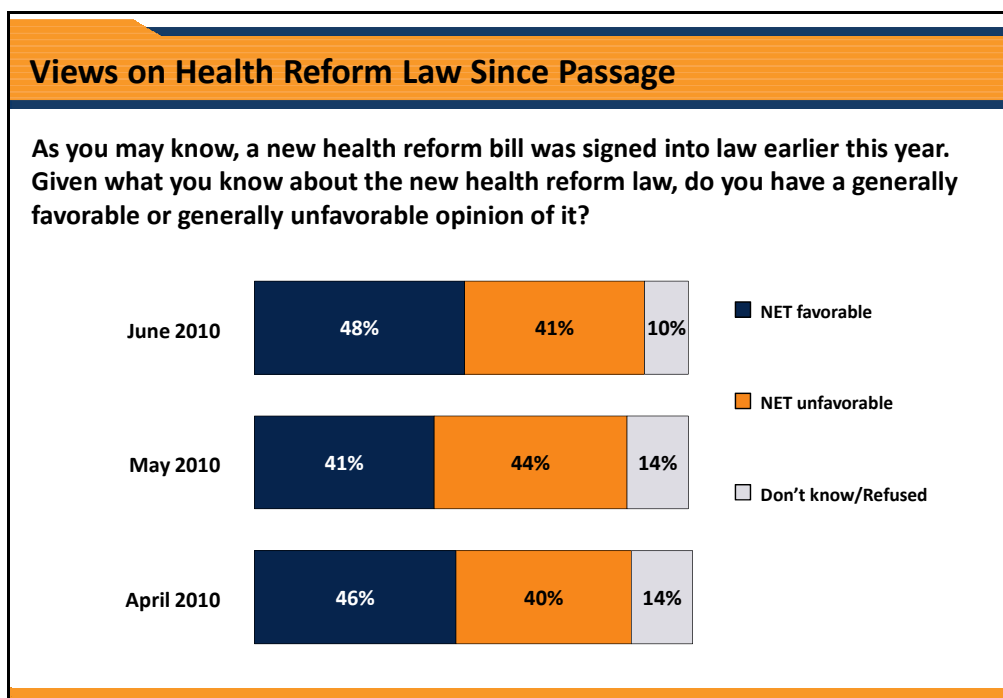


The start of summer finds the new health reform law continuing to divide the American public, although favorable views of the legislation have bumped up seven percentage points since May to settle at 48 percent in June. A very early look at the issue agenda for the November midterm elections suggests that the economy and jobs are continuing to top the issue list, though health care is in the mix for both the law's supporters and its opponents. Overall, roughly a third of voters say that a candidate who voted for the health reform law will be more likely to get their vote, a third say less likely, and a third say it doesn't really matter. One thing that most Americans agree on: they see the differences Republican and Democratic Congressional candidates have over the new law as more likely to be driven by politics than by policy. Meanwhile, support for individual elements of the law reported in earlier tracking polls has not slipped; many remain very popular, including on a bipartisan basis.

Health Reform: The Big Picture

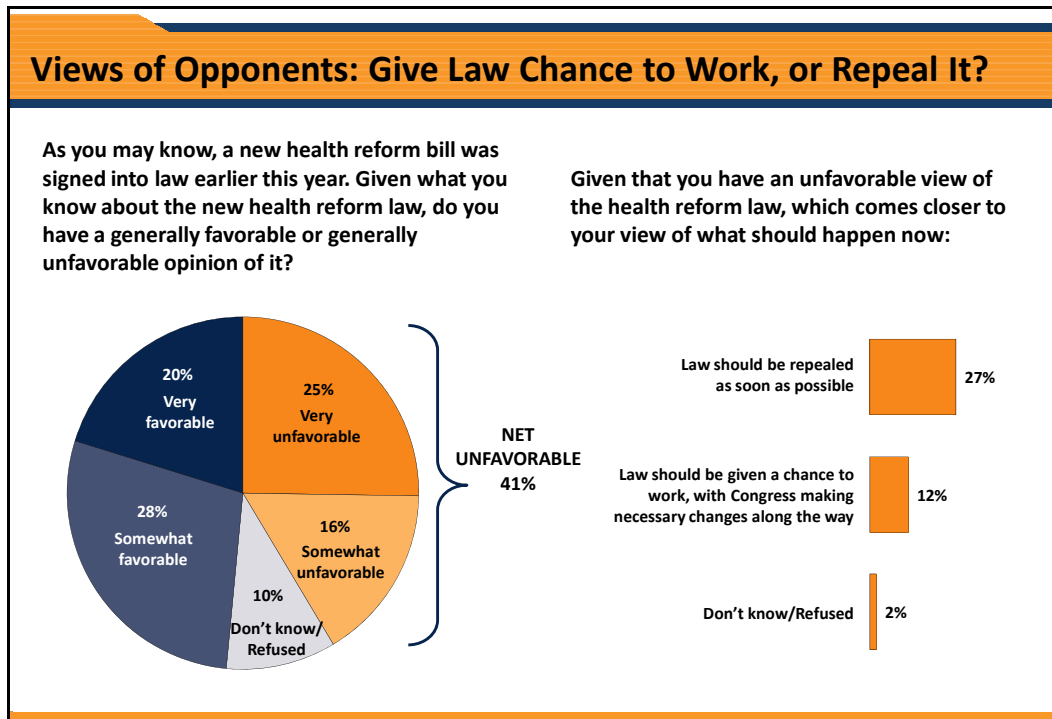
After dipping a bit between April and May, favorable views of health reform ticked up this month to 48 percent, with 41 percent having unfavorable views. This represents a seven percentage point bump up in support over the past month.

While the group who feel "very unfavorably" remains somewhat larger than those who have "very favorable" views (25 percent compared to 20 percent), these groups are much more closely matched in size than in May, when the very unfavorable group was twice as large as those with positive feelings (32 percent "very unfavorable" compared to 14 percent "very favorable").



When those with unfavorable views of the new health reform law were asked whether it should be given a chance to work and amended by Congress as needed, or whether it should be repealed as soon as possible, by two to one they chose

repeal. Overall, then, 27 percent of Americans currently support repeal efforts, 12 percent say the law should be given a chance to work, and 48 percent have a favorable view of the new law.



Interestingly, unlike last month, tightening the screen to look at views only among the group who report being most likely to vote in the midterm elections does not significantly shift the balance of opinion on the new law.¹

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?

	All	RV ¹	LV ¹	Dem.	Ind.	Rep.
NET Favorable	48%	48%	49%	69%	49%	23%
Very favorable	20	19	20	31	18	10
Somewhat favorable	28	29	29	38	31	13
NET Unfavorable	41%	42%	43%	19%	41%	69%
Somewhat unfavorable	16	16	14	14	15	19
Very unfavorable	25	26	29	5	26	50
Don't know/ Refused	10%	9%	8%	13%	11%	7%

¹ Sample included 1,066 self-identified registered voters and 840 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.

An Early Look at the November Elections: Most Important Issue

The midterm elections may seem to be zooming toward candidates and campaign staffers at lightning speed, but for a public just starting summer vacation season they are likely to seem fairly remote. An early look suggests that at this point, the November midterm elections are shaping up to be impacted by a number of different issues, with the economy in the lead but health care also in the mix. When voters were pressed to choose just one top issue economic concerns came out on top, with 29 percent naming either the economy or unemployment. In the next tier, 13 percent mentioned dissatisfaction with government, 12 percent mentioned health care and 9 percent each mentioned the Gulf Coast oil spill and the budget deficit. This sort of division across issues occurs among Republicans, Democrats and independents, though Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say they are most motivated by unhappiness with government and by the budget deficit.

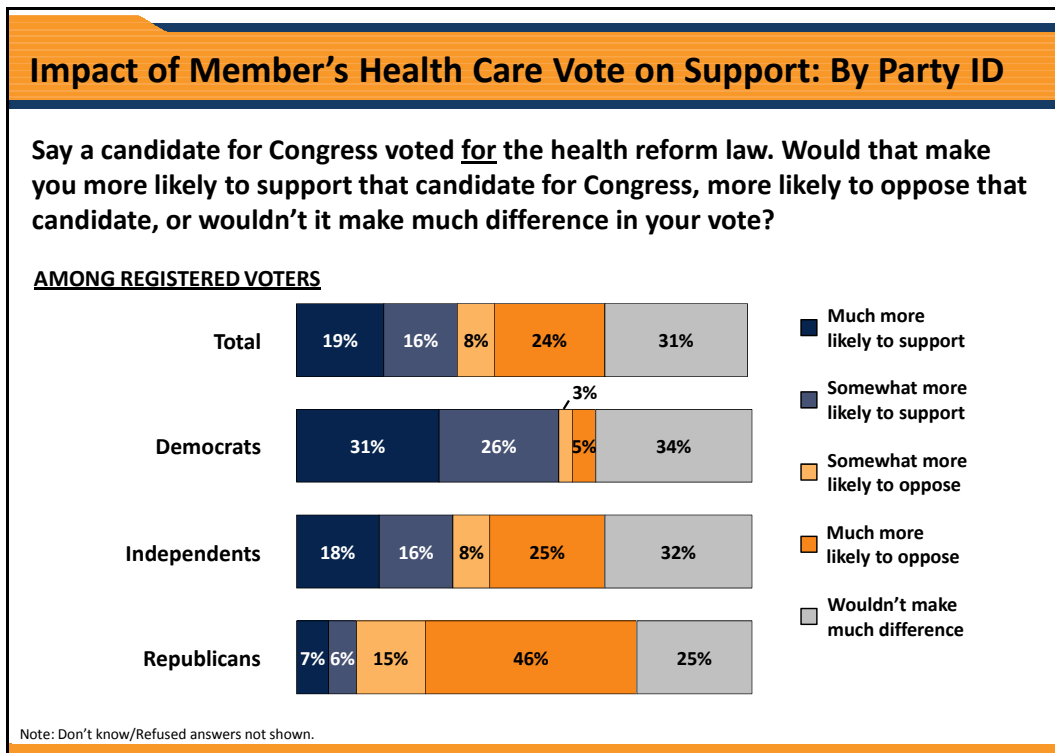
Health care, at least at this point, seems to be roughly equivalent in importance across these different groups: Overall, 10 percent of Republicans, 14 percent of Democrats and 12 percent of political independents say that health care will be their top issue in the fall.

Most Important Issue {among registered voters}	All RV	Dem.	Ind.	Rep.	Favorable view of HCR	Unfav/Give chance to work	Unfav/Repeal
NET Economy and Unemployment	29%	33%	26%	25%	38%	53%	26%
Economy	17	19	16	14	22	31	15
Unemployment	12	14	10	11	16	22	11
Dissatisfaction with government	13	5	13	19	8	7	34
Health care	12	14	12	10	19	9	15
Gulf coast oil spill	9	9	10	8	11	12	7
Budget deficit	9	7	8	13	8	10	14
Wars in Iraq/Afghanistan	7	8	6	7	13	8	3
Energy policy	2	2	1	1	3	0	0

At this relatively early point in terms of public attention, health care also ranks roughly the same in importance for supporters of the law as for its opponents. Overall, roughly 19 percent of those voters with favorable views of the law say that health care is their top voting issue, compared to 15 percent of those who want repeal, and 9 percent of those opponents who are willing to give the law a chance. The survey also suggests that the health care law is intertwined with a more widespread frustration with government: The top voting issue among the group that wants to repeal the new law is *dissatisfaction with government* (34 percent, compared to 15 percent in this group who name health care itself).

An Early Look at the November Elections: Health Care Reform and the Vote

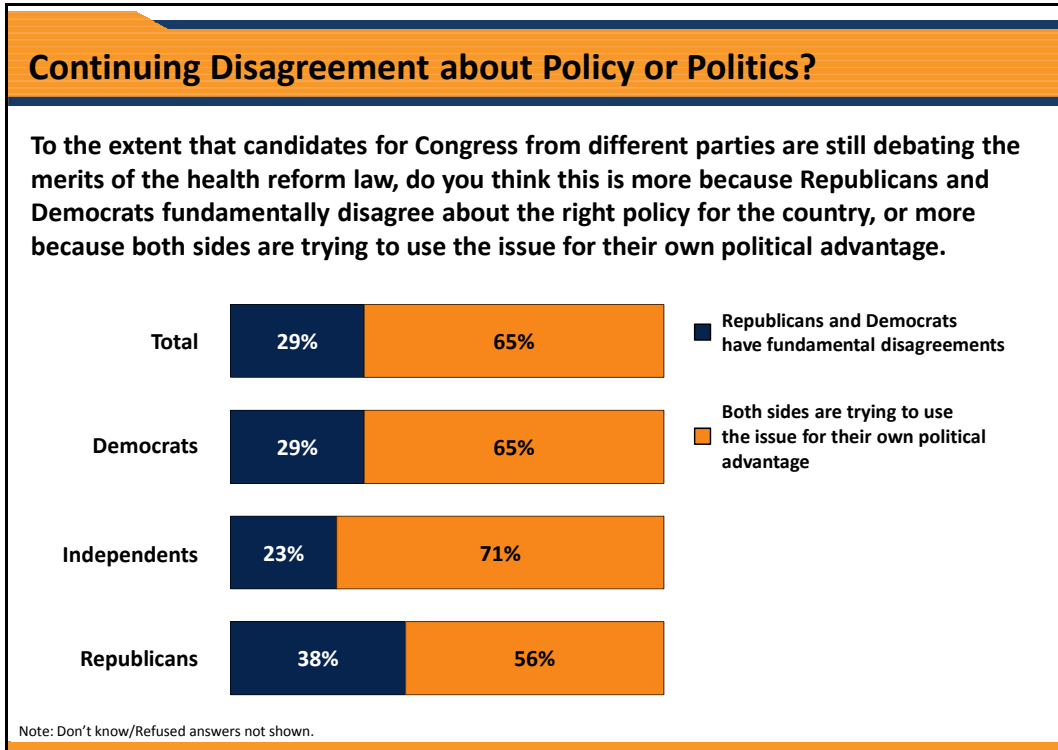
Not surprisingly for a law whose merits have divided the public over the course of the past year, health care reform seems to be cutting both ways in the upcoming election. Overall, roughly a third of registered voters say that a candidate who supported health reform is more likely to get their vote, a third say less likely and a third say it doesn't make much difference to them. These figures obviously vary greatly by party identification, with 57 percent of Democrats registered to vote saying a vote for health reform will increase their support for a candidate, and 61 percent of Republicans registered to vote saying the opposite. As has been true for most of the recent debate, however, intensity is on the side of those opposed to the law: fully 46 percent of Republicans say a pro-health reform vote makes them "much more likely to oppose" the candidate, compared to 31 percent of Democrats moved to be "much more likely to support". Independents, meanwhile, take the middle path, dividing a third- a third- and a third when it comes to whether a pro-reform vote pushes them toward a candidate, against a candidate, or neither way.



The survey also included an open-ended question asked of those who said health care was one of the issues that would be "extremely important" to their vote (a group representing 42 percent of registered voters) to find out what specifically about the issue was on their minds. Not surprisingly, most of this group mentioned something about the health reform law, generally dividing between positive and negative references. But about a third of the group mentioned health care issues more generally, without references to reform, ranging from the pressures of health care costs to seniors' issues to the health care needs of their own family.

Public Views Continuing Disagreements as More Politics Than Policy

In another continuing hallmark of public opinion on health reform, a rare area of bipartisan agreement comes in public views of the ongoing disagreements between members of Congress from differing parties over the merits of the new reform law. Majorities of Americans in each political party say these disagreements stem more from an interest in scoring political points than from genuine policy disagreements over what is good for the country.



Familiarity with Provisions of New Law

A majority of Americans express familiarity with a wide range of provisions of the new health reform law. Among the most widely recognized benefits are the subsidies (72 percent recognize these are included in the law), the provisions requiring guaranteed issue (70 percent), and the ability to keep adult children on their parents' insurance policy until their mid-twenties (69 percent). Also widely acknowledged are the major new mandates and penalties for individuals (67 percent) and employers (70 percent). The only listed item that fewer than half the public recognizes as being in the law is the gender parity provision, which prohibits insurance companies from charging women higher premiums than men (48 percent).

Percent Who Recognize Element is Included in Health Reform Law ²		
	June	April
Subsidy assistance to individuals	72%	75%
Guaranteed issue	70	64
Employer penalties	70	61
Extend dependent coverage until age 26	69	70
Individual mandate	67	71
Tax credits to small business	67	66
Medicaid expansion	66	64
High risk pool for individuals with pre-existing conditions	65	64
Basic benefits package, defined by government	64	n/a
Health insurance exchanges	62	62
Increase Medicare payroll tax on wealthy	62	66
Limit increases in Medicare provider payments	59	59
Eliminating caps on lifetime benefits	59	56
Gradually close the Medicare "doughnut hole"	59	56
Cadillac-plan tax on insurers	58	58
Federal review of health plan premium increases	58	n/a
Prohibit gender rating	48	43

² Note that these descriptions are abbreviated for ease of presentation here. For example, rather than "guaranteed issue," the questionnaire item read "Prohibit insurance companies from denying coverage because of a person's medical history or health condition." See the topline (<http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8082.cfm>) for full question wording.

Views of Individual Provisions

As was true during debate over the reform law, many of the individual provisions of the package are quite popular. The concept of the health insurance exchanges, tax credits for small business and the gradual closing of the Medicare doughnut hole are all viewed favorably by at least eight in ten Americans. Another group of elements are each viewed favorably by seven in ten, including: the creation of short-term high risk pools, subsidy assistance for individuals to purchase health insurance and allowing children to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26.

By far the least popular element on the list below was the individual mandate, which is viewed favorably by about a third of Americans.

For each element of the health reform law I name, please tell me if your opinion of it is very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable? ³	Net Favorable	"Very" Favorable
Health insurance exchanges	87%	54%
Tax credits to small business	82	49
Gradually closing the Medicare "doughnut hole"	81	51
High risk pool for individuals with pre-existing conditions	78	44
Subsidy assistance to individuals	76	42
Extend dependent coverage until age 26	71	47
Medicaid expansion	69	37
Federal reviews of health plan premium increases	69	34
Guaranteed issue	69	45
Prohibit gender rating	65	42
Eliminating caps on lifetime benefits	64	35
Increase Medicare payroll tax on wealthy	61	36
Basic benefits package, defined by government	59	27
Limit increases in Medicare provider payments	58	19
Cadillac-plan tax on insurers	58	28
Employer penalties	51	27
Individual mandate	34	14

³ Note that these descriptions are abbreviated for ease of presentation here. For example, rather than "guaranteed issue," the questionnaire item read "Prohibit insurance companies from denying coverage because of a person's medical history or health condition." See the topline (<http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8082.cfm>) for full question wording.

As the following table shows, although all the provisions are more widely popular among Democrats than among Republicans, a number of elements receive majority support from all three groups, including political independents.

Favorability of Elements by Party ID	All	Dem.	Ind.	Rep.
Health insurance exchange	87%	94%	88%	77%
Tax credits to small business	82	89	79	79
Help close the Medicare doughnut hole	81	96	77	71
High-risk pool for individuals with pre-existing conditions	78	85	78	67
Subsidy assistance to individuals	76	90	73	63
Extending dependent coverage until age 26	71	84	72	54
Medicaid expansion	69	80	71	54
Federal reviews of health plan premium increases	69	83	69	53
Guaranteed issue	69	75	76	58
Prohibit gender rating	65	75	69	60
Eliminating caps on lifetime benefits	64	67	70	57

Increased Familiarity and the Possibility of Opinion Shift. Overall views of the health reform law have been relatively stable for some time, but looking at the disjuncture between what people know about the law and what they like about it is one way to identify areas where opinion could shift as familiarity increases. Some of the biggest differences between favorable views and familiarity occur in relation to the health insurance exchanges and the gradual closing of the Medicare doughnut hole. In both cases, more than eight in ten favor the provisions, but closer to six in ten are aware the law includes each. In four other instances there are double digit gaps between the proportion who favor a provision and the proportion who are aware it is included in the new law, including the elimination of gender ratings, tax credits for small business, temporary high-risk pools and federal reviews of health plan premium increases. There are also areas where increased familiarity with the law’s provisions could boost opposition, particularly in the case of the individual mandate and employer penalties.

Awareness and Views of Elements	Yes, Law will do this	Favorable
Health insurance exchange	62%	87%
Help close the Medicare doughnut hole	59	81
Prohibit gender rating	48	65
Tax credits for small business	67	82
High-risk pool for individuals with pre-existing conditions	65	78
Federal reviews of health plan premium increases	58	69
Employer penalties	70	51
Individual mandate	67	34

Reported Understanding, and Emotional Reaction

The proportion who say they understand how the law will impact their own family also increased this month, from 61 percent in May to 70 percent now.

And Americans continue to express a range of emotions in reaction to passage of the new law. Confusion has now been replaced as the most predominant emotion by disappointment, expressed by 48 percent of Americans. Roughly four in ten still say they are at least somewhat confused by aspects of the law, and a similar proportion report feeling anxious and pleased. As has been true since passage, anger is the least frequently expressed emotion, hovering at roughly 30 percent over the past three months.

Please tell me if each of the following does or does not describe your own feelings about the health reform law	Yes, Describes
Disappointed	48%
Confused	42
Anxious	42
Pleased	41
Relieved	36
Angry	31

Methodology

This *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, Carolina Gutiérrez, Sarah Cho, and Theresa Boston. The survey was conducted June 17 through June 22, 2010, among a nationally representative random sample of 1,207 adults ages 18 and older, including 1,066 who say they are registered to vote. Telephone interviews conducted by landline (806) and cell phone (401, including 105 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 4 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/8082.cfm>

Additional copies of this publication (#8082-F) are available on the Kaiser Family Foundation's website at www.kff.org.