

Public Opinion on Health Care Issues

EARLY REACTION TO SUPREME COURT DECISION ON THE ACA

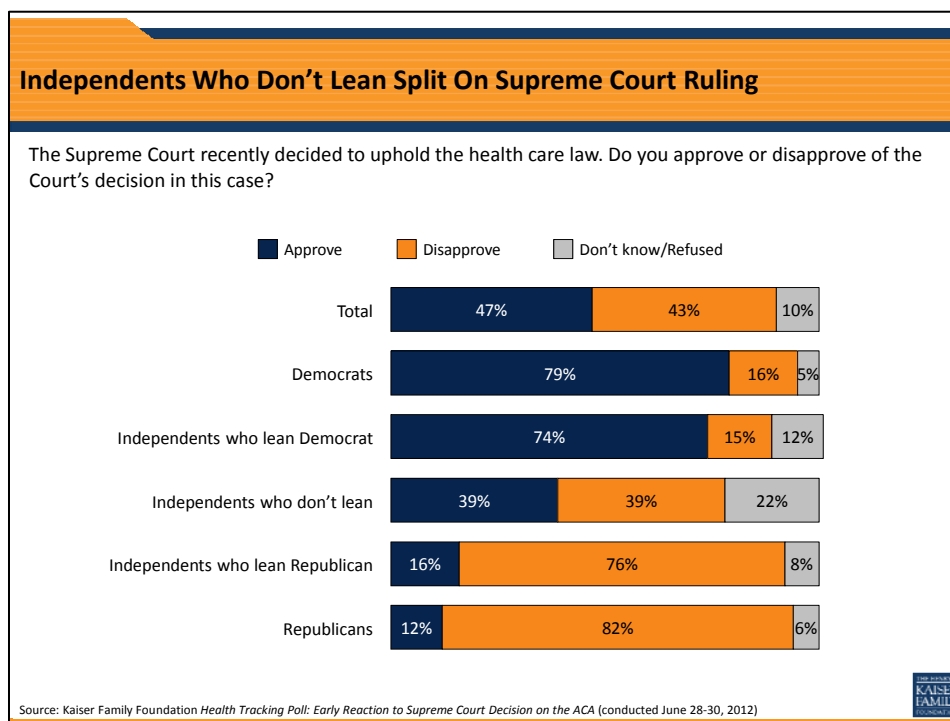
MAJORITY OF AMERICANS REPORT BEING AWARE OF SUPREME COURT DECISION; THEIR REACTION? DIVIDED

It can take a lot to get the public's attention in the heat of summer, but turns out a Supreme Court ruling on a major domestic issue in the midst of a presidential campaign can do the trick. A new Kaiser Family Foundation survey, conducted in the days following the court's ruling on the Affordable Care Act (ACA), suggests that six in ten Americans (59 percent) are aware that the Supreme Court upheld the health care law last Thursday.

And how does the public feel about the court's decision? Those who have noted the public's consistent division in their views of the ACA will not be surprised to hear that Americans' views on the court's opinion are again divided, with 47 percent in favor of the resolution, 43 percent against, and 10 percent unsure.

These findings are from the first of a series of two polls to be released this month looking at public opinion on the Affordable Care Act in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in the case challenging the law. A second poll to be released later this month will measure possible changes in opinion as news of the decision, and policymakers' reaction to it, sinks in. The next survey will also examine public views of some of the nuances of the Court's decision, such as the use of the government's taxing power as the basis for ruling that the individual mandate is constitutional, a change in federal enforcement of the law's Medicaid expansion, and the ways that states may respond to that change.

As has been true since the law's infancy, Americans views toward all things ACA are heavily influenced by party identification, and the court's ruling is no exception. Overall, eight in ten Democrats approve of the court's decision to uphold the primary provisions of the health care law, while eight in ten Republicans disapprove. Independents overall are evenly divided on the decision, 44 percent in favor, 43 percent opposed, masking the usual pattern of a Republican-leaning group of independents disapproving and a Democratic-leaning group of independents approving.



ANGER AND ENTHUSIASM IN EQUAL MEASURE IN REACTION TO COURT OPINION

Americans are also divided in their emotional reaction to the decision, and again along partisan lines. Overall, 17 percent report being angry, and on the opposite side of the spectrum, a similar proportion (18 percent) say they are enthusiastic. Looking at the emotional reaction by party identification yields the familiar, expected divide: overall about eight in ten Democrats are enthusiastic or at least satisfied; just over eight in ten Republicans are either angry or disappointed.

One nuance worth noting: in the case of reaction to the court decision, the proportion of Democrats with stronger views was closer than usual to the proportion of Republicans with stronger views. Overall, 37 percent of Republicans say they are “angry” about the decision, comparable to the 36 percent of Democrats that are “enthusiastic”. Anger does rise higher among some groups of Republicans, however. Among those in the GOP that report being supporters of the Tea Party, 49 percent say they are angry about the decision.

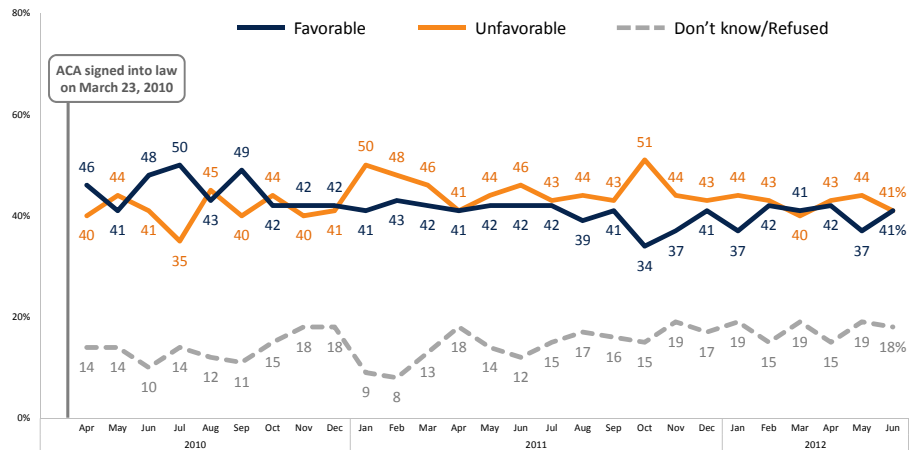
DEMOCRATIC ENTHUSIASM FOR ACA SURGES IN WAKE OF DECISION, REPUBLICANS’ INTENSE OPPOSITION SOLID, EVEN AS OVERALL SPLIT ON LAW PERSISTS

Many observers have wondered in recent days whether the Supreme Court’s ruling would change overall views on the long-contested law itself, or alternately if the decision would galvanize the intensity of one political party more than the other. This early snapshot of opinion suggests that, at least in the first days after the court ruling, the overall shape of public opinion on the ACA hasn’t changed, with the public still split at 41 percent favorable, 41 percent unfavorable, and 18 percent undecided. The partisan divide that lies beneath is also unchanged.

What did change, however, is the intensity of Democratic support for the measure. While still outstripped by Republicans’ overwhelmingly strong opposition to the law, the proportion of Democrats that say they have “very favorable” views of the law jumped from 31 percent in May to 47 percent this month, an all-time high in Kaiser polling stretching back two years. One would have to go back to the month after the law’s passage in March 2010 to get near this level of Democratic enthusiasm (in April 2010, 43 percent of Democrats were “very favorable” on the law). This striking jump was driven largely by liberal Democrats, whose “very favorable” views of the law surged 19 percentage points, from 38 percent in May to 57 percent right after the announcement. Even with this boost in intensity, however, a consistently higher share of Republicans have “very unfavorable” views of the law (64 percent in June, similar to the past two months).

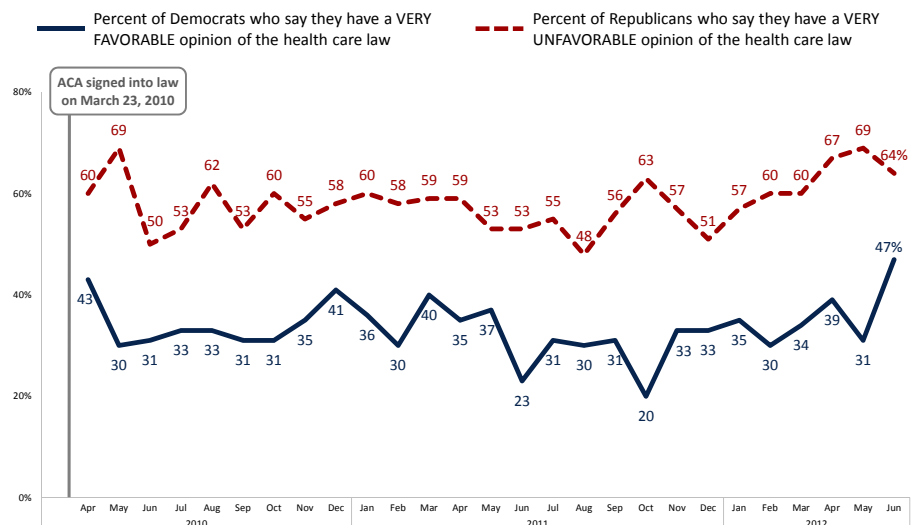
Views On ACA Remain Evenly Split After Supreme Court Decision

As you may know, a health reform bill was signed into law in 2010. Given what you know about the health reform law, do you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable opinion of it?



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Polls

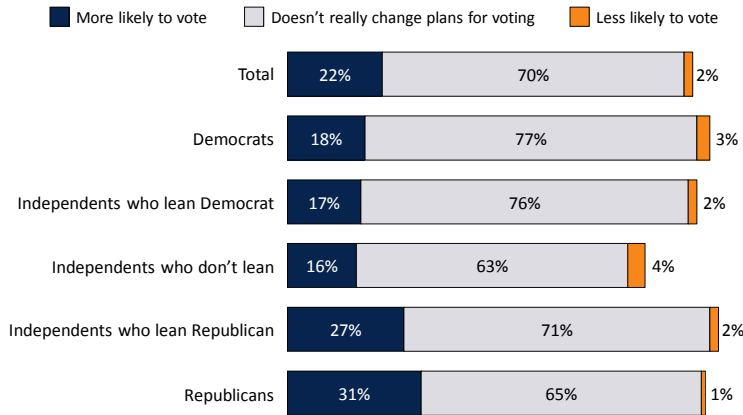
Intense Republican Opposition To ACA Continues, But Surge In Democratic Enthusiasm For Law



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Polls

Republicans More Likely Than Democrats to Say Court Decision Will Motivate Them to Vote

Does this decision by the Supreme Court make you more likely to vote this November than you otherwise would have been, less likely to vote than you otherwise would have been, or does it not really change your plans for voting?



Note: Don't vote, not registered to vote, don't plan to vote (vol.) and Don't know/Refused answers not shown.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll: Early Reaction to Supreme Court Decision on the ACA (conducted June 28-30, 2012)



REPUBLICANS MORE LIKELY THAN DEMOCRATS TO SAY DECISION WILL BRING THEM TO THE POLLS

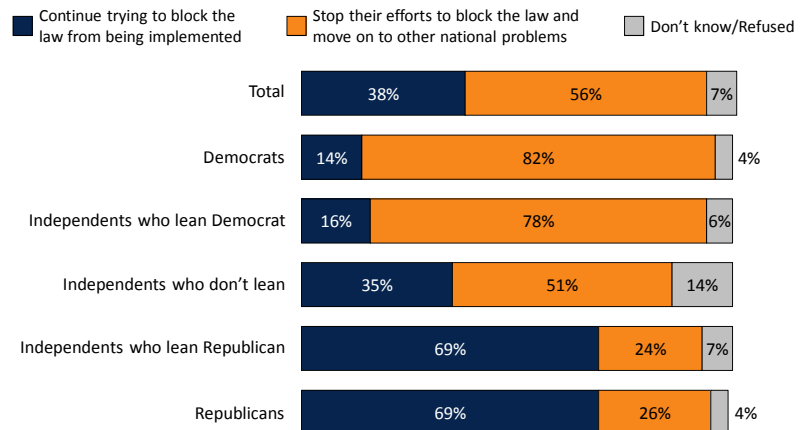
Solid majorities of voters of every political stripe say the Supreme Court's recent decision on the Affordable Care Act won't impact their decision whether or not to vote this November. But to the extent that the court's decision to uphold the law does motivate people to vote, higher shares of Republicans say the result makes them more likely to turn out on election day than Democrats (31 percent compared to 18 percent).

WITH SUPREME COURT DECISION BEHIND THEM, MOST AMERICANS—INCLUDING HALF OF INDEPENDENTS WHO DON'T LEAN—READY TO MOVE ON

In the wake of the Court ruling, more than half of Americans (56 percent) say they would like to see the law's detractors stop trying to block its implementation and instead move on to other national problems, while 38 percent say opponents should continue trying to halt the ACA. Democrats, not surprisingly, are overwhelmingly likely to support the idea of moving on (82 percent), but they are joined by 51 percent of independents and 26 percent of Republicans. On the flip side, most rank and file Republicans (69 percent) say they want to see efforts to stop the law continue. Among Republicans, intensity of views on 'what next' differ a fair bit between those who back the Tea Party and those who don't. Fully 82 percent of Republican Tea Party supporters want to continue to try to stop the ACA, compared to 53 percent among those Republicans that don't support the Tea Party. Among the 20 percent of Americans who say they are independents who don't lean towards either party, half (51 percent, representing 10 percent of the public overall) would like opponents to move onto other issues, and a little over a third (35 percent, 7 percent of the overall public) say they should continue their efforts to stop the law.

Half Of Independents Who Don't Lean Toward Any Party Say Opponents Should Move On To Other National Problems

Which comes closer to your view? Now that the Supreme Court has ruled to uphold the health care law, opponents of the law should...



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll: Early Reaction to Supreme Court Decision on the ACA (conducted June 28-30, 2012)

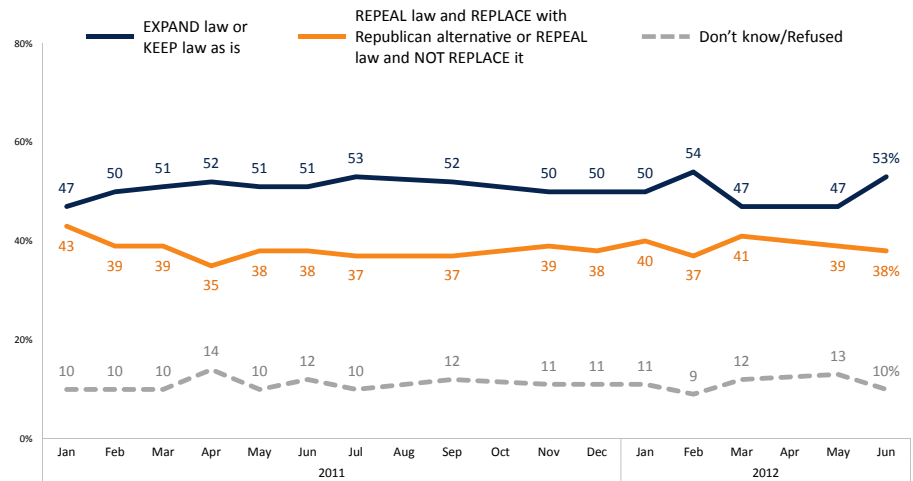


Now that it's clear that the courts will not stop implementation of the ACA this year, those opposed to the law are returning focus to the legislative branch. At least in terms of their immediate reaction, more Americans say they would either like to keep the law as is or expand it (25 percent and 28 percent, respectively) than would like to see the law repealed (38 percent). Among those who do support repeal, roughly half would like to see the law replaced with a Republican alternative, while the other half would like to return to the status quo with no further legislation.

Opinion here is predictably partisan. Among Democrats, 83 percent want to keep the law as is or even expand it, while the large majority of Republicans (79 percent) back repeal. Independents are more closely divided: 49 percent keep or expand, 41 percent repeal.

After Supreme Court Announcement, Views On Future Of ACA Relatively Steady

What would you like to see Congress do when it comes to the health care law?



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Polls

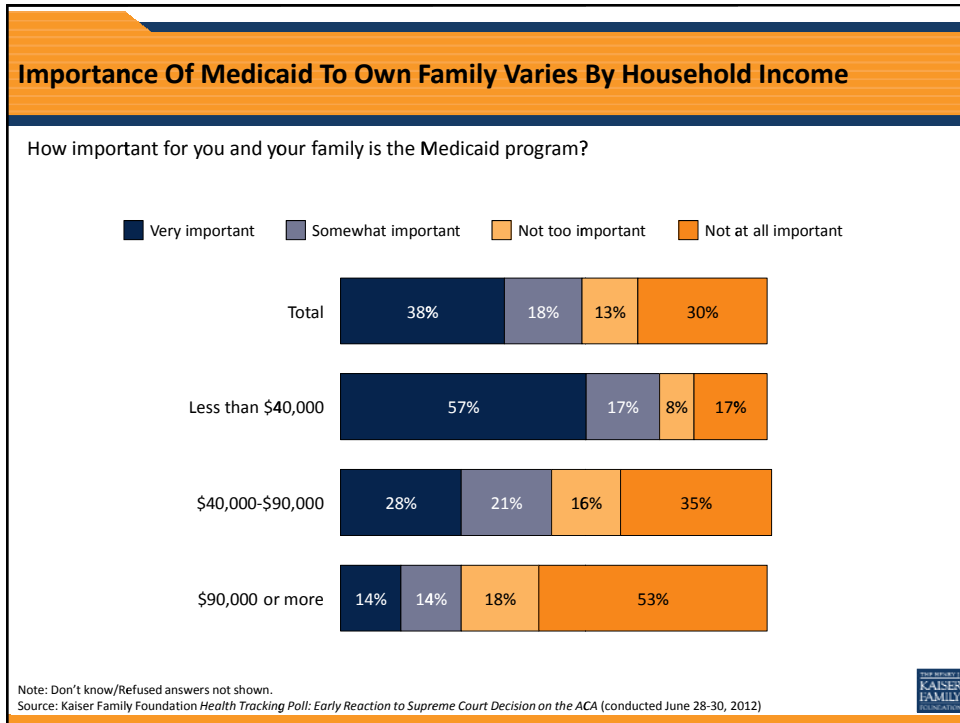
PUBLIC HAS MIXED VIEWS ON BASIS OF JUSTICES' DECISION

Americans continue to have mixed views of what drove the nation's top judges in casting their votes in this particular case. Overall, 27 percent say that the Justices' analysis and interpretation of the law was the most important factor, but the majority of the public names other non-legal factors such as national politics (19 percent), the Justices' own political ideology (15 percent), or whether the Justice had been appointed by a Republican or Democratic president (10 percent).

Cynicism about the role of politics in the court's decision has waxed and waned among partisans depending on how the case seemed to be proceeding. In the wake of oral arguments in the case, Republicans' belief that legal analysis was at the root of the Justices' opinion spiked, but that belief subsided again after the final decision was handed down this week. In the new poll, the share of Republicans naming legal reasoning as the most important factor in the justices votes dropped twenty percentage points (from 39 percent to 19 percent), while the share saying 'national politics' drove the ruling jumped 14 points. For Democrats, the cycle went the other way, with the proportion thinking that justices voted based on which party's president appointed them dropping from 22 percent to 8 percent over the period.

TOO EARLY TO MEASURE PUBLIC OPINION ON CHANGES TO ACA’S MEDICAID EXPANSION PROVISIONS; SURVEY SUGGESTS PROGRAM IMPORTANT TO MANY AMERICANS

Given that policymakers are still struggling to understand how the court’s decision is likely to affect the planned expansion of Medicaid under the ACA, the survey did not attempt to measure Americans’ reaction to the one major change the court’s opinion will make to the law’s implementation. In the short term, the survey confirmed that the large majority of Americans consider Medicaid either a “very important” (69 percent) or “somewhat important” (23 percent) program, putting it close behind Medicare and Social Security. The survey also found that more than half of Americans (56 percent) say the Medicaid program is important to their own family in some way, a share that rises to 74 percent among lower income Americans.



METHODOLOGY

This Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Early Reaction to Supreme Court Decision on the ACA is the first of two polls to be released this month looking at public opinion on the Affordable Care Act in the wake of the Supreme Court’s decision in the case challenging the law. The poll was designed and analyzed by public opinion researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation led by Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., including Claudia Deane, Sarah Cho, and Theresa Boston. The survey was conducted June 28-30, 2012, among a nationally representative random digit dial telephone sample of 1,239 adults ages 18 and older, living in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. Interviews conducted by landline (712) and cell phone (527, including 314 who had no landline telephone) were carried out in English and Spanish by Braun Research, Inc. under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI). The combined landline and cell phone sample was weighted to balance the sample demographics to match Census estimates for the national population on sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, nativity (for Hispanics only), region, and telephone usage.

All statistical tests of significance account for the effect of weighting. The margin of sampling error including the design effect is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on other subgroups, the margin of sampling error may be higher. Note that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

The full question wording and methodology of the polls can be viewed online at: <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8329.cfm>.

This publication (#8329-F) is available on the Kaiser Family Foundation’s website at www.kff.org.