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The Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation
Health Care, Medicare and the Election: A View from
Three Swing States – Virginia, Florida, and Ohio

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Health Care, Medicare and the Election: A View from Three States – Virginia, Ohio, & Florida

Methodology

The Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation Survey Project is a partnership and an experiment in combining survey research and reporting to better inform the public. The *Swing States and Medicare* surveys consisted of three separate surveys conducted among registered voters in Virginia, Florida and Ohio. All three surveys were conducted by telephone in September 2012 (Virginia was conducted from September 12-16 and Florida and Ohio were conducted from September 19-23), among a representative random sample of 1,104 adults in Virginia, 1,107 adults in Florida, and 1,101 adults in Ohio (note: persons without a telephone could not be included in the random selection process). Computer-assisted telephone interviews conducted by landline and cell phone (including those who had no landline telephone) were carried out in English and Spanish by Abt-SRBI of New York.

Representatives of *The Washington Post* and the Kaiser Family Foundation worked together to develop the survey questionnaire and analyze the results. Each organization bears the sole responsibility for the work that appears under its name. The project team from the Kaiser Family Foundation included: Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., Claudia Deane, and Bianca DiJulio. The project team from *The Washington Post* included: Jon Cohen, Peyton Craighill, and Scott Clement.

See below for information on the margin of sampling error including the design effect for registered voters. For results based on subgroups, the margin of sampling error may be higher. Sample sizes and margin of sampling errors for other subgroups are available by request. Note that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

Population (Registered Voters)	Number Interviewed	Margin of sampling error
Virginia	934	±4 percentage points
Ohio	934	±4 percentage points
Florida	925	±4 percentage points
National	1,367	±3 percentage points

More information about the swing states surveys is available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/polling>.

Comparison: National data is from the Kaiser Family Foundation September *Health Tracking Poll*, conducted September 13-19, 2012. Full information about the national survey is available at <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8361.cfm>.¹

Please note: (1) Table percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. (2) Values less than 0.5% are indicated by an asterisk (*). (3) "vol." indicates that a response was volunteered by respondent and not an explicitly offered choice. (4) For the state polls, those who refused to answer any individual item are not included in the base results of that item resulting in small differences in the number of valid responses for each question. The national data includes refusals in the base results.

¹ All national comparison data presented here is among registered voters.

6. For each item I name, please tell me how important it will be in your vote for President. The first is (ITEM). Will that be extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or less important than that? ²

Based on registered voters

	Nation ³	Virginia ⁴	Ohio ⁵	Florida ⁵
a. The economy				
Extremely	50	54	54	55
Very	42	39	37	36
Somewhat	5	6	8	6
Less	2	1	*	2
No opinion	1	*	*	*
	<i>N=</i> 1,367	934	933	925
b. Spending on the military				
Extremely	31	32	30	30
Very	36	38	37	40
Somewhat	21	23	27	23
Less	11	6	5	6
No opinion	1	1	1	*
	<i>N=</i> 688	934	934	925
c. The federal budget deficit				
Extremely	41	43	39	42
Very	37	36	35	38
Somewhat	15	17	20	14
Less	6	3	4	5
No opinion	1	1	1	2
	<i>N=</i> 688	934	933	924
d. Medicare, the government health insurance program for seniors				
Extremely	36	41	40	41
Very	43	36	39	39
Somewhat	16	18	17	16
Less	5	5	3	4
No opinion	1	*	1	*
	<i>N=</i> 1,367	933	934	924
e. Medicaid, the government health insurance and long term care program for certain low-income adults and children				
Extremely	29	34	34	32
Very	44	34	38	38
Somewhat	18	24	21	22
Less	8	7	7	7
No opinion	1	1	*	1
	<i>N=</i> 1,367	934	934	924

Q6 continued on next page

² The September *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll* stem read, "Thinking ahead to the November election, please tell me how important each of the following will be in your vote for President."

³ Items b,c,f, and g based on half sample A. Items h-k based on half sample B.

⁴ Items f and h based on half sample A. Items i and j based on half sample B. The "2010 health care law" items were not asked in Virginia.

⁵ Items f, g and h based on half sample A. Items i, j, and k based on half sample B.

Q6 continued

	Nation	Virginia	Ohio	Florida
f. Immigration issues				
Extremely	23	19	20	24
Very	32	33	31	34
Somewhat	30	36	36	29
Less	14	12	12	11
No opinion	1	1	*	2
	<i>N=</i> 688	471	495	449
g. The 2010 health care law				
Extremely	32	NA	38	41
Very	39	NA	32	36
Somewhat	14	NA	16	14
Less	9	NA	7	3
No opinion	6	NA	6	6
	<i>N=</i> 688		495	448
h. Social issues such as abortion and gay marriage				
Extremely	21	28	24	22
Very	24	21	23	20
Somewhat	21	22	28	26
Less	32	28	24	31
No opinion	2	1	1	1
	<i>N=</i> 679	471	494	448
i. International affairs				
Extremely	26	27	35	30
Very	40	44	31	37
Somewhat	24	22	29	25
Less	8	5	4	7
No opinion	2	2	2	1
	<i>N=</i> 679	463	439	476
j. Taxes				
Extremely	29	34	35	36
Very	43	41	35	36
Somewhat	21	20	24	20
Less	6	4	5	7
No opinion	1	*	*	1
	<i>N=</i> 679	462	437	475
k. The 2010 health care law, sometimes called ObamaCare				
Extremely	31	NA	43	39
Very	37	NA	27	30
Somewhat	14	NA	15	14
Less	15	NA	12	13
No opinion	4	NA	2	4
	<i>N=</i> 679		438	476
g/k. The 2010 health care law [sometimes called ObamaCare]				
Extremely	31	NA	41	40
Very	38	NA	30	33
Somewhat	14	NA	16	14
Less	12	NA	9	8
No opinion	5	NA	4	5
	<i>N=</i> 1,367		933	924

7. Regardless of who you support, which candidate do you trust to do a better job [ITEM] – (Obama) or (Romney)?⁶

Based on registered voters

	Nation	Virginia ⁷	Ohio ⁸	Florida ⁸
a. Handling the economy				
Obama	NA	47	50	49
Romney	NA	45	43	45
Both (vol.)	NA	1	*	1
Neither (vol.)	NA	5	4	3
No opinion	NA	2	3	2
	N=	933	932	920
b. Handling military spending				
Obama	NA	50	48	52
Romney	NA	44	41	40
Both (vol.)	NA	1	1	1
Neither (vol.)	NA	2	3	4
No opinion	NA	3	7	4
	N=	933	478	453
c. Determining the future of the Medicare program				
Obama	52	52	56	53
Romney	35	39	37	38
Both (vol.)	1	*	1	*
Neither (vol.)	7	3	3	4
No opinion	6	5	2	4
	N=	1,367	933	921
d. Determining the future of the Medicaid program				
Obama	53	55	56	54
Romney	33	37	37	39
Both (vol.)	1	*	*	*
Neither (vol.)	6	4	4	3
No opinion	7	4	3	3
	N=	1,367	933	919
e. Dealing with the federal budget deficit				
Obama	NA	44	43	49
Romney	NA	48	45	45
Both (vol.)	NA	1	2	*
Neither (vol.)	NA	5	6	3
No opinion	NA	3	4	3
	N=	452	477	453
f. Dealing with social issues such as abortion and gay marriage				
Obama	NA	54	61	53
Romney	NA	34	30	38
Both (vol.)	NA	*	1	2
Neither (vol.)	NA	5	4	3
No opinion	NA	6	4	4
	N=	451	454	463
g. Advancing the interests of the middle class				
Obama	NA	55	54	60
Romney	NA	36	35	35
Both (vol.)	NA	*	0	*
Neither (vol.)	NA	4	4	3
No opinion	NA	4	7	2
	N=	452	478	453

Q7 continued on next page

⁶ The September *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll* stem read, “Which presidential candidate, (Barack Obama) or (Mitt Romney), do you trust to do a better job (INSERT AND RANDOMIZE)? How about (NEXT ITEM)?”

⁷ Items e, f, and g based on half sample A. Items h, i and j based on half sample B.

⁸ Items b, e, and g based on half sample A. Items f, i, and j based on half sample B.

Q7 continued

	Nation	Virginia	Ohio	Florida
h. Addressing women's issues				
Obama	NA	58	NA	NA
Romney	NA	36	NA	NA
Both (vol.)	NA	*	NA	NA
Neither (vol.)	NA	3	NA	NA
No opinion	NA	3	NA	NA
	<i>N=</i>	<i>480</i>		
i. Handling taxes				
Obama	NA	49	56	48
Romney	NA	46	39	47
Both (vol.)	NA	*	1	1
Neither (vol.)	NA	3	2	2
No opinion	NA	2	2	1
	<i>N=</i>	<i>481</i>	<i>454</i>	<i>468</i>
j. Handling international affairs				
Obama	NA	53	58	49
Romney	NA	42	35	44
Both (vol.)	NA	1	2	1
Neither (vol.)	NA	2	1	4
No opinion	NA	3	5	2
	<i>N=</i>	<i>481</i>	<i>454</i>	<i>467</i>
k. Handling immigration				
Obama	NA	NA	48	48
Romney	NA	NA	40	41
Both (vol.)	NA	NA	1	1
Neither (vol.)	NA	NA	5	5
No opinion	NA	NA	6	5
	<i>N=</i>		<i>931</i>	<i>919</i>

8. Regardless of who you may support, who do you think better understands the economic problems people in this country are having – (Obama) or (Romney)?

Based on registered voters

	Nation	Virginia	Ohio	Florida
Obama	NA	54	57	53
Romney	NA	37	34	39
Both (vol.)	NA	2	1	1
Neither (vol.)	NA	7	5	5
No opinion	NA	1	3	2

25. 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? Is that a very [favorable/unfavorable] or somewhat [favorable/unfavorable] opinion?

Based on registered voters

		Nation	Virginia	Ohio	Florida
Favorable – NET		45	46	41	46
	Strongly	26	28	19	27
	Somewhat	19	19	22	18
Unfavorable – NET		42	47	48	44
	Somewhat	12	15	17	10
	Strongly	30	32	31	34
No opinion		13	7	11	10

Next, I have a few questions about the Medicare program, the government health insurance program for seniors.

26. Would you say the current Medicare program is working well for most seniors, or not?

Based on registered voters

	Nation	Virginia	Ohio	Florida
Medicare is working well	64	64	65	70
Medicare is not working well	24	27	28	22
No opinion	12	10	8	8

27. Do you think (changes need to be made to the Medicare program to keep it sustainable for the future), or do you think (the Medicare program will basically be fine if we leave it as is)?

Based on registered voters

	Nation	Virginia	Ohio	Florida
Medicare needs to be changed to keep it sustainable	74	76	76	71
Medicare is fine if we leave it as is	20	18	20	25
No opinion	6	6	4	4

28. Do you think we need to make (major) changes or (minor) changes to Medicare to keep it sustainable for the future?

Based on registered voters who say Medicare needs to be changed to keep it sustainable

	Nation	Virginia	Ohio	Florida
Major changes	49	53	48	48
Minor changes	45	41	47	47
No opinion	6	6	5	4
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,026</i>	<i>717</i>	<i>690</i>	<i>660</i>

29. Which of these two descriptions comes closer to your view of what Medicare should look like in the future? (OPTION A: Medicare should continue as it is today, with the government guaranteeing all seniors the same set of health insurance benefits), or (OPTION B: Medicare should be changed to a system in which the government guarantees each senior a fixed amount of money to help them purchase coverage either from traditional Medicare or from a list of private health plans)?

Based on registered voters

	Nation	Virginia	Ohio	Florida
Option A – Medicare continues as it is today	57	56	59	65
Option B – Medicare should be changed	36	35	33	29
Other (vol.)	2	2	2	2
No opinion	5	6	6	4

30. Which comes closer to your opinion – (if policymakers made the right changes, they could reduce the federal budget deficit without reducing Medicare spending) or (in order to significantly reduce the federal budget deficit policymakers will need to reduce Medicare spending)?

Based on registered voters

	Nation	Virginia	Ohio	Florida
Policy makers can reduce the deficit without reducing Medicare spending	60	73	78	74
Medicare spending needs to be reduced in order to reduce the deficit	31	21	17	18
No opinion	9	7	6	8

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