

ATTITUDES TOWARD HEALTH INSURANCE IN MASSACHUSETTS  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The questions making up this proprietary poll were asked as part of The State House News Poll, a telephone poll conducted by KRC/Communications Research for The State House News Service from June 26-28, 2006, using standard random-digit-dialing techniques. The poll of 410 Massachusetts adults carries an overall margin of error of +/-4.7%.

The results of this poll present clear signs that Massachusetts adults continue to maintain their solid support for a state constitutional amendment mandating health insurance coverage and strongly favor placing that amendment on the ballot this November.

The lead findings:

By an almost 4-1 margin, 76.2%-20.2%, over three-quarters of Massachusetts residents favor "an amendment to the state constitution that would require the state to make sure that every Massachusetts resident can get affordable, comprehensive, and equitably-financed health insurance coverage for all medically-necessary preventive, acute, and chronic health care and mental health care services, prescription drugs, and devices." As when this question was first asked in May, 2005, and favored by a margin of 75.5%-20.7%, women favor the amendment more strongly than do men; younger respondents favor the amendment more strongly than do older respondents; lesser-educated respondents favor the amendment more strongly than do better-educated respondents, and Democrats and Independents favor the amendment more strongly than do Republicans, although in all cases there is majority support for the amendment.

|         | Total | Men   | Women | 18-39 | 40-64 | 65+   | <Coll | Coll  | Coll+ | Dem   | Ind   | GOP   |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Support | 76.2% | 68.7% | 83.1% | 82.7% | 74.3% | 72.1% | 87.6% | 74.8% | 65.8% | 85.9% | 77.4% | 64.8% |
| Oppose  | 20.2% | 27.7% | 13.4% | 13.0% | 21.7% | 26.6% | 10.4% | 20.0% | 33.0% | 10.8% | 19.7% | 35.2% |

As in May, 2005, these high support levels for the constitutional amendment are no doubt fueled by the overall sentiment among respondents "that all residents of Massachusetts should be able to get the same high quality coverage for medically necessary health and mental health care regardless of their ability to pay." Fully 81.7% of respondents agree with that premise, as opposed to only 15.7% who disagree, while in May, 2005 the agree/disagree ratio was 82.6%/13.9%.

In fact, when respondents were presented with a list of potential financial concerns and asked to pick the one that concerns them most, the cost of health insurance ranked first, a result that held across every demographic subgroup except among lesser-educated respondents, who were more concerned about the cost of gasoline:

|                             | Total | <Coll | Coll  | Coll+ |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Cost of health insurance    | 38.1% | 32.5% | 39.0% | 42.9% |
| Cost of gasoline            | 22.5% | 37.6% | 18.9% | 12.6% |
| Cost of a college education | 19.5% | 12.4% | 20.5% | 25.6% |
| Job security                | 11.7% | 9.6%  | 12.7% | 11.8% |

When respondents were then asked whether having a constitutional right to affordable health care coverage would make them less concerned about whether they could afford needed health care for themselves and their families, a majority of 56.1% said they would be less concerned while 41.0% said they would not be less concerned.

The plurality, 46.0%, said that they were not very confident that the sweeping reforms just enacted by the legislature to expand access to health coverage will ensure that they will be able to afford the health coverage that they need, while 44.1% expressed some confidence in the new reforms and only 5.8% were very confident.

Thus it is no surprise that when asked whether there should "be a question on the ballot in the November election seeking to amend the state constitution to ensure that every resident has access to affordable health coverage" there is strong support in favor of putting that question on the ballot, by a margin of 71.5%-26.7%. Again, women are more supportive than men; younger respondents are more supportive than older respondents; lesser-educated respondents are more supportive than better-educated respondents, and Democrats and Independents are more supportive than Republicans, although in all cases there is majority support for the amendment.

|         | Total | Men   | Women | <Coll | Coll  | Coll+ | Dem   | Ind   | GOP   |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Support | 71.5% | 62.8% | 79.4% | 79.4% | 71.3% | 62.1% | 82.6% | 70.4% | 57.3% |
| Oppose  | 26.7% | 35.7% | 18.5% | 20.6% | 25.8% | 36.7% | 15.8% | 27.3% | 42.7% |