

Economy continues to dominate issue list, while gas prices jump in importance; Iraq and health care round out top issues

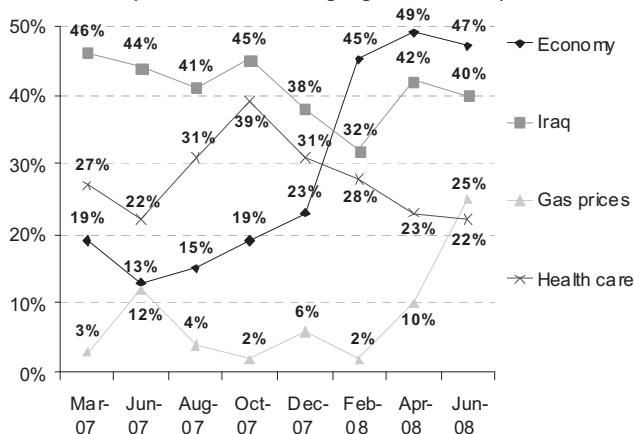
Since the start of the year, the economy has dominated the list of issues that voters say they want the presidential candidates to discuss, with Iraq and health care consistently rounding out the top three. The past two months, however, have seen another issue crack the top three list: gas prices. As the average price of gas tops \$4.00 a gallon and the media focuses more intensely on energy issues, one in four voters now want to hear the candidates talk about this pressing pocketbook issue. And overall, problems paying for gas continue to top the list of financial challenges caused by the current economy, with four in ten saying they are having a “serious problem” paying for gas.

Thinking about the campaign for the presidential election in 2008, what two issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (open-ended, among registered voters)

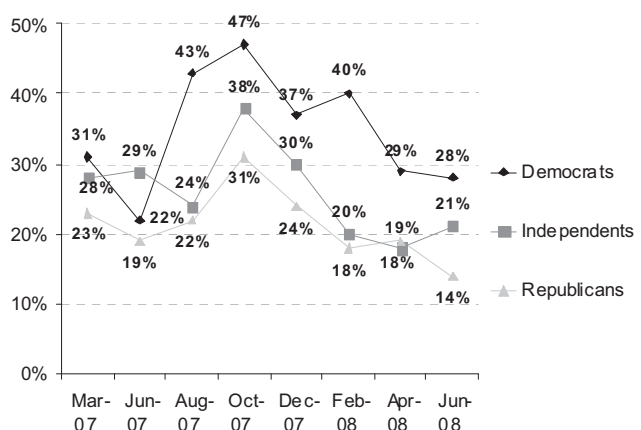
Issue Rank	Total registered voters	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
1	Economy (47%)	Economy (42%)	Economy (50%)	Economy (49%)
2	Iraq (40)	Iraq (35)	Iraq (46)	Iraq (40)
3	Gas prices (25)	Gas prices (30)	Health care (28)	Gas prices (22)
4	Health care (22)	Health care (14)	Gas prices (22)	Health care (21)

Currently, nearly half of voters (47 percent) say the economy is the top issue they want to hear discussed on the campaign trail, followed by the war in Iraq at 40 percent. The proportion who want to hear about gas prices – 25 percent – more than doubled since April, narrowly bumping health care to the number four issue for the first time since we began tracking. It’s worth noting, however, that health care remains the third most mentioned issue among Democratic voters, with 28 percent saying they want to hear the candidates talk about this, compared to 14 percent of Republicans and 21 percent of political independents.

Thinking about the campaign for the presidential election in 2008, what two issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (open-ended, top 4 responses shown among registered voters)



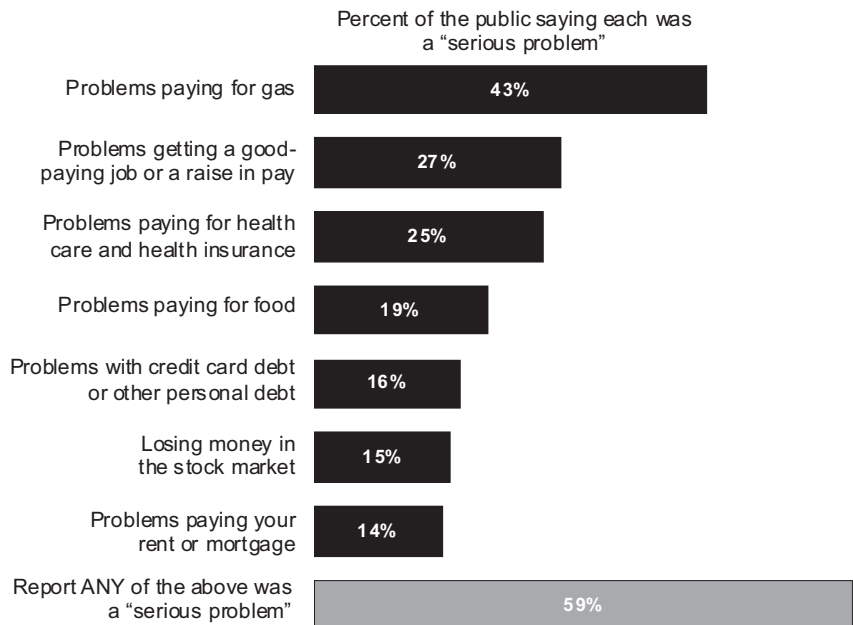
Percent naming HEALTH CARE as one of the top two issues they'd most like to hear presidential candidates talk about, by political party self-identification (among registered voters)



Health care costs an important facet of pocketbook problems

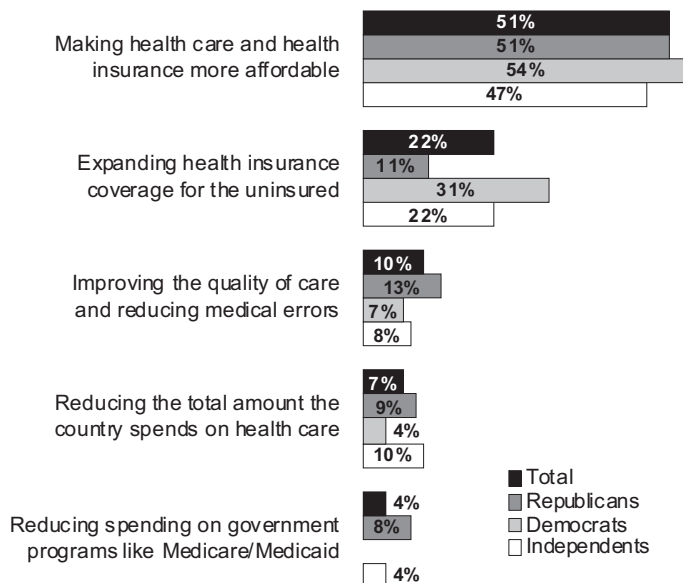
While the rise of the economy as a campaign issue may appear to have diluted the salience of health care this election season, the survey suggests that health care issues are actually an important aspect of Americans' pocketbook concerns. Asked whether they or their families had experienced a "serious problem" with any of a list of seven financial challenges, "problems paying for health care and health insurance" rank a close third behind problems getting a good job or a raise, and "problems paying for gas." Overall, 43 percent report having a serious problem paying for gas, compared to 27 percent who are having a serious problem getting or keeping a good-paying job and 25 percent who are having a serious problem paying for health care. Problems paying for health care are more widespread than other widely discussed financial challenges, including the proportion who report having a serious problem paying for food, facing credit and debt challenges, or losing money in the stock market.

As a result of recent changes in the economy, have you and your family experienced any of the following problems, or not? Was this a serious problem, or not?



Voters most interested in affordability and coverage

Which ONE of the following health care issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (among registered voters in June 2008)

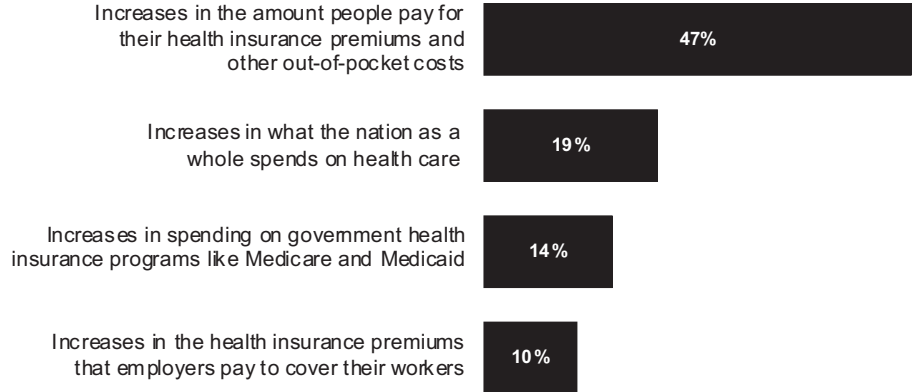


When it comes to the specifics of which health care issues are capturing the public's attention, affordability of health care and insurance is the issue chosen by the largest share of voters across party lines. When asked to select one health care issue from a list of five, about half of voters (51 percent) say they want to hear presidential candidates talk about making health care and health insurance more affordable, and two in ten (22 percent) say they most want to hear about expanding health coverage for the uninsured. The remaining voters are split between the remaining three options – with 10 percent saying they most want to hear about improving quality of care and reducing medical errors, 7 percent saying they want to hear about reducing total national health expenditures, and four percent saying they want to hear about reducing spending on government health programs like Medicare and Medicaid.

When it comes to health care costs, voters' concern is personal

When it comes to costs, voters' concerns are more close to home than national: nearly half (47 percent) say they are most worried about increases in the amount the average American pays for health insurance premiums and out-of-pocket health care costs. The next largest share of voters, about two in ten (19 percent), say they are most concerned about increases in how much the U.S. as a whole spends on health care. About one in seven (14 percent) voters say they are most concerned about increases in spending on government-run health insurance programs, and one in ten express the most concern about increases in the health insurance premiums employers pay to cover their workers.

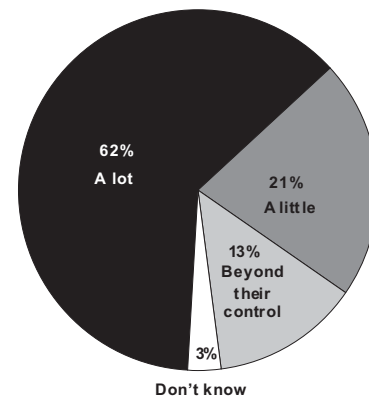
When thinking about rising health care costs, which ONE of the following concerns you most? (among registered voters in June 2008)



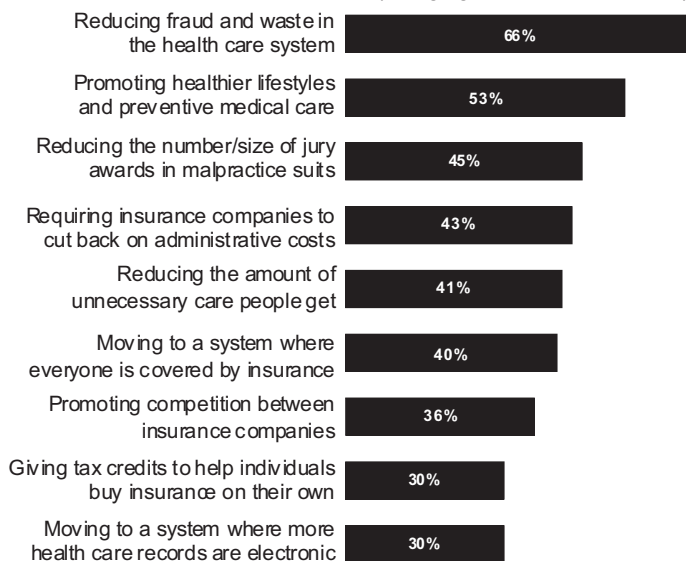
Most believe that cost issues can be addressed

The majority of voters believe that the nation's political leaders have the power to impact health care costs. Roughly six in ten (62 percent) say the president and Congress can do "a lot" about health care costs, and two in ten (21 percent) say they can do "a little." Only one in eight (13 percent) voters say they think health care costs are beyond the control of the president and Congress. The belief in the president and Congress' power to bring down health care costs suggests that there could be real expectations for the next administration and the new Congress to make a visible change.

Do you think that the cost of health care is something the president and Congress can do a lot about, do a little about, or is that mostly beyond their control? (among registered voters in June 2008)



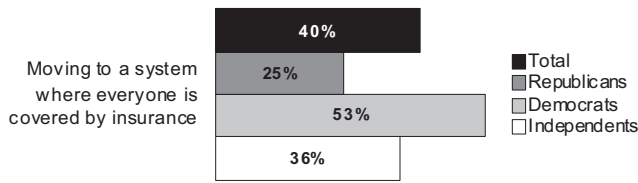
Percent who say each of the following will do "a lot" to lower health care costs for people like them: (among registered voters in June 2008)



When given a list of nine possible cost-reducing measures, most voters see each as making at least "some" difference in bringing down costs, but only two are perceived by more than half as doing "a lot" to reduce costs for "people like [them]": reducing fraud and waste, and promoting healthier lifestyles. The public often points to reducing fraud and waste as a first target of cost reduction across a range of public policy programs and issues, though it is not clear that this would be enough to bring down costs in any significant way. Another relatively popular cost reduction strategy is reducing the number and size of jury awards in malpractice suits, which the survey suggests is particularly popular with Republican voters, 55 percent of whom say it would do a lot to lower the average person's health care bills (compared to 45 percent of all voters). Interestingly, electronic storage of health care records is the proposal seen as having the least effect on costs, although it is viewed by many experts as a way

to lower spending in the long run and is an important part of the major candidates' campaign platforms.

Percent who say each of the following will do “a lot” to lower health care costs for people like them:
(among registered voters in June 2008)

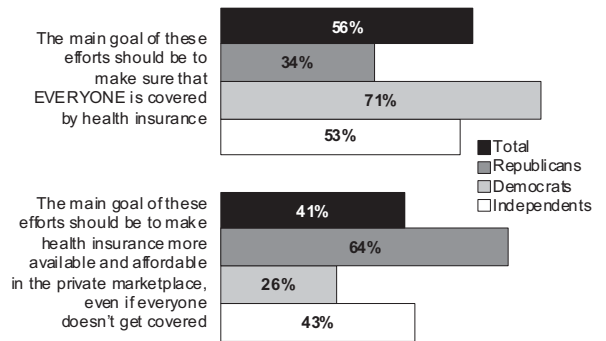


It’s worth noting that there is a large partisan difference in views regarding the cost implications of universal health care: fully half of Democrats (53 percent) *do* believe that covering all Americans will make a big difference for the average consumer – making this one of their top three cost-cutting plans – compared to half as many Republicans (25 percent). Political independents are somewhere in between the two groups on the issue (36 percent say covering everyone will do “a lot” to lower health care costs for people like them).

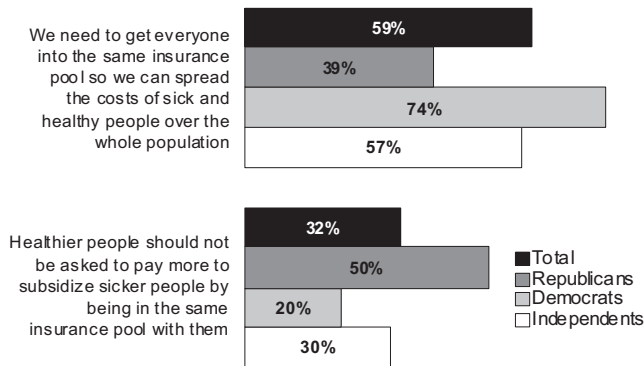
Choices and directions in health care reform

Directions in health reform: Overall, a majority (56 percent) of registered voters say the main goal of efforts to reform the health care system should be to make sure everyone is covered by health insurance, compared with four in ten (41 percent) who say the main goal should be to make insurance more available and affordable in the private marketplace, even if everyone doesn’t get covered. Clear partisan differences emerge in this question. While seven in ten (71 percent) Democratic voters say the main goal of reform efforts should be making sure everyone is covered by health insurance, over six in ten (64 percent) Republican voters say the main focus should be making insurance more affordable and available in the private marketplace, even if some people remain uninsured. Independent voters are somewhat more split between the two goals, although a slim majority (53 percent) say the goal should be for everyone to be covered.

The presidential candidates have proposed different approaches to improving the health care system in the U.S. Which of the following comes closest to your view?
(among registered voters in June 2008)



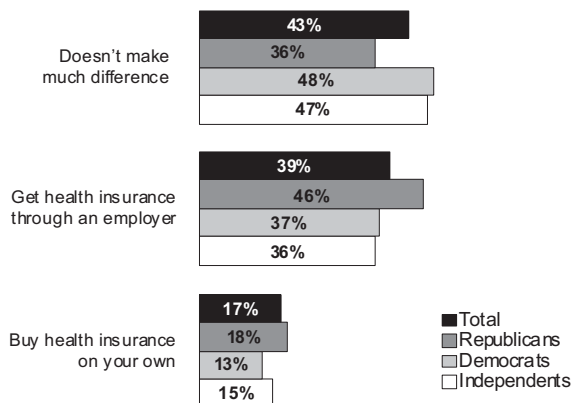
When thinking about health insurance coverage in this country, which of the following comes closer to your view?
(among registered voters in June 2008)



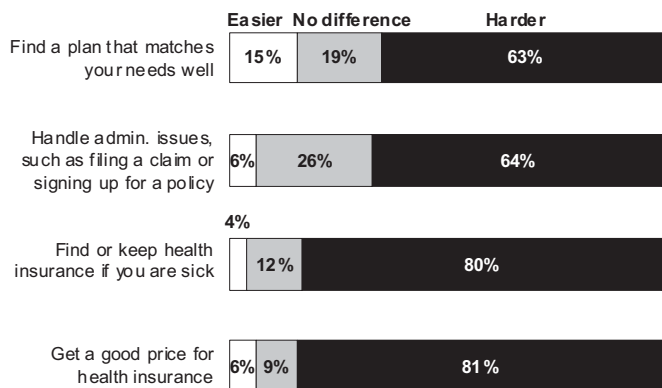
Should healthy and sick be in the same insurance pool: Overall, nearly six in ten (59 percent) voters say that the costs of sick and healthy people alike should be shared over an entire group within an insurance pool, while about one-third (32 percent) say that healthier people should not be asked to pay more to subsidize sicker people. Again there are stark differences between Democratic and Republican voters on this question, with nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of Democratic voters saying sick and healthy people should be in the same insurance pool, and half (50 percent) of Republican voters saying they should not. Independent voters tilt toward the former view.

Moving to an individual market: The survey suggests that employees who get health insurance through their jobs have a fair bit of ambivalence when it comes to the possibility of moving from the employer-based system toward an individual market. At the same time, a relatively small proportion of voters who are currently insured through an employer say they would actively prefer to get health insurance on their own. Overall, 17 percent say they would prefer to buy health insurance in the individual market, about half as many as would prefer to continue getting health insurance through an employer (39 percent). A plurality of 43 percent say they don't have a strong preference on the issue. Views are roughly the same across political party identification.

Assuming the cost to you was about the same, would you prefer to get health insurance through an employer at work, or would you prefer to buy health insurance on your own, or does n't it make much difference to you?
(among registered voters who are insured through an employer; June 2008)



If you were to buy health insurance on your own, do you think it would make each of the following easier, harder, or wouldn't it make much different compared to your current situation?
(among registered voters who are insured through an employer; June 2008)



Despite the ambivalence many voters seem to exhibit about changes in the way in which they are covered by insurance, when asked whether a variety of specific insurance-related tasks would be easier or harder if they were to buy coverage on their own, the picture looks decisively more negative. A majority of employer-insured voters in each case say they think things would be harder in the individual marketplace, including eight in ten who say it would be harder to get a good price (81 percent) or to find/keep health insurance if they are sick (80 percent), and upwards of six in ten who say it would be harder to find the right plan (63 percent) or to handle administrative issues (64 percent).

Methodology

This *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008*, the eighth in a series, was designed and analyzed by public opinion researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation led by Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., including Elizabeth Hamel and Carolina Gutiérrez. A nationally representative random sample of 1,206 adults ages 18 and older, including 1,066 adults who say they are registered to vote, was interviewed by telephone between June 3 and June 8, 2008. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is plus or minus 3 percentage points and for registered voters it is plus or minus 4 percentage points; for results based on subgroups, the sampling error is higher. For full question wording and results, see the Toplines at http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/h08_posr062508pkg.cfm.

April trends are from the seventh survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,759 registered voters interviewed April 3-13, 2008 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 3 percentage points).

February trends are from the sixth survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,770 registered voters interviewed February 7-16, 2008 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 3 percentage points).

December trends are from the fifth survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,063 registered voters interviewed November 28-December 9, 2007¹ (margin of sampling error plus or minus 4 percentage points).

October trends are from the fourth survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,058 registered voters interviewed October 1-10, 2007 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 3 percentage points).

August trends are from the third survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,303 registered voters interviewed August 2-8, 2007 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 3 percentage points).

June trends are from the second survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,050 registered voters interviewed May 31-June 5, 2007 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 4 percentage points).

March trends are from the first survey in the *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008* series, and are based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,013 registered voters interviewed March 8-13, 2007 (margin of sampling error plus or minus 3 percentage points).

¹ December data for question 1b comes from a parallel survey of a nationally representative random sample of 1,772 registered voters interviewed by telephone between November 28 and December 10, 2007, which has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. This question was asked on a separate survey because of the desire to track opinions about the issues people most want to hear candidates discuss and the most important issue in their choice for president. In order to avoid biasing answers to these questions by asking them of the same group, and to preserve a large enough sample for subgroup analysis, the questions were asked of separate samples on separate surveys.

Trends

1. Thinking about the campaign for the presidential election in 2008, what two issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? IF R GIVES ONE ISSUE PROBE FOR SECOND: Is there another issue you'd like to hear about? (OPEN-END)

Note: mentions less than 5 percent not shown.

For full question wording and results, see http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/h08_posr062508pkg.cfm.

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Economy				
Jun08	47	42	50	49
Apr08	49	49	53	47
Feb08	45	42	47	48
Dec07	23	19	25	26
Oct07	19	16	22	20
Aug07	15	15	13	16
Jun07	13	13	20	7
Mar07	19	18	20	20
Iraq				
Jun08	40	35	46	40
Apr08	42	33	50	40
Feb08	32	28	36	32
Dec07	38	31	39	42
Oct07	45	44	49	44
Aug07	41	32	45	46
Jun07	44	39	54	39
Mar07	46	44	54	43
Gas prices				
Jun08	25	30	22	22
Apr08	10	11	11	8
Feb08	2	2	3	1
Dec07	6	8	3	8
Oct07	2	2	4	2
Aug07	4	8	2	4
Jun07	12	12	12	12
Mar07	3	1	5	3
Health care				
Jun08	22	14	28	21
Apr08	23	19	29	18
Feb08	28	18	40	20
Dec07	31	24	37	30
Oct07	39	31	47	38
Aug07	31	22	43	24
Jun07	22	19	22	29
Mar07	27	23	31	28
Immigration				
Jun08	7	11	3	8
Apr08	6	10	4	6
Feb08	14	24	7	10
Dec07	15	25	9	16
Oct07	11	17	8	11
Aug07	13	17	8	15
Jun07	17	19	13	20
Mar07	6	8	4	9
Terrorism/nat'l security				
Jun08	6	10	2	9
Apr08	4	9	1	4
Feb08	6	14	1	7
Dec07	7	13	3	7
Oct07	7	13	1	9
Aug07	9	18	3	9
Jun07	8	17	3	6
Mar07	7	13	3	6

(continued on next page)

Taxes				
Jun08	5	7	3	4
Apr08	4	9	3	2
Feb08	5	6	4	6
Dec07	8	10	5	10
Oct07	6	10	4	7
Aug07	8	11	8	8
Jun07	4	5	2	3
Mar07	4	3	2	7

2. Now thinking specifically about HEALTH CARE, which ONE of the following health care issues would you most like to hear the presidential candidates talk about? (READ AND RANDOMIZE 1-5)

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS:	TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Making health care and health insurance more affordable				
Jun08	51	51	54	47
Expanding health insurance coverage for the uninsured				
Jun08	22	11	31	22
Improving the quality of care and reducing medical errors				
Jun08	10	13	7	8
Reducing the total amount the country spends on health care				
Jun08	7	9	4	10
Reducing spending on gov't health programs like Medicare/Medicaid				
Jun08	4	8	*	4
None of these (VOL)				
Jun08	3	3	1	5
Other issue (VOL)				
Jun08	2	3	2	2
Don't know/Refused				
Jun08	2	3	1	1

3. Thinking about all of the candidates for president in 2008, regardless of political party or who you intend to vote for, which candidate BEST represents your own views on health care?
(OPEN-END)

Note: only remaining candidates at the time of the survey shown

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Named any candidate (NET)				
Jun08	71	70	80	62
Apr08	70	67	84	60
Feb08	68	60	80	63
Dec07	48	42	63	41
Oct07	51	43	61	49
Aug07	43	33	59	40
Jun07	43	35	58	33
Mar07	36	29	48	31
Barack Obama				
Jun08	28	6	45	27
Apr08	20	6	33	19
Feb08	19	8	28	19
Dec07	6	2	12	3
Oct07	8	2	14	5
Aug07	6	3	9	7
Jun07	9	4	14	8
Mar07	6	3	9	5
John McCain				
Jun08	20	53	3	16
Apr08	19	51	3	16
Feb08	11	24	2	11
Dec07	1	2	1	1
Oct07	1	1	1	2
Aug07	1	2	*	1
Jun07	2	6	*	2
Mar07	3	4	2	3
Hillary Clinton				
Jun08	19	8	31	13
Apr08	26	8	44	20
Feb08	26	7	45	22
Dec07	22	8	39	20
Oct07	22	5	36	21
Aug07	19	4	36	16
Jun07	17	1	34	12
Mar07	16	6	27	11
Don't know/No candidate				
Jun08	29	30	20	38
Apr08	30	33	16	40
Feb08	32	40	20	37
Dec07	52	58	37	59
Oct07	49	57	39	51
Aug07	57	67	41	60
Jun07	57	65	42	67
Mar07	64	71	52	69

4. Thinking about how the issue of health care might affect your vote for president, would you...?
 (CATEGORIES READ IN ORDER AND REVERSE ORDER)

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Consider a candidate's position on health care as just one of many important factors				
Jun08	70	68	72	73
Apr08	67	66	68	69
Feb08	70	62	74	74
Dec07	73	73	73	74
Oct07	70	73	69	75
Aug07	76	76	77	75
Jun07	71	69	69	77
Mar07	74	78	72	74
Not see health care as a major issue in your vote				
Jun08	16	20	12	18
Apr08	14	18	10	14
Feb08	15	24	9	11
Dec07	11	12	9	12
Oct07	12	14	10	12
Aug07	10	12	7	13
Jun07	13	20	10	10
Mar07	10	10	7	12
ONLY vote for a candidate who shares your views on health care				
Jun08	10	8	14	7
Apr08	14	10	16	15
Feb08	11	9	14	10
Dec07	12	10	15	10
Oct07	13	9	18	7
Aug07	10	7	14	10
Jun07	12	8	15	10
Mar07	11	8	15	9
Don't know/Refused				
Jun08	3	3	3	2
Apr08	6	6	7	2
Feb08	5	4	3	6
Dec07	4	4	4	4
Oct07	4	4	3	5
Aug07	4	5	2	3
Jun07	4	3	6	3
Mar07	6	4	6	5

5. As a result of recent changes in the economy, have you or your family experienced any of the following problems, or not? First (INSERT AND RANDOMIZE)? IF YES, ASK: Was this a serious problem, or not? Next (INSERT NEXT ITEM)?
 For full question wording and results, see http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/h08_posr062508pkg.cfm.

	Percent of total sample saying each was a "serious problem"
a. Problems paying for health care or health insurance	
Jun08	25
Apr08	28
b. Problems paying for gas	
Jun08	43
Apr08	44
c. Problems getting a good-paying job or a raise in pay	
Jun08	27
Apr08	29
d. Problems paying your rent/mortgage	
Jun08	14
Apr08	19
e. Losing money in the stock market	
Jun08	15
Apr08	16
f. Problems with credit card or other personal debt	
Jun08	16
Apr08	18
g. Problems paying for food	
Jun08	19
Apr08	18

6. The presidential candidates have proposed different approaches to improving the health care system in the U.S. Which of the following comes closest to your view? (READ AND ROTATE)

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
The main goal of these efforts should be to make sure that EVERYONE is covered by health insurance				
Jun08	56	34	71	53
Apr08	54	35	70	50
The main goal of efforts should be to make health insurance more available and affordable in the private marketplace, even if everyone doesn't get covered				
Jun08	41	64	26	43
Apr08	42	61	26	48
Don't know/Refused				
Jun08	3	3	2	4
Apr08	4	4	4	2

7. When thinking about rising health care costs, which ONE of the following concerns you most...

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Increases in the amount people pay for their health insurance premiums and other out-of-pocket costs Jun08	47	48	54	37
Increases in what the nation as a whole spends on health care Jun08	19	16	18	24
Increases in spending on government health insurance like Medicare/Medicaid Jun08	14	17	13	13
Increases in the health insurance premiums that employers pay to cover their workers Jun08	10	11	6	14
All of these (VOL) Jun08	3	2	4	3
None of these (VOL) Jun08	2	2	2	4
Don't know/Refused Jun08	4	4	4	5

8. Do you think that the cost of health care is something the president and Congress can do a lot about, do a little about, or is that mostly beyond their control?

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
A lot Jun08	62	46	71	63
A little Jun08	21	27	19	20
Mostly beyond their control Jun08	13	21	7	15
Don't know/Refused Jun08	3	5	3	1

9. Next, please tell me how much each of the following would do to lower health care costs for people like you. First, how much would (READ AND RANDOMIZE) do to lower health care costs for people like you - a lot, some, not too much, or nothing at all? What about (INSERT NEXT ITEM)? For full question wording and results, see http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/h08_posr062508pkg.cfm.

	Percent of registered voters saying each would do "a lot"
a. Reducing the number and size of jury awards in malpractice suits Jun08	45
b. Moving to a system where more of our health care records are electronic, rather than on paper Jun08	30
c. Promoting competition between insurance companies Jun08	36
d. Giving tax credits to individuals to help them purchase insurance on their own Jun08	30
e. Reducing fraud and waste in the health care system Jun08	66
f. Requiring insurance companies to cut back on administrative costs Jun08	43
g. Moving to a system where everyone is covered by health insurance Jun08	40
h. Reducing the amount of unnecessary medical care people get Jun08	41
i. Promoting healthier lifestyles and preventive medical care Jun08	53

10. When thinking about health insurance coverage in this country, which of the following comes closer to your view?

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
We need to get everyone into the same insurance pool, so we can spread the costs of sick and healthy people over the whole population Jun08	59	39	74	57
Healthier people should not be asked to pay more to subsidize sicker people by being in the same insurance pool with them Jun08	32	50	20	30
Don't know/Refused Jun08	10	12	6	13

11. See Toplines at http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/h08_posr062508pkg.cfm.

12. Assuming the cost to you was about the same, would you prefer to get health insurance through your/your spouse's employer at work, OR would you prefer to buy health insurance on your own, OR doesn't it make much difference to you?

Based on those insured through own/spouse's employer

	AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: TOTAL	REP	DEM	IND
Get health insurance through own/ spouse's employer at work				
Jun08	39	46	37	36
Buy health insurance on your own				
Jun08	17	18	13	15
Doesn't make much difference				
Jun08	43	36	48	47
Don't know/Refused				
Jun08	1	1	2	1

13. If you were to buy health insurance on your own, do you think it would be EASIER or HARDER to, or wouldn't it make much difference compared to your current situation? What about purchasing your own coverage, do you think it would make it EASIER or HARDER for you to, or wouldn't it make much difference?

For full question wording and results, see http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/h08_posr062508pkg.cfm.

Based on those registered voters who are insured through their own/their spouse's employer

	Easier	No diff.	Harder
Get a good price for health insurance			
Jun08	6	9	81
Find or keep health insurance if you are sick			
Jun08	4	12	80
Handle administrative issues, such as filing a claim or signing up for a policy			
Jun08	6	26	64
Find a plan that matches your needs well			
Jun08	15	19	63