



# HealthVoices

Health Reform in Georgia: Perception or Reality?

Issue 2, 2010

## When the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed, health care reform became law.

The legislative process surrounding this bill was filled with intense debate—much of it emotional and heavily politicized. Challenging discussions continue on many fronts with elected officials, providers, payers and consumers all seeking to interpret the intent and consequence of this historic legislation. The purpose of this issue of *HealthVoices* is to provide a snapshot of how Georgians view health reform at the time of its passage.

*What do Georgians believe about the intent and effect of health reform? How will health reform law affect Georgians personally in terms of health care access, cost and quality?*

In the fall of 2009, Healthcare Georgia Foundation provided support to the Survey Research Center at the University of Georgia to conduct a health reform public opinion poll.

### About the Poll

*The Knowledge and Perceptions Related to Health Care Reform Survey* was conducted in February 2010. The survey comprised questions related to health care access, cost and quality. Data were generated from a telephone interview of an RDD (Random Digit Dial) probability sample of 500 residents, ages 18 years or older. Estimates based on this sample are subject to a sampling error of +/-4.4% at the 95 percent confidence interval. The cooperation rate for the survey was 53.6%. Further information regarding the survey methodology and results is available from the UGA Survey Research Center (James J. Bason, Ph.D., Director, [jbason@uga.edu](mailto:jbason@uga.edu), 706-542-9082).

### Survey Participants

Among the 500 Georgia residents 18 years or older who participated in the poll:

|                        |                             |                          |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Voter Registration:    | 93 % were registered voters |                          |
| Political Affiliation: | 29.3% Democrat              | 27.8% Republican         |
|                        | 33.6% Independent           | 9.3% other               |
|                        |                             |                          |
| Gender:                | 63.8% women                 | 36.2% men                |
| Race:                  | 78.2% White                 | 18.8% Black              |
|                        | 1.2% Hispanic               | 1.0 % multi-racial/other |
|                        | 8% Asian                    |                          |
|                        |                             |                          |
| Marital Status:        | 61.3% married               | 13.4% never married      |
|                        | 12.6% widowed               | 11.8% divorced           |
|                        | 1 % separated               |                          |
| Age:                   | 44.3% age 45-64             | 33% age 65+              |
|                        | 19.6% age 25-44             | 3.1% age 18-24           |
|                        |                             |                          |
| Locale:                | 77.2% urban                 | 22.8% rural              |
| Education:             | 34.6% college graduate      | 32.7% some college/tech  |
|                        | 32.7% high school or less   |                          |
| Income:                | 19.3% <\$20,000             | 30.7% \$20,000-\$49,000  |
|                        | 28.4% \$50,000-\$74,999     | 21.6% \$75,000+          |
|                        |                             |                          |



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### Key Findings

#### Health Insurance Coverage, Financing and Role of Government

- Among the respondents, health insurance and medical care ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important problem facing Georgia today.
- Access to health care
  - 74% favor or strongly favor providing access to quality health care for all Georgians;
  - 47% favor or strongly favor providing access to quality health care for all Georgians, even if it

means raising taxes;

- 35% favor or strongly favor providing access to quality health care for all Georgians, even if it means the federal government would have a major role in delivery of health care.
- Investments in health care
  - 71% agree and strongly agree that federal and state investments in health promotion and disease prevention will help Georgians stay healthier;

- 70% agree and strongly agree that federal and state investments in health promotion and disease prevention will help Georgians save money on health care costs;
- 48% agree or strongly agree that there are many other priorities that need government funding that are more important than trying to provide access to affordable quality health care for all Georgians.

### Health Reform Findings – Access, Quality and Cost

**Effects of health reform on personal health care access –** 53.3% believe access to personal health care will stay the same or decrease as a result of health care reform.

Percentage of respondents who believe their **access to health care** will increase, stay the same, or decrease:

| By Gender          | Men         | Women        |                  |       |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|-------|
| Increase           | 22.8%       | 18.5%        |                  |       |
| Stay the same      | 25.7        | 38.0         |                  |       |
| Decrease           | 52.1        | 43.6         |                  |       |
| By Political Affl. | Dem.        | Rep.         | Ind.             |       |
| Increase           | 32.8%       | 4.9%         | 16.3%            |       |
| Stay the same      | 53.6        | 19.7         | 34.8             |       |
| Decrease           | 13.6        | 75.4         | 48.9             |       |
| By Race            | White       | Black        |                  |       |
| Increase           | 13.3%       | 43.0%        |                  |       |
| Stay the same      | 30.8        | 42.0         |                  |       |
| Decrease           | 55.9        | 15.0         |                  |       |
| By Education       | High School | Some College | College Graduate |       |
| Increase           | 27.1%       | 19.4%        | 13.7%            |       |
| Stay the same      | 29.3        | 29.9         | 40.4             |       |
| Decrease           | 43.6        | 42.0         | 15.0             |       |
| By Age             | >24         | 25-44        | 45-64            | 65+   |
| Increase           | 50.0%       | 26.1%        | 18.0%            | 16.9% |
| Stay the same      | 33.3        | 39.8         | 33.5             | 28.9  |
| Decrease           | 16.7        | 34.1         | 48.5             | 54.2  |

**Effects of health reform on personal health care quality –** 85% believe the quality of their personal health care will stay the same or decrease as a result of health care reform.

Percentage of respondents who believe that their **quality of health care** will increase, stay the same, or decrease:

| By Gender          | Men         | Women        |                  |       |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|-------|
| Increase           | 11.8%       | 16.7%        |                  |       |
| Stay the same      | 28.8        | 34.1         |                  |       |
| Decrease           | 59.4        | 49.1         |                  |       |
| By Political Affl. | Dem.        | Rep.         | Ind.             |       |
| Increase           | 22.0%       | 5.0%         | 17.9%            |       |
| Stay the same      | 52.0        | 14.9         | 80.2             |       |
| Decrease           | 26.0        | 80.2         | 50.0             |       |
| By Race            | White       | Black        |                  |       |
| Increase           | 11.7%       | 27.3%        |                  |       |
| Stay the same      | 27.8        | 47.5         |                  |       |
| Decrease           | 60.5        | 25.3         |                  |       |
| By Education       | High School | Some College | College Graduate |       |
| Increase           | 21.4%       | 14.4%        | 9.3%             |       |
| Stay the same      | 27.9        | 26.0         | 41.4             |       |
| Decrease           | 50.7        | 59.6         | 49.4             |       |
| By Age             | >24         | 25-44        | 45-64            | 65+   |
| Increase           | 41.7%       | 17.6%        | 11.3%            | 15.3% |
| Stay the same      | 25.0        | 31.8         | 35.0             | 29.2  |
| Decrease           | 33.3        | 50.6         | 53.7             | 55.6  |



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**Effects of health reform on personal health care costs** – 90% believe the cost of their personal health care will stay the same or increase as a result of health care reform.

Percentage of respondents who believe the **cost of their health care** will increase, stay the same, or decrease:

| By Gender          | Men         | Women        |                  |       |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|-------|
| Increase           | 74.5%       | 64.8%        |                  |       |
| Stay the same      | 19.4        | 23.8         |                  |       |
| Decrease           | 6.1         | 11.4         |                  |       |
| By Political Affl. | Dem.        | Rep.         | Ind.             |       |
| Increase           | 43.0%       | 38.5%        | 71%              |       |
| Stay the same      | 38.0        | 7.9          | 22.2             |       |
| Decrease           | 18          | 22.2         | 6.7              |       |
| By Race            | White       | Black        |                  |       |
| Increase           | 74.9%       | 47.9%        |                  |       |
| Stay the same      | 17.9        | 37.2         |                  |       |
| Decrease           | 7.2         | 14.9         |                  |       |
| By Education       | High School | Some College | College Graduate |       |
| Increase           | 66.2%       | 70.5%        | 69.1%            |       |
| Stay the same      | 20.1        | 20.9         | 24.3             |       |
| Decrease           | 13.7        | 8.6          | 6.6              |       |
| By Age             | >24         | 25-4         | 45-64            | 65+   |
| Increase           | 20.0%       | 61.2%        | 72.5%            | 71.1% |
| Stay the same      | 60.0        | 29.4         | 19.6             | 19.0  |
| Decrease           | 20.0        | 9.4          | 7.9              | 9.9   |

### Conclusions:

Consumer knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and experiences with health care will play a significant role in the adoption and implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Research suggests that the adoption of a new idea or innovation such as health reform may in part be determined by how those affected perceive the law in terms of cost, complexity, reversibility, relevance to personal needs, etc. Some will immediately embrace the law, while others may never accept its provisions at a personal level.

The results of the UGA Survey Research Center poll illustrate the impact of timely, effective and well-financed health communications prior to and following passage of the law. Over time, public opinion has grown in favor of health reform. Yet, health literacy (including the ability to discern fact from fiction) among Georgia's population may prove to be a factor in an individual's participation and potential benefits from health reform efforts. The poll results demonstrate that perceptions varied significantly among respondents according to race, age, gender, income and political party affiliation. Regardless of one's position on health reform, the poll results strongly indicate that not all Georgians agree with the perceived intent and benefits of this landmark legislation.

The structure, delivery and financing of health care was arguably one of the most prominent public issues during 2009 and 2010. The enormity and complexity of health reform invited proponents and skeptics, all armed with facts and ideological principles. Yet, caught in the middle were Georgia consumers – those most in need of nonpartisan research and analysis. In our judgment, left behind are consumers wanting to know what the law means for them.

As Georgia approaches a November 2010 election, the health consumer is again at the mercy of elected officials and their knowledge about the law. For example, Georgia's candidates for Governor and Insurance Commissioner can provide meaningful leadership by articulating goals and plans for implementation, by addressing the state's capacity to implement the provisions of the law, and by demonstrating how improved performance (access, quality, and cost) of the health care system will benefit Georgians. The structure, delivery and financing of health and health care services is certainly deserving of a 21<sup>st</sup> vision for better health and health care for all Georgians.



## Endnotes

1. The Knowledge and Perceptions Related to Health Care Reform Survey, Survey Research Center, University of Georgia.

### Recommended Citation:

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**Healthcare Georgia Foundation** is a catalyst for better health and health care in Georgia.

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Healthcare Georgia Foundation is a statewide, private independent foundation whose mission is to advance the health of all Georgians and to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities.

