



The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

IN THE MIDST OF THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK, CONCERNS ABOUT THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM REMAIN

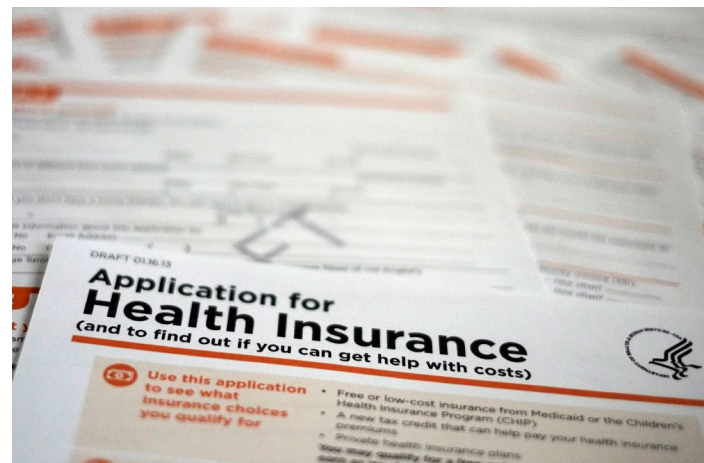
Despite the coronavirus outbreak putting a spotlight on many aspects of the U.S. health care system, the public's opinions about health care costs and coverage have not significantly changed in recent months.

A new study from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research includes two surveys measuring attitudes about the health care system—the first conducted in early February 2020 just after the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the United States, and the second conducted in early May 2020 when the U.S. case count was over one million.

Results from the May UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll show that Americans' concerns about the country's health care system continue to loom larger than worries about their own care. For example, only 19% of Americans are concerned about personally losing or not having health insurance, while 56% are worried about coverage issues for others in the country.

Indeed, this gap in concern has only widened in the midst of the outbreak as fewer Americans in May than February express personal concerns about losing their health insurance, the amount they spend on health care, and having access to high-quality care.

The two surveys also reveal a great deal of stability in Americans' fundamental concerns about the health care system and illustrate the public's differing priorities for their health insurance plans. For example, looking at trade-offs in the system, majorities prefer paying less for health care and prescription drugs, even if it means



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Three Things You Should Know About the UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll from May Among American Adults:

- 1) Sixty-two percent are very concerned about others not having access to high-quality health care; just 46% say the same about their own access. This 16-point gap has increased from a 1-point gap in February.
- 2) Seventy percent say that the private sector does a better job than the government in driving innovation in health care, including 81% of Republicans and 63% of Democrats.
- 3) Fifty percent would prefer an insurance plan with broader coverage but higher costs, while 45% want one with lower costs but less coverage.

paying higher taxes and investing less in innovation. However, there is little consensus on whether insurance plans should prioritize reducing costs, broadening coverage, or allowing people to choose their doctors.

The study also highlights stark differences between Democrats and Republicans about the role of government in health care. Democrats are more than twice as likely as Republicans to say that Americans should pay less for health care and more in taxes, while Republicans are significantly more likely to say that the private sector is better at handling all aspects of health care. Democrats are also significantly more likely than Republicans to say the U.S. government spends too little overall, and this partisan gap has widened over the past few months.

Overall, the public has far more confidence in the private sector than in the government to innovate and provide quality care. But there is far less agreement over whether government or the private sector is better able to control costs and provide coverage.

The nationwide surveys were conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The most recent survey was conducted from May 14 to 18, 2020, using AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,001 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.4 percentage points. The February survey used the same methodology and featured online and telephone interviews with 1,015 adults from February 13 to 16, 2020, using AmeriSpeak. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.2 percentage points.

Other key findings from the study include:

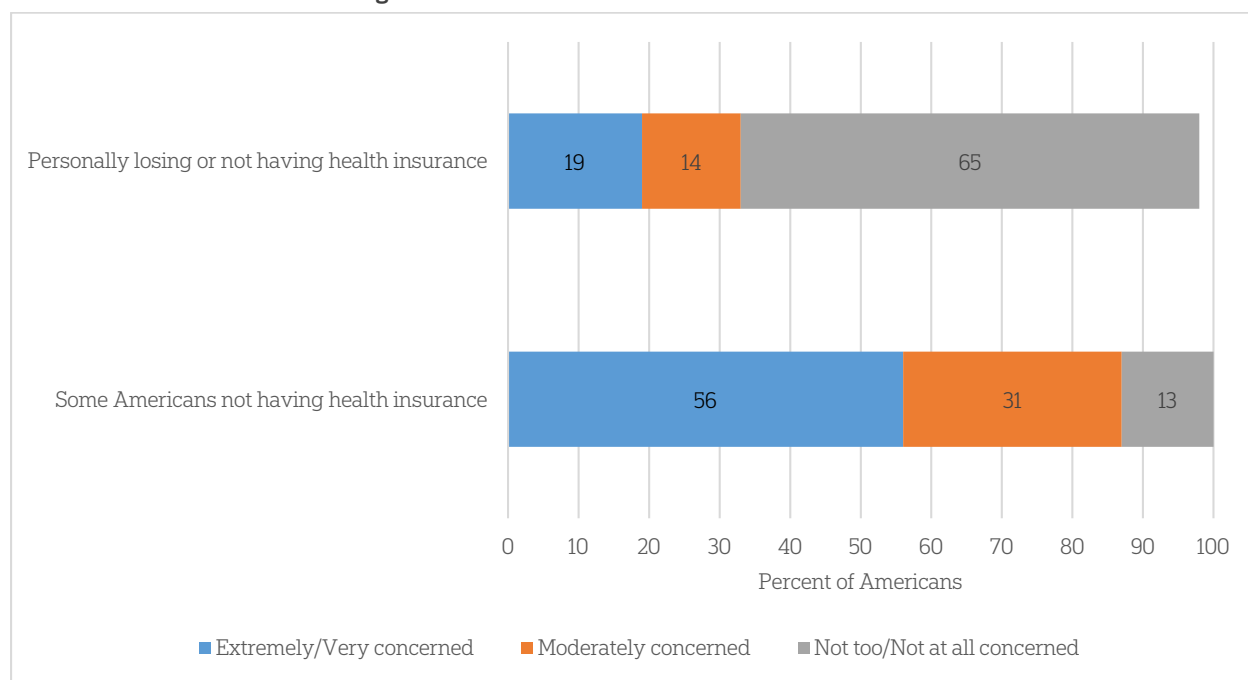
- Views on government spending on the nation's health have not changed since the outbreak, with 56% saying it spends too little compared with 55% reporting the same in February.
- Most Americans are not concerned with their insurance coverage, but those who identify as being in moderate or poor health are more likely than those in very good health to worry about having insurance (40% vs. 25%).
- About two-thirds of Americans (64%) want to pay less for prescription drugs, even if it means fewer new drugs would be available in the future.
- Democrats are more than twice as likely as Republicans to say that Americans should pay less for health care and more in taxes (78% vs. 35%).
- Fifty percent would prefer an insurance plan with lower out-of-pocket costs and higher monthly premiums, while 45% would rather have one with lower monthly premiums and higher out-of-pocket costs.
- In both May and February, 50% say they would prefer a health insurance plan that provided broader coverage with higher premiums and out-of-pocket costs rather than a plan with lower costs and more limited coverage.
- The partisan gap related to whether the government spends too little money overall has increased from 32 percentage points in February (54% of Democrats vs. 22% of Republicans) to 53 percentage points in May (66% of Democrats vs. 12% of Republicans).

AMERICANS ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT OTHERS THAN THEMSELVES WHEN IT COMES TO HAVING HEALTH INSURANCE AND SPENDING ON HEALTH CARE.

This study featured a survey experiment in which respondents were randomly assigned to questions about either their own personal health care or the overall state of health care in the country. In the first question, half of the respondents were asked how concerned they are about losing their health insurance or not having health insurance personally, while the other half were asked their level of concern about other Americans not having health insurance.

The findings show that concerns about coverage issues nationwide are more widespread than personal concerns about losing or not having coverage. Fifty-six percent say they are extremely or very concerned about others not having health insurance, with another 31% moderately concerned. In contrast, just 19% are extremely or very concerned about their own health insurance, and about two-thirds are not worried about losing or not having health insurance for themselves.

While a majority of Americans are concerned about other Americans not having health insurance, few are concerned about not having it themselves.

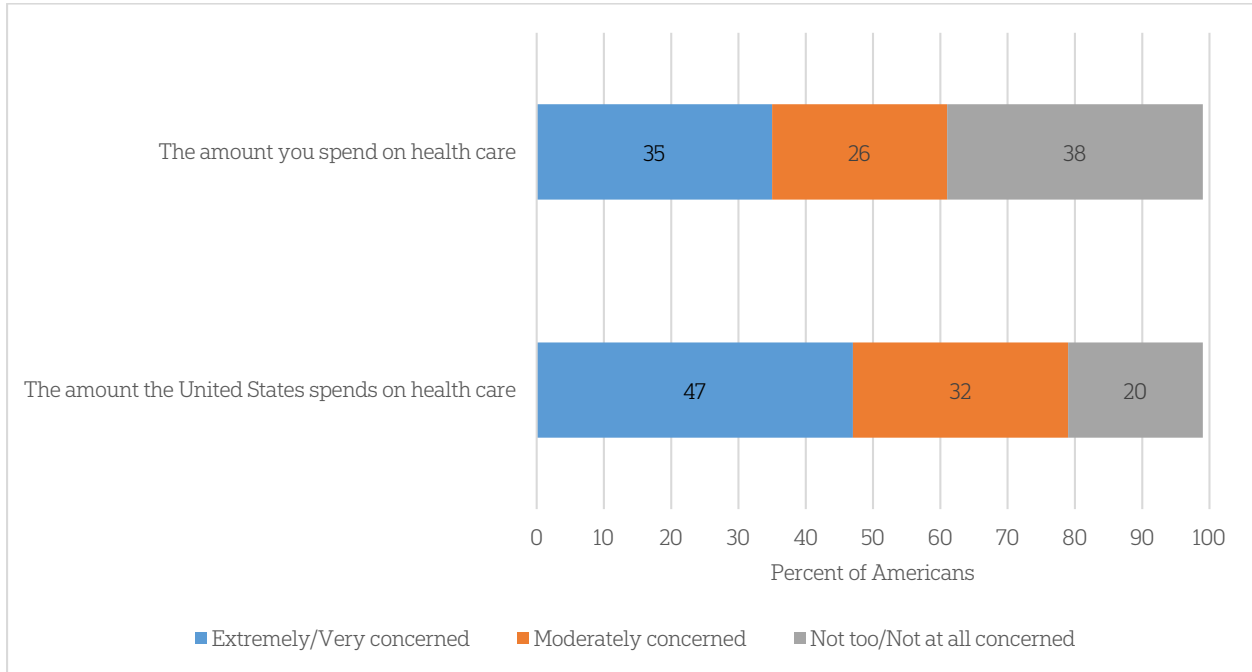


Questions: How concerned are you about losing your/not having health insurance? / How concerned are you there are Americans who do not have health insurance?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Americans also worry more about overall health care spending than their own spending. Thirty-five percent are concerned with how much they spend on their own health care, while 47% are concerned about overall spending on health care in the United States.

More than 3 in 4 Americans are concerned about how much the United States spends on health care, while only half say the same about their own health care spending.

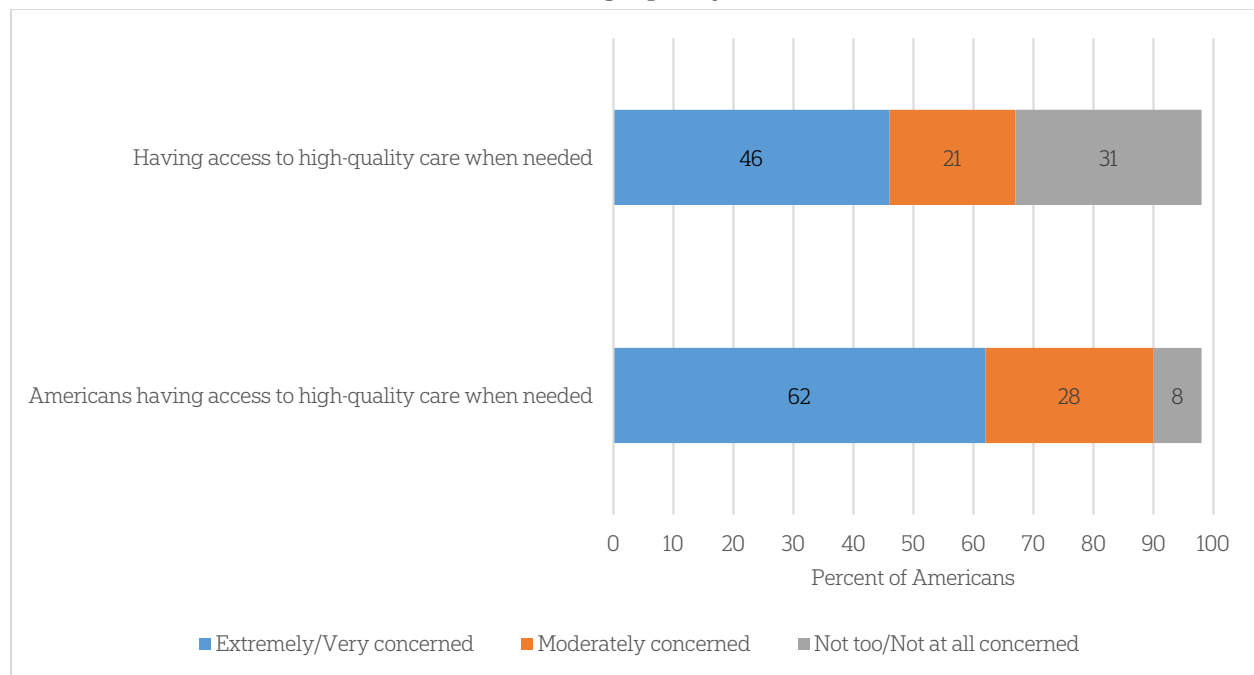


Questions: How concerned are you about the amount you spend on health care? / How concerned are you about the amount the United States spends on health care?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Americans' attitudes toward access to high-quality health care also reveal people have greater concern for the overall system than for themselves. Forty-six percent are very concerned about their personal access to high-quality care, while 62% say the same about overall access to quality care in this country.

Americans are more concerned about access to high-quality health care for others.



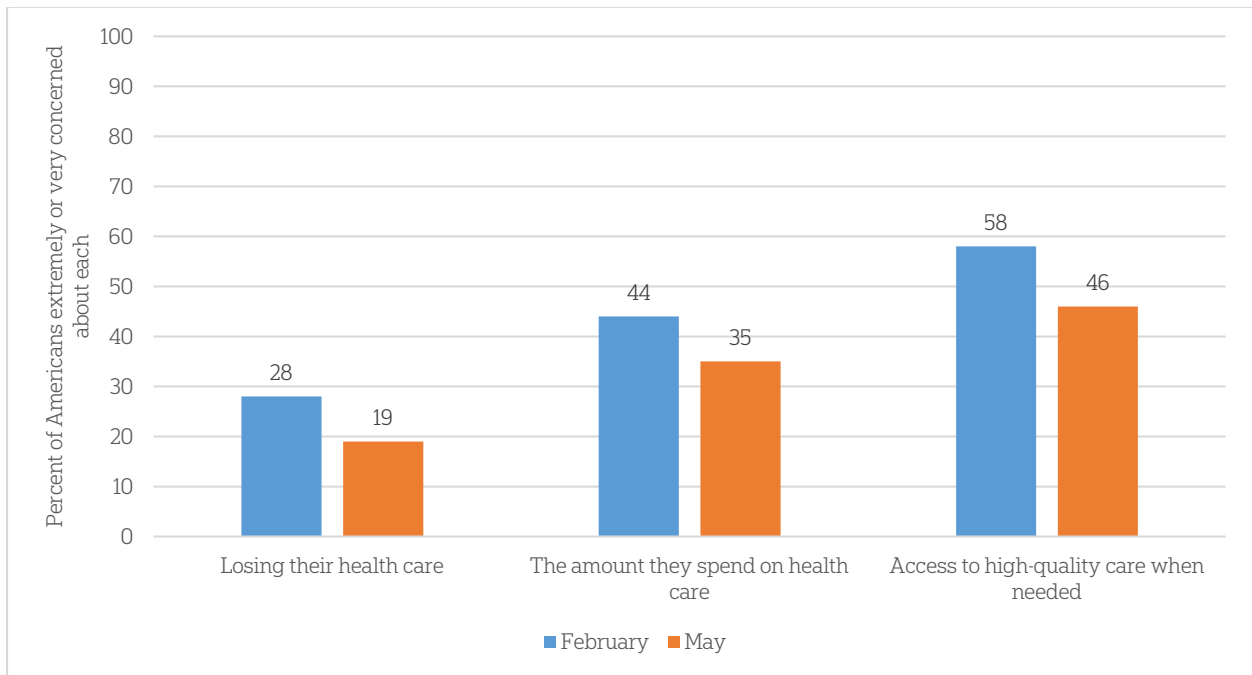
Questions: How concerned are you about having access to high-quality care when you need it? / How concerned are you about Americans having access to high-quality care when they need it?
Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Fewer Americans are concerned about their own health care costs and access following the outbreak of the coronavirus.

The study highlights a significant decrease in Americans’ concern about their own health care in the last three months, but no significant change in worries about the country’s health care system since the outbreak.

Compared to February, fewer Americans in May report being very concerned about losing their health care (19% vs. 28%), the amount they spend on health care (35% vs. 44%), and access to high-quality care when needed (46% vs. 58%).

Americans are less concerned about their own health care following outbreak of the coronavirus.

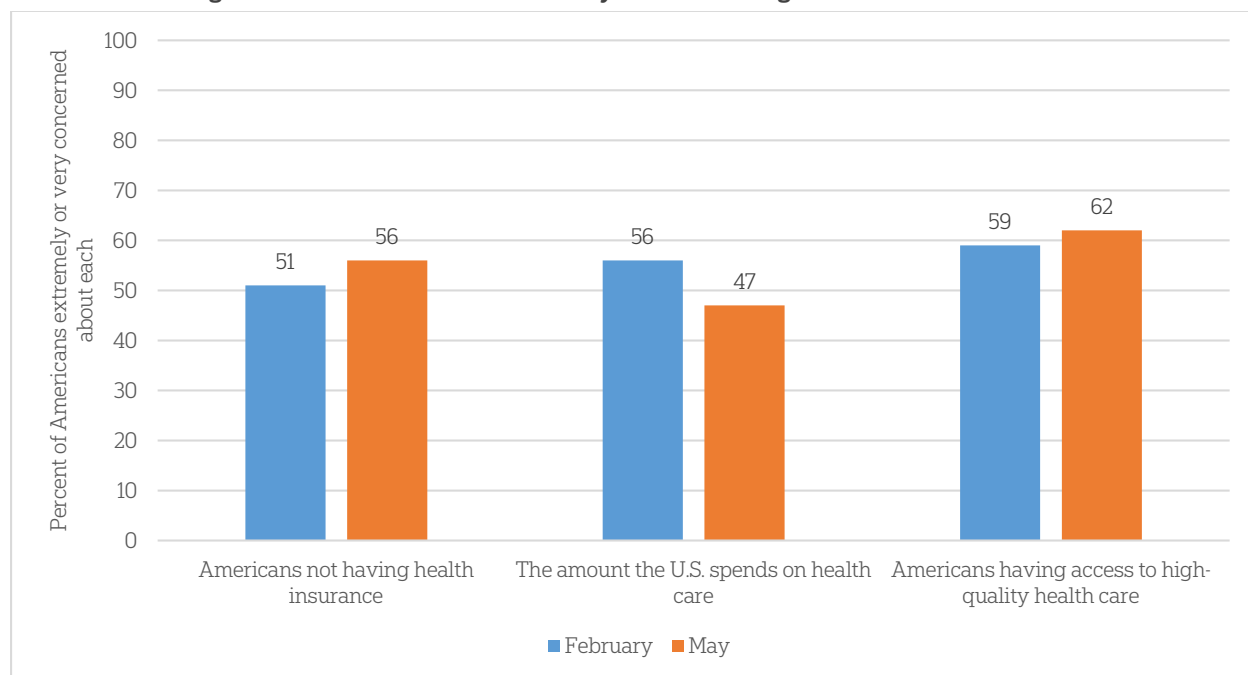


Questions: How concerned are you about losing your/not having health insurance? / How concerned are you there are Americans who do not have health insurance? / How concerned are you about the amount you spend on health care? / How concerned are you about the amount the United States spends on health care? / How concerned are you about having access to high-quality care when you need it? / How concerned are you about Americans having access to high-quality care when they need it?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 2/13-16/2020, with 1,015 adults age 18 and older nationwide; UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

In contrast, there is no significant change compared to February in public concern about either Americans who do not have health insurance (56% vs. 51%), the amount the United States spends on health care (47% vs. 56%), or Americans having access to high-quality health care (62% vs. 59%).

There is no change in worries about health care system following outbreak of the coronavirus.



Questions: How concerned are you about losing your/not having health insurance? / How concerned are you there are Americans who do not have health insurance? / How concerned are you about the amount you spend on health care? / How concerned are you about the amount the United States spends on health care? / How concerned are you about having access to high-quality care when you need it? / How concerned are you about Americans having access to high-quality care when they need it?

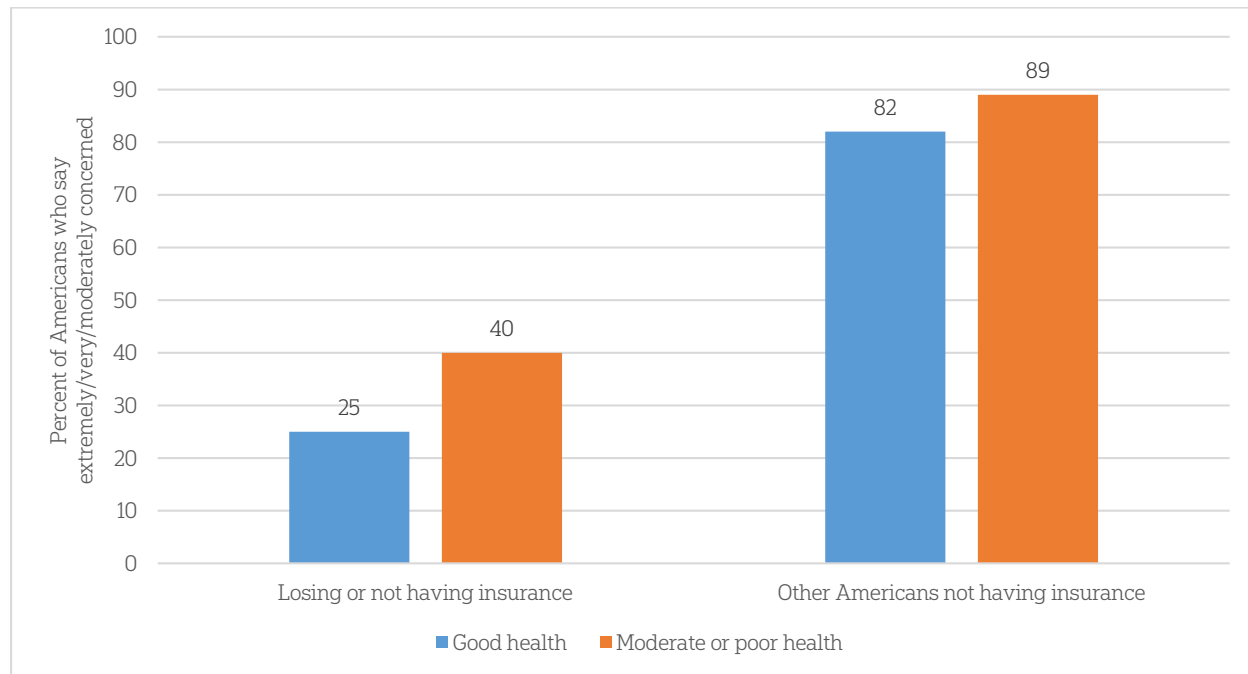
Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 2/13-16/2020, with 1,015 adults age 18 and older nationwide; UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Those who report being in worse health are particularly concerned with not having insurance or losing their insurance.

Personal concerns over health care coverage are larger for individuals in poorer health. Overall, 42% describe their health as excellent or very good, while 58% say it is either good, fair, or poor.

Those who identify as having poor, fair, or good health are more likely than those in better health to be concerned about their own insurance (40% vs. 25%). However, there is no significant difference between those in better or worse health when it comes to concern for others not having health insurance.

Americans who identify as being in moderate or poor health are most likely to be concerned about not having insurance.



Questions: How concerned are you about losing your/not having health insurance? / How concerned are you there are Americans who do not have health insurance?

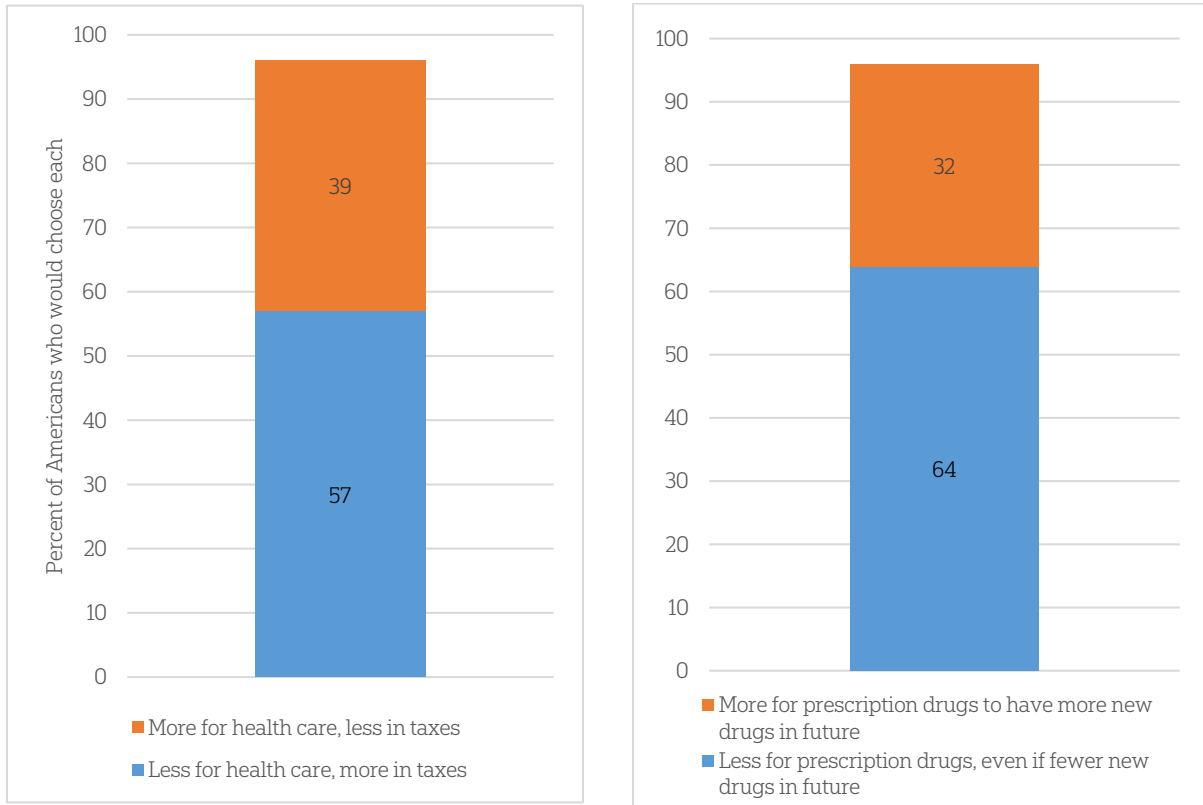
Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

A majority of Americans would prefer people pay less for health care even if it means higher taxes and less innovation, and there has been no shift in public opinion following the outbreak.

Faced with trade-offs between health care spending and taxes or innovation, people want to reduce spending. Americans’ attitudes about such trade-offs have held steady since February.

When asked about health care in the United States in May, 57% of Americans prefer that people pay less for health care and more in taxes. Likewise, 64% prefer to pay less for prescription drugs now, even if that means fewer new drugs would be available in the future.

Americans would choose to pay less for health care and prescription drugs even if it means higher taxes and less innovation.



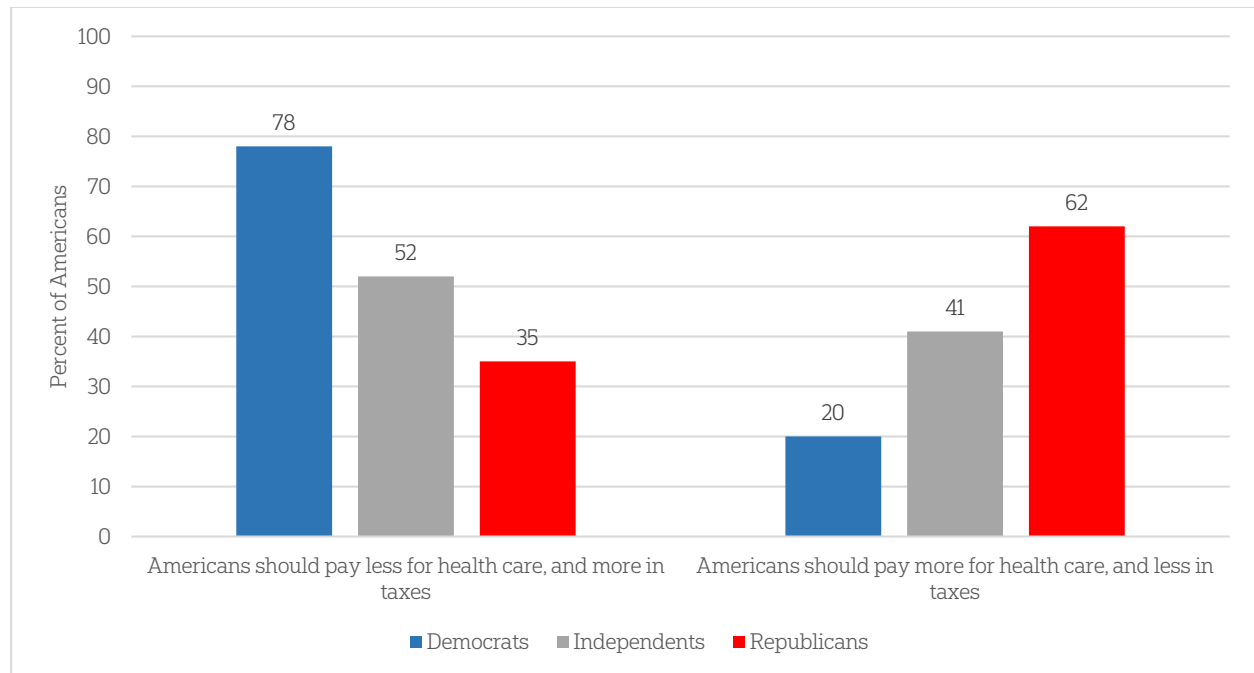
Question: Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion, even if neither is exactly right? When it comes to the health care system ... Americans should pay less for their health care, even if it means paying more in taxes. Americans should not pay more in taxes, even if that means paying more for their health care.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion, even if neither is exactly right? When it comes to the health care system ... Americans should pay less for prescription drugs, even if that means that there will be fewer new drugs available in the future. Investment in developing new prescription drugs should increase, even if that means Americans pay more for prescription drugs.

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Political partisanship is closely related to opinions about these trade-offs. Democrats are more than twice as likely as Republicans to prefer paying less for health care and more in taxes (78% vs. 35%).

Democrats and Republicans disagree on whether more should be paid for health care or in taxes.



Question: Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion, even if neither is exactly right? When it comes to the health care system ...

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

There is less agreement on trade-offs between health care premiums, out-of-pocket costs, coverage, and choice of doctors.

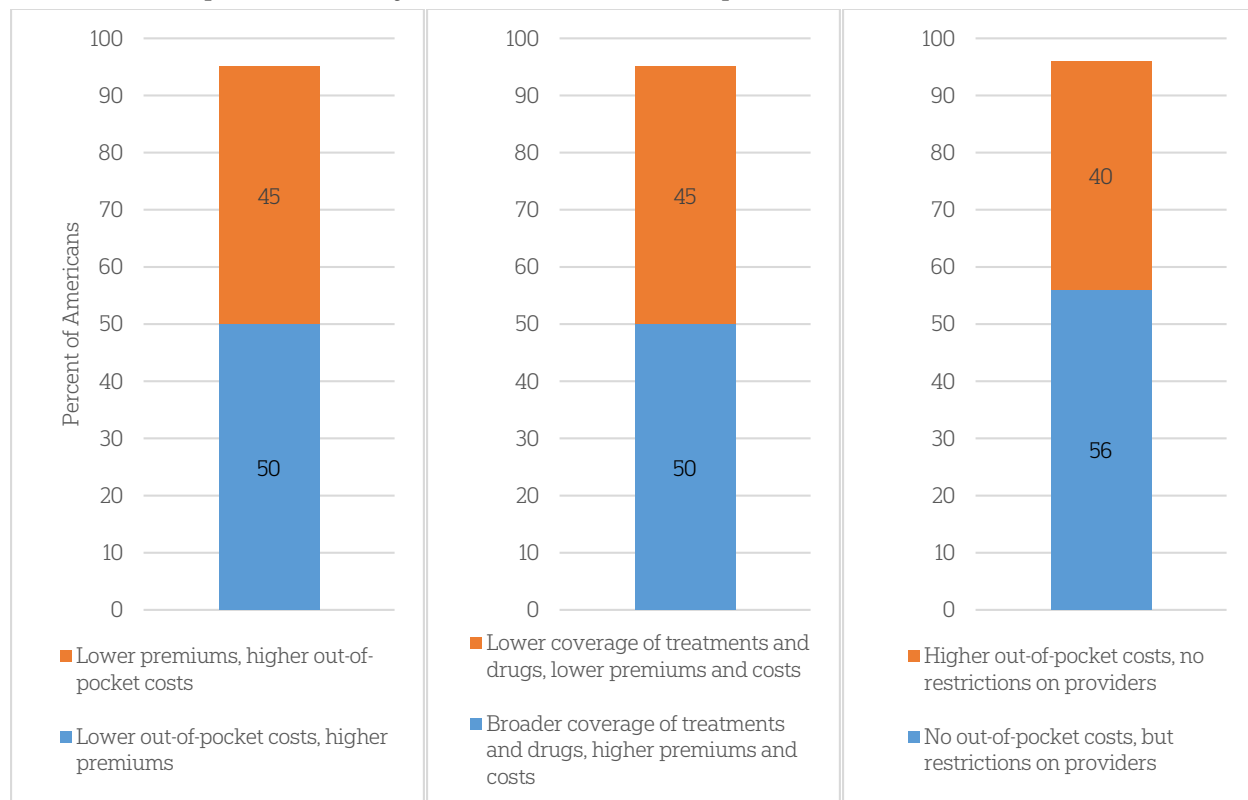
There is no clear consensus about the type of insurance plan that would best balance costs and coverage, and the coronavirus outbreak has not altered public opinion about insurance.

Asked about preferences for their own health care and insurance, 50% of Americans say they would choose lower out-of-pocket costs and higher monthly premiums, while 45% would prefer lower monthly premiums and higher out-of-pocket costs.

Moreover, 50% want a plan with broader coverage of treatments and drugs but higher premiums and out-of-pocket costs, whereas 45% prefer a plan with less coverage and lower costs.

In terms of choosing their doctors, 56% prefer a health insurance plan with lower out-of-pocket costs that restricts access to health care providers, while 40% would rather have no limits on providers but higher costs.

Americans are split on what they want in health insurance plans.



Question: If offered a choice between the following two health insurance plans, which would you prefer: [ITEM].

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Even controlling for other demographic factors, preferences about health insurance plans differ based on Americans' age and education.

Fifty-seven percent of those age 18 to 34 say that they would prefer a plan with no out-of-pocket costs but restrictions on providers, compared with 46% of those 65 and older.

Americans who have a college education are more likely than those with no college degree to say that they would want broader coverage of treatments and drugs, even at the cost of higher premiums and costs (62% vs. 43%).

Americans trust the private sector over government to drive innovation and improve quality of care, but are less confident it can control costs or provide coverage.

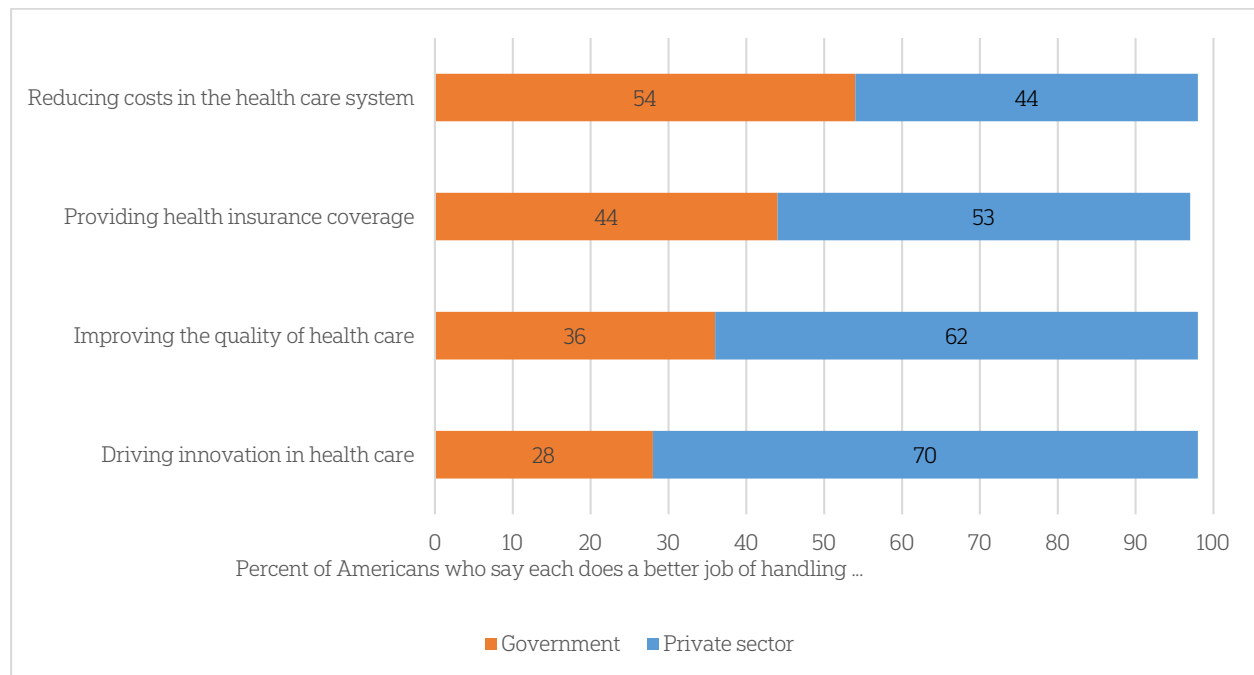
Large majorities of Americans believe that the private sector does a better job than the government handling some key aspects of health care.

Public opinion about whether the government or private sector does better at handling elements of health care has not significantly changed in the last three months despite all of the attention to the government’s handling of the coronavirus.

Seventy percent say the private sector is more effective than government at driving innovation in health care, and 62% report the private sector does a better job at improving the quality of health care.

There is, however, no consensus on whether the government or private sector better handles other key aspects of health care. While 53% say that the private sector does a better job of providing health insurance coverage, 52% say the government does a better job of reducing costs in the system.

Americans are split on who is better at reducing costs and providing coverage in health care.



Question: If you had to choose, which of the following do you trust to do a better job of handling each of the following: [ITEM].

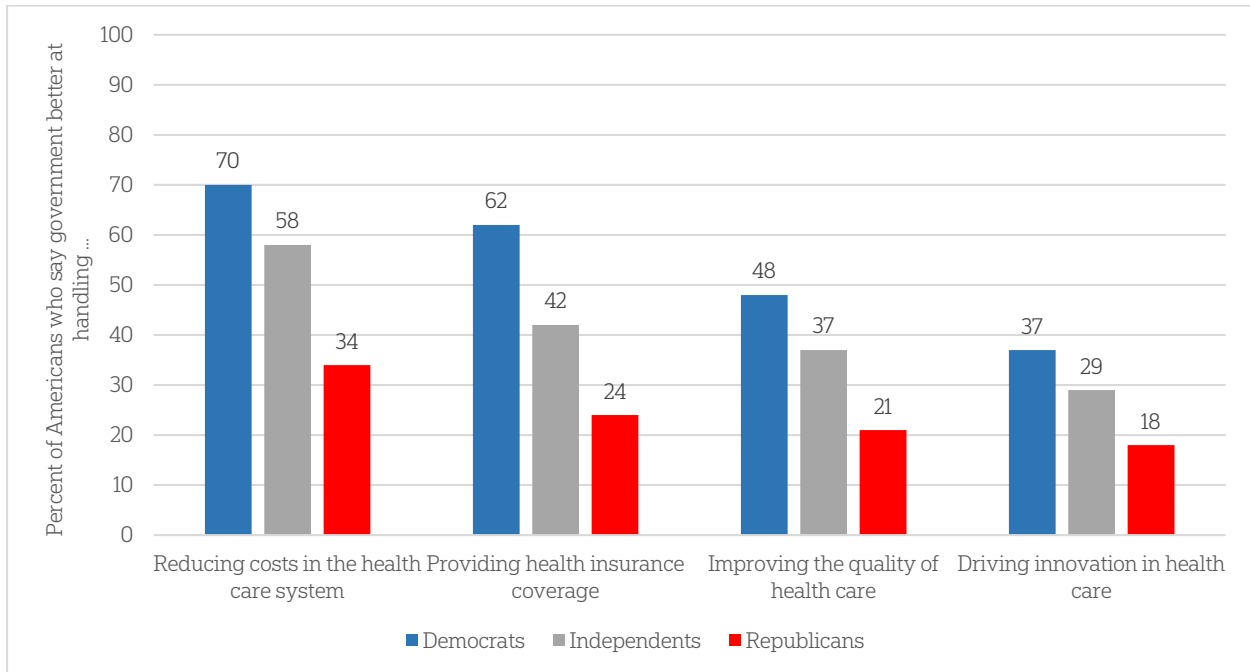
Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Beliefs about the effectiveness of the government versus the private sector in health care differ based on race and partisanship.

Black Americans are twice as likely as white Americans to say that the government does a better job of driving health care innovation (54% vs. 21%).

Majorities of Democrats say that the government is better than the private sector at reducing costs (70%) and providing coverage (62%). In contrast, less than half of Republicans believe the government is better than the private sector at handling any of these aspects of health care.

Democrats are more likely than Republicans and independents to believe that the government is better at handling health care.



Question: If you had to choose, which of the following do you trust to do a better job of handling each of the following: [ITEM].

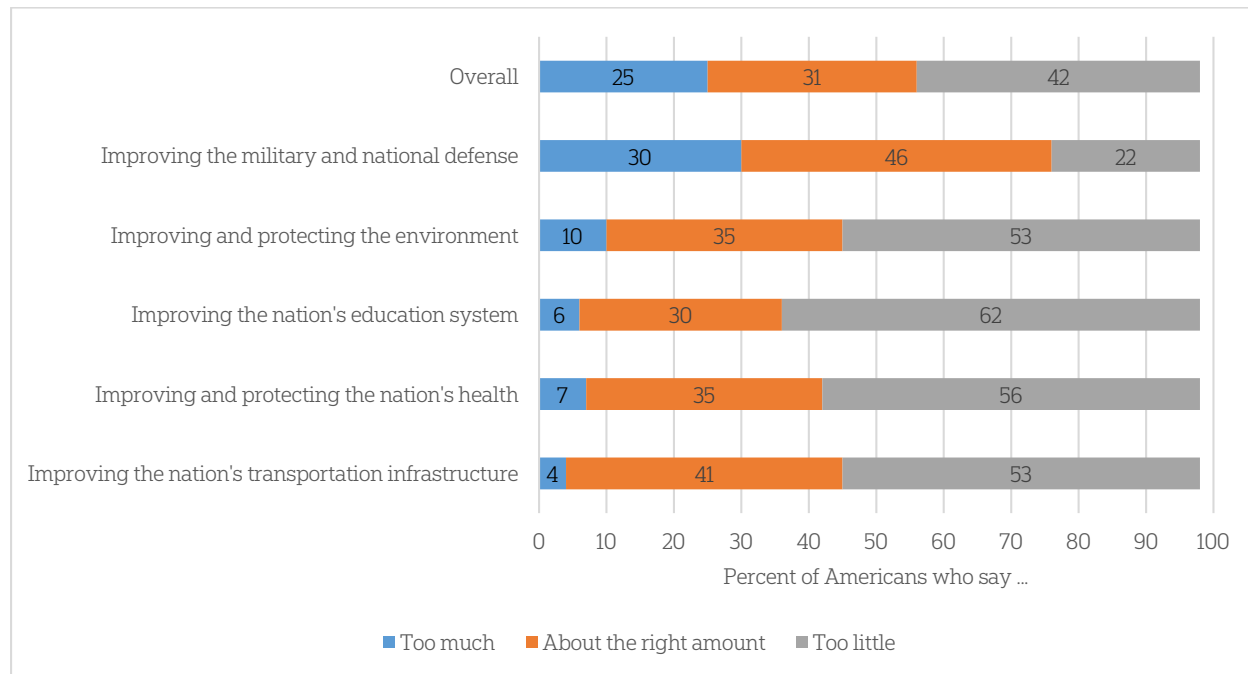
Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

A majority feel the federal government does not spend enough on improving the nation’s health.

A majority of Americans say that the United States is not spending enough on improving and protecting the nation’s health (56%). This is similar to the public’s attitude about spending on other items like infrastructure, education, and the environment. Public beliefs about government spending on these policy areas has not changed since the coronavirus outbreak.

However, there has been a decline in the last three months in the number of Americans who say the government is spending too much overall (25% vs. 37%) as more now say it is spending about the right amount (31% vs. 24%).

Twenty-five percent of the public says the government is spending too much overall, but a majority also say not enough is spent on health care or other policy areas.

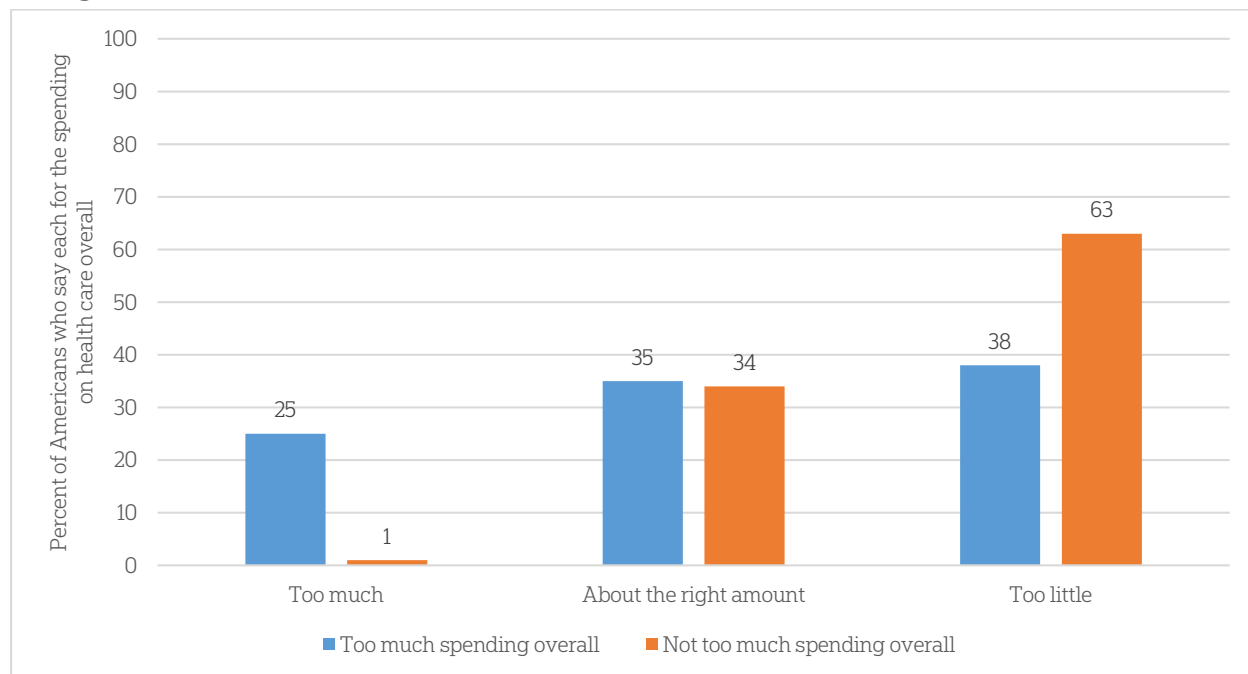


Questions: Overall, do you think the U.S. government is spending too much, too little, or the right amount? / Is the U.S. government spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on [ITEM].

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Those who say that too much is spent overall are also more likely than others to agree that too much is spent on improving the nation’s health (25% vs. 1%). Further, those who say that too much is spent overall are less likely than others to report that too little is spent on improving the nation’s health (38% vs. 63%).

Those who feel overall spending is too high also are more likely to feel spending on health care is too high.



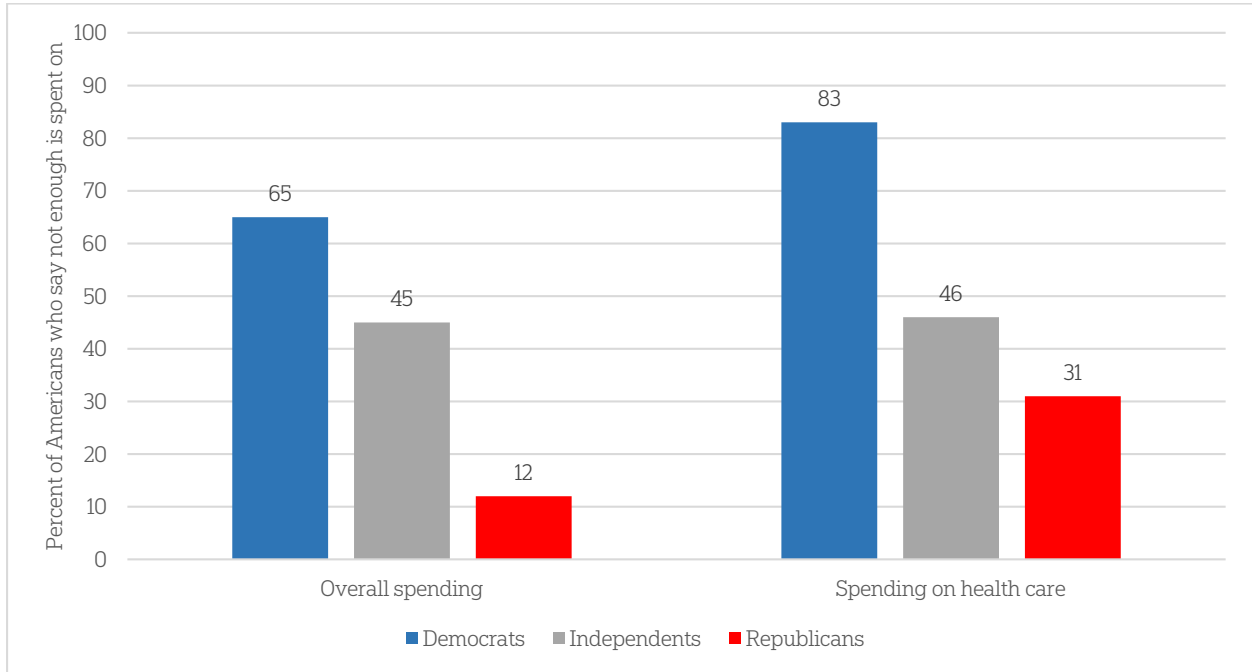
Questions: Overall, do you think the U.S. government is spending too much, too little, or the right amount? / Is the U.S. government spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on [ITEM].

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Americans’ attitudes about spending are strongly related to their political ideology and partisanship. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say that the United States spends too little overall (66% vs. 12%). This partisan gap in beliefs about the government spending increased by 21 percentage points since February when 54% of Democrats versus 22% of Republicans reported the government spent too little overall. Similarly, Americans who identify as conservative are more likely than those who identify as liberal to say that the United States spends too little (66% vs. 18%).

These differences on spending overall extend to attitudes toward funding for health care and other policies. For example, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say that not enough is spent on improving the nation’s health (83% vs. 31%). Likewise, Americans who identify as liberal are more likely than those who identify as conservatives to say that the United States spends not enough on health (84% vs. 32%).

While a significant majority of Democrats believe not enough is spent on health care, less than a third of Republicans agree.



Questions: Overall, do you think the U.S. government is spending too much, too little, or the right amount? / Is the U.S. government spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on [ITEM].

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted 5/14-18/2020, with 1,001 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from Harris Public Policy and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

The study featured two surveys, and data for both were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

The first survey was conducted between February 13 and 16, 2020, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,015 completed the survey—940 via the web and 75 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage completion rate is 20.3%, the weighted household panel response rate is 24.1%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 85.6%, for a cumulative response rate of 4.2%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.15 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect.

The second survey was conducted between May 14 and 18, 2020, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,001 completed the survey—890 via the web and 111 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage completion rate is 13.7%, the weighted household panel response rate is 24.1%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 85.6%, for a cumulative response rate of 2.8%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.37 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2019 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

A topline with full question wordings is available at www.apnorc.org. For more information, email info@apnorc.org.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO HARRIS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

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ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

- The Associated Press (AP) is the world's essential news organization, bringing fast, unbiased news to all media platforms and formats.
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

The founding principles of The AP-NORC Center include a mandate to carefully preserve and protect the scientific integrity and objectivity of NORC and the journalistic independence of AP. All work conducted by the Center conforms to the highest levels of scientific integrity to prevent any real or perceived bias in the research. All of the work of the Center is subject to review by its advisory committee to help ensure it meets these standards. The Center will publicize the results of all studies and make all datasets and study documentation available to scholars and the public.

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