



**THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER**  
**For The People & The Press**

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## Opposition to Ryan Medicare Plan from Older, Attentive Americans

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# Opposition to Ryan Medicare Plan from Older, Attentive Americans

The public offers a mixed reaction to a proposal to change Medicare into a program that would give future participants a credit toward purchasing private health insurance coverage: 41% oppose such a change, 36% favor it, and nearly a quarter (23%) have no opinion either way. Despite this even division of opinion overall, there is broad, and strong, opposition to the proposal among older Americans, and those who are paying a lot of attention to the issue.

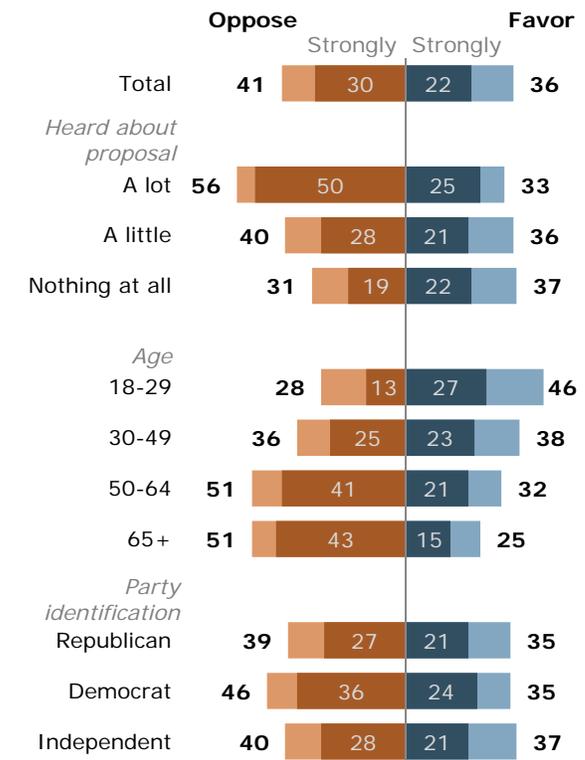
Those ages 50 and older oppose this proposal, which is part of Rep. Paul Ryan’s deficit reduction plan, by a 51% to 29% margin. And this opposition is intense: 42% strongly oppose this kind of change, while only 19% strongly favor it. The same is true among people who say they have heard a lot about this proposal – fully 56% are opposed while 33% are in favor, and strong opposition among this group outweighs strong support by two-to-one (50% vs. 25%).

The latest national poll by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted May 25-30 among 1,509 adults, finds only modest partisan differences in views of the Medicare proposal. Democrats are slightly more likely to oppose this kind of change than are Republicans (46% vs. 39%), while an identical 35% in both parties are in favor. The ambivalence toward this proposal among Republicans holds across ideological lines. Even among conservative Republicans as many oppose (38%) as favor (34%) this proposal. And among people who say they agree with the Tea Party just 44% support this change, while 36% are opposed.

When it comes to dealing with Medicare, the Democrats have a 44% to 34% edge over the Republicans as the party who can do the best job. Even though this proposed change receives mixed reactions within each party base, most remain loyal to their party on the issue generally.

## Divisions over Medicare Proposal: Older and Attentive More Opposed

*Change Medicare into program that would give future participants a credit toward purchasing private health insurance coverage?*



PEW RESEARCH CENTER May 25-30, 2011.

For example, while just 35% of Republicans favor this particular proposal, 70% believe the GOP can do the better job of dealing with Medicare overall. A comparable 75% of Democrats say their party is best suited to handle Medicare, far higher than the 46% who oppose this particular issue. Independents are divided in their assessment, with 40% preferring the Democratic Party, and 33% the Republican Party, on the issue of Medicare.

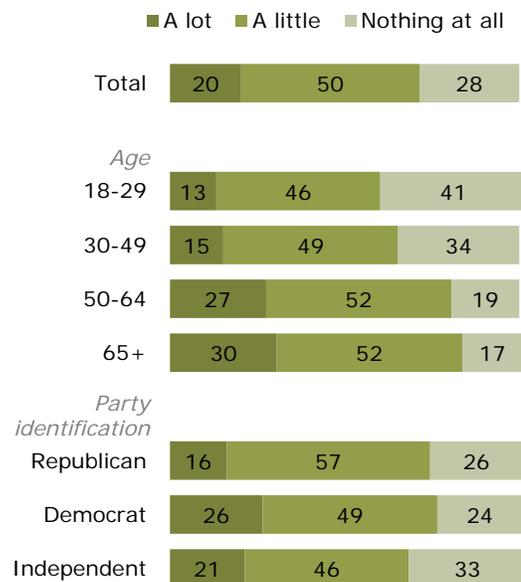
Attention to the debate over Medicare is limited so far. Just one-in-five Americans (20%) say they have heard a lot about a proposal to change Medicare into a program that would give future participants a credit toward purchasing private health insurance coverage; half (50%) have heard a little about it, and 28% have heard nothing at all. Awareness is particularly low among younger Americans – fully 41% of adults under 30, and 34% of those ages 30-49, have heard nothing at all about this proposal. And politically, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say they have heard a lot about this proposal (26% vs. 16%).

The lack of awareness goes a long way toward explaining some of the contradictory views many Americans hold on this issue. In particular, people under age 30 are the only major demographic group in which significantly more say they favor (46%) than oppose (28%) this proposed change. Yet this same cohort is far more likely to say the Democratic Party (49%) not the Republican Party (34%) can do a better job on this issue.

While there is little partisan difference overall in reactions to this proposed Medicare change, there is a distinct partisan divide among the very attentive. Democrats who have heard a lot about the proposal are far more likely to oppose it (69% vs. 38% of Democrats who have heard little or nothing). Similarly, independents who have heard a lot about this proposal are significantly more likely to oppose it than those who have not (51% vs. 37%). However, Republicans who have heard a lot about the proposal, if anything, are more likely to support it.

### Few Have Heard 'A Lot' about Proposal to Change Medicare

*How much have you heard about a proposal to change Medicare into a program that would give future participants a credit toward purchasing private health insurance coverage?*



PEW RESEARCH CENTER May 25-30, 2011. Q18.

## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted May 25-30, 2011 among a national sample of 1,509 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (1,004 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 505 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 255 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,509	3.5 percentage points
Republicans	384	6.0 percentage points
Democrats	500	5.5 percentage points
Independents	552	5.0 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**MAY 2011 POLITICAL SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**May 25-30, 2011**  
**N=1509**

**QUESTIONS 1 AND 15 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**  
**QUESTIONS 2-3 AND 16 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**  
**NO QUESTIONS 4-14**  
**QUESTIONS 17a AND 17c-d HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.17 Please tell me if you think the REPUBLICAN Party or the DEMOCRATIC Party could do a better job in each of the following areas... (First,) which party could do a better job of... **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]** How about **[NEXT ITEM]**?

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	(VOL.) Both equally	(VOL.) Neither	(VOL.) DK/Ref
b. Dealing with the Medicare system May 25-30, 2011	34	44	5	8	9
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b> <i>Reforming the Medicare system</i> Sep 16-19, 2010	33	38	7	9	12

**ASK ALL:**

Q.18 As you may know, Medicare is the government program that provides health care to seniors and people with permanent disabilities. How much, if anything, have you heard about a proposal to change Medicare into a program that would give future participants a credit toward purchasing private health insurance coverage? Have you heard a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

May 25-30  
2011

20	A lot
50	A little
28	Nothing at all
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL:**

Q.19 Generally, do you favor or oppose this proposal? **[REPEAT PROPOSAL AS NEEDED: Would you favor or oppose a proposal to change Medicare into a program that would give future participants a credit toward purchasing private health insurance coverage?]**

**ASK IF FAVOR OR OPPOSE (Q.19=1,2):**

Q.20 Would you say you **[Favor/Oppose]** this proposal strongly, or not so strongly?

May 25-30  
2011

36	Favor
22	Strongly
13	Not so strongly
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
41	Oppose
30	Strongly
10	Not so strongly
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
23	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**QUESTION 21-25 AND 36-46 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**  
**QUESTIONS 29-33 AND 49 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**  
**NO QUESTIONS 26-28, 34-35, 40-44, 47-48**

**ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

**ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	<i>Lean Rep</i>	<i>Lean Dem</i>
May 25-30, 2011	24	33	38	3	*	2	15	17
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	25	32	37	3	*	3	17	16
Mar 8-14, 2011	24	33	38	3	*	2	17	15
Feb 22-Mar 1, 2011	24	33	37	3	*	3	15	16
Feb 2-7, 2011	24	31	39	3	*	2	16	16
Jan 5-9, 2011	27	32	35	4	*	2	15	14
Dec 1-5, 2010	25	33	34	5	1	2	13	14
Nov 4-7, 2010	26	30	37	4	*	2	17	13
Oct 27-30, 2010	25	34	31	6	1	4	13	11
Oct 13-18, 2010	25	31	36	4	*	3	16	13
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010	24	32	39	2	*	2	15	17
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	26	33	34	4	*	3	14	14
Jun 16-20, 2010	27	34	34	3	1	2	15	15
Apr 21-26, 2010	26	33	36	3	1	3	16	13
<b>Yearly Totals</b>								
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

**ASK ALL:**  
TEAPARTY2

From what you know, do you agree or disagree with the Tea Party movement, or don't you have an opinion either way?

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No opinion either way</u>	<u>(VOL.) Haven't heard of</u>	<u>(VOL.) Refused</u>	<i>Not heard of/ DK</i>
May 25-30, 2011	18	23	54	2	2	--
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	22	29	47	1	1	--
Mar 8-14, 2011	19	25	54	1	1	--
Feb 22-Mar 1, 2011	20	25	52	2	2	--
Feb 2-7, 2011 <sup>1</sup>	22	22	53	2	2	--
Jan 5-9, 2011	24	22	50	2	1	--
Dec 1-5, 2010	22	26	49	2	2	--
Nov 4-7, 2010	27	22	49	1	1	--
Oct 27-30, 2010 (RVs)	29	25	32	--	1	13
Oct 13-18, 2010 (RVs)	28	24	30	--	1	16
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010 (RVs)	29	26	32	--	1	13
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	22	18	37	--	1	21
Jun 16-20, 2010	24	18	30	--	*	27
May 20-23, 2010	25	18	31	--	1	25
Mar 11-21, 2010	24	14	29	--	1	31

<sup>1</sup> In the February 2-7, 2011 survey and before, question read "...do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the Tea Party movement..." In October 2010 and earlier, question was asked only of those who had heard or read a lot or a little about the Tea Party. In May through October, it was described as: "the Tea Party movement that has been involved in campaigns and protests in the U.S. over the past year." In March it was described as "the Tea Party protests that have taken place in the U.S. over the past year."