



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

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Medicare Voucher Plan Remains Unpopular

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andrew Kohut

President, Pew Research Center

Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock

Associate Directors

Scott Keeter

Director of Survey Research

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel (202) 419-4350
Fax (202) 419-4399
www.people-press.org

Plurality Views Ryan VP Choice Negatively Medicare Voucher Plan Remains Unpopular

Paul Ryan's selection to the Republican ticket has put the issue of Medicare squarely on the 2012 campaign agenda. And the latest Pew Research Center survey continues to find the public is aware of a proposal to gradually shift Medicare to a system of vouchers and is, on balance, more opposed than supportive of the idea.

The survey, conducted August 16-19, 2012 among 1,005 adults nationwide, finds 72% have heard a lot or a little about a proposal to change Medicare into a program that would give future participants a credit toward purchasing private health insurance coverage. And among those who are aware, the idea remains unpopular; by a 49% to 34% margin more oppose than favor the idea. This is virtually unchanged from public reactions a little over a year ago, when Republicans in the House voted in favor of this proposal as part of the "Ryan plan."

More generally, while surveys consistently find that dealing with the deficit is a high priority for Americans, there is little support for doing so if it means entitlement cuts. When asked whether it is more important to reduce the budget deficit or to keep Social Security and Medicare benefits as they are, Americans continue to prioritize maintaining benefits.

The public offers a relatively negative assessment of Mitt Romney's selection of Ryan as his running mate. Nearly half (46%) say Ryan is an only fair or poor choice, while 28% say he is an excellent or good choice. By comparison, reactions to John Kerry's

Continued Opposition to Medicare Vouchers

A proposal to change Medicare into a program that would give future participants a credit toward purchasing private health insurance coverage

	May 2011	August 2012
Heard a lot	20	30
Heard a little	50	42
Heard nothing/DK	<u>29</u>	<u>29</u>
	100	100

Among those who have heard...

Favor	35	34
Oppose	45	49
Don't know	<u>20</u>	<u>17</u>
	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 16-19, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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High Negatives for Both Vice Presidential Candidates

Selecting Ryan to GOP ticket was...	%
Excellent/Good choice	28
Only fair/Poor choice	46
Don't know	<u>26</u>
	100

Job Joe Biden has done as VP ...

Excellent/Good job	27
Only fair/Poor job	56
Don't know	<u>17</u>
	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 16-19, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

selection of John Edwards in 2004, and Bill Clinton’s selection of Al Gore in 1992, were more positive than negative.

But public assessments of Ryan’s Democratic counterpart are even more negative. Just 27% say Joe Biden has done an excellent or good job as vice president, while 56% say his job performance has been only fair or poor.

Romney’s selection of Ryan as his running mate received less public attention than the selection of Palin and Biden to the Republican and Democratic tickets in 2008. Fewer than half (42%) say they heard a lot about the choice of Ryan this year, while 57% heard little or nothing. In 2008, 56% said they had heard a lot about McCain’s selection of Sarah Palin and 58% heard a lot about Obama’s selection of Joe Biden in the weeks following those announcements.

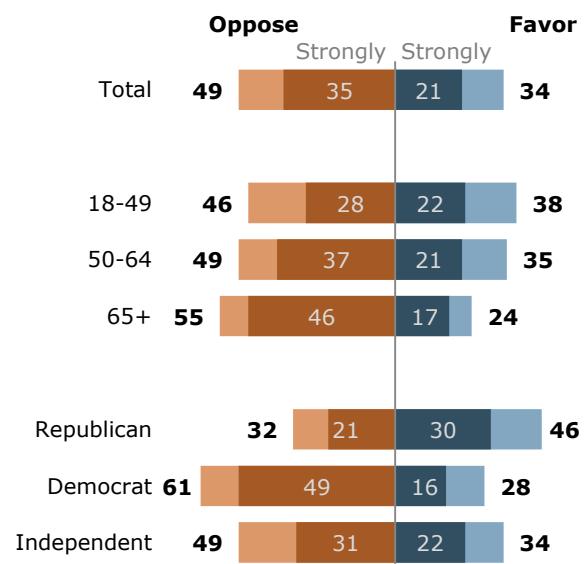
At this point, most Americans do not associate Ryan with the proposal to change Medicare. Just 23% of those who have heard about the idea of shifting Medicare to a system of credits to buy private insurance identify it as Ryan’s. Nearly as many (17%) say Barack Obama proposed this, while 44% do not know who proposed it.

Medicare Vouchers

As has consistently been the case, seniors express the strongest opposition to changing Medicare into a program that offers future participants credits toward purchasing private health insurance coverage. People age 65 and older who have heard about this proposal oppose it by a 55% to 24% margin, with fully 46% saying they are strongly opposed. There also is more opposition than support among people age 50 to 64, while those under age 50 are more divided.

Opposition to Medicare Vouchers from Older Americans

A proposal to change Medicare into a program that would give future participants a credit toward purchasing private health insurance coverage



PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 16-19, 2012. Based on those who have heard of this proposal (N=780).

The issue also splits along partisan lines with Democrats opposed to such a change by a 61% to 28% margin, while Republicans are more likely to favor it, though by a slimmer 46% to 32% margin. Among independents, 49% are opposed to this sort of gradual shift toward Medicare vouchers, while 34% are in favor.

Entitlements vs. Deficit Reduction

In January, 69% said reducing the budget deficit should be a top priority for the president and Congress, up significantly from recent years. But the public rejects changing Social Security and Medicare benefits to achieve deficit reduction.

Overall, 51% say it is more important to keep Social Security and Medicare benefits as they are, compared with 33% who say it is more important to take steps to reduce the budget deficit; 11% volunteer that they are equally important.

Democrats prioritize maintaining benefits over deficit reduction by a wide 64% to 23% margin. By contrast, Republicans are somewhat more likely to say taking steps to reduce the budget deficit (48%) is more important than keeping Social Security and Medicare benefits as they are (34%).

About half of independents (48%) prioritize maintaining benefits, compared with 35% who say reducing the deficit is more important.

Fully 61% of seniors say maintaining benefits is more important, just 22% say reducing the budget deficit should take priority. And those with low family incomes

Public Favors Maintaining Social Security and Medicare Benefits over Reducing Budget Deficit

<i>What is more important ...</i>	Reduce budget deficit	Keep Social Security & Medicare benefits	(Vol.) Both	DK
Total	33	51	11	5=100
Men	37	45	11	7=100
Women	29	57	11	4=100
18-29	34	47	7	12=100
30-49	36	50	11	3=100
50-64	34	51	13	2=100
65+	22	61	11	6=100
<i>Family income</i>				
\$75,000 or more	48	39	11	2=100
\$30,000-\$75,000	44	43	9	4=100
Less than \$30,000	16	66	11	7=100
Republican	48	34	12	6=100
Democrat	23	64	9	4=100
Independent	35	48	12	4=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 16-19, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

overwhelmingly favor maintaining current benefits: 66% say it is more important to keep Social Security and Medicare benefits as they are, compared with just 16% who say it is more important to reduce the deficit.

Low Ratings for Ryan Choice, Biden Performance

Mitt Romney's selection of Paul Ryan as his running mate receives a more negative than positive reaction from the public. Overall, 46% say Ryan is an only fair (23%) or poor (22%) choice, while just 28% call him an excellent (14%) or good (14%) choice; 26% do not offer a rating.

Six-in-ten (60%) Republicans call Ryan an excellent or good choice, 20% say he is an only fair or poor choice and 20% do not offer an evaluation. Nearly seven-in-ten (68%) conservative Republicans say Ryan is an excellent or good choice, just 16% give the selection an only fair or poor rating. Independents view the Ryan selection somewhat more negatively than positively – 30% call him an excellent or good choice, compared with 42% who say he is only a fair or poor choice; 27% of independents offer no rating. Democrats view the Ryan choice overwhelmingly negatively – 70% say he is an only fair or poor selection; just 8% say excellent or good.

Views of the Ryan vice presidential selection are somewhat less positive than those for John Edwards in 2004 and Al Gore in 1992. In 2004, 49% said Edwards was an excellent or good choice, 31% called him an only fair or poor choice and 20% did not offer an opinion. In 1992, 40% said Gore was an excellent or good choice compared with 27% who said he was an only fair or poor choice; a third (33%) offered no opinion.

Views of Ryan VP Choice

<i>Paul Ryan as VP choice ...</i>	Excellent/ Good %	Only fair/ Poor %	DK %
Total	28	46	26=100
Republican	60	20	20=100
Democrat	8	70	22=100
Independent	30	42	27=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 16-19, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Joe Biden receives more negative ratings for the job he has done as vice president. Only 27% say he has done an excellent (7%) or good (20%) job as vice president; about twice as many (56%) say he has done an only fair (31%) or poor (25%) job.

Biden receives tepid ratings from his own party. About half of Democrats (52%) say Biden has done an excellent or good job, while 36% rate his performance as only fair or poor. Liberal Democrats (61% excellent or good) are more likely than conservative and moderate Democrats (46% excellent or good) to rate Biden's job performance positively. Most independents (59%) and a broad majority of Republicans (87%) say Biden has done an only fair or poor job as vice president.

Most Say Biden Has Done an Only Fair or Poor Job as Vice President

	Excellent/ Good	Only fair/ Poor	DK
	%	%	%
Total	27	56	17=100
Republican	2	87	11=100
Democrat	51	36	13=100
Independent	22	59	19=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER August 16-19, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted August 16-19, 2012, among a national sample of 1,005 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (604 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 401 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 180 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. 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://peoplepress.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2011 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	1,005	3.6 percentage points
Republicans	237	7.4 percentage points
Democrats	323	6.4 percentage points
Independents	378	5.9 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
August 16-19, 2012 OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,005

PEW.1 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

Next,

PEW.2 How would you rate the job Joe Biden has done as vice president? Has he done an excellent, good, only fair, or poor job as vice president?

Aug 16-19
2012

7	Excellent
20	Good
31	Only fair
25	Poor
17	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

Thinking about the presidential campaign...

PEW.3 How much, if anything, have you heard about Mitt Romney's choice of a vice presidential running mate? Have you heard a lot, a little or nothing at all?

Aug 16-19
2012

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

TRENDS FOR COMPARISON	
<i>McCain's choice</i>	<i>Obama's choice</i>
Aug 29-31	Aug 22-25
<u>2008</u>	<u>2008</u>
56	58
30	35
13	7
1	*

ASK ALL:

PEW.4 As you may have heard Mitt Romney has named Paul Ryan as his running mate. How would you rate Paul Ryan? Do you think he is an excellent, good, only fair, or poor choice?

Aug 16-19
2012

14	Excellent
14	Good
23	Only fair
22	Poor
26	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

TRENDS FOR COMPARISON	
<i>Edwards</i>	<i>Gore</i>
July	July
<u>2004</u>	<u>1992</u>
16	15
33	25
22	22
9	5
20	33

NO QUESTIONS PEW.5-PEW.6

Next,

ASK ALL:

PEW.7 What is more important, taking steps to reduce the budget deficit or keeping Social Security and Medicare benefits as they are?

Aug 16-19 <u>2012</u>		Sep 22-Oct 4 <u>2011</u>	Jun 15-19 <u>2011</u>	Feb <u>1995</u>
33	Taking steps to reduce the budget deficit	35	32	24
51	Keeping Social Security and Medicare benefits as they are	58	60	70
11	Both equally (VOL.)	2	4	2
5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)		5	4

PEJ.1 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

PEW.8 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?

Aug 16-19 <u>2012</u>		May 25-30 <u>2011</u>
30	A lot	20
42	A little	50
28	Nothing at all	28
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1

ASK ALL:

PEW.9 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 (PEW.9=1,2):

PEW.9a Would you say you [Favor/Oppose] this proposal strongly, or not so strongly?

Aug 16-19 <u>2012</u>		May 25-30 <u>2011</u>
32	Favor	36
19	Strongly	22
12	Not so strongly	13
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1
44	Oppose	41
29	Strongly	30
13	Not so strongly	10
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1
24	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	23

ASK IF HEARD A LOT/A LITTLE (PEW.8=1,2) [N=780]:

PEW.10 Do you happen to know who proposed this change to Medicare? **[OPEN END; DO NOT READ PRECODES. DO NOT PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL RESPONSES]**

Aug 16-19 <u>2012</u>	
23	Paul Ryan
13	Mitt Romney
17	Barack Obama
3	Other
44	Don't know/Refused

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?

Aug 16-19, 2012	Republican	Democrat	Independent	preference	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
					No	Other			
	20	33	39	4	1	4	4	15	16