



## IEWS OF MISSOURI VOTERS On Health Care Coverage

To launch *Cover the Uninsured Week* in Missouri, the Missouri Foundation for Health commissioned Public Opinion Strategies, an Alexandria, VA -based survey research company specializing in public policy, to assess the attitudes of the state’s residents. The firm conducted a statewide survey of 500 registered voters in Missouri from April 9-12, 2005. The sample was drawn in proportion to the registered voter population. The margin of error for a sample of 500 is  $\pm 4.4\%$ .

### Key Findings

**Missouri voters overwhelmingly believe the number of people without health insurance is a serious problem.**

- More than nine out of 10 Missouri voters (92%) believe the number of people without health care coverage in Missouri is a serious problem; with more than half (55%) saying it is a very serious problem.
  - This perception of the uninsured as a serious problem in Missouri is consistent across parties (84% serious problem among Republicans, 95% serious problem among Independents, 99% serious problem among Democrats).
  - The issue of the uninsured in Missouri is perceived as a more serious problem among voters living in the Kansas City region and the Southeast region of the state.

#### **% Uninsured in MO is a Very Serious Problem**

Southeast	62%
Kansas City Region	60%
St. Louis Region	57%
Southwest	48%
Central	42%

- Nearly two-thirds (66%) believe the number of uninsured will continue to increase in the next 10 years.

“Access to affordable health insurance and coverage” is the number one social and domestic issue, in terms of where Missouri voters believe the President and Congress should focus.

- Respondents were asked the following question: “And, in addition to the concerns about terrorism, national security, and the situation in Iraq, which ONE of the following issues do you believe should be the next highest priority for Congress and the President?” The top issue was ‘access to affordable health insurance and coverage’ (30%), followed by ‘Social Security/Medicare’ (28%), and third was ‘jobs and the economy’ (21%). The remaining three health care goals were viewed as “most important” by substantially lower percentages of respondents.



- ‘Making health care more affordable’ (41%) and ‘providing basic health insurance coverage to all Americans’ (34%) are seen as the most important health care goals in reforming the health care system.
- The remaining three health care goals were viewed as ‘most important’ by substantially lower percentages of respondents: ‘making sure people can select the doctor or hospital of their choice’ (13%); ‘maintaining the high quality of American health care’ (7%); and ‘making sure the system allows the development and adoption of new medical technologies’ (4%).

### **Not having health care coverage is an issue that is close to home – and has consequences – for Missouri voters.**

- More than two-thirds of Missouri voters (68%) surveyed report either being uninsured themselves (12%) or knowing someone, such as a family member, friend or someone they work with who is uninsured (56%).
- A majority of Missouri voters (56%) say they or someone they know has had to postpone receiving medical care or treatment because they did not have private health insurance or other health coverage in the past year.
- Roughly one-third of Missouri voters (31%) believe the percentage of people without health care coverage in Missouri is ‘higher’ than the percentage of people who are uninsured nationally. Only 14% of voters believe the percentage of people without health care coverage in Missouri is ‘lower’ than the percentage of people who are uninsured nationally; while 49% believe the percentage of uninsured is ‘about the same.’

### **Many Missouri voters believe they could lose their health coverage.**

- More than one-third (37%) of respondents with employer-provided coverage believe it is likely that they will be forced to drop their employer-provided health coverage due to significant increases in their own out-of-pocket costs for health care, including the amount of premiums, deductibles or co-pays.
- When choosing from a series of possible negative outcomes related to employment and health care, 52% of Missouri voters report it is likely they would experience one of six negative outcomes in the next year.
  - Negative outcomes related to affording health care coverage are perceived as more likely to happen than negative employment outcomes in the coming year.
    - 14% Might not be able to afford out-of-pocket costs for health care coverage
    - 10% Might not be able to afford the cost of health care
    - 9% Might lose health insurance coverage
    - 8% Might not be able to cover the cost of a major illness
    - 7% Might lose job
    - 4% Hours, wages or salary might be reduced
  - Missourians most likely to say they would experience a negative outcome in the next year tended to be:



- Younger women (age 18-44);
- Voters with lower levels of formal education, particularly women;
- Voters with lower levels of household income;
- African Americans;
- Voters living in urban communities;
- Voters living in the Springfield media market;
- Voters who themselves have had to postpone care or know someone who has postponed care due to lack of coverage in the past year; and
- Voters who themselves are currently uninsured or know someone who is currently uninsured.

**Missouri voters have opinions about why people are becoming uninsured.**

The top three reasons Missouri voters say more Americans are becoming uninsured are:

- Fewer employers are offering health coverage because of rising costs (38%);
- Workers are turning down health coverage from their employers because they can no longer afford to pay their share of the costs (24%); and
- Higher unemployment means workers lose their jobs and their health coverage (19%).