



# WHAT DO KANSANS KNOW ABOUT HEALTH REFORM? SURVEY RESULTS: PART TWO

## Introduction

Now that President Obama has been re-elected for a second term, implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) seems likely to continue, though widespread opposition remains. Critics claim that the law is poorly designed and won't come close to achieving its goals; supporters insist that the health care system is doomed to fail without the major overhaul.

As more components of the ACA take effect, it is important to understand what Kansans know — and think — about federal health reform. To better understand Kansans' knowledge of health reform changes, the Kansas Health Institute was commissioned by the Kansas Insurance Department to conduct a telephone and online survey and a series of focus groups between November 2011 and January 2012. This brief, the second of two, describes Kansans' knowledge of the ACA and the health reform resources they turn to most often. The first brief, available at [www.khi.org](http://www.khi.org), summarizes what Kansans had to say about the state of health care now and the improvements they would like to see.

## Perceptions about the ACA

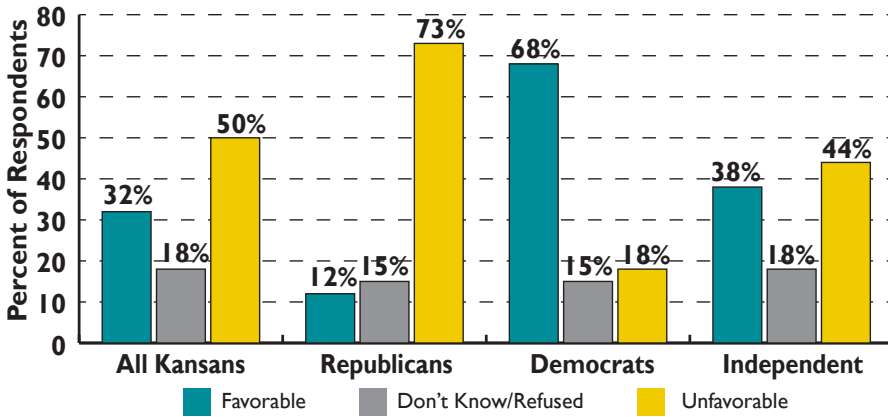
Half of the Kansans surveyed view the ACA unfavorably. This is slightly higher than the negative sentiment nationwide, which has stayed around 40 percent in the Kaiser Family Foundation's [monthly tracking polls](#). KHI surveyed 834 Kansans age 18–64, including Republicans, Democrats and independents. As shown in Figure 1 (page 2), Kansas Republicans were more likely to have an unfavorable opinion of the health reform law (73 percent unfavorable, 12 percent favorable) than Kansas Democrats (18 percent unfavorable, 68 percent favorable). Kansas independents were more evenly divided, with 44 percent unfavorable and 38 percent favorable.

Only 22 percent of Kansans who had an unfavorable opinion about the law said it was purely about the specifics of the law, as shown in Figure 2 (page 2). More than a third — 34 percent — said their dislike had more to do with the general direction of national politics. Another 41 percent said their negative opinion stemmed from both the general direction of national politics and specific provisions of the law.

### KEY POINTS

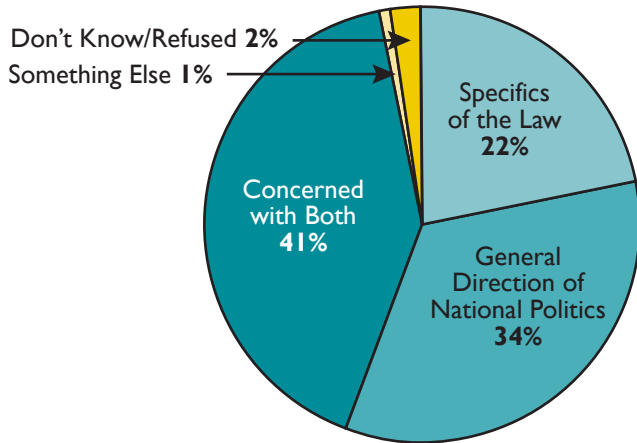
- Half of Kansans dislike the ACA, with Republicans more likely than Democrats to have a negative opinion of the health reform law.
- More than half of Kansans disagree with the concept of an individual mandate, which is the requirement that all citizens have health insurance.
- Most Kansans were not well-informed about the law, though they were familiar with a few major provisions.
- Television news programs and word of mouth are Kansans' primary sources of health reform information.

**Figure 1. Half of Kansans Oppose ACA, Nearly a Third in Favor**



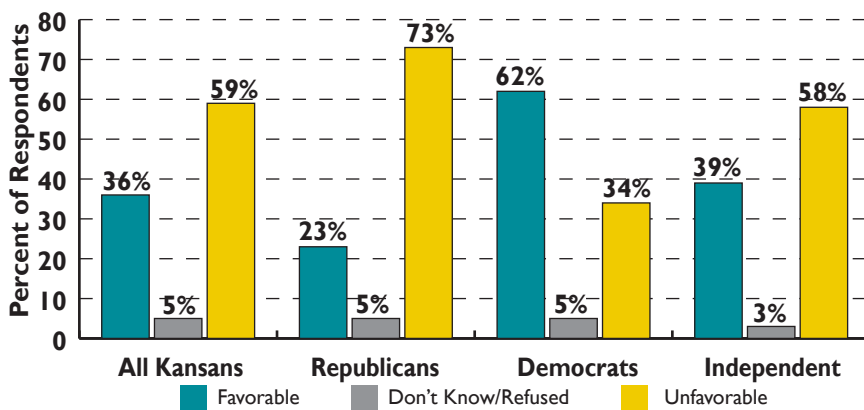
Percentage of Kansans surveyed who view the law favorably or unfavorably, by political affiliation. Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Differences among party affiliations significant at  $p < .001$ . Source: KHI analysis of 2011–2012 survey.

**Figure 2. Those Who Oppose the ACA are Concerned with General Direction of National Politics in Addition to the Law Itself**



Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Source: KHI analysis of 2011–2012 survey.

**Figure 3. Individual Mandate Opinions Follow Political Affiliation**



Kansans' opinions of individual mandate, by party. Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Differences among party affiliations significant at  $p < .001$ . Source: KHI analysis of 2011–2012 survey.

While this question focused on the law in its entirety, other questions aimed to better understand which elements of the ACA were most favorable or unfavorable. More than half — 59 percent — of the survey respondents viewed unfavorably the concept of a government requirement to have health insurance, also known as the individual mandate. As shown in Figure 3, Republicans were more likely to view the individual mandate unfavorably (73 percent unfavorable, 23 percent favorable) than Democrats (34 percent unfavorable, 62 percent favorable). The majority of independents — 58 percent — viewed the mandate unfavorably.

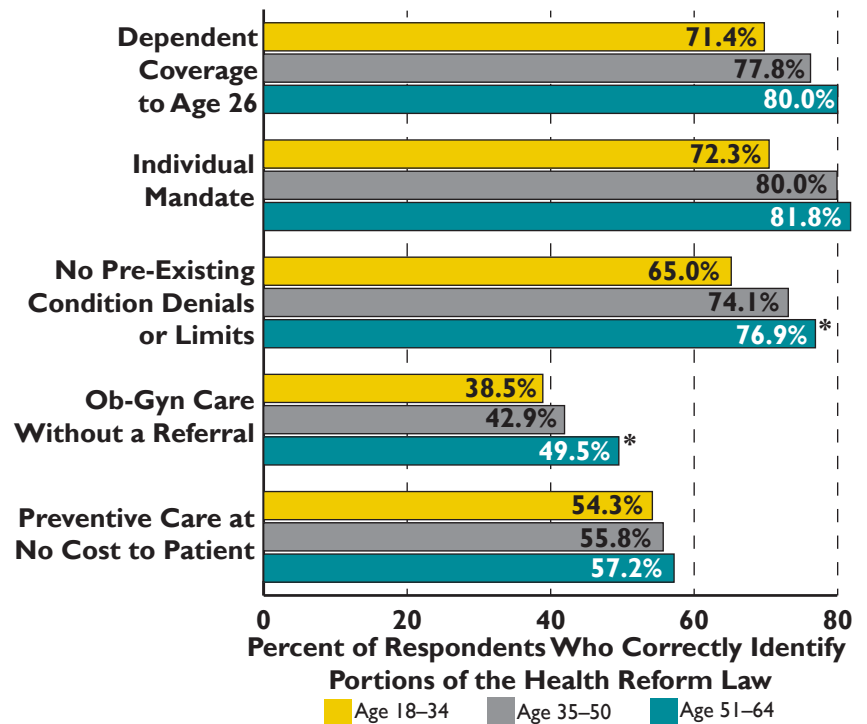
The 44 participants in the five focus groups held around the state discussed what they believed to be negative and positive elements of the law. Table 1 captures some of the participants' comments. Many focus group participants had never heard of a health insurance exchange — the online marketplaces that are one of the hallmarks of the ACA. But after learning more about an exchange, several said that it may be a way to curb health insurance costs if it could increase competition among health insurers. Some had concerns about oversight, saying they did not want exchanges to become another government-run program.

## What do Kansans Know about the ACA?

More than three-fourths of Kansans knew about the individual mandate and that the ACA allows young adults to

stay on their parents' insurance plans until they reach age 26. Nearly three-fourths also knew that most insurance companies will be prohibited from denying or limiting coverage to those with pre-existing medical conditions beginning in 2014. However, less than half of surveyed Kansans — only 44 percent — were aware that in most cases women will be able to see an obstetrician-gynecologist without a referral from her primary care provider. Slightly more than half — 56 percent — knew that the law requires insurers to provide preventive services like colonoscopies and mammograms at no cost to the patient. Older Kansans tended to know the correct answers more often than younger ones, as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Older Kansans More Likely to Know Specifics of Health Reform Law**



\*Indicates that the difference among age groups significant at p<0.05.  
 Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.  
 Source: KHI analysis of 2011–2012 survey.

**Table 1. Focus Group Participants Share Positive, Negative Views of Health Reform**

Harmful	Beneficial
It will be very expensive to implement the law and there's no money to pay for it.	People who were not able to be insured before will now be able to be insured.
The law did not do enough to address rising costs in the health care system.	The insurance offered through health insurance exchanges would have to meet quality standards.
The law calls for too much government intrusion.	Children can stay on a parent's plan until age 26.
The law was passed too quickly and without enough discussion and debate.	If people access preventive care, they won't show up at the emergency room.
There could be a shortage of doctors because of the law.	Buying coverage through a health insurance exchange could make it an easier task.
Taxpayer dollars will be used to pay for much of it and that means everyone is paying for it.	The federal high-risk pool provides coverage to people who cannot get it elsewhere.
With such a long and complicated law, there are going to be a lot of loopholes and unknowns.	The law is supposed to close the "doughnut hole."
The changes to the system could drive up costs.	The health insurance exchanges could create more competition among insurers.

Note: The comments above are paraphrased from focus group discussions.  
 Source: KHI analysis of 2011–2012 consumer focus groups.

## Reliable Health Reform Information Difficult to Find

The focus group participants described what they most wanted to know about the law: how much it was going to cost and how the insurance changes would directly affect them. Participants in the focus groups also talked about how difficult it is to find a neutral resource for health reform information. They used words like “nonpartisan,” “honest” and “independent” to describe ideal sources for health reform information. “I want someone who has nothing vested in it to tell me (about health reform),” one participant said.

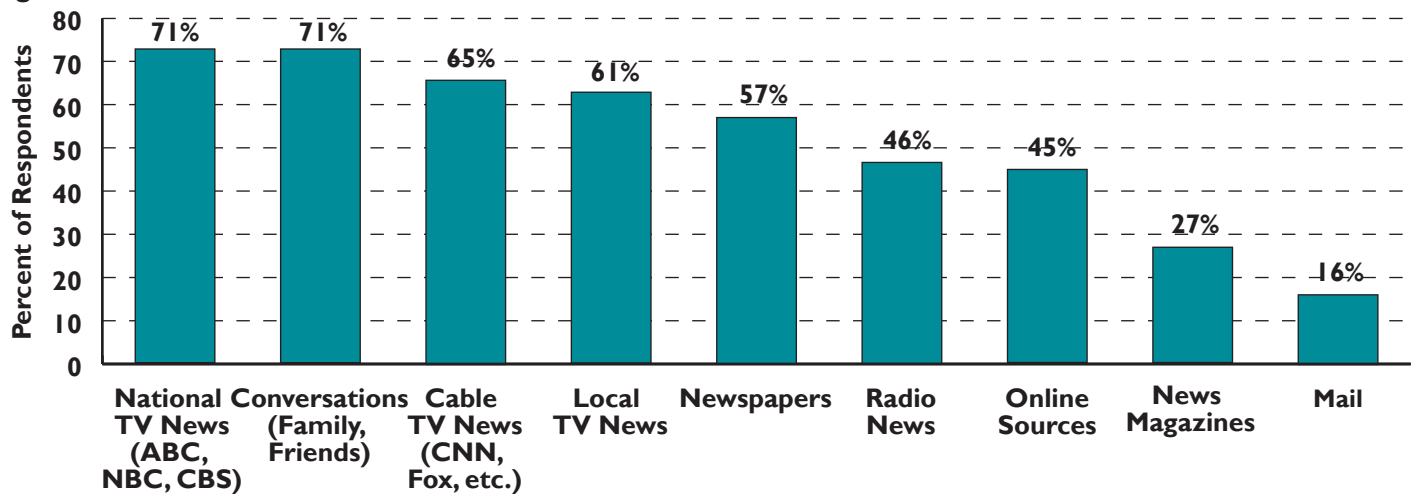
Almost three quarters — 71 percent — of the survey respondents reported that they relied on national network news and conversations with friends and family for health reform information. Cable and local television news were the next most frequently cited sources, followed by newspapers, as shown in Figure 5.

## Conclusion

Almost three years after it was passed, the ACA continues to stir up controversy. Half of Kansans view the ACA unfavorably, with Republicans more likely than Democrats to dislike the law. Of those who dislike the law, only 22 percent reported that their opinion was limited to the specifics of the law itself, as others indicated the general direction of national politics was a factor in their opinion.

While roughly three-quarters of Kansans surveyed correctly identified some provisions of the law, other provisions were less well known to the respondents. Kansans reported that they learn about health reform through conversations with friends and family and from national network news. Focus group participants shared their frustration with finding reliable and neutral sources for health reform information and called for an independent, trustworthy resource.

**Figure 5. Kansans Get Most Health Reform Information from Television News and Word of Mouth**



Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 percent because respondents could choose more than one answer.

Source: KHI analysis of 2011–2012 survey.

### More About This Work

This brief summarizes information gathered from a telephone and internet survey and five focus groups conducted between November 2011 and January 2012. Participants were Kansans age 18–64 who were selected at random. For the survey, the combined telephone and internet data (sample size n=834) were weighted based on congressional district. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.39 percent, with a 95 percent confidence interval. Among subgroups the sampling error will be higher. Detailed information about methodology can be found at [www.khi.org/kidsurvey](http://www.khi.org/kidsurvey).

### About the Issue Brief

This brief is based on work done by M. Suzanne Schrandt, J.D. This project was funded in part by the Kansas Insurance Department and the Affordable Care Act Opportunity Fund through the Topeka Community Foundation.

### KANSAS HEALTH INSTITUTE

The Kansas Health Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, independent health policy and research organization based in Topeka, Kansas. Established in 1995 with a multiyear grant from the Kansas Health Foundation, the Kansas Health Institute conducts research and policy analysis on issues that affect the health of Kansans.

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