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NEWS RELEASE

90 % of Canadians support public health care

New poll for Policy Options *examines our attitudes to universal health care*

Montreal – Nine Canadians in ten remain supportive of universal health care, and seven Canadians in ten think Barack Obama is on the right track in pursuing health reform in the United States, according to a new Nanos Research poll conducted exclusively for *Policy Options.*

"These numbers are way beyond any margin of error," notes pollster and *Policy Options* Contributing Writer Nik Nanos. "There are very few, if any, pillars of Canadian public policy of which Canadians approve as strongly as the principle of universal health care, which has been with us since it was first adopted by the Pearson government in the 1960s."

Fully 89.9 percent of Canadians support or somewhat support universal health care, and within those two response groups, the vast majority, 79.9 percent or four Canadians in five, give their unqualified endorsement, while another 10 percent are somewhat supportive. There are no important regional variations on this theme. Unqualified support for universal health care is strongest in Ontario (83 percent), and weakest on the Prairies (76.8).

Looking at the question of universal health care by demographics, unqualified support is actually strongest in the youngest cohort of 18 to 29 years of age, where 82.3 percent expressed unreserved support, closely aligned with 81.4 percent of clear supporters among the 60-plus age group. "It is remarkable. The first demographic, the least likely to need or even think about needing public health care, is every bit as supportive as the cohort most likely to be in need of it," says Nanos.

Nanos Research interviewed 1,005 Canadians by telephone from October 10-18, with a margin of error of 3.1 percent, 19 times out of 20.

The Nanos Research poll for *Policy Options* can be downloaded free of charge from the Institute's Web site (www.irpp.org).

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For more details or to schedule an interview with Nik Nanos, please contact Nanos Research at 613-234-4666, ext 237.

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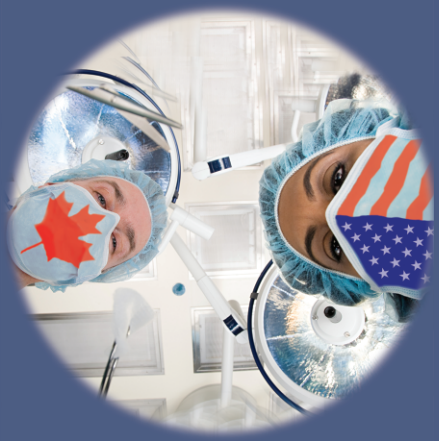
CANADIANS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE; THINK OBAMA IS ON RIGHT TRACK IN UNITED STATES



Nik Nanos

Nine Canadians out of ten support the principle of universal health care with a single insurer — the government. The principle of universality is itself the most popular feature of the public health care system, while waiting times are identified by a wide margin as the biggest problem. Seven Canadians out of ten also think Barack Obama is on the right track with his health care reform proposals in the United States. Contributing Writer Nik Nanos reports on the findings of his latest exclusive poll for *Policy Options*.

Neuf Canadiens sur dix appuient le principe des soins de santé universels fournis par un seul assureur : l'État. Et ce principe d'universalité est l'élément le plus populaire du système de santé public, dont les temps d'attente sont considérés par une forte marge comme le problème le plus important. Par ailleurs, 7 Canadiens sur 10 estiment que Barack Obama est sur la bonne voie en ce qu concerne la réforme des soins de santé aux États-Unis. Nik Nanos fait le point sur les conclusions du dernier sondage réalisé en exclusivité pour *Options politiques*.

Nine Canadians in ten remain supportive of universal health care, and seven Canadians in ten think Barack Obama is on the right track in pursuing health reform in the United States.

These are the principal findings of the latest Nanos Research poll conducted exclusively for *Policy Options*. We interviewed 1,005 Canadians by telephone from October 10-18, with a margin of error of 3.1 percent, 19 times out of 20.

These numbers are way beyond any margin of error. There are very few, if any, pillars of Canadian public policy of which Canadians approve as strongly as the principle of universal health care, which has been with us since it was first adopted by the Pearson government in the 1960s.

The principle is simple and understood by virtually all Canadians — health care is universal, and it is delivered by a single insurer, the government.

Fully 89.9 percent of Canadians support or somewhat support universal health care, and within those two response groups, the vast majority, 79.9 percent or four Canadians in five, give their unqualified endorsement, while another 10 percent are somewhat supportive.

There are really no important regional variations on this theme. Unqualified support for universal health care is strongest in Ontario (83 percent), and weakest on the Prairies (76.8), where the story of public health care began, with Tommy Douglas in Saskatchewan.

Looking at the question of universal health care by demographics, unqualified support is actually strongest in the youngest cohort of 18 to 29 years of age, where 82.3 percent expressed unreserved support, closely aligned with 81.4 percent of clear supporters among the 60-plus age group. The first demographic, the least likely to need or even think about needing public health care, is every bit as supportive as the cohort most likely to be in need of it.

Looking south to the current health care debate in the US, 71.3 percent of Canadians think Barack Obama "is on the right track when it comes to making changes to the health care system in the United States."

Only 7.3 percent of Canadians feel he was on the wrong track, while another 21.4 percent are unsure.

Regionally, there are some interesting variations. In Quebec fully 82.4 percent think President Obama is on the right track, which may also indicate support levels for the man as much as what he is proposing. Elsewhere in the country, 65.0 percent of respondents in Atlantic Canada think Obama is on the right track, while 73.8 percent of

Ontarians think so, with 59.6 percent in the Prairies and 67.6 percent in British Columbia.

Publicly funded universal health care swamped all other positive attributes when we asked Canadians: "What do you think is the key strength of the Canadian health care system?"

Fully 61.4 percent of respondents chose public health care, accessible to everyone. Nothing else is even in double digits.

For example, only 4 percent of Canadians cited doctors and nurses, and other health care providers. Only 1.6 percent cited the quality of services, and only 1.5 percent named government funding and investments in the public system.

But these low numbers also suggest a disquieting reverse approval rating — for example, research/medical resources/medical awareness — were cited by just 1.2 percent of respondents. Emergency services and ambulances were named by only 0.7 percent. This doesn't speak highly of the research component in Canada's health care system or of the quality of services in often chaotic ERs.

And when we asked Canadians what they consider the key weakness of the Canadian health care system, they were again quite unequivocal in their answer.

Waiting times for treatment was named by 32.7 percent, one respondent in three. This was identified as the most urgent problem in the system by a margin of two- and-a-half to one over the next one down, a shortage of doctors, nurses and other providers, which came in at 13.8 percent. A lack of resources or government funding was next, at 9.7 percent, while hospital mismanagement/organization/service quality was named by 9.6 percent.

All of those secondary factors are, of course, drivers of the bigger number on waiting times.

In summary, Canadians love their universal health care, but they think there is room for improvement in delivering it. And they definitely think Barack Obama is on the right track in the United States.

Contributing Writer Nik Nanos is president and CEO of Nanos Research, a national public opinion research firm based in Ottawa. He is also research associate professor at the State University of New York (SUNY) in Buffalo.

QUESTION 1. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE KEY STRENGTH OF THE CANADIAN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM?

	Frequency	Valid percent
Free/public health care/accessible for everyone	617	61.4
General positive attitude	45	4.5
Nothing	43	4.3
Doctors and nurses/people involved	40	4.0
Quality of services	16	1.6
Government funding/investments	15	1.5
Research/medical resources/medical awareness	12	1.2
Emergency services/ ambulances	7	0.7
Special care units	1	0.1
Unsure/no answer	208	20.7
Total	**1,005**	**100.0**

QUESTION 2. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE KEY WEAKNESS OF THE CANADIAN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM?

	Frequency	Valid percent
Waiting times for treatment/lack of accessibility	328	32.7
Not enough doctors, nurses and/or personnel	139	13.8
Lack of resources/funding/government support	98	9.7
Hospital mismanagement/organization/service quality	96	9.6
Too expensive/waste	61	6.1
Health fraud/abuse of system	31	3.0
Politics associated with it	26	2.6
General negative feeling	21	2.1
No weakness	17	1.7
That it is public/too universal	16	1.6
Not enough hospitals/overcrowding	12	1.2
It is becoming privatized	8	0.8
Lack of preventative medicine/too many medications	7	0.7
Public relations issues	3	0.3
Security	2	0.2
Unsure/no answer	138	13.8
Total	**1,005**	**100.0**

QUESTION 3. THINKING OF THE CANADIAN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM DO YOU SUPPORT, SOMEWHAT SUPPORT, SOMEWHAT OPPOSE OR OPPOSE UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE?

		Total *N*	Support %	Somewhat support %	Somewhat oppose %	Oppose %	Unsure %
Region	Canada	1,005	79.9	10.0	1.7	3.5	4.9
	Atlantic	98	78.8	4.7	0.0	7.3	9.2
	Quebec	252	79.0	12.3	1.6	2.5	4.6
	Ontario	302	83.0	5.5	1.9	3.6	5.9
	Prairies	208	76.8	12.8	2.6	3.7	4.0
	BC	145	80.0	14.9	1.1	1.9	2.1
Gender	Male	495	82.6	7.7	1.7	4.1	3.9
	Female	511	77.3	12.3	1.7	2.8	5.9
Age	18 to 29	199	82.3	6.9	2.3	4.6	3.8
	30 to 39	193	79.1	12.7	0.7	1.5	6.0
	40 to 49	216	76.7	12.6	1.9	3.9	4.9
	50 to 59	170	79.9	8.7	1.6	4.7	5.1
	60 plus	227	81.4	8.9	1.8	2.9	5.0
Home	Own	727	80.5	9.5	1.3	3.8	5.0
	Rent	242	79.6	9.6	2.7	3.2	5.0

QUESTION 4. DO YOU THINK PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK OR THE WRONG TRACK WHEN IT COMES TO MAKING CHANGES TO THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES?

		Total *N*	Right track %	Wrong track %	Unsure %
Region	Canada	1,005	71.3	7.3	21.4
	Atlantic	98	65.0	5.4	29.7
	Quebec	252	82.4	4.1	13.5
	Ontario	302	73.8	7.7	18.5
	Prairies	208	59.6	11.6	28.8
	BC	145	67.6	7.3	25.1
Gender	Male	495	70.8	8.0	21.2
	Female	511	71.7	6.6	21.7
Age	18 to 29	199	68.5	11.5	20.0
	30 to 39	193	70.1	4.5	25.4
	40 to 49	216	68.4	4.9	26.7
	50 to 59	170	74.4	7.5	18.1
	60 plus	227	75.0	8.2	16.8
Home	Own	727	71.3	7.0	21.6
	Rent	242	71.6	7.6	20.8

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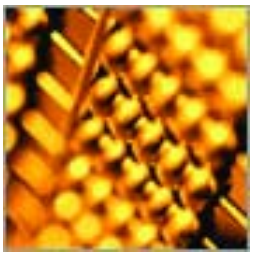

Getting Started

At Nanos, we believe that small steps can lead to large insights. We are regularly in the field with a national omnibus surveys. We'll sit down with you to learn about your challenges and work on your challenge together. The results can be used to conduct a strategic assessment of your current challenge or can be the basis of a broader mission plan for you to achieve your market or mind share objectives.

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