

MEDICARE DOCTOR-PATIENT SURVEY MASSACHUSETTS Survey Summary



December 8, 2010

More than 10 years ago, Congress created a flawed system to pay doctors who treat Medicare patients. Because lawmakers have been unable to fix this system, Medicare can no longer pay doctors what it costs to care for seniors. Now, unless Congress acts by January 1st, Medicare doctors will face a 25% cut, which could mean many seniors will lose their doctors or have trouble finding a new one.

Knowing how important doctors are to older Americans, AARP surveyed its members to determine whether they are concerned about losing their doctors if Congress fails to stop the cut. The survey also looked at whether AARP members would be more favorable to a member of Congress who votes to stop the cut. Finally, the survey measured whether AARP members think Congress should block the cut for a few months or whether they think they should find a long-term solution to the problem.

Survey Findings

- The majority of Massachusetts members across party lines (82%) said they were concerned that doctors may stop treating Medicare patients because of this cut (83% Democrat, 83 % Republican, and 83% Independent).
- Eighty-one percent of members who are covered by Medicare were concerned about having to find a new doctor if their current physician no longer accepted Medicare (86% Democrat, 91% Republican, and 78% Independent).
- AARP members support their Senators in fighting to stop this cut. Seventy-eight percent of members across party lines said they would be more favorable to their Senators if they fought to protect Medicare payments to doctors (77% Democrat, 86 % Republican, and 79% Independent). Likewise, 83% of members said they would be less favorable towards their Senator if they did nothing to stop this cut (82% Democrat, 86% Republican, and 84% Independent).
- Most members (68%) feel a long-term solution to the problem is needed (72% Democrat, 74% Republican, and 66% Independent).

Methodology: 804 interviews of Massachusetts AARP members age 60+ were conducted by Woelfel Research, an independent research firm, between November 22, 2010 and November 28, 2010. This survey has a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.5%.

ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE

(Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding)

1. Which of the following best describes your primary form of health insurance coverage?

	Total n=804
You are covered by Medicare	61%
You are covered through your employer	18%
You are covered through your spouse's employer	6%
You have coverage that you or your spouse buy directly	8%
You are covered by Medicaid or some other government program that is not Medicare	2%
You do not have coverage	1%
Other	4%
Don't know	1%
Refused	0%

"Medicare is scheduled to cut the payments it makes to Medicare doctors by nearly 25 percent in January. That means that unless Congress stops the cut, the government will automatically decrease the amount that it pays doctors who treat Medicare patients by nearly 25 percent."

2. How concerned are you that doctors may stop treating Medicare patients because of this cut?

	Total n=804	Democrat n=258	Republican n=94	Independent n=391
Very concerned	60%	59%	62%	61%
Somewhat concerned	22%	24%	21%	22%
Not very concerned	8%	9%	4%	7%
Not at all concerned	8%	6%	11%	8%
Don't know	3%	2%	1%	2%
Refused	0%	0%	0%	0%

3. If your Senators fought to stop this cut and protected Medicare payments to doctors, would you be:

	Total n=804	Democrat n=258	Republican n=94	Independent n=391
Much more favorable towards your Senator	51%	54%	52%	50%
Somewhat more favorable towards your Senator	27%	23%	34%	29%
Somewhat less favorable towards your Senator	4%	5%	1%	5%
Much less favorable towards your Senator	5%	5%	6%	5%
Don't know	11%	12%	6%	10%
Refused	2%	1%	1%	1%

4. If your Senators did nothing to stop this cut and let Medicare cut payments to doctors by nearly 25 percent, would you be:

	Total n=804	Democrat n=258	Republican n=94	Independent n=391
Much more favorable towards your Senator	3%	2%	3%	3%
Somewhat more favorable towards your Senator	4%	2%	3%	6%
Somewhat less favorable towards your Senator	20%	23%	21%	19%
Much less favorable towards your Senator	63%	59%	65%	65%
Don't know	9%	11%	7%	8%
Refused	2%	3%	1%	<1%

5. If Congress fails to stop this cut and your doctor chooses to stop accepting Medicare patients, how concerned would you be about finding a new doctor?

	Total n=491 (Medicare beneficiaries)	Democrat n=165	Republican n=58	Independent n=232
Very concerned	63%	64%	64%	63%
Somewhat concerned	18%	22%	27%	15%
Not very concerned	7%	3%	2%	10%
Not at all concerned	9%	7%	7%	11%
Don't know	3%	4%	0%	1%
Refused	<1%	--	--	--

This cut has been scheduled to happen many times before, but Congress has always voted to temporarily delay it. Now, some people have proposed that we delay the cut for three months and address the issue again while Congress deals with what some say are more immediate national priorities while others think a longer term solution is needed now.

6. Would you support postponing the cut for three months while Congress deals with other National priorities or urge Congress to find a longer-term solution now?

	Total n=804	Democrat n=258	Republican n=94	Independent n=391
Postpone the cut for three months	22%	20%	21%	24%
Find a longer-term solution now	68%	72%	74%	66%
Don't know	9%	7%	4%	10%
Refused	1%	1%	1%	1%

7. What is your age as of your last birthday?

	Total n=804
60-64	23%
65-74	36%
75+	35%
Refused	6%

8. What is your gender?

	Total n=804
Male	37%
Female	63%

9. Regardless of how you are registered, do you consider yourself a:

	Total n=804
Strong Democrat	27%
Weak Democrat	6%
Weak Republican	3%
Strong Republican	9%
Independent	49%
Other	2%
Refused	1%

10. What best describes your race?

	Total n=804
White or Caucasian	90%
Black or African-American	3%
Latino, Hispanic or Mexican	<1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	<1%
Native American	2%
Mixed Race	1%
Other	1%
Refused	3%

11. Do you consider yourself to be a Hispanic Descent?

	Total n=804
Yes	2%
No	95%
Don't know	1%
Refused	3%

12. For statistical purposes only, we need to know your total family income for 2009. Will you please tell me which of the following categories best represents your total family income?

	Total n=804
Less than \$15,000	8%
\$15,000 to less than \$30,000	12%
\$30,000 to less than \$40,000	11%
\$40,000 to less than \$50,000	9%
\$50,000 to less than \$60,000	9%
\$60,000 to less than \$75,000	5%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	9%
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	5%
\$150,000 or more	4%
Refused	28%