Medicare & Context

• What?
  o Medicare: Federal government program that provides health insurance to 50 million people, 1/6 Americans

• Who?
  o Covers seniors and non-elderly adults living with permanent disabilities
  o Beneficiaries have significant health needs and modest financial resources

• Cost?
  o Important share of the federal budget: 16% in 2013
  o Spending is expected to increase from 3.0% of GDP in 2012 to 3.5% in 2023

• Change?
  o Proposals attempt change Medicare and reduce growth in spending

What is public opinion on proposals to change Medicare?
Methodology

- KFF national, random sample telephone surveys
- KFF Health Tracking Polls
  - ~1,200 U.S. adults
  - Landline and cellular telephones
  - Conducted in both English and Spanish
- Kaiser Family Foundation/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health “The Public’s Health Care Agenda for the 113th Congress”
  - Conducted January 3-9, 2013
  - 1,347 adults
- MOSE ± 3 percentage points
Medicare is Popular and Perceived To Be Working Well

Would you say the current Medicare program is working well for most seniors, or not?

- **Total**
  - YES, Medicare is working well: 60%
  - NO, Medicare is not working well: 28%
  - Don't know/Refused: 12%

- **18-49**
  - YES, Medicare is working well: 52%
  - NO, Medicare is not working well: 31%
  - Don't know/Refused: 17%

- **50-64**
  - YES, Medicare is working well: 62%
  - NO, Medicare is not working well: 29%
  - Don't know/Refused: 9%

- **65+**
  - YES, Medicare is working well: 80%
  - NO, Medicare is not working well: 15%
  - Don't know/Refused: 5%

Medicare and the Federal Budget Deficit

To reduce the deficit...

- 58% support no reductions in Medicare spending
- 31% support minor reductions
- 10% support major reductions
- Don’t know/Refused

Which comes closer to your opinion?

- 19% say Medicare spending needs cuts to reduce deficit
- 75% say can reduce deficit without major reductions in Medicare
- Don’t know/Refused

NOTES: Question wording abbreviated. First chart asked of half sample.
### Public Opinion on Proposals to Change Medicare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Favor Change</th>
<th>Oppose Change</th>
<th>Don't Know/Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Require drug companies to give better deal on medications for low-income</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase premiums only for high income seniors</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise the age of eligibility from 65 to 67</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce payments to doctors and hospitals</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Medicare payroll taxes</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switch to a premium support system</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase premiums for all seniors</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Question wording abbreviated.

**SOURCES:** Kaiser Family Foundation/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, The Public’s Health Care Agenda for the 113th Congress (conducted January 3-9, 2013); Kaiser Family Foundation, Health Tracking Poll October 2012 (conducted October 18-23, 2012)
Opinions by Age

Overall opinion similar except...

**Premium support:** Medicare should continue as it is today OR Medicare should be changed to a system in which each senior is given a fixed amount of money to help them purchase coverage? (Oct 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Favor Change</th>
<th>Oppose Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-64</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Raising age of eligibility:** Would you favor or oppose gradually raising the age of eligibility for Medicare from 65 to 67 for future retirees as a way to reduce the federal deficit? (Jan 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Favor Change</th>
<th>Oppose Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-49</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Don’t know/refused/other not shown.
SOURCES: Kaiser Family Foundation/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, The Public’s Health Care Agenda for the 113th Congress (conducted January 3-9, 2013); Kaiser Family Foundation, Health Tracking Poll October 2012 (conducted October 18-23, 2012)
Opinions by Political Party

**Premium support:** Medicare should continue as it is today OR Medicare should be changed to a system in which each senior is given a fixed amount of money to help them purchase coverage? (Oct 2012)

- **Republicans:** 47% Favor Change, 44% Oppose Change
- **Independents:** 33% Favor Change, 58% Oppose Change
- **Democrats:** 21% Favor Change, 75% Oppose Change

**Increasing payroll taxes:** Would you favor or oppose increasing the payroll taxes workers and employers pay to help fund Medicare as a way to reduce the federal deficit? (Jan 2013)

- **Republicans:** 28% Favor Change, 70% Oppose Change
- **Independents:** 43% Favor Change, 54% Oppose Change
- **Democrats:** 53% Favor Change, 43% Oppose Change

NOTE: Don’t know/refused/other not shown.

SOURCES: Kaiser Family Foundation/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, The Public’s Health Care Agenda for the 113th Congress (conducted January 3-9, 2013); Kaiser Family Foundation, Health Tracking Poll October 2012 (conducted October 18-23, 2012)
Public Opinion on Raising the Medicare Age of Eligibility: 1995-2013

Would you favor or oppose gradually raising the age of eligibility for Medicare from 65 to 67 for future retirees?

NOTE: Don’t know/Refused answers not shown. There are minor variations in question wording across years.
SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation Polls
Malleability of Public Opinion: Raising the Age of Eligibility

Would you favor or oppose gradually raising the age of eligibility for Medicare from 65 to 67 for future retirees as a way to reduce the federal deficit?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
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</table>

*Asked of those who FAVOR raising the age of eligibility:* What if you heard that this proposal would increase costs for employers and people not yet eligible for Medicare, and may leave those that can’t afford coverage uninsured?

*Asked of those who OPPOSE raising the age of eligibility:* What if you heard that this proposal would save the federal government money and help preserve Medicare for the long term?

Results for total after hearing follow-up argument:

- **Still favor raising age of eligibility:** 20%
- **Now MORE likely to oppose raising age of eligibility:** 75%
- **Originally oppose raising age of eligibility:** 63%
- **Now MORE likely to favor raising age of eligibility:** 35%
- **Still oppose raising age of eligibility:**

NOTE: Don’t know/Refused answers not shown.
Recap

- Medicare is a large and growing share of the federal budget
- Many proposals have been floated as ways to slow the program’s cost growth
- Public agrees deficit is a problem, but reluctant to cut Medicare spending
- Out of seven proposals recently polled, only two gain majority support
- Seniors mostly agree with younger adults, with a few important exceptions
- Bigger divides by party affiliation
- Public opinion on this issue is malleable, pay attention to messaging going forward
Thank you!