



Ohio adults' views about expanding Medicare to adults younger than 65

The **Ohio Health Issues Poll** is conducted every year to learn more about the health opinions, behaviors and status of Ohio adults. The idea of expanding Medicare to allow people younger than 65 to buy insurance through this program has emerged in the national health policy conversation. OHIP asked Ohio adults whether they favored or opposed such a plan.

WHAT OHIP FOUND

Most Ohio adults favor expanding Medicare

OHIP asked, "Do you favor or oppose giving some people under the age of 65 the option to buy insurance through the Medicare program?" Seven in 10 Ohio adults (71%) either strongly or somewhat favored or leaned toward favoring this idea. About 2 in 10 (17%) opposed such a plan. About 1 in 10 (12%) were not sure.

While much has changed in the national discussion of this topic since 2017, this identical question was asked by Kaiser Family Foundation at that time. In November 2017, 72% of U.S. adults favored and 24% opposed

Do you favor or oppose giving some people under the age of 65 the option to buy insurance through the Medicare program?



SOURCE: 2019 Ohio Health Issues Poll (released November 2019)

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expanding Medicare. Five percent did not know.¹

Responses vary by age, political party identification

Responses varied by age. Ohio adults ages 30 to 64 (77%) were more likely to favor expanding Medicare than adults ages 18 to 29 (65%) or 65 and older (66%).

Responses also varied by political party identification. Nine in 10 Democrats (90%) favored giving some people under the age of 65 the option to buy insurance through Medicare. That compares with 7 in 10 Independents (67%) and more than 5 in 10 Republicans (55%).

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation. (2017). *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll, Nov 2017*. Retrieved from https://www.kff.org/interactive/question-finder/?qid=1910829&pid=4&ccid=4#_topdoc

Adults cite specific groups, cost of care as reasons for support

OHIP followed up this question by asking "What is the **most important** reason that you (favor/oppose) giving some people under the age of 65 the option to buy insurance through the Medicare program?" Respondents could provide any answer.

Ohio adults who favored this plan most commonly identified specific groups that they thought should have access, such as people who are close to age 65, who have low income or who have a serious illness (38%). About 15% said they favored the plan because of the high cost of health care and health insurance. Another 14% said health care was a right. Seven percent said the current health insurance

Continued on next page

system is so problematic that it is important to identify other options.

Available alternatives, lack of funding given as reasons for opposition

Among Ohio adults who opposed this plan, about 2 in 10 identified each of the following as the most important reason they were opposed:

- People should have to earn Medicare (22%).
- There is not enough funding (18%).
- There are enough other alternatives (18%).

WHY WE ASK THESE QUESTIONS

Health care is expensive, and most people rely on health insurance to help cover the cost. The concept of “Medicare for All” has emerged in national conversations as one possible way to address issues of cost and coverage in our health care system, although there is disagreement about the details of such a plan. Assessing public opinion about these policies can inform policymakers as they consider programs to implement in the future.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2.3 million Ohio adults in 2018 had health insurance coverage through Medicare, about 20% of the total population of the state. Most of those adults (85%) were age 65 or older. The remaining 15% were eligible to receive Medicare because they were disabled.² People younger than age 65 are eligible for Medicare if they have been receiving Social Security disability benefits for 24 months, or have permanent kidney failure.³

²Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (2019). *Medicare enrollment dashboard data file* [Data File]. Retrieved from <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/CMSProgramStatistics/Dashboard.html>

³U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Digital Communications Division. (2014). *Who is eligible for Medicare?* Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/answers/medicare-and-medicaid/who-is-eligible-for-medicare/index.html>