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## Medicare and Private Sector Medicare Plans Face Uphill Battle as Initial Enrollment Period for New Medicare Drug Benefit Draws Closer

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*Less than half of U.S. seniors confident that they would be able to choose a drug plan that's right for them*

The percentage of adults who approve of the 2003 Medicare reform bill has increased over the past year as nearly two in five (38%) U.S. adults say that they are pleased this bill has passed, up from 21 percent in 2004. The number of adults aged 65 and over who are pleased that this bill has passed also has increased (34% now vs. 26% in 2004). However, while approval for this bill may have increased, so has the number of seniors who say they do not know enough about the bill to have an opinion (30% now vs. 20% in 2004).

These are some of the results of a Harris Interactive online survey of 2,153 U.S. adults conducted between June 8 and 12, 2005 for The Wall Street Journal Online's Health Industry Edition.

### Public Support in Relation to Four Parts of the Medicare Bill

Support for four parts of the 2003 Medicare reform bill varies among those adults who say they know enough about the bill to have an opinion. Findings from the survey include:

- Support for a plan to help insurance and managed care plan providers compete with traditional Medicare has remained steady as slightly more than half (52%) of U.S. adults who know enough to have an opinion say they approve of this plan compared to 54 percent in 2004. The number of seniors who know enough about the bill to have an opinion and who approve of this plan has increased over the past year (54% now vs. 41% in 2004).
- A large majority (71%) of adults who say they know enough about the Medicare reform bill to have an opinion approve of a prescription drug benefit starting in 2006 for people on Medicare.
- Eight in ten (80%) adults who know enough to have an opinion approve of a subsidy for lower-income seniors to reduce their out-of-pocket costs by lowering their monthly premiums for the drug benefit and lowering co-payments for prescription drugs.
- There is little support for a law which prohibits importing less expensive drugs from Canada, as a substantial majority (70%) of adults who know enough to have an opinion say they disapprove of this. Those aged 50 to 64 are more likely to feel this way (80%).

## Medicare Drug Plans

Nearly one-third (32%) of all seniors (aged 65 and over) say it is not likely that they will enroll in a new Medicare drug plan by 2006, and a further 38 percent think that they do not need to enroll because they already have coverage. Fewer than half (46%) of all seniors, regardless of whether they plan to enroll, feel confident that they would choose a plan that is right for them, while more than a third (37%) admit that they are not confident that they would be able to choose a plan that is right for them.

“With approximately six months to go, the challenges are enormous and it is unsettling to see that seniors appear to be more, rather than less, confused about the Medicare reform bill as the enrollment period approaches,” states Katherine Binns, senior vice president of Healthcare Research at Harris Interactive.

**TABLE 1**  
**Pleased or Disappointed with New Medicare Bill**

“In 2003, the Congress passed a new Medicare bill that includes a new prescription drug benefit. Which of the following best describes how you feel about the Medicare bill?”

Base: All Adults

	Total			Age 65+		
	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Pleased (Net)</b>	20	21	38	16	26	34
I am very pleased that it passed.	10	9	17	8	8	12
I am somewhat pleased that it passed.	10	12	21	8	18	22
<b>Disappointed (Net)</b>	25	25	18	51	41	32
I am somewhat disappointed that it passed.	8	9	8	14	14	14
I am very disappointed that it passed.	18	16	10	37	27	18
<b>Not sure/don't know enough about it to have an opinion (Net)</b>	54	55	44	33	32	34
Don't know	12	12	6	11	12	4
Don't know enough about it to have an opinion	42	43	38	22	20	30

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

# Health-Care Poll

**TABLE 2**

**Approve/Disapprove of Helping Insurers to Compete with Traditional Medicare**

"How do you feel about the following four pieces of the bill?"

(1) A plan to help insurance and managed care plans to compete with traditional Medicare

Base: Those who "know enough to have an opinion" (i.e., 62% of all adults)

	Total			Age 50 - 64			Age 65+		
	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Approve Strongly/ Somewhat (Net)	47	54	52	47	55	55	30	41	54
Approve strongly	20	24	21	19	23	23	10	12	20
Approve somewhat	27	30	32	28	31	32	19	29	34
Disapprove Strongly/ Somewhat (Net)	37	32	20	42	35	24	54	47	27
Disapprove somewhat	15	12	12	16	15	14	18	12	15
Disapprove strongly	22	19	8	27	20	9	36	35	12
Not sure	16	14	28	11	10	21	16	12	19

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 3**

**Approve/Disapprove Ban on Important Less Expensive Drugs**

"How do you feel about the four following pieces of the bill?"

(2) A law which prohibits importing less expensive drugs from Canada

Base: Those who "know enough to have an opinion" (i.e., 62% of all adults)

	Total			Age 50 - 64			Age 65+		
	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Approve Strongly/ Somewhat (Net)	17	15	16	14	9	14	12	12	15
Approve strongly	9	7	7	8	4	6	6	7	7
Approve somewhat	8	8	9	6	5	8	6	5	8
Disapprove Strongly/ Somewhat (Net)	76	79	70	80	89	77	85	84	77
Disapprove somewhat	19	17	18	17	21	16	18	15	18
Disapprove strongly	56	62	52	63	69	60	67	69	59
Not sure	8	6	14	6	2	9	3	3	8

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

# Health-Care Poll

**TABLE 4**

**Approve/Disapprove of Prescription Drug Benefit**

“How do you feel about the following four pieces of the bill?”

(3) Prescription drug benefit for people on Medicare starting in 2006

Base: Those who “know enough to have an opinion” (i.e., 62% of all adults)

	Total			Age 50 – 64			Age 65+		
	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005	Dec. 2003	Feb. 2004	June 2005
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Approve Strongly/ Somewhat (Net)	55	65	71	57	67	80	48	61	69
Approve strongly	25	36	39	27	40	51	22	31	26
Approve somewhat	30	29	32	30	26	28	26	31	43
Disapprove Strongly/ Somewhat (Net)	33	26	11	37	29	9	44	32	17
Disapprove somewhat	14	12	7	15	10	4	21	12	9
Disapprove strongly	18	14	4	22	19	5	23	20	8
Not sure	12	9	18	6	4	11	8	7	14

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 5**

**Approve/Disapprove Subsidy for Lower-Income Seniors**

“How do you feel about the following four pieces of the bill?”

(4) A subsidy for lower-income seniors to reduce their out-of-pocket costs by lowering their monthly premiums for the drug benefit and lowering co-payments for prescription drugs

Base: Those who “know enough to have an opinion” (i.e., 62% of all adults)

	Total	Age 50 – 64	Age 65+
	%	%	%
Approve Strongly/Somewhat (Net)	80	86	80
Approve strongly	51	63	33
Approve somewhat	30	23	46
Disapprove Strongly/Somewhat (Net)	8	7	14
Disapprove somewhat	5	4	9
Disapprove strongly	2	2	5
Not sure	12	7	7

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

# Health-Care Poll

**TABLE 6**  
**Seniors' Intent to Enroll in Medicare Drug Plans**

"How likely are you to enroll in a new Medicare drug plan by 2006, when the initial enrollment period for the new benefit ends?"

Base: Adults age 65 and older

	Adults Age 65+	Adults 65 + who "know enough to have an opinion"
	%	%
<b>Certain/Very Likely/Somewhat Likely (Net)</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>
Absolutely certain	2	2
Very likely	15	18
Somewhat likely	15	14
<b>Not Very/Not at All Likely (Net)</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>34</b>
Not very likely	21	22
Not at all likely	9	12
Already have coverage so don't need plan	38	31

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 7**  
**Seniors' Confidence in Choosing a Drug Plan**

"Whether or not you plan to enroll in a new Medicare drug plan, how confident are you that you would be able to choose a drug plan that's right for you?"

Base: Adults age 65 and older

	Adults Age 65+	Adults 65 + who "know enough to have an opinion"
	%	%
<b>Very Confident/Confident (Net)</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>52</b>
Very confident	13	15
Confident	33	37
<b>Not Very/Not at All Confident (Net)</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>34</b>
Not very confident	25	22
Not at all confident	13	12
Not sure/Too early to tell	16	14

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

# Health-Care Poll

Downloadable PDFs of Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Healthcare Polls are posted at [http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters\\_wsj.asp](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_wsj.asp).

## Methodology

Harris Interactive conducted this online survey within the United States between June 8 and 12, 2005 among a national cross section of 2,153 adults, ages 18 years and over. Figures for age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income and region were weighted where necessary to align with population proportions. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

In theory, with probability samples of this size, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Sampling error for the following sub-sample results: adults aged 65 and over (325); and all adults (1,226), those aged 50-64 (314) and those aged 65 and over (212) who know enough about the 2003 Medicare reform bill to have an opinion is higher and varies. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. This includes refusals to be interviewed (nonresponse), question wording and question order, and weighting. It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. This online sample was not a probability sample.

*These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.*

## About the Survey

The Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll is an exclusive poll that is published in the award-winning Health Industry Edition of The Wall Street Journal Online at [www.wsj.com/health](http://www.wsj.com/health).

## About The Wall Street Journal Online

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## About Harris Interactive

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