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IN THE BACKDROP of the growing media and elite debates about healthcare reform in the US, it is worthwhile to examine the state of public opinion in the US on the various facets of the healthcare reform (Keckley & Coughlin, 2011). Existing public opinion surveys on the healthcare reform asked broad-based questions regarding support for the reform (Center for American Progress, 2011; Gallup, 2012). The current report, funded by a grant from the University Scholars Award at Purdue University, seeks to address the question of public attitude toward the specific components of the healthcare reform by providing a big-picture summary of national-level public opinion around the healthcare reform and the key issues covered in the healthcare reform. More specifically, by breaking down the key topical areas and issues in the healthcare reform into its components, we seek to understand the various aspects of the reform as constituted through public opinion.

One of the key elements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is the compulsory health insurance coverage for every American. American citizens are fairly divided in their attitude toward this specific component of the ACA, as illustrated in Figure 1. 42 percent of US citizens dislike the policy whereas 44
percent of US citizens like the policy, with 14 percent who neither like nor dislike the policy. Americans are also fairly polarized in their responses to the policy, with the highest responses being in the “strongly like” and “strongly dislike” categories.

Also, in Figure 3, 46 percent of Americans support government payment for health insurance for those who are poor as compared to 38 percent Americans who do not like the policy. 22 percent of Americans strongly like the policy whereas 12 percent of Americans strongly dislike the policy. 16 percent of Americans state that they are neutral about the policy. Worth noting is the highest percentage of Americans in the “strongly like” category.

In Figure 4, the majority of Americans (51 percent) support government subsidies of health insurance for those who are struggling to pay for health insurance. 25 percent of Americans strongly like the policy as compared to 9 percent of Americans who strongly dislike the policy. 20 percent of Americans state that they are neutral – in the category “neither like nor dislike” – about the policy. Once again, the category with the largest percentage of Americans is the “strongly like” category.

When it comes to health information, a vast majority (71 percent) support every American having access to comparative information on clinical effectiveness, relative health outcomes, and appropriateness of different medical treatments. (Refer to Figure 5.) 36 percent
of Americans strongly like the policy as compared to 2 percent who strongly dislike the policy.

In Figure 6, the majority of Americans (57 percent) indicate that they support the policy requiring chain restaurants and food vendors to display the caloric content of their foods on menus, drive-thru menus, and vending machines. On the other hand, 25 percent of Americans state that they dislike the policy, and 17.9 percent point out that they are ambivalent regarding the policy.

In the context of prohibiting health insurers from dropping policyholders when they are sick, a large majority of the American public (82 percent) like this policy compared to 9 percent who do not like the policy as shown in Figure 7. Furthermore, when the category “strongly like” is considered, 54 percent of Americans strongly like the prohibition of insurers from dropping policyholders when they get sick as compared to 3 percent who strongly dislike the policy.

The ACA also creates provisions for the accessibility of preventative services such as mammograms and colonoscopies. Most Americans (73 percent in Figure 8) like the policy that such preventive services must be covered by insurance plans without charging a deductible, co-pay or co-insurance. 44 percent of Americans strongly like the new policy.

The majority of Americans (62 percent) support banning lifetime caps on the amount of insurance payout an individual can receive. 32 percent of Americans strongly like the policy, compared to 8 percent who strongly dislike the policy. (Refer to Figure 9.)

In Figure 10, 67 percent of Americans like the component of the health reform policy that requires insurers to reveal the amount of money they spend on overhead compared to 15 percent
who dislike the policy. 33 percent of Americans strongly like the policy compared to 4 percent who strongly dislike the policy.

Finally, as part of the ACA, the Department of Health and Human Services will set up a new website to make it easy for Americans in any state to seek out affordable health insurance options. Majority of Americans (68 percent) like the creation of the new website, as illustrated in Figure 11. 36 percent of Americans are strongly favorable toward the creation of a health information website that will provide information on affordable health insurance options.

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REFERENCES


Figure 11: The Department of Health and Human Services will set up a new website to make it easy for Americans in any state to seek out affordable health insurance options.