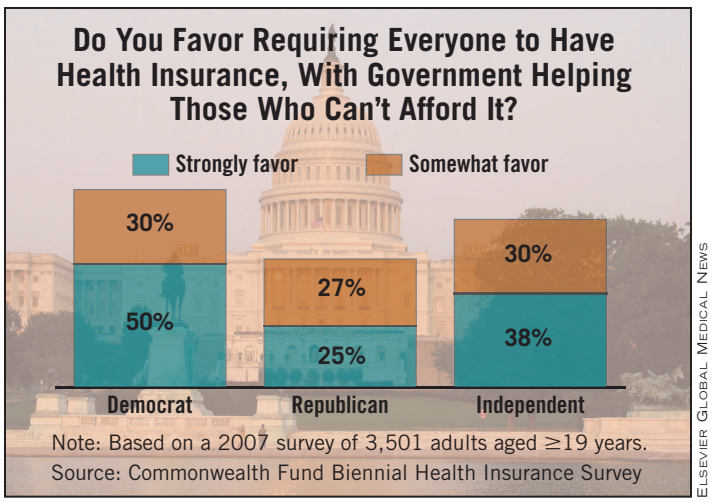

ELSEVIER GLOBAL MEDICAL NEWS

Universal Health Coverage Favored

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Most Americans favor a continuation of the employer-based health insurance system and say they believe health insurance costs should be shared among individuals, employers, and the government, according to a Commonwealth Fund survey.

More than two-thirds of surveyed Americans favor requiring individuals to obtain health insurance in an effort to provide universal health coverage.

These findings indicate that on certain health reform issues Americans' views may be more closely aligned with proposals put forth by Democratic candidates for president than those outlined by Republicans. For example, the leading Democratic candidates would require employers to offer health coverage to employees or pay for part of their coverage, while most of the Republican candidates propose changes to the tax code that could reduce the role of employers in the health insurance market, according to a Commonwealth Fund analysis.

Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) would support an individual insurance mandate, while Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) would mandate coverage for all children. Of the Republican candidates, no one is proposing an individual insurance mandate, according to the Commonwealth Fund.

From June to October 2007, the Commonwealth Fund conducted a phone survey of 3,501 adults aged 19 years and older as part of its biennial health insurance survey.

Respondents expressed broad support for employer-based health insurance. About 81% said employers should provide health insurance or contribute to a fund to cover all Americans. Support for this idea among respondents was high regardless of political affiliation, race, gender, age, and income.

Support for an individual insurance mandate to ensure coverage for all was lower; 68% of respondents said they strongly or somewhat favor a requirement that all individuals obtain health insurance.

When respondents were asked who should pay for health insurance for all Americans, 66% favored a system in which costs would be shared by individuals, employers, and the government. About 15% said it should be financed mostly by government, 8% said by employers, and 6% by individuals. About 86% of the respondents said health care reform is very or somewhat important in determining their vote. ■

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