

Wisconsin Survey: Small Businesses Need Healthcare Reform

The high cost of health insurance is a financial burden for small businesses.

Small business owners in Wisconsin are struggling to offer health insurance, according to a May 2009 telephone survey by Small Business Majority. 70% of small business owners who offer their employees coverage say it's difficult to afford. In other findings:

- 58% of small businesses do not pay for insurance for their workers. Of those, 85% say they can't afford to.
- 72% say healthcare reform is important for getting the economy back on track.

Employers accept responsibility to help provide employee health coverage.

- When asked if their company has a responsibility to offer health insurance to employees, 55% of Wisconsin respondents say yes.
- 67% say it's important for individuals, employers, insurers, the government and healthcare providers to share the responsibility for making healthcare more affordable.
- 53% believe businesses that don't offer health insurance should be required to pay something to cover their employees, although 32% say no contribution should be required. Of those who agree that employers should contribute, more than half believe it should be more than 5% of payroll.

Small businesses want reform of many parts of the system.

- The number one concern for Wisconsin small businesses in healthcare reform is controlling costs, followed by having insurance that covers everybody.
- 85% of small businesses support establishing a health insurance pool to create a marketplace where small businesses and individuals can choose their coverage. Only 11% oppose this proposal.
- Small businesses in Wisconsin appreciate choice—75% prefer having the choice of a private or public health insurance plan.
- 85% of respondents agree that people should be able to buy health insurance without regard to any past health problems, and 75% say more entrepreneurs would start businesses if they didn't face those obstacles to coverage.

Respondents are politically varied.

- 33% of respondents identified themselves as Republican, 24% as Democrat and 30% as independent.

About this research: This is a telephone poll of 200 randomly selected small business owners in Wisconsin conducted by the national public opinion firm Lake Research in May 2009. The survey included owners of companies with fewer than 100 employees as well as sole proprietors. It has a margin of error of 6.9%.