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Most Americans Still Don't Understand Healthcare Law

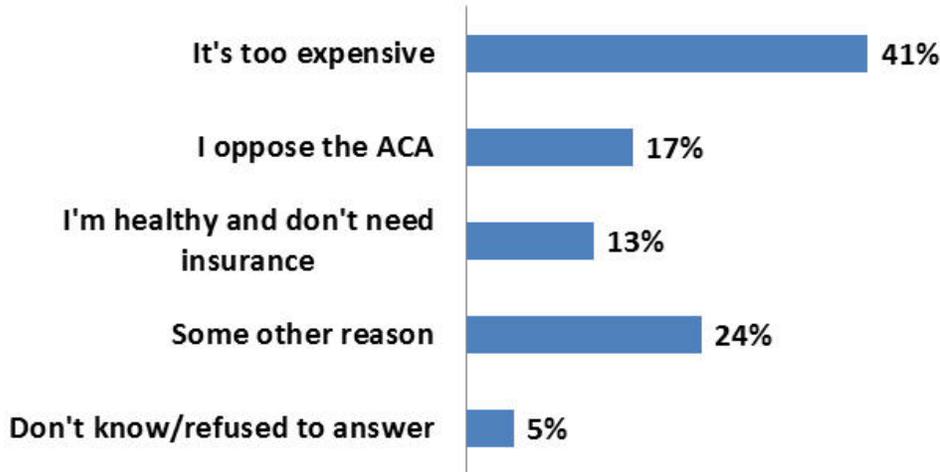
According to a new survey by Bankrate.com, one in three Americans who lack health coverage plan to remain uninsured, citing cost as their chief obstacle. Fewer than a third (30%) of the uninsured realize that federal tax credits available through the new health exchanges can make health insurance affordable to lower-income individuals and families. About one-third (34%) of uninsured survey respondents said they intend to continue without health coverage. When asked why, 41% said health insurance is too expensive, 17% cited opposition to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and 13% said they're healthy and don't need coverage. Just over half (56%) of the uninsured said they plan to obtain health coverage.

The following question was posed to a national sample of uninsured Americans: "As far as you know, are there tax credits available through the Affordable Care Act to reduce the monthly price of health insurance?":

- 42% of people who identify themselves as Republicans say there are no tax credits, compared with 20% of Democrats and 33% of independents.
- Only 5% of Americans earning \$75,000 per year or more knew about the tax credits, versus 30% of those making less than \$30,000.
- 35% of people in both the West and South say the tax credits don't exist, compared with 25% in the Northeast and just 13% in the Midwest.

The following question was posed to uninsured Americans in the survey who indicated they planned to remain that way, despite potential penalties under the Affordable Care Act: "Which is the main reason you will not sign up for health insurance this year?" See chart below for results.

The main reason the uninsured will not sign up for health insurance this year, 2012



Highlights:

- 22% of men who won't obtain health insurance cite opposition to the ACA, compared with just 8% of women who plan to remain uninsured.
- 31% of people ages 18 to 29 who won't obtain insurance say they're healthy and don't need it, versus just 6% of respondents in the 30 to 49 age group.
- 50% of Republicans who plan to stay uninsured say the main reason is that they don't like the ACA, but only 5% of Democrats in that group say the same thing.

Outreach efforts that emphasize the ACA's positive tax subsidies rather than the punitive tax penalty for not having insurance may have failed to prompt action. Also in the survey, fewer than half (48%) of the uninsured could correctly name March 31 as the deadline for obtaining health insurance to avoid the penalty. One big unknown in the survey results is how many of the uninsured who plan to stay that way might qualify for Medicaid, except that their state has chosen not to expand the program. The uninsured with income below 100% of the federal poverty line in one of the 24 states that did not expand their Medicaid program are not going to receive Medicaid and are not eligible for the subsidies.

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