



# Two in Three Americans Support Increased Federal Healthcare Spending

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Healthcare has taken center stage once again in American politics, as Republicans in Congress debate various plans that would repeal and replace the 2010 Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare. However, surveys have shown that these proposed replacement plans which aim to cut federal healthcare spending have consistently found relatively little support among the public.<sup>1</sup> The new 2017 Chicago Council Survey finds that a clear and growing majority of Americans support increases in federal healthcare spending, while few support cuts.

## Majority Support for Expanded Federal Healthcare Spending

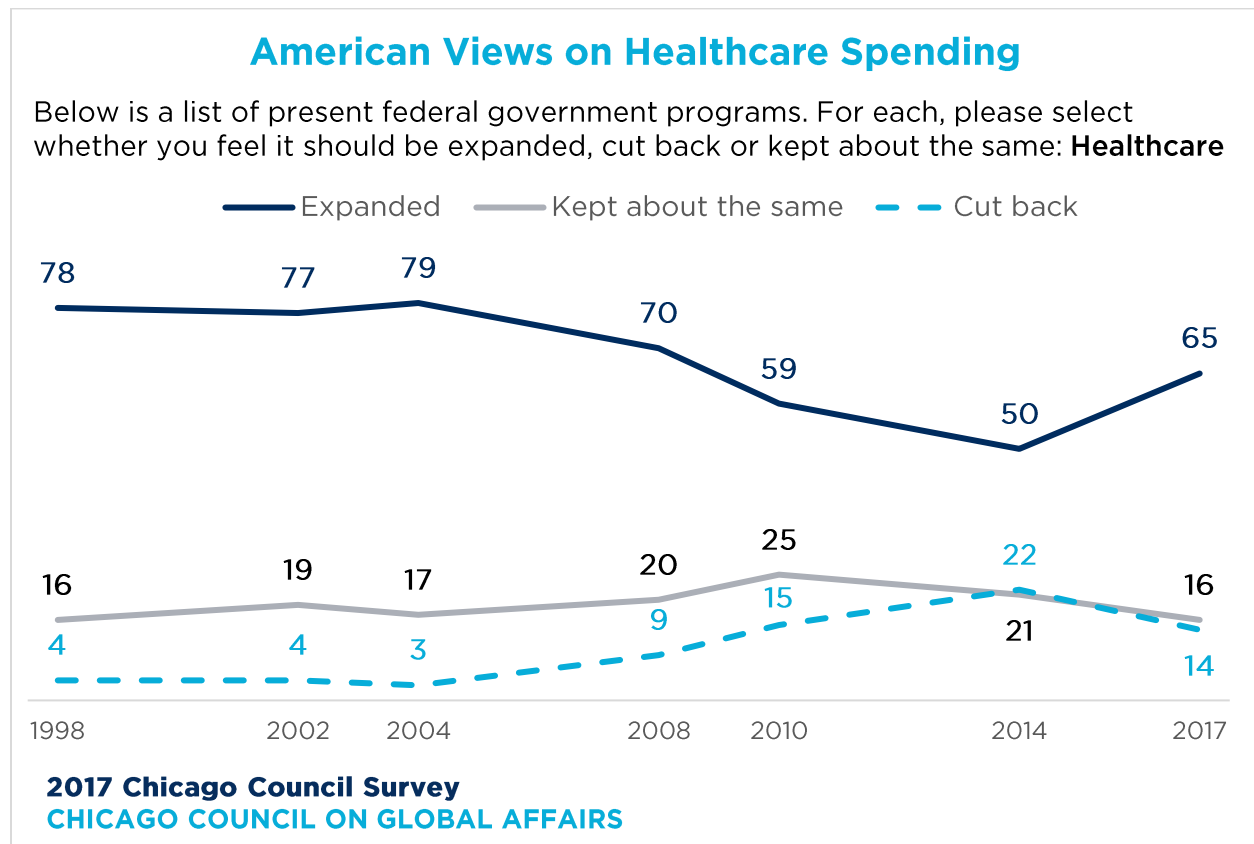
When asked about a series of federal programs, two in three Americans (65%) say federal spending on healthcare should be expanded. The rest are divided between those who favor keeping federal spending on healthcare the same (16%) or cutting it back (13%). This represents a sharp rise in support over the past three years for expanded federal healthcare spending: support is up fifteen percentage points from 2014, when a bare majority (50%) supported increased spending on healthcare. Similarly, the percentage of Americans who say spending should be cut has fallen eight points since 2014 (from 22 percent to 14 percent in 2017). Overall, support for increasing spending on healthcare has returned to pre-ACA-debate levels, but is still below the highs seen in the late 1990s and early 2000.

Just as the House was voting on a healthcare replacement bill in May, Gallup poll results found that healthcare had surged as one of the most important problems facing the country, tied with dissatisfaction with government (both at 18%), ahead of the economy and immigration. More recently, an ABC News/Washington Post survey (July 10-13) that found that half of Americans (50%) support the current federal health care law (Obamacare) compared to only a quarter who support "the Republican plan to replace it" (24%). A majority think it is the responsibility of the

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<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation: [Public Opinion on ACA Replacement Plans](#)

federal government to provide health care coverage for all Americans (60%, 39% disagree), according to a June 8-18 Pew survey. And Kaiser Family Foundation polling (July 5-10) found that two in three Americans oppose major reductions in federal funding for Medicaid as part of a plan to repeal and replace the ACA (65% oppose, 28% support).



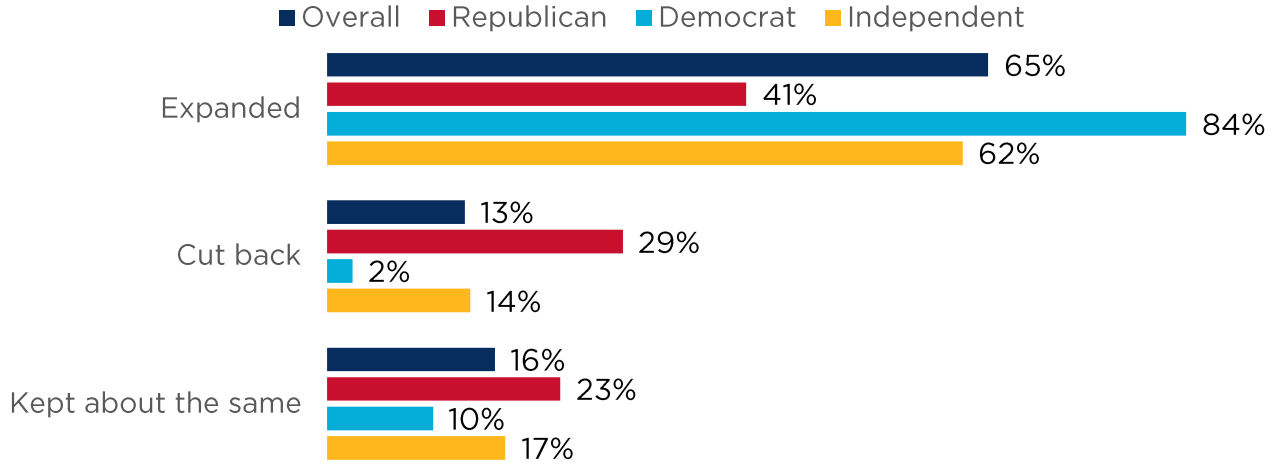
### Majorities of Democrats and Independents, and Plurality of Republicans, Support Expanded Federal Healthcare Spending

As in past surveys, Democrats are most strongly in favor of expanding healthcare spending, with more than eight in ten (84%) in support. A majority of Independents (62%) also support expanding spending. In Chicago Council Surveys dating back to 1998, majorities or pluralities of both partisan groups have supported more federal spending on healthcare.

Republicans, however, have shifted their position over the last decade. Compared to past results, Republicans have grown more supportive of increased spending on healthcare by sixteen percentage points since 2014 (from 25 percent to 41 percent in 2017). GOP support for cuts to federal spending on healthcare has fallen twelve percentage points (from 41 percent in 2014 to 29 percent now). Trump supporters (those with a favorable view of President Trump) are similar to other Republicans on their views of this issue, with a plurality supporting expanded federal healthcare spending.

## Partisan Views on Healthcare Spending

Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back or kept about the same: **Healthcare**

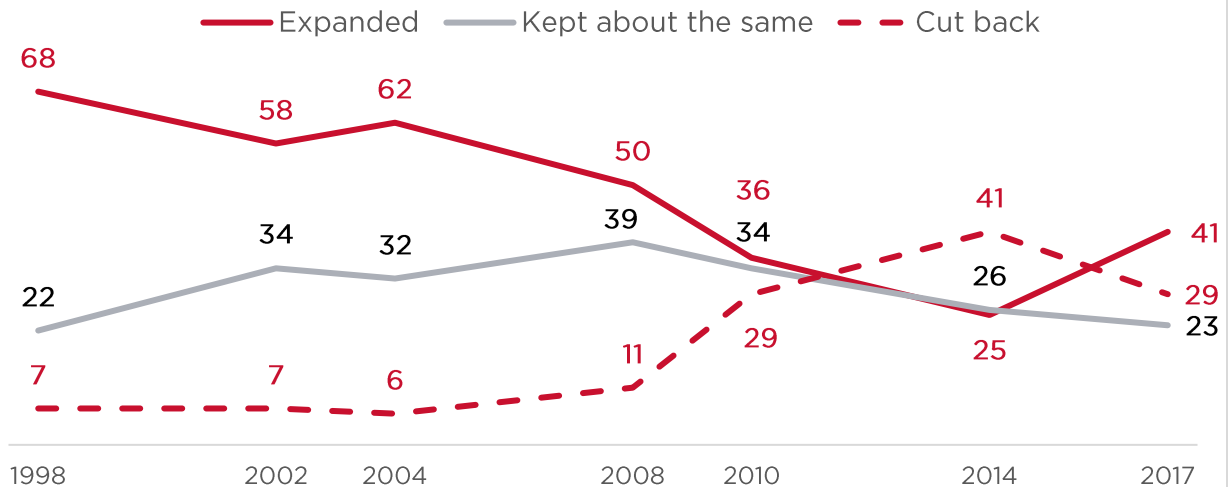


**2017 Chicago Council Survey**  
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For the Republican public, this is somewhat of a return to the past. From 1998 through 2008, a majority of Republicans supported expanded federal healthcare spending. In 2010, following the signing of Affordable Care Act, support for that spending fell and support for cuts to spending rose. By 2014, a plurality of Republicans (41%) supported cuts to federal healthcare spending, while support for expanded spending had fallen to one in four (25%).

## Republican Views on Healthcare

Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back or kept about the same: **Healthcare**



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Majorities of Americans also support federal budget increases for education (70%) and social security (57%), in line with longstanding preferences to fund domestic programs over other priorities such as defense spending and aid to other countries. As is true for federal healthcare spending, Democrats are also more likely to support increasing federal spending on education (84% Democrats, 54% Republicans) and social security (68% Democrats, 46% Republicans), with majorities of Independents supporting spending increases at levels in between the two parties.

### **About the Chicago Council Survey**

The analysis in this report is based on data from the 2017 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy. The 2017 Chicago Council Survey was conducted by GfK Custom Research using their large-scale, nationwide online research panel between June 27 and July 19, 2017 among a weighted national sample of 2,020 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of error is  $\pm 2.4$  percentage points.

The 2017 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Korea Foundation, and the personal support of Lester Crown and the Crown family.

### **About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization that provides insight—and influences the public discourse—on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices, conduct independent research, and engage the public to explore ideas that will shape our global future. The Council is committed to bringing clarity and offering solutions to issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business, and governments engage the world. Learn more at [thechicagocouncil.org](http://thechicagocouncil.org) and follow [@ChicagoCouncil](https://twitter.com/ChicagoCouncil).

## Appendix

Q25. Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back or kept about the same:

### 25/6. Healthcare

	Expanded (%)	Kept about the same (%)	Cut back (%)	Not sure (%)
2017				
Overall	65	16	13	5
Republican	41	23	29	7
Democrat	84	10	2	3
Independent	62	17	14	6

### 25/1. Education

	Expanded (%)	Kept about the same (%)	Cut back (%)	Not sure (%)
2017				
Overall	70	19	7	4
Republican	54	30	12	4
Democrat	84	10	2	3
Independent	66	20	9	5

### 25/3. Social Security

	Expanded (%)	Kept about the same (%)	Cut back (%)	Not sure (%)
2017				
Overall	56	35	5	4
Republican	46	42	8	3
Democrat	68	26	3	3
Independent	54	35	6	6