



# What Ohioans Think about *the Medical Malpractice System*

December 2009



Results From The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati



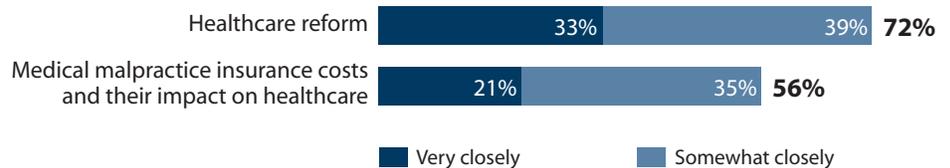
Healthcare reform continues to make national news. However, the real opinions of the public are not always heard among the noise. To find out what Ohioans think, The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati conducted a Fall 2009 *Ohio Health Issues Poll* focused entirely on healthcare reform.

The increasing cost of healthcare is a central part of the healthcare reform discussion. One way to control costs, some believe, is by changing how much money can be awarded in medical malpractice lawsuits, also known as “tort reform.” By limiting how much can be awarded, supporters of tort reform believe that there will be fewer frivolous lawsuits and that medical malpractice insurance costs and other healthcare costs will go down.

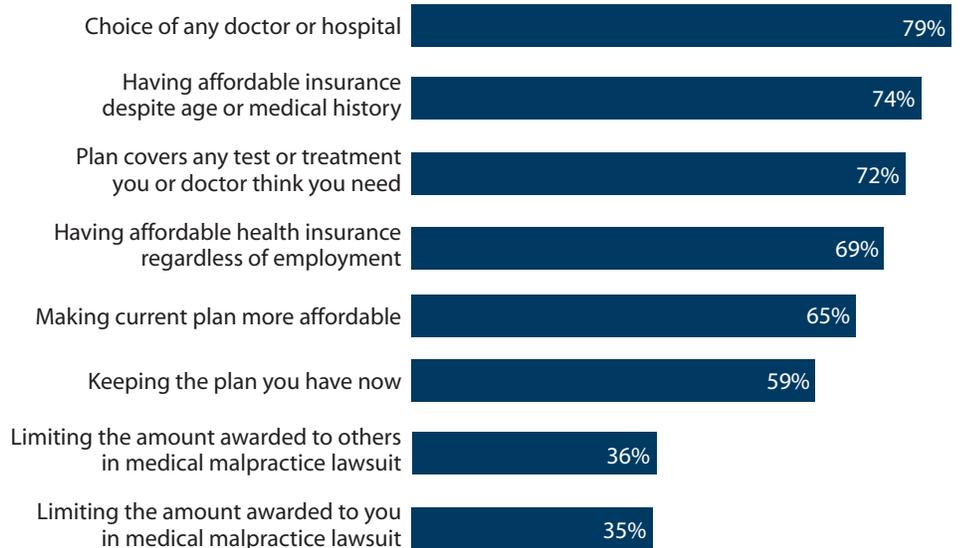
To understand what Ohioans think about the medical malpractice system, the *Poll* asked Ohio adults several questions about medical malpractice. While over half of Ohioans are closely following the discussions about medical malpractice insurance costs and their effect on the healthcare system, limiting how much can be awarded in medical malpractice lawsuits is less important to them than other healthcare reform issues.

## How closely have you been following discussions in Washington about...

*(Graph presents only those who said they were following the discussions very or somewhat closely.)*



## Congress is currently considering major changes to the way the healthcare system works in this country. Thinking about how such changes might affect you, personally, and using a 5 point scale, how important is ...? *(Graph reflects the percent of Ohio adults who rated the item as 5, extremely important.)*



## The Majority of Ohioans are Following Discussion on Medical Malpractice Insurance Costs

Just over half of Ohio adults (56%) said they were closely following the discussions in Washington about the cost of medical malpractice insurance and its effect on healthcare. This is lower

than the 72% of Ohioans who are closely following the discussions about healthcare reform.

About 1 in 5 Ohioans (21%) said they were following the medical malpractice discussions very closely, with some Ohioans following the discussions more closely more than others. Ohioans

*(continued on back)*

These findings unless otherwise noted are from The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati's *Ohio Health Issues Poll*, part of the *Ohio Poll* conducted September 16–26, 2009, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 818 adults from throughout Ohio was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, statewide estimates will be accurate to ±3.4%. In addition to sampling error, there are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording, or context effects that can introduce error or bias. For more information about the *Ohio Health Issues Poll*, please visit [www.healthfoundation.org/ohip.html](http://www.healthfoundation.org/ohip.html).

who said they were following the malpractice discussions very closely included:

- Ohioans who said they were following the healthcare debate very closely (57%)
- college graduates (31%)
- Ohioans ages 65 and older (31%)

### **Malpractice Award Limits Lowest Priority for Healthcare Reform**

The *Poll* also asked Ohioans to identify how important different changes to the healthcare system were to them. These changes included issues of healthcare choice, affordability, portability, and malpractice award limits. Limits

to medical malpractice lawsuits was the lowest rated issue, rated as extremely important by only one-third of Ohioans. In comparison, 60–79% of Ohioans rated issues of healthcare choice, affordability, and portability as extremely important.

Ohioans were then asked to choose the one issue of the eight that was MOST important to them. Again, medical malpractice lawsuit limits was at the bottom of the list, with only 2% of Ohioans identifying medical malpractice lawsuit limits as the most important healthcare issue to them. In comparison, 14–19% of Ohioans chose issues of healthcare choice, affordability, and portability.