



Experiences and Attitudes of Primary Care Providers Under the First Year of ACA Coverage Expansion

Findings from the Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers

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Commonwealth Fund pub. 1823
Vol. 17

Abstract A new survey from The Kaiser Family Foundation and The Commonwealth Fund asked primary care providers—physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants—about their views of and experiences with the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and other changes in health care delivery and payment, as well as their thoughts on the future of primary care. In this first brief based on the survey, many providers reported seeing an increased number of patients since the coverage expansions went into effect, but not an accompanying compromise in quality of care. A large majority of primary care providers are satisfied with their medical practice, but a substantial percentage of physicians expressed pessimism about the future of primary care. Similar to the population overall, providers' views of the ACA are divided along party lines. A second brief will report on providers' reactions to other changes occurring in primary care delivery and payment.

OVERVIEW

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) expanded health insurance coverage to millions of Americans, mainly by providing subsidies for the purchase of private coverage in new insurance marketplaces and by broadening eligibility for Medicaid. Estimates of the total decline in the uninsured vary, but the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently estimated that about 16 million uninsured people have gained insurance since the law's coverage provisions took effect.¹ How is this coverage expansion affecting health care providers, particularly those in primary care who are on the front lines of the nation's health care delivery system?

Using data from the Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers, this brief examines the experiences of primary care providers under the first year of ACA coverage expansions, focusing on changes since January 2014 to their patient populations and ability to provide quality care and meet patient demand. It also explores providers' opinions about the law. The survey, conducted by mail and online from January 5 through March 30, 2015, is based on a nationally representative sample of 1,624 primary care physicians and a separate nationally representative sample of 525 midlevel clinicians (nurse practitioners and physician assistants) working in primary care practices.

Overall, 59 percent of physicians and 64 percent of nurse practitioners and physician assistants reported that since the ACA coverage expansions took effect, they

have seen either an increase in the number of Medicaid patients they serve or an increase in patients who were previously uninsured. Providers working in community clinics and those in states that expanded their Medicaid programs are more likely to report experiencing these increases. Providers reported absorbing these increases without a negative impact on patient care. Most providers said their ability to provide high-quality care to all patients has not changed since January 2014 whether or not they have experienced increases in their Medicaid or newly insured patient populations.

Primary care providers do not appear to be closing their practices to new patients in response to coverage expansions. Comparisons of the current survey with a similar study conducted in 2012 find that the reported rate of new patient acceptance among primary care physicians has declined slightly (89% to 83%), but the share accepting new Medicaid patients remains about the same at 50 percent.

However, many providers feel that the amount of time they have with each patient and the time they spend on insurance administration issues have gotten worse. Surveys conducted before the ACA reforms took effect suggest that these are issues that have concerned providers since long before health reform was enacted.

The survey points to a disconnect between providers' reported experiences and their opinions about the law. Similar to the population overall, physicians' views of the ACA are divided along partisan lines. Providers who are Democrats are more likely to report a positive rather than a negative impact of the ACA by a three-to-one margin; Republican providers lean in the opposite direction by seven-to-one.

Despite these sharply divided opinions, a large majority of primary care providers—Democrats and Republicans alike—are satisfied with their medical practices. In fact, satisfaction levels are slightly higher than what was reported by primary care physicians in 2012, before the ACA. Still, a sense of pessimism persists among physicians in particular, as nearly half said they would not advise a young person to pursue a career in primary care.

CHANGES IN PATIENT POPULATION AND PRACTICE CAPACITY AFTER THE ACA COVERAGE EXPANSIONS

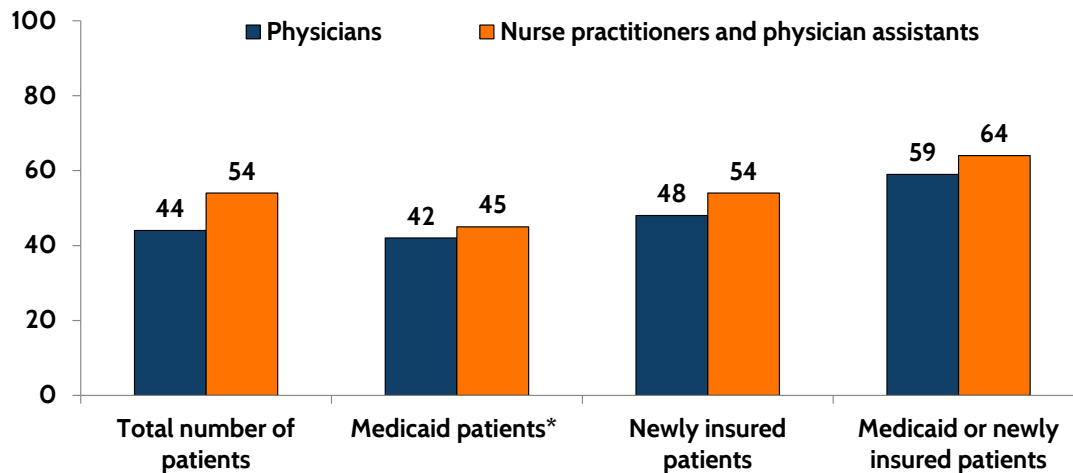
Primary Care Providers See Increases in Newly Insured and Medicaid Patients

Since the major coverage provisions of the ACA took effect in January 2014, many primary care providers (44% of physicians, 54% percent of nurse practitioners and physician assistants) reported an increase in the overall number of patients they see (Exhibit 1). Younger providers are significantly more likely than older providers to report an increase in patient volume, suggesting that at least some of the change may be attributable to those who are still building and growing their practices (data not shown).

Approximately half of providers (48% of physicians, 54% of midlevel clinicians) have seen an increase since January 2014 in the number of patients who are newly insured. Among physicians working in community health centers, seven of 10 saw an increase (Table 1). Among providers who accept Medicaid, more than four of 10 (42% of physicians, 45% of midlevel clinicians) reported an increased number of Medicaid patients. In states that expanded Medicaid under the ACA, about half of providers reported seeing an increase in Medicaid patients, compared with fewer than four of 10 of those working in states that opted out of the expansion (Table 2). Overall, 59 percent of physicians and 64 percent of nurse practitioners and physician assistants reported seeing either an increase in patients covered by Medicaid or an increase in patients who were previously uninsured.

Exhibit 1. About Six of 10 Primary Care Clinicians Are Seeing More Medicaid or Newly Insured Patients Since January 2014

Percent of providers reporting increases in the following patients since January 2014



* Among providers accepting Medicaid patients.

Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

Slightly less than four of 10 physicians (37%) and more than four of 10 midlevel providers (44%) said the number of patients they treat with chronic illnesses has increased since January 2014. However, the majority of providers said this number has remained about the same (Table 1). The share reporting an increase in chronically ill patients is fairly evenly distributed across different types of providers. The percentage is not significantly higher among physicians working in community health clinics or those treating mostly low-income patients, which are the groups mostly likely to have gained coverage under the ACA.

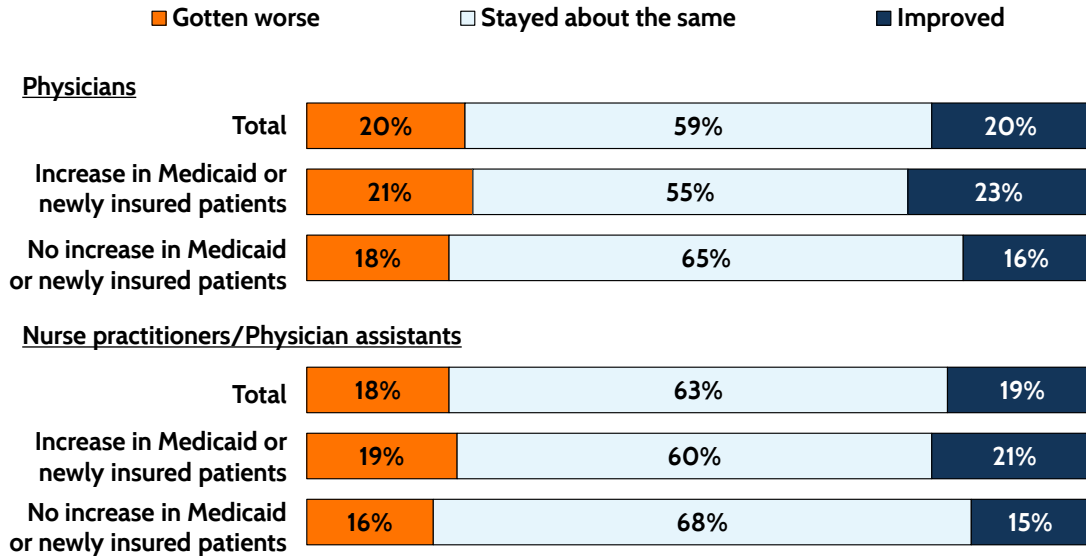
Despite Patient Increases, Primary Care Providers Able to Deliver High-Quality Care

Despite these reported changes in their patient populations, majorities of primary care providers reported no change since January 2014 in their ability to provide high-quality care to all patients or in their patients' satisfaction and experiences with care (Exhibit 2). About one of five providers said things have improved; a similar share said things have gotten worse. Providers are somewhat less sanguine about their practices' ability to recruit and retain clinical staff (Table 3). About half said this has not changed since January 2014, but about a third said it has gotten worse. Fewer than one of 10 said it has improved.

We examined whether providers who reported seeing an increase in Medicaid patients or newly covered patients are more likely than other providers to report changes since January 2014 in their ability to serve patients. Across several measures, the survey finds no relationship between reported changes to patient population and declines in practice capacity (Table 3). Among providers who have seen increases in the number of Medicaid patients or newly covered patients, most reported no changes since January 2014 in their ability to provide high-quality care to patients or in patients' satisfaction and experiences with care.

Exhibit 2. Most Providers Report No Change in Their Ability to Provide Quality Care

Percent who say since January 2014, their ability to provide high-quality care to all patients has:



Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

One area of concern is the amount of time providers spend treating patients, compared with the amount of time spent on administrative or other tasks. Four of 10 physicians and more than a third of midlevel providers said the amount of time they have available to spend with each patient has gotten worse since January 2014 (Table 3). An even larger share—about six of 10 physicians and about half of nurse practitioners and physician assistants—said the amount of time they spend on administrative issues related to insurance has gotten worse. About three of 10 primary care physicians said they are somewhat or very dissatisfied with the amount of time they are able to spend with their patients (data not shown). In two surveys conducted by The Commonwealth Fund in 2006 and 2012—before the implementation of the ACA—about four of 10 physicians reported a similar level of dissatisfaction.²

Providers Say Most Patients Can Get Same- or Next-Day Appointments

Overall, about four of 10 primary care providers said almost all their patients who request a same- or next-day appointment can get one; another quarter said most of their patients can get such appointments (Table 4). For physicians, the rates are largely unchanged from 2009 and 2012—as measured by Commonwealth Fund surveys—suggesting that there has not been an overall decline in providers' ability to provide timely appointments. The rates, however, are somewhat lower than those reported in 2006.³ Other surveys of patients also indicate that most adults with new coverage have been able to find physicians and get appointments within reasonable time frames.⁴

Physicians who have seen an increase in Medicaid patients or newly insured patients since January 2014 are less likely than others to say most of their patients can access a same- or next-day appointment (36% vs. 50%). However, it is not clear whether this difference is a direct result of increases in patient populations or whether it reflects a preexisting difference in practice capacity. For

example, survey results show that of physicians working in community clinics—who are among the most likely to report an increase in Medicaid or newly insured patients—only two of 10 said almost all of their patients could get timely appointments (Table 4). This was also the case in 2012, before ACA reforms took effect.

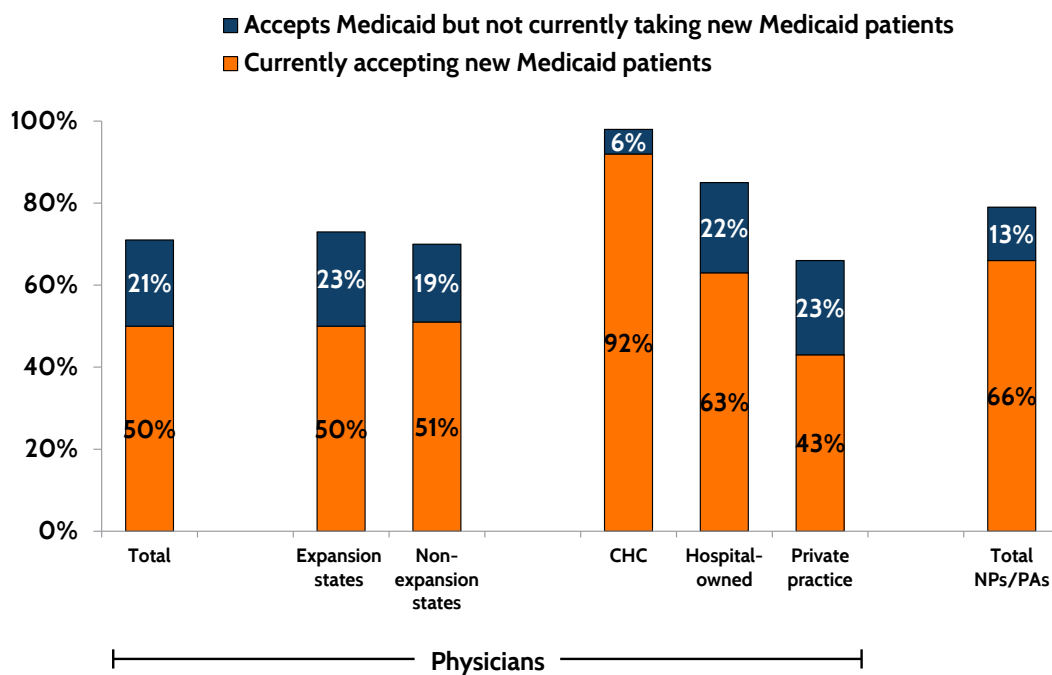
Share of Physicians Accepting New Medicaid Patients Remains Unchanged from 2012

A large majority of primary care providers (83% of physicians, 93% of midlevel clinicians) said they are currently accepting new patients (Table 5). Nine percent of physicians said they stopped accepting new patients within the past 12 months; another 7 percent said they stopped accepting new patients more than one year ago (data not shown). Most primary care providers (71% of physicians, 80% of nurse practitioners and physician assistants) said they accept Medicaid, though fewer (50% of physicians, 66% of nurse practitioners and physician assistants) are currently accepting new Medicaid patients (Exhibit 3).

A survey conducted in late 2011 through early 2012 found that 89 percent of primary care physicians were accepting new patients and 52 percent were accepting new Medicaid patients.⁵ This indicates that while physicians' rates of accepting new patients overall may have declined slightly since the ACA coverage expansions went into effect, acceptance rates for Medicaid have remained about the same. No similar trend data are available for nurse practitioners and physician assistants, but the current survey indicates that these practitioners are significantly more likely than physicians to be accepting new patients and particularly new Medicaid patients.

The share of providers accepting new Medicaid patients does not differ among physicians working in states that expanded their Medicaid program versus those that did not (50% and 51%, respectively) (Exhibit 3). However, there are certain types of primary care physicians who are more

Exhibit 3. Half of Physicians and Two-Thirds of Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants Are Currently Accepting New Medicaid Patients



likely than others to say they are accepting new Medicaid patients: those working in community clinics (92%), those serving mostly low-income patients (82%), and those serving a higher proportion of non-English-speaking patients (74%) (Table 5).

PROVIDERS' OPINIONS ABOUT HEALTH REFORM AND ITS IMPACT ON MEDICAL PRACTICE

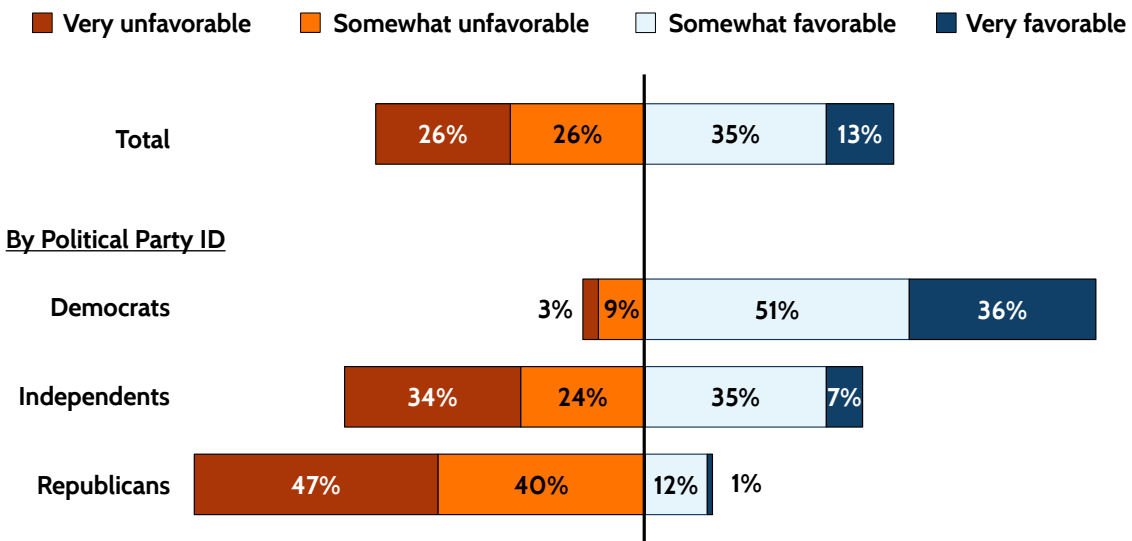
Providers' Opinions Split on ACA, with Sharp Divisions Along Party Lines

The survey asked providers about their views of the law and how it has affected their practice and patients. In contrast to the questions about their experiences over this time period, providers' attitudes toward the law and their perceptions of its impacts break sharply along partisan lines.

Overall, primary care providers are about evenly split in their opinion of the Affordable Care Act, with about half saying they have a generally favorable view of the law and the other half unfavorable (Table 6). Similar to the general public, providers' opinions divide sharply along partisan lines. Nearly nine of 10 of those who identify as Democrats have a favorable view of the law, while a similar share of Republicans said their view is unfavorable (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4. Physicians' Opinions About the Affordable Care Act Are Split, with Sharp Divisions Along Party Lines

Among physicians: Overall, what is your opinion of the health care law that was passed in 2010, also known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or Obamacare?



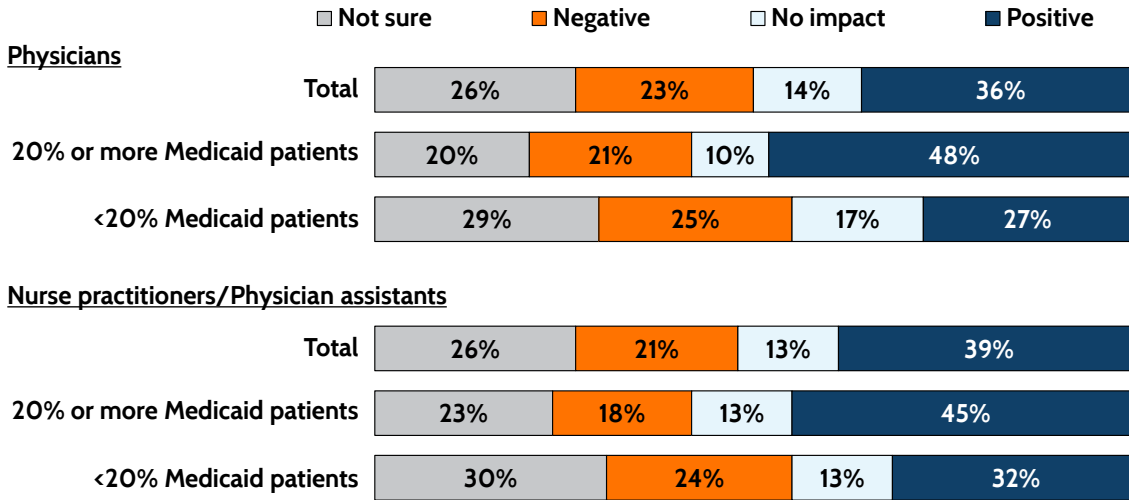
Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

When asked more specifically about the expansion of Medicaid under the ACA, nearly four of 10 providers (36% of physicians and 39% of nurse practitioners and physician assistants) said the expansion has had a positive impact on providers' ability to provide quality care to their patients (Table 7). About two of 10 said it has had a negative impact and the remainder said it has not made a difference or they are not sure. Providers who likely have more direct experience with the Medicaid expansion—that is, those who see a larger share of Medicaid patients and those working in expansion

states—are more likely than their counterparts to say the impact of has been positive (Exhibit 5). Partisan divisions persist on views of Medicaid expansion, with majorities of Democrats viewing the impact as positive and most Republicans viewing it as neutral or negative (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 5. Providers Serving a Higher Proportion of Medicaid Patients Are More Likely to Say Medicaid Expansion Has Positively Impacted Their Ability to Provide Quality Care

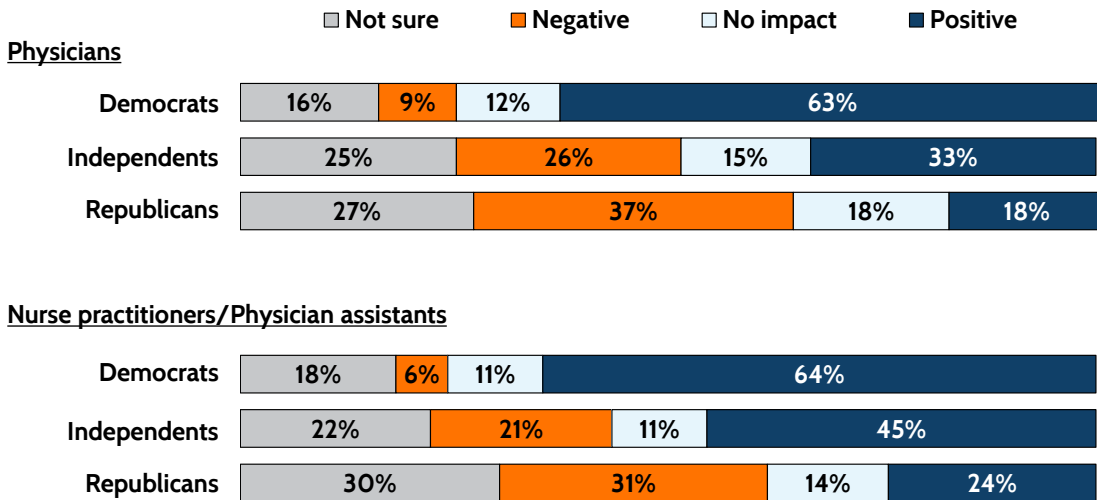
Do you think the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act is having a positive, negative, or no impact on primary care providers' ability to provide quality care to their patients?



Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

Exhibit 6. Partisan Divisions Persist on Views of Medicaid Expansion and Its Impact on the Ability to Provide Quality Care

Do you think the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act is having a positive, negative, or no impact on primary care providers' ability to provide quality care to their patients?



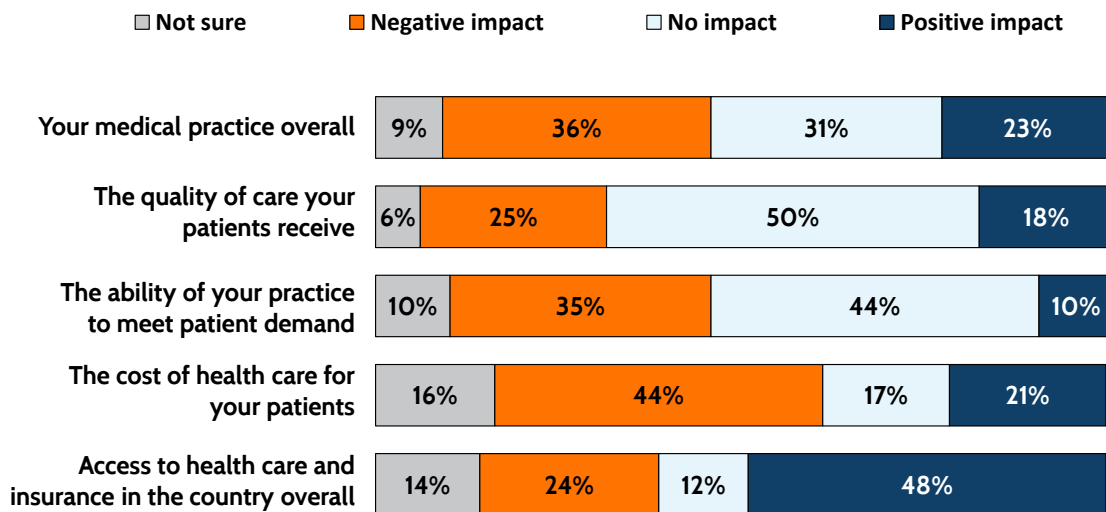
Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

Partisanship Drives Differences in Perceptions of the Impact of the Affordable Care Act

Providers were asked five questions about whether the Affordable Care Act has had a positive, negative, or neutral impact on their practice (Exhibit 7, Table 8). When asked their opinions about the impact of the ACA on the quality of care their patients receive and on the ability of their practice to meet patient demand, between four of 10 and half of providers said there has been no impact. However, the share of physicians saying the impact in these areas has been negative is greater than the share saying it has been positive (Exhibit 7). About four of 10 providers believe the ACA has had a negative impact on patients' out-of-pocket costs. Conversely, about half of providers said the ACA has had a positive impact on access to health care and insurance in the country overall.

Exhibit 7. Physicians' Views of the Impact of Health Reform on Their Practice and Patients Are More Negative on Cost of Care and More Positive on Access and Health Insurance

Among physicians: Percent who say the ACA has had a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact on each of the following:



Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

Providers' responses to the questions that mention the ACA by name are deeply divided along party lines. For example, by a three-to-one margin, physicians who identify as Democrats are more likely to say the ACA has had a positive (44%) rather than a negative (15%) impact on their medical practice overall (Table 8). Republican physicians break in the opposite direction by about seven-to-one (57% negative, 8% positive). Patterns of partisan divisions are similar among midlevel clinicians.

About half of providers (48 percent of physicians and 54 percent of nurse practitioners and physician assistants) feel they do not have enough information about the law to understand how it is affecting their medical practice. Similarly, 41 percent of Americans overall said they do not have enough information about the law to understand how it will affect them and their family.

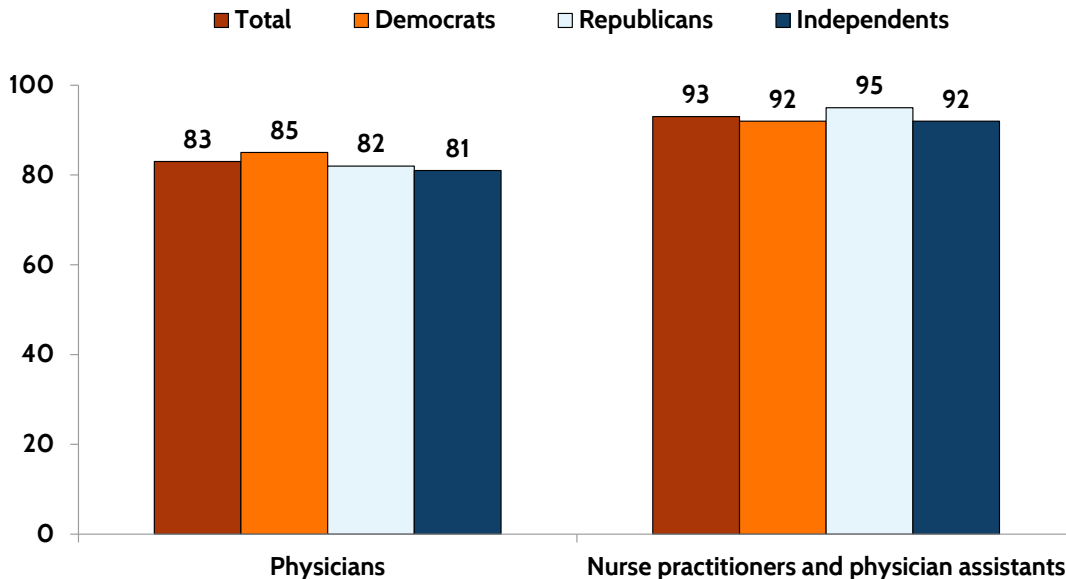
Majority of Primary Care Providers Are Satisfied with Their Practice, But Many Are Pessimistic About the Future of Primary Care

Even though providers with different political affiliations do not share views about the Affordable Care Act, a large majority of primary care providers (83% of physicians and 93% of nurse practitioners and physician assistants)—both Republicans and Democrats—reported they are very or somewhat satisfied with their medical practice overall (Exhibit 8). The changing environment does not appear to be affecting overall provider satisfaction even among providers who see a larger share of Medicaid patients or work in Medicaid expansion states (Table 9). Indeed, current satisfaction levels are slightly higher than what was reported by primary care physicians before the ACA. In 2012, 68 percent of primary care physicians reported they were very satisfied or satisfied with practicing medicine.⁶

Still, many primary care physicians express pessimism about the future of primary care medicine (Table 9). Physicians are split on whether they would (45%) or would not (49%) advise a qualified high school or college student to pursue a career as a primary care physician. These views are somewhat divided along party lines, with Democrats (56%) more likely than Independents (40%) or Republicans (39%) to say they would recommend a career in primary care. Nurse practitioners and physician assistants are far more optimistic. The vast majority would recommend a career in primary care, whether Democrat (88%), Republican (89%), or Independent (79%).

Exhibit 8. The Vast Majority of Providers—Democrats and Republicans Alike—Are Satisfied with Their Medical Practice

Percent of providers reporting they are “very or somewhat” satisfied with their medical practice overall



Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

Many Providers Unaware of Key Affordable Care Act Provisions

Even more than a year after the major coverage provisions went into effect, there is still a lack of awareness about the law among primary care providers (Table 10). For example, many providers are unaware of their own state's Medicaid expansion status. When asked whether their state has expanded its Medicaid program, about six of 10 primary care providers (59 percent of physicians and 55 percent of nurse practitioners and physician assistants) answered correctly, while the remaining four of 10 either gave the incorrect answer or said they did not know. Providers in states that have expanded Medicaid are more likely to correctly identify their state's status (62 percent of providers), compared with those in nonexpansion states (54 percent of physicians and 46 percent of nurse practitioners and physician assistants).

About half of providers are also unaware of specific reforms in the Affordable Care Act that are intended to encourage more providers to accept Medicaid and Medicare patients.^{7,8,9} For example, the ACA provided a 10 percent increase in Medicare payments to certain primary care providers from 2011 through 2015 to incentivize the provision of primary care and preventive services.¹⁰ A similar though shorter-lived program increased Medicaid payments for primary care physicians to match Medicare rates for 2013–2014 in an effort to maintain provider participation as the Medicaid population expanded.¹¹ When asked whether they knew about these provisions or had received these payments, the survey found that among physicians who see Medicare and Medicaid patients, about half did not know about these bumps in payment (Table 10). Three of 10 physicians (31 percent) who see Medicaid patients reported receiving the Medicaid payment bump, and about half of those said it made a difference in their willingness to see these patients. Among physicians who accept Medicare, just one-quarter reported receiving the Medicare payment bump. Of these, about four of 10 said it made a difference in their ability to serve these patients, with most saying it made only a small difference. Most nurse practitioners and physician assistants serving Medicare and Medicaid patients were not aware of either of these payment increases (73% each).

CONCLUSION

The expansion of coverage to millions of previously uninsured Americans under the Affordable Care Act raised questions about how these changes would affect the primary care delivery system. This new survey finds that most primary care providers—including those who reported seeing more patients who are newly insured or covered by Medicaid—said their ability to provide high-quality care has not changed since January 2014. Most providers are not closing their practices to Medicaid patients. Large majorities of those who have traditionally been part of the Medicaid safety-net—including those working in community clinics and those serving a higher proportion of low-income and non-English-speaking patients—continue to say their practices are open to new Medicaid patients. Furthermore, a large majority of primary care providers say they are satisfied with their medical practices, although many physicians are pessimistic about the future of primary care.

However, the survey also finds that many primary care providers remain uninformed about aspects of the law. And despite their close connections to the health care system, primary care providers—like the public overall—view the law largely through a political lens.

NOTES

- ¹ Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, “Health Insurance Coverage and the Affordable Care Act” (Washington, D.C.: ASPE, May 5, 2015), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2015/uninsured_change/ib_uninsured_change.pdf.
- ² Authors’ analysis of the Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Surveys (2006 and 2012).
- ³ Authors’ analysis of the Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Surveys (2006, 2009, and 2012).
- ⁴ S. R. Collins, P. W. Rasmussen, and M. M. Doty, *Gaining Ground: Americans’ Health Insurance Coverage and Access to Care After the Affordable Care Act’s First Open Enrollment Period* (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, July 2014); and S. R. Collins, P. W. Rasmussen, M. M. Doty, and S. Beutel, *Americans’ Experiences with Marketplace and Medicaid Coverage—Findings from the Commonwealth Fund Affordable Care Act Tracking Survey, March–May 2015* (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, June 2015).
- ⁵ Data from C. DesRoches, A.-M. Audet, M. Painter, and K. Donelan, 2011 National Survey of Physicians (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 2011).
- ⁶ Authors’ analysis of the Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Survey (2012).
- ⁷ S. L. Decker, “The Effect of Physician Reimbursement Levels on the Primary Care of Medicaid Patients,” *Review of Economics of the Household*, March 2007 5(1):95–112.
- ⁸ S. L. Decker, “In 2011 Nearly One-Third of Physicians Said They Would Not Accept New Medicaid Patients, But Rising Fees May Help,” *Health Affairs*, Aug. 2012 31(8):1673–79.
- ⁹ Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission, *Report to Congress on Medicaid and CHIP* (Washington, D.C.: MACPAC, 2015).
- ¹⁰ Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, *Report to Congress: Medicare Payment Policy* (Washington, D.C.: MedPAC, 2015).
- ¹¹ Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission, *Report to Congress on Medicaid and CHIP* (Washington, D.C.: MACPAC, 2015).

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Editorial support was provided by Deborah Lorber.

METHODOLOGY

The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers was jointly designed and analyzed by researchers at The Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) and The Commonwealth Fund. Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS) carried out the field work and collaborated with Kaiser and Commonwealth Fund researchers on questionnaire design, pretesting, sample design, and weighting. The Kaiser Family Foundation and The Commonwealth Fund each contributed financing for the survey. The project team included Liz Hamel, Mira Norton, and Mollyann Brodie from KFF; and Michelle Doty, Jamie Ryan, Rose Kleiman, Melinda Abrams, and Anne-Marie Audet from The Commonwealth Fund.

Survey responses were collected via hard copy and Web-based questionnaires between January 5 and March 30, 2015, with a random sample of 1,624 primary care physicians and a separate random sample of 366 nurse practitioners (NPs) and 159 physician assistants (PAs) working in primary care practices. The surveys achieved the following response rates, calculated using AAPOR's RR3: physicians (34%), NPs (29%), and PAs (25%).

The sample for physicians was procured from SK&A, which maintains a national database of physicians that is continuously updated by a telephone verification process. Physicians drawn for the sample were those whose specialty was listed in the SK&A database as either general practice, family practice, internal medicine, adolescent medicine, internal medicine pediatrics, general pediatrics, or geriatrics. Physicians were further screened to include only those who indicated in the survey that they spend at least 60 percent of their work time providing care to patients as a primary care provider. The physician sample included an oversample of physicians working in low-income areas (those whose office is located in a zip code where the average annual household income is \$55,000 or less) and those working in federally qualified health centers and community health centers.

The sample for NPs/PAs was procured from KM Lists, which uses publicly released data available from state licensing boards and information from professional associations and journal subscriptions to develop and update its database. Unlike physicians, specialty type for NPs and PAs does not necessarily correspond with the practice setting in which they work. Therefore, a broader list of specialties was included. NPs and PAs drawn for the sample were those whose specialty was listed in the database as family medicine, internal medicine, adult medicine, adolescent medicine, pediatrics, internal medicine pediatrics, geriatrics, preventive medicine, osteopathy, women's health, or community/public health. The sample also included NPs and PAs whose specialty type was listed as "unknown" (these were undersampled relative to the other listed specialties). NPs and PAs were further screened to include only those who indicated in the survey that they are currently working in a primary care practice and that they spend at least 60 percent of their work time providing care to patients as a primary care provider.

In an effort to maximize contact and completion rates, providers were contacted by multiple modes (mail, telephone, and email), offered incentives, and given the option of completing the survey in hard copy or online.

A multistage weighting process was applied to ensure an accurate representation of the national population of primary care physicians and NPs/PAs. The first stage in weighting both samples involved corrections for sample design and differential nonresponse by email availability. Physician survey data were weighted by gender, age, specialty type, region, and site specialty using benchmarks in the 2014 American Medical Association Physicians Masterfile; and number of MDs at site using benchmarks in the SK&A list of primary care MDs. NP and PA data were weighted by gender and specialty type using benchmarks in the KM Lists. The physician sample was analyzed separately from the NP and PA sample.

All statistical tests of significance account for the effect of weighting. The margin of sampling error (MOSE) including the design effect is plus or minus 3 percentage points for MDs and 5 percentage points for the combined group of NPs and PAs. Unweighted Ns and MOSE for NPs and PAs separately are shown in the table below. For results based on other subgroups, the MOSE may be higher.

Group	N (unweighted)	MOSE
MD	1,624	±3 percentage points
NP/PA combined	525	±5 percentage points
NPs only	366	±6 percentage points
PAs only	159	±9 percentage points

TABLE 1. REPORTED CHANGES IN PATIENT POPULATION SINCE JANUARY 2014

	Total		Physicians by practice setting		
	Physicians	Nurse practitioners/ Physician assistants	Community health clinic	Hospital-owned practice	Private practice
Percent saying each of the following have increased, decreased, or stayed about the same since January 2014:					
The total number of patients you see					
Increased	44	54	48	47	44
Decreased	15	7	9	13	17
Stayed about the same	38	38	40	38	38
Not applicable	1	1	2	1	1
Not sure	1	<1	2	1	1
The number of patients you see who recently gained health insurance after being uninsured					
Increased	48	54	70	54	46
Decreased	4	3	1	6	4
Stayed about the same	28	23	15	23	31
Not applicable	7	8	5	5	7
Not sure	12	12	8	13	12
The number of patients you see who are chronically ill					
Increased	37	44	41	43	36
Decreased	2	1	0	1	2
Stayed about the same	57	51	53	52	59
Not applicable	2	2	5	1	1
Not sure	2	2	1	2	1

Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

TABLE 2. REPORTED CHANGES IN MEDICAID PATIENT POPULATION SINCE JANUARY 2014 AMONG PROVIDERS IN MEDICAID EXPANSION STATES AND NONEXPANSION STATES

	Physicians			Nurse practitioners/ Physician assistants		
	Total	Expansion state	Nonexpansion state	Total	Expansion state	Nonexpansion state
Among providers who accept Medicaid, percent saying the number of Medicaid patients they see has:						
Increased since Jan 2014	42	47	35	45	50	38
Decreased since Jan 2014	7	6	9	7	6	7
Stayed about the same	46	44	50	45	40	52
Other/Blank/NA	5	5	6	4	4	3

Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

TABLE 3. CHANGES TO PRACTICE CAPACITY AMONG PROVIDERS SEEING MORE MEDICAID OR UNINSURED PATIENTS SINCE JANUARY 2014

	Total		Physicians		Nurse practitioners/ Physician assistants	
	Physicians	Nurse practitioners/ Physician assistants	Report increase in Medicaid or newly insured Patients	Report no increase in Medicaid or newly insured	Report Increase in Medicaid or newly insured Patients	Report no increase in Medicaid or newly insured
Percent of providers who report an increase in Medicaid or uninsured patients since January 2014	59%	64%	-	-	-	-
Percent who say each of the following has improved, stayed about the same, or gotten worse since January 2014:	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ability to provide high-quality care to all patients						
Improved	20	19	23	16	21	15
About the same	59	63	55	65	60	68
Worse	20	18	21	18	19	16
Patient satisfaction and experiences with care						
Improved	18	22	19	16	22	21
About the same	61	63	59	64	62	64
Worse	18	13	20	16	13	12
Practice's ability to recruit and retain clinical staff						
Improved	9	7	10	7	8	5
About the same	45	50	45	44	49	51
Worse	35	34	36	34	33	35
Amount of time available to spend with each patient						
Improved	9	6	9	10	7	5
About the same	50	57	49	53	54	62
Worse	40	36	42	37	39	32
Amount of time spent on administrative issues related to insurance						
Improved	5	3	6	4	4	2
About the same	27	30	25	29	29	31
Worse	62	50	62	61	50	50

Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

**TABLE 4. REPORTED ABILITY OF PATIENTS TO GET ACCESS TO
SAME- OR NEXT-DAY APPOINTMENTS BY PRACTICE SETTING AND
INCREASE IN MEDICAID OR NEWLY INSURED PATIENTS**

Proportion of patients who can get a same- or next-day appointment when requested	Almost all (>80%)	Most (60%-80%)	About half (about 50%)	Some (20%-40%)	Few (<20%)
Physicians (2006)*	50	27	10	6	5
Physicians (2009)*	44	26	11	9	7
Physicians (2012)*	47	23	11	8	6
Physicians (2015)	42	25	13	10	8
Nurse practitioners/Physician assistants (2015)	42	27	14	9	6
Physicians by practice setting (2015)					
Community health clinic	20	25	23	14	16
Hospital-owned	32	24	15	15	12
Private practice	47	25	11	8	6
Physicians by practice setting (2012)*					
Community health clinic	23	28	20	12	12
Hospital-owned	36	21	13	10	11
Private practice	57	24	9	5	3
Physicians by patient increases					
Increases in Medicaid or newly insured patients	36	26	13	12	10
No increase in Medicaid or newly insured	50	22	12	8	6
Nurse practitioners/Physician assistants by patient increases					
Increases in Medicaid or newly insured patients	41	27	14	10	7
No increase in Medicaid or newly insured	44	26	13	7	5

Sources: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers;
and * Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Surveys 2006, 2009, 2012.

TABLE 5. PERCENT OF PROVIDERS ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS AND THOSE WITH MEDICAID BY SELECTED PROVIDER CHARACTERISTICS

	Percent accepting new patients	Percent accepting new Medicaid patients
Physicians overall (2015)	83	50
Nurse practitioners/Physician assistants overall	93	66
Physicians by practice setting		
Private practice	83	43
Hospital-owned	80	63
Community health clinic	92	92
Physicians by specialty		
Pediatricians	91	66
Non-pediatricians	81	45
Physicians by patient characteristics		
Mostly low-income patients	89	82
Not mostly low-income patients	82	42
>10% non-English-speaking patients	92	74
<10% non-English-speaking patients	81	44
Physicians by state		
Medicaid expansion	82	50
Not Medicaid expansion	85	51
Physicians by age		
<45	89	57
45-54	82	49
55+	80	47
Physicians by race		
White	80	46
Asian	89	53
Black/Hispanic/other	93	68

Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

**TABLE 6. PROVIDER OPINION OF THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT
BY POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION**

	Physicians				Nurse practitioners/ Physician assistants			
	Total	Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Total	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Overall, what is your opinion of the health care law that was passed in 2010, also known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or Obamacare?								
Very favorable	13	36	7	1	15	39	6	1
Somewhat favorable	35	51	35	12	34	48	44	19
Somewhat unfavorable	26	9	24	40	28	10	33	39
Very unfavorable	26	3	34	47	23	3	16	40

Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

**TABLE 7. PROVIDER OPINION OF MEDICAID EXPANSION BY SHARE OF MEDICAID PATIENTS
AND STATE MEDICAID EXPANSION STATUS**

	Total MDs	Total NP/PA	Physicians				Nurse practitioners/Physician assistants			
			20%+ Medicaid patients	<20% Medicaid patients	Expansion state	Nonexp. state	20%+ Medicaid patients	<20% Medicaid patients	Expansion state	Nonexp. state
			Positive	36	39	48	27	40	30	45
Negative	23	21	21	25	23	24	18	24	17	24
No impact	14	13	10	17	12	17	13	13	12	14
Not sure	26	26	20	29	23	28	23	30	25	27

Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

TABLE 8. PROVIDER VIEWS ON THE IMPACT OF THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT BY POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION

		Total			Physicians			Nurse practitioners/ Physician assistants		
		MD	NP/PA	Dem	Ind	Rep	Dem	Ind	Rep	
Percent who say the Affordable Care Act has had a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact on each of the following:										
Your medical practice overall	Positive impact	23	27	44	18	8	42	21	17	
	Negative impact	36	30	15	37	57	12	32	42	
	No impact	31	30	30	36	28	34	33	29	
	Not sure	9	12	10	8	6	12	14	11	
The quality of care your patients receive	Positive impact	18	21	30	14	7	41	16	9	
	Negative impact	25	21	9	26	38	5	25	29	
	No impact	50	49	53	53	49	43	52	53	
	Not sure	6	8	6	4	4	10	6	6	
The ability of your practice to meet patient demand	Positive impact	10	16	17	8	4	30	8	11	
	Negative impact	35	35	22	36	49	21	42	41	
	No impact	44	38	49	47	40	36	36	39	
	Not sure	10	10	11	7	7	11	13	8	
The cost of health care for your patients	Positive impact	21	26	42	17	7	42	27	15	
	Negative impact	44	38	20	45	66	22	34	50	
	No impact	17	15	19	19	13	14	16	16	
	Not sure	16	19	17	16	11	22	21	15	
Access to health care and insurance in the country overall	Positive impact	48	51	77	42	30	78	52	33	
	Negative impact	24	23	7	26	41	8	22	31	
	No impact	12	11	6	15	15	6	5	20	
	Not sure	14	14	8	14	12	8	20	15	
Do you feel you have enough information about the Affordable Care Act to understand how it is affecting your medical practice?										
Yes		50	45	50	53	55	42	38	49	
No		48	54	48	45	44	58	61	48	
Don't know		<1	<1	2	2	2	0	1	4	

Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

TABLE 9. PROVIDER SATISFACTION BY POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND BY SHARE OF MEDICAID PATIENTS AND STATE MEDICAID EXPANSION STATUS

How satisfied are you with your medical practice overall?					
	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	
Physicians	35	48	13	4	
Nurse practitioners/ Physician assistants	55	38	5	1	
Physicians by party identification					
Democrat	35	50	11	3	
Independent	33	48	14	4	
Republican	35	47	13	4	
Physicians by share of Medicaid patients					
<20% Medicaid patients	35	48	13	4	
20%+ Medicaid patients	35	49	13	4	
Physicians by Medicaid expansion status					
Expansion state	33	50	14	3	
Nonexpansion state	37	47	11	5	
Given what you know about the state of health care, would you advise a qualified high school or college student to pursue a career in primary care?					
	Definitely would	Probably would	Probably would not	Definitely would not	Not sure
Physicians	15	30	32	17	5
Nurse practitioners/Physician assistants	49	36	9	2	3
Physicians by party identification					
Democrat	21	35	29	9	6
Independent	13	27	29	26	5
Republican	10	29	37	20	5
Nurse practitioners/Physician assistants by party identification					
Democrat	49	39	6	2	3
Independent	36	42	14	3	4
Republican	56	32	8	<1	3

Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.

TABLE 10. AWARENESS OF MEDICARE EXPANSION STATUS AND MEDICARE AND MEDICAID PAYMENT INCREASES PROVIDED BY THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

	Total physicians (%)	Total nurse practitioners/ physician assistants (%)
As you may know, the Affordable Care Act gives states the option of expanding their Medicaid program to cover more low-income uninsured adults. As far as you know, has your state expanded its Medicaid program, or not?		
Accurately reported their state's Medicaid expansion status	59	55
Did not accurately report their state's Medicaid expansion status or did not know	41	45
Among those in Medicaid expansion states		
Accurately reported their state's Medicaid expansion status	62	62
Did not accurately report their state's Medicaid expansion status or did not know	38	38
Among those in nonexpansion states		
Accurately reported their state's Medicaid expansion status	54	46
Did not accurately report their state's Medicaid expansion status or did not know	46	53
Were you aware of the 10% increase in Medicare payments to certain primary care providers from 2011 through 2015, provided for by the Affordable Care Act? (base: total who accept Medicare)		
Yes, aware of increase and received bump	25	9
Yes, aware of increase but did not receive bump	25	17
No, was not aware of increase	49	73
Has this Medicare payment bump made a difference in your ability to serve your Medicare patients? (base: aware of and received bump)		
Big difference	5	*
Small difference	37	*
No difference	48	*
Not sure	7	*
Were you aware of the temporary increase in Medicaid payments for primary care to match Medicare rates beginning in 2013? (base: total who accept Medicaid)		
Yes, aware of increase and received bump	31	10
Yes, aware of increase but did not receive bump	21	15
No, was not aware of increase	47	73
Has this Medicaid payment bump made a difference in your willingness to see Medicaid patients? (base: aware of and received bump)		
Big difference	22	*
Small difference	30	*
No difference	41	*
Not sure	6	*

* Sample size too small to analyze.

Source: The Kaiser Family Foundation/Commonwealth Fund 2015 National Survey of Primary Care Providers.



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