

**Access to Health Care for Alabamians: Good to Great for Most –
Problematic for Some
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Ask-Alabama Poll, Spring 2005
Center for Governmental Services
2236 Haley Center
Auburn University AL 36849

Comments by: Jim Seroka, Director, Center for Governmental Services
Auburn University (334) 844-4781 jseroka@auburn.edu

Significant Findings

- 1. 85% of Alabamians report that they have health care insurance for themselves, and 79% of those with coverage describe their coverage as *excellent* (40%) or *good* (39%).**

Assessment of Coverage	Self	Family Coverage
Excellent	40%	37%
Good	39%	42%
Fair	14%	15%
Poor	6%	4%

Most Alabamians report that they have health insurance for themselves and their families, and that they consider the coverage to be good or excellent. Very few report that their coverage is poor. We should still be concerned, however, that one out of five of Alabamians contacted either do not have health insurance for themselves or have poor coverage. We need to recognize that this places an enormous burden on public hospitals and the medical community that affects us all.

- 2. Even though most Alabamians assess their coverage as *good to excellent*, two thirds of the respondents (66%) believe that a majority of Alabamians do not have access to the health and medical care they need, and 58% feel that the State leaders are not giving access to health care the attention it deserves.**

Attention Paid by State Leaders to Health and Medical Care Issues

Too Little Attention	58%
Just Enough Attention	31%
Too Much Attention	2%
Undecided or Don't Know	9%

Alabamians are concerned that good health care is not available for all. Although many may have an exaggerated perception of the scarcity of good health care in

the State, they seem to believe that the problem is real and needs direct attention by our State leaders. Access to health care is an issue Alabamians care deeply about, and it is an issue that State leaders need to address in the near future.

- 3. Almost half of the respondents (48%) report that they have had significant difficulty with their health care provider during the past year. Problems with paying medical fees were the most prevalent problems.**

Reported Problems with Health Care Provider During the Past Year	Percent Reporting
Difficulty Paying for Necessary Care	32%
Dropped from Health Insurance Plan	8%
Insurance Company Refused Payment	13%
Unable to Obtain Coverage Because of Medical History	10%
Deferred Medical Attention Because of Cost or Coverage	25%
Those Reporting One or More Problems during the Year	48%

While Alabamians may be generally pleased with their health care coverage, a large proportion report difficulties with how their programs are administered and with restrictions on coverage. Good health care is costly, and even many of those with health insurance report difficulty paying for their care or have been reluctant to seek care because of the cost.

- 4. 65% believe that the overall quality of health care in their community is excellent (27%) or good (39%); and more than 80% of Alabamians feel that they are able to obtain health care or access to medical professionals when they need it at least most of the time.**

Assessment of Quality of Community Health Care

Excellent	27%
Good	39%
Fair	21%
Poor	12%
No Answer or Don't Know	2%

Nearly two thirds of Alabamians are pleased with the quality of health care in their community. Satisfaction, however, is understandably higher in urban areas than in rural areas and small towns where there are fewer health professionals and a less developed health infrastructure.

Access to Medical Professional	Doctor	Specialist	Dentist
Always	68%	63%	67%
Most of the Time	20%	20%	13%
Occasionally	8%	7%	8%
Never	4%	8%	12%

It speaks well of the progress that has been made in the State that two out of three Alabamians now characterize their community's health care to be excellent or good, and that they are confident they have access to a medical doctor, or even a medical specialist, when they need it.

Poll Facts

Dates of Survey: April 6 - 18, 2005
Sample Size: 603 Alabama residents
Estimated Margin of Error: +/- 4%
Type of Survey: Random telephone survey of Alabamians 19 or older