

# Public Opinion on Medicare and Priorities for the Future

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National Academy of Social Insurance Symposium  
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# Three Main Themes Of Public Opinion On Medicare

- **Medicare is popular and perceived to be working well.**
- **The public is concerned about Medicare's financial future.**
- **Americans are resistant to most proposed changes to Medicare, particularly those that are perceived as scaling back benefits.**

# Three Main Themes Of Public Opinion On Medicare

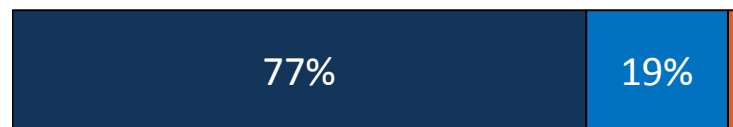
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# Medicare Is Viewed Almost Universally As Important

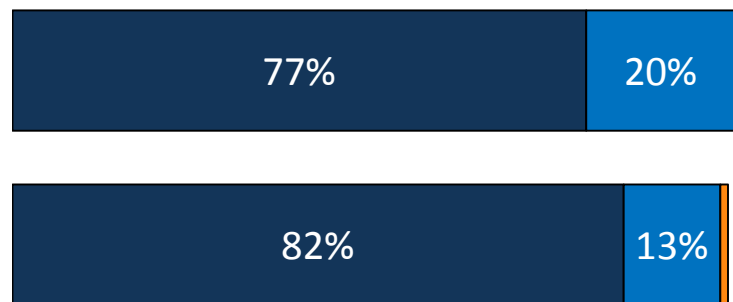
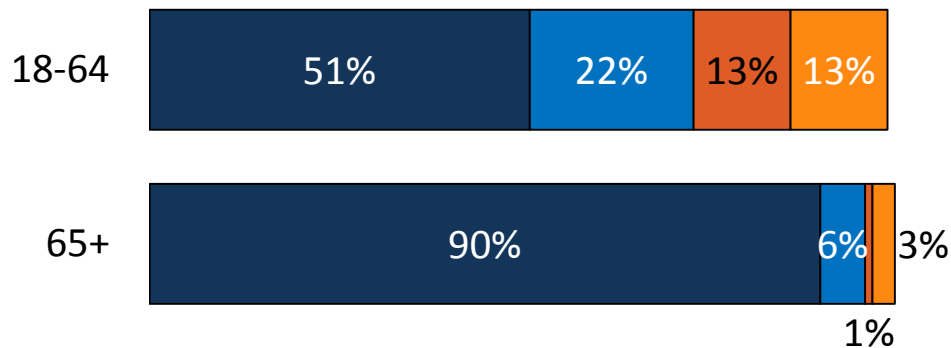
How important is Medicare for you and your family? (Nov. 2014)

How important is the Medicare program for the country as a whole? (Apr. 2009)

Very Important    
  Somewhat Important    
  Not too important    
  Not at all important



## By Age



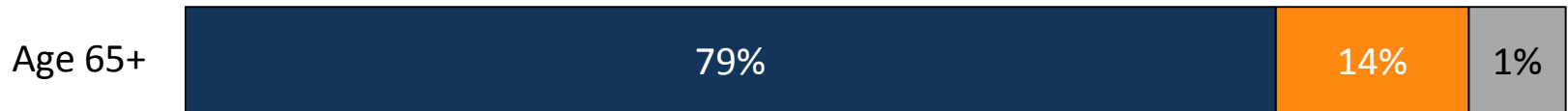
# Eight In Ten Seniors Believe Medicare Is Working Well

Would you say the current Medicare program is working well for most seniors, or not? (Nov. 2014)

■ Yes, working well      ■ No, not working well      ■ Don't know

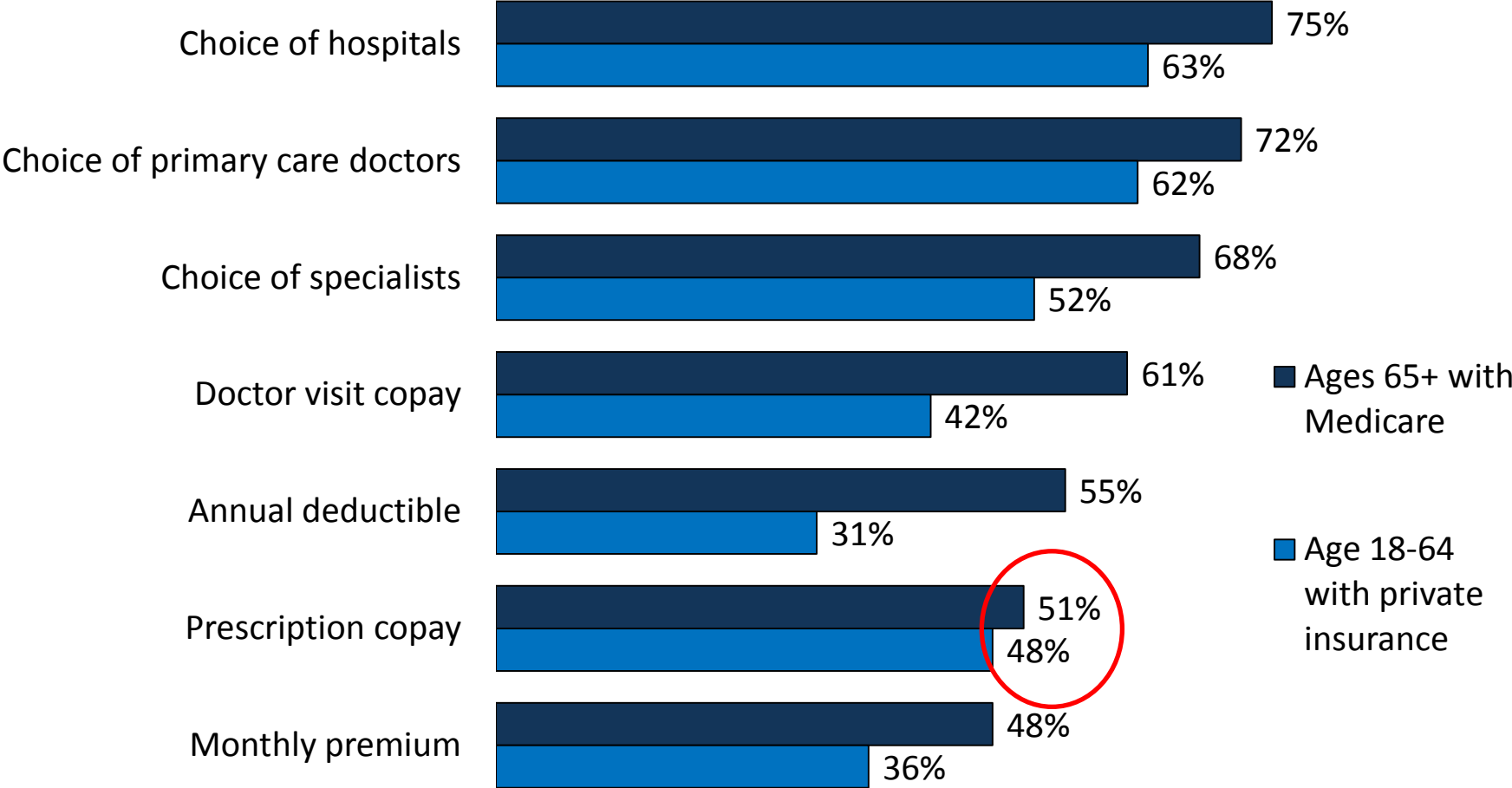


## By Age



# Medicare Beneficiaries Over 65 Are More Likely To Be Satisfied Than Younger Adults With Private Insurance

Percent who say they are **very satisfied** with each of the following:



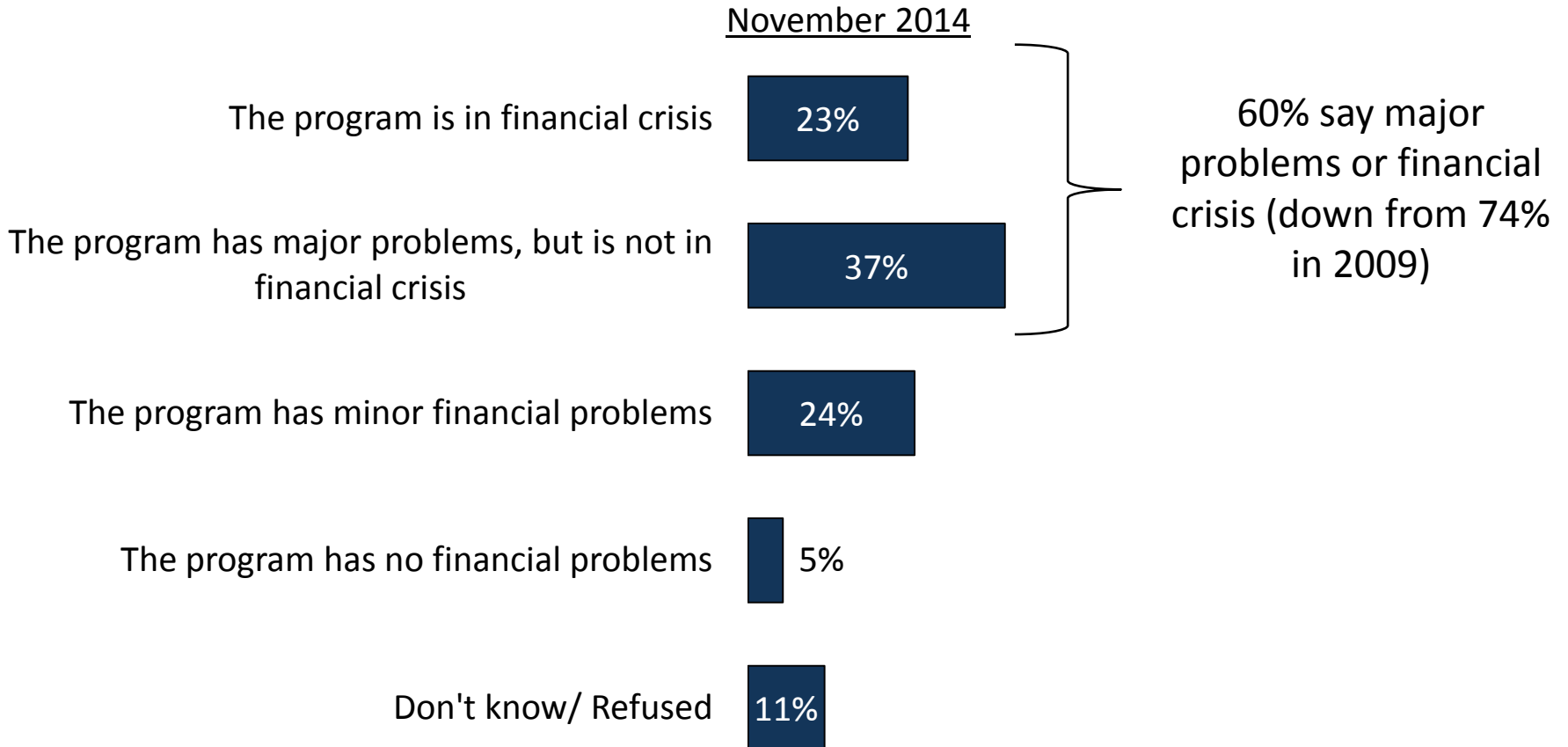
SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll (conducted May 13-19, 2014)

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# Most Think Medicare Has Major Financial Problems

AMONG TOTAL PUBLIC: Which of the following four statements comes closest to your own view of the **financial status of the Medicare program**?

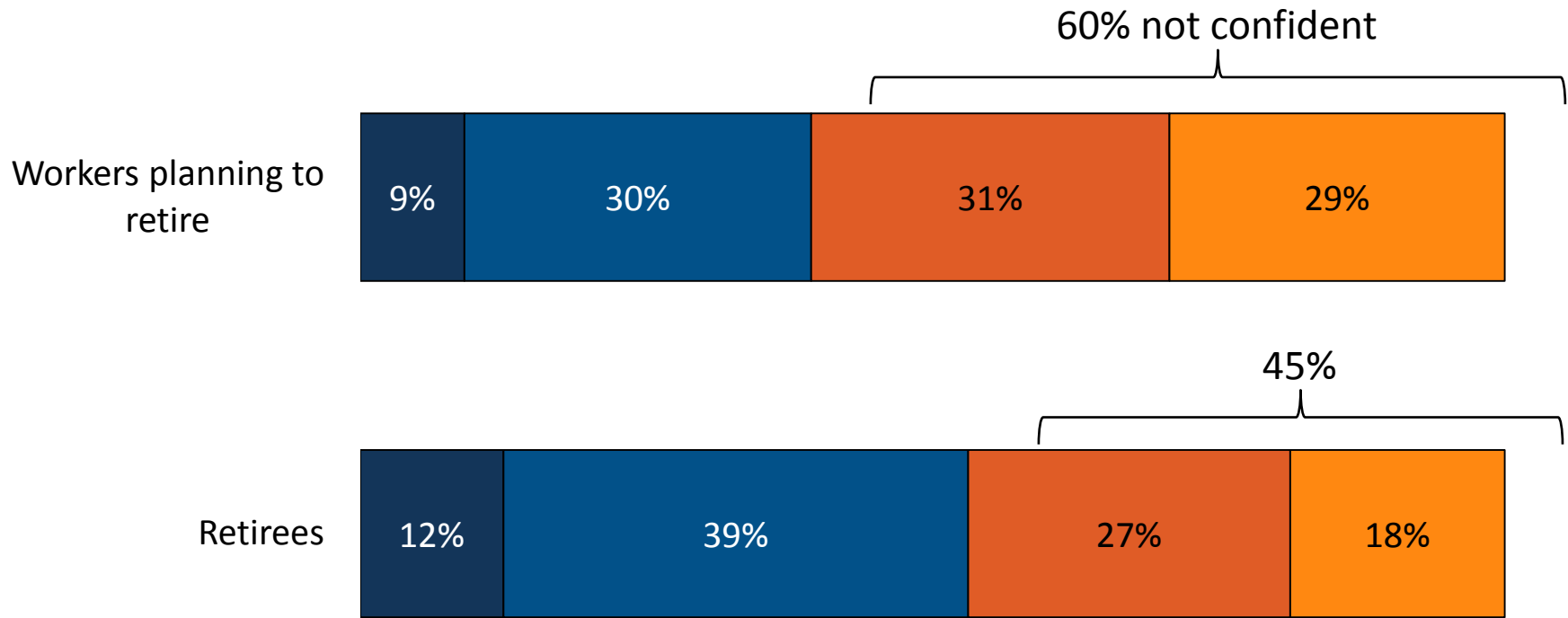




# Many Current And Future Retirees Are Not Confident In Medicare's Ability To Maintain Future Benefits

How confident are you that the Medicare system will continue to provide benefits of at least equal value to the benefits received by retirees today?

■ Very confident   ■ Somewhat confident   ■ Not too confident   ■ Not at all confident



SOURCE: SOURCE: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald & Associates, 2014 Retirement Confidence Survey

The Opinion Pages | CONTRIBUTING OP-ED WRITER

# Obamacare, Hands Off My Medicare

APRIL 22, 2015



**Thomas B.  
Edsall**

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A number of factors underpin [the anti-redistributionist shift](#) in public opinion that I wrote about last week.

First, and perhaps most important, is the emergence of significant resistance to downward redistribution among the elderly, a major voting bloc.

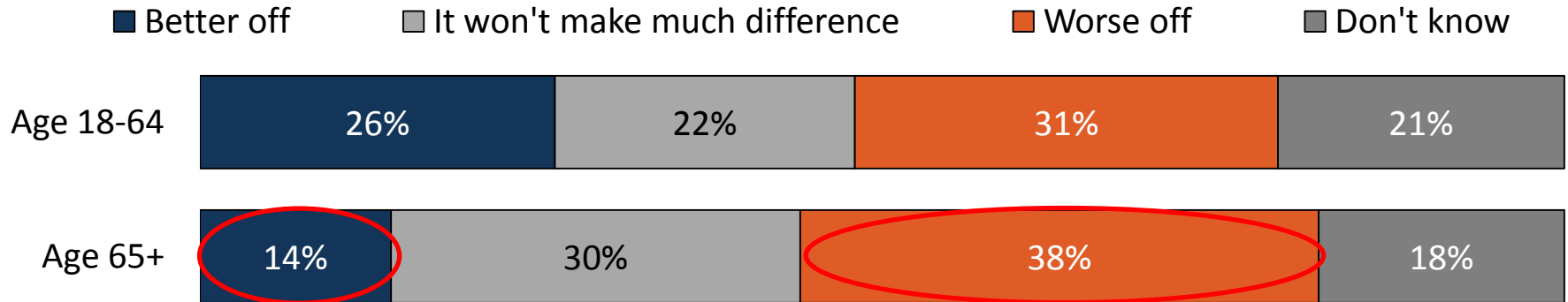
The views of older voters deserve scrutiny. They “worry that redistribution will come at their expense, in particular via cuts to [Medicare](#),” Vivekinan Ashok, a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Yale; Ilyana Kuziemko, a professor of economics at Princeton; and Ebonya Washington, a professor of economics at Yale, write in a March 2015 [Brookings Institution](#) essay, “[Support for Redistribution in an Age of Rising Inequality](#)”— an essay my Times colleague Neil Irwin also discussed in [a recent column](#) that asked why Americans don’t want to soak the rich.

In the end, Ashok, Kuziemko and Washington conclude that

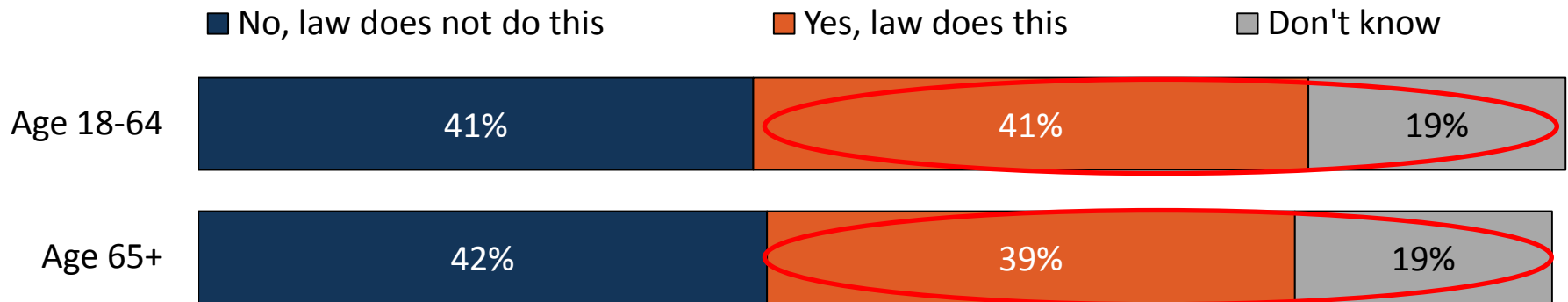
the elderly have grown increasingly opposed to government provision of health insurance and that controlling for this tendency explains roughly half of their declining relative support of redistribution.

# Concern – And Confusion – About ACA’s Impact On Medicare

Do you think the Medicare program will be better off or worse off under the health reform law, or don't you think it will make much difference? (Sept. 2013)



To the best of your knowledge, would you say the health reform law does or does not establish a government panel to make decisions about end-of-life care for people on Medicare? (Dec. 2014)

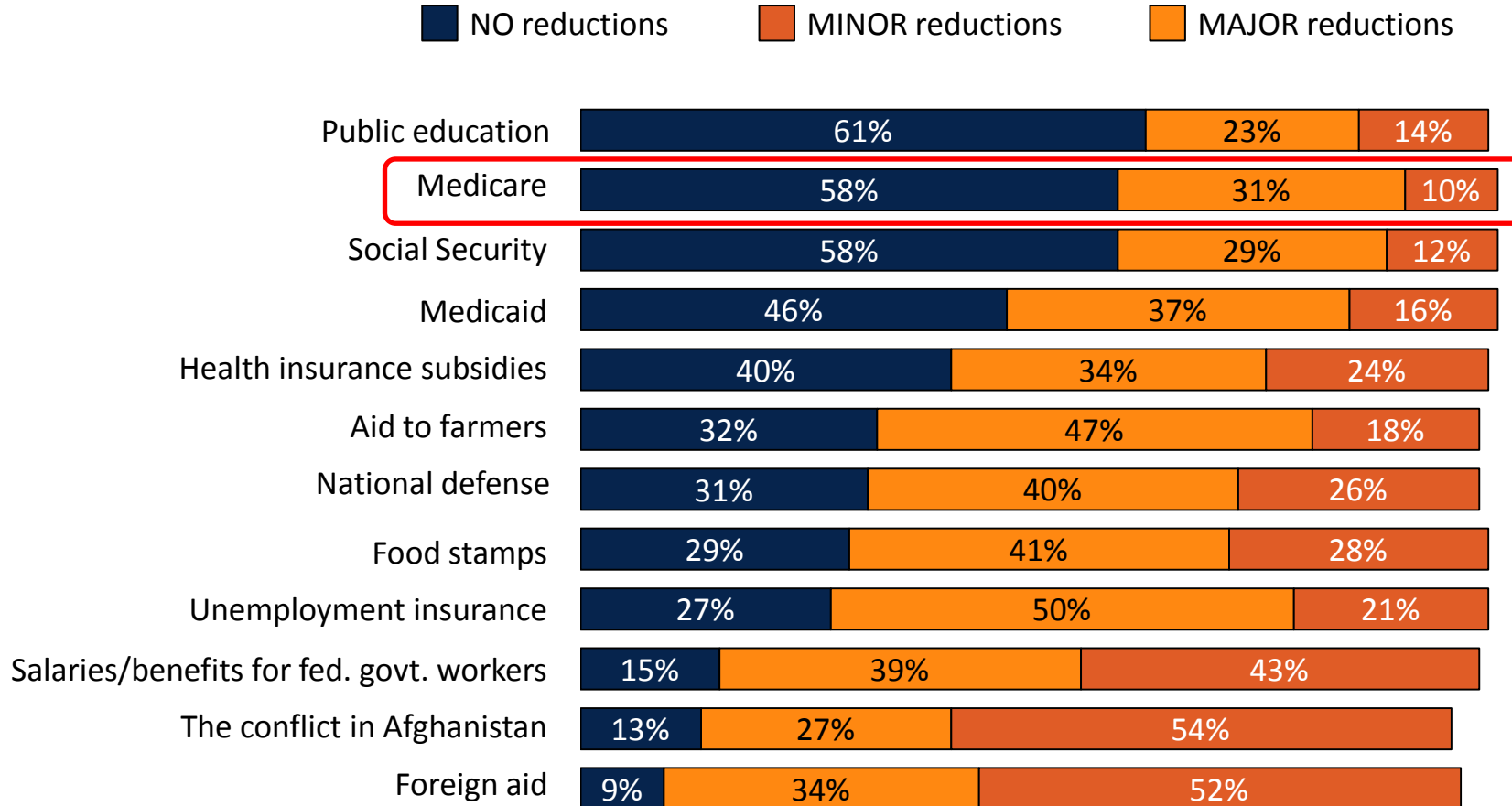


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# Most Want No Spending Cuts To Medicare

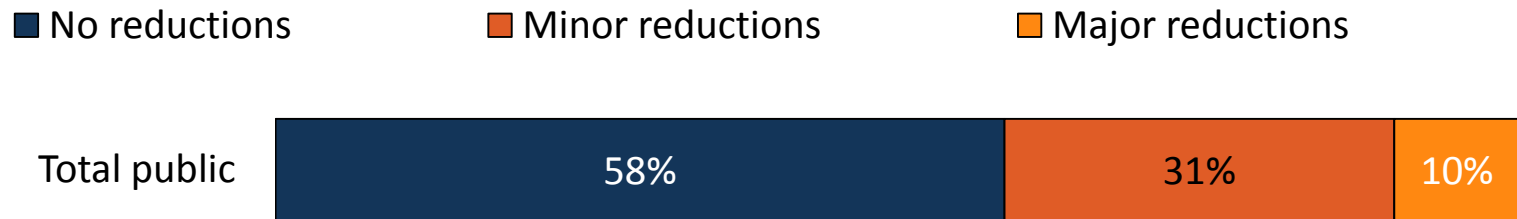
AMONG TOTAL PUBLIC: Percent who say they would support **spending reductions to federal programs** as a way to reduce the federal deficit (2013)



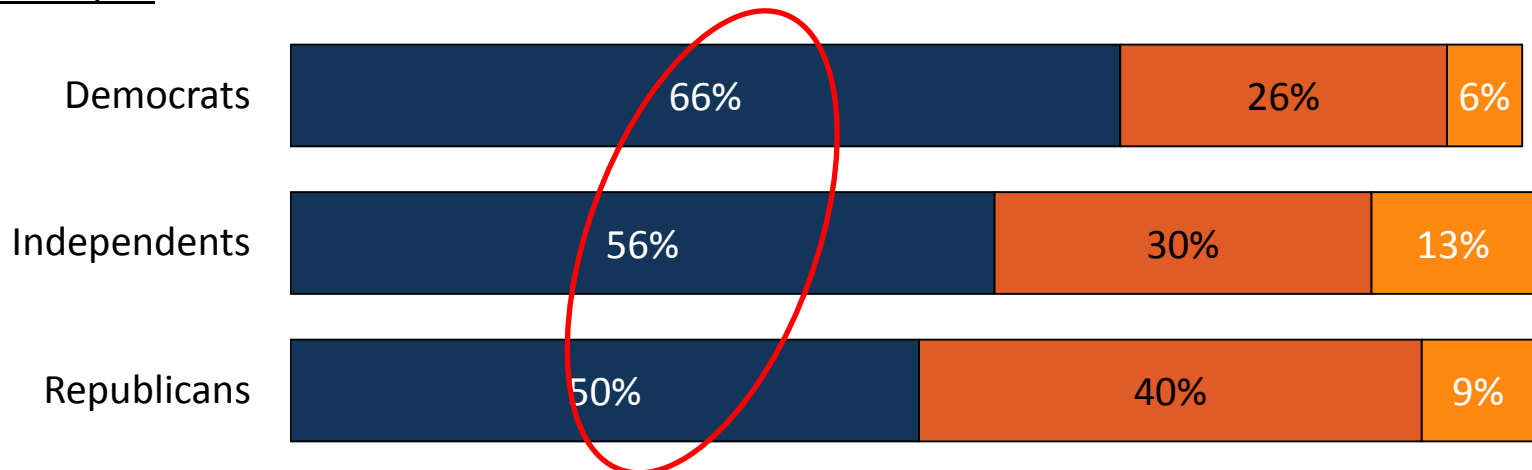
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress* (conducted January 3-9, 2013)

# Reluctance To Cut Medicare Spending Across Party Lines

Percent who say they would support spending reductions to Medicare as a way to reduce the federal deficit (2013)



## By Political Party ID



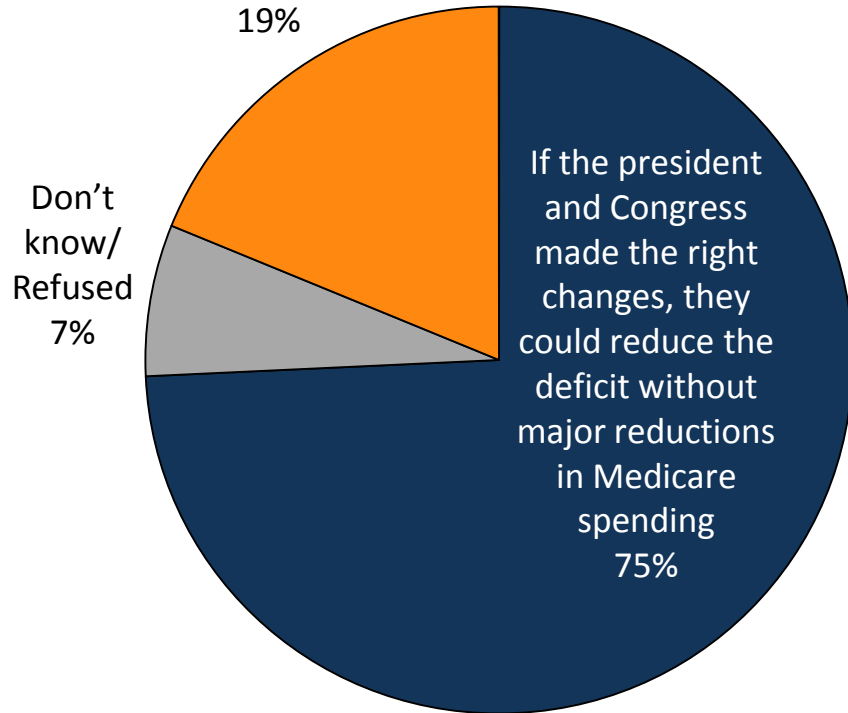
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress* (conducted January 3-9, 2013)

# Most Don't Believe Sacrifice Is Necessary

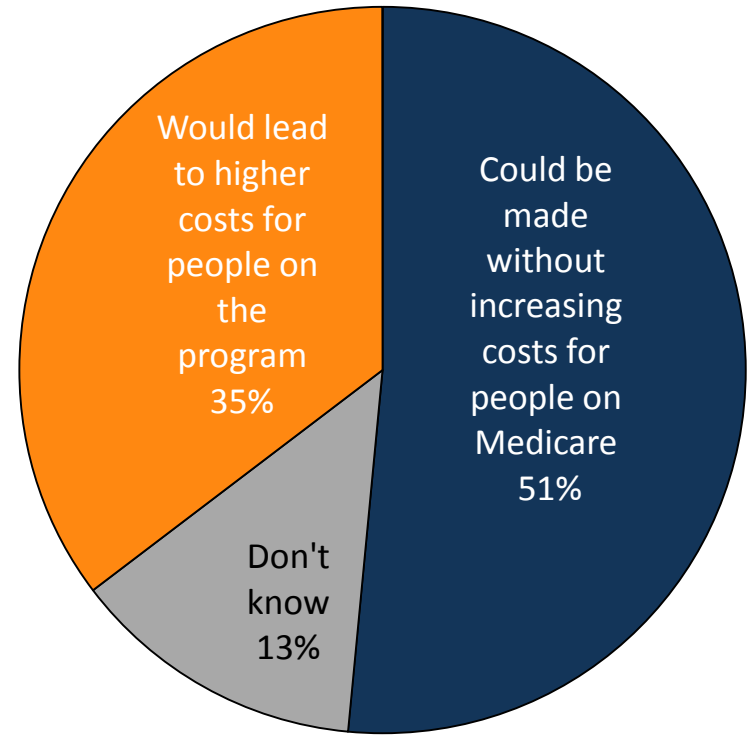
## AMONG TOTAL PUBLIC:

Which comes closer to your opinion:

In order to significantly reduce the deficit, the president and Congress will need to make major cuts in Medicare spending

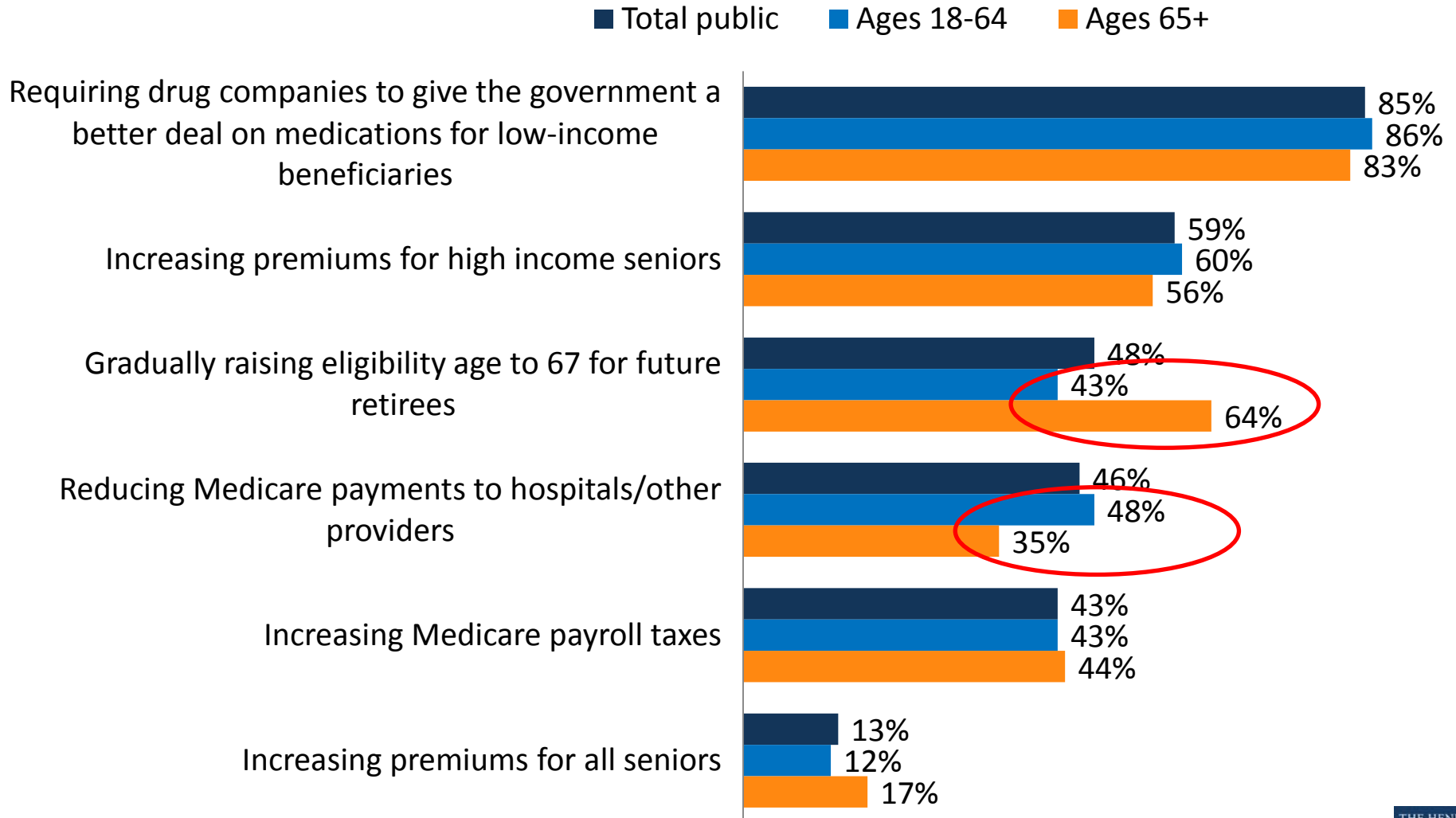


Do you think significant reductions in Medicare spending...



# Support For Various Deficit-Reducing Changes To Medicare

Percent who favor each of the following Medicare proposals to reduce the federal budget deficit:



SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress* (conducted January 3-9, 2013)

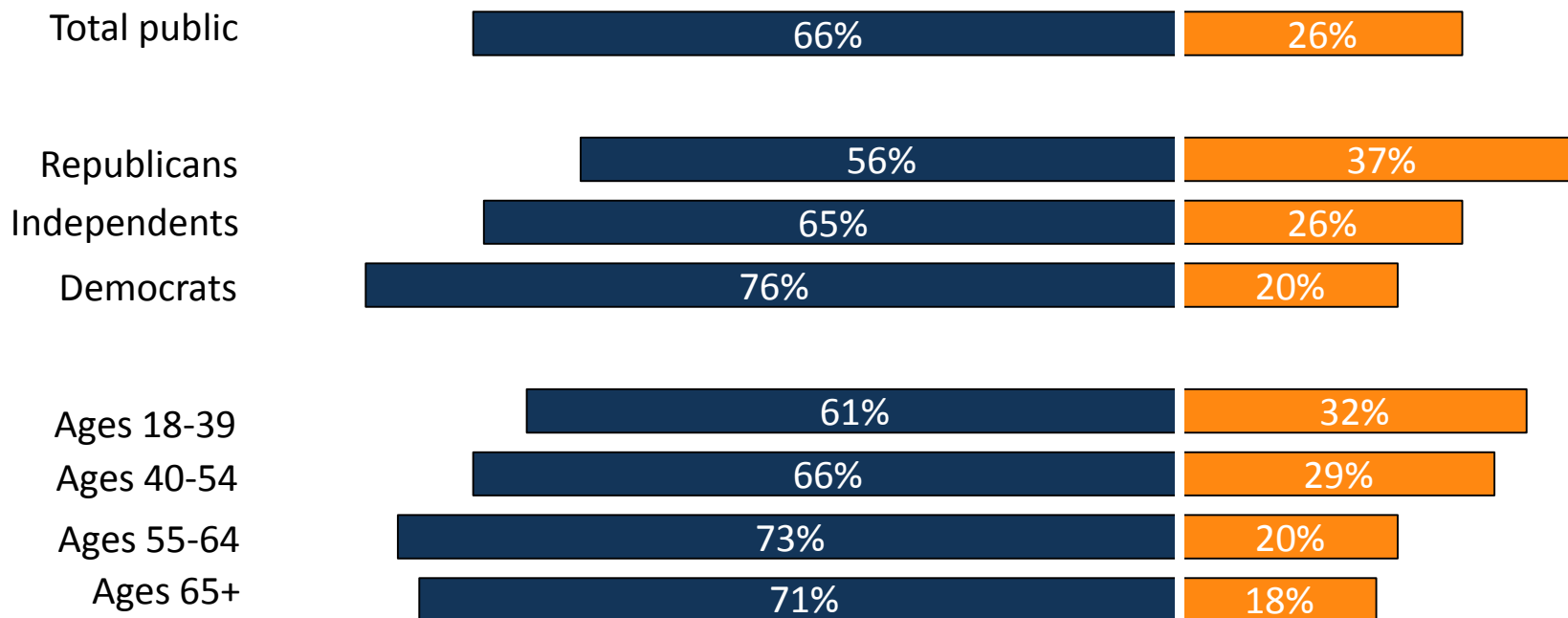


# Views on Changing Medicare to a Defined Contribution System

Percent who say each is closer to their view of what Medicare should look like in the future:

■ Medicare should continue as it is today, with the **government guaranteeing seniors health insurance** and making sure that **everyone gets the same defined set of benefits.**

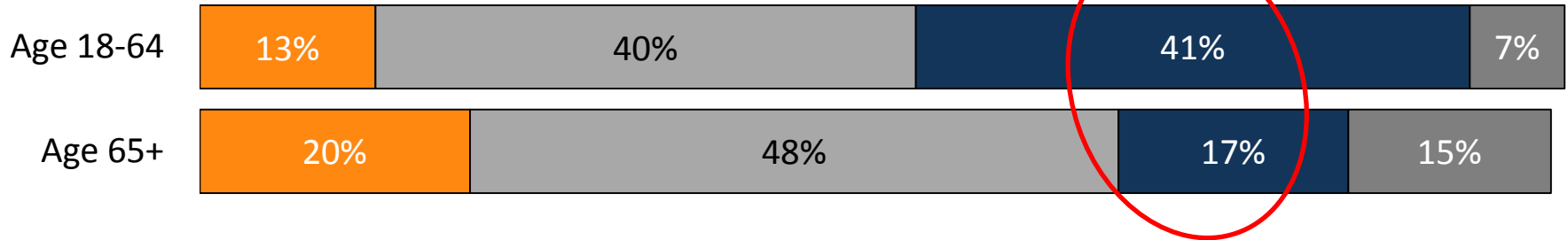
■ Medicare should be changed to a system in which the government would guarantee each senior a **fixed amount of money** to put toward health insurance. Seniors would purchase that coverage either **from traditional Medicare or from a list of private health plans.**



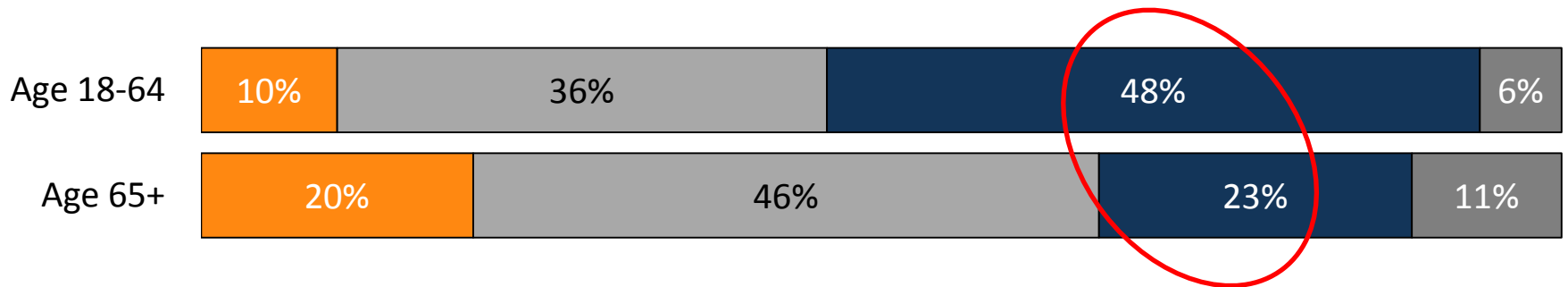
# Younger Adults More Likely To Say Private Plans Offer Better Benefits And More Provider Choice

■ Medicare    ■ About equal    ■ Private plans    ■ Don't know

Which do you think offers more generous health benefits?

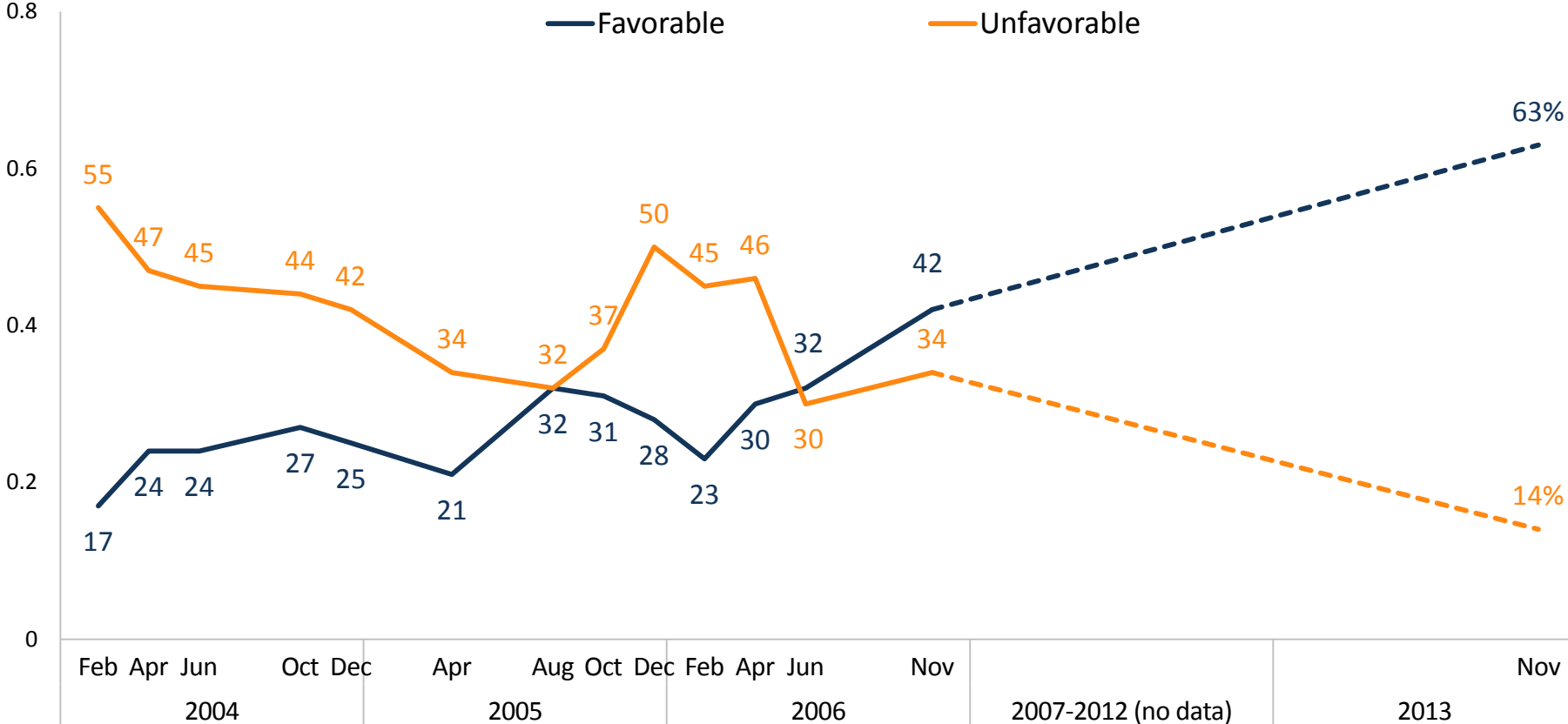


Which do you think offers more choice among doctors and hospitals?



# The Evolution Of Seniors' Views On Part D

AMONG AGES 65+: As you may know, Medicare provides a prescription drug benefit, known as Medicare Part D. Given what you know about it, in general, do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of the Medicare prescription drug benefit?



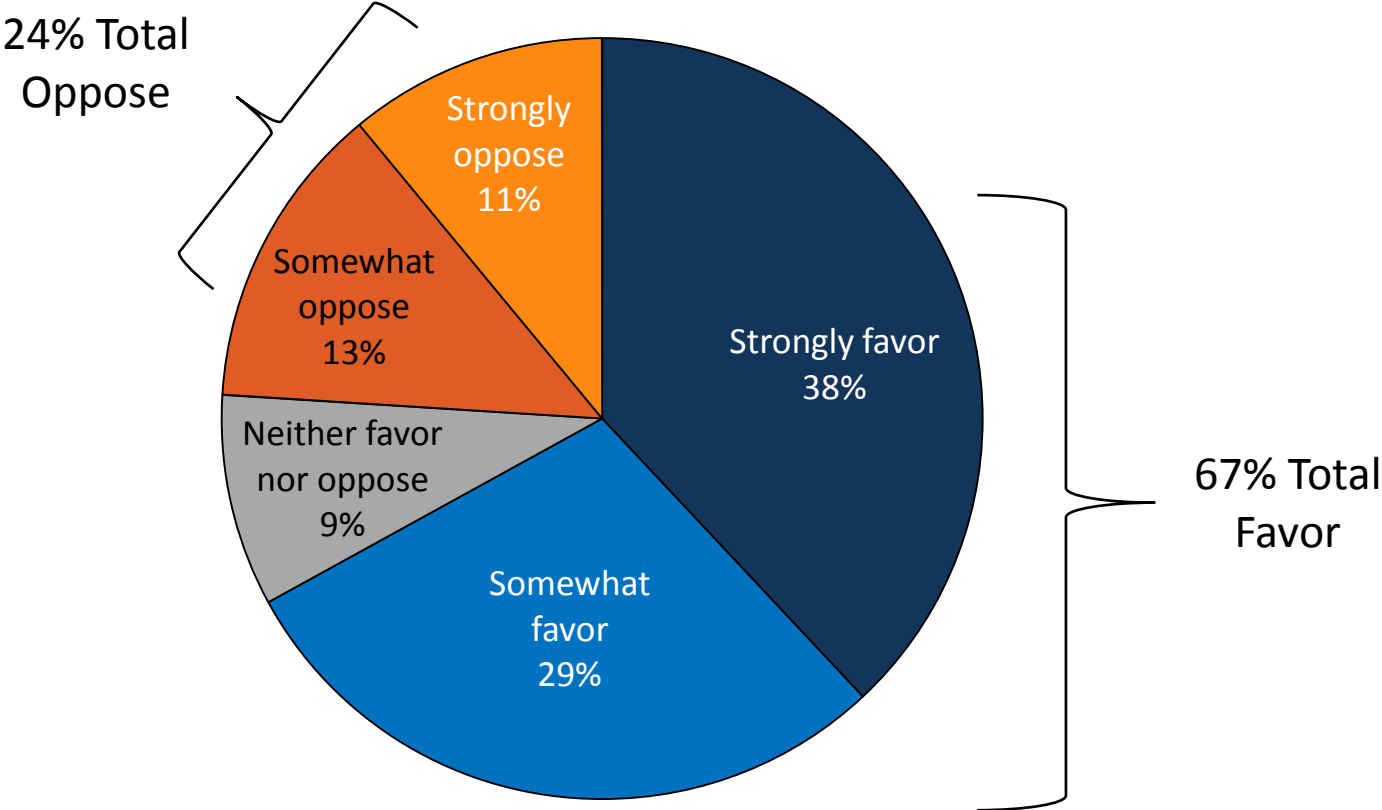
NOTES: Question wording varied slightly in 2004-2006 surveys. Neither/neutral (Vol.) and Don't know/Refused answers not shown.

SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys



# Two-Thirds Favor Adding Medicare Dental and Vision Coverage At A Cost For Recipients

AMONG ALL ADULTS: Medicare doesn't currently include vision and dental coverage. Would you favor, oppose or neither favor nor oppose **adding dental and vision coverage for Medicare at an extra charge for Medicare recipients?**



Source: Associated Press-GfK Poll conducted Nov. 18-22, 2010

# Improving Coverage For Long Term Care Ranks At The Top Of Improvement Priorities

AMONG THOSE AGES 65+: If the country could afford to make **ONE improvement to Medicare**, which of these three possible improvements would you choose?

