

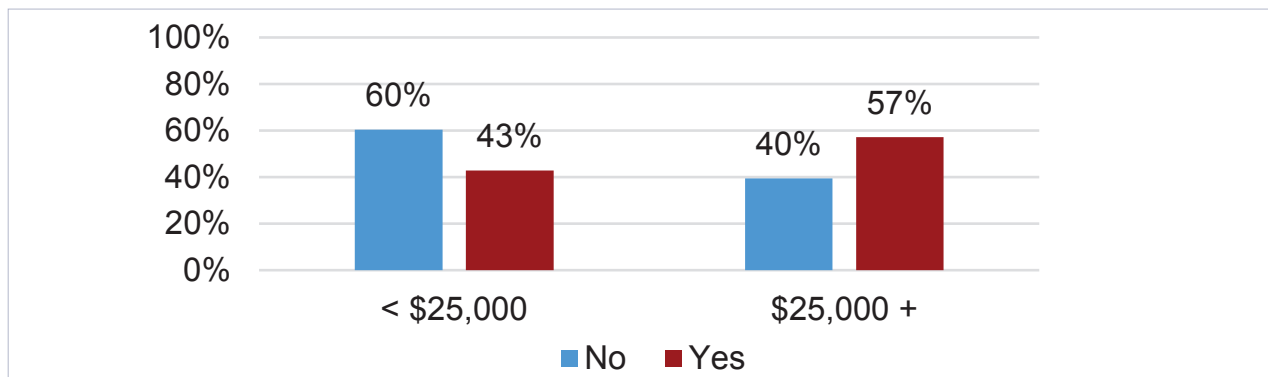


## Income and Assets Summary

In this round of the MCBS, we ask you questions about you and your family’s income and assets. Many people feel that their financial information is sensitive and want to know why we ask about it. The fact is that there is a strong relationship between health care and personal finances. Income relates to the amount of resources a person has available to purchase medical care. Even though Medicare covers a large part of medical costs, it does not cover all of them, and medical care can be a burden on many people’s budgets.

Many Medicare beneficiaries are likely to have a fixed income which may present challenges in the face of growing health care expenses. Income data collected by the MCBS have allowed the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), as well as independent groups such as Kaiser Family Foundation, to study the unique financial burdens that health care costs place on Medicare beneficiaries. Participation by you, and other survey participants like you, has allowed us to estimate that 57% of Medicare beneficiaries who have an annual income of \$25,000 or more have a usual source of care, such as a primary care doctor. However, 60% of Medicare beneficiaries who have an annual income of \$25,000 or less do not have a primary care doctor.

Medicare Beneficiaries with a Usual Source of Care, by Income, 2013



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why are you asking questions about income and assets?**

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Every four months, we collect information on a number of topics related to health care use and the associated costs. We ask about the health insurance coverage that you have, about the medical services you receive, where you get those services, and who provides them. Once a year, we ask about how satisfied you are with the care you receive and about your general health.

To get a complete picture of the effects of health care costs on Medicare enrollees, we also need to collect information on income and assets. This information can show how health care costs affect an individual's as well as our nation's economic well-being. This information also may show how financial resources affect the choice and use of health care services.

### **What will you be asking me about?**

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To understand how you are doing financially, we will first ask you about your employment and living situation. We will then ask you some general questions about income and value of your assets. We will ask if you or your spouse/partner have income from Social Security, pensions, wages, investments, etc. You can simply answer "yes" or "no." After answering these questions, we will ask you to estimate your family's income from each source and your total income.

We will also ask about other financial resources that you might have such as bonds, retirement accounts, and checking accounts that pay interest. You should take these into account when estimating your total income and assets. In addition, we will ask a few questions about the value of your home, cars, and other assets.

### **Am I answering these questions for a specific time frame?**

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Yes, we will ask about your family's income in the last month and your income in the year 2014. The questionnaire will clearly specify which time frame we are asking out. If you ever are unsure which time frame is being referenced please ask your interviewer for clarification.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Is this information confidential?**

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The information you provide will be kept in strict confidence under the laws prescribed by the Privacy Act of 1974. Information cannot be disclosed in any form that would permit identification of an individual in this study, except to those involved in this research or for routine use or in very limited circumstances as prescribed by the Privacy Act.

### **What are you going to do with this information?**

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Studies show that there is an association between income and use of health care. The information you provide on your income and other financial assets will be analyzed with the information you provide in response to other questions, such as how often you see a doctor. This will allow us to assess the relationship between personal finances and an individual's expenses for health care. The information that you provide about your income and assets will be de-identified and used for statistical purposes only. In no way will your responses to any answers in this survey, including the income and assets questions, affect your Medicare benefits.

### **Isn't there enough information already available on income and other financial resources?**

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There is other information available; but, unfortunately, very little of it describes the Medicare population. There is no information on the impact that income and other financial resources have on health care, nor does the available material cover the impact of health care use on financial resources.

### **Do I need records, such as my income tax records, to respond to these questions?**

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No, you do not. However, some people find it easier to estimate their income and other financial records by referring to their records. Also, if another member of your family is more knowledgeable about some of your financial resources, you may want to have this individual help with these answers.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### What if I don't know an answer?

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Just estimate the best that you can. If you are unable to estimate a number you can select a range you estimate the amount to fall under. If you cannot provide any estimate for a question, just answer, "I don't know."

### Do I have to answer these questions?

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No, your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or series of questions and still participate in the survey. Your Medicare benefits will not be affected in any way by your answers to these questions or by your decision to answer or not answer the income and assets questions.

### What should I do if I have more questions?

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If you or other members of your family have any additional concerns about these questions, please use NORC's toll-free number (1-877-389-3429) or write CMS at the following address:

Mr. William Long  
Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey  
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services  
Room B2-29-04  
7500 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850

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*Thank you for your continued  
participation in the MCBS!*