



# QALY FOCUS GROUPS

**PITTSBURGH, PA**

**FEMALE SUBURBAN SWING VOTERS**

## FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY

OnMessage recently conducted an evening of focus groups made up of female suburban swing voters in Pittsburgh, PA on September 13, 2021.

Two groups were conducted, each consisting of ten female swing voters. The first group was comprised of seniors (age 65+) and the second comprised of near-seniors (ages 45-64).

Overall by registration, the groups included 6 Democrats, 7 Independents, and 7 Republicans; 11 of the women voted for Trump, 9 voted for Biden. Also, each group had a mix of education levels, occupations, and ideologies. None of the women self-identify as “Strong” partisans or “Very” ideological.

The goal of the groups is to understand opinions and reactions to healthcare proposals currently before Congress, specifically proposals to use a version of the U.K.’s Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY) cost saving approach to rationing care.



**Overview of Attitudes  
Toward:**

**Healthcare & QALY**



## KEY FINDINGS

- American healthcare is the best in the world and should not move toward a Canadian/U.K. model.
- Medicare, as currently structured, should be protected. And, given the choice, all 20 respondents would prefer Medicare over a Veterans Administration-type system.
- Government negotiating drug pricing directly is met with broad derision and dismissal.
- The idea of QALY immediately strikes these women as distasteful and dehumanizing. The “mathematical calculation” reduces human beings to a number, and all foresee a reduction in quality and availability of care.
- Government should not “play God.”
- For all twenty women, this issue is a deal breaker on supporting proposed legislation AND on voting for politicians who do.

# QUALITY OF AMERICAN HEALTHCARE

- “I think we have a wide variety of doctors in our country versus in other countries, specialists and whatnot. Because you hear about people from other countries coming to our city [Pittsburgh], to Children’s Hospital, other places, because they might not get that kind of great care. Plus some of the doctors in other countries come to the United States for schooling then go back to their country. So, I mean, that is a plus to our country about that.” -Verree V, College Grad, Moderate, Registered Independent, Biden Voter
- Moderator: What about reliability? Do you think that healthcare here is more or less reliable here than in other countries?  
Nadene L: More.  
Moderator: More Reliable?  
All: Agree/Nod  
Moderator: Does anyone say less?  
All: No
- “Alls I know is I have a Canadian friend and she has to see specialists and it takes her months to get her appointments.” -Verree V, College Grad, Moderate, Registered Independent, Biden Voter
- Moderator: So, is there anyone here who believes American healthcare system should be run more like that [Canadian healthcare system]?  
Senior Group All: No  
Moderator: No positives?  
Senior Group All: No
- “As far as healthcare I think we have superb healthcare here. I was in Niagara Falls one time and the lady was bragging about her healthcare, but then she went on to say her husband had prostate cancer he wasn’t going to be seen for six months, but they were allowing him to go to Buffalo to get treatment. Well, I’m glad he could get treatment. But I’m thinking, wait, you’re saying your healthcare is better but you’re not able to get care. Our accessibility in Pittsburgh is phenomenal.” -Joanne S, Some College, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Independent, Trump Voter
- “Y’know, yes, I’ve heard about delaying procedures.” -Sandi Q, College Grad, Moderate, Registered Republican, Biden Voter
- “I don’t know, in socialized medicine do you get to choose your doctor?” -Joan H, Post-Grad Degree, Moderate, Registered Independent, Biden Voter
- Moderator: Would you be in favor of America’s healthcare system move in the [socialized medicine] direction?  
Near-Senior Group All: No

## PROTECT MEDICARE

## BETTER MODEL THAN V.A.

- Moderator: Is healthcare an important issue when you go to vote?  
Senior Group All: Yes (heads nodding emphatically)
- Moderator: What under the current [healthcare] system would you want to see protected?  
Nadene L: Medicare  
Moderator: Medicare?  
Senior Group All: Yes (heads nodding)
- “We should keep Medicare, and we should keep Medicare exclusively for those individuals who participated, who have contributed.” – Constance S, College Grad, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican, Trump Voter (Note: “Usually Vote Dem”)
- Moderator: Who would choose Medicare in those two choices [between Medicare or a VA type healthcare system]?  
Near-Senior Group: (six in ten raise hands)  
Maryann S: I’m not too sure.  
Moderator: Well if that was the benefit you had paid into [which system would you prefer]?  
Joanne S: I would do the Medicare, more freedom to go where you want.  
Near-Senior Group: (agreement, hands raised to choose Medicare over Veterans Administration-type healthcare administration)
- Moderator: Let’s do a quick show of hands, who would choose V.A.?  
Senior Group All: (no hands are raised, shrugs around table)  
Moderator: Alright, who would choose Medicare?  
Senior Group All: (all hands raised)
- “It sounds like they’re socializing Medicare in that proposal [H.R. 3, as described by Democrat website promoting the bill].” -Joyce B, Post-Grad Degree, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Democrat, Trump Voter

# GOVERNMENT NEGOTIATORS?

- “I don’t think government should be running ... you have to bring in people that know what they’re doing to do it. And I don’t think government should have the final say.” - Kathy H, HS Graduate, Moderate, Registered Republican, Biden Voter
- “Just like corporations should not be making the decision as to whether or not you require or don’t require a certain surgery or a treatment. If your doctors believe then that’s their expertise, they should be the final call on it.” -Constance S, College Grad, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican, Trump Voter (Note: “Usually Vote Dem”)
- “Those people at Medicare, they are NOT ... they are not, um ... the skilled negotiators.” -Constance S, College Grad, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican, Trump Voter (Note: “Usually Vote Dem”)

# QALY INTRODUCTION AND REACTIONS

- Moderator: Quality Adjusted Life Year, or “Qaly” for short so that’s what I’m going to refer to it as.  
Joan H: Seems terrible!
- Moderator: So what’s your reaction?  
Kathy K: Shocking.
- “I don’t know who gives people the right to determine that.” -Barb N, Some College, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican, Trump Voter
- “I would be like 10,000% against it. Because my son takes a drug that’s \$24,000 a month, a month. He’s perfectly healthy, like on paper he’s not healthy, but to look at him no one would ever know there was anything wrong with him. Yet, because he has this diagnosis, there gonna put him like, they’re gonna say ‘well, he’s, y’know what, he’s y’know’ ... (gesturing stop/hesitation).” -Maura G, College Grad, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican, Trump Voter
- “I’m just saying because, if I think YOU can give a qualification of the value of my life? I’m saying no freakin’ way.” -Constance S, College Grad, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican, Trump Voter (Note: “Usually Vote Dem”)
- “Hard enough when a loved one has to make a decision, but there’s emotion involved. There’s no emotion involved in someone looking at a paper and you’re a number, saying no you’re done, you’re a drain on the system.” -Joanne S, Some College, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Independent, Trump Voter
- Moderator: This idea, if you have to compromise, is this [QALY proposal] a hard no?  
Near-Senior Group All: (nodding agreement)
- “What it’s doing, it’s just looking at people not as humans, it’s looking at people as a liability.” -Joanne S, Some College, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Independent, Trump Voter
- “It’s an unnecessary, it’s an unnecessary evil, having anyone make those decisions outside of the doctor.” -Constance S, College Grad, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican, Trump Voter (Note: “Usually Vote Dem”)
- “So now we just don’t value people if they have a disability? If they have a physical or a mental ore emotional ... suddenly their life isn’t worth as much? I don’t think that’s true.” -Constance S, College Grad, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican, Trump Voter (Note: “Usually Vote Dem”)
- “I think year’s ago, it seemed, probably before us, men where more valuable than women and all the medical research was on men and like they had better results if they had a heart attack and everything. And, it was just lately within our lives women have kind of caught up like we’re valuable too. So now this is like a step back.” -Joyce B, Post-Grad Degree, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Democrat, Trump Voter



# THE POWER OVER LIFE & DEATH

- “It’s just treating humans like a business. Y’know, we have to cut costs, we’re gonna cut numbers and the only way to cut numbers is (gestures in exasperation).” -Kathy K, College Grad, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican Trump Voter
- “Government playing G-d. If you don’t believe in G-d, government believes.” -Joanne S, Some College, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Independent, Trump Voter
- “My father is 89, he was just taken to Presby three nights ago. And if this were in effect there would be no need to treat him. He has congestive heart failure, he’s 89, he has the beginning of dementia, he’s delirious right now, you might as well just throw the towel in.” -Kathy H, High School Grad, Moderate, Registered Republican, Biden Voter
- “They want to play Dr. Kevorkian. When they say it’s illegal but they want to do it. That’s exactly what I think they’re doing. If we have no right to end our life then they shouldn’t be allowed either.” -Nadene L, High School Grad, Moderate, Registered Democrat, Biden Voter
- Moderator: This proposal requires using a mathematical calculation of the value of the patient’s life to decide if they qualify for medical treatments. Have you heard of this?  
Senior Group All: (silence, head shaking)
- “The Charlton Heston movie where they were eating the people. That was your value, you were the food. Soylent Green. Exactly. That’s what popped into my mind” -Nadene L, High School Grad, Moderate, Registered Democrat, Biden Voter
- “They woulda probably euthanized Stephen Hawking. And he was brilliant” -Sue K, Post-Grad Degree, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican, Trump Voter

## IMPACT ON RESPONDENT DECISIONS

- Moderator: Correct me if I'm wrong, it seems loud and clear that this [QALY proposal] is not something that you will ...  
Near-Senior Group All: (heads shaking no)  
Joyce B: It's a deal-breaker.
- Moderator: If your elected official were to support this [QALY proposal] would it make you more or less likely to vote for them?  
Senior Group All: Less (in unison)  
Moderator: Regardless?  
Senior Group All: Regardless.  
Constance S: I don't care who they are.
- "If [elected officials] think they are in a position to judge another person's 'value' of their life, they are gone." -Constance S, College Grad, Somewhat Conservative, Registered Republican, Trump Voter (Note: "Usually Vote Dem")



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