



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

# The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Care Public Perception Index

*A survey of Americans' attitudes about health care*

An Analysis of Findings from January – December 2010

February 2011

Analysis provided by





## Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Care Public Perception Index

### Tracking Health Care Perceptions over Time: January – December 2010

#### Introduction

This report provides a 12-month historical overview of Americans' opinions about their experiences and expectations relating to health care. The report is based on The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) Health Care Public Perception Index (RWJF Index), a monthly snapshot of how adults in the United States perceive their access to health care.<sup>1</sup> The RWJF Index monitors consumers' assessments of barriers they have faced in obtaining health care over the past year and their concerns about the affordability of the care they will need in the future. By tracking both consumer health care experiences and expectations over time, the RWJF Index provides insights into the ongoing importance of health care concerns for Americans. This report focuses on the period from January 2010 to December 2010.

The RWJF Index ended the year lower than it started but did not have a significant trend. The gaps in the overall Index within subgroups were largest by insurance status; over 50 points separated the insured and uninsured. The 18-34 year old age group had its record low in December in the index of their recent experiences. Complete results are discussed in the Findings section of this report.

#### Data and Methods

The data for the indices are collected from questions added to the *Surveys of Consumers*, written to construct the RWJF Index. The survey items measure access to health care, health insurance and future concerns regarding health care. For more than 50 years, the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan has conducted the *Surveys of Consumers* which has been an accurate indicator for understanding and forecasting changes in the national economy. The survey's Index of Consumer Expectations is an official component of the U.S. Dept. of Commerce's Index of Leading Economic Indicators.

Begun in spring 2009, the RWJF Index is composed of two sub-indices, the Recent Health Cost Barriers Index (RHCB Index) and the Future Health Cost Concerns Index (FHCC Index), which measure recent problems with access to health care due to cost reported by consumers, and consumers' worries about future problems with access to health care or loss of health insurance coverage due to cost, respectively. More information on these measures is described in the appendix to this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The results of each month's snapshot are released on a regular basis over the year and are available from the [RWJF web site](#).

Increases in the indices indicate gains in public perception with respect to health care, while declines indicate a loss in confidence among consumers. The RWJF Index ranged from 101.0 to 96.1 from January 2010 to December 2010. In presenting the results, we show both the 30-day moving average and the monthly mean for the Index. The 30-day moving average provides perspective on the within-month indices, highlighting short-term fluctuations that underlie the trends.

For more information on the construction of the RWJF Index and the underlying data, see the monthly snapshot reports available from the [RWJF website](#).

## Findings

The RWJF Index began 2010 at 101.0 points and ended the year at 96.1. The RHCB Index started the year at 103.4 and ended at 96.6, while the FHCC Index started the year at 98.7 and ended at 95.6. Given the monthly fluctuations in the RWJF Index and the sub-indices, these were not significant trends over this period.

The charts that follow track the RWJF Index for key subgroups of the population, including by insurance status (Chart 2), family income group (Chart 3), health status (Chart 4), age group (Chart 5), and sex (Chart 6). Detailed information on the RWJF Index by subgroups is provided in Table 2 (the overall Index), Table 3 (the RHCB Index), and Table 4 (the FHCC Index).

- **Insurance status:** The RWJF Index began 2010 at 54.3 among the uninsured and ended the year at 50.0, ranging from a high of 69.0 in April to a low of 47.5 in November. The insured began the year at 106.3 and ended the year at 102.1, ranging from a high of 107.2 in September to a low of 100.6 in May. This gap between the insured and uninsured averaged 47.0 points over the course of the year and is the greatest of the selected demographics presented. The gap between these groups ranged from a low of 37 in April to a high of 54.3 in November, but started and ended the year at 52.

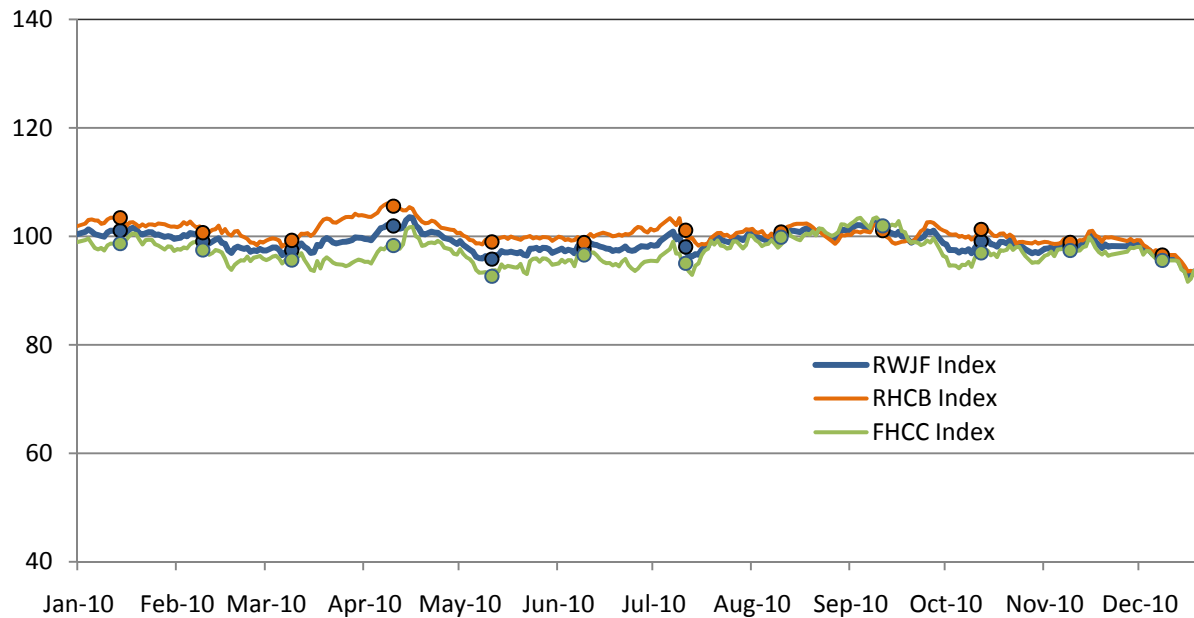
The Recent and Future sub-indices show similar trends between the insured and uninsured. The RHCB Index among the uninsured began the year at 59.7 and ended at 51.3, and ranged from a high of 76.2 in October to a low of 49.4 in November. The RHCB Index among the insured began the 2010 year at 108.4 and ended at 102.4, and ranged from a high of 109.5 in April to lows of 102.4 in November and December. The FHCC Index among the uninsured began the year at 48.9 and ended at 48.6, and ranged from a high of 63.7 in April to a low of 40.1 in October. The FHCC Index among the insured began the 2010 year at 104.3 and ended at 101.7, and ranged from a high of 107.3 in September to a low of 97.7 in May.

- **Family income:** As seen in previous results, the RWJF Index and sub-indices vary by income category. The RWJF Index began 2010 at 82.7 among the bottom-third income category and ended the year at 71.5, ranging from highs of 86.3 in September and October to a low of 71.5 in December. The middle-third income category started the year at 101.5 and ended at 94.4, ranging from a high of 104.7 in September to a low of 89.9 in May. The top-third category started the year at 117.5 and ended at 116.3, ranging from a high of 117.5 in January to a low of 109.9 in March. The gap between the top- and

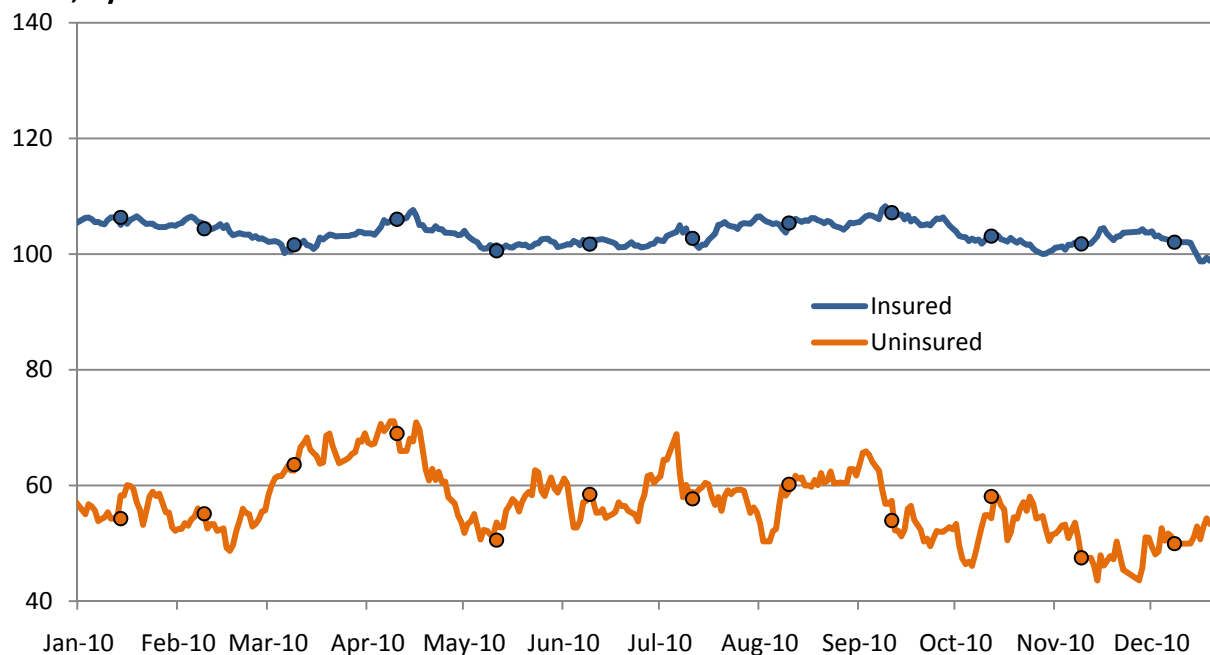
bottom-income categories averaged 34 points over the year. There were no significant trends over this time period time, but the December value for the bottom-third of income is its lowest since the survey began.

- **Health status:** All three indices continue to show consistent disparities over time between the health status groups. The RWJF Index began 2010 at 114.9 among those with excellent or very good health and ended the year at 110.9, ranging from a high of 116.3 in September to a low of 107.2 in March. Those with good health started the year at 92.8 and ended at 90.0, ranging from a high of 97.6 in August to a low of 88.5 in May. Those with fair or poor health started the year at 76.3 and ended at 70.6, ranging from a high of 81.7 in April to a low of 67.7 in July. The gap between those with excellent/very good health and fair/poor health averaged 37.3 points over the year.
- **Age group:** The RWJF Index began 2010 at 92.6 among those 18-34 years of age and ended the year at 84.2, ranging from a high of 109.2 in September to a low of 84.2 in December. The 35-64 year olds started the year at 100.7 and ended at 94.4, ranging from a high of 100.7 in January to a low of 89.9 in May. Those 65 years and older started the year at 107.2 and ended at 107.5, ranging from highs of 110.5 in both February and September to a low of 106.2 in October. The gap between oldest and youngest age groups averaged 10.1 points over the year, and the gap between the oldest and mid-age groups averaged 14.1 points. The gap between the middle and youngest age groups averaged 4 points during the year, with the youngest reporting a higher index on average.
- **Sex:** The RWJF Index began 2010 at 106.7 among males and ended the year at 102.6, ranging from a high of 107.0 in April to a low of 99.1 in March. Females started the year at 96.8 and ended at 89.9, ranging from a high of 101.9 in September to a low of 89.9 in December. The gap between males and females averaged 9.2 points over the year. There were no significant trends over this time period time, but the December value for females is its lowest since the survey began.

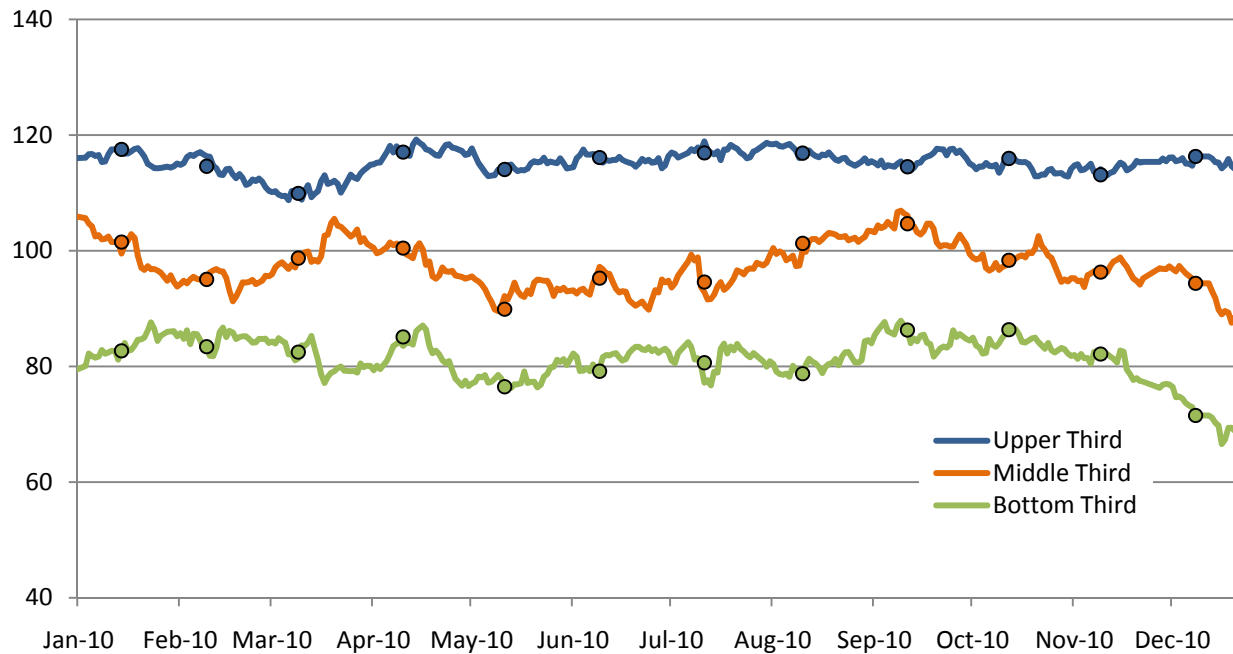
**Chart 1. RWJF Index, Recent Health Cost Barrier Index, and Future Health Cost Concern Index, 30-day moving average and monthly mean**



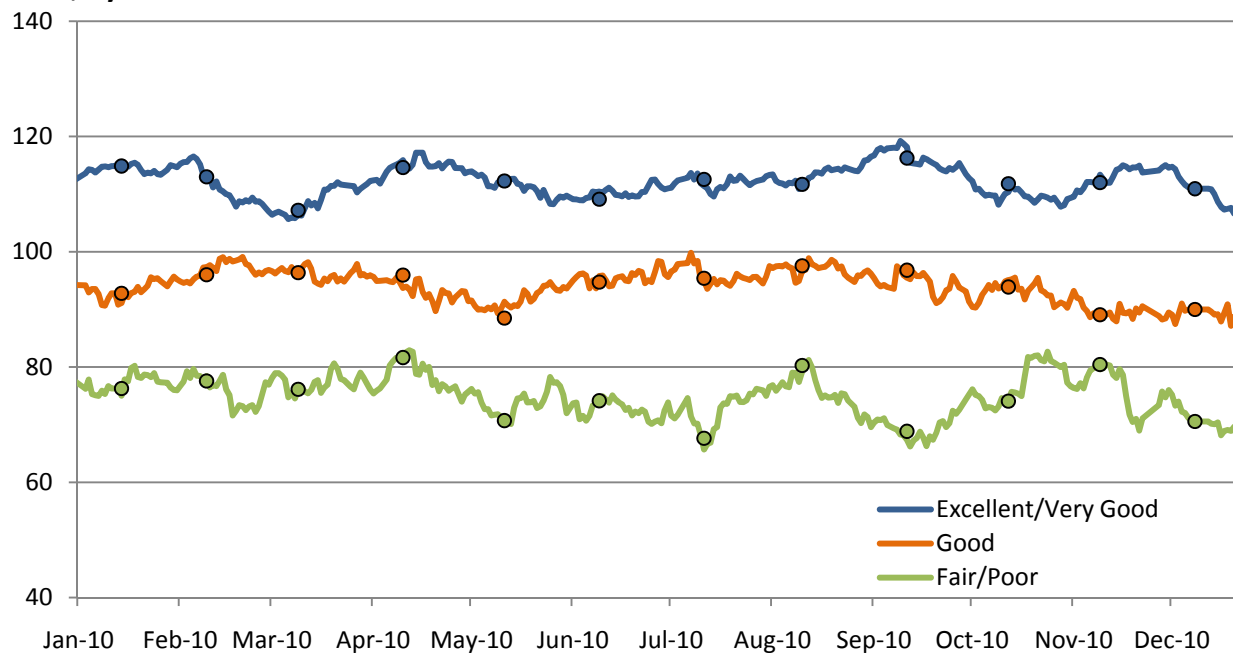
**Chart 2. RWJF Health Care Public Perception Index, 30-day moving average and monthly mean; by insurance status**



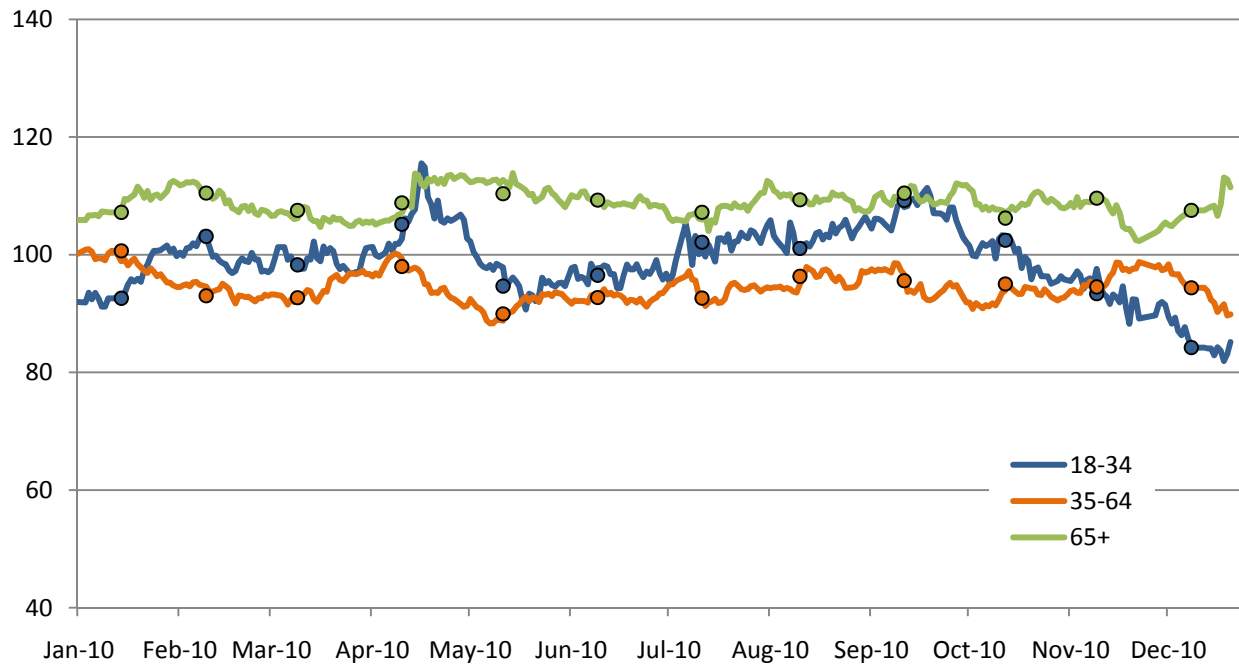
**Chart 3. RWJF Health Care Public Perception Index, 30-day moving average and monthly mean; by income**



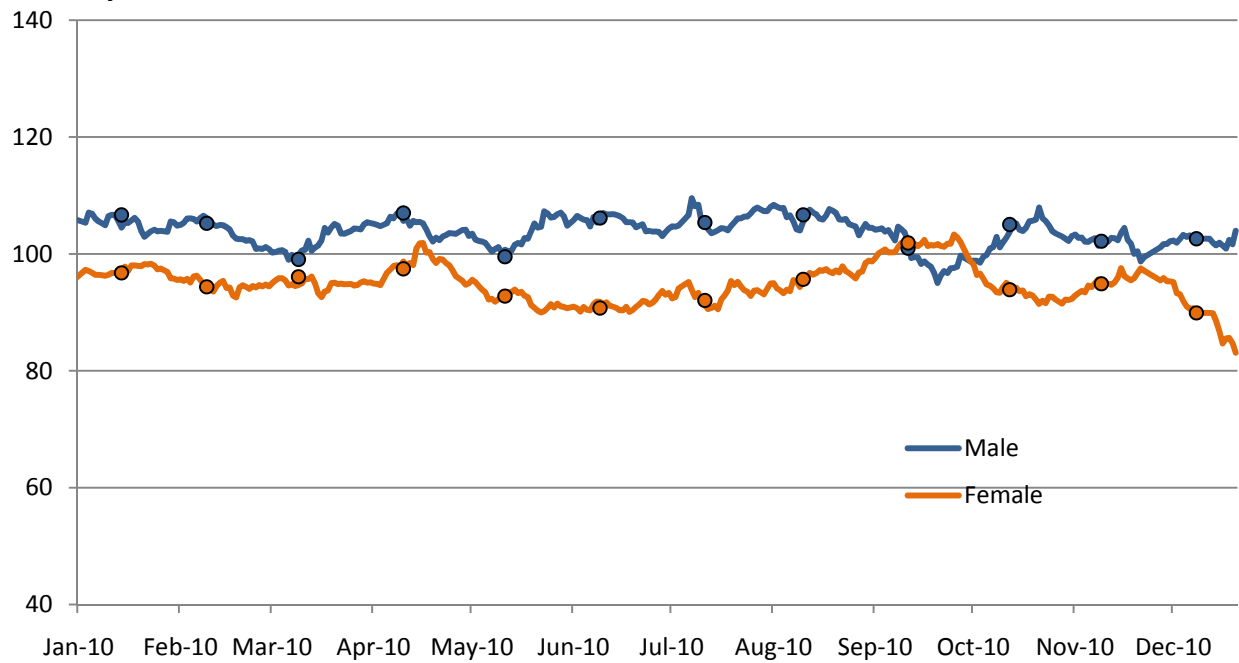
**Chart 4. RWJF Health Care Public Perception Index, 30-day moving average and monthly mean; by health status**



**Chart 5. RWJF Health Care Public Perception Index, 30-day moving average and monthly mean; by age**



**Chart 6. RWJF Health Care Public Perception Index, 30-day moving average and monthly mean; by sex**



**Table 1. RWJF Index, Recent Health Cost Barrier Index, and Future Health Cost Concern Index: January 2010 to December 2010**

	Jan-10	Feb-10	Mar-10	Apr-10	May-10	Jun-10	Jul-10	Aug-10	Sep-10	Oct-10	Nov-10	Dec-10
<b>RWJF Index</b>	101.0	99.1	97.4	101.9	95.8	97.7	98.1	100.3	101.5	99.1	98.1	96.1
<b>RHCB Index</b>	103.4	100.7	99.3	105.6	99.0	98.8	101.1	100.8	101.1	101.3	98.9	96.6
<b>FHCC Index</b>	98.7	97.5	95.6	98.3	92.6	96.6	95.0	99.8	101.9	97.0	97.4	95.6

**Table 2. RWJF Health Care Public Perception Index: January 2010 to December 2010**

	Jan-10	Feb-10	Mar-10	Apr-10	May-10	Jun-10	Jul-10	Aug-10	Sep-10	Oct-10	Nov-10	Dec-10
<b>Total</b>	101.0	99.1	97.4	101.9	95.8	97.7	98.1	100.3	101.5	99.1	98.1	96.1
<b>Insurance Status</b>												
Uninsured	54.3	55.1	63.6	69.0	50.5	58.5	57.7	60.2	53.9	58.1	47.5	50.0
Insured	106.3	104.4	101.6	106.0	100.6	101.7	102.7	105.4	107.2	103.1	101.8	102.1
<b>Income Categories</b>												
Bottom-Third	82.7	83.4	82.5	85.1	76.5	79.2	80.6	78.7	86.3	86.3	82.1	71.5
Middle-Third	101.5	95.0	98.7	100.5	89.9	95.3	94.6	101.3	104.7	98.4	96.3	94.4
Top-Third	117.5	114.6	109.9	117.1	114.0	116.1	116.9	116.9	114.5	116.0	113.1	116.3
<b>Health Status</b>												
Excellent/Very Good	114.9	113.0	107.2	114.6	112.3	109.1	112.6	111.7	116.3	111.8	112.0	110.9
Good	92.8	96.0	96.4	95.9	88.5	94.7	95.4	97.6	96.8	93.9	89.1	90.0
Fair/Poor	76.3	77.6	76.1	81.7	70.7	74.1	67.7	80.3	68.9	74.1	80.4	70.6
<b>Age Categories</b>												
18-34	92.6	103.1	98.3	105.2	94.7	96.5	102.1	101.1	109.2	102.5	93.4	84.2
35-64	100.7	93.0	92.7	98.0	89.9	92.7	92.6	96.3	95.6	95.0	94.5	94.4
65+	107.2	110.5	107.5	108.8	110.4	109.3	107.2	109.3	110.5	106.2	109.6	107.5
<b>Sex</b>												
Male	106.7	105.2	99.1	107.0	99.5	106.1	105.4	106.7	101.0	105.0	102.2	102.6
Female	96.8	94.4	96.1	97.5	92.8	90.7	92.1	95.7	101.9	93.9	94.9	89.9



**Table 3. Recent Health Cost Barrier Index: January 2010 to December 2010**

	Jan-10	Feb-10	Mar-10	Apr-10	May-10	Jun-10	Jul-10	Aug-10	Sep-10	Oct-10	Nov-10	Dec-10
<b>Total</b>	103.4	100.7	99.3	105.6	99.0	98.8	101.1	100.8	101.1	101.3	98.9	96.6
<b>Insurance Status</b>												
Uninsured	59.7	63.7	67.8	74.3	56.2	57.0	66.7	68.3	50.9	76.2	49.4	51.3
Insured	108.4	105.1	103.0	109.5	103.5	103.2	105.1	104.9	107.0	103.7	102.4	102.4
<b>Income Categories</b>												
Bottom-Third	90.1	89.1	84.4	94.0	84.2	86.8	89.3	86.2	87.8	95.8	86.9	73.0
Middle-Third	103.5	95.3	99.2	105.8	96.3	95.1	97.1	98.6	102.1	97.9	97.1	94.3
Top-Third	114.6	114.9	111.0	114.6	110.2	112.7	113.7	113.0	112.4	112.9	110.2	115.6
<b>Health Status</b>												
Excellent/Very Good	112.6	111.3	106.9	113.7	111.5	107.0	110.6	105.7	110.4	110.0	111.1	107.7
Good	99.9	98.2	98.9	103.7	96.2	97.8	101.7	102.0	101.0	98.8	88.9	92.9
Fair/Poor	84.4	84.4	81.5	90.4	76.8	81.0	77.9	89.2	76.2	82.6	85.9	76.4
<b>Age Categories</b>												
18-34	86.9	97.2	94.4	100.9	90.4	88.7	96.2	93.9	102.0	96.3	87.3	78.0
35-64	102.7	96.8	93.9	101.6	94.0	94.0	96.1	98.4	93.3	97.0	94.7	93.0
65+	115.4	112.7	113.9	117.7	117.1	116.2	113.8	111.9	117.4	114.3	116.1	116.6
<b>Sex</b>												
Male	107.6	101.0	103.7	107.7	101.9	105.1	107.6	105.3	100.6	105.6	102.3	104.1
Female	100.2	100.4	95.7	103.7	96.6	93.7	95.8	97.5	101.4	97.4	96.2	89.4

**Table 4. Health Cost Concern Index: January 2010 to December 2010**

	Jan-10	Feb-10	Mar-10	Apr-10	May-10	Jun-10	Jul-10	Aug-10	Sep-10	Oct-10	Nov-10	Dec-10
<b>Total</b>	98.7	97.5	95.6	98.3	92.6	96.6	95.0	99.8	101.9	97.0	97.4	95.6
<b>Insurance Status</b>												
Uninsured	48.9	46.6	59.5	63.7	45.0	59.9	48.7	52.2	57.0	40.1	45.6	48.6
Insured	104.3	103.7	100.2	102.6	97.7	100.3	100.3	105.9	107.3	102.5	101.1	101.7
<b>Income Categories</b>												
Bottom-Third	75.4	77.8	80.5	76.2	68.8	71.6	72.0	71.3	84.8	77.0	77.4	70.0
Middle-Third	99.5	94.8	98.3	95.2	83.5	95.4	92.1	104.0	107.2	98.8	95.5	94.4
Top-Third	120.4	114.3	108.8	119.5	117.9	119.5	120.1	120.7	116.6	119.0	116.0	117.0
<b>Health Status</b>												
Excellent/Very Good	117.1	114.7	107.5	115.5	113.1	111.2	114.5	117.6	122.0	113.6	112.9	114.2
Good	85.7	93.8	93.8	88.2	80.8	91.7	89.2	93.1	92.7	89.0	89.3	87.1
Fair/Poor	68.3	70.8	70.8	73.0	64.7	67.4	57.5	71.4	61.6	65.7	75.1	64.8
<b>Age Categories</b>												
18-34	98.2	109.0	102.2	109.4	98.9	104.3	108.1	108.2	116.4	108.6	99.4	90.4
35-64	98.6	89.2	91.5	94.4	85.9	91.5	89.2	94.3	97.8	93.1	94.4	95.7
65+	99.0	108.2	101.3	100.0	103.7	102.5	100.7	106.8	103.5	98.2	103.2	98.6
<b>Sex</b>												
Male	105.7	109.4	94.5	106.3	97.1	107.2	103.2	108.1	101.3	104.4	102.1	101.1
Female	93.3	88.4	96.5	91.3	89.0	87.8	88.3	93.8	102.4	90.4	93.6	90.4

## Appendix

The data used to produce the RWJF Index come from the University of Michigan Surveys of Consumers. The Surveys of Consumers are monthly telephone interviews conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan using list-assisted random digit dialing. The sample is designed to be representative of all households in the coterminous United States (that is, the United States plus the District of Columbia, excluding Hawaii and Alaska).

The RWJF Index is the sum of two sub-indices, the Recent Health Cost Barriers Index (RHCBI) and the Future Health Cost Concerns Index (FHCCI).

The RHCBI measures whether respondents experienced barriers in access to health care in the past year, including:

- delaying seeing a doctor when it was necessary due to cost,
- skipping a recommended medical test, treatment, or follow-up due to cost,
- not filling a prescription due to cost, and
- having difficulty paying for medical bills.

The FHCCI uses measures of worry about barriers in access to health care due to cost in the near future. Specifically, the FHCCI uses items that asked respondents about:

- worry about losing health insurance coverage,
- worry about not being able to afford treatment for serious illness,
- worry about not being able to afford all of the routine health care services needed,
- worry about not being able to afford prescription drugs, and
- worry about going bankrupt from not being able to pay medical bills.

The RWJF Index was developed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC). Further information and the monthly reports are available from the [RWJF web site](#).