

Obamacare covered somebody's health, but not mine

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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Remember in the fall, when [Obamacare's insurance exchanges got off to a shamefully bad start](#), and people who never liked the health-care law in the first place started cheering its impending doom?

Yeah, they were wrong. [Millions of people](#) have bought insurance on the exchanges, [most of whom](#) were uninsured before. Most are [eligible for significant subsidies](#) (pdf). Their rates [won't necessarily go up a lot next year](#). Meanwhile, millions of low-income Americans have been [added to Medicaid](#).

Now, none of this directly affects most of us who get our health insurance through our employers. Obamacare does a lot of little things, but its major provisions don't really change group coverage. (That's by design; Congress could never have passed reform that significantly shook up white-collar people's coverage.) Add Obamacare's singularly polarizing politics, and it's not that surprising that a lot of Americans [don't think Obamacare has done anything to help their families](#) (pdf), as CNN found in a poll this week.

What's a bit more startling is this additional tidbit from the same poll: 44 percent of Americans don't think Obamacare has helped *anybody*.

Now, some of this is no doubt related to not knowing what exactly Obamacare is and isn't. Other respondents may understand the law well but be committed enough to their ideological opposition to maintain that in the long run, being able to pay for health care with a government subsidy *isn't* helping, not *really*.

Still, it's stunning that such a high number of Americans think Obamacare helps *no one*. True, some of us might not have personal relationships with a whole lot of people on Medicaid. But who doesn't know someone who's in the individual insurance market for one reason or another and has struggled to get affordable coverage in the past? *Millions* of people who were uninsured—not just or even mostly people the feds determined to be *under-insured*—have coverage now. Ask them if they like this change. A whole lot of them do.

That's why Republican leaders have for the most part quietly backed off calls for Obamacare repeal. But [as Philip Klein notes](#), they could start again—especially in the wake of [this week's conflicting appeals court decisions](#) and the uncertainty they suggest. The more people Obamacare helps, the harder the politics of repeal—that is, at least among those of us who acknowledge that millions of people have access to health care they didn't have before, that this is a good and helpful thing, and that Obamacare is the thing that did this.