

# MCBS Highlights

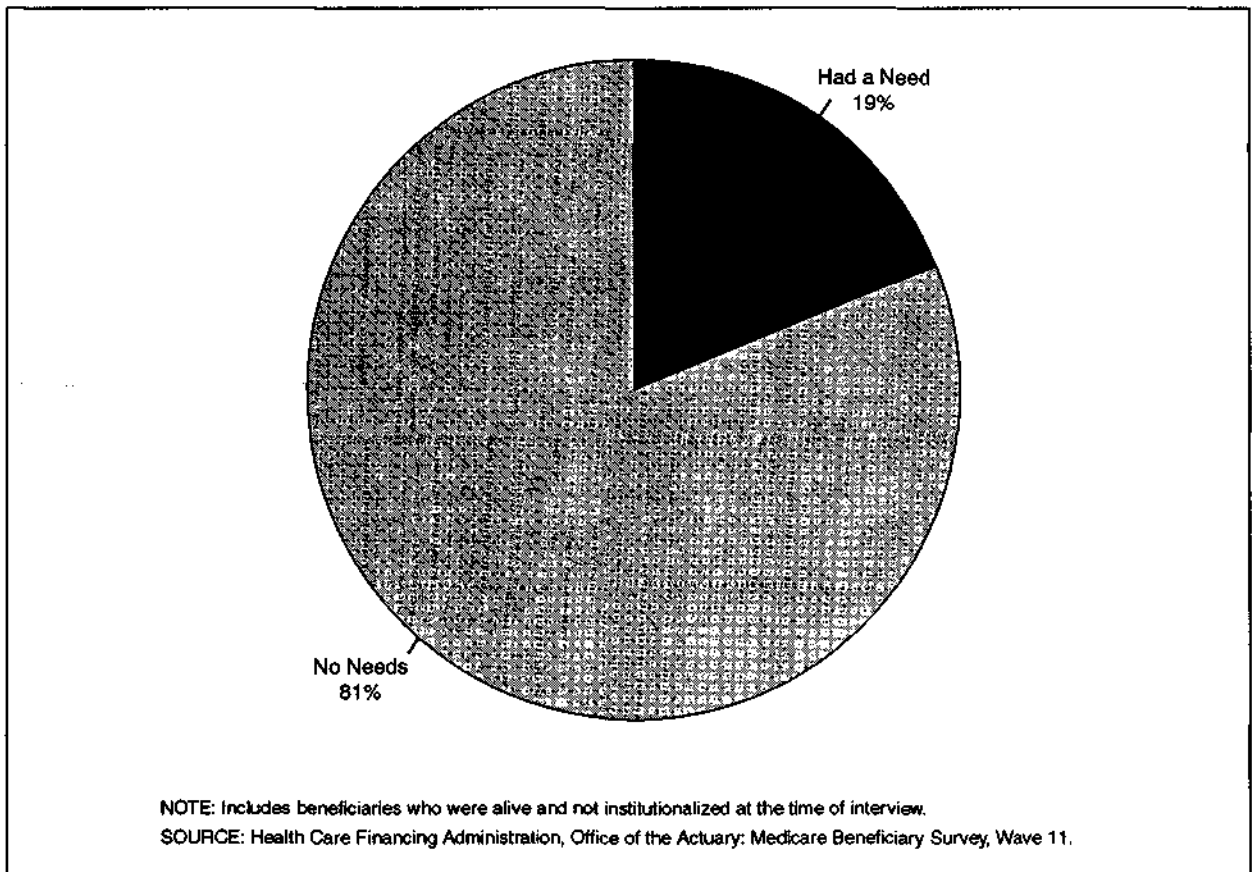
## Medicare Beneficiary Information Needs: 1994

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The Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS) is a powerful tool for analyzing enrollees' access to medical care (Adler, 1994). Based on a stratified random sample, we can derive information about the health care use, expenditure, and financing of Medicare's 36 million enrollees. We can also learn about those enrollees' health status, living arrangements, and access to and satisfaction with care.

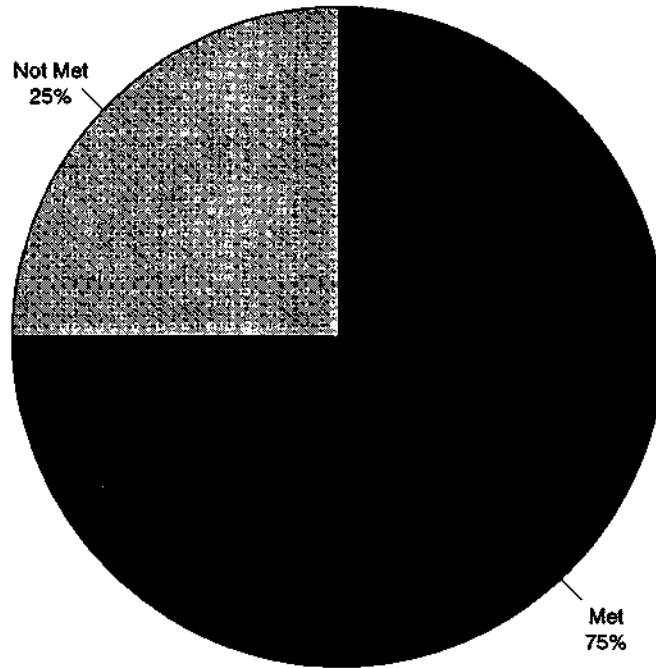
In the charts that follow, we have presented some findings on enrollee information needs in 1994, number of beneficiaries with information needs met, and sources of information used by beneficiaries. These charts attempt to answer the following questions: What types of needs do our beneficiaries have? How well do our beneficiaries understand Medicare?

**Beneficiary Information Needs**



- Nearly one in five beneficiaries reported a need for information about new benefits or changes in the Medicare program in 1994.

## Unmet Beneficiary Information Needs

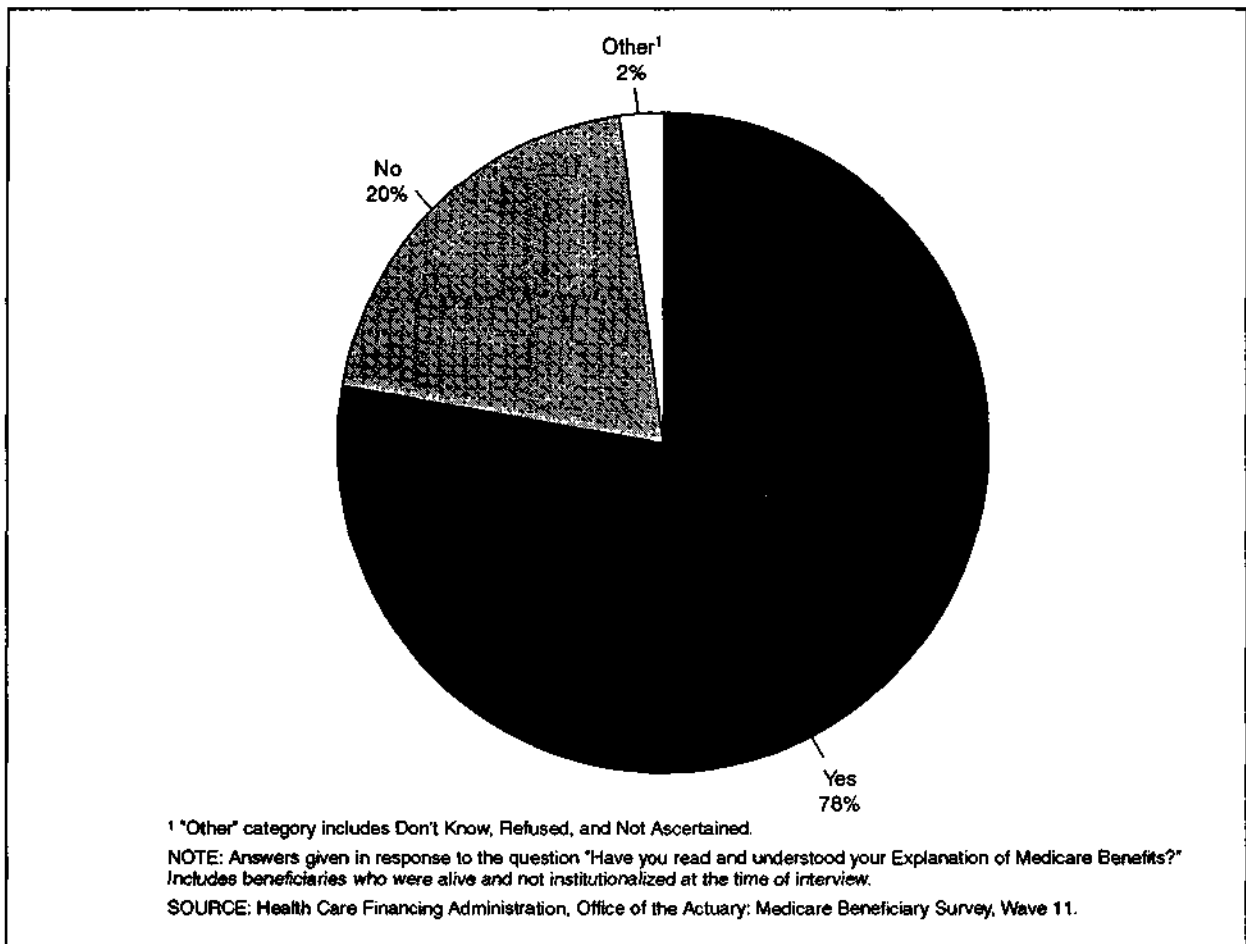


NOTE: Includes beneficiaries who were alive and not institutionalized at the time of interview.

SOURCE: Health Care Financing Administration, Office of the Actuary: Medicare Beneficiary Survey, Wave 11.

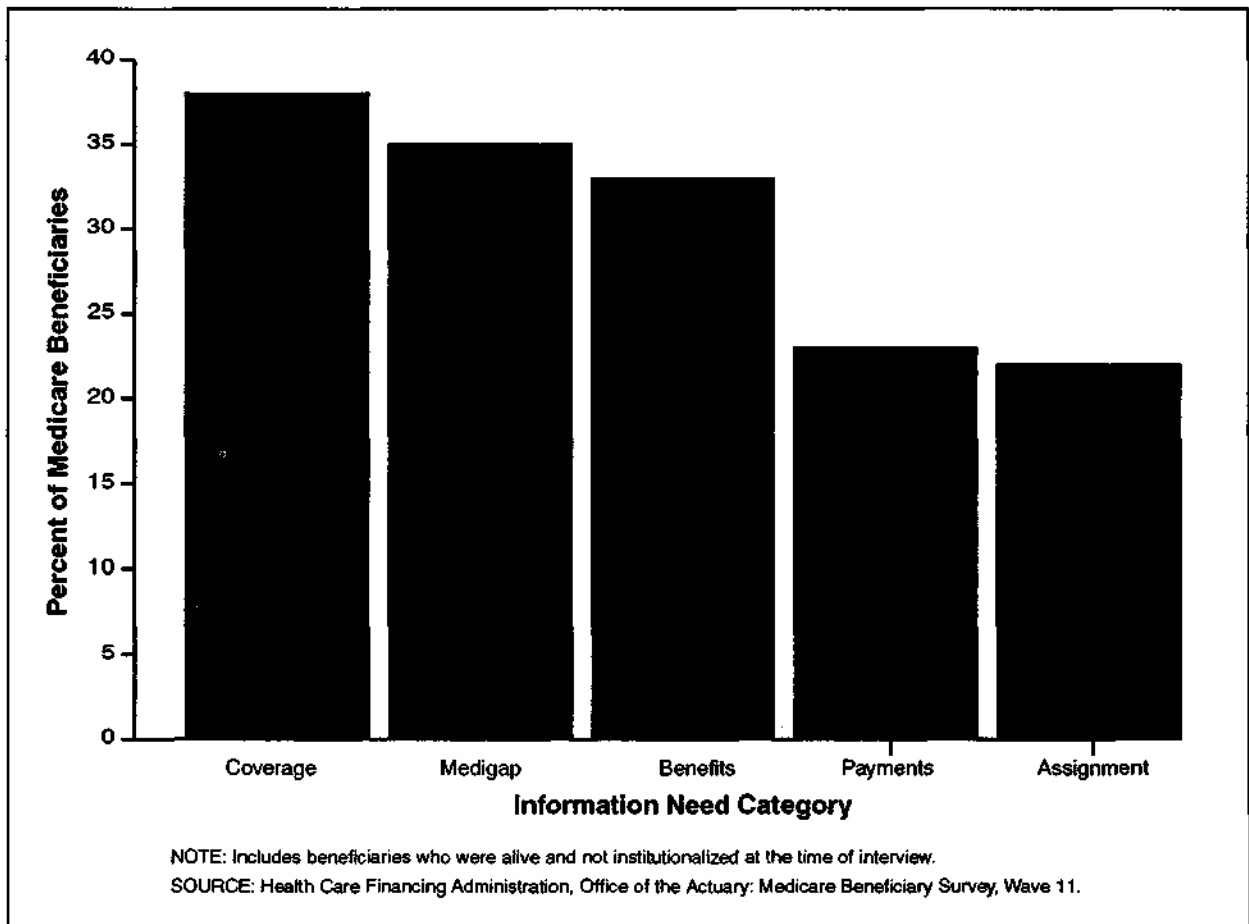
- Of the 5.9 million beneficiaries who had at least one need for information in 1994, including benefits, assignment, charges, services, or medigap coverage, 75 percent had all of their information needs met.

## Beneficiary Understanding of Explanation of Medicare Benefits



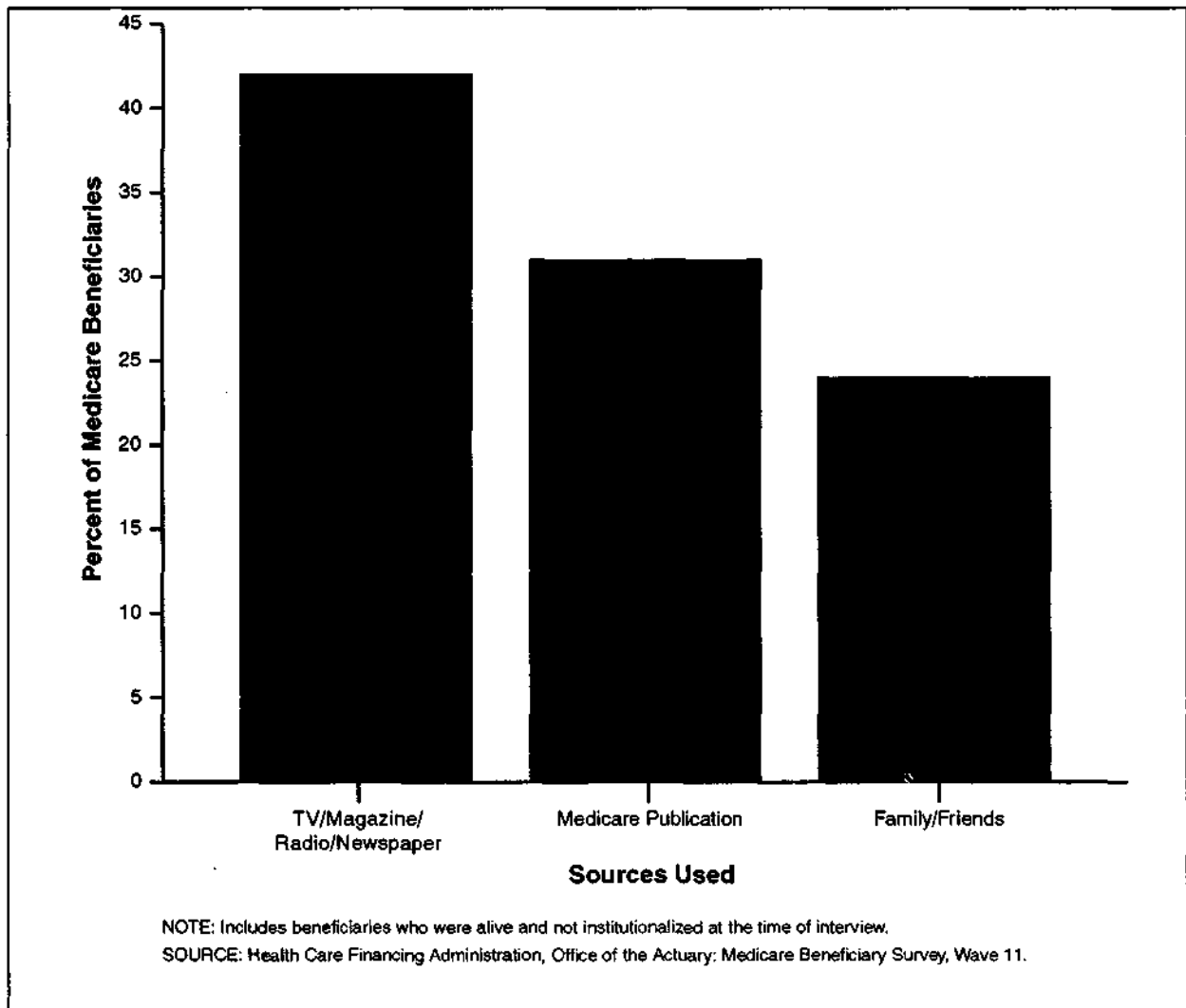
- Of those who have received and read their explanation of benefits, 78 percent find it easy to understand.

### Beneficiaries' Specific Information Needs, by Category



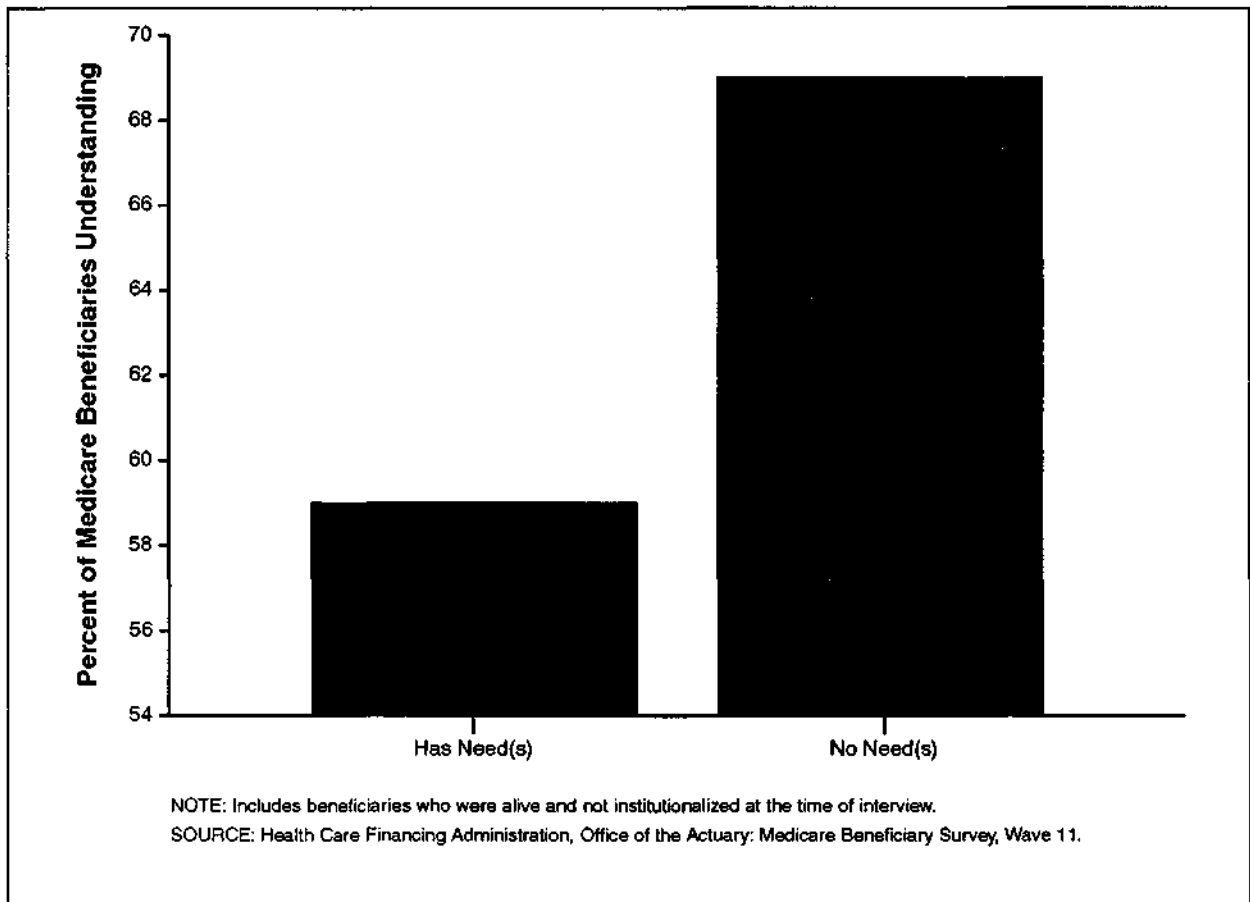
- Questions regarding Medicare coverage are the most commonly mentioned information need among those beneficiaries reporting at least one need.
- Thirty-six percent of beneficiaries reported multiple information needs during the year.

### Top Three Beneficiary Sources of Information for Those With Questions in 1994



- Beneficiaries who needed information in the last year found the information they needed through television, magazines, radio, or newspapers more than any other sources.

## Beneficiaries' Understanding of Medicare, by Information Need Status



- Only 59 percent of those beneficiaries who had at least one need for information last year indicated that they have a general understanding of the Medicare program, while 69 percent of those with no needs felt that way.

## REFERENCE

Adler, G.: A Profile of the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey. *Health Care Financing Review* 15(4):153-163, Summer 1994.

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The authors are with the Office of the Actuary, Health Care Financing Administration. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Health Care Financing Administration.

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