



Public Support for Prescription Drug Price Reform

Findings from a Survey of 1,503 American Adults

September 2016



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Executive Summary

Americans worry about the price of prescription drugs. They have strong economic concerns, and the price of healthcare and prescription drugs nears the top of their top economic anxieties. They believe that prescription drug companies charge prices that are too high, which often results in people who need drugs not being able to afford them.

People believe prescription drugs are one area where there is a strong need for government oversight and regulation. They overwhelmingly believe the government needs to do more than they currently are to reduce the price of prescription drugs.

Americans believe it is morally wrong for drug companies to make excessive profits on lifesaving drugs, and people across demographics strongly support policy changes that would increase the access and affordability of lifesaving drugs.

- ✓ **Reforming Patents:** Seventy-three (73) percent of Americans favor regulating patents on prescription drugs developed from public research to ensure they are available to everyone, while 18 percent oppose and 8 percent are undecided.

Seventy-five (75) percent of Americans favor shortening the length of monopoly granted on prescription drugs so that cheaper generic drugs are made available sooner, while 16 percent oppose and 9 percent are undecided.

- ✓ **Allowing Medicare to Negotiate Lower Drug Prices:** Seventy-two (72) percent of Americans favor allowing Medicare and other government programs that pay for prescription drugs to negotiate prices directly with drug companies, while 18 percent oppose and 9 percent are undecided.
- ✓ **Increasing Price Transparency:** Seventy-four (74) percent of Americans favor requiring pharmaceutical drug companies to justify their prices by disclosing how much they spend on research, manufacturing and marketing, while 20 percent oppose and 6 percent are undecided.

Even a more radical idea – considering prescription drugs as public goods as opposed to commodities that can be bought and sold – finds majority support:

- ✓ **Making Prescription Drugs Public Goods.** Two-thirds (67 percent) of Americans favor making prescription drugs public goods paid for by the federal government and available to all Americans at an affordable price, while 25 percent oppose and 8 percent are undecided.

Americans believe everyone has the right to affordable prescription drugs, particularly those that are essential or developed from public research or with tax dollars. People over 65, African Americans, and Latinos are among the strongest supporters of this agenda but support extends across lines of age, race, gender, and partisanship.

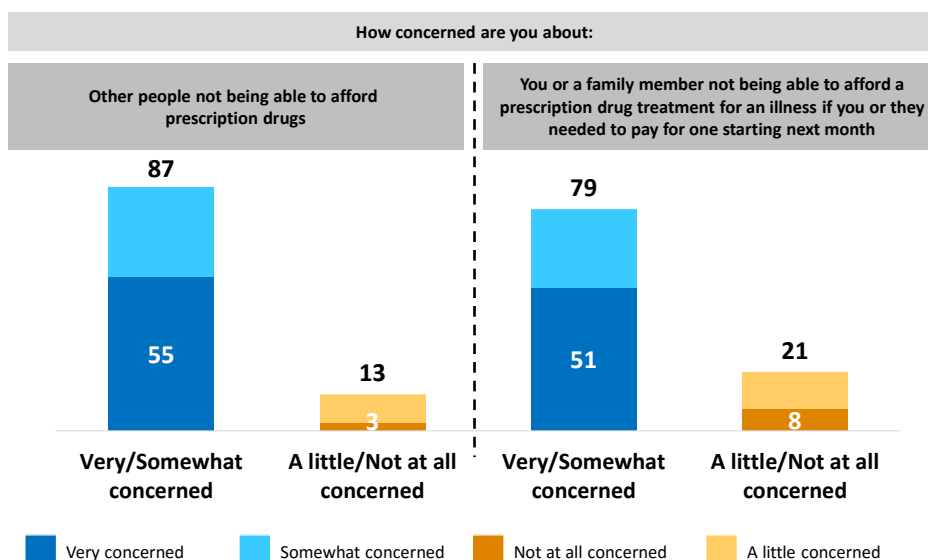
Summary of Findings

Prescription Drugs Prices are a Key Economic Concern

Americans hold significant concerns around the prices of prescription drugs. One in four American adults indicate that the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs is the economic issue of most concern to them, second only to wages keeping up with the cost of living (29 percent) and ahead of retirement security (18 percent), tax increases (12 percent), losing a job (9 percent), and the cost of education after high school (7 percent).

A strong majority of Americans worry about being able to afford a prescription drug if they needed one next month, and express greater intensity of concern when it comes to others being able to afford prescription drugs.

Americans intensely worry about being able to afford a prescription drug if they needed one next month, and worry about others being able to afford prescription drugs.

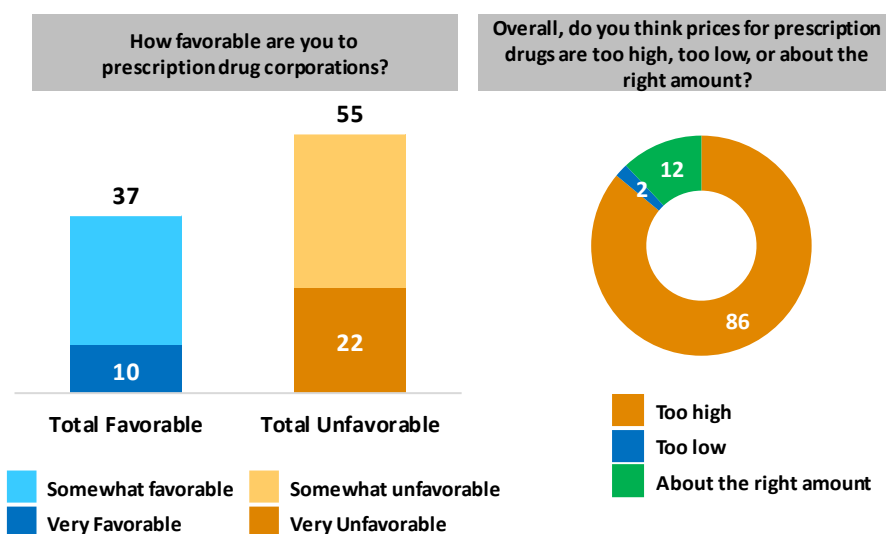


Eighty-seven (87) percent of adults are concerned about other people not being able to afford prescription drugs (55 percent very concerned), particularly seniors (90 percent concerned, 61 percent very concerned), African Americans (87 percent concerned, 64 percent very concerned), Latinos (90 percent concerned, 60 percent very concerned), and those currently taking a prescription drug (91 percent concerned, 62 percent very concerned).

Attitudes toward Prescription Drugs and Prescription Drug Corporations

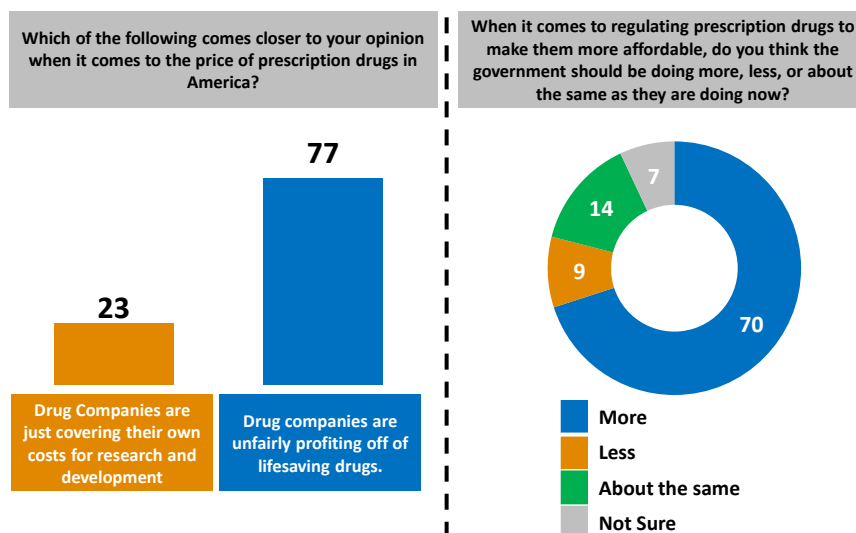
A 55 percent majority of adults have an unfavorable view of prescription drug corporations and nearly a quarter have a very unfavorable opinion. Overall, 85 percent of Americans say the prices of prescription drugs are too high, and there is near universal agreement across demographics.

Americans are unfavorable toward prescription drug corporations and think prices are too high.



Americans blame drug companies for high prices. A 77 percent majority of adults think that drug companies are unfairly profiting off of lifesaving drugs, while only 23 percent of people believe drug companies are just covering their costs for research and development.

Americans believe drug companies are unfairly profiting off of lifesaving drugs, and want the government to regulate prescription drugs to make them more affordable.



People hold strong views on policies and prescription drug corporation practices that many see as contributing to high prices.

Money in Politics: Seventy-eight (78) percent of Americans say that “drug companies have spent millions on lobbying to increase their profits and keep prices high for prescription drugs.”

Profits over cures: Seventy-four (74) percent of Americans say that “prescription drug companies do not focus enough on finding cures for major diseases because they prefer to make drugs that make them more profits.”

Maintenance drugs: Seventy-two (72) percent of Americans say that “drug corporations do not seek out cures because there is more money to be made in maintenance drugs that people take for life.”

Imports: Sixty-five (65) percent of Americans say that “Americans should be able to get their prescription drugs imported from other countries.”

Advertisements: People hold mixed views on prescription drug advertising. Sixty-seven (67) percent of Americans say that “advertisements for prescription drugs lead to people wanting drugs they don’t actually need.” However, 66 percent believe that “advertisements for prescription drugs are a good way to inform people about possible treatments.”

People’s views divide evenly on the broad question of whether government regulation succeeds more often than it fails or fails more often than it succeeds, with 44 percent believing each.

However, Americans strongly favor government regulation with regard to prescription drug prices. Seventy (70) percent of adults think the “government should do more to make prescription drugs more affordable;” only 9 percent think the government should do less. Eighty-three (83) percent of adults believe “our government should ensure prescription drugs are affordable for every American.”

Access and Affordability: Americans want to ensure people who need lifesaving drugs can afford them

Americans express concerns about unequal access to prescription drugs in several dimensions. First, they do not like that drug companies’ focus on profits denies access to lifesaving drugs. Eighty-seven (87) percent of adults agree that, “it is not fair that drug corporations deny people access to lifesaving drugs just to make extreme profits” including 50 percent who *strongly* agree, while just 5 percent disagree.

Secondly, they do not like that people who need lifesaving drugs cannot get them if they cannot afford them. Eighty-eight (88) percent of Americans agree that “it is not fair that some people are denied access to lifesaving drugs because they cannot afford them,” including 51 percent who *strongly* agree.

People also believe that Americans should be able to import prescription drugs. Sixty-five (65) percent of adults agree that “Americans should be able to get their prescription drugs imported from other countries,” including 22 percent who *strongly* agree, while 14 percent disagree and 21 percent are not sure.

Americans strongly support government's role in regulating prescription drugs to increase their affordability. An overwhelming majority believe that "prescription drugs that are developed with taxpayer dollars should be made affordable to every American, with 89 percent agreeing, including 53 percent who *strongly* agree. Furthermore, 85 percent of adults agree that "every American has the right to affordable quality healthcare, including prescription drugs," including 49 percent who *strongly* agree.

When considering the role government should have in prescription drugs, 83 percent of Americans agree that "our government should ensure prescription drugs are affordable to every American," including 46 percent who *strongly* agree. Americans' understanding of affordability adopts a moral framework, with 68 percent agreeing that "it's fine for drug companies to make large profits off lifestyle drugs but lifesaving drugs must be affordable," including 24 percent who *strongly* agree, while 19 percent disagree and 14 percent are not sure.

Support for Policies that Reduce the Price of Prescription Drugs

Despite concerns about access and affordability, Americans remain optimistic about the impact of effective policies, with 82 percent agreeing that "if we had the right policies in place, Americans would have access to affordable prescription drugs," including 38 percent who *strongly* agree.

Americans strongly support many policies that would lower prices and increase access. Support extends across demographics, and especially among women and seniors, to make prescription drugs more affordable.

People strongly support policies that limit prescription drug companies' monopolies, increase transparency around how prescription drug companies set their prices, and require that drug companies spend more on research than on marketing. Support increases when people learn medicines are developed using taxpayer money.

Americans strongly favor more well-known policy proposals like allowing Medicare to negotiate cheaper prescription drug prices and paying for value, but also support bolder ideas like making prescription drugs public goods paid for by the federal government and available to everyone at affordable prices.

The tables below show the strong support each policy has across lines of gender, age, race, and partisanship.

Percent Favoring Each Policy Across Demographic Groups														
“Do you favor or oppose this proposal?”	All Adults	Gender		Age					Race/Ethnicity			Party ID		
		M	W	<30	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	W	AA	L	D	I	R
Shorten the length of monopoly granted on prescription drugs so that cheaper generic drugs are made available sooner	75	73	77	66	67	77	79	86	78	66	69	74	73	79
Require pharmaceutical drug companies to justify their prices by disclosing how much they spend on research, manufacturing, and marketing	74	73	74	64	66	75	75	90	75	74	69	76	71	74
Require pharmaceutical drug companies to disclose how much they spend on research, manufacturing, and marketing	74	71	78	67	66	71	82	85	77	65	70	75	69	78
Let doctors decide what to prescribe based in part on how much better the treatment is than an alternative and how much it costs	74	74	74	66	63	72	81	86	76	67	70	75	69	78
Regulate patents on prescription drugs developed from public research to ensure they are available to everyone	73	72	74	64	64	72	80	86	76	71	67	77	66	75

Percent Favoring Each Policy Across Demographic Groups														
“Do you favor or oppose this proposal?”	All Adults	Gender		Age					Race/Ethnicity			Party ID		
		M	W	<30	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	W	AA	L	D	I	R
Make it illegal for a drug company to pay a different company that manufactures generic drugs to delay the release of a generic version of their drug	72	73	72	62	60	74	79	84	75	67	64	75	66	74
Require drug companies that benefit from taxpayer funds to spend set amounts on research, not just on marketing and profits	72	69	74	56	56	80	77	90	75	76	55	72	67	77
Allow Medicare and other government programs that pay for prescription drugs to negotiate prices directly with drug companies	72	74	70	60	59	74	79	87	75	68	62	73	71	74
Make prescription drugs public goods paid for by the federal government and available to all Americans at an affordable price	67	65	68	60	63	69	71	70	66	71	66	73	63	62
Make Medicare and government programs that pay for prescription drugs pay according to how well they actually prolong life and improve health so that expensive drugs that only provide minimal improvements are not used	60	64	56	53	60	68	54	67	59	68	55	63	53	59

Methodology

Lake Research Partners and ASO Communications designed and administered a survey that was conducted online from May 17 to 22, 2016. The survey reached a total of 1,503 adults. The sample of adults was drawn from an online panel and respondents were screened to be over the age of 18. The sample of adults was weighted slightly by education, race, and party affiliation. The margin of error for the national sample is +/-2.5%. It is higher for subgroups.

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