



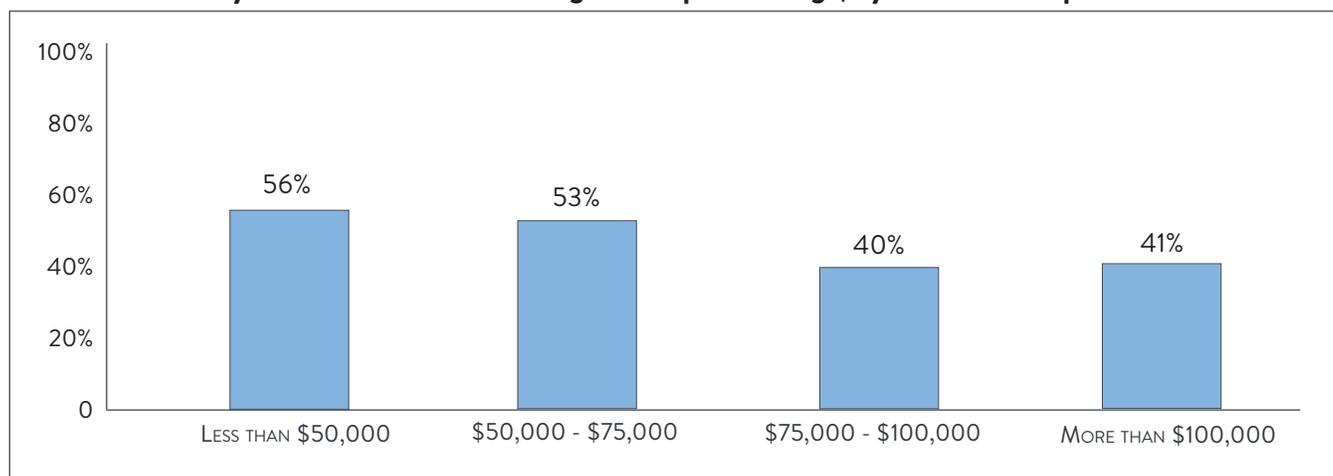
DATA BRIEF NO. 92 | JUNE 2021

Oregon Residents Worried about High Drug Costs—Support a Range of Government Solutions

According to a survey of more than 900 Oregon adults, conducted from April 13, 2021, to April 29, 2021, residents are concerned about prescription drug costs and express a strong desire to enact solutions.

Almost half of all survey respondents (49%) reported being either “somewhat worried” or “very worried” about affording the cost of prescription drugs. Worry varied substantially by income group, with residents in households making less than \$75,000 per year experiencing the most worry (see Figure 1). Residents in these income groups were much more worried than those in households making more. However, it is important to note that a large percentage of households making \$75,000-\$100,000 and more than \$100,000 both experienced worry about affording prescription drugs.

Figure 1
Somewhat or Very Worried About Affording Prescription Drugs, by Income Group

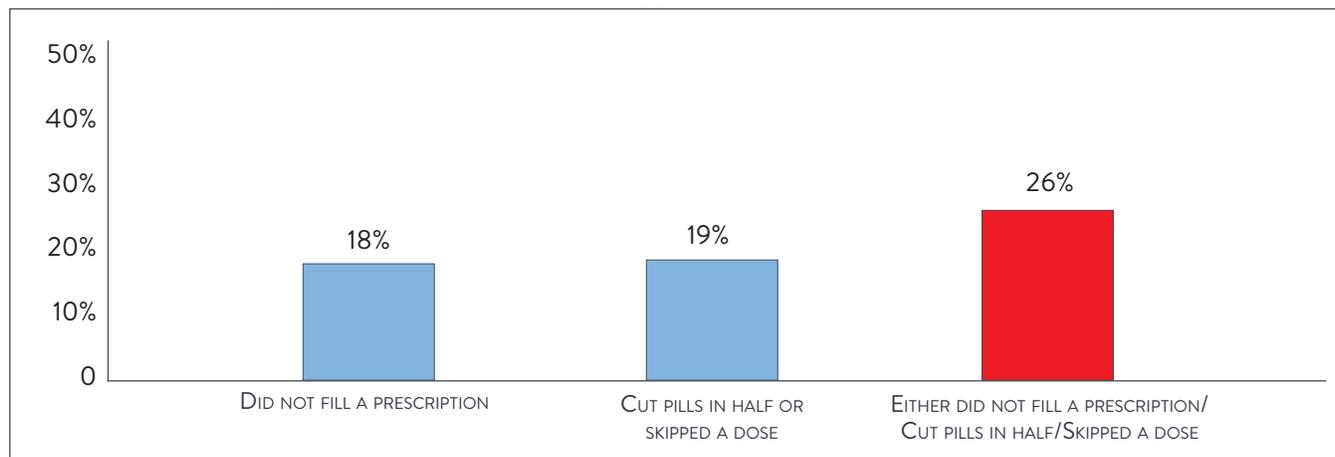


Source: 2021 Poll of Oregon Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

In addition to being worried about prescription drug affordability in the future, many Oregon residents experienced hardship in the prior 12 months due to the cost of prescription drugs. Indeed, cost concerns led 1 in 4 Oregon adults (26%) to not fill a prescription, cut pills in half or skip a dose of medicine (see Figure 2).

These hardships disproportionately impact people in lower income households. As Table 1 shows, people in households earning less than \$50,000¹ per year are more likely to have rationed their prescription medicines (by not filling a prescription, cutting pills in half or skipping a dose of medicine) than people in households making more than \$100,000 per year. These hardships are alarmingly prevalent in middle income households, as well.

Figure 2
Did not Fill a Prescription, Cut Pills in Half or Skipped a Dose Due to Concerns About Cost



Source: 2021 Poll of Oregon Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

Table 1
Oregon Adults with Drug Affordability Issues, By Income

INCOME	CUT PILLS IN HALF OR SKIPPED A DOSE	DID NOT FILL A PRESCRIPTION	EITHER DID NOT FILL A PRESCRIPTION/CUT PILLS IN HALF/OR SKIPPED A DOSE
LESS THAN \$50,000	20%	23%	29%
\$50,000 - \$75,000	24%	21%	31%
\$75,000 - \$100,000	15%	14%	25%
MORE THAN \$100,000	14%	15%	21%

Source: 2021 Poll of Oregon Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

When given more than 20 options, the option cited most frequently as being a “major reason” for high healthcare costs was “drug companies charging too much money:”

- 74%—Drug companies charging too much money
- 68%—Insurance companies charging too much money
- 66%—Hospitals charging too much money

In light of these prescription drug cost concerns—as well as concerns about high healthcare costs generally²—it is not surprising that Oregon adults are extremely dissatisfied with the health system:

- Just 26% agreed or strongly agreed that “we have a great healthcare system in the U.S.,”
- While 71% agreed or strongly agreed that “the system needs to change.”

When it comes to tackling high drug costs, Oregon adults endorsed a number of strategies:

- 91%—Require drug companies to provide advanced notice of price increases and information to justify those increases³
- 90%—Authorize the Attorney General to take legal action to prevent price gouging or unfair prescription drug price hikes
- 90%—Ensure the cost of widely needed vaccines are affordable for all
- 89%—Prohibit drug companies from charging more in the U.S. than abroad
- 88%—Set standard prices for drugs to make them affordable
- 85%—Create a Prescription Drug Affordability Board to examine the evidence and establish acceptable costs for drugs

There is remarkably high support for government action on drug costs regardless of the respondents' political affiliation (see Table 2).

Table 2
Percent Who Agree/Strongly Agree, by Political Affiliation

SELECTED SURVEY QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS	TOTAL	GENERALLY SPEAKING, DO YOU THINK OF YOURSELF AS...		
		REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRAT	NEITHER
MAJOR REASON FOR RISING HEALTHCARE COSTS: DRUG COMPANIES CHARGING TOO MUCH MONEY	74%	66%	79%	73%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD AUTHORIZE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION TO PREVENT PRICE GOUGING OR UNFAIR PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICE HIKES	90%	88%	92%	89%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REQUIRE DRUG COMPANIES TO PROVIDE ADVANCED NOTICE OF PRICE INCREASES AND INFORMATION TO JUSTIFY THOSE INCREASES	91%	88%	94%	89%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE THE COST OF WIDELY NEEDED VACCINES ARE AFFORDABLE FOR ALL	90%	84%	94%	89%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROHIBIT DRUG COMPANIES FROM CHARGING MORE IN THE U.S. THAN ABROAD	89%	84%	92%	88%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CREATE A PRESCRIPTION DRUG AFFORDABILITY BOARD TO EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE AND ESTABLISH ACCEPTABLE COSTS FOR DRUGS	85%	74%	91%	85%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SET STANDARD PRICES FOR DRUGS TO MAKE THEM AFFORDABLE	88%	81%	91%	89%

Source: 2021 Poll of Oregon Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

While Oregon residents are united in calling for the government to address high drug costs, they also see a role for themselves:

- 76% would switch from a brand name to an equivalent generic drug if given a chance
- 56% have tried to find out the cost of a drug beforehand

The high burden of healthcare and prescription drug affordability, along with high levels of support for change, suggest that elected leaders and other stakeholders need to make addressing this consumer burden a top priority. Moreover, the current COVID crisis is leading state residents to take a hard look at how well health and public health systems are working for them, with strong support for a wide variety of actions. Annual surveys can help assess whether or not progress is being made.

Notes

1. Median household income in Oregon was \$62,818 (2015-2019). U.S. Census, *Quick Facts*. Retrieved from: [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Oregon](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/oregon)
2. For more detailed information about healthcare affordability burdens facing Oregon residents, please see Healthcare Value Hub, *Oregon Residents Struggle to Afford High Healthcare Costs; COVID Fears Add to Support for a Range of Government Solutions Across Party Lines*, Data Brief No. 91.
3. In 2019, Oregon passed the Prescription Drug Price Transparency Act, which, among other things, requires drug manufacturers to report price increases to the Department of Consumer and Business Services at least 60 days before the increase is set to take place. For more information, see: *Prescription Drug Price Transparency*, Oregon Division of Financial Regulation (Accessed June 3, 2021). <https://dfr.oregon.gov/drugtransparency/Pages/index.aspx>

Methodology

Altarum’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey (CHESS) is designed to elicit respondents’ unbiased views on a wide range of health system issues, including confidence using the health system, financial burden and views on fixes that might be needed.

The survey used a web panel from Dynata with a demographically balanced sample of approximately 1,000 respondents who live in Oregon. The survey was conducted in English or Spanish and restricted to adults ages 18 and older. Respondents who finished the survey in less than half the median time were excluded from the final sample, leaving 929 cases for analysis. After those exclusions, the demographic composition of respondents was as follows, although not all demographic information has complete response rates:

Demographic Composition of Survey Respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
HOUSEHOLD INCOME			GENDER		
Under \$20K	122	13%	MALE	396	43%
\$20K - \$30K	90	10%	FEMALE	533	57%
\$30K - \$40K	80	9%	INSURANCE STATUS		
\$40K - \$50K	80	9%	HEALTH INSURANCE THROUGH EMPLOYER OR FAMILY MEMBER’S EMPLOYER	312	34%
\$50K - \$60K	61	7%	HEALTH INSURANCE I BUY ON MY OWN	104	11%
\$60K - \$75K	105	11%	MEDICARE	283	30%
\$75K - \$100K	126	14%	MEDICAID (OREGON HEALTH PLAN)	144	16%
\$100K - \$150K	175	19%	TRICARE/MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM	19	2%
\$150K+	90	10%	DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) HEALTH CARE	17	2%
PARTY AFFILIATION			NO COVERAGE OF ANY TYPE	35	4%
REPUBLICAN	240	26%	I DON’T KNOW	15	2%
DEMOCRAT	383	41%	HEALTH STATUS		
NEITHER	306	33%	EXCELLENT	110	12%
AGE			VERY GOOD	300	32%
18-24	79	9%	GOOD	331	36%
25-34	129	14%	FAIR	163	18%
35-44	157	17%	POOR	25	3%
45-54	158	17%			
55-64	231	25%			
65+	165	18%			

Source: 2021 Poll of Oregon Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey
 Note: Percentages in the body of the brief are based on weighted values, while the data presented in the demographic table is unweighted.



ABOUT ALTARUM’S HEALTHCARE VALUE HUB

With support from Arnold Ventures, the Healthcare Value Hub provides free, timely information about the policies and practices that address high healthcare costs and poor quality, bringing better value to consumers. The Hub is part of Altarum, a nonprofit organization with the mission of creating a better, more sustainable future for all Americans by applying research-based and field-tested solutions that transform our systems of health and healthcare.

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