



DATA BRIEF NO. 113 | JANUARY 2022

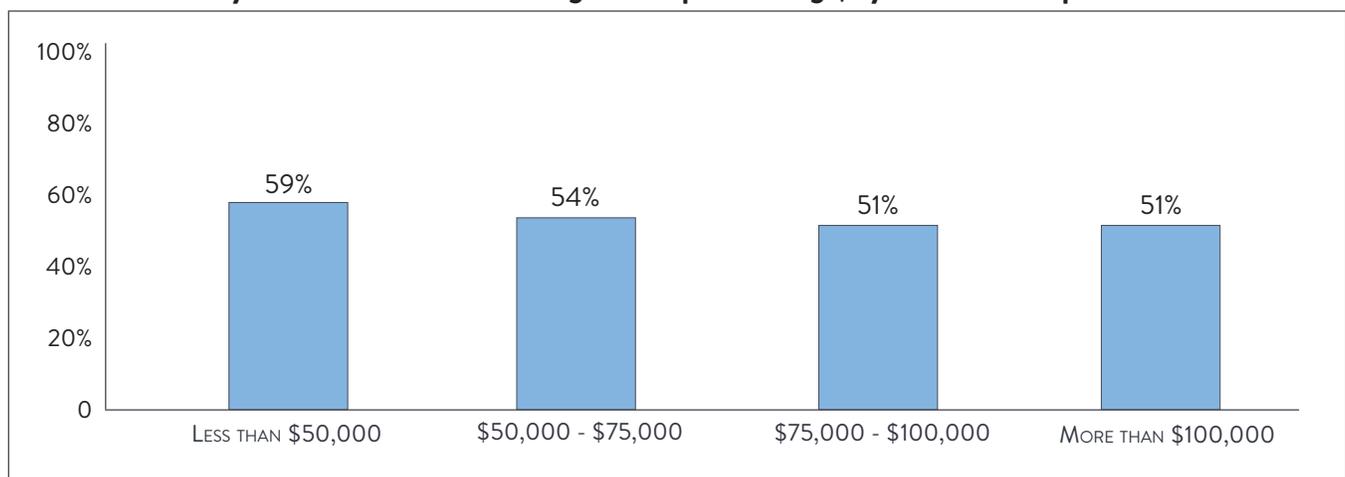
Maine Residents Worried about High Drug Costs—Support a Range of Government Solutions

According to a survey of more than 920 Maine adults, conducted from Oct. 18, 2021 to Oct. 28, 2021, residents are concerned about prescription drug costs and express a strong desire for government-led solutions.

More than half (55%) of survey respondents report being either “somewhat worried” or “very worried” about affording the cost of prescription drugs. Worry varies by income group, with residents in households making less than \$50,000 per year experiencing the most worry (see Figure 1). It is important to note, however, that large percentages of people in higher earning households report being somewhat or very worried about affording prescription drugs, as well.

Figure 1

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



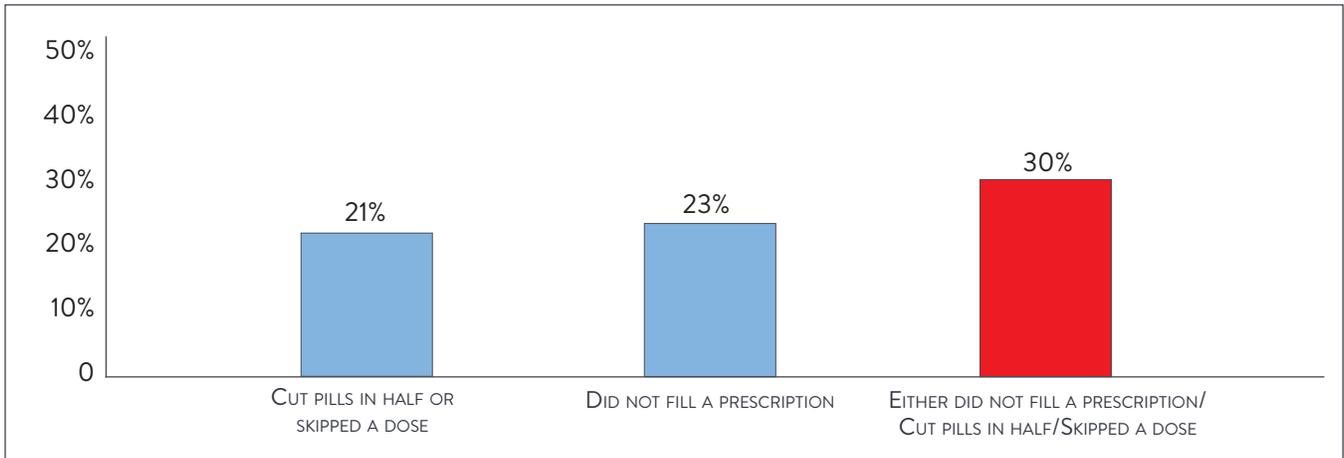
Source: 2021 Poll of Maine Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

In addition to worrying about prescription drug affordability *in the future*, many Maine residents report difficulty affording prescription drugs in the past 12 months. Cost concerns led nearly one-third (30%) of Maine adults to not fill a prescription, cut pills in half or skip a dose of medicine (see Figure 2).

Surprisingly, these hardships disproportionately impact people in higher income households. As Figure 3 shows, households earning above \$100,000 per year¹ are more likely to have rationed medication by not filling a prescription, cutting pills in half or skipping a dose due to cost concerns. Prescription drug affordability burdens are alarmingly prevalent in middle- and low-income households as well, leading more than one-fourth of these respondents to not take medications as prescribed.

Figure 2

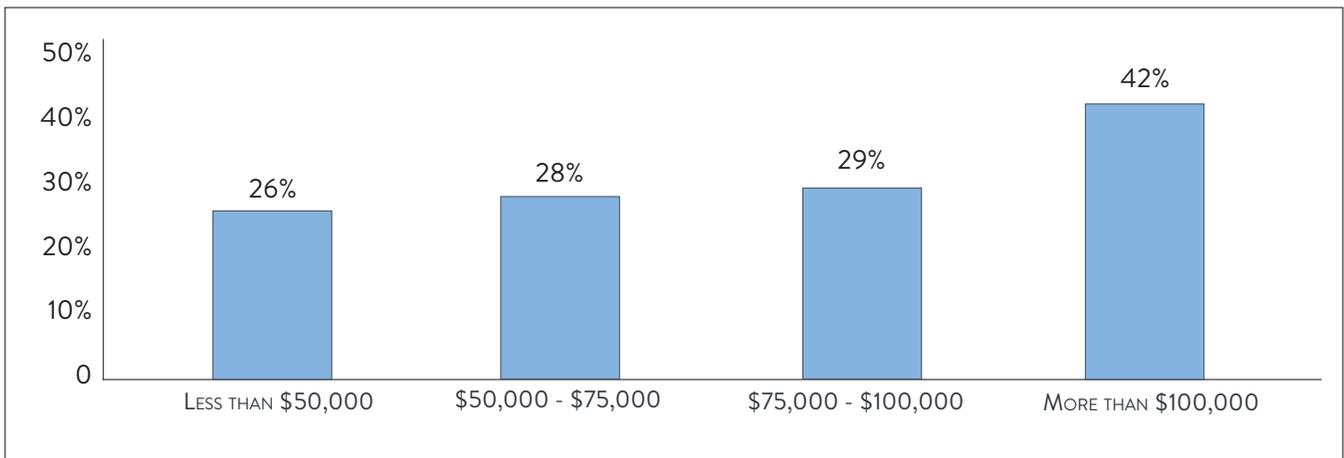
Did not Fill a Prescription, Cut Pills in Half or Skipped a Dose Due to Concerns About Cost



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

Figure 3

Did not Fill a Prescription, Cut Pills in Half or Skipped a Dose, by Income Group



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

The likelihood of medication rationing is relatively consistent across congressional districts, with roughly one-third of residents in both districts reporting forgoing medication due to cost (see Table 1).

Table 1

Did Not Fill a Prescription, Cut Pills in Half or Skipped a Dose of Medicine, by Congressional District²

	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
DISTRICT 1	22%	21%	29%
DISTRICT 2	20%	25%	31%

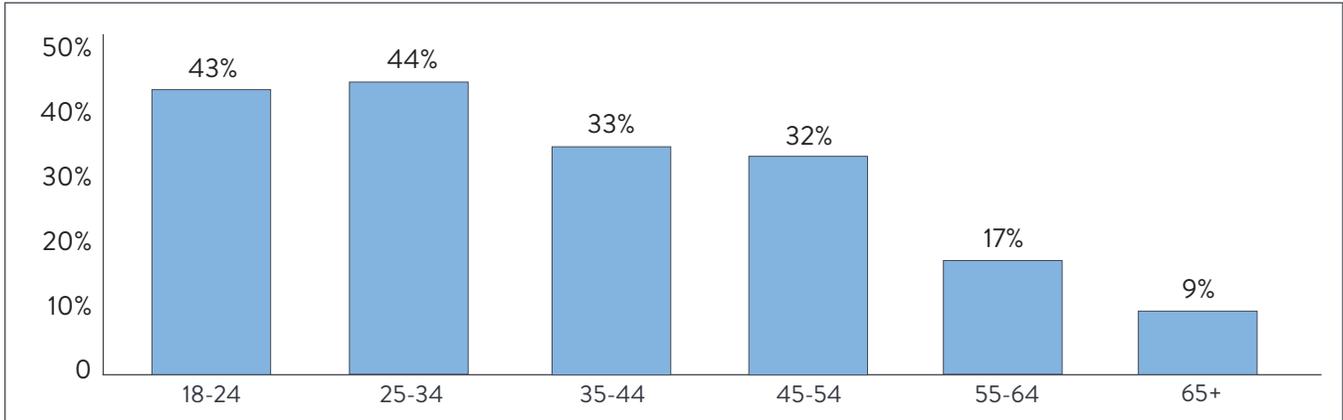


Source: 2021 Poll of Maine Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

Younger Mainers (ages 18-34) and those who buy health insurance on their own are also more likely to have rationed their prescription medications due to cost (see Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4

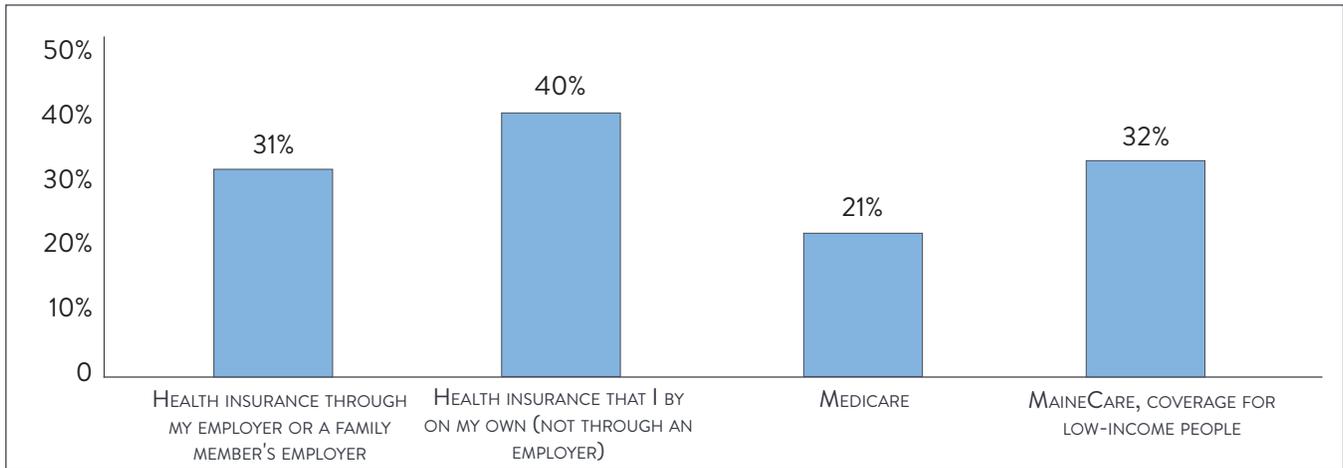
Did not Fill a Prescription, Cut Pills in Half or Skipped a Dose, by Age Group



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

Figure 5

Did not Fill a Prescription, Cut Pills in Half or Skipped a Dose, by Insurance Type



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

When given more than 20 options, the options cited most frequently as being a “major reason” for high healthcare costs were:

- 75%—Drug companies charging too much money
- 70%—Hospitals charging too much money
- 65%—Insurance companies charging too much money

In light of these prescription drug cost concerns—as well as concerns about high healthcare costs generally³—it is not surprising that Maine adults are dissatisfied with the health system:

- Just 33% agreed or strongly agreed that “we have a great healthcare system in the U.S.”
- While 74% agreed or strongly agreed that “the system needs to change.”

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

- 92%—Require drug companies to provide advanced notice of price increases and information to justify those increases
- 92%—Set standard prices for drugs to make them affordable
- 91%—Authorize the Attorney General to take legal action to prevent price gouging or unfair prescription drug price hikes
- 91%—Ensure the cost of widely needed vaccines are affordable for all
- 91%—Prohibit drug companies from charging more in the U.S. than abroad
- 90%—Create a Prescription Drug Affordability Board to examine the evidence and establish acceptable costs for drugs

There is substantial 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: <i>DRUG COMPANIES CHARGING TOO MUCH MONEY</i>	75%	75%	71%	81%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REQUIRE DRUG COMPANIES TO PROVIDE ADVANCED NOTICE OF PRICE INCREASES AND INFORMATION TO JUSTIFY THOSE INCREASES	92%	89%	93%	92%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SET STANDARD PRICES FOR DRUGS TO MAKE THEM AFFORDABLE	92%	89%	94%	90%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE THE COST OF WIDELY NEEDED VACCINES ARE AFFORDABLE FOR ALL	91%	88%	94%	90%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROHIBIT DRUG COMPANIES FROM CHARGING MORE IN U.S. THAN ABROAD	91%	87%	95%	89%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD AUTHORIZE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION TO PREVENT PRICE GOUGING OR UNFAIR PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICE HIKES	91%	89%	93%	90%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CREATE A PRESCRIPTION DRUG AFFORDABILITY BOARD TO EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE AND ESTABLISH ACCEPTABLE COSTS FOR DRUGS	90%	85%	95%	88%

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

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

- 76% would be willing to switch from a brand name to an equivalent generic drug if given the chance
- 60% 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 Maine was \$57,918 (2015-2019). U.S. Census, *Quick Facts*. Retrieved from: [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Maine](#)
2. For the purposes of this survey, all of Kennebec county was included within Congressional District 2. However, in reality, Kennebec county is divided between both districts.
3. For more detailed information about healthcare affordability burdens facing Maine residents, see: Healthcare Value Hub, [Maine Residents Struggle to Afford High Healthcare Costs; COVID Fears Add to Support for a Range of Government Solutions Across Party Lines](#), Data Brief No. 111 (January 2022).

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 Maine. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and was 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 926 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	107	12%	MALE	348	38%
\$20K - \$30K	77	8%	FEMALE	578	62%
\$30K - \$40K	93	10%	INSURANCE STATUS		
\$40K - \$50K	72	8%	HEALTH INSURANCE THROUGH EMPLOYER OR FAMILY MEMBER’S EMPLOYER	406	38%
\$50K - \$60K	70	8%	HEALTH INSURANCE I BUY ON MY OWN	115	11%
\$60K - \$75K	79	9%	MEDICARE, COVERAGE FOR SENIORS AND THOSE WITH SERIOUS DISABILITIES	206	27%
\$75K - \$100K	130	14%	MAINECARE, COVERAGE FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE	132	16%
\$100K - \$150K	195	21%	TRICARE/MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM	12	2%
\$150K+	103	11%	DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) HEALTH CARE	15	2%
PARTY AFFILIATION			NO COVERAGE OF ANY TYPE	30	4%
REPUBLICAN	208	22%	I DON’T KNOW	10	1%
DEMOCRAT	441	48%	HEALTH STATUS		
NEITHER	277	30%	EXCELLENT	165	14%
AGE			VERY GOOD	338	33%
18-24	120	13%	GOOD	286	35%
25-34	298	33%	FAIR	106	14%
35-44	147	16%	POOR	31	4%
45-54	98	11%			
55-64	141	15%			
65+	107	12%			

Source: 2021 Poll of Maine 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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