



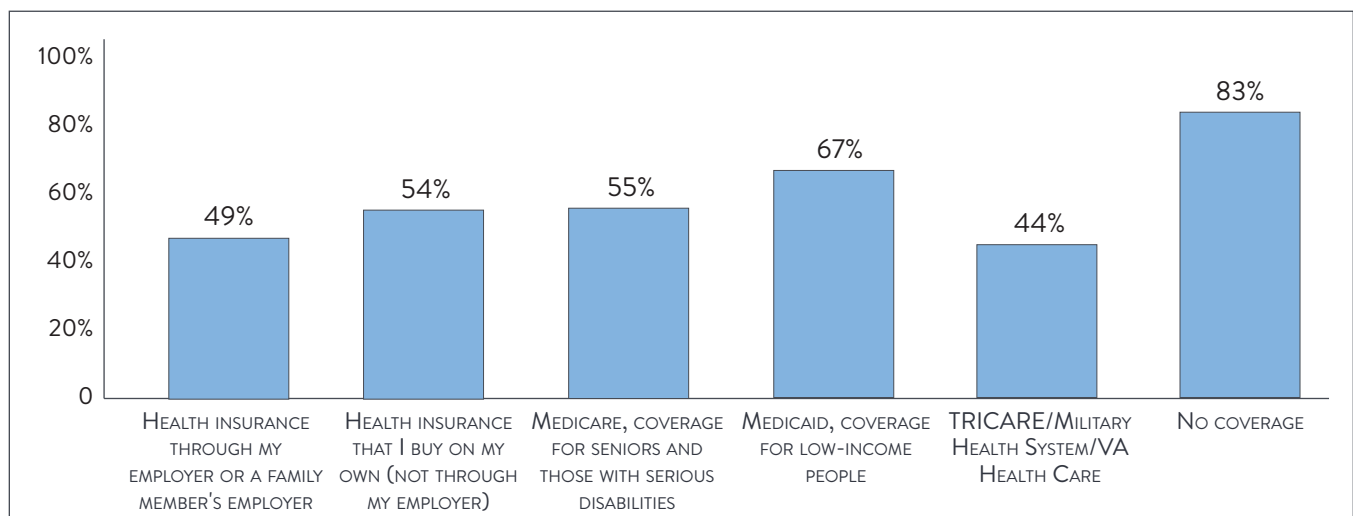
DATA BRIEF NO. 22 | FEBRUARY 2019

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

According to a survey of more than 1,000 Utah adults conducted from August 28 to September 14, 2018, there is great concern about prescription drug costs and a desire to enact solutions.

Fully half (54%) of all survey respondents reported being either “worried” or “very worried” about affording the cost of prescription drugs. These concerns vary by type of insurance coverage, with the uninsured and those on Medicaid being most concerned about affording drugs (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
**Somewhat or Very Worried—Won’t Be Able to Afford the Prescription Drugs You Need**



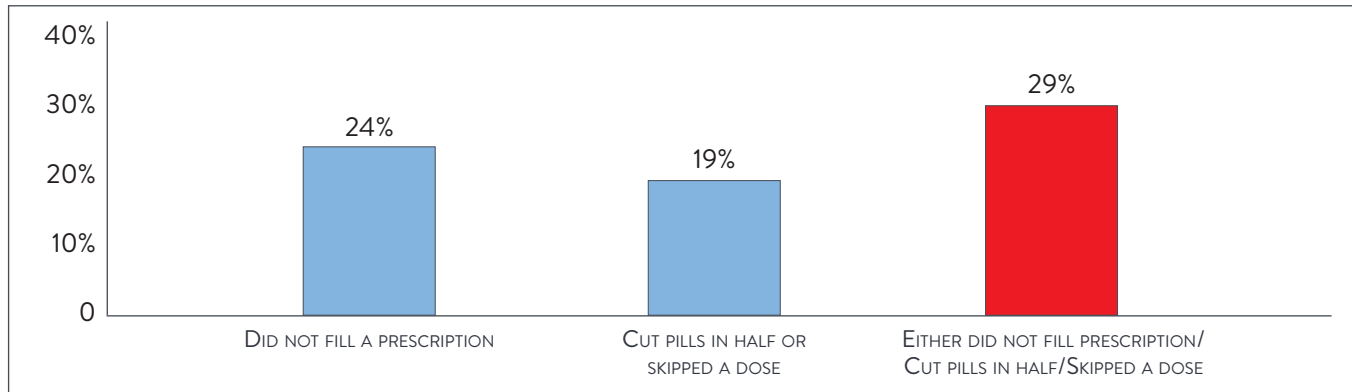
Source: 2018 Poll of Utah Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

Given the higher levels of worry among Medicaid recipients and the fact that Medicaid recipients do not face cost-sharing for prescription drugs—it is instructive to look at worries about health coverage security and affordability. As detailed in a companion data brief, respondents are worried about losing their health coverage or being unable to afford their insurance.<sup>1</sup> Among those with Medicaid, sixty-two percent are worried about losing their coverage and even more worried about affording it (73%). Only those that buy private insurance coverage on their own (not through an employer) had higher rates of worry (77%). For many, including Medicaid recipients, concerns about affording drugs are likely tied to concerns about the security of their health coverage.

In addition to being concerned about drug affordability in the future, many Utah residents are currently experiencing hardship due to drug costs. One-fifth (21%) of respondents report it was “Difficult” or “Extremely Difficult” to afford their prescription drugs.

**Figure 2**

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



Source: 2018 Poll of Utah Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

Indeed, cost concerns lead 29% of respondents (or someone in their household) to not fill a prescription or to cut pills in half (see Figure 2).

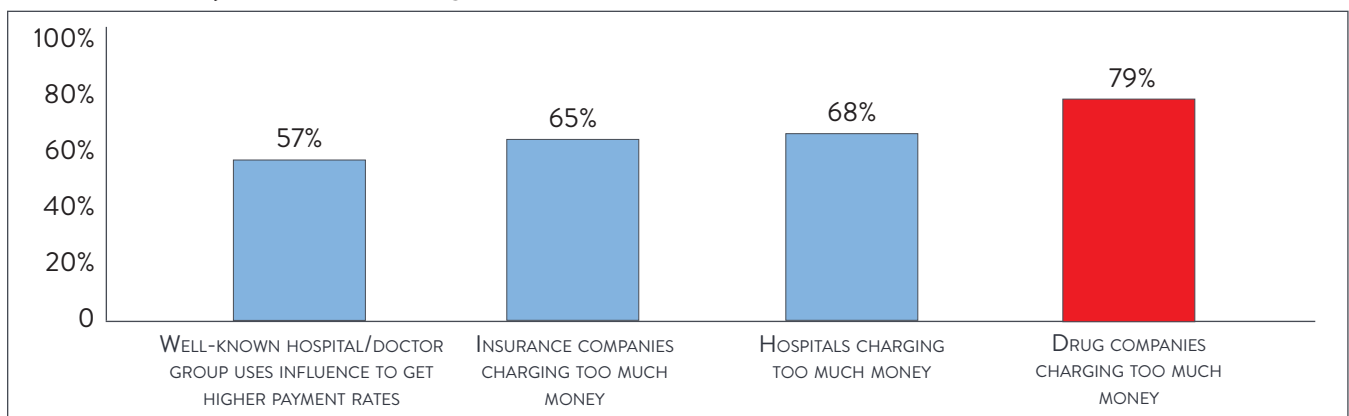
In light of these prescription drug cost concerns—as well as concern about high healthcare costs generally—it is not surprising that Utah residents are extremely dissatisfied with the health system:

- Only 26% agree or strongly agree with the statement “We have a great healthcare system in the U.S.”
- While 77% agree or strongly agree “the system needs to change.”

When given more than 20 options, the option cited most frequently as being a “major reason” for high healthcare costs were drug companies charging too much money (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

**Most Cited “Major Reason” for High Healthcare Costs**



Source: 2018 Poll of Utah Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

When it comes to tackling high drug costs specifically, respondents endorsed a number of strategies:

- **91%**—Authorize the Attorney General to take legal action to prevent price gouging or unfair prescription drug price hikes
- **90%**—Require drug companies to provide advanced notice of price increases and information to justify those increases
- **88%**—Set standard prices for drugs to make them affordable

What is remarkable about the findings is high support for change regardless of the respondent’s political affiliation (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Percent Who Agree/Strongly Agree, by Political Affiliation**

SELECTED SURVEY QUESTIONS	TOTAL	GENERALLY SPEAKING, DO YOU THINK OF YOURSELF AS...		
		REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRAT	NEITHER
MAJOR REASON FOR RISING HEALTHCARE COSTS: DRUG COMPANIES CHARGING TOO MUCH MONEY	79%	78%	86%	77%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD AUTHORIZE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION TO PREVENT PRICE GOUGING OR UNFAIR PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICE HIKES	91%	89%	95%	90%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REQUIRE DRUG COMPANIES TO PROVIDE ADVANCED NOTICE OF PRICE INCREASES AND INFORMATION TO JUSTIFY THOSE INCREASES	90%	89%	93%	91%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SET STANDARD PRICES FOR DRUGS TO MAKE THEM AFFORDABLE	88%	87%	93%	86%

Source: 2018 Poll of Utah Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

While Utah residents are united in calling for a role for government in addressing high drug costs, they also see a role for themselves:

- **90%** would switch from a brand to a generic if given the option
- **57%** have tried to find out the cost of a drug beforehand

**NOTE**

1. See: Healthcare Value Hub, *Utah Residents Struggle to Afford High Healthcare Costs; Express Support for a Range of Government Solutions Across Party Lines*, Data Brief No. 20 (February 2019). <http://www.healthcarevaluehub.org/Utah-2018-state-survey/>

## 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 SSI Research Now containing a demographically balanced sample of approximately 1,000 respondents who live in Utah. The survey was conducted only in English 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 1,080 cases for analysis with weighting occurring in age, gender and income to be demographically representative of Utah. After those exclusions, the demographic composition of respondents is found in the table below.

## Demographic Composition of Survey Respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>			<b>GENDER</b>		
Under \$15K	88	8%	MALE	407	38%
\$15K - \$25K	81	8%	FEMALE	660	62%
\$25K - \$50K	219	21%	<b>INSURANCE STATUS</b>		
\$50K - \$75K	222	21%	HEALTH INSURANCE THROUGH EMPLOYER OR FAMILY MEMBER’S EMPLOYER	601	56%
\$75K - \$100K	147	14%	HEALTH INSURANCE I BUY ON MY OWN	113	10%
\$100K - \$200K	205	19%	MEDICARE	203	19%
\$200K - \$500K	28	3%	MEDICAID	44	4%
\$500K+	2	<1%	TRICARE/MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM	24	2%
<b>PARTY AFFILIATION</b>			DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) HEALTH CARE	12	1%
REPUBLICAN	444	41%	NO COVERAGE OF ANY TYPE	65	6%
DEMOCRAT	244	22%	I DON’T KNOW	18	2%
NEITHER	392	37%	<b>HEALTH STATUS</b>		
<b>AGE</b>			EXCELLENT	140	13%
18-24	80	8%	VERY GOOD	435	42%
25-34	276	26%	GOOD	354	31%
35-44	176	17%	FAIR	125	11%
45-54	118	11%	POOR	26	2%
55-64	196	18%			
65+	220	21%			

Source: 2018 Poll of Utah Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey



### ABOUT ALTARUM’S HEALTHCARE VALUE HUB

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 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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