

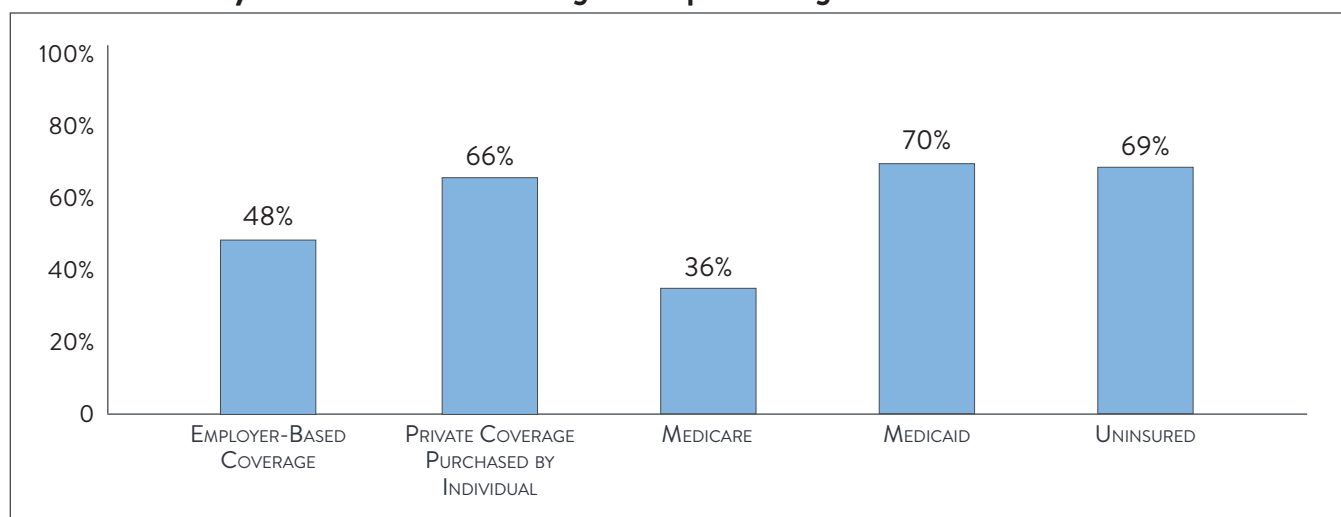


Virginia Residents Worried about High Drug Costs—Support a Range of Government Solutions

According to a survey of 1,172 adults, Virginians are extremely concerned about prescription drug costs and express a strong desire to enact solutions.

Half (50%) of all survey respondents reported being either “worried” or “very worried” about affording the cost of prescription drugs. The uninsured, those that purchase private coverage individually and those on Medicaid were the most concerned about affording drugs (see Figure 1).

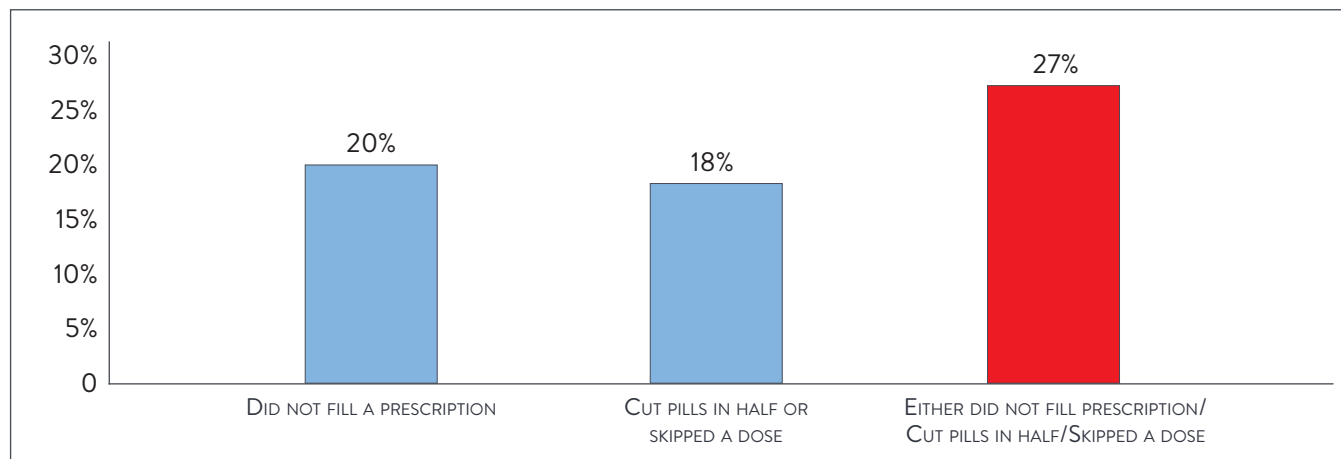
Figure 1
Somewhat or Very Worried About Affording Prescription Drugs



Source: 2019 Poll of Virginia Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

Concerns about affording drugs may be tied to concerns about the security of health coverage. As detailed in a companion data brief,¹ many respondents worried about losing their health coverage or being unable to afford their insurance, with those on Medicaid and those that buy private insurance coverage on their own (not through an employer) having the highest rates of insurance worry.

In addition to high levels of worry, many Virginia residents experienced hardship due to drug costs. One in four (27%) of survey respondents reported not filling a prescription and/or cutting pills in half in the prior 12 months due to concerns about cost (see Figure 2).

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

Source: 2019 Poll of Virginia Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

In light of concerns about high healthcare costs—including prescription drug costs—it is not surprising that Virginia residents were extremely dissatisfied with the health system:

- Only **28%** agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “We have a great health care system in the U.S.”
- While **74%** agreed or strongly agreed “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:

- **73%**—Drug companies charging too much money
- **63%**—Hospitals charging too much money
- **62%**—Insurance companies charging too much money
- **55%**—Some well-known or large hospitals or doctor groups using their influence to get higher payments from insurance companies

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

- **88%**—Authorize the attorney general to take legal action to prevent price gouging or unfair prescription drug price hikes
- **88%**—Require drug companies to provide advanced notice of price increases and information to justify those increases
- **85%**—Set standard prices for drugs to make them affordable
- **85%**—Prohibit drug companies from charging more in the U.S. than abroad

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
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD AUTHORIZE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION TO PREVENT PRICE GOUGING OR UNFAIR PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICE HIKES	88%	85%	91%	88%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REQUIRE DRUG COMPANIES TO PROVIDE ADVANCED NOTICE OF PRICE INCREASES AND INFORMATION TO JUSTIFY THOSE INCREASES	88%	88%	89%	87%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROHIBIT DRUG COMPANIES FROM CHARGING MORE IN THE U.S. THAN ABROAD	85%	84%	87%	83%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SET STANDARD PRICES FOR DRUGS TO MAKE THEM AFFORDABLE	85%	81%	86%	87%

Source: 2019 Poll of Virginia Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

While government action was strongly viewed as more effective to address high drug costs, respondents also saw a role for themselves in solving problems. They reported actions they have already taken, like researching the cost of drug beforehand (61%), as well as future actions—80% believe that switching to a generic if given the option is one of the top things they can do personally to address affordability.

Note

1. See: Healthcare Value Hub, *Virginia Residents Struggle to Afford High Healthcare Costs; Support a Range of Government Solutions Across Party Lines*, Data Brief No. 42 (July 2019). www.healthcarevaluehub.org/Virginia-2019-Healthcare-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 1,200 respondents who live in Virginia. The survey was conducted from March 12 through April 2, 2019 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 1,172 cases for analysis with sample balancing occurring in age, gender and income to be demographically representative of Virginia. After those exclusions, the demographic composition of respondents is as follows.

Demographic Composition of Survey Respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
Under \$30K	175	20%
\$30K - \$40K	78	10%
\$40K - \$50K	76	7%
\$50K - \$60K	122	10%
\$60K - \$75K	103	7%
\$75K - \$100K	178	13%
\$100K - \$150K	235	16%
\$150K+	205	17%
PARTY AFFILIATION		
REPUBLICAN	384	31%
DEMOCRAT	405	35%
NEITHER	383	34%
AGE		
18-24	136	26%
25-34	227	26%
35-44	189	10%
45-54	211	11%
55-64	254	16%
65+	149	12%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
GENDER		
MALE	508	48%
FEMALE	664	52%
INSURANCE STATUS		
HEALTH INSURANCE THROUGH EMPLOYER OR FAMILY MEMBER’S EMPLOYER	582	46%
HEALTH INSURANCE I BUY ON MY OWN	109	10%
MEDICARE	261	22%
MEDICAID (HEALTH FIRST COLORADO)	73	8%
TRICARE/MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM	57	5%
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) HEALTH CARE	15	1%
NO COVERAGE OF ANY TYPE	60	5%
I DON’T KNOW	15	2%
HEALTH STATUS		
EXCELLENT	166	16%
VERY GOOD	428	36%
GOOD	411	35%
FAIR	143	12%
POOR	24	2%

Source: 2019 Poll of Virginia 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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