



High Prices, Broken Promises

Opinion Poll: Iowa Voters Want Action on the High Price
of Prescription Drugs

October 9, 2018



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Executive Summary

While immigration, jobs and the economy garner headlines across the nation, the rising cost of healthcare has claimed the minds of Iowa voters. The cost of healthcare is the single most important issue facing the country, according to 60% of Iowans, edging out jobs and the economy (44%) and immigration (28%), according to a scientific opinion poll of 750 Iowa voters, conducted from Aug. 16-23, 2018. In particular, the high cost of prescription drugs weighs heavily on a stunning 82% of Iowa voters.

The poll's findings, commissioned by the nonprofit, nonpartisan West Health Institute, could have significant repercussions for political candidates. Voters are concerned, and they have said that concern will be reflected at the polls.

More than three-quarters (77%) of Iowa voters consider the price of prescription drugs to be unreasonable, and a majority said lowering the cost of prescription drugs should be a top priority for congressional candidates. These views cut across party lines, with Democrats, Republicans and independent voters alike expressing their displeasure with the way the president and Congress have dealt with high drug costs and stating that it will factor into their voting choices for congressional candidates.

More than half of voters disapprove of the way President Trump and Republicans in Congress are handling the situation, and four in 10 disapprove of the way Democrats are handling it.

Voters also have clear views about potential ways to address the high cost of prescription drugs. According to 84% of all Iowa voters, it's important for congressional candidates to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with prescription drug makers to lower prices. Two-thirds of respondents (66%) said they would be more likely to vote for candidates who have committed to allowing Medicare to do just that.

Currently, the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 prohibits the government from negotiating directly with drug manufacturers for drugs used by Medicare beneficiaries. President Trump proposed changing this policy during his presidential campaign, but his plan for lowering drug prices, released in May 2018, did not include that proposal. The high price of drugs has even led more than a quarter (27%) of individuals to forego filling a prescription or to take less than what their doctor prescribed—actions that undermine the health and well-being of Iowans.

Five Key Stats

- ✓ 82% of Iowa voters are concerned about the cost of prescription drugs.
- ✓ 64% said lowering drug prices should be a top priority for candidates running for Congress.
- ✓ 84% of Iowa voters said it's important for congressional candidates to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prices.
- ✓ 66% of respondents would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies.
- ✓ 27% of respondents have not filled a prescription or have taken less than prescribed because of the cost of drugs.

Main Findings

- **The cost of healthcare is the single most important national issue to Iowa voters:** 60% of respondents said healthcare costs are the most important issue facing the country—even more important than jobs and the economy (44%) and immigration (28%).
- **Eight in 10 Iowa voters are concerned about the cost of prescription drugs:** 82% of respondents said prescription drug costs concern them, with 47% saying they are very concerned.
- **Drug costs strike the average Iowa voter as unreasonable:** Over three-quarters of those polled (77%) feel the cost of prescription drugs is unreasonable, with 50% finding them very unreasonable. This sentiment cuts across party lines, with 70% of Republicans feeling the costs are unreasonable and 83% of Democrats and 77% of independent voters agreeing.
- **A majority believes lowering drug prices should be a top priority for congressional candidates:** 64% of voters believe candidates should prioritize reining in drug prices, a view that cuts across parties. Fifty-six percent of Republicans, 74% of Democrats and 63% of independent voters agreed.
- **Respondents are strongly supportive of allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to reduce the price of prescription drugs:** When asked about possible ways to reduce drug costs, 86% support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies, 86% support requiring drug companies to release information to the public on how they set their prices, and 49% support requiring drug companies to set the price for a drug based on how well it works for patients.
- **A majority of respondents would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to get lower prices on prescription drugs:** 66% of respondents said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies. Respondents feel this way regardless of party: 61% of Republicans, 81% of Democrats and 59% of independents said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly.
- **Respondents disapprove of the way the president and both parties in Congress are handling drug costs:** 52% of respondents disapprove of the way President Trump is handling the cost of prescriptions drugs, 52% disapprove of the way congressional Republicans are handling the issue, and 43% disapprove of the way congressional Democrats are handling it.

Main Findings

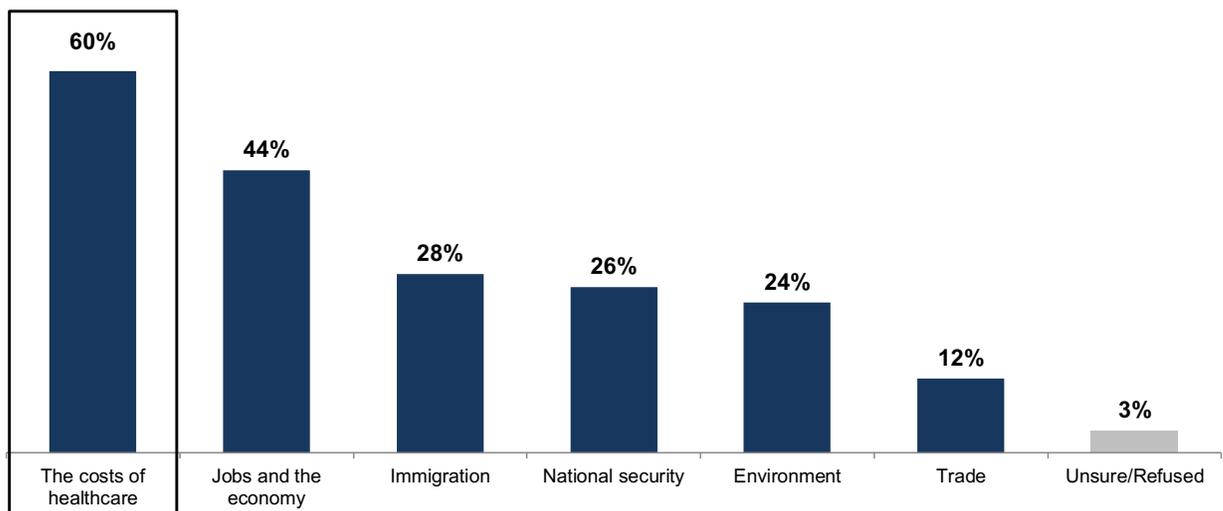
- **More than 80% of respondents say it's important candidates running for Congress support allowing Medicare to negotiate lowering prescription drug prices:** 84% of voters think it's important congressional candidates support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies in an effort to bring down prices. That number includes 80% of Republicans, 91% of Democrats and 84% of independent voters.
- **Eight in 10 respondents say President Trump should work toward allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies:** 83% of respondents said it is important for President Trump to work toward allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prices.
- **More than a quarter of respondents have not taken drugs as prescribed because of cost:** In the last year, more than a third (27%) of respondents have either not filled a prescription or have taken less than the prescribed amount because of the cost. For 19% of those who responded positively, this had occurred more than once.

Healthcare Costs Rank Highest Among National Issues to Iowa Voters

Out of six pressing policy issues, the cost of healthcare ranks highest in importance to Iowa voters. More than half, or 60%, say the cost of healthcare is the most important issue facing the country, ahead of those who say jobs and the economy are the most important (44%), immigration (28%), national security (26%), the environment (24%) and trade (12%).

The cost of healthcare is the single most important national issue to Iowa voters

Question: Now I am going to read a list of issues facing the United States. Please listen and let me know which **two** are most important to you personally?



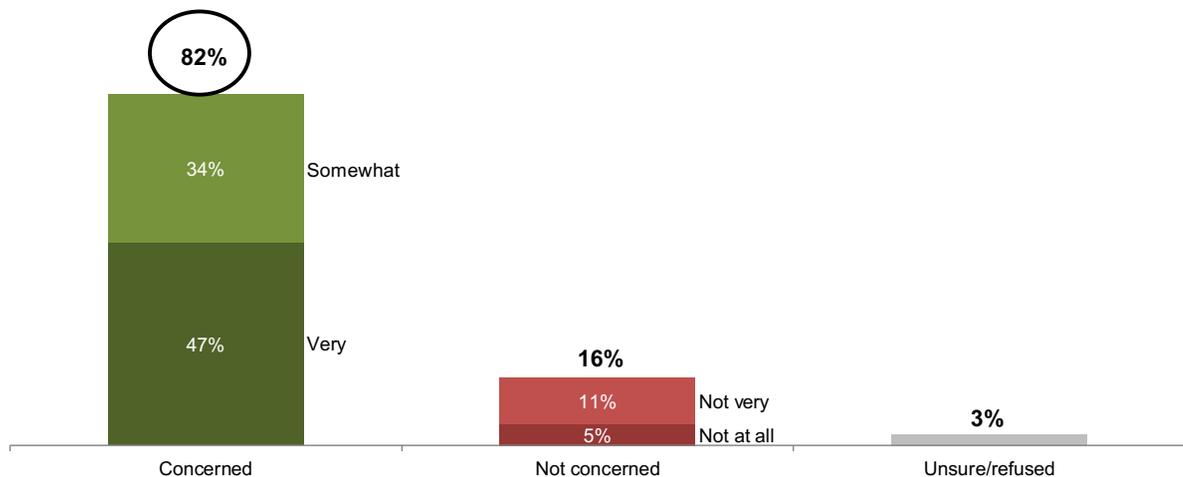
*Numbers in the following charts may add up to less than or more than 100% due to rounding

Vast Majority of Iowa Voters are Concerned About the Cost of Prescription Drugs

Eighty-two percent of respondents are worried about the price of prescription drugs. Nearly half of all respondents said they are very concerned about the cost. One in three (34%) are somewhat concerned. Those who were not very or not at all concerned only accounted for 16% of respondents.

82% are concerned about the cost of prescription drugs; a plurality (47%) is very concerned

Question: How concerned are you about the cost of prescription drugs? Would you say that you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned or not at all concerned?

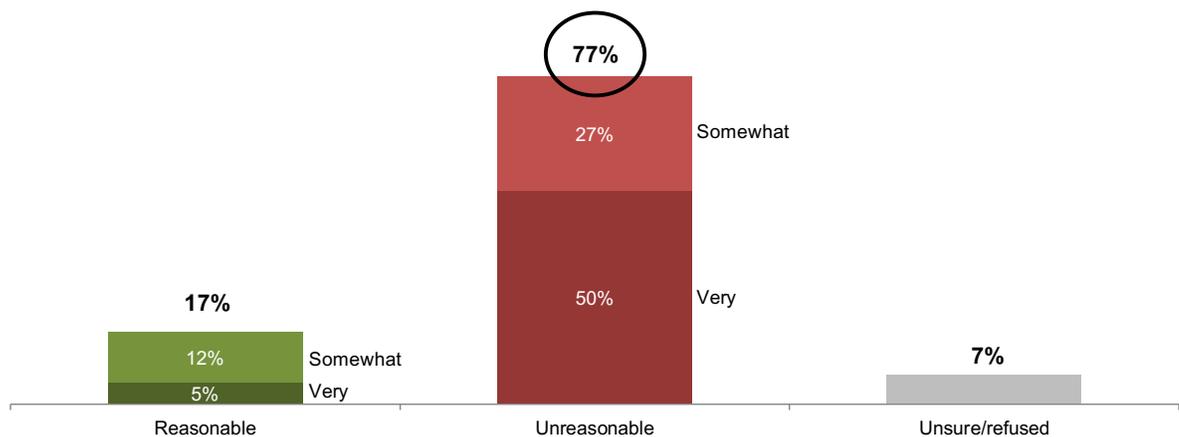


Drug Costs Strike the Average Iowa Voter as Unreasonable

More than three-quarters of those polled (77%) feel the price of prescription drugs is unreasonable, with 50% saying the costs are very unreasonable. These sentiments cut across party lines: 83% of Democrats feel the costs are unreasonable, while 70% of Republicans and 77% of independent voters feel the same.

Over three-quarters (77%) feel the cost of prescription drugs in the U.S. is unreasonable

Question: Do you feel the cost of prescription drugs in the United States is reasonable or unreasonable? And would you say that the costs of prescription drugs in the United States is very (reasonable/unreasonable) or somewhat (reasonable/unreasonable)?

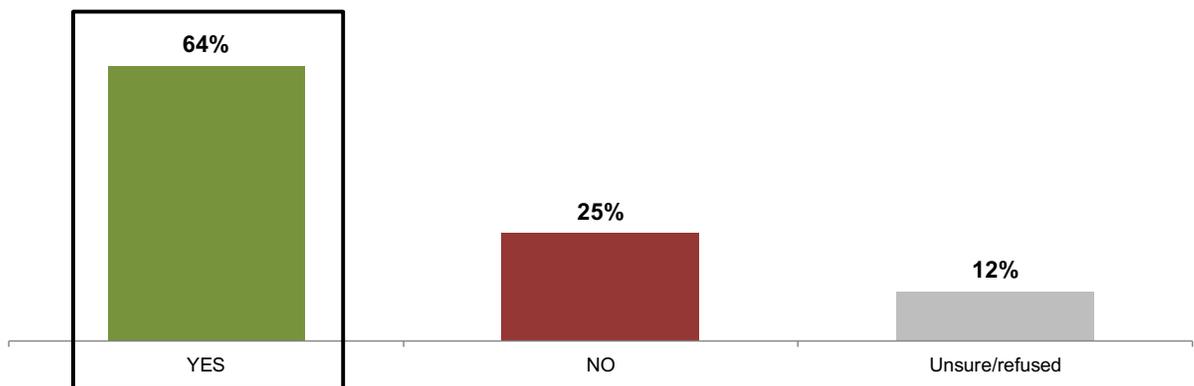


Lowering Drug Prices Should be a Top Priority for Congressional Candidates

A majority (64%) of respondents believe that reining in drug prices should be a top priority for congressional candidates. This sentiment crosses party lines: 56% of Republicans, 74% of Democrats and 63% of independent voters agreed.

A majority (64%) feels that lowering drug prices should be a top priority for candidates running for Congress

Question: Do you feel that lowering drug prices should be a top priority for candidates running for Congress in your state this year?

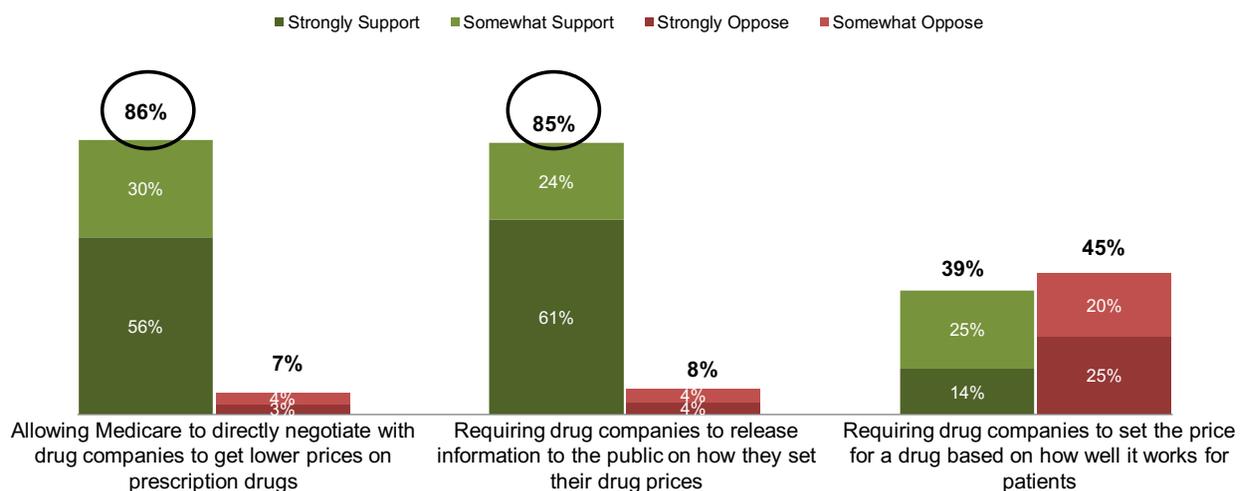


Respondents Are Strongly Supportive of Allowing Medicare to Negotiate for Lower Drug Prices

When asked about possible ways to reduce drug costs, 86% of respondents support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies, 85% support requiring drug companies to release information to the public on how they set their prices, and 39% support requiring drug companies to set the price for a drug based on how well it works for patients.

What are the most popular ways to reduce the cost of prescription drugs?

Question: Now I am going to read you a list of possible ways to reduce the cost of prescription drugs. Please listen to each and let me know if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose each one.

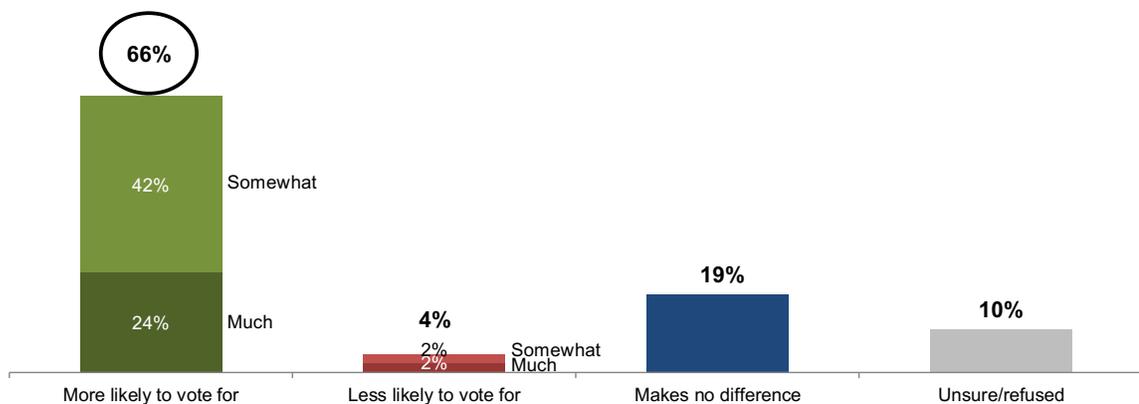


Two-Thirds of Iowa Voters Say They Would Be More Likely to Support a Candidate Who Wants Medicare to Negotiate Lower Prices

A supermajority of respondents—across political parties—said a stance in favor of letting Medicare negotiate directly with drug companies could influence their vote: 66% of respondents said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies. This is a sentiment that pervades all parties, including 61% of Republicans who would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly, with 81% of Democrats and 59% of independents agreeing.

66% would be more likely to vote for a candidate if he/she committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies

Question: Would a Congressional candidate's commitment to allow Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to get lower prices on prescription drugs make you more likely or less likely to vote for that candidate? And would you say that you are much [more likely/less likely] or somewhat [more likely/less likely]?

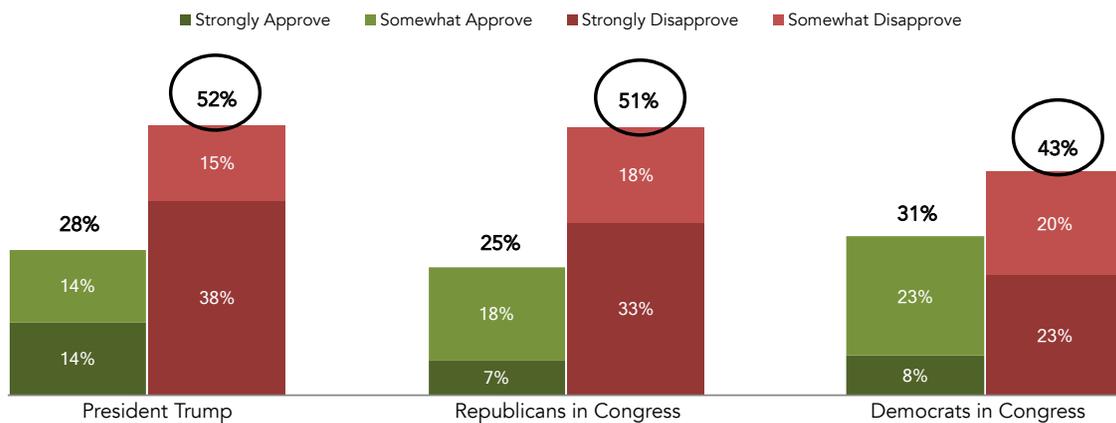


Respondents Disapprove of the Way the President and Both Parties in Congress are Handling Drug Costs

More than half of respondents (52%) disapprove of the way President Trump is handling the cost of prescription drugs; 51% disapprove of the way congressional Republicans are handling the issue, and 43% disapprove of congressional Democrats' handling of high drug costs.

Voters disapprove of the President AND both Democrats and Republicans in Congress for how they are handling drug costs

Question: Would you say that you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove of the way each of the following is handling prescription drug costs?

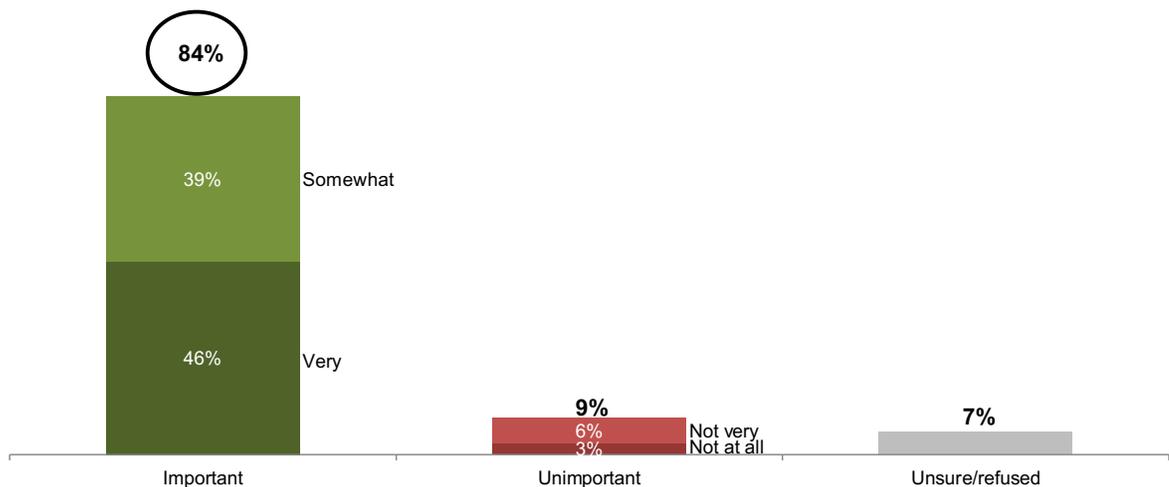


More than 80% of Respondents Say Congressional Candidates Should Support Allowing Medicare to Act to Lower Prescription Drug Prices

It's important for candidates running for Congress to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies in an effort to bring down prices, say 84% of Iowa voters. That includes 80% of Republicans, 91% of Democrats and 84% of independent voters.

84% of voters say that it's important for Congress to allow Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies

Question: How important is it for candidates running for Congress to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prescription drug prices? Would you say that it is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important?

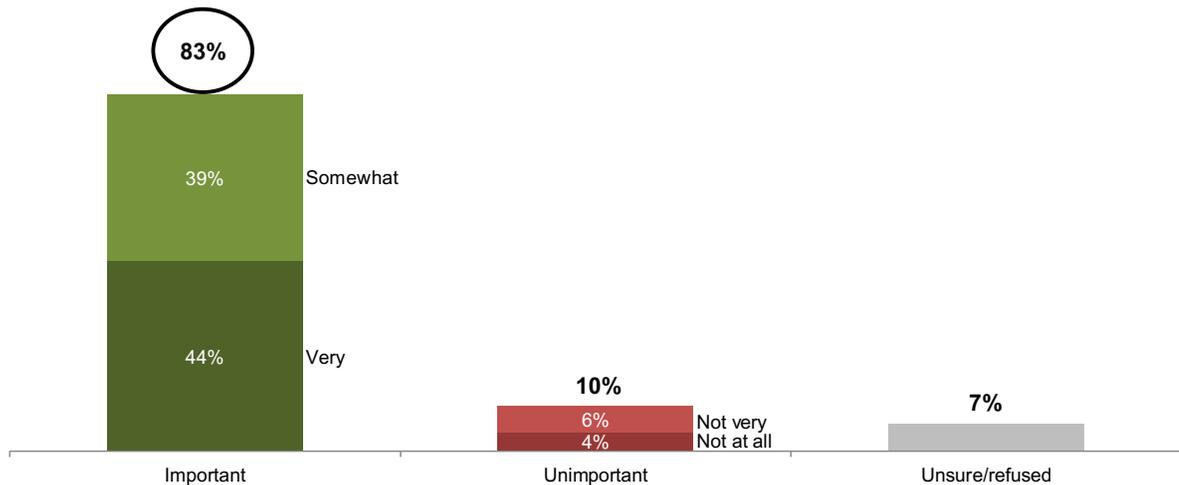


Eight in 10 Respondents Want President Trump to Work Toward Allowing Medicare to Negotiate Directly

Eight in 10 (83%) voters think the president should also work toward allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prescription drug prices.

83% say that it is important for President Trump to work towards allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies

Question: How important is it for President Trump to work towards allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prescription drug prices? Would you say that it is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important?

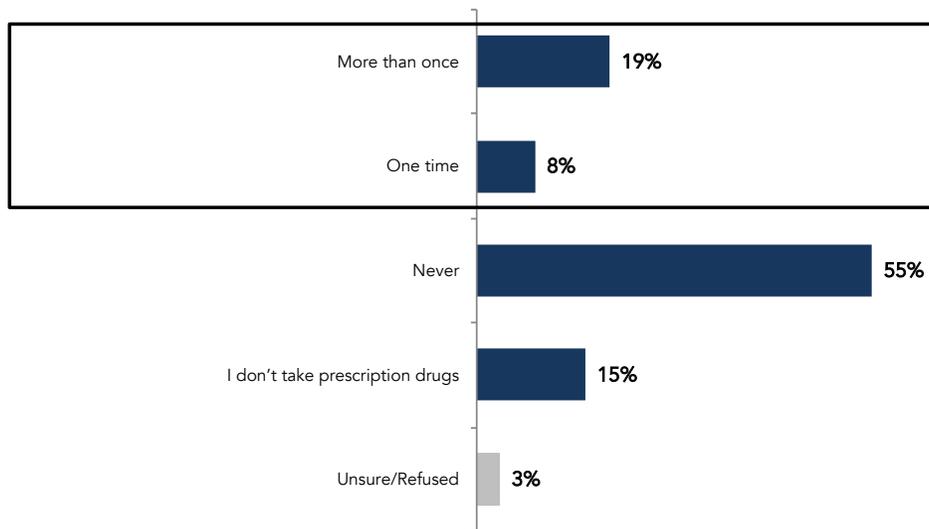


More Than a Quarter of Respondents Have Not Taken Prescribed Drugs Because of Cost

More than a quarter (27%) of respondents said that in the last year, they have either not filled a prescription or have taken less than the prescribed amount because of the cost. Taking these measures is a repeat occurrence for 19% of those who responded positively.

Over one-quarter (27%) have not followed prescription instructions at least once within the past year because of cost

Question: In the past 12 months, how often have you not filled a prescription or taken less than the prescribed dose of medicine because of the cost?



Conclusion

Heading into the midterm elections in November, the high cost of prescription drugs is a top-of-mind issue for Iowa voters. Most voters believe prescription drug prices are unreasonable and think Congress and the president should play a stronger role in lowering them.

As these results show, the cost of prescription drugs will figure significantly in voters' minds as they head to the polls this November. Candidates seeking to gain favor with voters should take the issue of healthcare and prescription drug costs seriously, while laying out a strategy to work to bring them down—specifically, committing to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower the cost of drugs.

Methodology

This poll reflects a telephone survey of 750 voters statewide in Iowa (calls were made on landline and mobile phones in both English and Spanish). The poll was conducted by J Wallin Opinion Research for West Health Institute with a margin of error of +/-3.6%. The survey was conducted from August 16 through August 23, 2018.

Toplines

Field Dates: Friday, August 16 through Sunday, August 26, 2018
 Universe: Among all voters: State of Iowa
 Language: English, Spanish
 N = 750 per survey
 Margin of Error = +/-3.6%

1. In your own words, what do you feel is the most important issue facing your community today?
 [PROBE HEAVILY, CAPTURE AND CODE]: _____

Jobs/Economy	16.7%
Crime/Public Safety	16.3%
Moral Issues	8.5%
Health Care	7.2%
Government	6.1%
Education	5.6%
Traffic/Transportation	3.3%
Immigration	3.2%
Affordable Housing	2.9%
Poverty	2.4%
Environmental	2.1%
Taxes	2.1%
Growth/Population	1.9%
Security	0.9%
Homelessness	0.9%
Other	8.4%
None/Nothing	2.4%
Don't Know	7.9%
Refuse	1.1%

2. Now I am going to read a list of issues facing the United States. Please listen and let me know which two are most important to you personally?
 [ROTATE]

The costs of healthcare	59.9%
Jobs and the economy	44.3%
Immigration	28.0%
National security	26.0%
Environment	23.6%
Trade	11.6%
Unsure [DO NOT READ]	3.1%
Refused [DO NOT READ]	0.3%

Toplines

3. How concerned are you about the cost of prescription drugs? Would you say that you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned or not at all concerned?

Concerned (NET)	81.6%
<i>Very concerned</i>	47.2%
<i>Somewhat concerned</i>	34.4%
Not concerned (NET)	15.9%
<i>Not at all concerned</i>	4.9%
<i>Not very concerned</i>	10.9%
Unsure [DO NOT READ]	2.3%
Refused [DO NOT READ]	0.3%

Would you say that you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove of the way each of the following is handling prescription drug costs?

Approve (NET)		Disapprove (NET)		Unsure/Refused (DO NOT READ)
Strongly approve	Somewhat approve	Strongly disapprove	Somewhat disapprove	

(ROTATE Q4-6)

4.	President Trump	14.1%	<u>28.0%</u>	13.9%	<u>52.0%</u>	14.5%	20.0%
5.	Republicans in Congress	6.8%	<u>24.8%</u>	18.0%	<u>51.7%</u>	18.4%	23.5%
6.	Democrats in Congress	7.5%	<u>30.5%</u>	23.1%	<u>43.1%</u>	19.9%	26.4%

7. Do you feel the cost of prescription drugs in the United States is reasonable or unreasonable? [IF REASONABLE/UNREASONABLE] And would you say that the costs of prescription drugs in the United States is very (reasonable/unreasonable) or somewhat (reasonable/unreasonable)?

Reasonable (NET)	16.8%
<i>Very reasonable</i>	5.1%
<i>Somewhat reasonable</i>	11.7%
Unreasonable (NET)	76.7%
<i>Very unreasonable</i>	49.9%
<i>Somewhat unreasonable</i>	26.8%
Unsure [DO NOT READ]	6.1%
Refused [DO NOT READ]	0.4%

Toplines

Now I am going to read you a list of possible ways to reduce the cost of prescription drugs. Please listen to each and let me know if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose each one.

Support (NET)		Oppose (NET)		Unsure/ Refused (DO NOT READ)
Strongly support	Somewhat support	Strongly oppose	Somewhat oppose	

(ROTATE Q8-10)

8.	Allowing Medicare to directly negotiate with drug companies to get lower prices on prescription drugs	<u>55.5%</u>	<u>85.9%</u>	<u>30.4%</u>	<u>3.3%</u>	<u>6.9%</u>	<u>3.6%</u>	<u>7.2%</u>
9.	Requiring drug companies to release information to the public on how they set their drug prices	<u>61.1%</u>	<u>85.1%</u>	<u>24.0%</u>	<u>3.9%</u>	<u>8.1%</u>	<u>4.3%</u>	<u>6.8%</u>
10.	Requiring drug companies to set the price for a drug based on how well it works for patients	<u>14.4%</u>	<u>38.9%</u>	<u>24.5%</u>	<u>24.5%</u>	<u>44.3%</u>	<u>19.7%</u>	<u>16.8%</u>
11.	Do you feel that lowering drug prices should be a top priority for candidates running for Congress in your state this year?							
	Yes							63.6%
	No							24.9%
	Unsure [DO NOT READ]							11.2%
	Refused [DO NOT READ]							0.3%
12.	How important is it for candidates running for Congress to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prescription drug prices? Would you say that it is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important?							
	Important (NET)							84.4%
	<i>Very important</i>							45.6%
	<i>Somewhat important</i>							38.8%
	Unimportant (NET)							8.7%
	<i>Not at all important</i>							2.8%
	<i>Not very important</i>							5.9%
	Unsure [DO NOT READ]							6.8%
	Refused [DO NOT READ]							0.1%

Toplines

13. Would a Congressional candidate's commitment to allow Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to get lower prices on prescription drugs make you more likely or less likely to vote for that candidate? [RECORD] [IF MORE LIKELY OR LESS LIKELY>>>] And would you say that you are much [more likely/less likely] or somewhat [more likely/less likely]?

More likely to vote for [NET]	66.4%
<i>Much more likely</i>	24.1%
<i>Somewhat more likely</i>	42.3%
Makes no difference [DO NOT READ]	18.8%
Less likely to vote for [NET]	4.4%
<i>Much less likely</i>	2.3%
<i>Somewhat less likely</i>	2.1%
Unsure [DO NOT READ]	9.9%
Refused [DO NOT READ]	0.5%

14. How important is it for President Trump to work towards allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prescription drug prices? Would you say that it is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important?

Important (NET)	82.9%
<i>Very important</i>	44.3%
<i>Somewhat important</i>	38.7%
Unimportant (NET)	10.5%
<i>Not at all important</i>	4.4%
<i>Not very important</i>	6.1%
Unsure [DO NOT READ]	6.1%
Refused [DO NOT READ]	0.4%

15. In the past 12 months, how often have you not filled a prescription or taken less than the prescribed dose of medicine because of the cost?

More than once	18.5%
One time	8.1%
Never	55.1%
I don't take prescription drugs	15.1%
Unsure [DO NOT READ]	3.2%
Refused [DO NOT READ]	0.0%

Toplines

16. And finally, for demographic purposes only, which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

Latino/Hispanic	2.9%
White/Caucasian	89.7%
Black/African American	2.1%
Mixed race	1.6%
Something else	2.0%
Refused [DO NOT READ]	1.6%

ABOUT THE WEST HEALTH INSTITUTE

Solely funded by philanthropists Gary and Mary West, West Health includes the nonprofit and nonpartisan Gary and Mary West Health Institute and Gary and Mary West Foundation in San Diego and the Gary and Mary West Health Policy Center in Washington, DC. These organizations are working together toward a shared mission dedicated to lowering healthcare costs and enabling seniors to successfully age in place with access to high-quality, affordable health and support services that preserve and protect their dignity, quality of life, and independence. For more information, visit westhealth.org and follow [@westhealth](https://twitter.com/westhealth).

For more information about the poll, contact hccosts@westhealth.org.