

Nine in ten Americans concerned pharma will use COVID-19 pandemic to raise drug prices

June 18 2020, by Dan Witters

Percentage of U.S. Adults "Very Concerned" Over Rising Costs of Prescription Drugs, Insurance, and Healthcare Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

% Very concerned

	Rising drug prices %	Rising insurance premiums %	Rising healthcare costs %
U.S. TOTAL	55	41	41
Gender			
Women	57	46	48
Men	52	37	33
Race			
Nonwhite	59	47	50
White	52	38	36
Annual household income			
Less than \$40,000	57	49	46
\$40,000-<\$100,000	51	37	40
\$100,000+	56	41	38
Party ID			
Democrats	66	49	47
Independents	52	39	43
Republicans	49	37	32

GALLUP-WEST HEALTH COST OF HEALTHCARE STUDY, MAY 2020

Percentage of US Adults "Very Concerned" Over Rising Costs of Prescription Drugs, Insurance, and Healthcare Due to COVID-19 Pandemic. Credit: Gallup-West Health Cost of Healthcare Study, May 2020

Nearly 9 in 10 U.S. adults are "very" (55%) or "somewhat" (33%) concerned that the pharmaceutical industry will leverage the COVID-19

pandemic to raise drug prices. Similarly, 84% are very or somewhat concerned that the general cost of care will rise, and 79% are very or somewhat concerned their health insurance premiums will go up in response to the pandemic. In each of the latter two scenarios, 41% of Americans are very concerned.

The [new findings](#), released today by the nonprofit West Health and Gallup as part of ongoing research on the rising cost of healthcare in the U.S., come from a nationally representative survey of 1,016 U.S. adults. Amid a mounting death toll, the results underline the knife-edge fears associated with paying for care in the U.S.

Fears related to the cost impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic vary by demographic subgroup. Most Americans, regardless of gender, race, income or [political identity](#), believe [drug prices](#) will rise. However, there is less consensus regarding rising insurance premiums and [healthcare costs](#).

Among key demographic differences:

- Fifty-seven percent of women are very concerned about rising drug prices, compared with 52% of men.
- Nearly half of women (48%) are very concerned about the general cost of care rising, compared with 33% of men.
- Fifty percent of nonwhites are very concerned about the general cost of care rising, compared with 36% of whites.
- Forty-six percent of women are very concerned about rising insurance premiums, compared with 37% of men.
- Forty-seven percent of nonwhites are very concerned about rising insurance premiums, compared with 38% of whites.
- Forty-nine percent of households making less than \$40,000 a year are very concerned about rising [insurance](#) premiums, compared with 37% of those making between \$40,000 and

\$100,000. However, those making more than \$100,000 a year express greater concern (41%).

- Democrats (66%) are more likely to say they are very concerned about rising drug prices than are independents (52%) or Republicans (49%).

"Concerns loom large that when the pandemic is all over, Big Pharma and [insurance companies](#) will revert to old patterns and behaviors and continue to squeeze Americans with ever-higher drug prices and [insurance premiums](#)," said Tim Lash, chief strategy officer for West Health. "If history is any guide, these concerns are well-founded, which is why promises to rein in prices are not enough. We need to retool our healthcare system and enact smart legislation now."

Amid concerns about how the COVID-19 pandemic could raise healthcare costs, a large majority of Americans support the federal government directly negotiating the price of a treatment for the disease with the drug manufacturer. Eighty-eight percent of U.S. adults support this intervention, with very little daylight between Democrats (91%), independents (87%) and Republicans (89%).

Perceptions of the U.S. Response to COVID-19

As countries, including the U.S., continue to grapple with the effects of the pandemic and look ahead to a potential second wave of infections, Americans hold dim views of how their country has responded so far. Relative to how much the U.S. spends on healthcare, 9% of respondents rate the U.S. response as "excellent" and another 14% as "very good." In contrast, 34% rate the response as "poor" and 23% as "fair."

These perceptions are inversely related to both education and income. For example, among those with postgraduate degrees, 72% evaluate the response as fair or poor, compared with 49% of those whose education

was high school or less. Political identity also greatly informs perspectives, with 84% of Democrats evaluating the [response](#) as fair or poor, compared to 28% of Republicans.

"Americans are clearly worried about the impact of the coronavirus [pandemic](#) well beyond being exposed to or spreading the disease," said Dan Witters, Gallup senior researcher. "Still, their misgivings regarding pharmaceutical companies and general anxieties regarding the cost of care are tempered by a clear, bipartisan call to policymakers to get involved to ensure that the public will be able to afford a treatment for COVID-19."

The new findings come from a nationally representative survey of 1,016 U.S. adults conducted between May 11 and May 22, 2020. Respondents represent all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

Provided by West Health Institute

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