



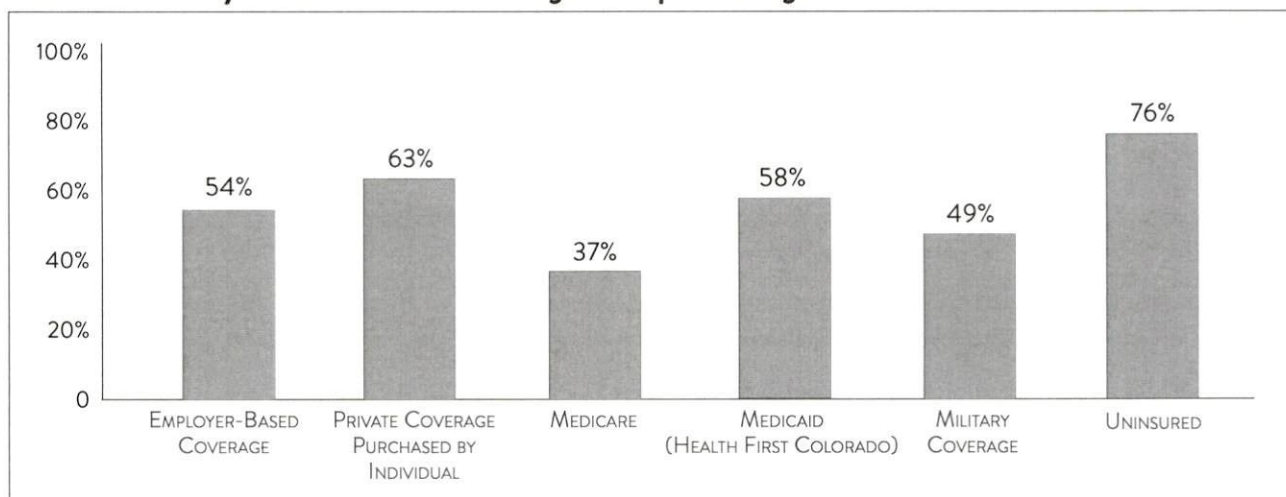
DATA BRIEF NO. 34 | FEBRUARY 2019

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

According to a survey of more than 970 Colorado adults conducted from Dec. 20, 2018 to Jan. 2, 2019, Coloradans are extremely concerned about prescription drug costs and express a strong desire to enact solutions.

More than half (53%) 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 are the most concerned about affording drugs (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
**Somewhat or Very Worried About Affording Prescription Drugs**

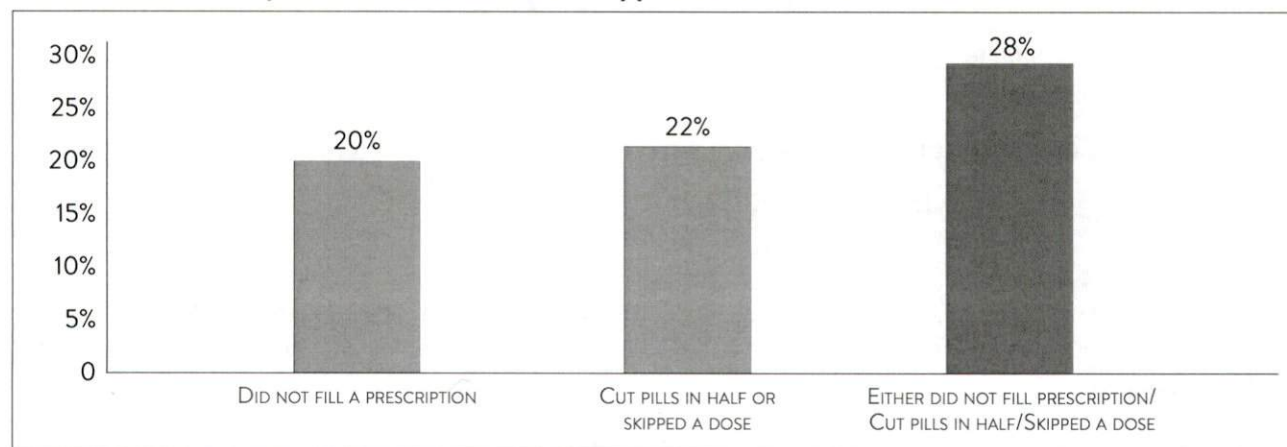


Source: 2018-2019 Poll of Colorado Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

Concerns about affording drugs may be tied to concerns about the security of health coverage. As detailed in a companion data brief,<sup>1</sup> many respondents are 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 Colorado residents are currently experiencing hardship due to drug costs. One-fifth (20%) of respondents report it was “Difficult” or “Extremely Difficult” to afford their prescription drugs. In addition, 28% of survey respondents report not filling a

Figure 2

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

Source: 2018-2019 Poll of Colorado Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

prescription and/or cutting pills in half in the prior 12 months due to concerns about cost (see Figure 2).

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

- Only 27% agree or strongly agree with the statement “We have a great health care system in the U.S.”
- While 79% 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:

- 74%—Drug companies charging too much money
- 71%—Hospitals charging too much money
- 70%—Insurance companies charging too much money
- 56%—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:

- 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
- 89%—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	74%	70%	74%	78%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD AUTHORIZE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION TO PREVENT PRICE GOUGING OR UNFAIR PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICE HIKES	91%	89%	94%	90%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REQUIRE DRUG COMPANIES TO PROVIDE ADVANCED NOTICE OF PRICE INCREASES AND INFORMATION TO JUSTIFY THOSE INCREASES	90%	88%	92%	89%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SET STANDARD PRICES FOR DRUGS TO MAKE THEM AFFORDABLE	89%	83%	94%	89%

Source: 2018-2019 Poll of Colorado 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 (46%), as well as future actions—82% 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, *Colorado Residents Struggle to Afford High Healthcare Costs; Support a Range of Government Solutions Across Party Lines*, Data Brief No. 30 (February 2019). [www.healthcarevaluehub.org/Colorado-2019-Healthcare-Survey/](http://www.healthcarevaluehub.org/Colorado-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 1,000 respondents who live in Colorado. 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 971 cases for analysis with sample balancing occurring in age, gender and income to be demographically representative of Colorado. After those exclusions, the demographic composition of respondents is as follows.

## Demographic Composition of Survey Respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>			<b>GENDER</b>		
Under \$30K	116	12%	MALE	464	48%
\$30K - \$40K	95	10%	FEMALE	507	52%
\$40K - \$50K	92	9%	<b>INSURANCE STATUS</b>		
\$50K - \$60K	94	10%	HEALTH INSURANCE THROUGH EMPLOYER OR FAMILY MEMBER'S EMPLOYER	425	44%
\$60K - \$75K	116	12%	HEALTH INSURANCE I BUY ON MY OWN	88	9%
\$75K - \$100K	154	16%	MEDICARE	312	32%
\$100K - \$150K	170	18%	MEDICAID (HEALTH FIRST COLORADO)	81	8%
\$150K+	134	14%	TRICARE/MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM	28	3%
<b>PARTY AFFILIATION</b>			DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) HEALTH CARE	8	1%
REPUBLICAN	299	31%	NO COVERAGE OF ANY TYPE	21	2%
DEMOCRAT	323	33%	I DON'T KNOW	8	1%
NEITHER	349	36%	<b>HEALTH STATUS</b>		
<b>AGE</b>			EXCELLENT	174	18%
18-24	15	<1%	VERY GOOD	402	41%
25-34	135	14%	GOOD	276	28%
35-44	140	15%	FAIRL	104	11%
45-54	101	10%	POOR	15	2%
55-64	245	25%			
65+	329	34%			

Source: 2018-2019 Poll of Colorado 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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