

Public Opinion Regarding Prescription Drug Costs

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Abstract

Many people struggle to afford the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs. The costs need to be reduced as several people depend on prescription drug costs to maintain their health. This memo presents public opinion data about prescription drug costs that Public Citizen can utilise when advocating for the reduction in prescription drug prices. The data has been compiled from American National Election Studies, Kaiser Family Foundation, Pew Research Center, Associated Press/ The SCAN Foundation and PhRMA. The findings indicate that among the many political issues, one of the issues that people prefer for the government to focus on is reducing healthcare costs. They are also generally of the opinion that the government should increase its expenditure on services such as healthcare and education. Additionally, most of the people strongly or somewhat favour the allowing the government and private insurance companies to negotiate for reduced prescription drug prices. Finally, people's perceptions about the government negotiating for lower costs may vary depending on what they are told the outcome of the negotiation will be. Overall, the findings reveal that the masses demand for affordable medicine prices.

Keywords: Prescription drug costs, healthcare, government, public opinion.

Introduction

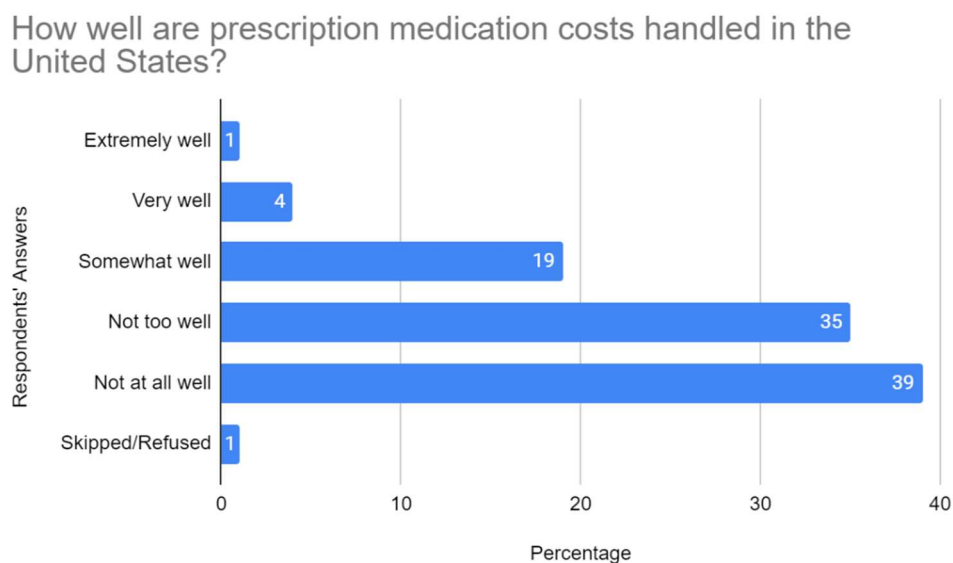
Many people in America are reliant on the use of prescription drugs; there are about 62% of Americans who take a minimum of four prescription drugs (Hamel et al., 2022). These medicines are essential as they contribute to one's physical wellbeing. However, the prices of prescription drugs are often unreasonable, making it unaffordable for many Americans. 83% of the Americans find that the prices are unreasonable and 29% of the U.S. adults have reported that they are unable to take prescription drugs due to their costs (Hamel et al, 2022). Moreover, three in ten Americans resort to rationing their medicines by taking measures such as skipping doses (Public Citizen, 2021). It is crucial for organisations and the masses to press for accessibility and affordability of prescription drugs. Public Citizen has already been at the forefront of this issue as it aims to reduce the costs of prescription drugs and demands for the ability that everyone can access medical devices (Public Citizen, 2021).

In order for Public Citizen to continue its advocacy for lowering prescription drug costs, it is necessary for the organisation to be aware about the how the masses perceive healthcare-related matters and their viewpoints on the same. This memo aims to provide the public opinion regarding prescription drug costs in America so that Public Citizen can successfully sanction for the reduction of prescription drug costs. The data presented in the memo covers information of public opinion regarding healthcare costs, government expenditure and the government's priorities for the same. This data has been gathered from various sources, including the American National Election Studies, Kaiser Family Foundation, Pew Research Center, Associated Press/The SCAN Foundation and PhRMA.

General opinion on how the United States manages Prescription Medication Costs

Figure 1

Public opinion regarding handling of prescription medication costs



(Associated Press/The SCAN Foundation, 2022)

The data above clearly depicts that most of the people are not confident about the way that prescription drug costs are being handled in America. 35% of the respondents believed that the government was not handling the costs too well and an additional 39% believed that the government was not at all handling the costs well. Overall, 74% of the people had a negative perception regarding the issue. This demonstrates that Public Citizen will have to push for the government as well as private health companies of the United States to take up accountability in managing prescription drug costs.

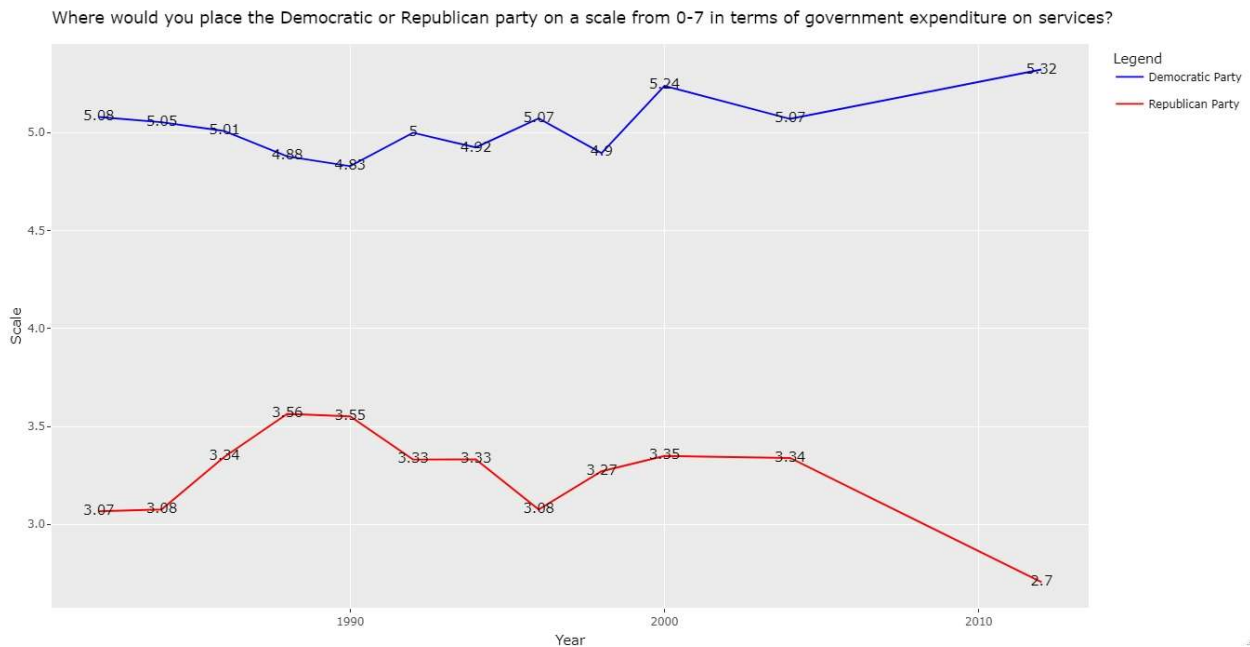
Perceptions of Government Spending on Services such as Healthcare and Education

Before delving further into public opinion data specifically about prescription drug costs, this section provides information regarding people's opinions of how the government should handle services, such as healthcare and education, in general.

The American National Election Studies are a series of surveys; one of the survey sections asks people their views regarding government expenditure on services. In this section, participants were asked where they would place the Democratic Party, Republican Party and themselves on a scale of 1 to 7; where 1 denoted that the government should reduce expenditure on services and 7 denoted that the government should increase expenditure on services. These questions were asked every 2 years between 1982 to 2000 and additionally in the years 2004, 2008 and 2012, however the data for 2008 is not present. The graphs below present the average scale values of the responses for each year.

Figure 2

People's perception of political parties' willingness to increase govt. expenditure on services

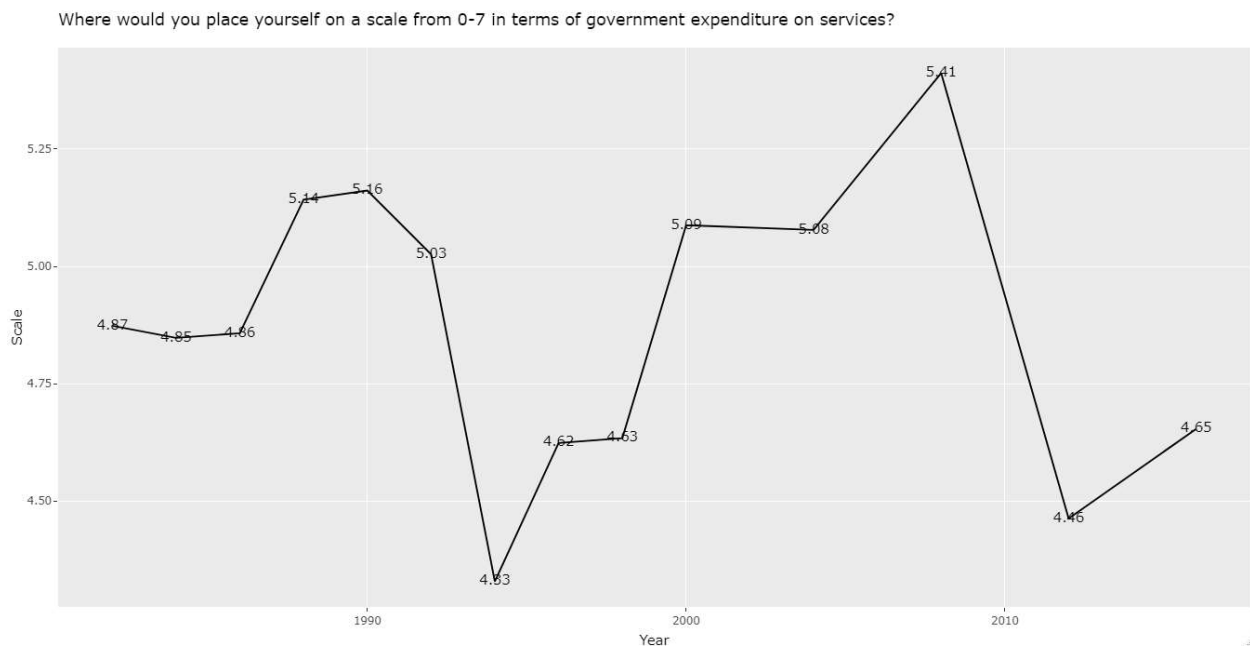


(American National Election Studies, 2022)

Across the years, the results of where the people placed the Democratic and Republican Party remained constant. The average scale value for where people believed the Democratic party stood was on the higher end, lying between 4.83 to 5.32. Contrarily, the average value for where people believed the Republican party stood was on the lower end, between 2.07 to 3.56. From this, we can infer that people are more likely to rely on the Democratic Party to be responsible for increasing government expenditure on services such as healthcare and the Republican Party to be responsible to reduce government expenditure on services.

Figure 3

People's perception regarding increasing govt. expenditure on services



(American National Election Studies, 2022)

When the same question was asked but individuals had to state where they stood on the scale of 1 to 7, the average scale value of the responses lied between 4.33 to 5.41. This denotes that more than half of the people are of the opinion that the government should increase their expenditure on services such as healthcare and education. This may extend to people thinking that the government should increase its expenditure on prescription drug costs.

Public Opinion of the Current Government's Role in Reducing the Cost of Healthcare

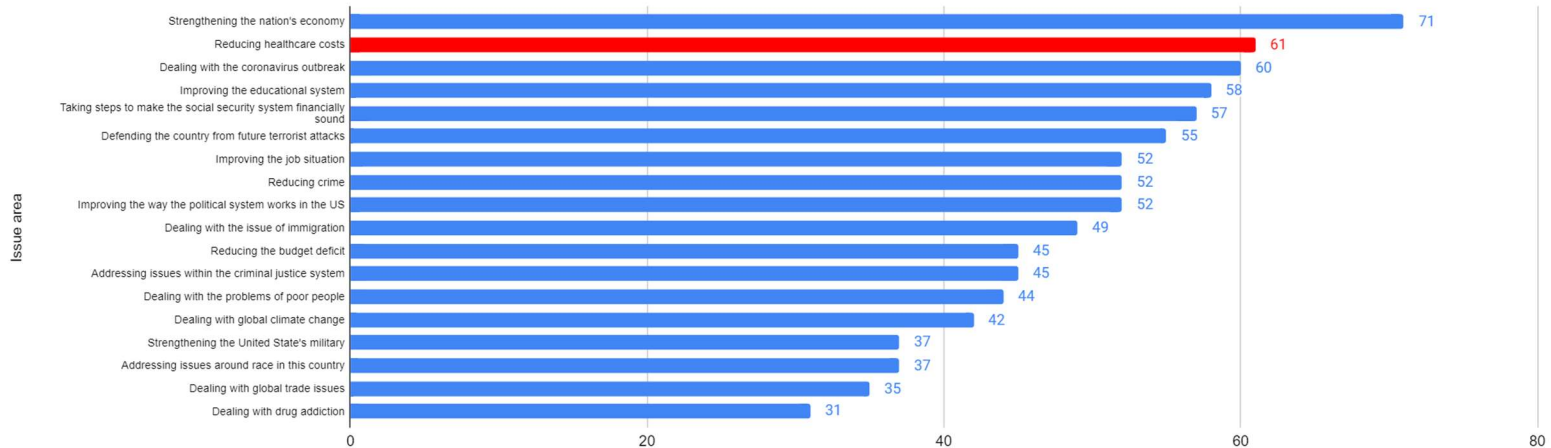
Reducing Healthcare Costs

The Pew Research Center conducts surveys in which it asks people to rank how much consideration the government should take for different political matters. These surveys included a question about reducing healthcare costs. Information regarding the responses about the matters in comparison to reducing healthcare costs in 2022 and the opinion on healthcare costs over the years is provided in this section.

Figure 4

Public opinion regarding the Government's top priorities

What should be a top priority for Joe Biden & Congress in 2022?



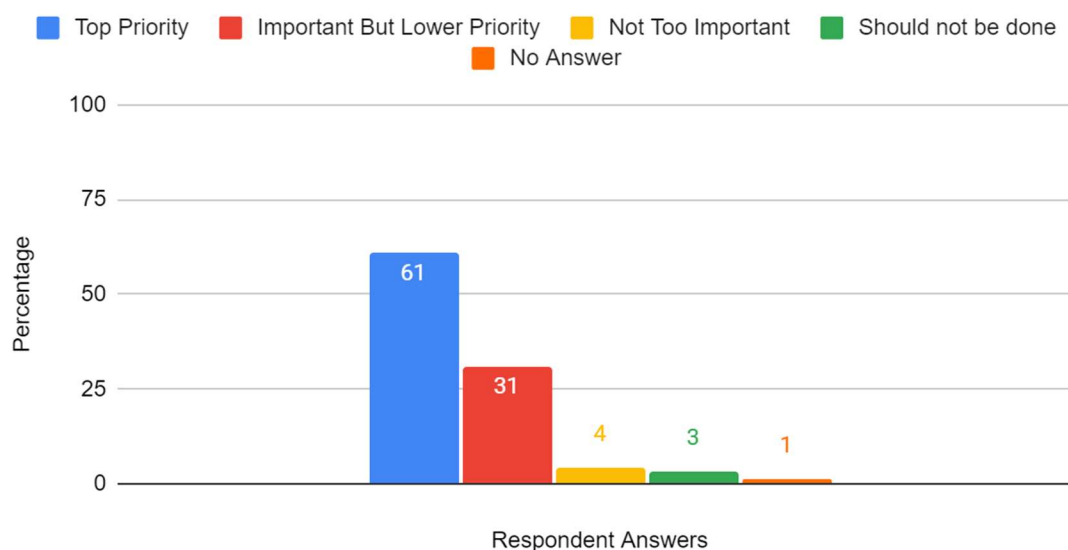
(Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2022)

The values provided for each issue in the graph indicate the percentage of people who believed that the particular issue should be a top priority for Joe Biden and the Congress in 2022. Among these values, the second highest percentage belonged to people who believed reducing healthcare costs should be a top priority. This reveals that when compared to the other political matters, the public has a stronger preference to healthcare cost reduction.

Figure 5

Public opinion regarding the Government's priority to reduce healthcare costs

How much of a priority should reducing healthcare costs be for the president (Joe Biden) and Congress to address in 2022?

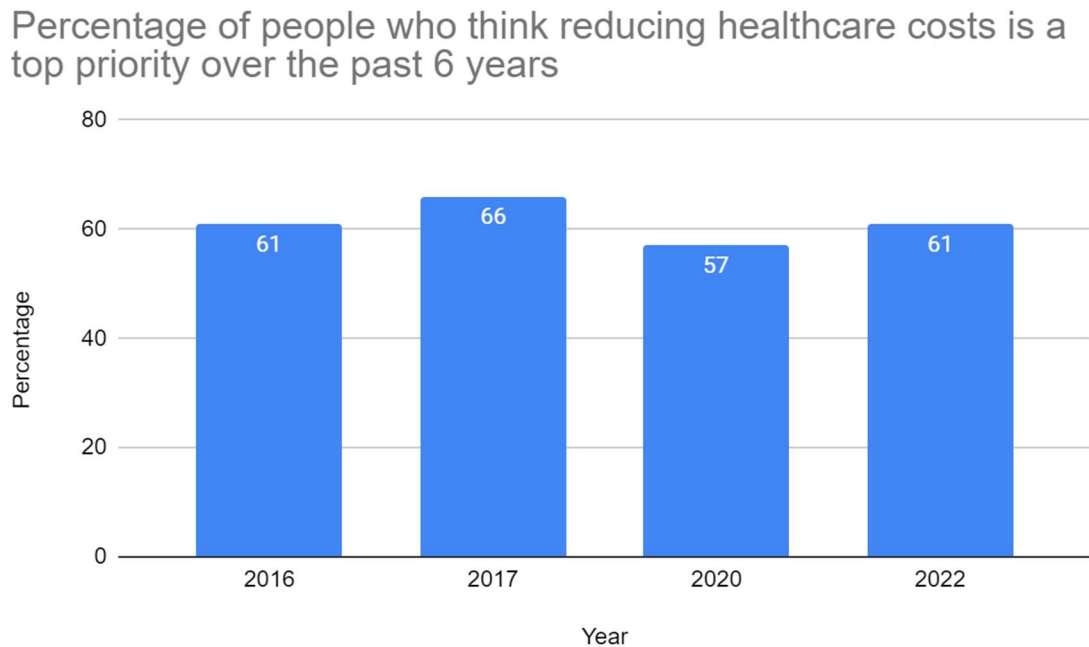


(Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2022)

92% of the people believe that reducing healthcare costs is either a top or important priority for 2022. This large majority clearly indicates that this is an issue that the public deeply cares about and also strengthens Public Citizen's motivation to advocate for accessibility and affordability of prescription drugs.

Figure 6

People's Perception regarding the Issue of Healthcare Costs over Six years



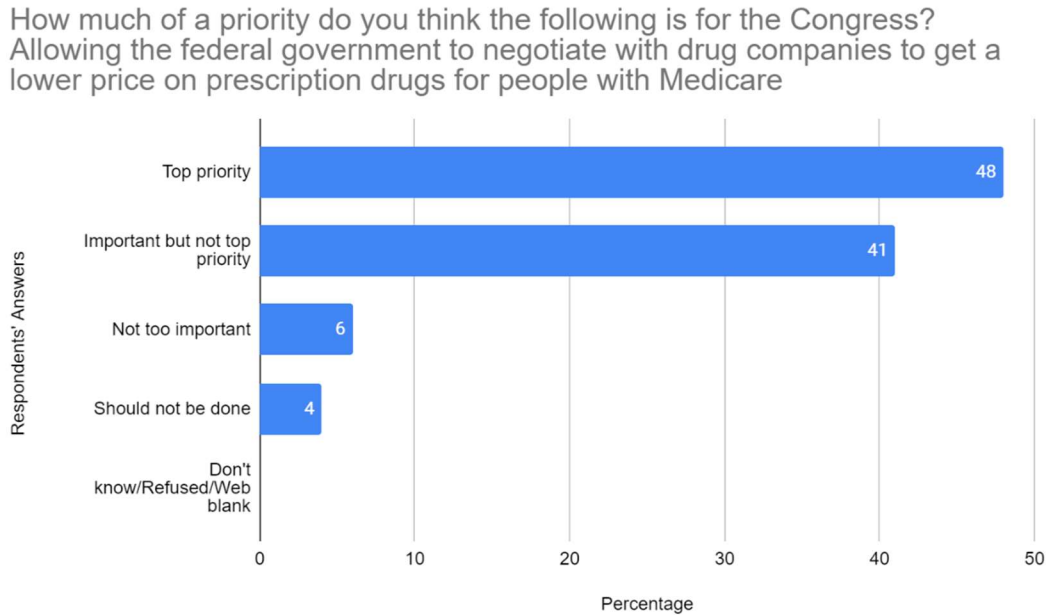
(Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2022; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2017; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2016)

This chart illustrates that across six years, a majority of the people have consistently argued that healthcare cost reduction is a top priority. For every year displayed, around 60% of the people believed the same to be a top priority. Hence, while campaigning for the issue, the Public Citizen should focus on the urgency of working towards reducing healthcare costs since people have been waiting for several years for the matter to be resolved.

Reducing Prescription Drug Costs

Figure 7

Public opinion regarding the Government's priority to reduce prescription drug costs



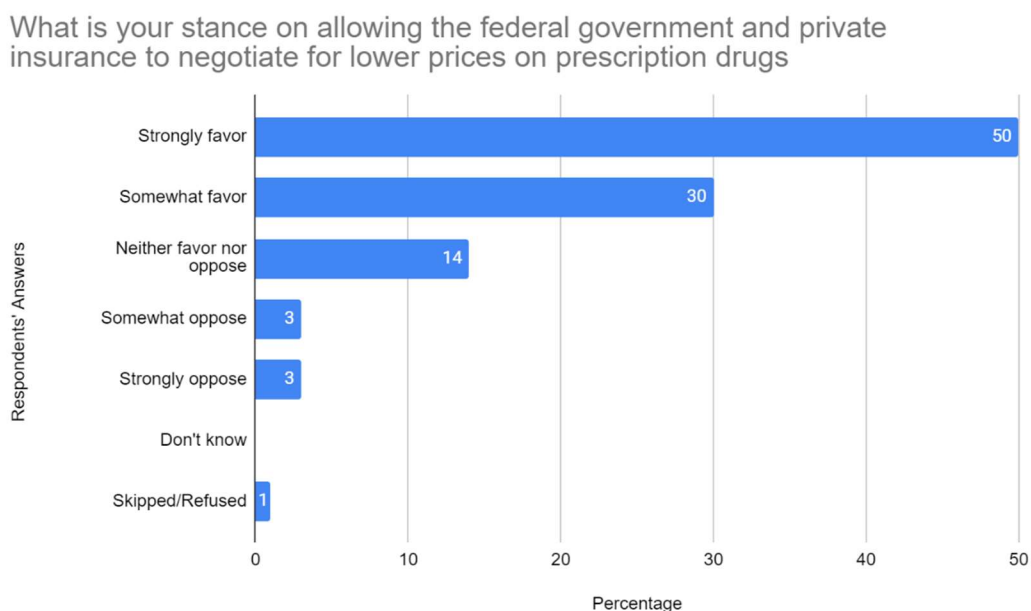
(Kaiser Family Foundation, 2022)

The Kaiser Family Foundation found that 48% of the people believe that Congress' top priority should be to allow the federal government to negotiate with drug companies to reduce the prescription drug prices for those individuals who have Medicare. An additional 41% believe this to be an important issue that the Congress should look into. Therefore, while approaching the federal regulators, Public Citizen can state that it is imperative to negotiate for lower prices as an overwhelming majority of 89% want the same.

Perceptions regarding Negotiation of Prescription Drug Costs

Figure 8

People's stance on the government and private insurance to reduce prescription drug prices



(Associated Press/The SCAN Foundation,2022)

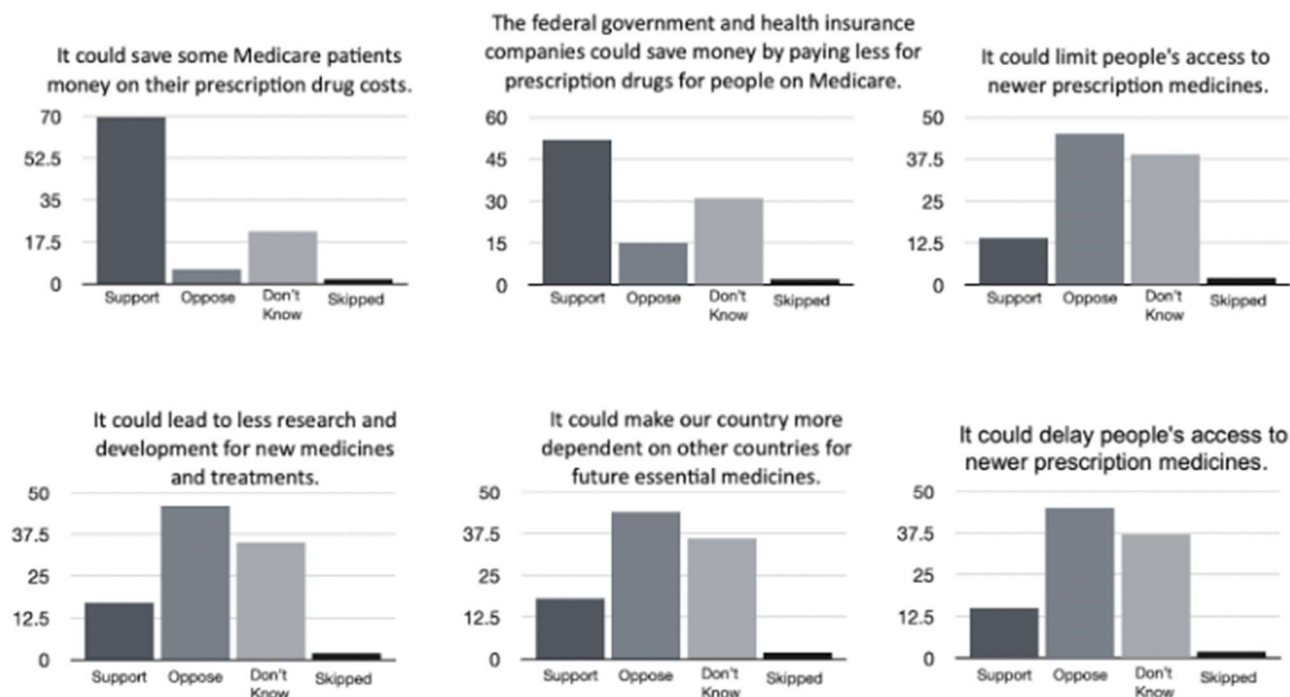
The chart depicts that 80% of the people either strongly or somewhat favour the action that the federal government and private insurance should negotiate for lower prices on prescription drugs. In contrast, only 6% of the people strongly or somewhat oppose the same. This data is crucial for Public Citizen to present as it shows how the masses want lower prescription drug prices.

Impact of Various Outcomes of a Single Issue on Public Opinion

It is important for Public Citizen to take note that the public opinion regarding a specific issue can change depending on the information that is provided to them. This is demonstrated by the research done by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America where they asked the same question to people, that is, if they would support or oppose the government negotiating prices of prescription drugs but then mentioned the possible outcomes of the same. The percentage of people who supported or opposed the action varied depending on the outcome mentioned, as can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 9

Change in people's opinion depending on the outcome mentioned



(PhRMA, 2022)

When people were told that by the government negotiating prices, Medicare patients as well the federal government and health insurance could save money, the majority of the people supported the action. However, when they were told that the action could limit or delay their access to newer prescriptions, reduce the research conducted to develop new treatments, and make the country dependent on other countries for essential medicines in the future, the majority of the people opposed the action and the percentage of people who didn't know what their stance would be also increased. This data highlights that when Public Citizen discusses with the government and private health companies regarding prescription drug costs, it should push for the government and companies to be transparent about the various effects that can occur if they implement the reduction of costs.

Conclusion

To summarise, the majority of the public favours the reduction in prescription drug costs. Currently, they are not satisfied with the way the matter has been handled by the government. Moreover, the demand for lower drug prices has been a consistent issue across many years. Without lowering the prices of prescription drugs, many people will be forced to reduce or stop their intake of medicines leading to a lower quality of life. Therefore, it is crucial for Public Citizen to state the demands and perceptions of the public in order to signify the weight and urgency in making prescription drugs accessible and affordable for all when advocating for equitable healthcare.

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