

Prescription Drug Access and Affordability
A Survey of Canadians' Experiences, Perceptions and Attitudes

Angus Reid Institute and the Mindset Foundation

-- Final Questionnaire --
(June 30)

We are asking people today about some different topics related to health care here in Canada.

1. Approximately how many times in the last 12 months have you or anyone in your household:

[Randomize Rows:]

Visited a family doctor or walk-in clinic

Been admitted to a hospital

Received a diagnostic test (such as an x-ray or CT scan etc)

Received a prescription for medicine

[Columns:]

Zero, no one in household in past year

Once

Two times

Three to five times

Six to ten times

Ten or more times

2. Thinking about prescription medicines that you or others in your household may need over the course of the year, about how much of the total cost of those prescriptions would you have to pay yourselves, and how much would be paid for by a government program or a private insurance plan?

(Please take into account any re-imbursements you might get and indicate how much of the total cost you/your household would end up paying.)

[Display for those who indicated they received no prescriptions this past year at Q1 above:]
(Even if you don't use prescription medicines or do so only rarely, please answer the question to the best of your knowledge supposing you did need one or more prescriptions this year.)

Are prescription drugs in your household:

[Single Choice:]

Always paid by you/yourselves with no insurance/ government coverage

Mostly paid by you/yourselves with some insurance/ government coverage

About 50:50 (you pay roughly half)

Mostly paid by insurance/ government with some paid by your household

Always paid by insurance/ government with nothing paid by your household in the end

(Cannot say/Do not know)

[Ask those who have received at least 1 prescription at Q1 above:]

3. Thinking of prescriptions filled over the past year, approximately what was the total dollar amount your household has had to pay yourselves? (This would be after any re-imbursement you might get – the total amount you end up paying.)

\$0

Some but less than \$100

Between \$100 and \$500

Between \$500 and \$1,000

Between \$1,000 and \$3,000

Over \$3,000

4. In the past 12 months, did you/someone in your household do any of the following?

[List items in this order:]

Decide **to NOT fill** a prescription for medicine because of the cost

Decide to **NOT renew** a prescription due to cost

Do anything to make a prescription **last longer** (such as skip doses/split pills/etc) due to cost

Experience **financial difficulty** due to the cost of prescription medicine (such as needing to borrow the money, or cut back on something else)

Worry about how you, or members of your family, might be able to afford the prescription drugs you need

[Columns:]

Yes, have done that

No, have not

Not applicable

[For all respondents:]

5. Thinking specifically of the issue of the cost of prescription drugs,

a) Do you have any friends or family members who **cannot afford** their prescription medications and have had to skip or delay renewing prescriptions as a result?

Yes

No

b) Do you have any friends or family members who **have financial difficulty** paying for their prescription medicines (i.e. have to borrow money or go without other things)?

Yes

No

6. Thinking of your future, what are your own overall expectations about your ability to afford prescription drugs when you are 10 years older than you are now? Would you say you are:

Very worried about being able to afford drugs down the road

Somewhat worried

Fairly confident

Very confident you will always be able to pay for your prescription drugs (either yourself or your insurance)

7. Suppose you and your family were **NOT** part of any insurance plan and had to pay for 100% of your prescription medicine costs. Please use the sliding scale below to indicate **at what total dollar amount:**

[Present in this order:]

Your own household would have financial difficulty paying for prescription medicines?

Your own household would simply not be able to afford prescription medicines?

[Slider scale]

\$25 per month

\$50 per month

\$100 per month

\$200 per month

\$500 per month

\$1000 per month

\$2000 per month

\$5000 per month or more

The Plan and the Policy Angles

Currently in Canada there is no national universal coverage program for prescription medicine. Drug coverage in Canada varies by province, and is a blend of public and private insurance plans. Many Canadians have little or no drug insurance and therefore pay for their own prescriptions. We wanted to ask people their views on this set-up, and on possible new policies that could be put in place.

8. First, how much of a priority do you think this issue is for Canada -- improving prescription drug access and affordability? Would you say this is a:

Very high priority

High priority

Lower priority

Very low priority

[Display for all:]

One suggestion is for a universal “pharmacare” program where medically necessary prescription drugs would basically be treated like other health care services provided under medicare.

Here’s a bit of background:

Royal Commissions and other studies into this issue have made the case that a universal prescription drug program would save money and lives since Canada would be able to negotiate better drug prices and ensure that everyone can afford to take the medicines they need.

This would be organized by government and become part of our publically funded health care system. The latest research indicates that such a universal drug program would cost government an additional \$1 billion per year but would mean Canadians would spend \$7 billion less on medicines annually.

9. Overall, do you personally support or oppose the *concept* of having “pharmacare” in Canada, providing universal access to prescription drugs?

Strongly Support

Moderately Support

Moderately Oppose

Strongly Oppose

10. What do you think would be the **main advantages** and the **main disadvantages** of Canada moving to a universal “pharmacare” system?

[Open-ended]

Main advantages:

Main disadvantages:

11. Here are some statements that might be made about this issue of prescription drugs and how they are or should be paid for. For each statement, please indicate whether you personally agree or disagree.

[Randomize Rows:]

Overall the current system is working well enough and doesn't need to be changed

We simply can't afford universal drug coverage

It would be more efficient if there is one single system for drug coverage

Having free prescription drugs will lead to abuse

It only makes sense that medicine should be part of medicare

Every Canadian – regardless of income – should have access to necessary prescription medicine

There are lots of other higher priority issues facing the health care system right now

[Columns:]

Strongly Agree

Moderately Agree

Moderately Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Suppose this idea did move forward and we were going to have a new universal drug plan in Canada. Let's consider how such a plan might be set up.

12. Would you prefer to see this area left up to the individual provinces or should the federal government be involved?

Entirely left up to the provinces

Mostly the provinces

Both the provinces and the federal government

Mostly the federal government
Entirely the federal government

13. One suggestion is to have a pharmacare plan that would only cover the full cost of the most common and essential drugs, and leave it for private insurance to cover other medicines. What is your overall reaction to this idea? Compared to the way things are done now, would you say this approach would be:

Better
Worse
Neither

14. Another suggestion is for the program to cover virtually all drugs but to have people pay a standard, fairly modest user-charge of, say, \$15 per prescription, no matter how cheap or expensive the drug actually is -- and the rest is covered by a "pharmacare" type public insurance program. What is your overall reaction to this idea? Compared to the way things are done now, would you say this approach would be:

Better
Worse
Neither

15. A new public pharmacare program like this would need to be funded (even though studies show it would save Canada money overall due to lower drug costs, the program itself would have to be paid for). Would you yourself support or oppose a pharmacare system being brought in if it were to be funded in each of the following possible ways?

[Randomize Rows:]

Increase the GST from 5% to 6%

Restore the federal corporate income tax rate to its 2010 level of 18%, since companies will save money from getting out of drug insurance plans

Increase the basic income tax rate on incomes over \$40,000 from 22% to 23%

Have a pharmacare premium of \$180 per year for all Canadians over age 18 (which would be added to current healthcare premiums or income taxes)

Strongly support
 Moderately Support
 Moderately Oppose
 Strongly Oppose

16. Thinking about this whole idea of moving to a new universal “pharmacare” program versus keeping things as they are, which of the following two broad options best reflects your own view of this?

[Rotate statements:]

Canada should move to a national pharmacare program. Other Medicare countries have it. Royal commissions have recommended it, and studies have shown it would save us billions of dollars through bulk buying our drugs. And this way, everyone can afford the drugs they need.

Canada should keep things as they are, with individuals and companies buying their own drug insurance, and some programs to help the very poor and elderly. There is no need to make a big change like this. And reducing the amount Canadians spend on medicine will reduce the amount that the pharmaceutical companies spend on research to find new cures.

[Ask those choosing “keep things as they are” above:]

17. And, do you favour keeping things as they are now, or would you perhaps support some changes to cover more people -- but not a full pharmacare program?

Keep things as they are
 Support some changes

Awareness/Knowledge

18. How do you think Canada’s prescription drug costs (regardless of who is paying) compare to other countries like Canada? Do you think Canada pays:

Way less for prescription drugs than other countries
 Less
 About the same
 More
 Way more than other countries

19. What would be your estimate of how many Canadians, if any:

[Keep rows in this order:]

Are not covered by a drug insurance plan

Have financial difficulty paying for their prescriptions

Don't take their medical prescriptions properly (or at all) because they can't afford to

Almost none – say, less than 1%

Very few – say, less than 3%

Less than 5%

5-10%

10-20%

20-30%

30-40%

40-50%

Over 50%

Attitudes

20. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

[Randomize Rows:]

No matter what the research shows, a national pharmacare plan will end up costing taxpayers lots of money

Most people who can't pay for medicine probably waste their money on other things instead

It's simply not right that some Canadians have to struggle to pay for medicine they need

Canada needs a more national approach to issues like this, rather than leaving the provinces on their own

High drug prices are needed to ensure the pharmaceutical companies can keep researching and inventing new life-saving drugs

Strongly Agree

Moderately Agree

Moderately Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Concept Re-visit

21. We've been discussing issues concerning access and affordability of prescription drugs. In closing, all things considered, do you yourself support or oppose adding prescription drugs to the universal health coverage of "medicare" so all Canadians have access to prescribed medicines without having to pay out of their own pocket?

Strongly support

Moderately Support

Moderately Oppose

Strongly Oppose

Socio-demographic Info

Region/sub-region

Gender

Age

Education

HH income

HH composition/family status

Federal Party Support 2011