

THE PERFECT PRICING STORM:

Hospital Consolidation, High Health Care Costs Burdening People and a Driving Desire for Congress to Act

As Congress puts health care affordability into sharper focus, one resounding truth is clear: people are struggling to pay for the care they need. Year after year, people are straining to access care as costs and prices continue to skyrocket. Hospital spending continues to make up the largest share of total health care expenditures – outpacing spending on retail prescription drugs and physician services combined. Decades-long hospital consolidation has resulted in large hospital systems amassing substantial market power, crowding out competition, and hiking prices and fees for patients who are ultimately left making an impossible decision to assume financial hardship to afford care, or forego care altogether.

Since its founding in 2018, United States of Care (USofCare) has conducted listening research with people across the country to learn about their interactions with the health care system. In that time, our years-long research shows cost as the top concern for people, sowing further mistrust of the health care industry.

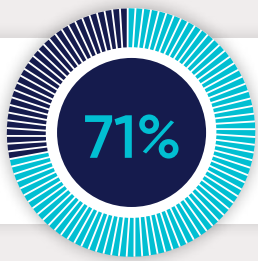
In the context of Congressional focus on health care affordability, United States of Care Action commissioned Morning Consult to conduct a poll between April 6-April 7, 2026 among a sample of 2,001 adults (margin of error +/- 2%) to understand the perspectives of individuals encountering a health care system that's increasingly become financially out of reach.



HEALTH CARE COSTS ARE UNAFFORDABLE & AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGES ARE WIDESPREAD

People perceive a health care system that is unaffordable and those perceptions are rooted in the realities of their experiences with high health care costs at nearly every interaction they have with the health care system.

There is a widely held view that health care is unaffordable

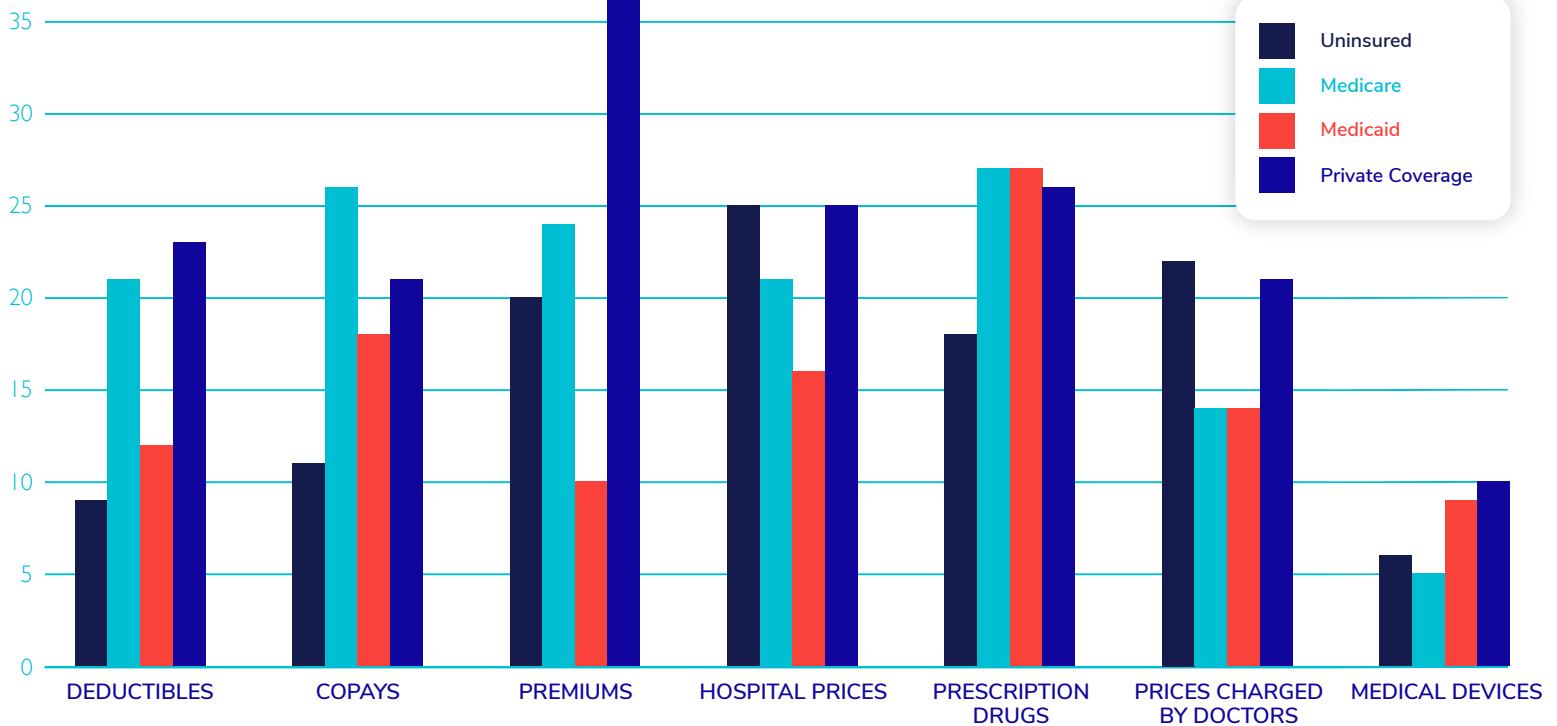


71% of respondents agree that health care costs are **unaffordable for people and families**



The high cost burden is felt at every turn, regardless of coverage type

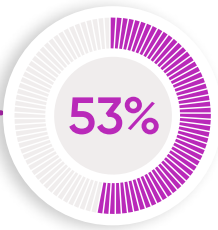
Top Health Care Costs with the Biggest Financial Impact on People



Percentages do not add to 100% due to the survey question, which asked respondents to select the top two costs they experience as most difficult.

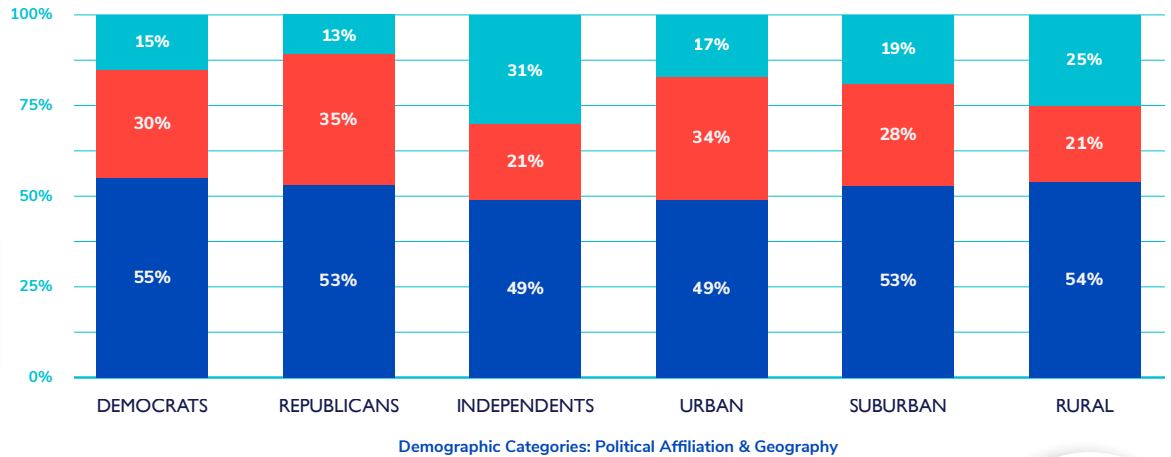
PEOPLE BELIEVE HOSPITALS OVERCHARGE PATIENTS; Seeking solutions, people do not trust industry stakeholders to lower costs on their own

People want Congress to take action, and do not trust that costs will get better by allowing private health care companies to address high costs on their own.



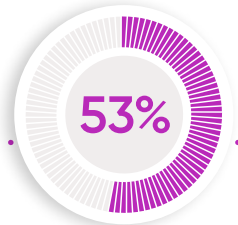
Across political affiliation and geography, a majority of people believe hospitals charge above what is needed

A majority of people (53%) believe hospitals charge more than they need to, a view that holds true across all political affiliations and geography. Conversely, only 29% believe hospital prices reflect their costs, and 20% don't know or have no opinion.



Over half of people distrust private health care companies to lower costs on their own

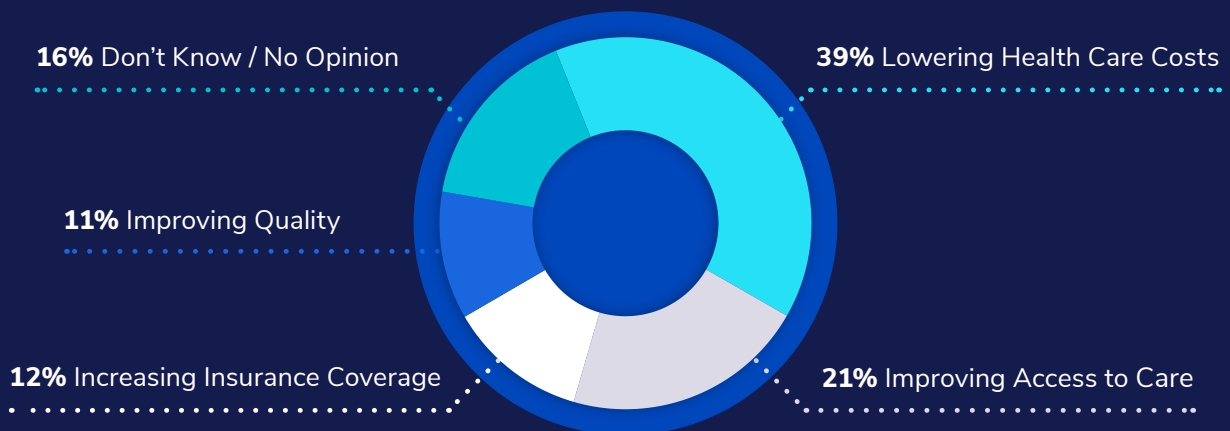
53% of people don't trust private health care companies to regulate health care costs on their own



PEOPLE WANT CONGRESSIONAL ACTION TO DRIVE DOWN THE COST OF HEALTH CARE

When considering actions that Congress and policymakers can take, people expressed widespread, bipartisan support for a number of specific policies to lower the cost of health care for people.

Top Health Care Issue People Want Congress to Prioritize: Lowering Costs is #1



Across political affiliations, a majority of people will prioritize candidates' views on health care costs in the midterm election



76% of people believe a candidate's position on health care costs is important in deciding who they vote for in the midterm elections.

By party, that translates into:



85% Democrats



79% Republicans



64% Independents



84% of people with employer-sponsored insurance believe a candidate's position on addressing health care costs is important (48% agree it's "very important").

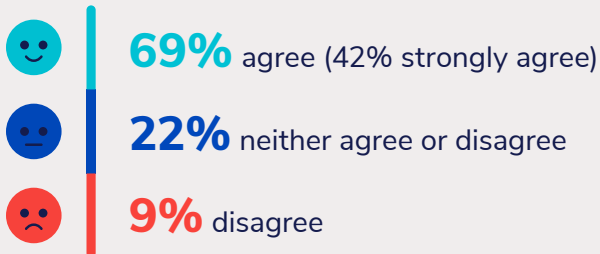


57% of people who are uninsured believe a candidate's position on health costs is important when voting in the midterms.



A majority of people want congressional action to regulate health care companies

People agree that Congress should act to ensure affordable health care, even if that means regulating health care companies.



Across party affiliations, people agree Congress should act.



81% Democrats

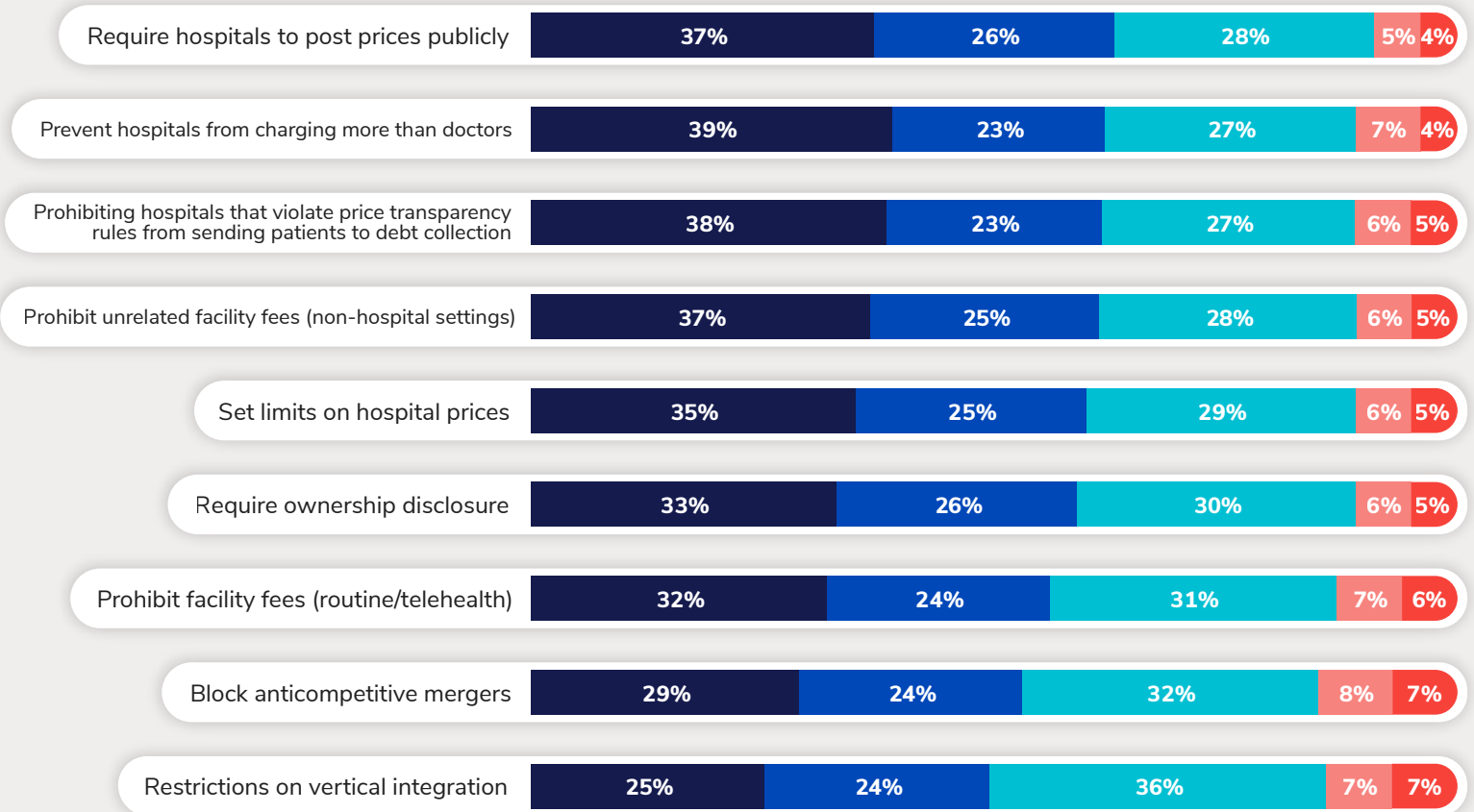


66% Republicans



59% Independents

Across policy solutions, people indicate consistent support for policies to lower the health care costs



How much do you support or oppose Congress doing the following?

Strongly support
 Somewhat support
 Neither support nor oppose
 Somewhat oppose
 Strongly oppose

POLL RESULTS ARE CLEAR: Policymakers must act to lower health care costs

The cost of health care is untenable and people overwhelmingly want policymakers to take action. While this poll surveys a national sample, these sentiments are echoed at the state level as seen in recent polling we conducted in [Maine](#), [Minnesota](#), and [North Carolina](#).



ABOUT UNITED STATES OF CARE ACTION

United States of Care Action is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing health care reforms at the state and federal levels for everyday people. Our policy solutions are based on qualitative and quantitative research, listening to real people's needs across the country, translating those needs into policy, and then advocating for reforms that deliver on what people seek from the system.

