

THE MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN
May 4-8, 2006

Fewer than half of Americans over the age of 65 have say they have enrolled in the new Medicare prescription drug program - and the May 15 deadline is less than a week away. But most of those who have signed up say the process was relatively easy, and four in ten say they are now paying less for prescription drugs.

39% of seniors are currently enrolled, and another 10% plan to join. But nearly half of all seniors - 48% - say they have no intention of signing up for the plan.

ENROLLED IN THE MEDICARE RX PLAN?

(Among adults age 65+)

Joined	39%
Plan to join	10
Do not plan to join	48

Of those seniors who do not intend to join, most say they are currently covered by some other prescription drug plan. Only 13% of them are not covered at least partially by some other prescription drug plan.

Most Americans - including most seniors - find the new program difficult to understand. 70% of Americans and 75% of seniors describe the new plan as at least somewhat difficult to understand, and 45% of seniors describe it as very difficult.

HOW EASY/DIFFICULT IS NEW MEDICARE RX TO UNDERSTAND?

	All	Age 65+	Age 65+ on Rx drug plan
Very easy	3%	6%	11%
Somewhat easy	13	13	20
Somewhat difficult	38	30	23
Very difficult	32	45	42

Most seniors who are already on the plan, however, say they did not have much trouble enrolling: 61% of them say they found the process of enrolling easy.

ENROLLING IN THE MEDICARE RX PLAN WAS...

(Among adults age 65+ enrolled in the plan)

Easy	61%
Difficult	33

81% all of seniors believe that the May 15th deadline for enrolling in the program without paying a penalty fee should be extended.

Seniors are divided as to whether or not the new plan will save older Americans money in the long run. 40% of all seniors believe that the new plan will significantly reduce the cost of prescription drugs, and 44% believe it will not. Seniors enrolled in the program are more optimistic. A majority of them (51%) believe that elderly Americans will eventually see significant reductions in prescription drug costs.

WILL THE NEW MEDICARE PLAN REDUCE RX COSTS?

	All	Age 65+	Age 65+ on Rx drug plan
Yes	36%	40%	51%
No	45	44	37
Don't know	19	17	13

42% of seniors now enrolled in the plan say they are already spending less on prescription drugs. 19% say they are spending more, while 30% say they are spending about the same amount.

SINCE ENROLLING IN THE MEDICARE RX PLAN, DO YOU...?

(Among adults age 65+ enrolled in the plan)

Spend more on Rx drugs	19%
Spend less on Rx drugs	42
Spend the same amount on RX drugs	30

This poll was conducted among a nationwide random sample of 1,241 adults, interviewed by telephone May 4-8, 2006. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. An oversample of people age 65 and over was also conducted for this poll, for a total of 500 interviews among this group. Their results were then weighted in the total sample to represent the proper proportion of the adult population. The margin of error for people 65 and older is plus or minus four points.

CBS NEWS POLL
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q82 From what you've heard or read, in general how easy or difficult is the Medicare prescription drug plan to understand -- is it very easy to understand, somewhat easy to understand, somewhat difficult to understand, or very difficult to understand?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **
	%
Very easy	3
Somewhat easy	13
Somewhat difficult	38
Very difficult	32
DK/NA	14

q83 Have you, personally, joined the new prescription drug benefit program for Medicare recipients, do you plan to join, or do you not plan to join?

	* AGE 65 AND OVER *
Joined	39
Plan to join	10
Do not plan to join	48
DK/NA	3

q84 May 15th is the deadline for enrolling in the Medicare prescription drug plan. Anyone who wants to enroll after May 15th will have to pay a penalty fee. Do you think Medicare should or should not extend the May 15 deadline in order to give people more time to enroll in the Medicare drug plan WITHOUT PENALTY?

Should be extended	81
Should not	15
DK/NA	4

q85 Was the process of enrolling in the new Medicare prescription drug program very easy, fairly easy, fairly difficult, or very difficult?

	* AGE 65+ AND ENROLLED IN MEDICARE DRUG PROGRAM *
Very easy	37
Fairly easy	24
Fairly difficult	16
Very difficult	17
DK/NA	6

q86 Since enrolling in the Medicare prescription drug program, are you now spending more, less or about the same as before on prescription drugs?

More	19
Less	42
Same	30
DK/NA	9

q87 Do you think that eventually the Medicare drug plan WILL or WILL NOT significantly reduce the cost of prescription drugs for the elderly?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

	%
Will significantly reduce	36
Will not significantly reduce	45
DK/NA	19

q88 Do you have a prescription drug plan other than Medicare?

* AGE 65 AND OVER *

Yes	65
No	34
DK/NA	1

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total respondents	1241	
Age 65 and over	500	202
Age 65+ and enrolled in Medicare drug program	190	79