

MEDSHADOW
FOUNDATION
AND KANTAR

JULY
2025

GENERIC AND BRAND NAME PRESCRIPTION DRUG SENTIMENT REPORT

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Introduction

I started MedShadow Foundation in 2013 because I was harmed by a medicine called DES (diethylstilbestrol) that was given to my mother when she was pregnant with me. When I was 13, I learned that I would not ever be able to get pregnant because of the side effects of DES. The FDA told doctors to stop prescribing that drug to pregnant women in 1971, but between five and 10 million pregnant women had already been given it.

Because of my work with MedShadow, I've learned a lot about how the FDA approves drugs. From 2017-2024 I sat on the FDA Advisory Committee on Drug Safety and Risk Management, a panel of doctors and pharmacists where I was the lone consumer representative.

The FDA assures the public that all generics are equivalent to brand drugs—that they are just as safe and effective as brand name drugs. While that is the intent, that is not always the reality for patients. A small but significant amount of generic drugs are sub-quality, and that puts patients at risk.

Experts and investigative reporters, including ours at MedShadow, have been sounding the alarm. Our research and the overwhelming response to our reporting and social media posts demonstrate that many people have experienced generic drug failure.

With this research in hand, we call on doctors to believe patients when they say a drug is not working and help them find one that does. And we call on the FDA to put better safety checks on the drugs made both here and in other countries to keep Americans healthy.



Suzanne Robotti
Founder and President
MedShadow Foundation

Executive Summary

Among Americans who have taken a prescription drug in the past 12 months, 80% take a prescription on a regular basis. Within the regular prescription drug users, they are generally on a mix of both brand names and generics, taking an average of between 3-4 different prescriptions.

There is little differentiation between brand names and generics in the minds of the general public with four out of five Americans agreeing that they both are safe and effective.

Two-thirds of Americans have switched from a brand name to a generic prescription. The majority don't notice a difference between the formulations. However, among the 46% who have switched from one generic to another, about one third experience differences in efficacy and side effects, often for more than one refill.

Two-thirds of Americans would be willing to pay more for drugs tested by an independent third party to ensure the drugs are safe and effective. Among those who are willing to pay for independent testing, one third would pay at least 50% more. Americans are most willing to pay higher out-of-pocket costs for one-time medications (58%) vs. paying more for medications for a chronic condition (52%) or mental health (47%).

The generic drug manufacturing supply chain relies on ingredients manufactured overseas, yet most Americans believe that drugs made in the U.S. are safer or more effective.



Two-thirds of Americans would be willing to pay more for drugs tested by an independent third party to ensure the drugs are safe and effective.

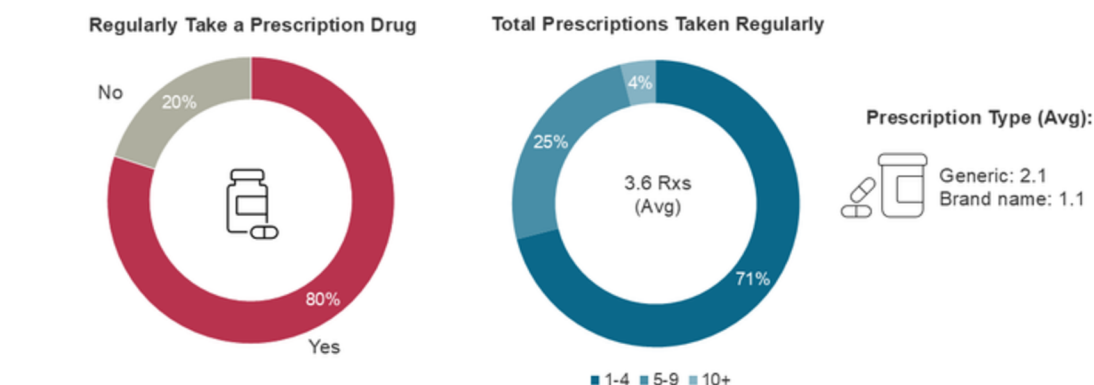
Prescription Drug Usage

Most Americans take between 3-4 prescriptions on a regular basis.

Among Americans who have taken a prescription drug in the past 12 months, 80% take a prescription on a regular basis (at least monthly). Within the regular prescription drug users, they are generally on a mix of both brand names and generics, taking an average of between 3-4 different prescriptions. Most respondents said they take between 1-4 prescriptions regularly (71%); followed by 5-9 (25%) and 10+ (4%).

Prescription Drug Usage

The vast majority (80%) of Americans who have taken a prescription in the past year take one regularly (at least monthly) and on average, are on between 3-4 prescriptions.



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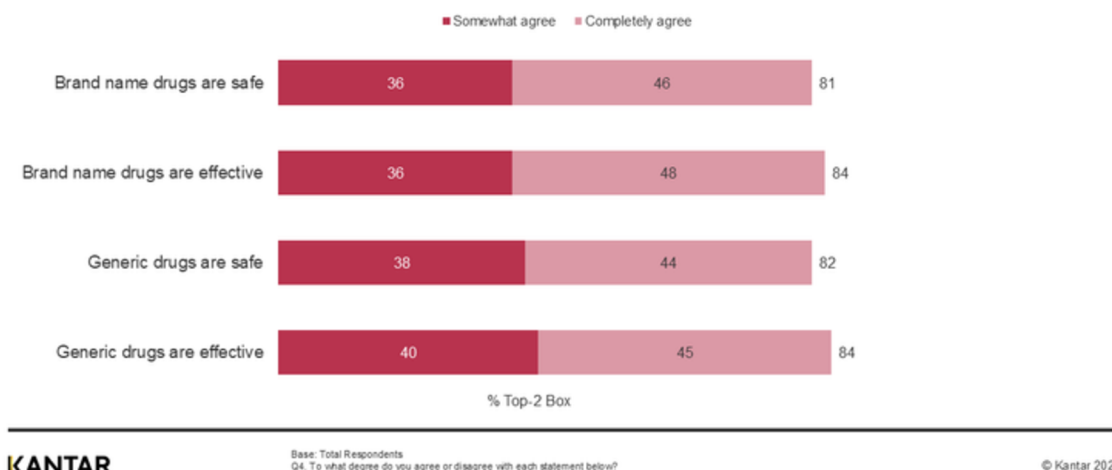
Base: Total Respondents
Q2: How many prescriptions do you take regularly (at least monthly)?
Base: Regular prescription drug users (n=505)
Q3: Please indicate how many of your prescriptions are brand name vs. generic?

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Age plays a factor in medication use: 97% of those aged 65 and older reported regularly taking a prescription, compared to only 60% of those aged 18-24. The number of drugs taken on average also increases by age, with 86% of 18-24 year olds only taking 1-4 prescriptions. For those who are 65 and older, 57% take 1-4 prescriptions, 37% take 5-9, and 5% take 10 or more prescriptions regularly.

Prescription Drug Sentiment

Four out of five Americans believe that both brand-name drugs and generic drugs are generally safe and effective.



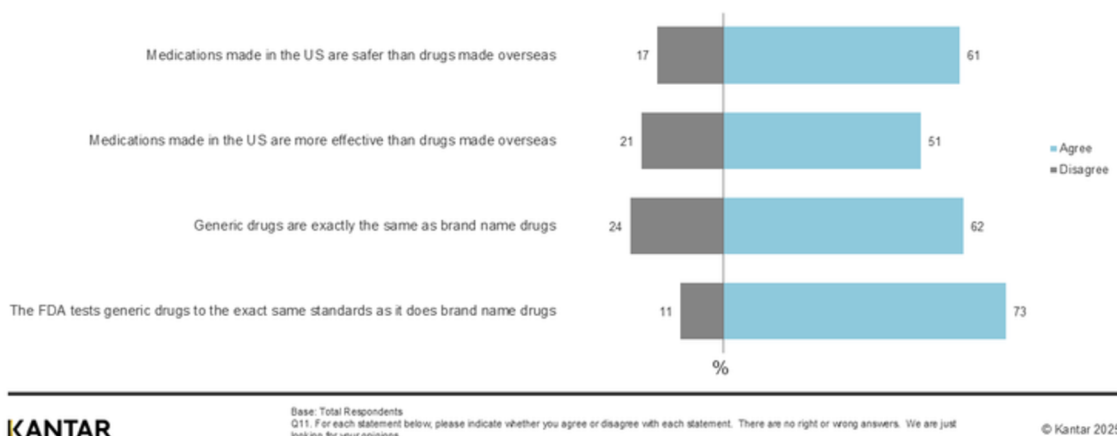
Agreement with Drug Safety Statements

While most Americans believe that generics are exactly the same (62%) and are held to the same standards (73%) as brand-name drugs, the majority of Americans (67%) also feel that U.S.-made drugs are safer or more effective than drugs made overseas.

More than 90% of the drugs taken in the U.S. are generics, and up to 86% of the active ingredients in those drugs are manufactured overseas. (Source: HealthAffairs.org)

Agreement With Drug Safety Statements

The vast majority of Americans feel that US-made drugs are safer and more effective than drugs made overseas and that generics are held to the same standards as brand name drugs.



Throughout the survey, age had the greatest bearing on responses. For example, 73% of respondents aged 44 and below believe that prescriptions made in the U.S. are safer compared to 51% of those 45 and over. In addition, 74% of those 44 and under believe U.S.-made drugs are more effective than those made overseas, compared to 32% of people aged 45 and above.

People under 45 also share a higher skepticism regarding the safety and efficacy of both brand and generic drugs, with around one in 10 saying they disagreed that the drugs were safe (brand name: 10% / generic: 12%) or effective (brand name: 12% / generic: 9%), compared to those aged 45 and older who disagree about safety (brand name: 3% / generic: 4%) or efficacy (brand name: 2% / generic: 4%).

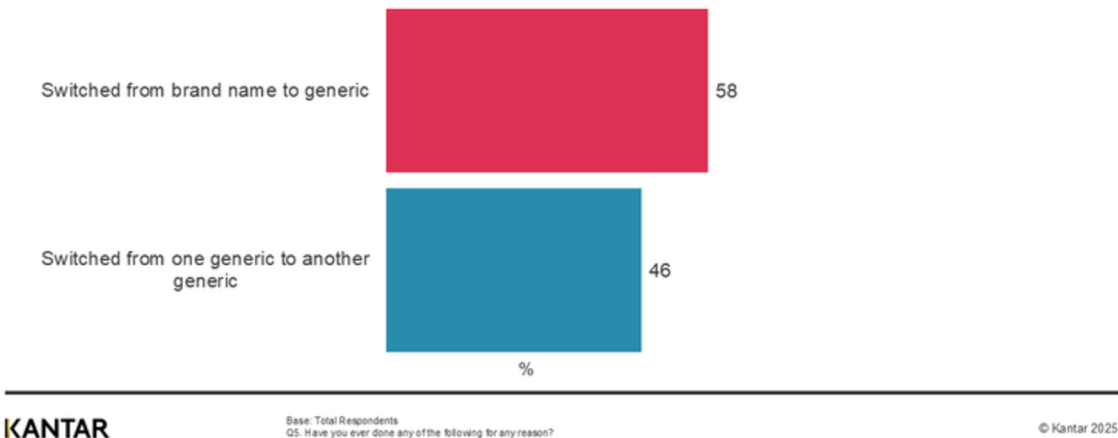


Incidence of Switching Prescriptions

Two-thirds of Americans (69%) have switched from a brand name to a generic prescription or from one generic to another, according to the survey. Half of Americans also said they know someone who had switched from brand-name drugs to generics, and one third know of someone who switched from one generic to another.

Incidence of Switching Prescriptions

About two-thirds of Americans have switched from a brand name to a generic prescription and just under half have switched from one generic to another.



Experience After Switching Prescriptions

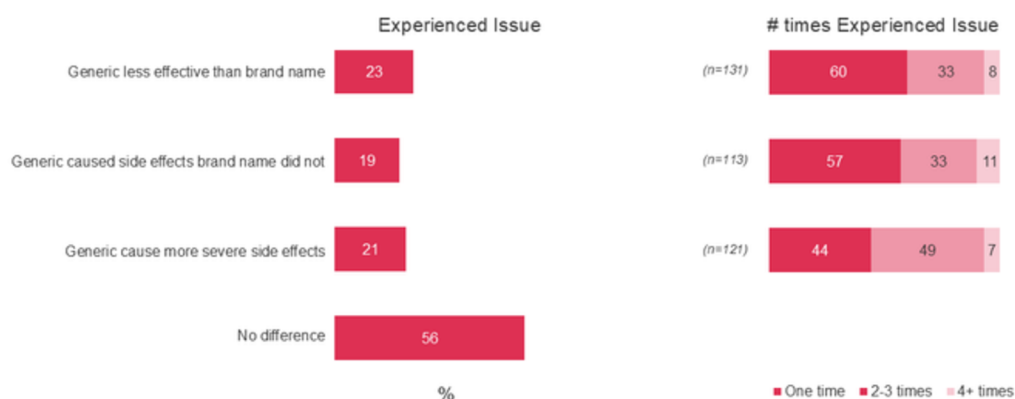
One third of Americans have noticed a difference with generics.

When asked about their experiences switching from a brand name to a generic or from one generic to another, a third of Americans (36%) report that they have experienced differences such as reduced effectiveness, new side effects, or more severe side effects.

In total, one out of three Americans have noticed a difference with generics, often for more than one refill. Sometimes the new generic was less effective (than the brand name 23% / than prior generic 31%), other times it caused new side effects (vs. the brand name: 19% / vs. prior generic: 23%), and sometimes the new generic caused more severe side effects (21% for both).

Experience After Switching from Brand Name to Generic Prescription Drug

The majority of Americans who have switched from a Brand name to a generic have not noticed any differences between the medications. In the instances where they do, they're most often only experienced one time.



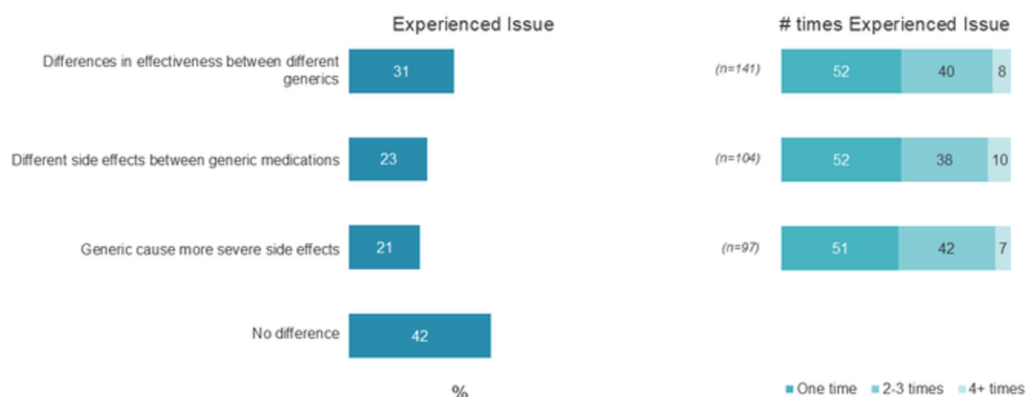
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Base: Switched from brand name to generic (n=581) Q5a. When you switched from a brand name drug to a generic drug, which, if any, of the following did you experience?
Base: Experienced difference Q5b. How often have you experienced these differences between a generic drug and brand name drug?

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Experience After Switching from One Generic to Another Generic Prescription

About one-third of Americans have switched from one generic to another generic notice a difference in efficacy between generics. In the instances where they do, they're most often only experienced one time.



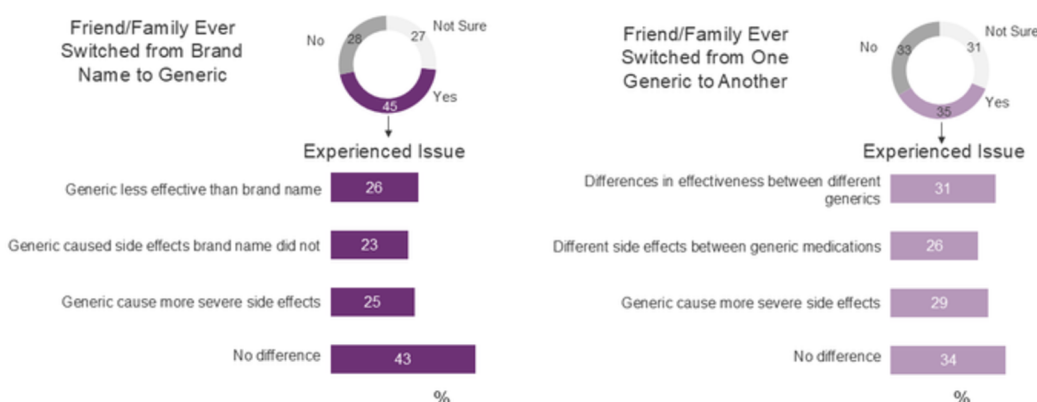
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Base: Switched from one generic to another generic (n=459) Q5C. When you switched from one generic to another generic, which, if any, of the following did you experience?
Base: Experienced difference Q5d. How often have you experienced these differences between one generic and another?

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Family/Friends Prescription Drug Behaviors

About half of Americans have a friend or family member that they know has switched their prescription. Among those who have switched, differences in efficacy are the most noted.



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Base: Total Respondents Q7. To the best of your knowledge, has a friend or family member ever done any of the following?
Base: Friend/family switched from brand to generic (n=451) Q7a. When your friend or family members have switched from a brand name drug to a generic drug, which, if any, of the following did they experience?
Base: Friend/family switched from one generic to another (n=354) Experienced difference Q7b. When your friend or family members switched from one generic to another generic medication, which, if any, of the following did they experience?

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Once again, those aged 18-44 were the most likely to notice these differences. Only one in five of under-45-year-olds said they didn't notice a difference (switching from brand name: 22% / switching generics: 20%), while more than two-thirds of those over 45 said they didn't notice a difference when switching (switching from brand name: 85% / switching generics: 67%).

Men were also much more likely (switching from brand name: 54% / switching generics: 72%) than women (switching from brand name: 35% / switching generics: 46%) to report differences they experienced.

In most cases, the differences in efficacy and new side effects were experienced only one time, but for those who experienced more severe side effects, half of respondents said it happened 2-3 times.

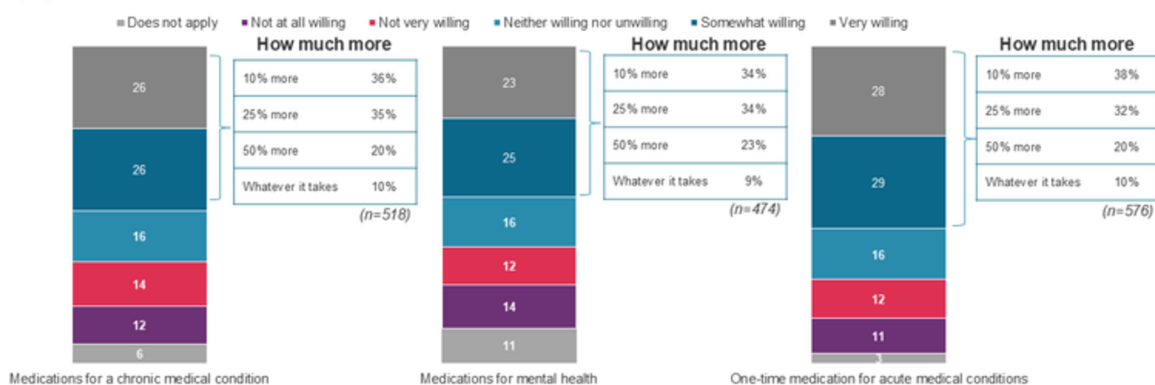
Willingness to Pay for Independent Testing of Medications

Most Americans say their prescription drug coverage is provided by Medicare/Medicaid (43%), but almost as many have coverage provided by their employer (39%). In addition, 26% have private coverage, and 5% of respondents said they do not have prescription drug insurance.

Despite this, 67% of Americans say they would be willing to pay more for medications if they were tested by an independent third party to ensure their safety and effectiveness. The amount they would be willing to pay is evenly split between 50% or more, 25%, and 10%. One third would pay at least 50% more, one third would pay up to 25% more, and one third would pay up to 10% more for the service.

Willingness to Pay for Independent Party Testing of Medications

Interestingly, Americans are most willing to pay for independent testing of medications for acute conditions (58% top-2 box) over medications for chronic conditions or mental health. Among those willing, about one-third would pay at least 50% more.



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Base: Total Respondents
Q9: How willing would you be to pay a higher out-of-pocket cost for medications that are tested by an independent party to ensure their safety and effectiveness for each category below?
Base: Willing to pay more Q10: How much more would you be willing to pay per prescription for this testing?

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Americans are most willing to pay higher out-of-pocket costs for one-time medications for acute conditions (58%). Around half would also pay more for medications for a chronic condition (52%) or mental health (47%).

On this topic, the under-45 set once again split from the 45+ set: they are more willing to pay extra for testing all types of medication. Among those 45 and older, not only are they less willing to pay more across the board, but only a third of respondents would pay more for their mental health medications, specifically.

Income levels also impact Americans' desire to pay more for better medications. People earning less than \$50,000 per year are significantly less likely to be willing to pay more than those who make \$50,000 or more. Of those who are willing to pay more, those earning less than \$50,000 would, in most cases, want to pay only 10% more to have their drugs tested for safety and effectiveness.

Methodology

This research was conducted online among 1,000 people across the United States. Respondents were sourced from the Kantar Profiles Respondent Hub. All interviews were conducted as online self-completion between June 20 and 25, 2025 and collected to be census representative for age and gender. All respondents reported that they have taken at least one prescription drug in the past 12 months.

Survey Demographics

	Total		Total
	N=1000		N=1000
Gender		HCP	7%
Male	50%	Non-HCP	93%
Female	50%		-
		Income	
Age		< \$50,000	35%
18-24	12%	\$50,000-\$74,999	20%
25-34	18%	\$75,000-\$99,999	23%
35-44	15%	\$100,000-\$149,999	14%
45-54	16%	\$150,000 or more	6%
55-64	16%		
65+	23%	Education	
		High school graduate or less	26%
Prescription Drug Coverage		Some college, no degree	23%
Employer-provided	39%	Associate's degree	11%
Private	26%	Bachelor's degree	30%
Medicare/Medicaid	43%	Advanced degree	11%
None	5%		



About MedShadow Foundation

MedShadow Foundation is a nonprofit that focuses on the safest ways to take over-the-counter and prescription medications. Medications have many benefits, but knowing how to balance these against their potential side effects is essential. Side effects can sometimes be difficult to recognize, so MedShadow works to illuminate and explain medication reactions that may be otherwise minimized or obscured.

www.medshadow.org

About Kantar

Kantar is the world's leading marketing data and analytics business and an indispensable brand partner to the world's top companies. It combines the most meaningful attitudinal and behavioral data with deep expertise and advanced analytics to uncover how people think and act. It helps clients understand what has happened and why and how to shape the marketing strategies that shape their future. Kantar's Profiles division is the industry's most trusted strategic partner for essential data collection. With access to 170 million+ people in over 100 global markets, they provide unrivalled global reach with local relevancy through a range of data solutions. Due to their unparalleled innovations and investment into AI-driven anti-fraud, panel management technology and research design, the Profiles Team at Kantar delivers quality with flexibility.

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