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KFF Health Tracking Poll July 2023: The Public's Views Of New Prescription Weight Loss Drugs And Prescription Drug Costs

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FINDINGS

Key Findings

- As a relatively new class of prescription drugs, initially approved to treat type 2 diabetes, have been gaining attention for their use as effective weight loss drugs, the latest KFF Health Tracking Poll finds that nearly half of adults (45%) say they would generally be interested in taking a safe and effective prescription weight loss drug, including nearly six in ten (59%) of those who are currently trying to lose weight and half (51%) of those who are trying to lose less than 10 pounds. About seven in ten adults say they have heard at least "a little" about this new class of weight loss drugs, which include Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro.
- While there is overall interest in taking a prescription weight loss drug, interest decreases substantially once people are asked if they would take a drug administered as routine injection (23% of all adults would still be interested), if it was not covered by their insurance (16%), if it was not approved by the FDA for weight loss specifically (16%), or if they heard they may gain weight back after stopping use (14%).
- Most adults (80%) say that insurance companies should cover the cost of weight loss drugs for adults who are overweight or obese, while half of adults (53%) say insurance should cover the cost of these drugs for anyone who wants them to lose weight. Half of adults continue to say that health insurance should cover the cost of weight loss drugs, even if it meant that monthly health insurance premiums increased for everyone, including larger shares of Democrats (62%).

- Interest and demand for these new weight loss drugs comes at a time when a majority of the public say they trust pharmaceutical companies to develop new drugs (75%) and provide reliable information about safety and side effects (66%) as well as drug effectiveness (64%) – but far fewer adults (22%) say they trust these pharmaceutical companies to price their products fairly. A large majority of adults (83%), including majorities across partisans, see pharmaceutical profits as a major factor contributing to the cost of prescription drugs.
- Notable shares of adults (28%) report difficulty affording prescription drugs, with another three in ten adults (31%) reporting not taking their medicine as prescribed in the past year due to the cost. Lower income adults are more likely than those with higher household incomes to report experiencing these costrelated prescription drug issues.
- Majorities across partisans say there is not enough regulation over drug pricing, however, just under a year after the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act. few adults in the U.S. are aware of the law's provisions aimed at reducing the cost of prescription drugs in Medicare. While adults ages 65 and older – the group who will be most affected by the law's Medicare provisions – are more likely than younger adults to know about some of these aspects of the law, a majority of older adults are still unaware whether these provisions are currently in place. About four in ten (44%) of those ages 65 and older say they are aware of insulin caps for people with Medicare, and about three in ten say they are aware of annual out-of-pocket prescription drug limits for people with Medicare (34%) or the requirement that the federal government negotiate the price of some prescription drugs for people with Medicare (31%), while just 5% say they are aware of penalties for drug companies for increasing prices faster than inflation for people with Medicare.

Public Opinion On A New Class Of Weight Loss Drugs

A new class of prescription drugs, initially developed to treat type 2 diabetes, have been garnering an increasing amount of attention

(https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/social-media-is-fueling-enthusiasm-for-new-weight-loss-<u>drugs-are-regulators-watching/)</u> due to their ability to act as highly effective weight loss drugs for overweight or obese adults. This class of drugs includes different medications, such as Ozempic, Wegovy, and Mounjaro. 1 (https://www.kff.org/healthcosts/poll-finding/kff-health-tracking-poll-july-2023-the-publics-views-of-new-prescription-weightloss-drugs-and-prescription-drug-costs/view/footnotes/#footnote-594887-1) The latest KFF Tracking Poll examines public interest and awareness of these drugs as well as how views change once people hear more information about the accessibility and administration of the medications.

Seven in ten adults say they have heard at least "a little" about a new class of drugs being used for weight loss, such as Ozempic, Wegovy, and Mounjaro, with about one in five (19%) saying they have heard "a lot" about these drugs.

Awareness of the new weight loss drugs is high among all groups, but older adults are some of the most aware with at least eight in ten adults ages 65 and older (79%) saying they have heard about them. Three in four adults (76%) who have

been told by a doctor in the past five years that they are overweight or obese are also aware of this new class of drugs being used for weight loss. Awareness is also high among adults who are currently trying to lose weight, with three in four (74%) saying they have heard about these drugs.

Figure 1

Most Adults Have Heard About New Weight Loss Drugs, Including Larger Shares Of Older Adults And Those Tryin To Lose Weight

How much have you heard, if anything, about a new class of drugs being used for weight loss, sur as Ozempic, Wegovy, and Mounjaro?

A lot	Some	A little	Nothing at all				
					509	%	
Total			19%	24%	27%		30%
Age							
18-29			15%	16%	27%	42%	
30-49			20%	21%	28%	,	30%
50-64			17%	28%	27%	%	29%
65+			22%	32%		26%	21%
		re provider rweight or					
Yes			26%	2	6%	24%	23%
No			14%	22%	29%	34°	%
Weight lo	ss intent						
Trying to le	ose weight		22%	25%	27	7%	25%
Not trying	to lose wei	aht	14%	22%	27%	37%	

While most adults report having heard at least "a little" about this new class of weight loss drugs, very few report having ever taken any prescription drug to lose weight, with even fewer who report currently taking a prescription drug for weight loss. Just 4% of adults say they are currently taking a prescription drug to lose weight and one in ten say they have previously taken prescription drugs for weight loss but are not currently using them, leaving about nine in ten adults (87%) who

say they have never taken any prescription weight loss drugs.

NOTE: See topline for full question wording.

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Overall, about six in ten adults (61%) say they are currently trying to lose weight, including 28% who are trying to lose more than 20 pounds. About four in ten (39%) adults say a doctor or other health care provider has told them that they are overweight or obese² (https://www.kff.org/health-costs/poll-finding/kff-health-tracking-poll-july-2023-the-publics-views-of-new-prescription-weight-loss-drugs-and-prescription-drugcosts/view/footnotes/#footnote-594887-2) in the past five years. Prior use of weight loss drugs is also more common among these groups.

One in ten of those who are currently trying to lose more than 20 pounds and a similar share of adults who have been told by a doctor in the past five years that they are obese or overweight say they are currently taking medications for weight loss. An additional one in six among each of these groups say they have taken medications for weight loss in the past.

Women are about twice as likely as men to say they have ever used any prescription drug to lose weight (18% v. 8%) and are also more likely to say they are currently using these drugs to lose weight (5% v. 2%). Notably, women are also more likely than men to say that a doctor or other health care provider told them they were overweight or obese in the past five years (47% v. 32%).

Few Adults Are Currently Using Or Have Ever Used Any Prescription Drugs To Lose Weight

Are you currently or have you ever used a prescription drug to lose weight? This does not include any over-the-counter medications or supplements.

Yes, currently using a prescription never	drug to lose weight	Yes, but not currently using	No,
Total	10% 87%		
Gender			
Women	13% 82%		
Men	92%		
Doctor or health care provider told them they were overweight or obese			
Yes	8% 15% 76%		
No	94%		
Weight loss intent			
<10lbs	92%		
10lbs-20lbs	9% 88%		
20lbs+	9% 16% 75%		
Not trying to lose weight	93%		

NOTE: See topline for full question wording. SOLIRCE: KEE Health Tracking Poll (July 11-19, 2023) • PNG KF

Nearly half of adults (45%) say they would be interested in taking a prescription drug to lose weight if they heard that it was safe and effective, including about one in five (18%) who say they are "very interested." Women are significantly more likely than men to say they would be interested in taking a prescription drug for weight loss (51% v. 38%). About four in ten Black adults (41%), nearly half of White adults (45%), and just over half of Hispanic adults (55%) say they would be interested in taking a prescription weight loss drug. While similar shares of Black adults, Hispanic adults and White adults report being told by a doctor or health care provider in the past five years that they are overweight or obese, KFF's analysis (https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/adult-obesity-by-re/?

currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colld%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D) of Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data shows that Black and Hispanic adults in the U.S. have a higher rate of obesity than White adults. For additional information

on obesity rates and racial disparities, see KFF's policy watch: What are the <u>Implications of New Anti-Obesity Drugs for Racial Disparities?</u> (https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/what-are-implications-of-new-anti-obesity-drugs-racialdisparities/)

The share who say they are interested in taking prescription drugs for weight loss increases to two-thirds (67%) among those who have been told by a doctor or health care provider that they are overweight or obese in the past five years. In addition, about six in ten (59%) adults who say they are currently trying to lose weight say they would be interested in taking a weight loss drug.

Interest in taking a prescription drug for weight loss is even more common among those who say they are trying to lose relatively larger amounts of weight, however, notable shares of those who are trying to lose 10 pounds or less also say they would be interested in taking a safe, effective prescription drug for weight loss. About seven in ten (68%) adults who say they are currently trying to lose 20 pounds or more say they would be interested in taking a prescription drug for weight loss if they heard it was safe and effective, compared to about half of adults who are trying to lose 10 to 20 pounds (50%) or less than 10 pounds (51%). But interest for taking such medications isn't limited to those currently trying to lose weight; a quarter (23%) of those who say they are not currently trying to lose weight say they would be interested in taking a drug to lose weight if they heard it was safe and effective.

While notable shares of adults who say they are trying to lose relatively small amounts of weight say they would be interested in taking a prescription drug for weight loss if they heard it was safe and effective, it is worth noting that among the relatively new class of drugs being used for weight loss, Wegovy, which is approved by the FDA for weight loss, is intended (https://www.fda.gov/news-events/pressannouncements/fda-approves-new-drug-treatment-chronic-weight-management-first-2014) for chronic weight management in adults who are obese, or adults who are overweight and have one weight-related condition, such as type 2 diabetes.

Figure 3

About Half Of Adults Say They Would Be Interested In Taking A Safe, Effective Weight-Loss Drug

If you heard that a prescription weight loss drug was safe and effective, how interested would you be in using that prescription drug to lose weight?

Very interested Currently taking we	Somewhat interested ight loss drugs	Not too	interested	Not at al	I interes	ted	
				50%			
Total	18%	27%	1	9%	32%		
Gender							
Women	23%	2	8%	18%	26%		
Men	13%	25%	21%	39	%		
Doctor or health care per them they were overw							
Yes	33%		34%		14%	11%	8
No	8%	22%	23%	46%			
Weight loss intent							
<10lbs	14%	37%		24%	2	3%	
10lbs-20lbs	14%	36%		31%		16%	
20+lbs	37%		31%		10%	12%	9%
Not trying to lose weight	t 7% ′	16% 1	9% 589	%			

NOTE: Percentages based on total. Asked of those who say they are not currently taking a prescription drug to lose weight. See topline for full question wording.

SOURCE: KFF Health Tracking Poll (July 11-19, 2023) • PNG



While about half of adults express interest in taking safe, effective prescription drugs for weight loss, some people are no longer interested after hearing additional information about these drugs. Similar to the share of adults who are interested in taking a drug for weight loss if it was safe and effective, nearly half of all adults (44%) continue to be either "very" or "somewhat" interested in taking medication like this if it could be taken it as a pill. (https://www.kff.org/health-costs/pollfinding/kff-health-tracking-poll-july-2023-the-publics-views-of-new-prescription-weight-loss-drugsand-prescription-drug-costs/view/footnotes/#footnote-594887-3) But interest drops more than twenty percentage points when adults are asked if they would be interested if they had to administer it themselves as a weekly injection (23%), if it was not

covered by their insurance (16%), or if it was not approved by the FDA for weight loss but was approved for another use (16%). Interest in taking a medication for weight loss drops to 14% when people hear they may gain weight back after stopping use.4 (https://www.kff.org/health-costs/poll-finding/kff-health-tracking-poll-july-2023the-publics-views-of-new-prescription-weight-loss-drugs-and-prescription-drugcosts/view/footnotes/#footnote-594887-4)

Figure 4

About Half Of Adults Are Interested In Taking Weight Los Drugs As A Pill, Fewer Are Interested If They May Gain Weight Back After Stopping

Percent who say they would be very or somewhat interested in taking a prescription weight loss

...they heard that it was safe and effective 45%

Percent who say they would still be interested if...

it could be taken as a pill	44%
it were self-administered as a weekly injection	23%
it was not covered by their insurance	16%
it was not approved by the FDA for weight loss, but was approved for another use	
they heard they may gain the weight back if they stopped using the prescription drug	14%

Eight in ten adults say they think health insurance should cover the cost of prescription weight loss drugs for adults who have been diagnosed as overweight or obese, while about half (53%) of adults say health insurance should cover the cost of these drugs for anyone who wants to take them to lose weight. Half of adults continue to say they think health insurance should still cover these costs even if they heard that it could generally increase monthly health insurance premiums for everyone.

Majority Of Adults Say Health Insurance Should Cover The Cost Of Prescription Weight Loss Drugs For Overweight And Obese Adults

Percent who say that health insurance should cover the cost of prescription weight loss drugs...

For adults who have been diagnosed as overweight or obese	80%
For anyone who wants to take them to lose weight	53%
Even if they heard that it could increase monthly health insurance premiums for everyone*	

While majorities across partisans say that health insurance should cover the cost of prescription weight loss drugs for either anyone who wants them or for adults diagnosed as overweight or obese, larger shares of Democrats say this (88%) compared to independents (81%) and Republicans (77%). Additionally, about six in ten Democrats (62%) say insurance should still cover the cost of weight loss drugs even at the expense of higher premiums for everyone compared to about half of

NOTE: Percentages based on total. *Asked of those who said insurance should cover the cost of prescription weight

While large majorities across age groups say health insurance should cover the cost of prescription weight loss drugs for either anyone who wants them or for adults diagnosed as overweight or obese, people under the age of 65 are more likely than those ages 65 and older to say they still think insurance should cover the cost of prescription weight loss drugs even if they heard that it might increase insurance premiums for everyone (53% v. 39%).

Views On Pharmaceutical Companies And Concerns Over Prescription Drug Pricing

independents (48%) and four in ten Republicans (39%).

Alongside public interest in new weight loss drugs and notable shares of adults saying they think health insurance should cover the cost of these drugs – even at the expense of increasing monthly premiums for everyone – most adults report a lack of trust in pharmaceutical companies to price their drugs fairly and say there is not enough regulation when it comes to prescription drug costs. Notable shares also experienced cost-related issues with prescription drugs in the past year, with three in ten adults reporting not taking their prescription medicine as prescribed due to the cost. Most adults, however, are trusting of drug companies when it comes developing new drugs and communicating reliable information about the safety and effectiveness of their drugs.

Three-quarters (75%) of adults say they trust pharmaceutical companies either "a lot" or "somewhat" to develop new, effective drugs, and just over six in ten say they trust drug companies to offer reliable information about the side effects and safety of their drugs (66%) or to offer reliable information about how well their drugs work (64%). Fewer, or about half (48%), of all adults say they trust pharmaceutical companies to inform the public quickly when they learn of a safety concern with their drugs. Adults are least trusting when it comes to drug pricing, with one in five (22%) saying they trust drug companies "a lot" or "somewhat" to price their products fairly.

Figure 6

Most Adults Trust Drug Companies On Development, Providing Reliable Information, But Few Trust Companies To Price Drugs Fairly

How much do you trust pharmaceutical companies to ...?

A lot Somewhat Not too much	Not at all		
		50%	
Develop new, effective drugs	20% 55%	1	8%
Offer reliable information about side effects and safety of their drugs	14% 52%	23%	119
Offer reliable information about how well their drugs work	10% 54%	26%	10
Inform the public quickly when they learn of a safety concern with one of their drugs	9% 39%	35%	16%
Price their products fairly	18% 39%	39%	

NOTE: See topline for full question wording.

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Most adults, including majorities across partisans, cite profits made by pharmaceutical companies as a "major factor" contributing to the price of prescription drugs. About eight in ten adults (83%) say profits made by pharmaceutical companies are a "major factor" contributing to the price of prescription drugs, compared to fewer who say the cost of research and development (54%) or the cost of marketing and advertising (45%) are major contributing factors. Additionally, majorities across partisans cite profits made by pharmaceutical companies as the main factor contributing prescription drug prices, including nine in ten Republicans (89%) and similar shares of Democrats (84%) and independents (78%).

At Least Eight In Ten Across Parties Say Pharmaceutical Company Profits Are A Major Factor Contributing To **Prescription Drug Costs**

Percent who say the following is a major factor contributing to the price of prescription drugs:

	Total	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Profits made by pharmaceutical companies	83%	84%	78%	89%
The cost of research and development		53%	56%	57%
The cost of marketing and advertising	45%	47%	47%	43%

NOTE: See topline for full question wording.



While many adults report a lack of trust in pharmaceutical companies to price their products fairly, notable shares of adults also report experiencing problems affording prescription drugs, with three in ten (28%) saying it is either "somewhat" or "very difficult" to afford prescription drugs, including larger shares of those with annual household incomes of less \$40,000 a year (40%).

Another three in ten adults (31%) say they haven't taken their medicine as prescribed due to cost. This includes one in five adults who say they have not filled a prescription for a medicine due to the cost (21%) or taken an over-the-counter drug instead of getting a prescription filled because of the cost, and about one in ten (12%) who say they have cut pills in half or skipped doses of medicine because of the cost in the past year.

Lower income adults are more likely than those with higher incomes to experience these cost-related prescription drug issues. Just under four in ten (37%) of those with annual household incomes of less than \$40,000 say they haven't taken their medicine as prescribed due to the cost in the past year compared to three in ten (30%) of those with annual incomes between \$40,000 and less than \$90,000 and a quarter (24%) of those with incomes of \$90,000 or more.

Three In Ten Adults Say They Didn't Take Their Medicine As Prescribed Due To Costs, Including Larger Shares With Lower Incomes

Percent who say they have done the following in the past 12 months because of the cost:

	Total	Household income <\$40K	Household income \$40K-\$89.9K	Household income \$901
Not filled a prescription for a medicine	21%	25%	22%	15%
Taken an over-the-counter drug instead of getting a prescription filled	21%	27%	19%	17%
Cut pills in half or skipped doses of medicine	12%	16%	12%	8%
Did at least one of the above	31%	37%	30%	24%

NOTE: See topline for full question wording.

SOURCE: KFF Health Tracking Poll (July 11-19, 2023) • PNG

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Public Opinion on Prescription Drugs

KFF has a long history of examining public opinion on prescription drugs including the latest update to our Public Opinion on Prescription Drug And Their Prices (https://www.kff.org/health-costs/poll-finding/public-opinion-onprescription-drugs-and-their-prices/).

Most adults say there should be more regulation when it comes to prescription drug costs. Three quarters (73%) of adults say there is not enough government regulation when it comes to limiting the price of prescription drugs, with just 13% saying there is "about the right amount" of regulation in this area. About half (47%) of adults say there is not as much government regulation as there should be when it comes to making sure prescription drugs are safe for people to use, while four in ten say there is the right amount of government regulation in this area. The share of adults currently saying there is not as much regulation as there should be in each of these areas has increased by about 10 percentage points since 2021 (https://www.kff.org/health-costs/poll-finding/kff-health-tracking-poll-may-2021/).

About Seven In Ten Adults Say There Is Not Enough Regulation Limiting Prescription Drug Prices, Half Say No **Enough Regulation Over Safety**

When it comes to government regulation over...is there too much regulation, not as much regulation as there should be, or about the right amount of regulation in this area?

Too much regulation be	About the righ	ht am	nount of r	egulation	Not as much as there should	
Making sure prescription dr	rugs are safe	2%	41%		47%	
Limiting the price of prescri	ption drugs 14	4%	13%	73%		

NOTE: See topline or full question wording. SOLIRCE: KEE Health Tracking Poll (July 11-19, 2023) • PNG



Majorities of adults across partisans agree that there is not enough regulation over prescription drug prices, with eight in ten Democrats (82%) and just over twothirds of Republicans (68%) and independents (67%) saying there is not as much regulation as there should be when it comes to limiting the price of prescription drugs. Similar to increases among the total population, the shares of Democrats and Republicans saying there is not enough regulation in limiting the price of prescription drugs has increased by about ten percentage points since 2021 (https://www.kff.org/health-costs/poll-finding/kff-health-tracking-poll-may-2021/).

Compared to 2021, Larger Shares Of Democrats And Republicans Now Say There Is Not Enough Regulation Over Prescription Drug Prices

Percent who say there is not as much regulation as there should be when it comes to limiting t price of prescription drugs:

Total	
Jul-23	73%
May-21	63%
Democrats	
Jul-23	82%
May-21	70%
Independents	
Jul-23	67%
May-21	65%
Republicans	
Jul-23	68%
May-21	57%
NOTE: See topline for full question wording. SOURCE: KFF Health Tracking Polls • PNG	KF

Half (49%) of adults ages 18 to 64 say there is not as much regulation as there should be when it comes to making sure prescription drugs are safe for people to use, while two in five (40%) of those ages 65 and older say there is not enough regulation in this area. When it comes to regulation over prescription drug prices, similar shares of those under the age of 65 (73%) and those 65 and older (72%) say there is not as much regulation as there should be.

The Public's Knowledge of the Inflation Reduction Act

Even as many adults, regardless of partisanship or age, say there is not enough regulation over limiting prescription drug prices, few adults are aware of new prescription drug regulations included in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Signed into law in August of 2022 by President Joe Biden, the IRA contains several provisions related to lowering prescription drug costs for people with Medicare. Namely, the law caps the cost of insulin for people with Medicare at \$35 a month, requires the federal government to negotiate the price of some prescription drugs for people with Medicare, places an annual limit on out-of-pocket prescription

drug costs for people with Medicare, and penalizes drug companies for increasing prices faster than the rate of inflation for people with Medicare. For more information, see KFF's issue brief on the IRA's prescription drug provisions (https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/explaining-the-prescription-drug-provisions-in-theinflation-reduction-act/#bullet02).

Nearly a year after being signed into law, few adults are aware of the IRA's provisions related to prescription drug costs in Medicare. A quarter of adults say they are aware there are federal laws in place that cap monthly insulin costs at \$35 for people with Medicare (25%), that require the federal government to negotiate the price of some prescription drugs for people with Medicare (25%), or that place a limit on annual out-of-pocket drug costs for people with Medicare (24%). Even fewer adults are aware there is a law in place that penalizes drug companies for increasing prices faster than the rate of inflation for people with Medicare (10%).

Figure 11

Few Adults Are Aware That Medicare Prescription Drug Provisions In The Inflation Reduction Act Are Currently Law

As far as you know, is there a federal law in place that...

Yes, there is a law that does this	Not sure	No, there is not a law that does this	ı
Requires the federal government to negotiate the price of some prescription drugs for people with Medicare	25%	63%	12%
Caps the cost of insulin for people with Medicare at \$35 per month	25%	63%	12%
Places an annual limit on out-of-pocket prescription drug costs for people with Medicare	24%	63%	13%
Penalizes drug companies for increasing prices faster than the rate of inflation for people with Medicare	10% 67%	2	23%

Adults ages 65 and older – most of whom are covered by Medicare– are more likely than younger adults to know these regulations are currently in place. But still, fewer than half of older adults are aware of these provisions. Twice the share of older adults (those ages 65 and older) are aware of the cap on monthly insulin costs for people with Medicare (44%) compared to those under the age of 65 (20%). Older adults are also more likely than younger adults to know there is a law that sets an annual limit on out-of-pocket drug costs for people with Medicare (34% v. 21%) and government negotiation requirements for some prescription drugs for people with Medicare (31% v. 23%). However, few adults in either age

group are aware there is a law in place that penalizes drug companies for increasing prices faster than the rate of inflation (5% of those ages 65 and older and 11% of those under age 65).

Figure 12

Awareness Of Most Medicare Provisions In The Inflation Reduction Act Is Higher Among Adults Ages 65 And Olde

Percent who say there is a federal law in place that...

	Under age 65	Ages 65 and older
Caps the cost of insulin for people with Medicare at \$35 per month	20%	44%
Places an annual limit on out-of-pocket prescription drug costs for people with Medicare		34%
Requires the federal government to negotiate the price of some prescription drugs for people with Medicare		31%
Penalizes drug companies for increasing prices faster than the rate of inflation for people with Medicare	11%	5%

NOTE: All items asked of respondents are summaries of provisions included in the Inflation Reduction Act. See topline for full question wording.

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METHODOLOGY (HTTPS://WWW.KFF.ORG/REPORT-SECTION/KFF-HEALTH-TRACKING-POLL-JULY-2023-THE-PUBLICS-VIEWS-OF-NEW-PRESCRIPTION-WEIGHT-LOSS-DRUGS-AND-PRESCRIPTION-DRUG-COSTS-METHODOLOGY/)

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