
Opinions Towards Pharmacare in Canada

National Pharmacare – What does it and should it mean?

As federal Liberal and NDP MPs work to finalize a bill this session on their joint commitment of national pharmacare coverage, Pollara Strategic Insights is releasing this comprehensive survey of how Canadians understand the idea of national pharmacare, where it ranks in their health priorities, and their preferences on the design of the program.

In short, Canadians are fair and compassionate. They want people who don't have drug coverage to have it. They want the failings of the current health system addressed more urgently. And they believe that achieving universality through support for the underinsured is a better approach than reinventing the pharmacare wheel with an expensive, new government program.



Methodology

Online survey of randomly-selected sample of 4,001 adult (18+) Canadians

Field Window

June 13 to June 23, 2023

Reliability (*)

Online samples cannot be assigned a margin of error. As a guideline, a probability sample of this size carries a margin of error of $\pm 1.5\%$, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error is larger for sub-segments.

The data was weighted by the most current gender, age, & region Census data, to ensure the sample reflects the actual population of adult Canadians.

Region	Number of Interviews (Unweighted)	Margin of error*
Newfoundland & Labrador	208	$\pm 6.8\%$
Nova Scotia	218	$\pm 6.6\%$
Prince Edward Island	119	$\pm 9.0\%$
New Brunswick	216	$\pm 6.7\%$
Quebec	610	$\pm 4.0\%$
Ontario	814	$\pm 3.4\%$
Manitoba	405	$\pm 4.9\%$
Saskatchewan	403	$\pm 4.9\%$
Alberta	501	$\pm 4.4\%$
British Columbia	507	$\pm 4.4\%$
Canada	4,001	$\pm 1.5\%$

Key Findings



45%

of Canadians prefer a “fill in the gaps” pharmacare model, while 27% support a single-payer model, and 14% would prefer the government not expand pharmacare

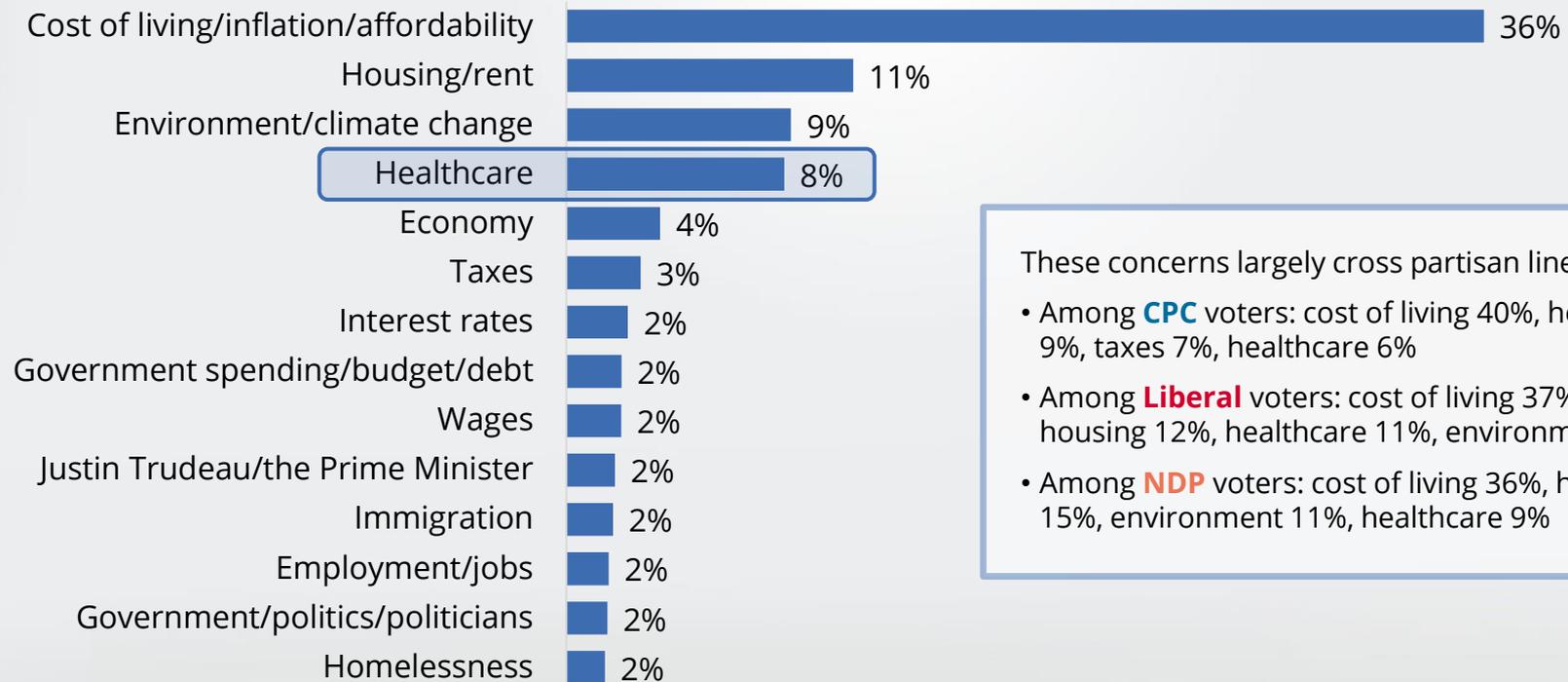
- Four-in-five (78%) Canadians have an existing prescription drug plan, and most (71%) are satisfied with their plan.
- Though not a top healthcare *priority*, there is broad support for a national universal prescription drug coverage program *at the conceptual level (78%)*.
- In all parts of the country, and among the voters for all parties, **there is a preference for a national prescription drug coverage program that covers Canadians who are not currently covered rather than a program that covers all Canadians and replaces existing plans.**
- The majority of NDP voters would consider both pharmacare models tested as evidence the Liberals are honouring the supply agreement with the NDP, though they show a *preference* for a fill in the gaps model over a single payer model.



Healthcare System Priorities

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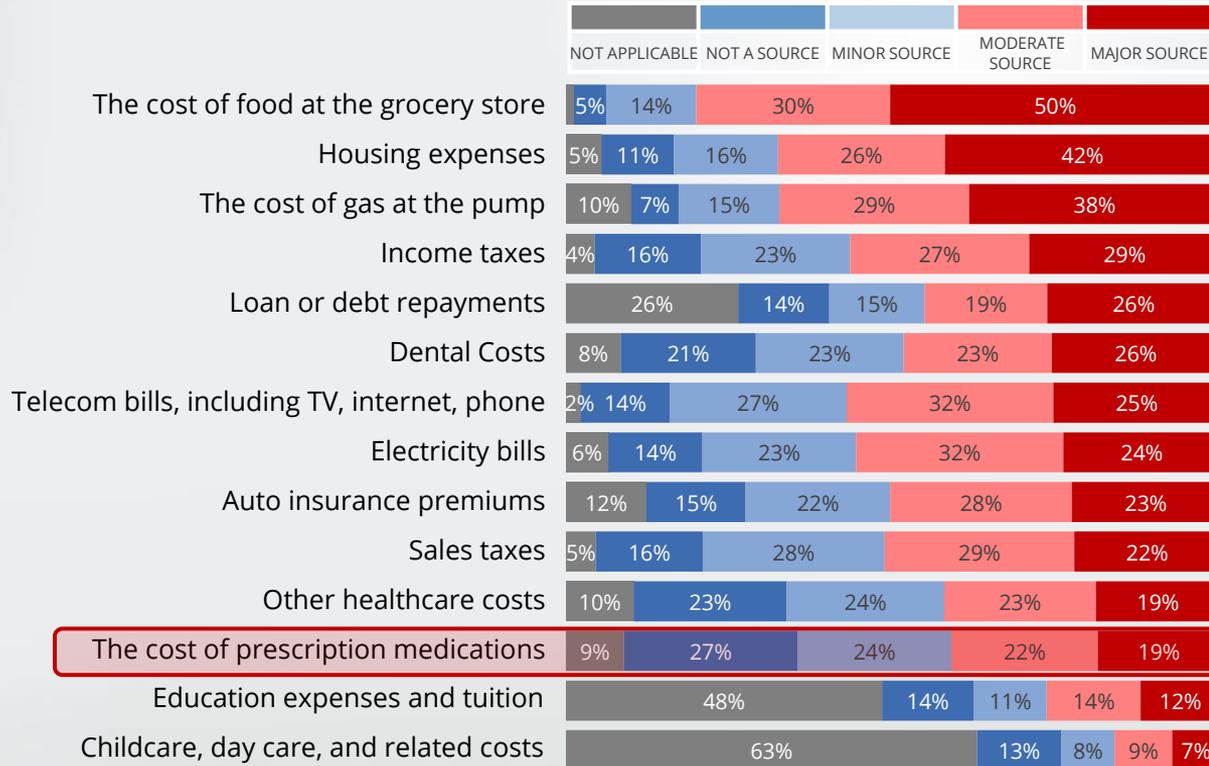
Cost-of-living is the largest top-of-mind issue for Canadians, with environment and healthcare secondary concerns



These concerns largely cross partisan lines:

- Among **CPC** voters: cost of living 40%, housing 9%, taxes 7%, healthcare 6%
- Among **Liberal** voters: cost of living 37%, housing 12%, healthcare 11%, environment 9%
- Among **NDP** voters: cost of living 36%, housing 15%, environment 11%, healthcare 9%

Prescription medication is a relatively low cost of living stressor



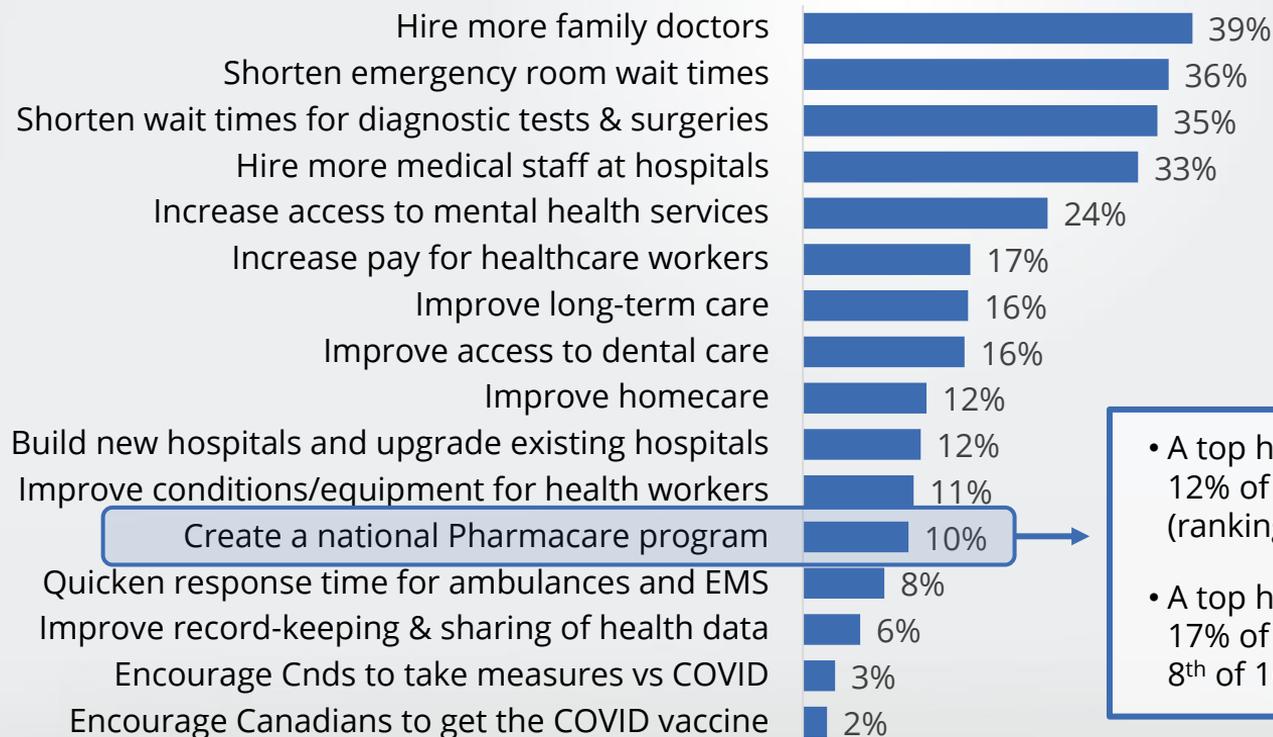
Prescription meds most likely to be a major source of stress for:

- Women 50-64 (27%)
- Under \$50k income (26%)
- No prescription medication plan (37%)



For each of the following items **related to the cost of living**, please indicate if it is a major source of stress, a moderate source of stress, a minor source of stress, or not a source of stress at all **for you and your household?** (Base: All respondents N=4001)

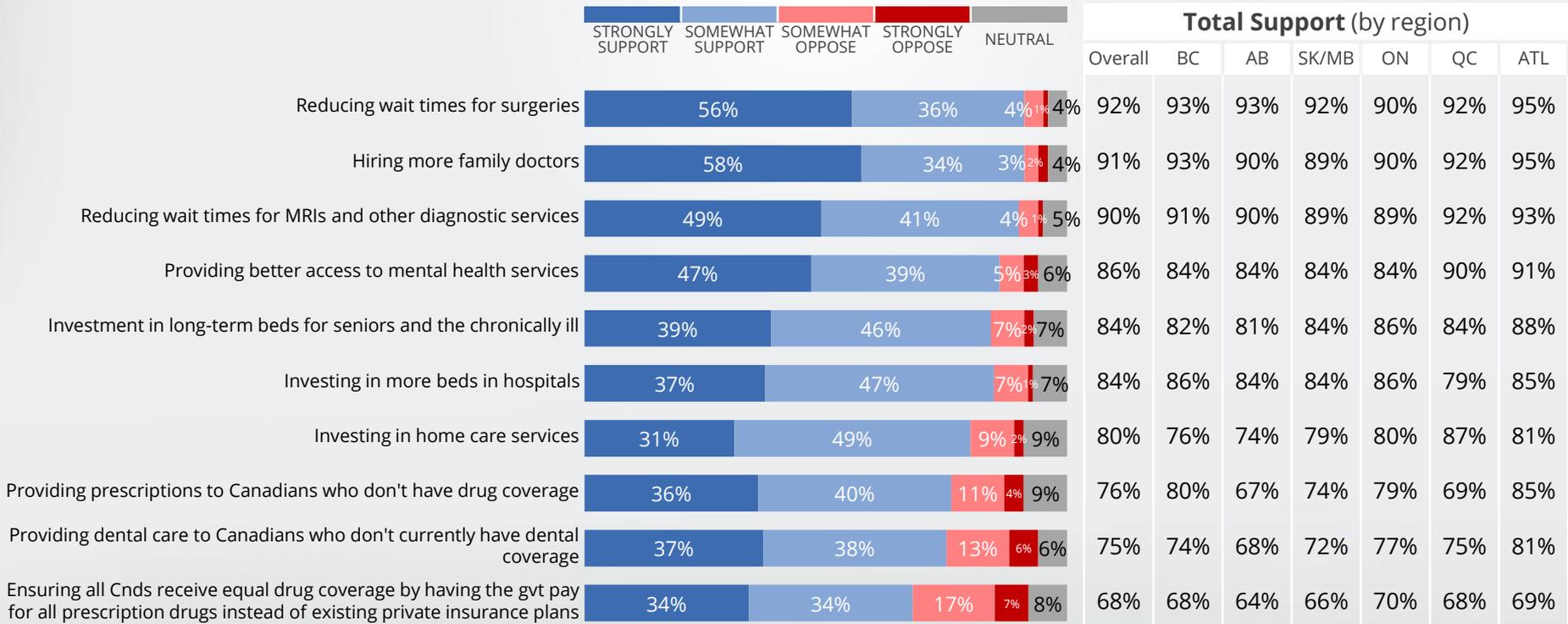
Hiring family doctors, staff, and shortening waiting times are top healthcare priorities



- A top health priority for 12% of **Liberal** voters (ranking 9th of 16 issues)
- A top health priority for 17% of **NDP** voters (ranking 8th of 16 issues)



Widespread support for both pharmacare models, but support *stronger* for other health investments



As you know, the federal government only has so much money they can spend, without having to raise taxes. | With this in mind, do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose each of the following for the **first new dollars** that the federal government invests in health care? (Base: Total N=4001)

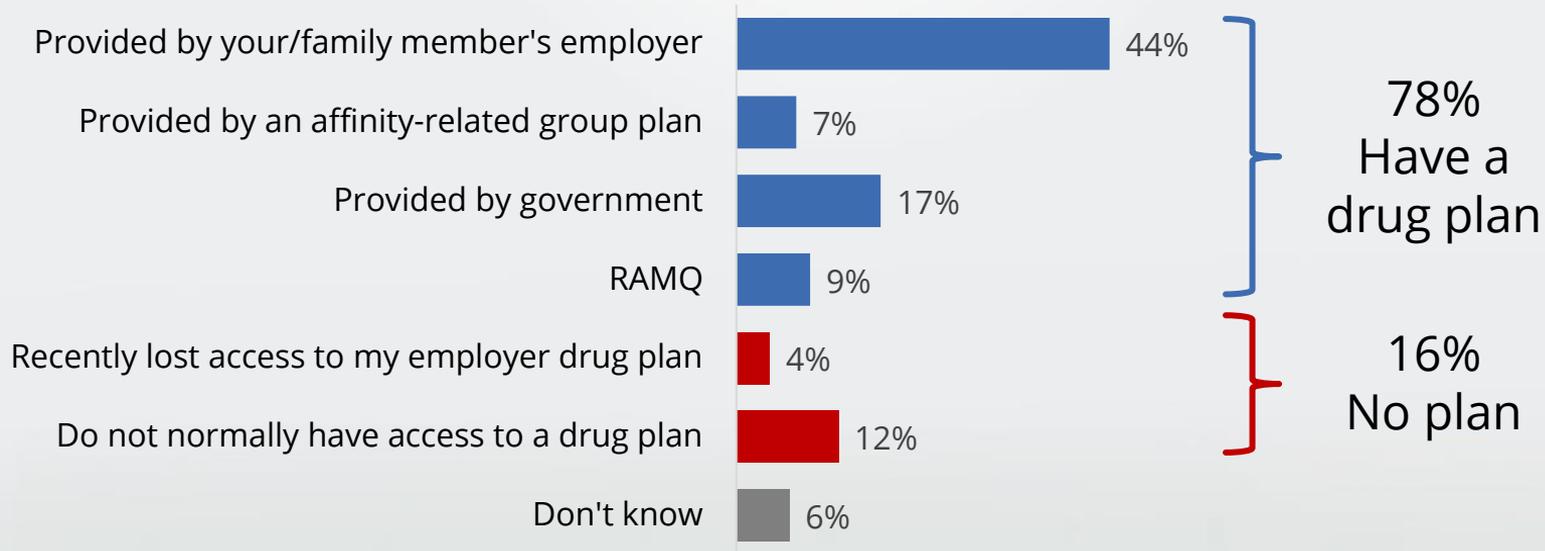


Existing Prescription Drug Plans

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Four-in-five Canadians have a drug plan, most have a plan provided by an employer or family member's employer

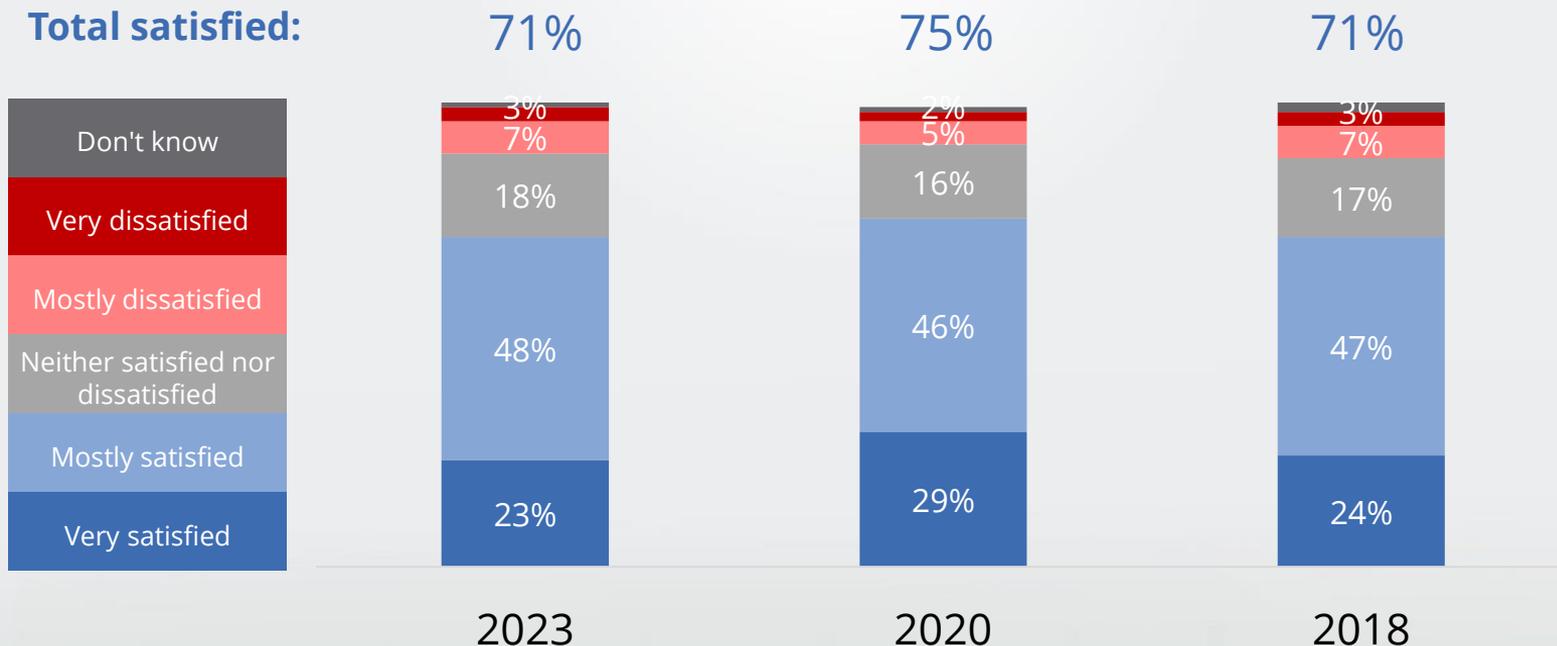
- 86% of seniors have a prescription drug plan (compared to 70% of those under 35).
- 94% of Quebecers report having plan, thanks to 37% who have RAMQ.
- 87% of Canadians earning \$100k+ a year have a prescription drug plan (compared to 70% of those earning < \$50k).



Which of the following best describes your current prescription drug insurance plan? (Base: Total N=4001)

Seven-in-ten Canadians are satisfied with their current drug plan

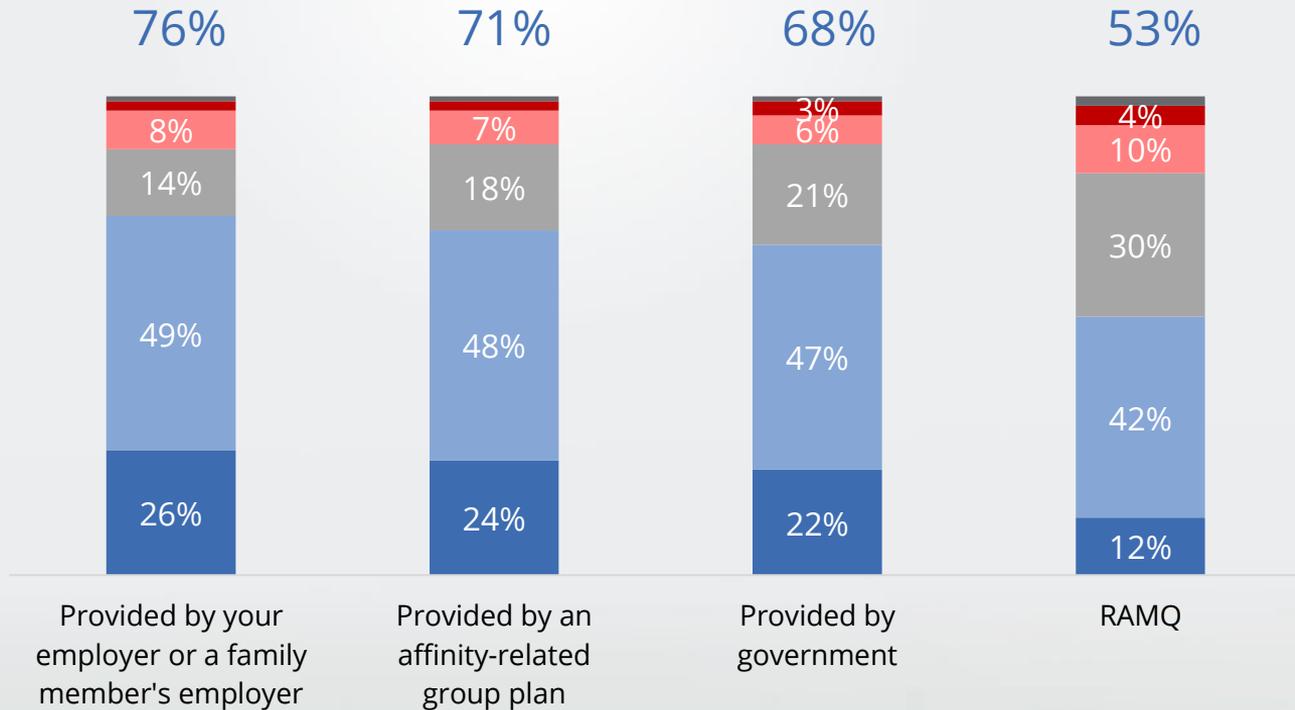
- Satisfaction levels are down slightly from 2020, though this marks a return to 2018 levels.



Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the prescription drug plan you currently have access to? (Base: Have a drug plan N=3104)

Satisfaction is higher with employer-provided plans than government-provided plans

Total satisfied:



Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the prescription drug plan you currently have access to? (Base: Have a drug plan N=3104)



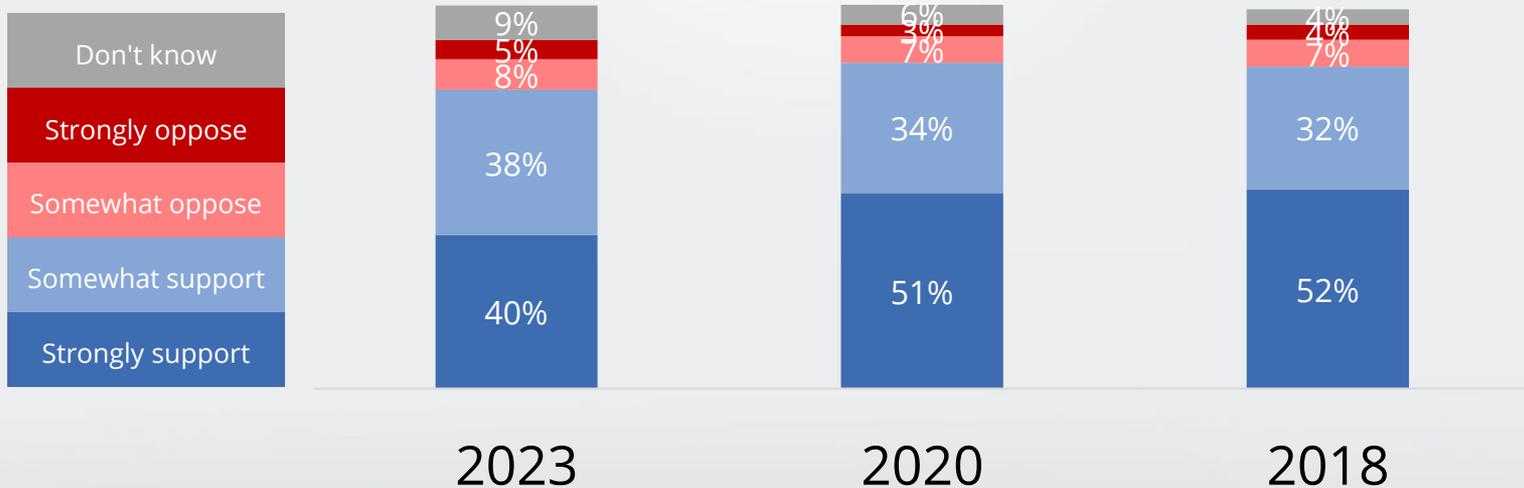
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Widespread support for “national universal prescription drug coverage program”, but at lower levels than recent years

- Support is much higher among Liberal (91%) and NDP (93%) voters than among CPC voters (51%).

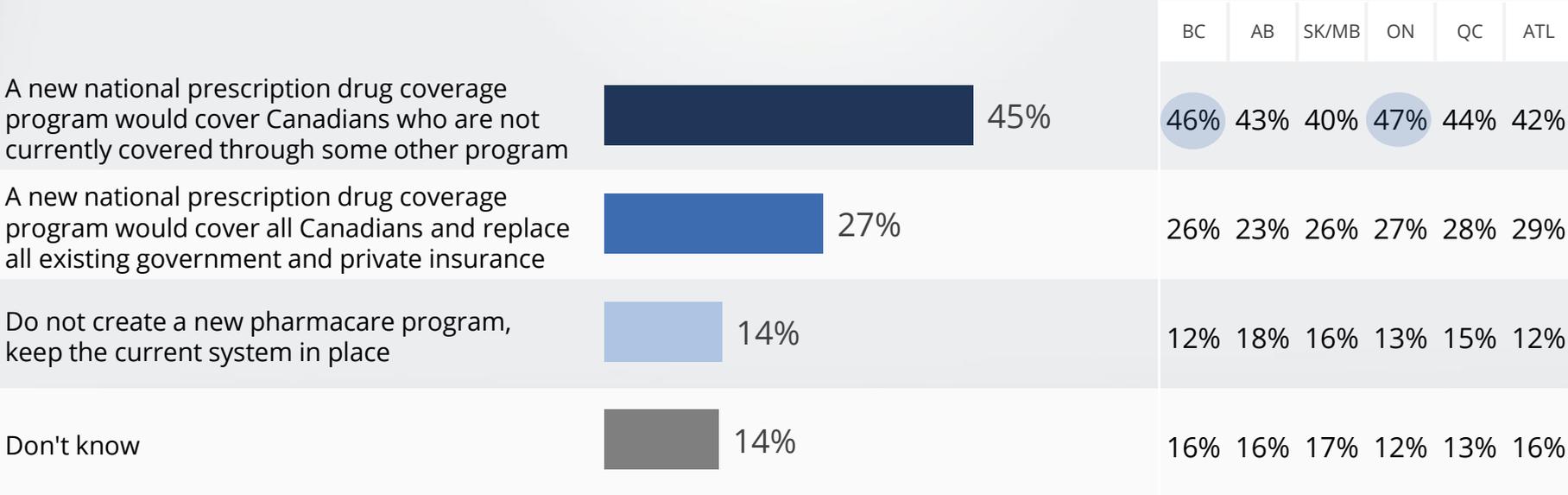
Total support:



Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the idea of a national universal prescription drug coverage program that would provide all Canadians access to the prescription medications they need? (Base: All respondents N=4001)

Plurality of Canadians – 45% – prefer a pharmacare program that covers Canadians who are not currently covered through some other program

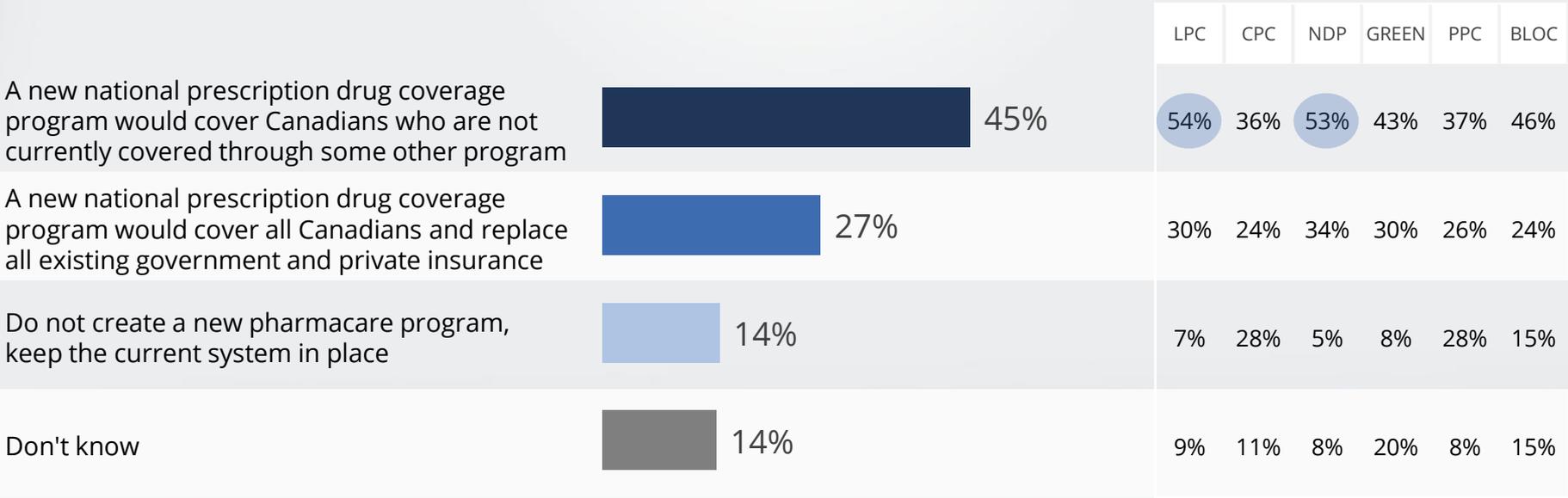
Preferred Approach to a Universal Prescription Drug Coverage Program



Which one of the following approaches to universal prescription drug coverage comes closest to your preferred approach?
 (Base: All respondents N=4001)

Majority of Liberal, NDP voters prefer program that covers those who are not currently covered through another program

Preferred Approach to a Universal Prescription Drug Coverage Program



Which one of the following approaches to universal prescription drug coverage comes closest to your preferred approach?
 (Base: All respondents N=4001)

Both pharmacare models would be interpreted as the Liberals honouring their agreement with the NDP

- A “fill in the gaps” model would be seen as the Liberals keeping their pharmacare agreement with the NDP by the majority of Liberal (keeping: 73% / breaking: 7%) and NDP (keeping: 59% / breaking: 12%) voters.
- A pharmacare model that replaces existing plans would be viewed similarly, albeit slightly less positively, by both Liberal (keeping: 65% / breaking: 10%) and NDP (keeping: 57% / breaking: 12%) voters.

NDP voters graphed

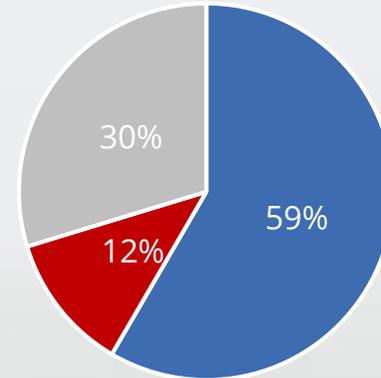
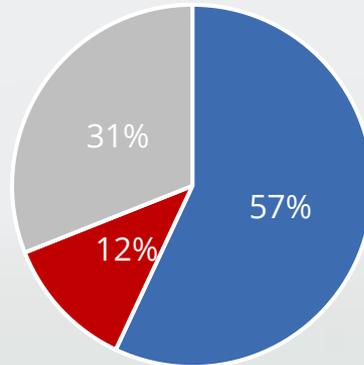
Drug coverage program that covers all Canadians and **replace all existing government and private insurance plans.**

Drug coverage program that covers Canadians who are **not currently covered through some other existing government or private plan.**

Yes, this would be keeping their agreement

No, this would be breaking their agreement

Don't know



Let's assume that by 2025, the federal Liberals introduce a new national prescription drug coverage program that covers all Canadians... Would you feel the Liberals have kept their end of the agreement with the NDP on pharmacare? (Base: All respondents, split sampled N= >2000)

The background features a stylized illustration of two hands, one in blue and one in red, holding several white, oval-shaped pills. The overall color palette is a gradient from blue on the left to red on the right.

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