

## IMPACT OF DRUG PRICES ON NORTH CAROLINA SENIORS

*Older adults in North Carolina are disproportionately impacted by higher drug prices. Communities of older people have consistently been forced to handle higher health care costs, such as the [“age tax”](#) that existed before the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. **Seniors consistently take more medication for chronic illnesses, and the impact of these high costs results in financial strain for hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians, to say nothing of the millions of seniors across the US.***

*According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, [Medicare Part D](#) is a “voluntary outpatient prescription drug benefit for people with Medicare” that 45 million of the more than 60 million people on Medicare nationwide rely on to access their drugs. Despite its intent, Medicare Part D recipients often fall into the program’s “donut hole” and are responsible for 100 percent of their medication costs.*

### SNAPSHOT: NORTH CAROLINA SENIORS ON PART D

Medicare Beneficiaries Enrolled in Part D	1,384,216
Average Drug Cost per Part D Enrollee	\$3,899
Part D Average Drug Fills per Enrollee	57
Part D Enrollees Receiving Gap Coverage	165,931

[Source](#)

# IMPACT

*In general, older adults have more health issues and, as a result, rely on more medications on a regular basis than younger Americans. More than half of all seniors – [54 percent](#) – take four or more prescription drugs. Further, [7 million seniors](#) in the United States can't afford their prescription drugs, while a majority of prescription drugs that older Americans skip treat serious, chronic health conditions. Lower drug costs would benefit all Americans, but older communities would especially feel the benefits.*

34 percent of adults have noticed an [increase](#) in the price of their prescription drugs in the past year.

22 percent of adults 60 or older with a chronic condition have [stopped taking a prescription medication](#) because of the cost.

The majority of older Americans, regardless of party affiliation, believe that the costs of prescription drugs are [unreasonable](#).

Nearly half (45 percent) of all older Americans in [fair or poor health](#) have difficulty affording their prescription drugs.

In a 2019 survey, [half of all Americans](#), including older adults, dealt with a problem accessing the drugs they need despite having insurance with prescription drug coverage.

People between the age of 50 and 64 are the [most likely](#) to not be able to afford their prescription drugs.

**On average, older adults take [four to five](#) prescription medicines per month. Individuals who take 4 or more medications are [more than twice as likely](#) to have difficulty affording their prescription drugs.**

1 out of every 5 older adults reports [not taking their medications](#) as prescribed due to cost. Of this group, more than half did not tell their doctor or healthcare provider.

According to a Morning Consult survey from July 2019, 39 percent of seniors on Medicare “are worried about their ability to pay [out-of-pocket costs](#) for their prescription drugs.”

Americans 65 or older are about 15 percent of the U.S. population but consume around [34 percent of prescription drugs](#).

# SOLUTIONS

*As pharmaceutical companies continue to charge more for prescription drugs and funnel the additional profits into stock buybacks and executive compensation, American taxpayers are suffering. Taxpayers are paying more, in part, because Medicare cannot negotiate with pharmaceutical companies to lower the cost of drugs.*

*1 out of 5 North Carolinians, over [1.9 million people](#), is on Medicare and 1.3 million are eligible for prescription drug coverage, such as Medicare Part D. The Lower Drug Costs Now Act, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives in [December 2019](#), would allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices. This would reduce the cost of medications and potentially improve medication compliance for all Americans – a profound impact on reducing out-of-pocket costs for seniors.*

**In general, the price of prescription drugs in the United States would [go down](#) if Medicare had negotiating power.**

**According to a survey done by the Kaiser Family Foundation, [82 percent of older Americans](#), including 81 percent of Republicans, support allowing the government “to negotiate with drug companies to get a lower price for people with Medicare.”**

If Medicare could negotiate with pharmaceutical companies, these negotiated prices would be available to [all Americans](#), including those with private insurance.

The Lower Drug Costs Now Act would put in place a \$2,000 [out-of-pocket limit](#) on prescription drug costs for Medicare beneficiaries.

Enacting the Lower Drug Costs Now Act would save the federal government at least [\\$100 billion](#) over a 10 year period, to say nothing of the patients who need prescription medications.