

## **Most Would Pay Higher Taxes To Fund a Seniors' Drug Plan**

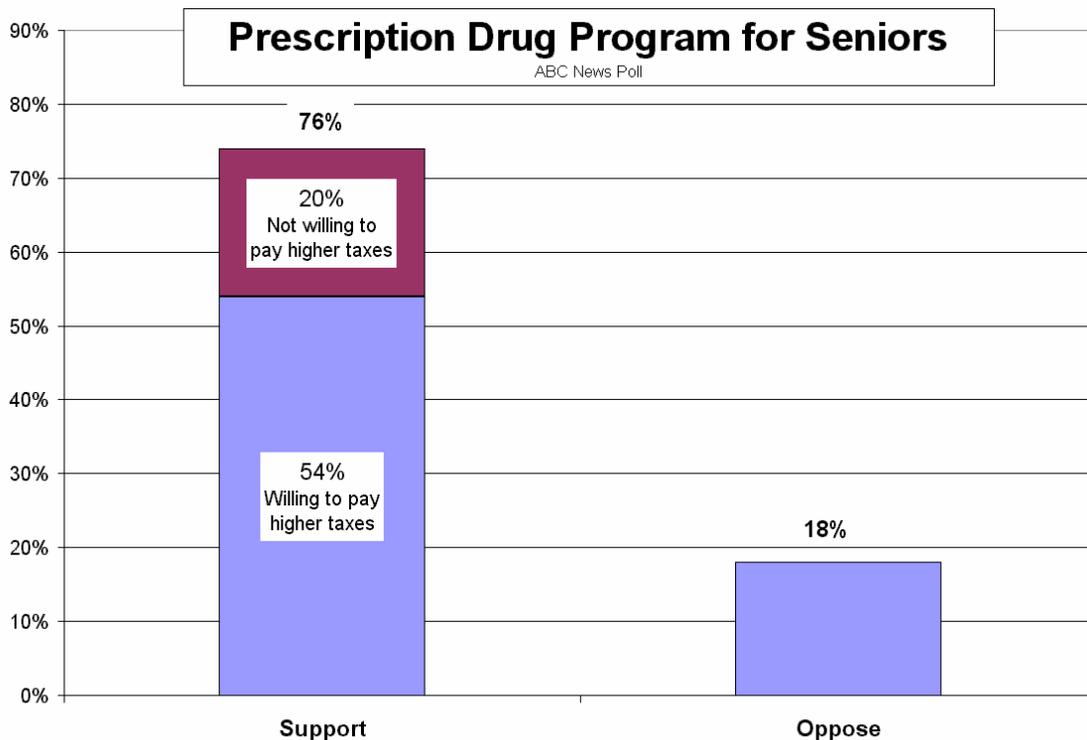
Americans overwhelmingly support a new federal program to help senior citizens buy prescription drugs – and most say they'd be willing to pay higher taxes to fund it.

Three-quarters say they'd support a new prescription-drug benefit – not a surprise, given its obvious appeal. More to the point is the majority's willingness to pay the way: Fifty-four percent say they'd accept an increase in taxes to cover the cost.

Older adults, though, are less apt to want to pay for such a program, even though they'd benefit from it most directly. Some of that could reflect financial concerns; some could indicate doubts among seniors about the complexities of the program.

The overall result, like similar ones before it, counters conventional wisdom that Americans want social programs, but don't want to pay for them. Over the years, across a variety of popular programs, most have expressed a willingness to foot the bill.

On this issue, the House and Senate are reconciling measures to subsidize prescription drugs for Medicare recipients; the bills don't specify how to pay for the program. George W. Bush has endorsed the effort at a cost of up to \$400 billion over 10 years.



Without being asked about a tax increase, 76 percent of Americans support the concept, while 18 percent oppose it. Fifty-four percent support it *and* would pay higher taxes for it, while 20 percent like the idea but don't want to pay higher taxes to meet the cost.

AGE GAP – There's a somewhat surprising generation gap in these results: Sixty percent of Americans younger than 55 are willing to pay higher taxes for the program, even though it won't benefit them for decades. But among those who are closer to receiving the benefit, willingness to pay declines, to 40 percent of those aged 55 and up (it's about the same among those 55-64 as it is among those at the retirement age of 65 and up.)

While senior citizens make up about 12 percent of the population, they account for about 40 percent of the spending on prescription drugs, according to AARP, a seniors lobbying group. Still, retirement-aged Americans are somewhat less likely than their juniors to favor the plan even when paying for it isn't mentioned, 67 percent to 78 percent.

	All	18-54	55+
Support NET	76%	79	70
Support, willing to pay	54	60	40
Support, unwilling to pay	20	17	27
Oppose	18	16	21

By contrast, in an ABC News poll in April, senior citizens were more likely than younger adults to support increased funding for Alzheimer's research. Both groups in that poll were equally willing to pay higher taxes to subsidize such research.

PARTY – Among Republicans, who in general are more averse to government programs and to higher taxes alike, 71 percent support a new drug benefit program in general, and half would pay higher taxes to fund it. Support for the program, and willingness to pay, is higher among Democrats.

	Dem	Ind	Rep
Support NET	82%	73	71
Support, willing to pay	61	54	50
Support, unwilling to pay	19	17	20
Oppose	13	20	23

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone July 23-27, 2003, among a random national sample of 1,023 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by David Morris.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:  
[http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/Poll\\_Vault/Poll\\_Vault.html](http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/Poll_Vault/Poll_Vault.html)

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934, or Lisa Finkel, (212) 456-6190

Results follow:

1. (and 2) Would you support or oppose a new federal program that would help pay prescription drug expenses for senior citizens, at a cost of 400 billion dollars over the next 10 years? (IF SUPPORT) Would you be willing or unwilling to pay higher taxes to fund that program?

-----Support-----						
	NET	Would pay higher taxes	Wouldn't pay higher taxes	DK	Oppose	No op.
7/27/03	76	54	20	2	18	6

\*\*\*END\*\*\*