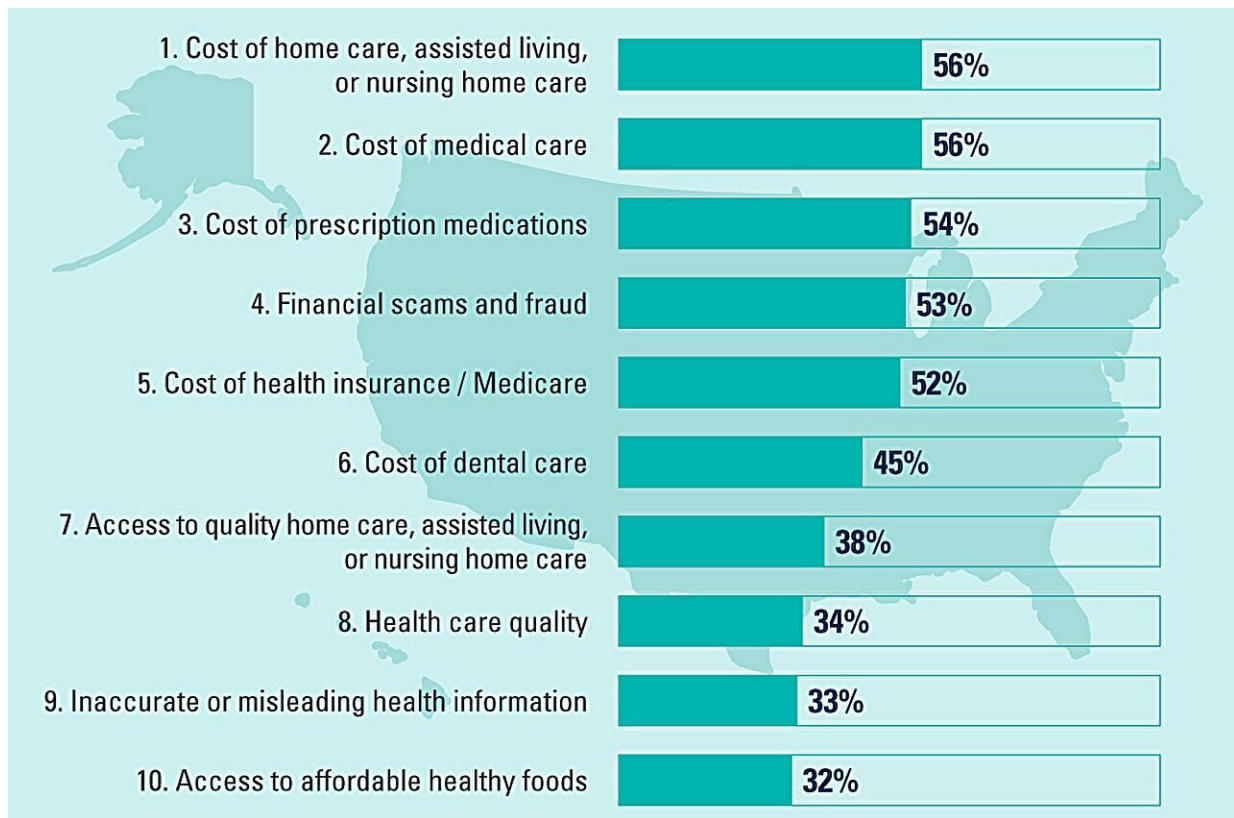


As election approaches, national poll shows which health topics concern older adults most

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Top health concerns among people age 50 and older, showing the percentage who said they are "very concerned" about each topic for older adults in their community. Credit: University of Michigan

More than half of the people who voted in the 2020 election were aged 50 and older, making this age group a key demographic for candidates

up and down the ballot.

Now, a [study](#) shows what issues top their lists of health-related concerns going into this November's election.

Five of the top six issues that the highest percentage of [older adults](#) reported being very concerned about have to do with the cost of different kinds of health care, from medical care and [prescription drugs](#) to [long-term care](#), health insurance and dental care. Financial scams and fraud, which can cause intense stress and mental distress, also made the top six.

Published in *JAMA* by a team from the University of Michigan's Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation, the study is based on data from the [National Poll on Healthy Aging](#). The poll, conducted in February and March 2024, asked more than 2,500 adults ages 50 and older nationwide how concerned they were about 26 different health-related topics for older adults in their community, not just for themselves.

Five of the top six topics all earned a 'very concerned' rating from at least 50% of older adults, with [dental care](#) costs not far behind at 45%.

The new research shows some differences among older adults based on age, gender and self-reported political ideology.

For example, 67% of those who called themselves liberal were very concerned about the cost of medical care for older adults in their community, compared with 56% of those who called themselves moderate and 51% who said they are politically conservative.

When it came to the cost of prescription drugs, 64% of self-identified liberals said they were very concerned, compared with 54% of

moderates and 51% of conservatives.

The new analysis also shows that higher percentages of women than men were very concerned about both types of cost, at 59% vs. 54% for medical care costs and 58% vs. 51% for cost of prescription drugs.

Those in their 50s and early 60s were also more likely to say they're very concerned about the cost of medical care for older adults in their community than those over age 65, at 60% vs. 53%.

And among those who live in [rural areas](#), 62% said they are very concerned about the cost of medical care, compared with 56% of those living in [metropolitan areas](#) that include both cities and their suburbs.

"It's important for candidates for president, the U.S. House and Senate, and state offices to be well-informed about the top concerns of older voters," says John Z. Ayanian, M.D., M.P.P., lead author of the new study and director of IHPI.

"There have been efforts in recent years to reduce costs of some types of care for older adults, especially those enrolled in Medicare, but these findings suggest a strong interest in more action, across the political spectrum and various demographic groups."

Rounding out the top 10 concerns were access to quality care in their home or nursing homes and assisted living facilities; health care quality; inaccurate or misleading [health information](#); and access to affordable healthy foods.

The new study is based on a survey response rate of 71% and a statistically adjusted analysis of results from the poll's core population.

More information: Leading health-related concerns of older adults

before the 2024 election, *JAMA* (2024). DOI: [10.1001/jama.2024.14353](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2024.14353), jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/.../1001/jama.2024.14353

Read the reports issued in May with additional results from [the full poll sample](#) and a sample of [Michigan adults age 50 and older](#). An [interactive data visualization](#) for the samples used for the May release is also available.

Provided by University of Michigan

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