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POLLING AND MESSAGING ON PHARMACEUTICAL PRICING REFORM

As Democrats move forward with legislation on prescription drug costs, their central message should be a moral case against pharmaceutical industry profits and the idea that patents are a privilege the industry has abused.

On behalf of Data for Progress, YouGov Blue fielded an online survey including several pharmaceutical reform proposals. The survey ran on YouGov’s online panel 10/11/19-10/14/19 and included 1,024 registered voters. The survey focused on government intervention in generic pharmaceutical manufacturing and the persuasiveness of arguments in favor of generic alternatives manufacturing.

Executive summary

- ▶ Voters support pharmaceutical reforms, including those that would grant the government significant leverage in drug prices.
- ▶ Across the board, Independents side with Democrats on pharmaceutical reform, as do Republican voters on many issues.
- ▶ Despite the belief that lack of access to pharmaceutical drugs is a rural phenomenon, we do not find significant differences in overall support by voters’ urban/suburban/rural status.

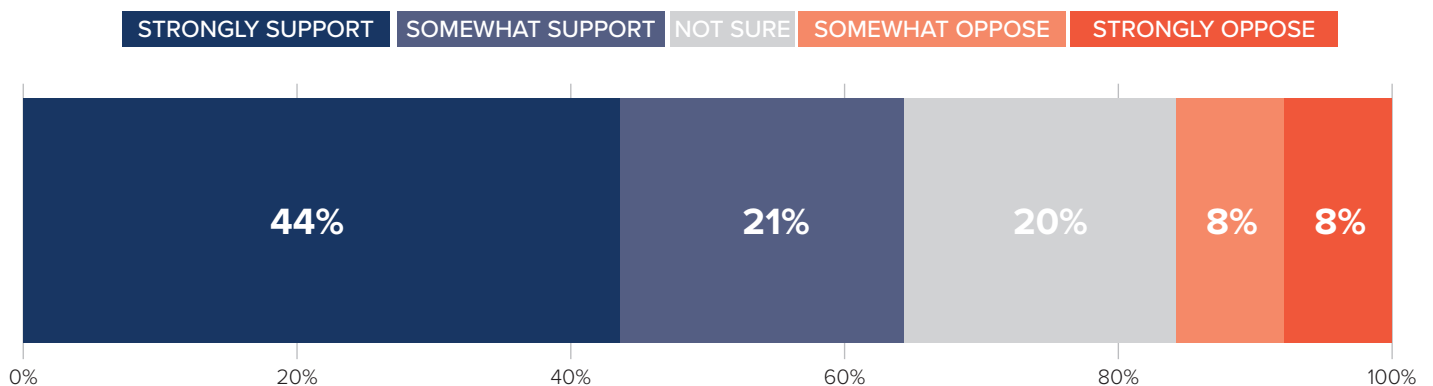
Support for removing public-private noninterference clause for drug pricing

Early in the survey, we asked about a key component of current Democratic pharmaceutical legislation: allowing Medicare to negotiate the price of drugs. We asked respondents,

“Do you support or oppose a policy removing the noninterference clause that stops Medicare from negotiating drug prices? This would allow the federal government to negotiate the price of drugs with pharmaceutical companies.”

Fully 65 percent of respondents said they strongly or somewhat supported removing the noninterference clause, while 20 percent said they were not sure of their support level. 8 percent of respondents indicated they strongly opposed and 8 percent of respondents indicated they somewhat opposed the measure.

SUPPORT FOR REMOVING THE NONINTERFERENCE CLAUSE ON FEDERAL NEGOTIATION OF DRUG PRICING



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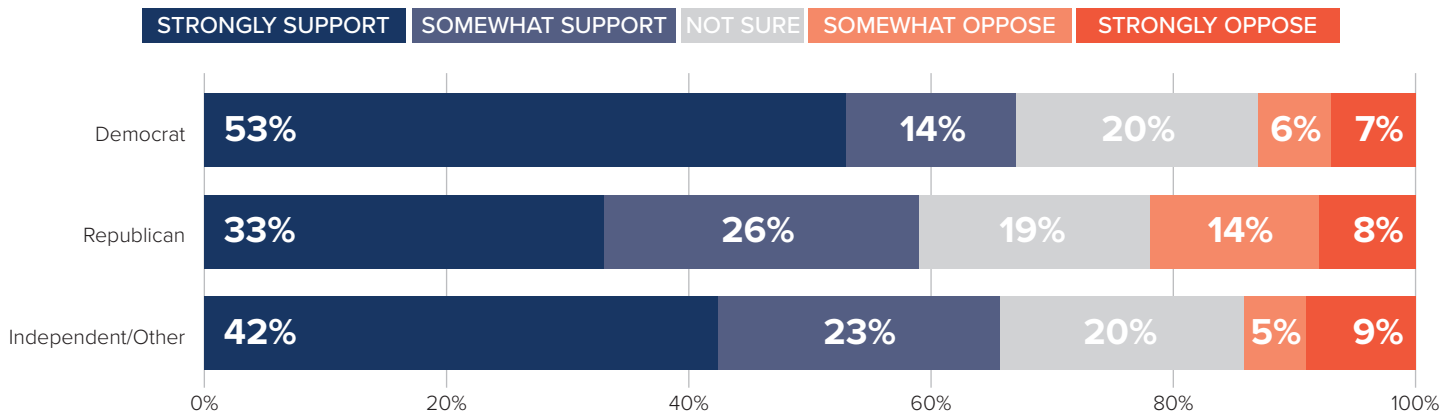
While Democrats were more supportive of the pharmaceutical reform policy, the majority of Republicans still indicated they strongly or somewhat supported removing the noninterference clause. While Republicans were about split between somewhat and strongly supporting the policy, far more supported than opposed removing the noninterference clause overall. On net, the policy enjoys +54 net support among Democrats, +51 percent among Independents, and +37 percent support among Republicans.

Of the survey's 1024 respondents, about 21 percent live in rural areas, 14 percent live in towns, 37 percent live in suburban areas, and 28 percent live in cities. Although many believe that pharmaceutical prices and access to

pharmaceutical drugs are a problem primarily for rural voters, we do not find many differences in support for removing the noninterference clause across the urban/suburban/rural divide. We asked voters if they considered the area they lived in to be rural, a town, a suburb, or a city. A majority of voters within each of these residential categories responded in support of removing the noninterference clause.

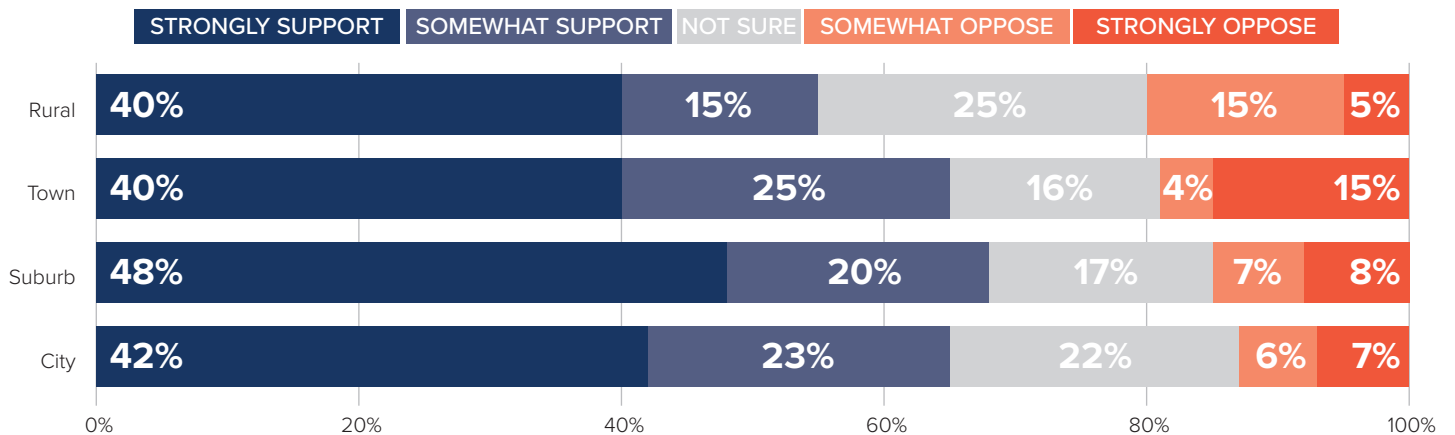
Outright majorities of respondents in each type of geography supported the policy. There is a slight discrepancy in the ways rural- and town- residing respondents responded to the proposed measure; but, overall support levels, overall opposition levels, and uncertainty levels are relatively consistent.

SUPPORT FOR REMOVING THE NONINTERFERENCE CLAUSE ON FEDERAL NEGOTIATION OF DRUG PRICING BY PARTY ID



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SUPPORT FOR REMOVING THE NONINTERFERENCE CLAUSE ON FEDERAL NEGOTIATION OF DRUG PRICING BY TYPE OF AREA WHERE RESPONDENTS LIVE



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Ranking question

We were also interested in testing what sort of arguments voters find to be compelling reasons to expand government authority to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies. To do so, we posed five statements to voters and asked them to rank how convincing or not convincing they found each. Those statements were presented in a randomized order and read read,

Next, you will read some statements arguing for allowing the federal government to revoke pharmaceutical patents to make it easier to manufacture generic alternatives. Please rank those arguments from 1 to 5, with 1 representing “most convincing” and 5 representing “least convincing,” or if you don’t find any of these convincing.

<1> Other countries permit the hasty development of generic alternatives and the pharmaceutical industry does just fine in those countries.

<2> America’s pharmaceutical industry is doing just fine, with profits and salaries high enough that it’s time to put consumers before drug executives.

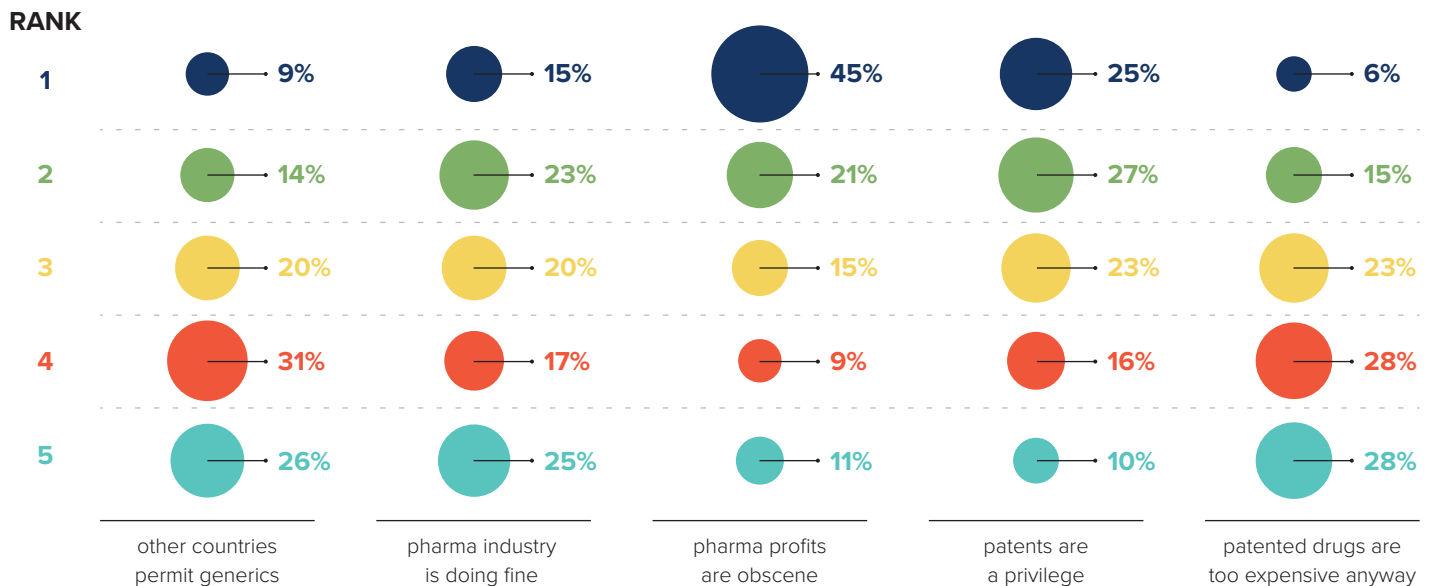
<3> The pharmaceutical industry’s profits are obscene, and it is a matter of moral justice to allow Americans access to affordable drugs from generic providers.

<4> Patents are granted by the government to companies as a privilege, not a right. If these companies are abusing these privileges in the government’s eyes through high prices they should lose those privileges.

<5> Permitting the hasty development of generic drugs will ultimately enrich America’s pharmaceutical industry, as patented American drugs are too expensive to be profitable in other countries.

Across the full sample, respondents were clearly most motivated by the “pharma profits are obscene” statement, with almost half of voters selecting that as their top response. The “patents are a privilege” statement was in a distant second, with the other statements ranked lower.

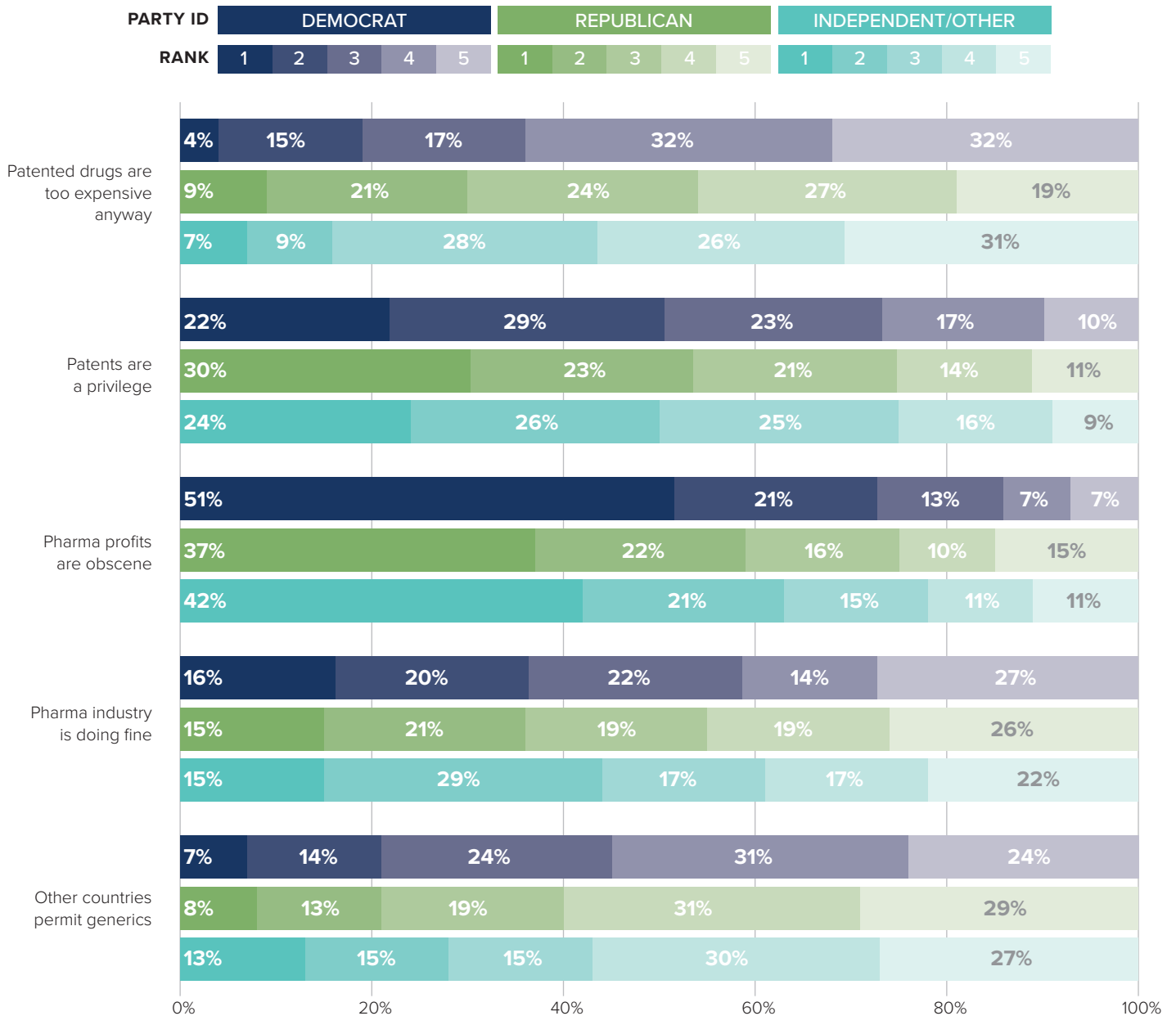
RANKING OF ARGUMENTS FOR PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY REFORM



Even though the “profits are obscene” message contains a clear moral indictment of business activity, Republicans were as swayed by that message as were other voters. About 51 percent of Democrats, 42 percent of Independents, and 37 percent of Republicans ranked that statement first, the top rank for each party identification group.

Indeed, the approximate ranking of each item was the same across party identification groups. Voters clearly preferred the “obscene profits” statement, were split between the “patents are a privilege” and “the pharma industry is doing fine” statements as second choices, and were split on the “drugs are too expensive to sell overseas” and “other countries permit generics” statements as the last place or second-to-last choice.

RANKING OF ARGUMENTS FOR PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY REFORM



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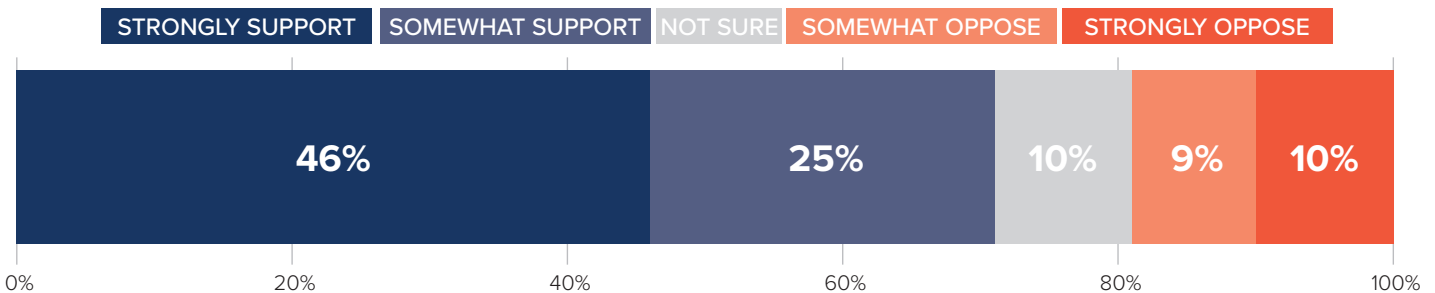
Support for granting the federal government the power to revoke pharmaceutical patents

In addition to the aforementioned question about removing the noninterference clause on Medicare-negotiated drug pricing, we asked respondents if they would “support or oppose a policy allowing the government to revoke patents from pharmaceutical companies if those companies charge prices for their drugs that are too high for most people to afford them?” And, once again a majority of survey respondents responded in support of the government intervention in drug pricing. Here, 71 percent of registered voters indicated they strongly or somewhat supported the proposed policy. The following figure also illustrates an interesting shift toward certainty for this policy; only 10 percent of respondents responded they were ‘Not sure’

about allowing the government to intervene in drug patents when they deemed a specific medicine too costly.

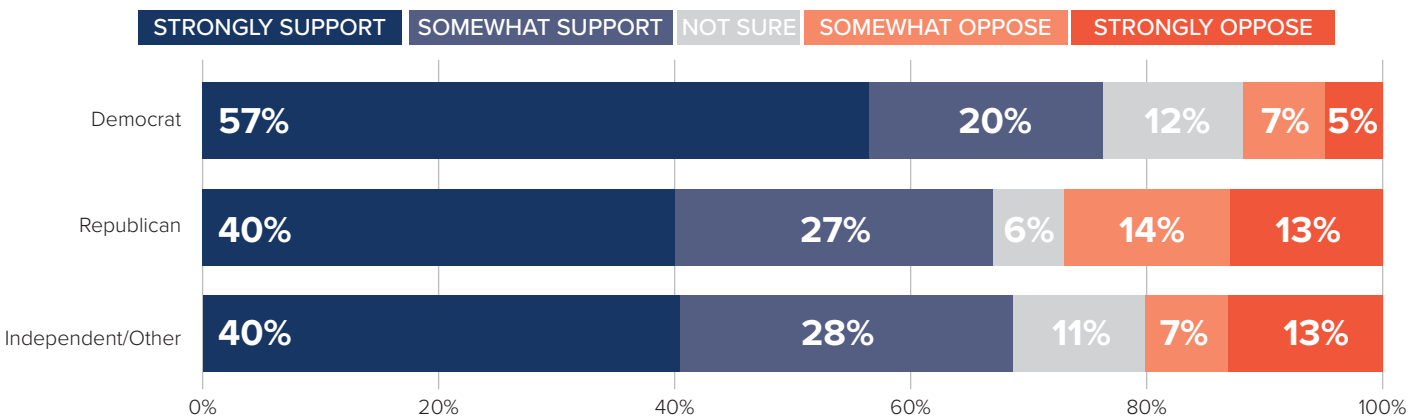
We also broke this question into party identification groups. As expected we observe a slight decrease between overall support levels when comparing Democrats to Independents and again when comparing Independents to Republicans. We also observe a slight increase in overall opposition levels among the same group comparisons. However, once again, it is worthwhile to note that overall support among all three parties is evident and uncertainty remains rather low. This does conflict with the general supposition that Republican voters strongly oppose federal government intervention in private company affairs. But, it is clear that when considering pharmaceutical drug pricing, Republicans did respond supportively, in general, to the proposal of government intervention in pricing medicines and treatments deemed too costly.

SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT REVOKING PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY PATENTS WHEN DRUGS ARE CONSIDERED UNAFFORDABLE



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SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT REVOKING PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY PATENTS WHEN DRUGS ARE CONSIDERED UNAFFORDABLE BY PARTY ID



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Methods

On behalf of Data for Progress, YouGov Blue fielded an online survey including several pharmaceutical reform proposals. The survey ran on YouGov's online panel 10/11/19-10/14/19 and included 1,024 registered voters. The survey focused on government intervention in generic pharmaceutical manufacturing and the persuasiveness of arguments in favor of generic alternatives manufacturing. This survey included a module asking support levels for removing the federal noninterference clause regarding public-private negotiations with pharmaceutical companies and a related message test.

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