
Chartpack



Seniors' Early Experiences with Their New Medicare Drug Plans - June 2006

July 2006

Methodology

Seniors' Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans - the 13th in a series that comprises three large surveys and ten smaller tracking polls - is based on interviews with 1,585 adults ages 65 and older. The survey was designed and analyzed by researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation.

A nationally representative random sample of 1,217 adults ages 18 and older, including 285 participants ages 65 and older, was interviewed about a few topics in the news as part of the ongoing Kaiser Health Poll Report survey (referred to as the "main survey"), and asked the Medicare questions that follow. In addition, a nationally representative random sample of 1,300 adults ages 65 and older was asked the Medicare questions only, for a total of 1,585 seniors. Individuals were contacted by telephone by Princeton Survey Research Associates International between June 8 and June 18, 2006. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

Throughout these findings, we report on several different groups of seniors:

- All seniors (unweighted n=1,585)
- Seniors enrolled in Medicare drug plans, including those who reported being in stand-alone prescription drug plans, Medicare and Medicaid enrollees (i.e. dual eligibles), and Medicare HMO enrollees (40% of all seniors, unweighted n=623).
- Seniors enrolled in stand-alone Medicare drug plans - same as above, but excluding those in Medicare HMOs (32% of all seniors, unweighted n=509)
- Seniors enrolled in stand-alone Medicare drug plans that they chose on their own (as opposed to being assigned to a plan) (25% of all seniors, unweighted n=392)
- Seniors who have used their Medicare drug plans (28% of all seniors, unweighted n=443)

This survey is representative of seniors in the U.S. living outside institutions, but not of all Medicare beneficiaries because the survey did not include seniors living in institutional settings, such as nursing homes, nor younger, pre-65 Medicare beneficiaries with permanent disabilities.

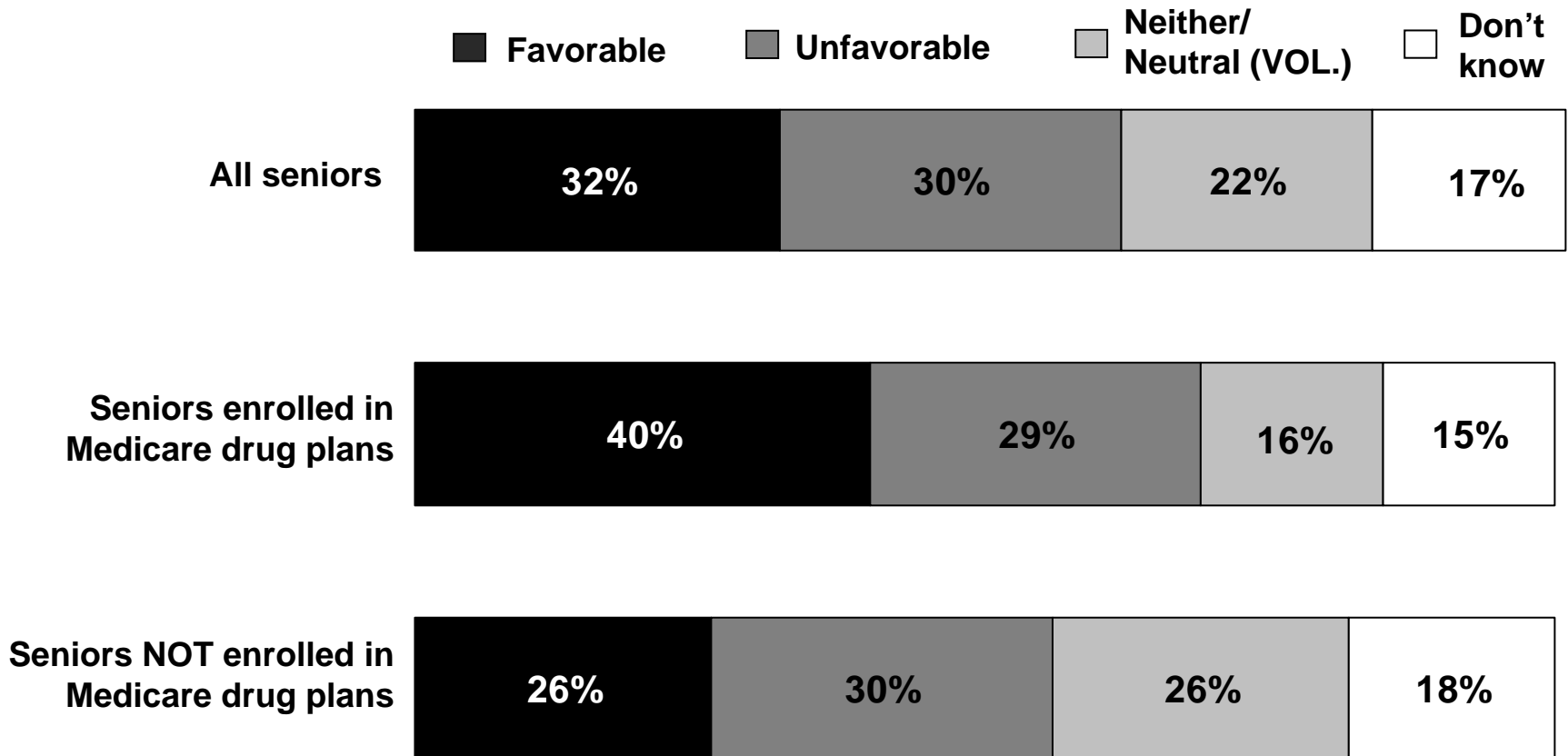
The margin of sampling error for the survey is plus or minus 3 percentage points for all seniors, and plus or minus 4 points for seniors enrolled in Medicare drug plans. For results based on smaller subsets of respondents the margin of sampling error is higher. Note that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

Values less than 0.5% are indicated by an asterisk (*). "VOL" indicates that a response was volunteered by respondent, not an explicitly offered choice.

General Views of the Medicare Drug Benefit

Seniors' Impressions of Medicare Drug Benefit

AMONG SENIORS: Given what you know about it, in general, do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of this new Medicare prescription drug benefit?



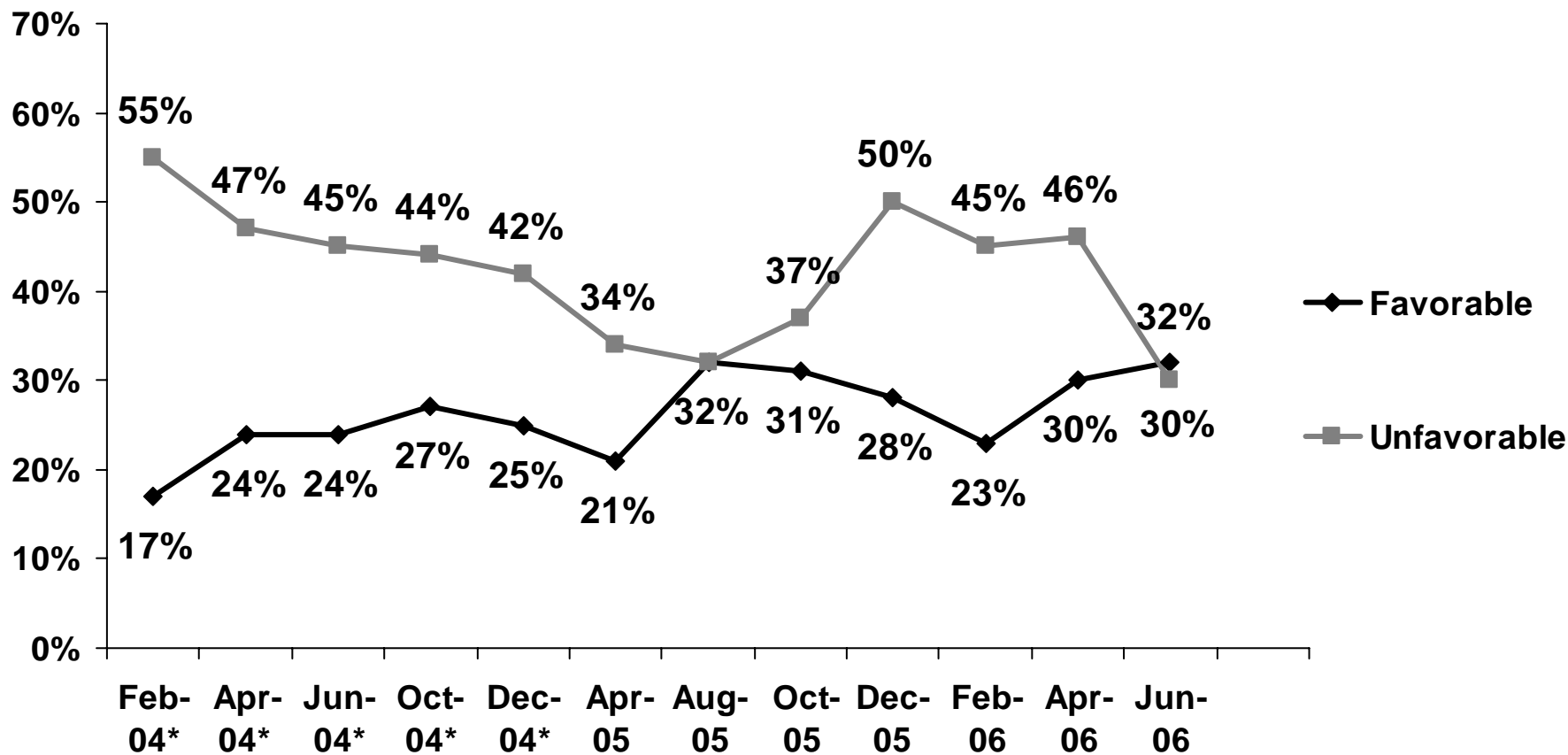
Note: Statistically significant difference between enrolled seniors and seniors who are not enrolled ($p < 0.05$) for favorable impression

Note: "VOL." indicates a volunteered response

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Seniors' Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans* (conducted June 8-18, 2006)

Trends in Seniors' Impressions of Drug Benefit

AMONG SENIORS: Given what you know about it, in general, do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of the new Medicare drug benefit?



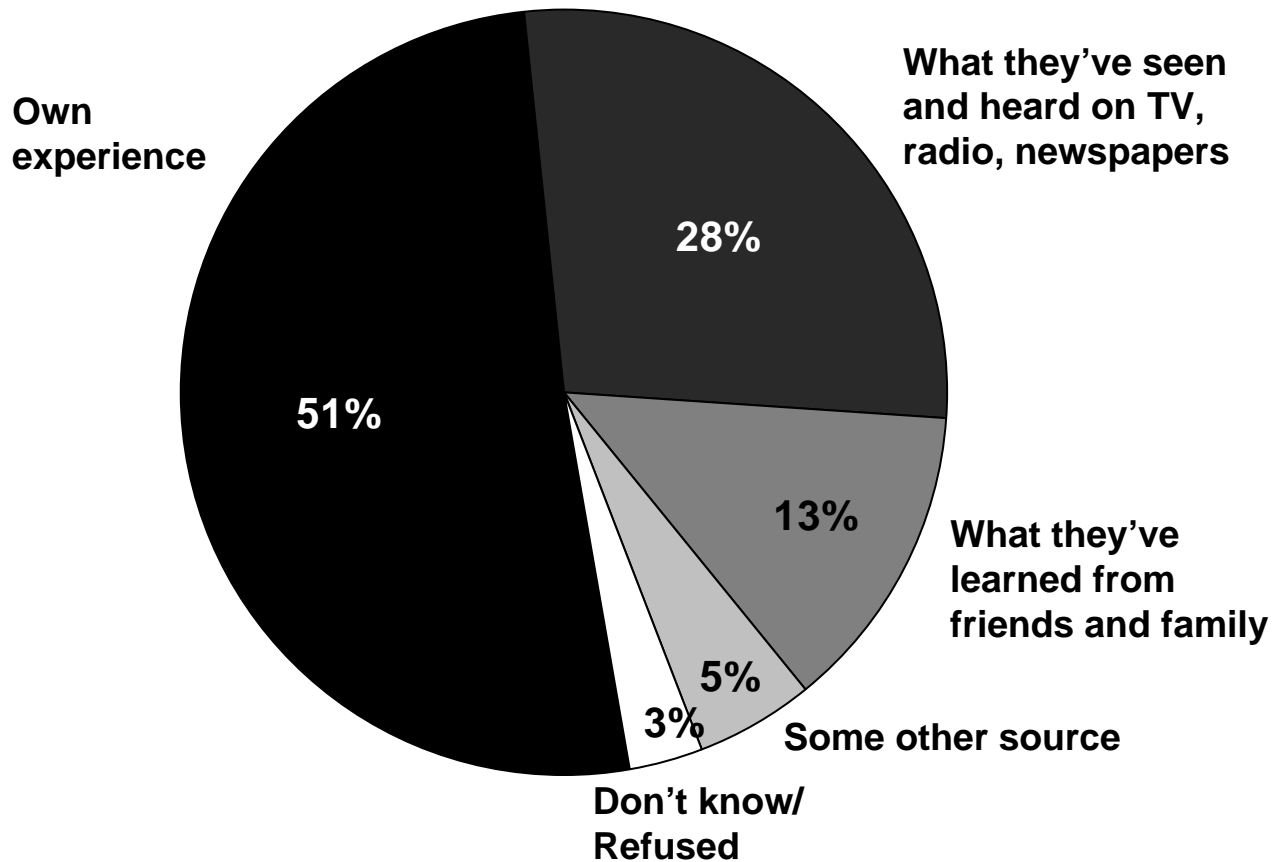
*Question prior to Apr-05 referred to "new Medicare prescription drug law".

Note: The decline in the percent saying "unfavorable" is statistically significant between Apr-06 and Jun-06.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys

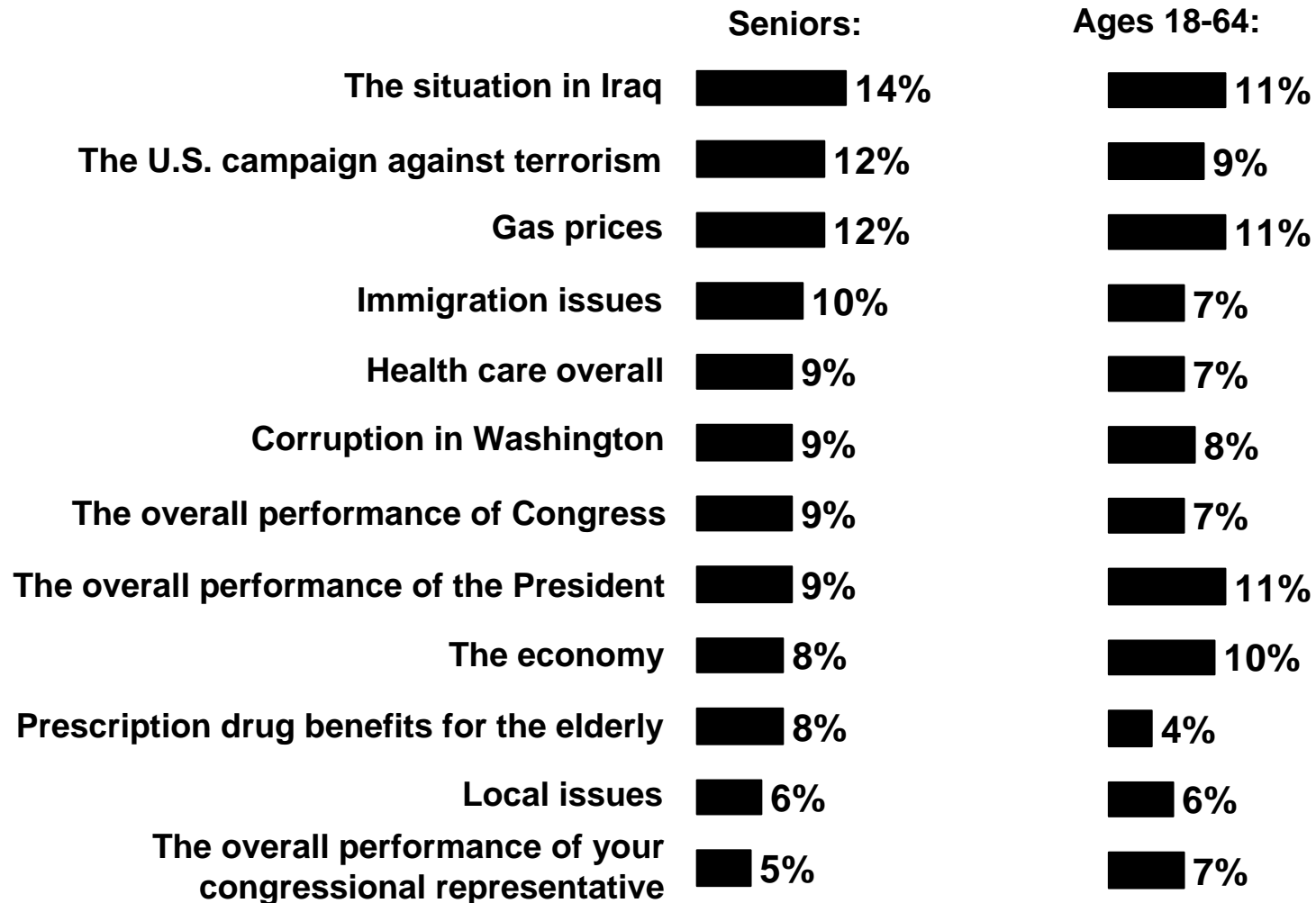
Seniors' Primary Source of Information About Benefit

AMONG THE 62% OF SENIORS WHO HAVE A FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE IMPRESSION OF THE NEW MEDICARE DRUG BENEFIT: Percent who say that impression is based mainly on...



Single Most Important Issue in Vote for Congress

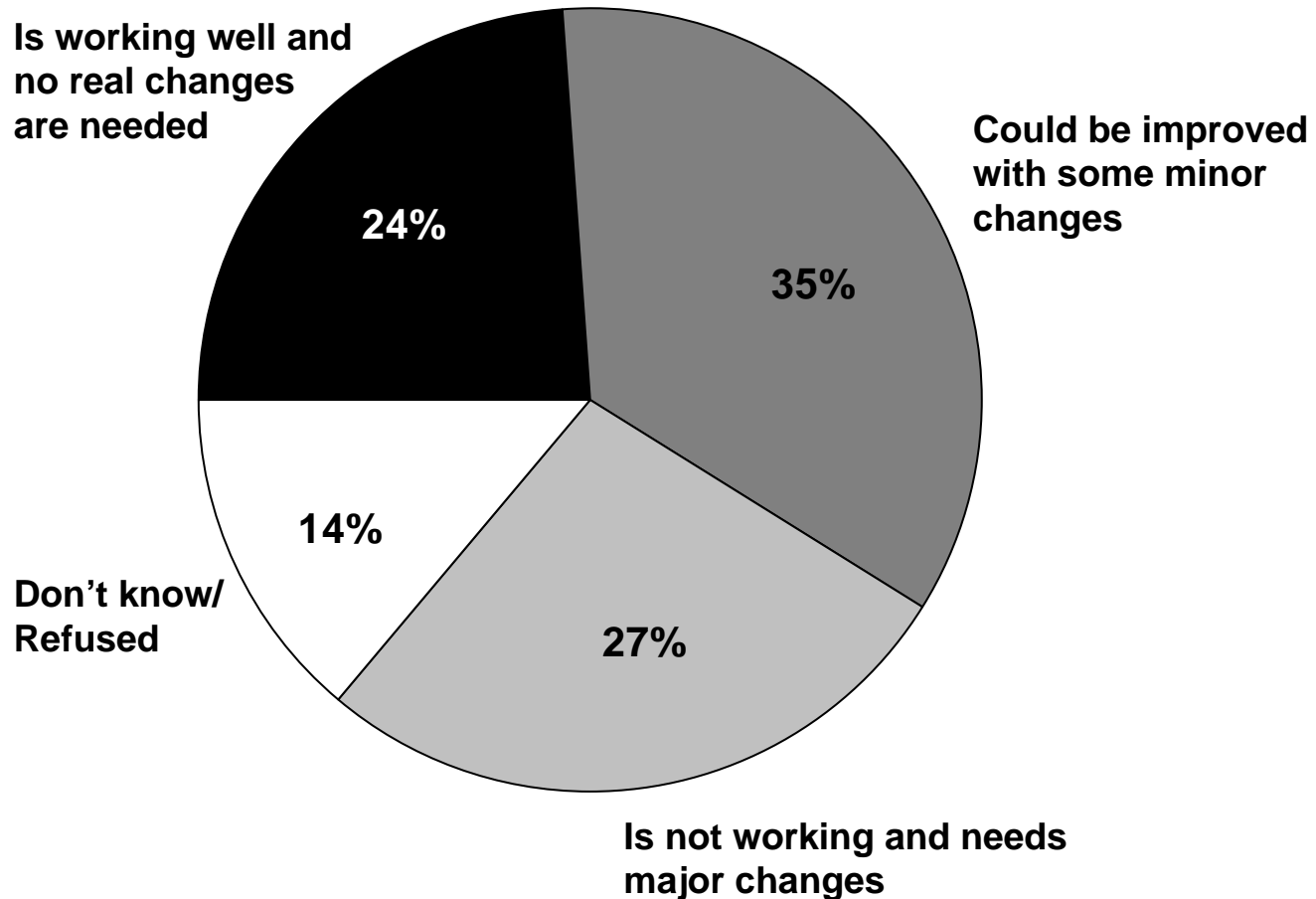
Percent who say each of the following will be the “single most important” issue in their vote for Congress this year (2006)...



Views and Experiences of Seniors Enrolled in Medicare Drug Plans

Seniors' Views On Medicare Drug Benefit

AMONG SENIORS ENROLLED IN MEDICARE DRUG PLANS: What message would you send to policymakers in Washington? Would you say the new Medicare drug benefit...

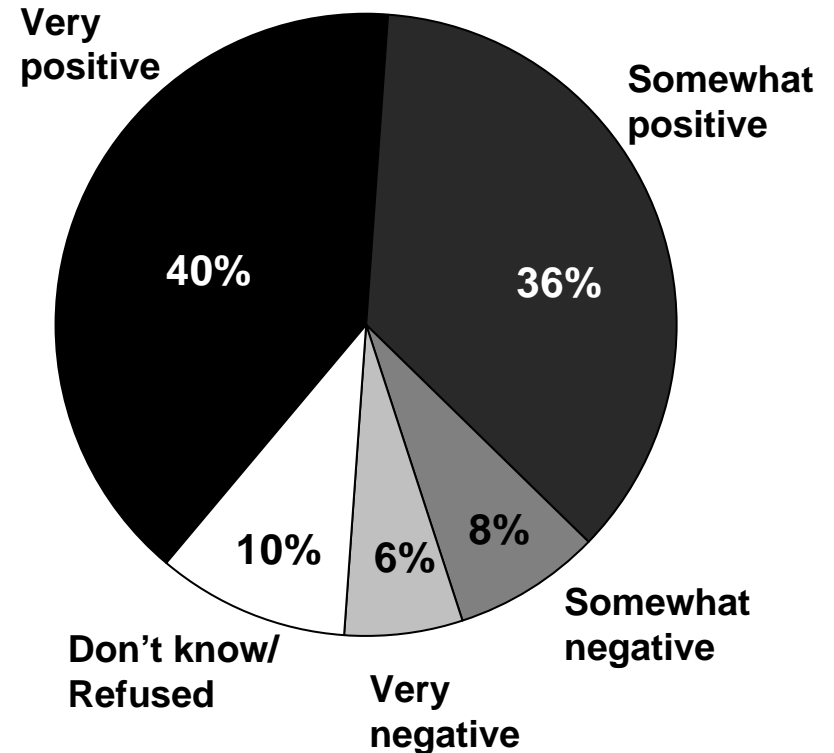
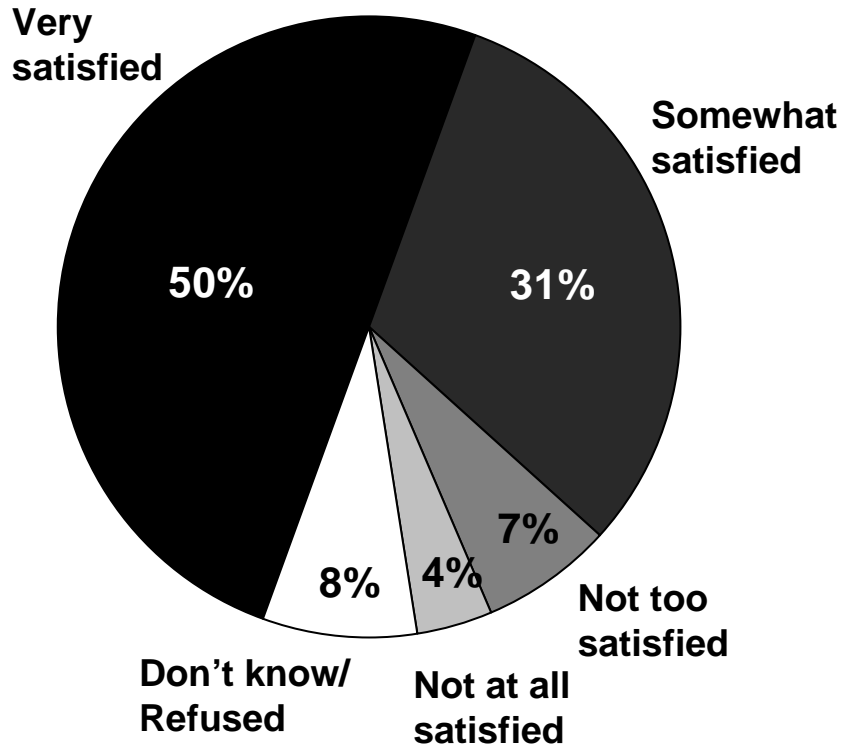


Seniors' Reported Satisfaction With Drug Plan

AMONG SENIORS ENROLLED IN MEDICARE DRUG PLANS:

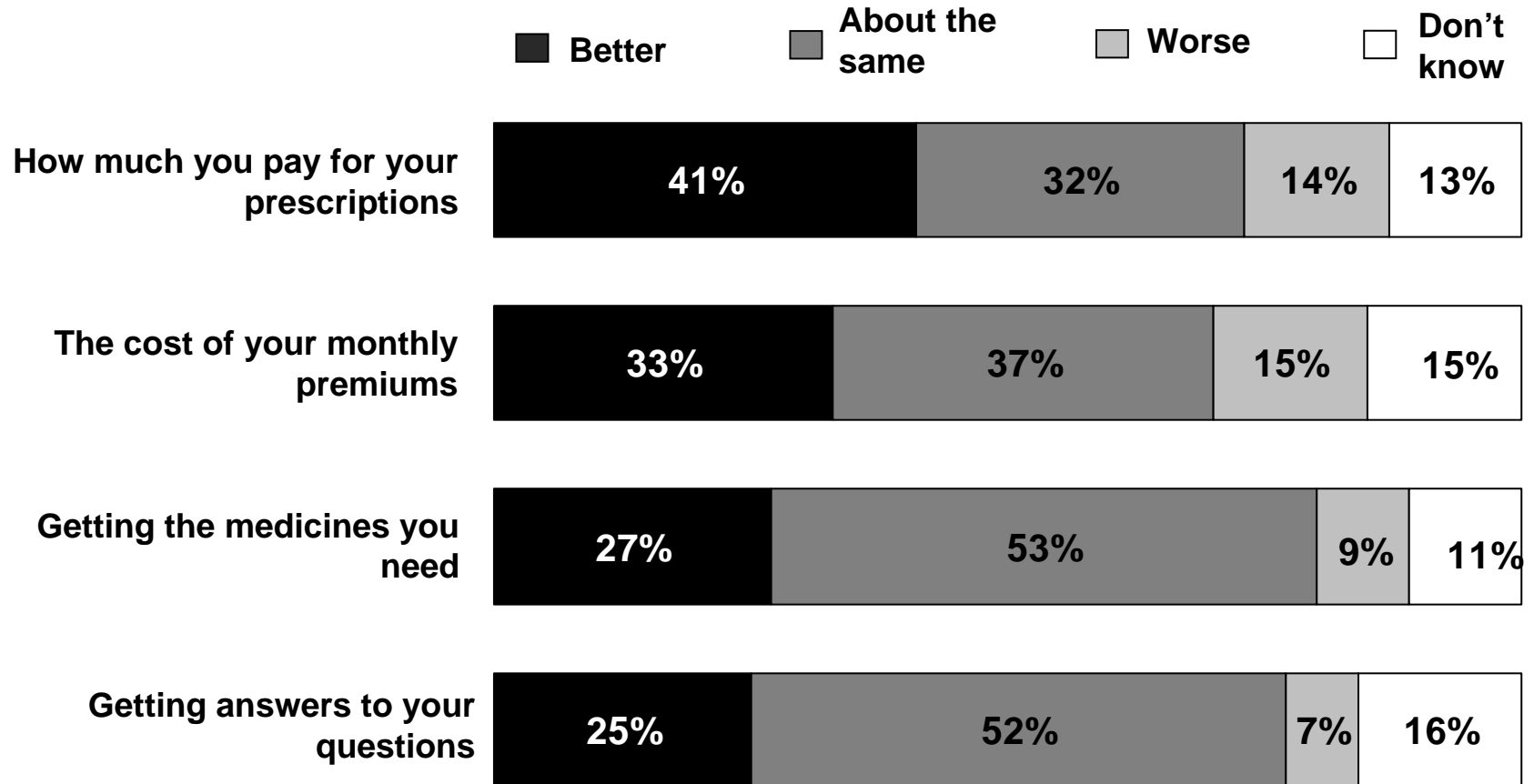
How satisfied are you with the Medicare drug plan you are enrolled in?

All in all, have your experiences using your new Medicare drug plan been...



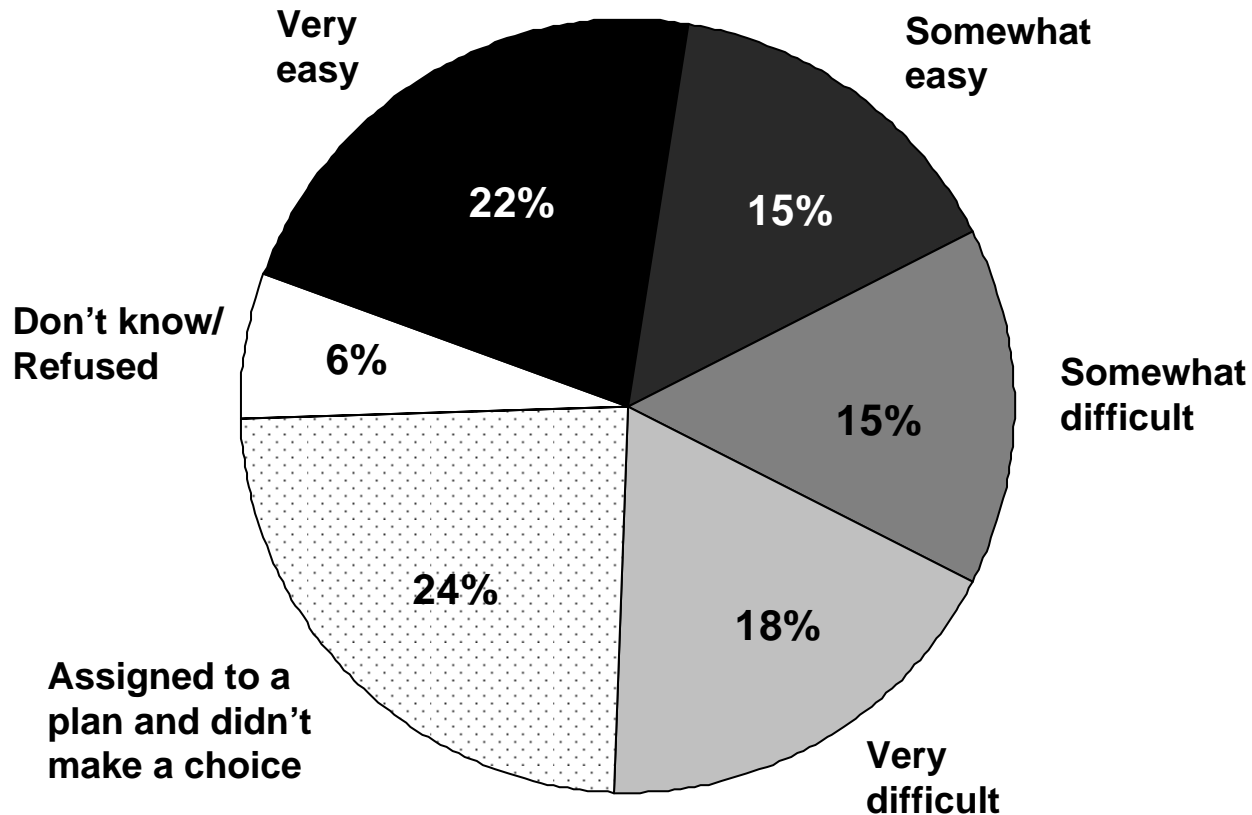
New Medicare Drug Plan Vs. Previous Coverage

AMONG SENIORS ENROLLED IN STAND-ALONE MEDICARE DRUG PLANS:
 Compared with how you got your prescriptions before, please tell me whether your new Medicare drug plan is better, worse, or about the same in terms of...



Seniors' Ease with Choosing Drug Plans

**AMONG SENIORS ENROLLED IN STAND-ALONE MEDICARE DRUG PLANS:
 Would you say it was very easy, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult, or very difficult to choose a Medicare drug plan, or were you just put in a plan and didn't make a choice for yourself?**

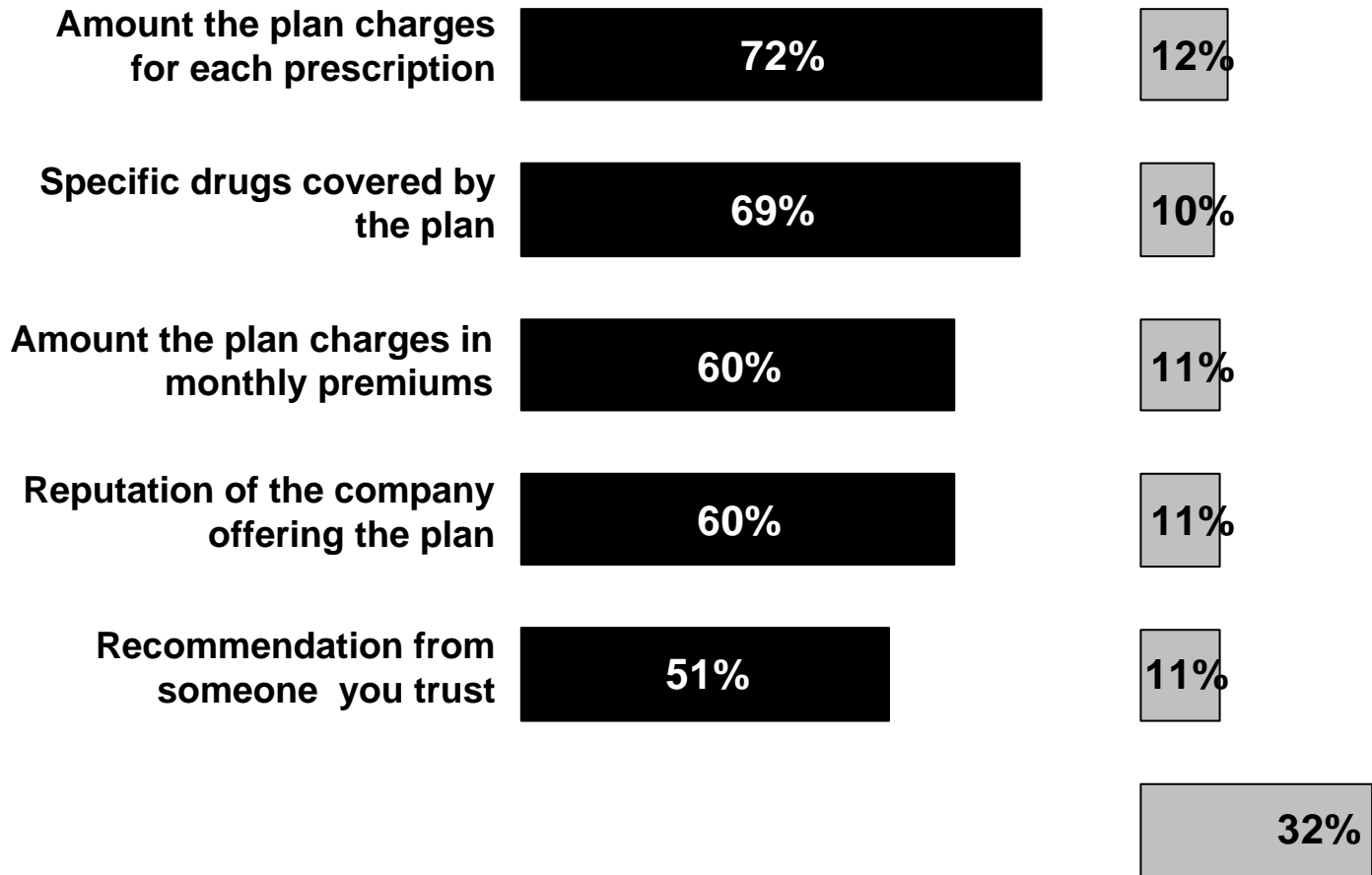


Important Factors in Choosing a Drug Plan

AMONG SENIORS ENROLLED IN STAND-ALONE MEDICARE DRUG PLANS THAT THEY CHOSE ON THEIR OWN:

■ Percent who say each item was “very important” in deciding upon a drug plan...

□ When forced to choose, percent who say each is the MOST important factor*



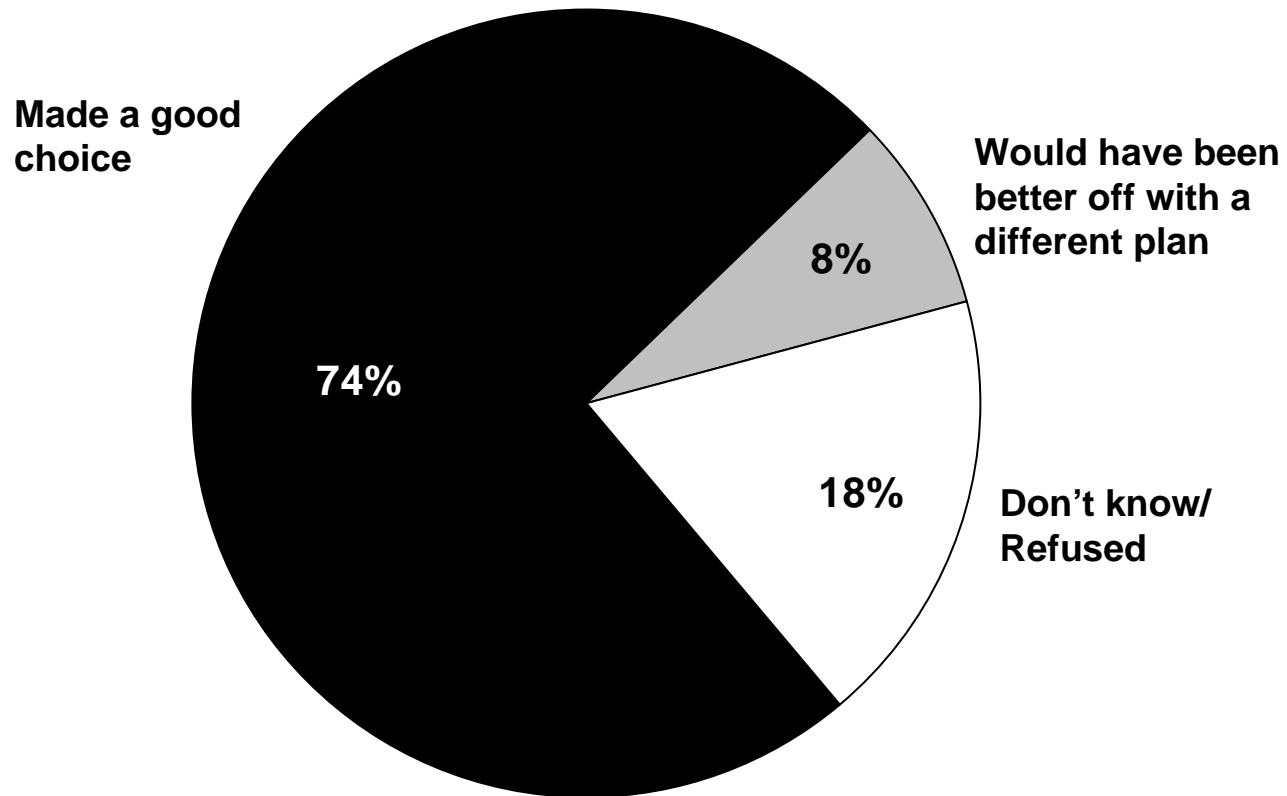
*Note: also includes those who said only one factor was “very important”

Note: “VOL.” indicates a volunteered response

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Seniors’ Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans* (conducted June 8-18, 2006)

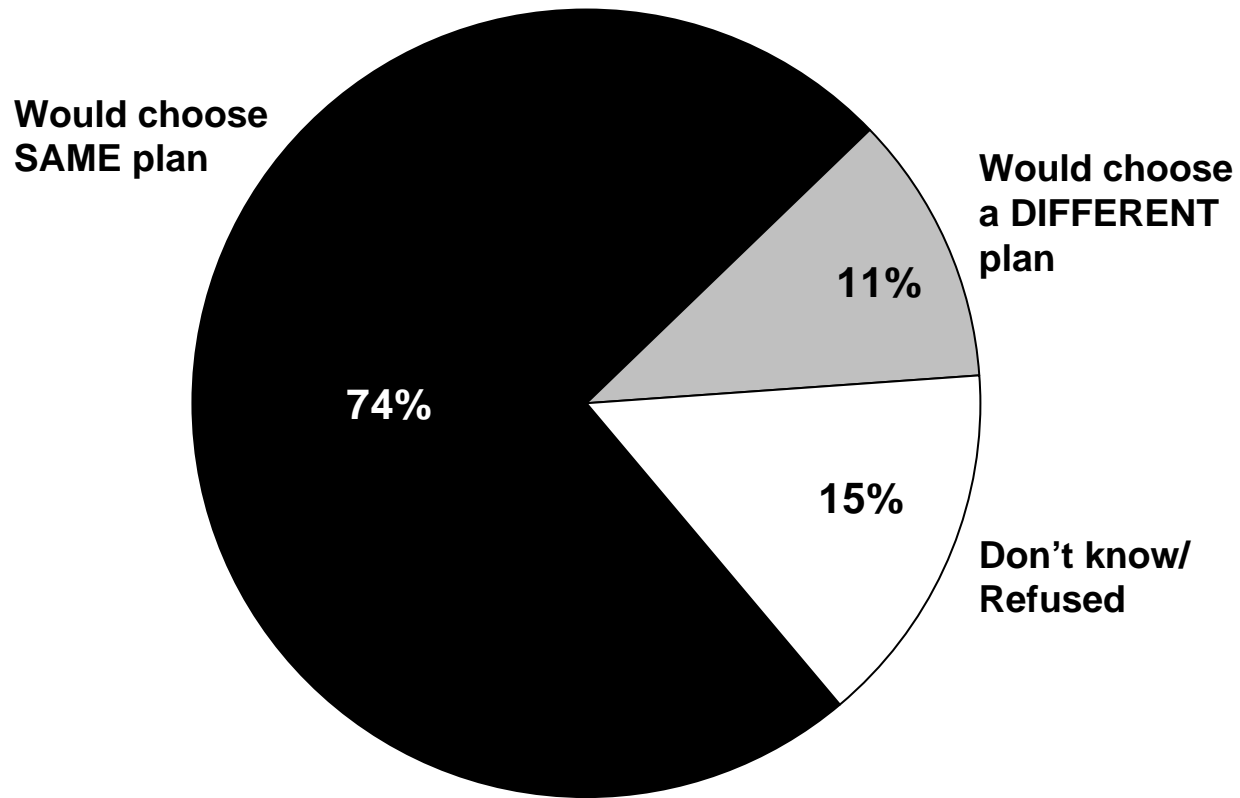
Seniors' Views On Choice of Plan

AMONG SENIORS ENROLLED IN STAND-ALONE MEDICARE DRUG PLANS THAT THEY CHOSE ON THEIR OWN: Overall, do you feel you made a good choice in selecting your Medicare drug plan, or do you think you would have been better off with a different plan?



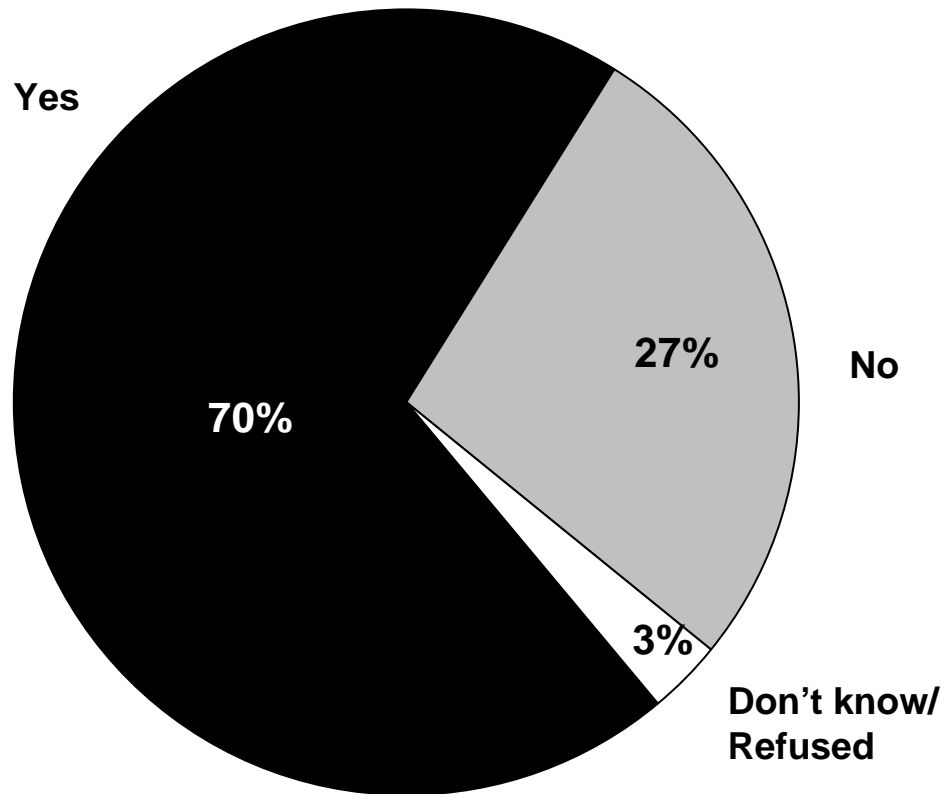
Seniors' Views On Choice of Plan

**AMONG SENIORS ENROLLED IN STAND-ALONE MEDICARE DRUG PLANS:
If you had to choose today would you pick the same plan, or would you choose a
different drug plan?**



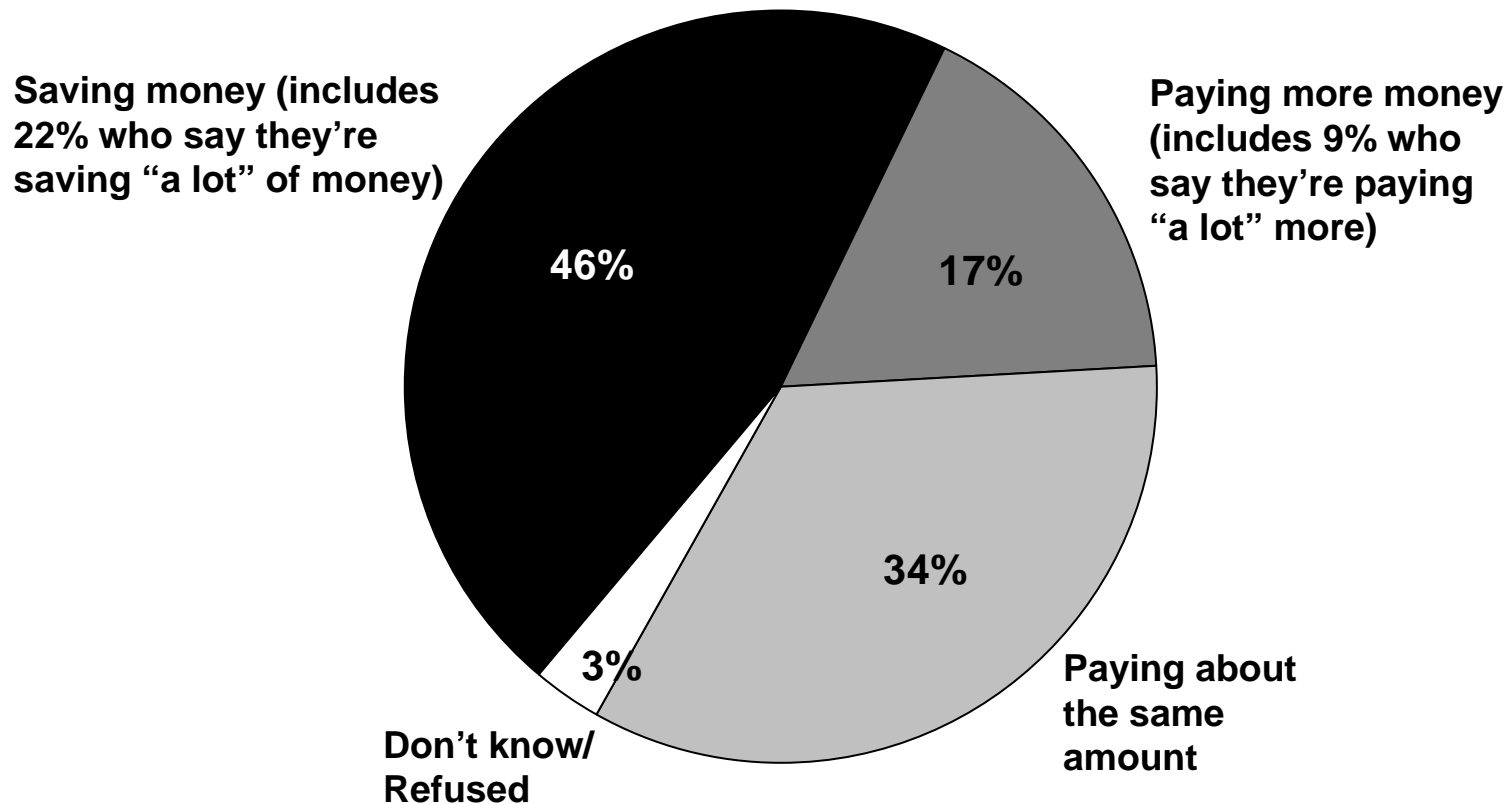
Seniors' Reported Use of Their Drug Plans

AMONG SENIORS ENROLLED IN MEDICARE DRUG PLANS: Have you tried to fill any prescriptions under your new Medicare drug plan yet?



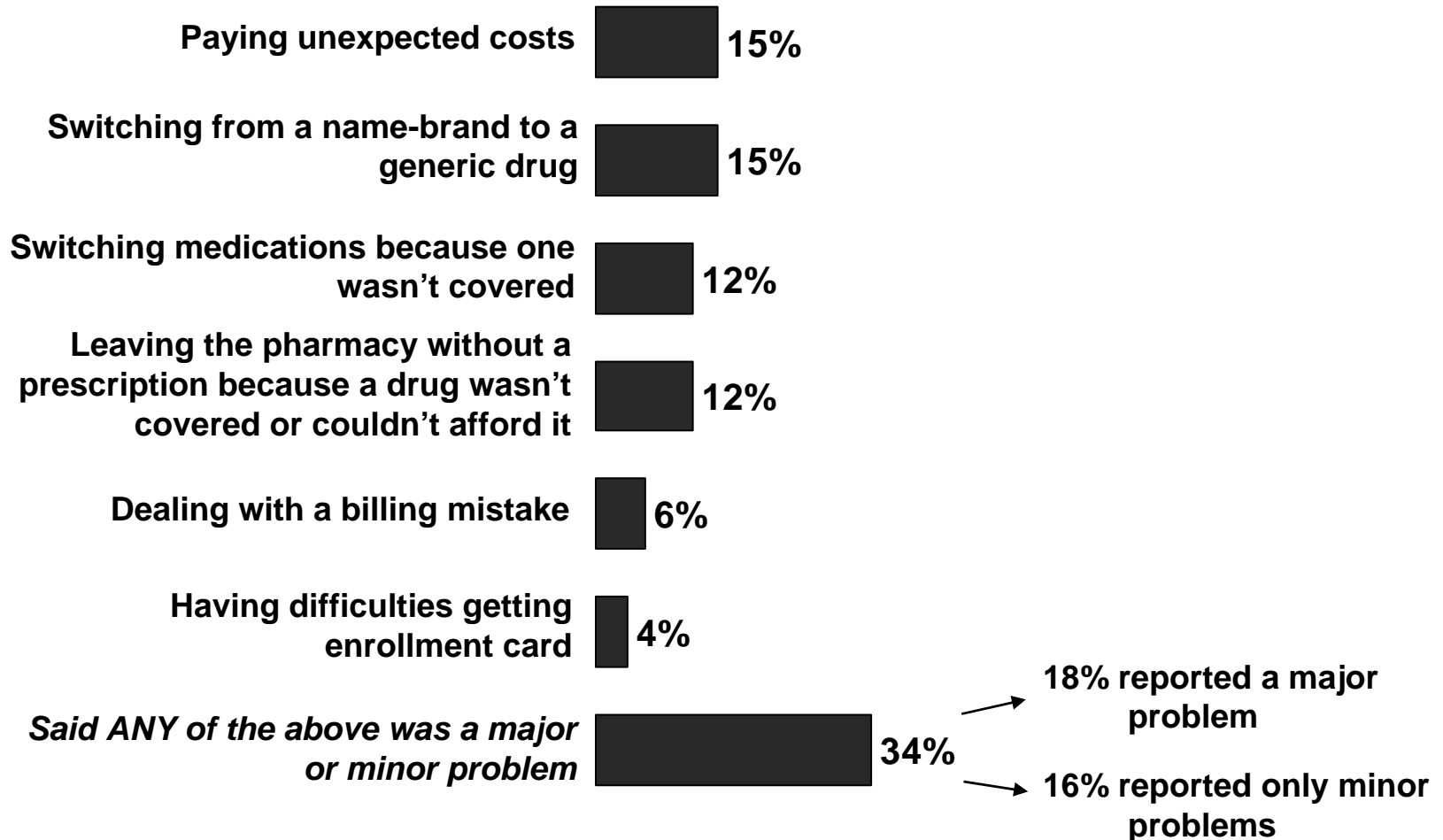
Seniors' Reported Cost Savings With New Plan

AMONG SENIORS WHO HAVE USED THEIR MEDICARE DRUG PLANS: Compared to what you paid for prescriptions last year, are you now saving money, paying more or paying about the same overall for your prescriptions?



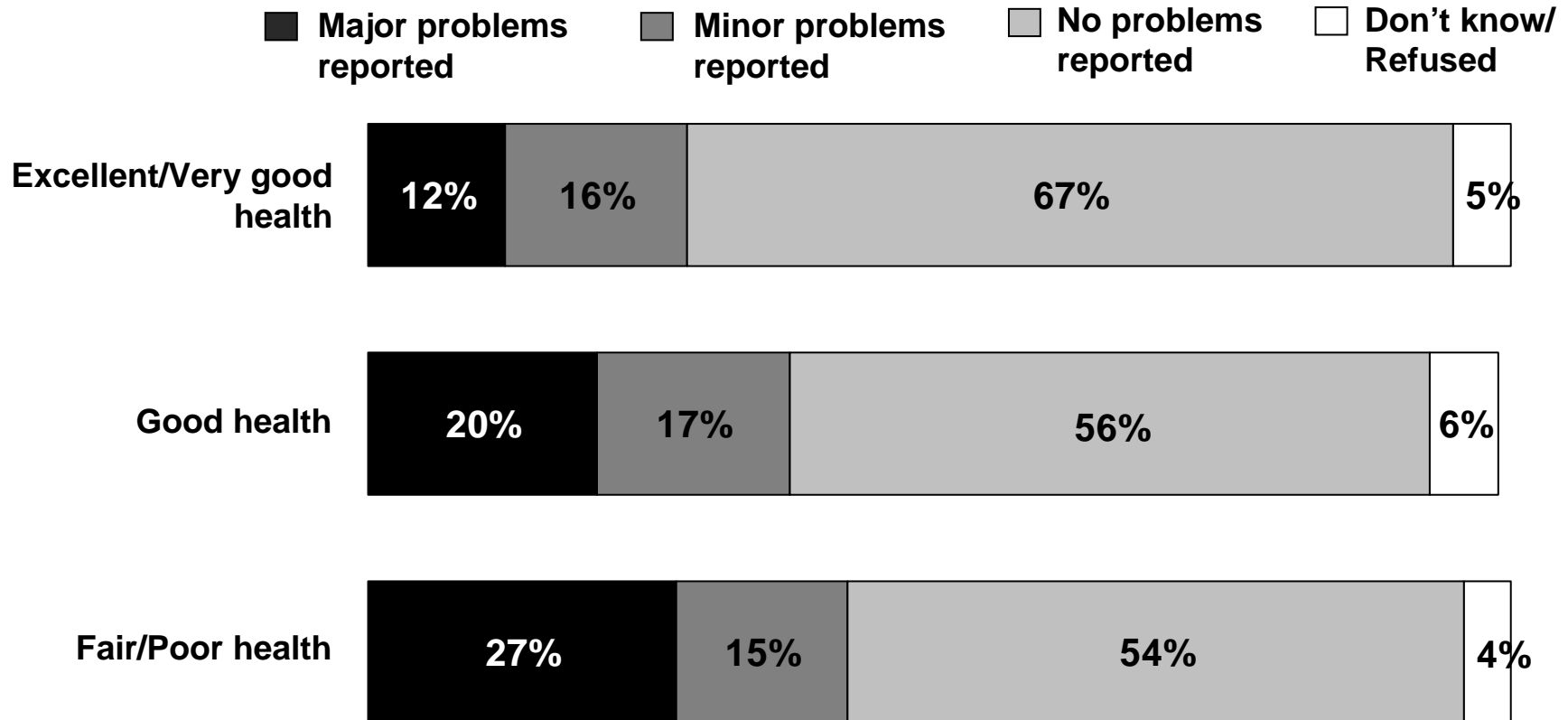
Seniors' Reported Problems Related to Getting Prescriptions

AMONG SENIORS WHO HAVE USED THEIR MEDICARE DRUG PLANS: Percent who say each of the following was a MAJOR or MINOR problem for them...



Reported Problems Filling Prescriptions by Health Status

AMONG SENIORS WHO HAVE USED THEIR MEDICARE DRUG PLANS: Percent who report having problems related to getting prescriptions by reported health status...

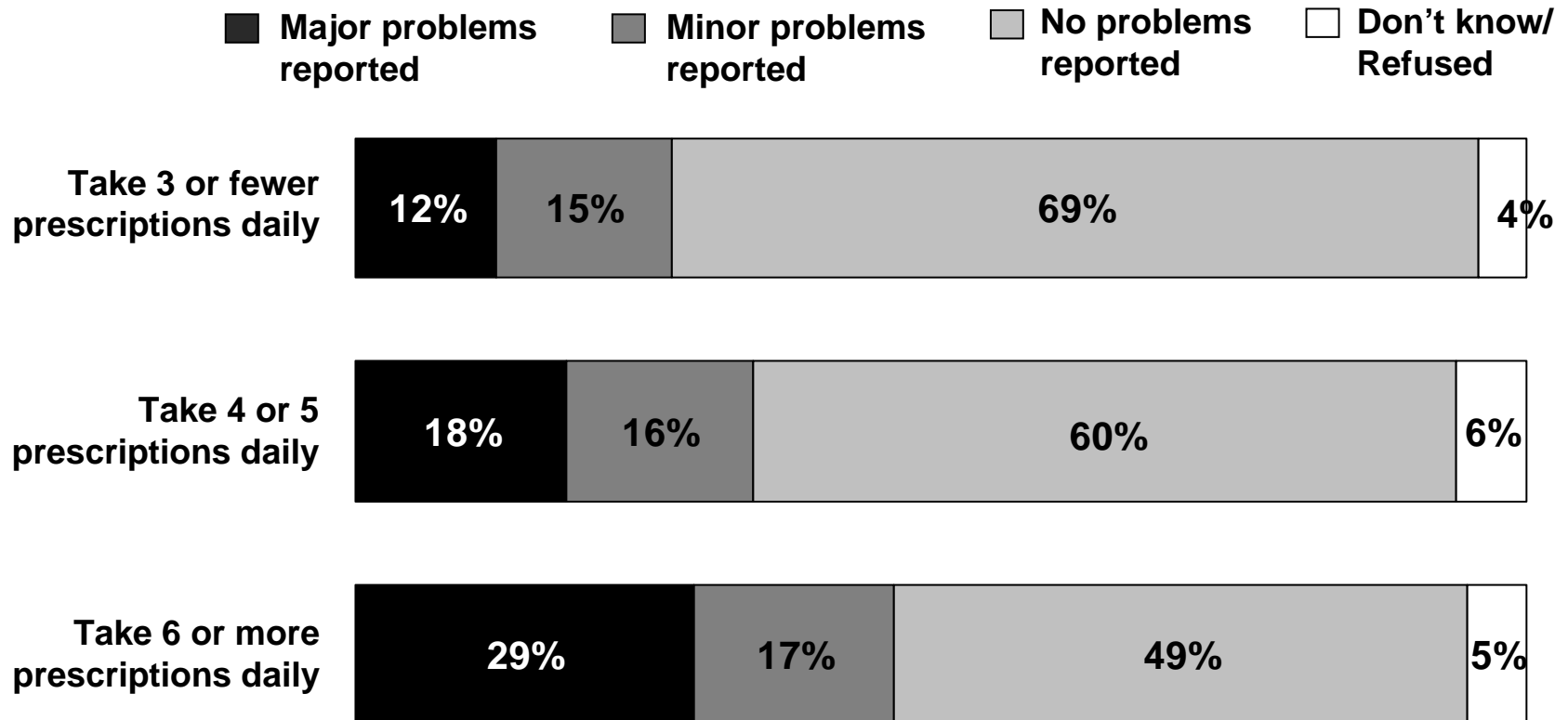


Note: Statistically significant difference between "Excellent/Very good" and "Fair/Poor" ($p < 0.05$) for major problems, and for any problems (major + minor)

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Seniors' Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans* (conducted June 8-18, 2006)

Reported Problems Filling Prescriptions by Number of Prescriptions Taken Daily

AMONG SENIORS WHO HAVE USED THEIR MEDICARE DRUG PLANS: Percent who report having problems related to getting prescriptions by the number of prescriptions taken daily...

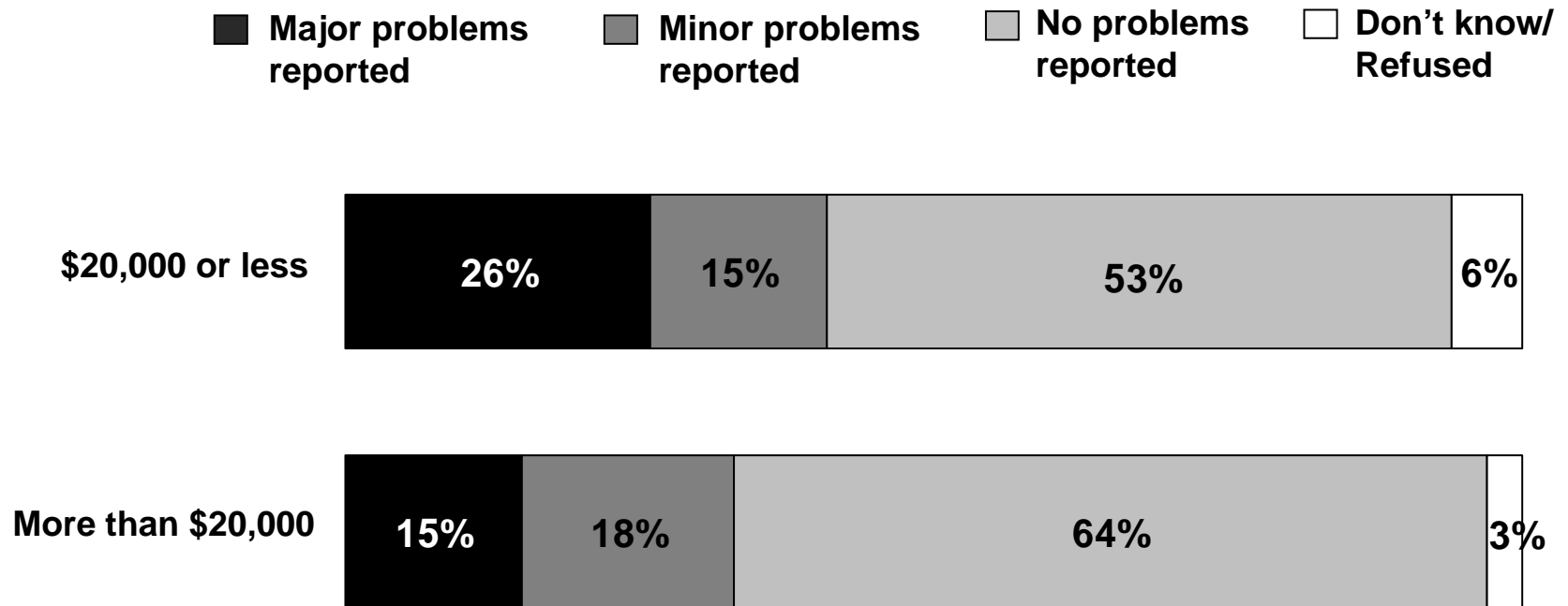


Note: Statistically significant difference between "3 or fewer" and "6 or more" ($p < 0.01$) for major problems, and for any problems (major + minor)

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Seniors' Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans* (conducted June 8-18, 2006)

Reported Problems Filling Prescriptions by Income

AMONG SENIORS WHO HAVE USED THEIR MEDICARE DRUG PLANS: Percent who report having problems related to getting prescriptions by income...

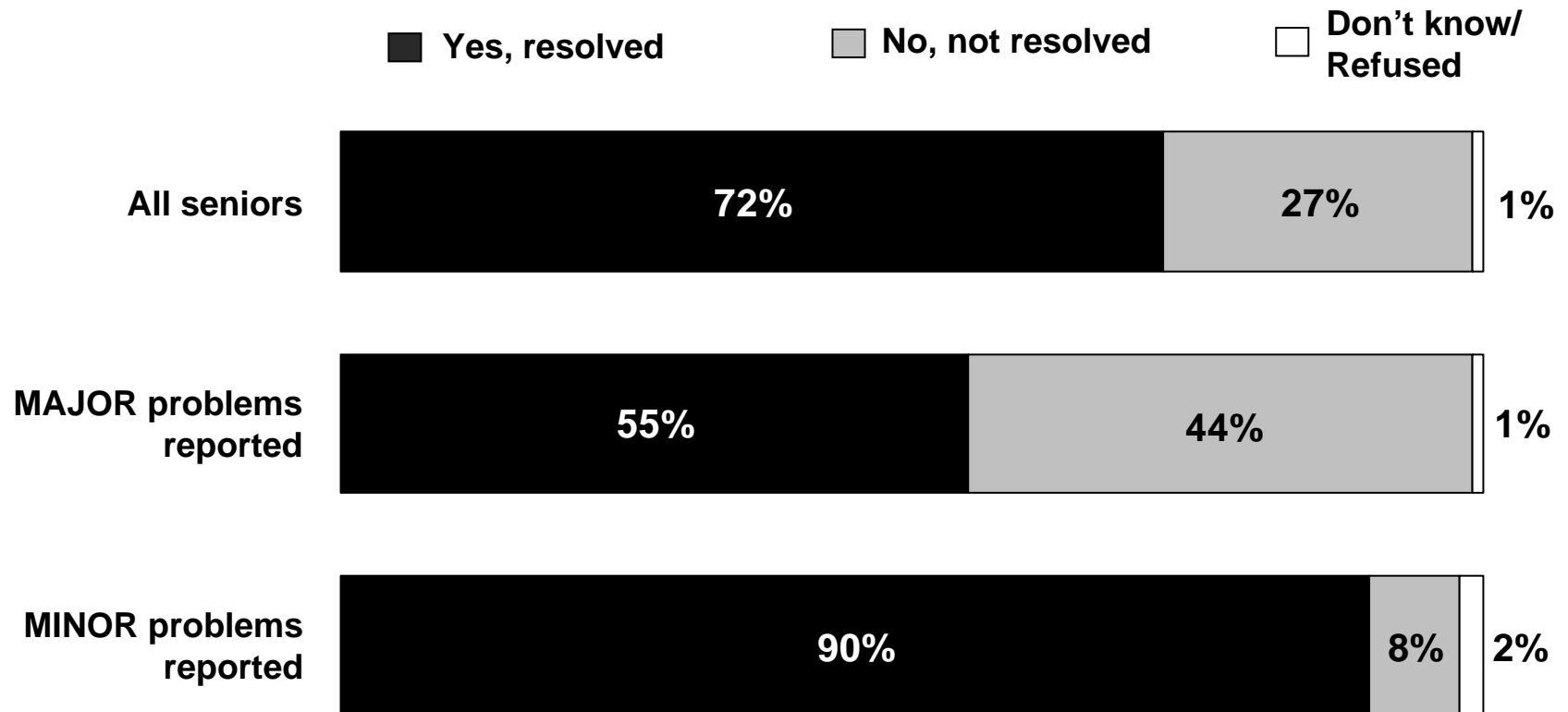


Note: Statistically significant difference between groups ($p < 0.05$) for major problems

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Seniors' Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans* (conducted June 8-18, 2006)

Seniors' Reported Resolution of Problems

AMONG SENIORS WHO SAY THEY EXPERIENCED A MAJOR OR MINOR PROBLEM RELATED TO GETTING THEIR PRESCRIPTIONS (34% of seniors who have used their Medicare drug plans): Thinking about the problems you had related to getting your prescriptions, would you say they have been resolved to your satisfaction, or not?



Note: Statistically significant difference between seniors reporting major problems and seniors reporting minor problems ($p < 0.001$)

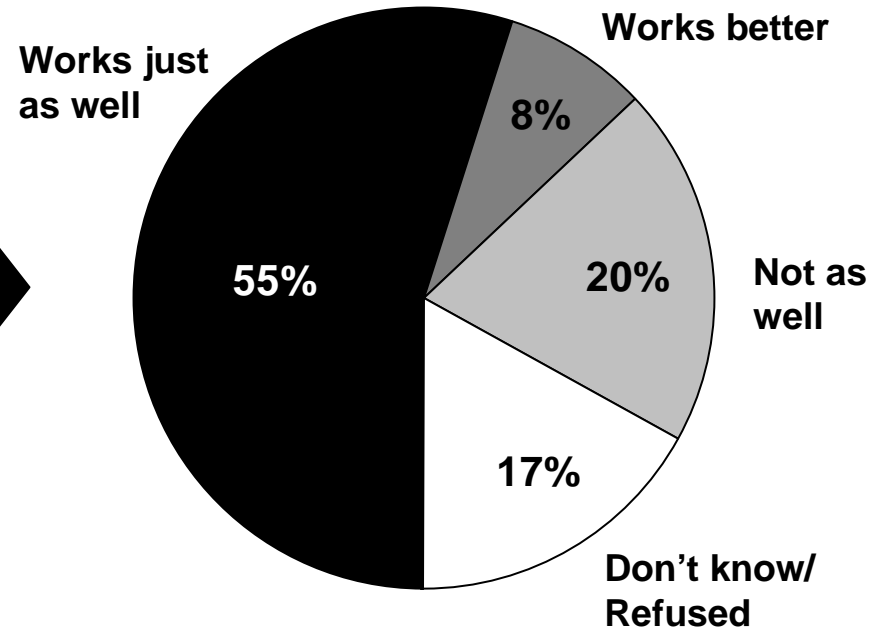
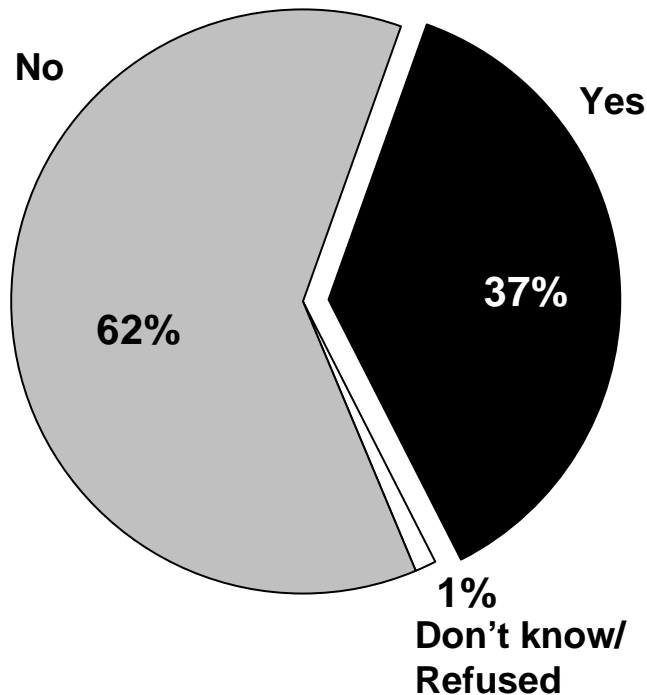
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Seniors' Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans* (conducted June 8-18, 2006)

Seniors' Reported Experiences Switching Medications

AMONG SENIORS WHO HAVE USED THEIR MEDICARE DRUG PLANS:

Have you had to switch medications because one of the drugs you were taking wasn't covered by your plan? Have you had to switch from a name-brand to a generic drug?

Among the 37% who switched drugs: Do you think the new drug works better, just as well or not as well as the old one?

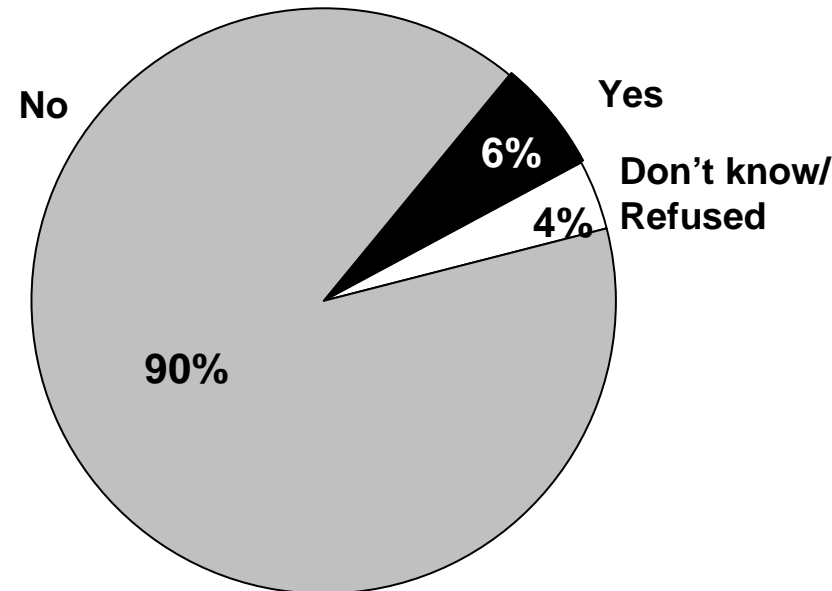
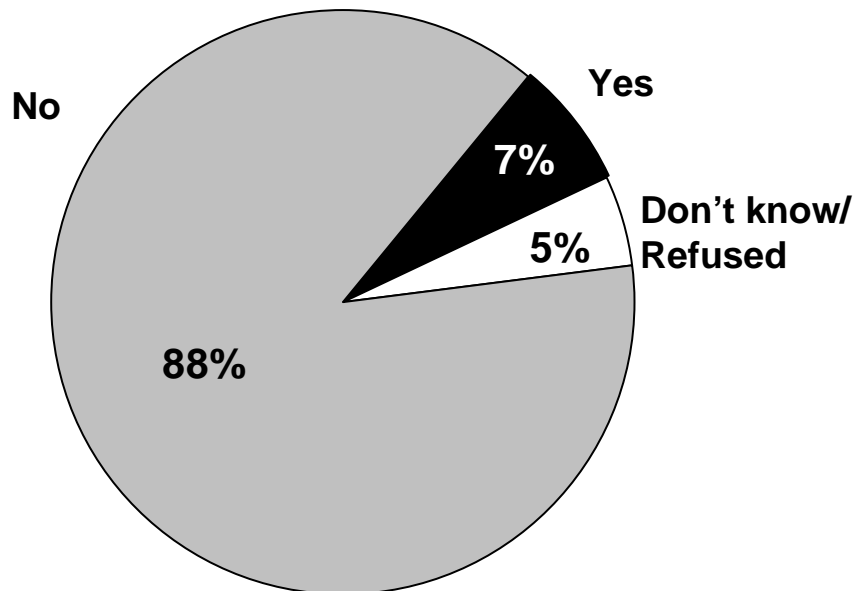


Seniors' Reported Assistance from Doctors and Pharmacists

AMONG SENIORS ENROLLED IN MEDICARE DRUG PLANS:

Since joining your new Medicare drug plan, have you asked your **DOCTOR** for help in getting your plan to pay for the drugs you need, or not?

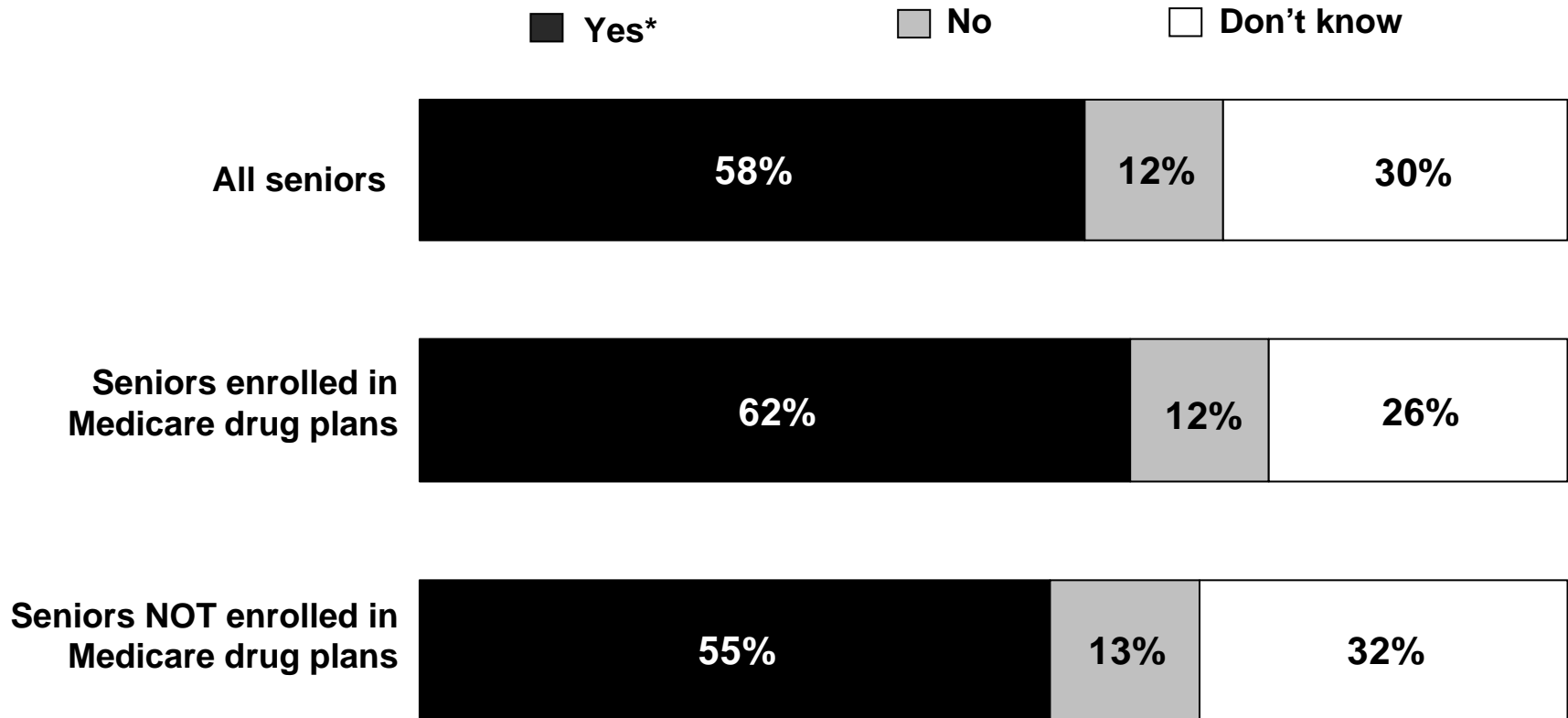
Since joining your new Medicare drug plan, have you asked your **PHARMACIST** for help in getting your plan to pay for the drugs you need, or not?



Knowledge of the Medicare Drug Benefit & Plan Rules

Seniors' Knowledge of Premium Penalty

AMONG SENIORS: To the best of your knowledge, if seniors wait until next year or later to enroll in a Medicare drug plan will they have to pay higher premiums, sometimes called a “premium penalty”, or not?



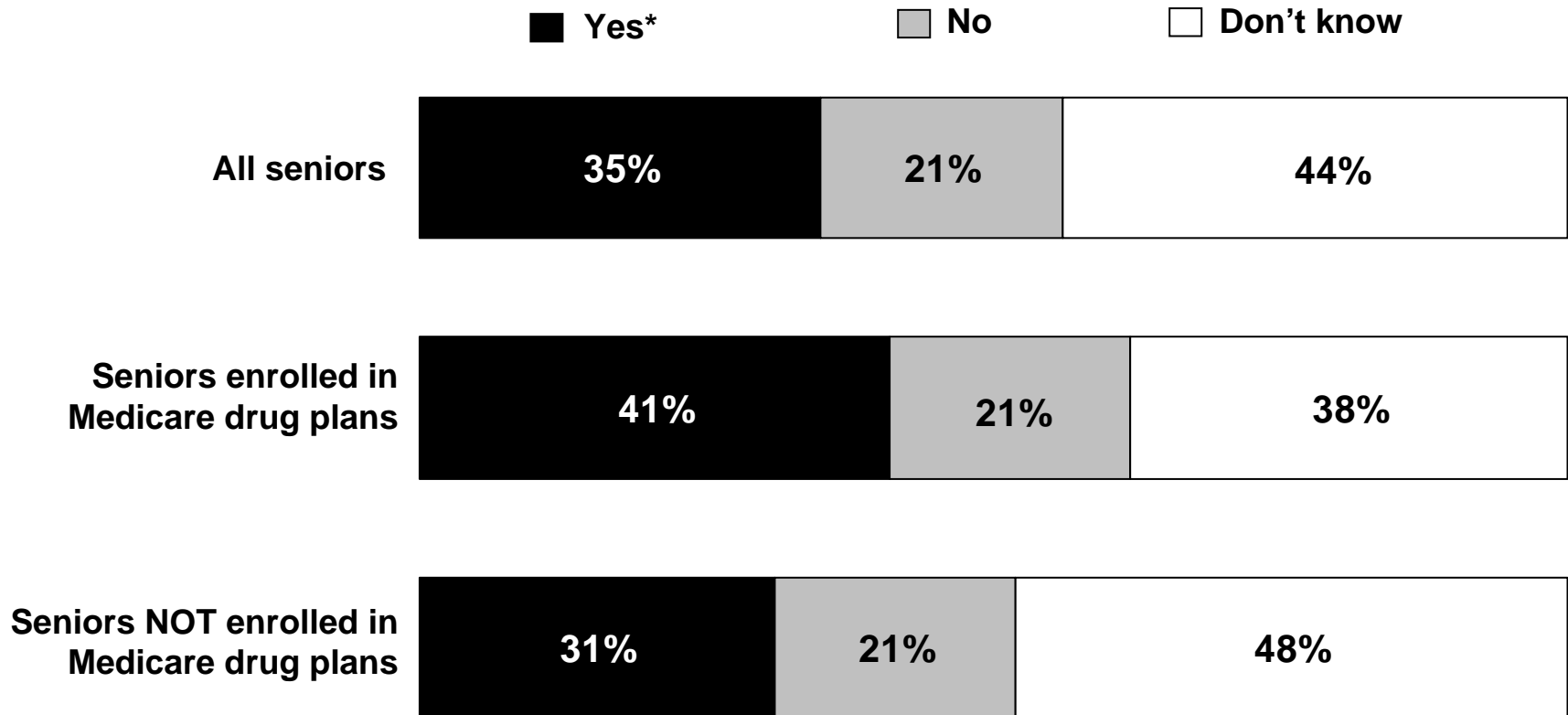
*Correct answer

Note: Statistically significant difference between enrolled seniors and seniors who are not enrolled ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Seniors' Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans* (conducted June 8-18, 2006)

Seniors' Knowledge of Low-Income Subsidy

AMONG SENIORS: To the best of your knowledge, is there a program through Social Security that gives low-income seniors extra help with prescription drug costs under the new Medicare drug benefit, or not?



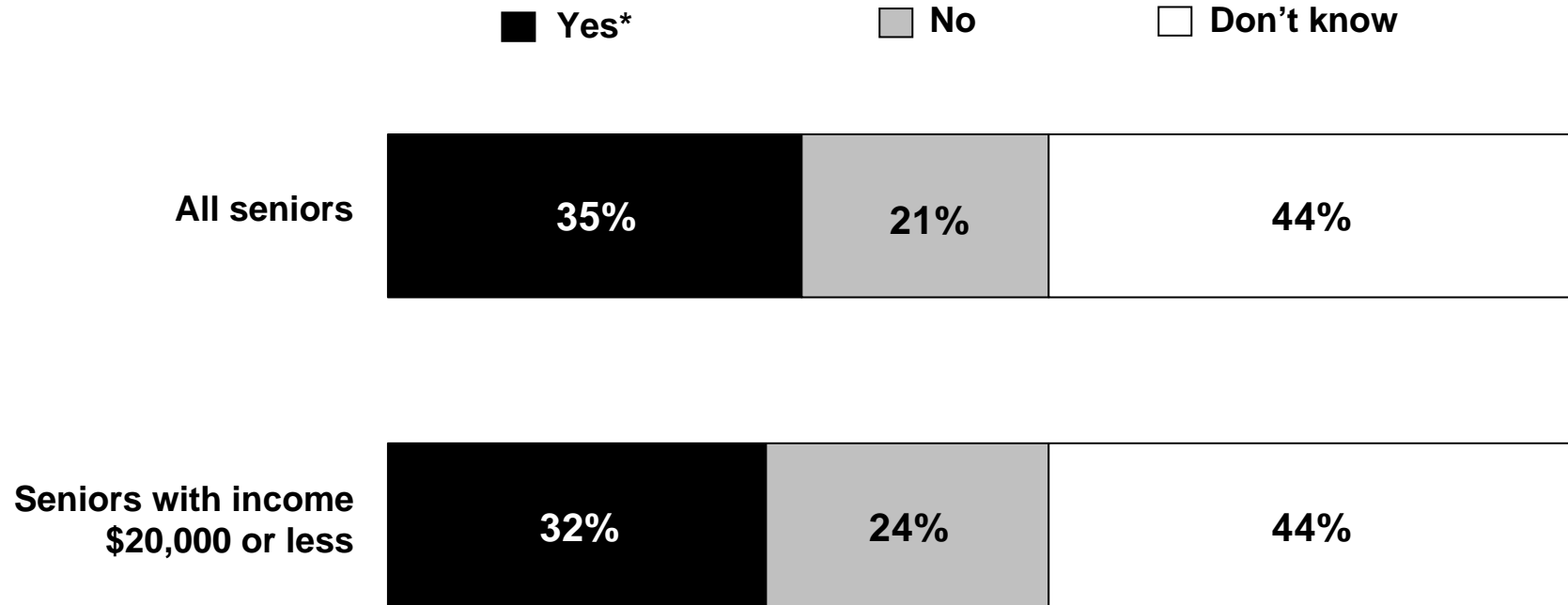
*Correct answer

Note: Statistically significant difference between enrolled seniors and seniors who are not enrolled ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Seniors' Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans* (conducted June 8-18, 2006)

Seniors' Knowledge of Low-Income Subsidy by Income

AMONG SENIORS: To the best of your knowledge, is there a program through Social Security that gives low-income seniors extra help with prescription drug costs under the new Medicare drug benefit, or not?



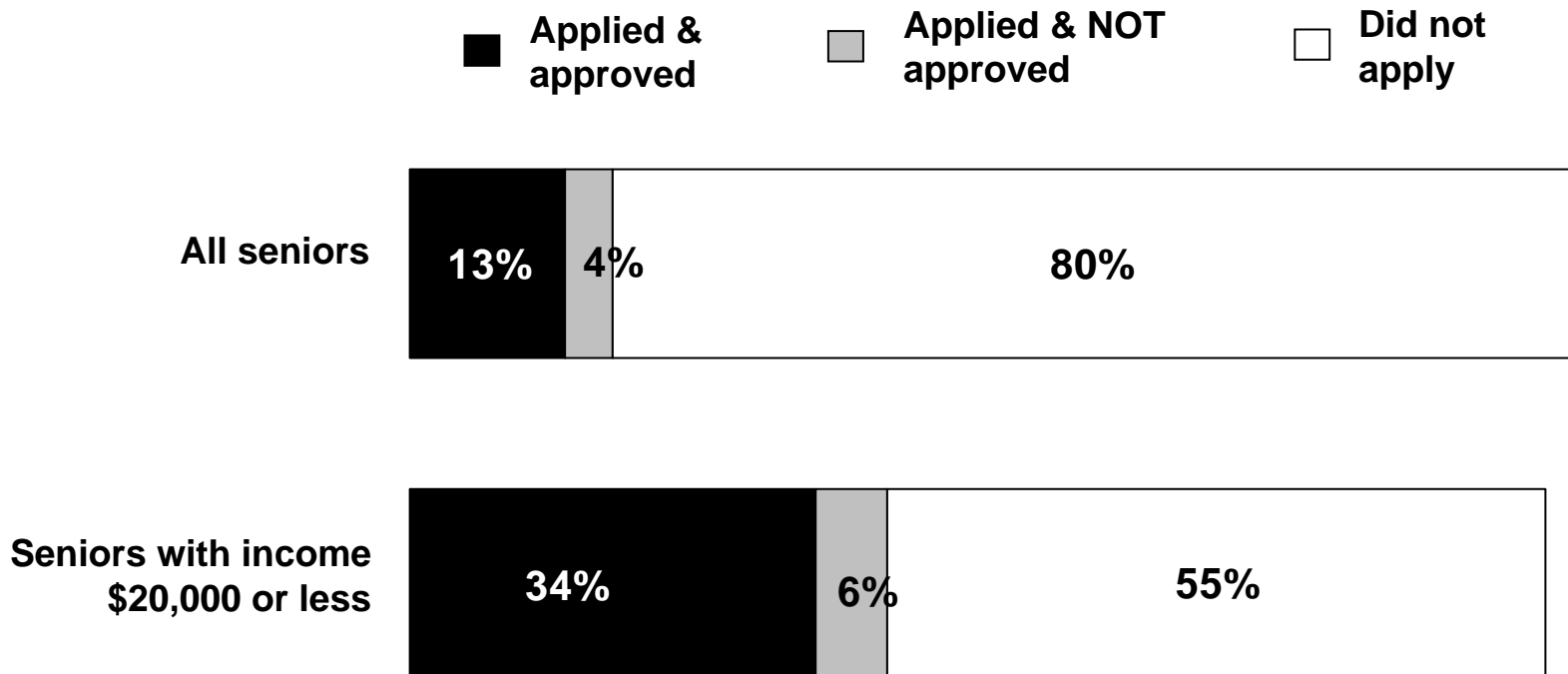
*Correct answer

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Seniors' Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans* (conducted June 8-18, 2006)

Seniors' Application for Low-Income Subsidy

AMONG THE 35% OF SENIORS WHO KNOW THERE IS A LOW-INCOME SUBSIDY PROGRAM:

Did you apply for the program that gives low-income seniors extra help with drug costs, or not? If yes, was your application approved or not?



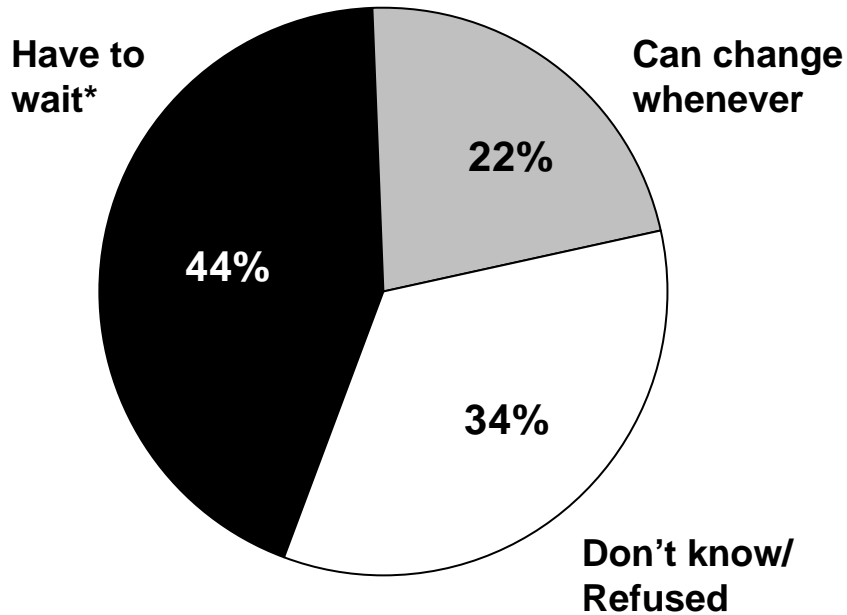
Don't know responses not shown

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Seniors' Early Experiences with Their Medicare Drug Plans* (conducted June 8-18, 2006)

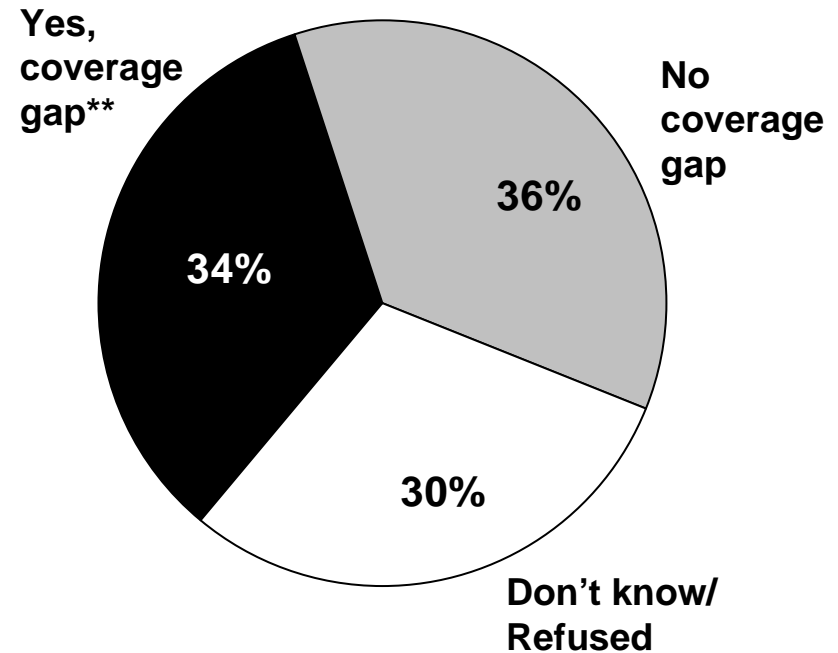
Seniors' Beliefs About Plan Rules

AMONG SENIORS ENROLLED IN MEDICARE DRUG PLANS:

To the best of your knowledge, if you are dissatisfied with your new Medicare drug plan, can you change to a different plan whenever you want, or do you have to wait for a specific period?

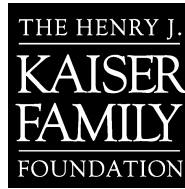


Some plans have what's called a "coverage gap" or "doughnut hole" – a point where the plan stops paying for prescriptions and seniors are required to pay the full cost of their medicines for awhile. Does your Medicare drug plan have such a coverage gap, or not?



* Correct answer.

** Most Part D enrollees are in plans with a coverage gap. 72% of all Medicare Advantage and 85% of stand-alone PDPs have a gap.



The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation
2400 Sand Hill Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
Phone: (650) 854-9400 Fax: (650) 854-4800

Washington Office:
1330 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 347-5270 Fax: (202) 347-5274

www.kff.org

Additional copies of this publication (#7546) are available on
the Kaiser Family Foundation's website at www.kff.org.

*The Kaiser Family Foundation is a non-profit, private operating foundation dedicated to providing information and analysis on health care issues to policymakers, the media, the health care community, and the general public.
The Foundation is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.*