

HEALTH POLL:

Back Pain

May 2017

SURVEY OVERVIEW

Every other month, the Truven Health Analytics®-NPR Health Poll surveys approximately 3,000 Americans to gauge attitudes and opinions on a wide range of healthcare issues. Poll results are reported by NPR on the health blog Shots (<http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/>) and on air.

The Truven Health Analytics-NPR Health Poll is powered by the Truven Health Analytics PULSE® Healthcare Survey, an independently funded multi-modal (land line, cell phone, internet) survey that collects information from approximately 80,000 U.S. households annually. The results depicted here represent responses from 3,002 survey participants interviewed from March 1-16, 2017. The margin of error is +/-1.8 percentage points.

Executive Summary

This survey asked respondents about treatment for their back pain. Half said they had experienced back pain in the prior 12 months, and 58 percent of these sought medical treatment though 55 percent said they treated the pain themselves. The most-prescribed (40 percent) medical treatment was prescription painkillers; among self-treating respondents, 69 percent said they used over-the-counter (OTC) pain medication. Ninety-five percent of respondents who said they had experienced back pain said it stayed the same, got better, or went away completely; five percent said it grew worse.

Additional results:

- 51 percent of all respondents indicated that they suffered from back pain in the past 12 months.
- 6 percent of respondents who suffered from back pain indicated that the pain lasted more than 3 months, a rate that tends to decrease with increasing age but increase with increasing levels of education and income.
- 55 percent of respondents with back pain indicated that they treated the back pain themselves.
- 69 percent of respondents who treated their back pain themselves indicated that they used over-the-counter pain medication. Other treatments were: exercise/physical therapy, 21 percent; heat, 18 percent; massage, 17 percent; rest, 17 percent; prescription medication, 12 percent; and some other treatment, 18 percent.
- 58 percent of respondents who suffered from back pain in the last 12 months indicated that they sought medical care. Among those experiencing such pain, 70 percent went to a medical doctor, 14 percent to a chiropractor, 4 percent to a nurse practitioner or physician assistant, 3 percent to an alternative medicine practitioner; and 10 percent to some other provider.
- The most frequently mentioned treatment recommended by a medical professional was prescription painkillers at 40 percent. Other treatments prescribed were exercise/physical therapy, 31 percent; injections, 20 percent; massage, 17 percent; steroids, 17 percent; over-the-counter painkillers, 13 percent; surgery, 12 percent; and some other treatment, 37 percent.
- Among all respondents who said they had experienced back pain, 45 percent indicated that their back pain got better, 25 percent said it stayed the same, 25 percent said it went away completely, and 5 percent said it got worse. Among those with pain staying the same, the lowest rate (7 percent) was among those with an income of \$100,000 or more; this group also was most likely (45 percent) to say the pain went away completely and least likely (1 percent) to say it grew worse.

Survey Data

Bolded figures are statistically significant.

Question 1

During the past 12 months, have you suffered from back pain?

	Yes	No
Age		
<35	56.5%	43.5%
35 - 64	51.3%	48.7%
65+	41.3%	58.7%
Total	50.6%	49.4%
Education		
HS or Less	49.2%	50.8%
Some College/Assoc	55.1%	44.9%
Collegiate+	48.4%	51.6%
Total	50.6%	49.4%
Generation		
Silent Generation	44.0%	56.0%
Baby Boomers	42.9%	57.1%
Generation X	54.6%	45.4%
Millennials	56.5%	43.5%
Total	50.6%	49.4%
Income		
<\$25k	49.6%	50.4%
\$25k - \$49.9k	55.8%	44.2%
\$50k - \$99.9k	51.3%	48.7%
\$100k+	49.8%	50.2%
Total	50.6%	49.4%

Question 2

How long did the back pain last? Would you say...

	Less Than 1 Month	1 to 3 Months	More Than 3 Months	Still Dealing With it
Age				
<35	51.8%	14.2%	7.1%	27.0%
35 - 64	32.1%	11.0%	5.5%	51.3%
65+	26.7%	6.1%	2.7%	64.6%
Total	37.1%	11.1%	5.5%	46.2%
Education				
HS or Less	29.3%	15.1%	0.9%	54.7%
Some College/Assoc	29.0%	7.0%	4.4%	59.5%
College+	47.7%	11.9%	9.0%	31.4%
Total	37.1%	11.1%	5.5%	46.2%
Generation				
Silent Generation	23.4%	5.1%	1.6%	69.9%
Baby Boomers	23.9%	8.1%	2.7%	65.3%
Generation X	37.4%	12.1%	7.1%	43.4%
Millennials	51.8%	14.2%	7.1%	27.0%
Total	37.1%	11.1%	5.5%	46.2%
Income				
<\$25k	24.5%	10.0%	2.8%	62.7%
\$25k - \$49.9k	28.2%	7.9%	2.8%	61.0%
\$50k - \$99.9k	41.0%	10.9%	6.8%	41.3%
\$100k+	52.6%	18.5%	10.4%	18.5%
Total	37.1%	11.1%	5.5%	46.2%

Question 3

Did you treat the back pain yourself?

	Yes	No
Age		
<35	63.8%	36.2%
35 - 64	50.2%	49.8%
65+	54.2%	45.8%
Total	55.1%	44.9%
Education		
HS or Less	45.4%	54.6%
Some College/Assoc	54.0%	46.0%
College+	61.4%	38.6%
Total	55.1%	44.9%
Generation		
Silent Generation	52.4%	47.6%
Baby Boomers	57.3%	42.7%
Generation X	46.6%	53.4%
Millennials	63.8%	36.2%
Total	55.1%	44.9%
Income		
<\$25k	51.9%	48.1%
\$25k - \$49.9k	56.6%	43.4%
\$50k - \$99.9k	55.6%	44.4%
\$100k+	61.8%	38.2%
Total	55.1%	44.9%

Question 4

How did you treat the back pain? (Up to two responses accepted per respondent)

	Over-the-counter pain medication, such as Aleve® or Advil®	Prescription pain medication from your doctor	Exercise	Rest	Massage	Heat	Acupuncture, Pain cream, Nothing, Other
Age							
<35	52.5%	12.8%	27.5%	22.8%	34.1%	8.9%	7.3%
35 - 64	77.9%	12.1%	17.9%	13.9%	8.6%	22.7%	22.5%
65+	78.8%	9.9%	15.1%	10.7%	3.2%	21.6%	28.2%
Total	69.0%	12.0%	20.8%	16.5%	16.7%	17.6%	18.1%
Education							
HS or Less	65.7%	7.3%	20.2%	14.6%	11.3%	17.0%	26.5%
Some College/Assoc	76.2%	12.2%	15.6%	14.9%	13.3%	28.3%	21.4%
College+	65.8%	13.7%	24.4%	18.3%	21.2%	10.9%	12.4%
Total	69.0%	12.0%	20.8%	16.5%	16.7%	17.6%	18.1%
Generation							
Silent Generation	86.1%	8.3%	10.3%	6.6%	2.2%	14.3%	38.8%
Baby Boomers	80.3%	10.7%	10.9%	10.1%	3.3%	29.9%	28.4%
Generation X	74.0%	13.1%	24.5%	17.4%	11.9%	18.1%	16.1%
Millennials	52.5%	12.8%	27.5%	22.8%	34.1%	8.9%	7.3%
Total	69.0%	12.0%	20.8%	16.5%	16.7%	17.6%	18.1%
Income							
<\$25k	63.6%	11.1%	15.7%	13.2%	14.5%	11.4%	26.8%
\$25k - \$49.9k	70.8%	10.5%	17.5%	25.5%	13.5%	27.4%	10.7%
\$50k - \$99.9k	69.8%	13.7%	28.3%	10.2%	18.6%	23.5%	18.8%
\$100k+	69.8%	13.6%	20.2%	18.2%	21.5%	4.8%	17.1%
Total	69.0%	12.0%	20.8%	16.5%	16.7%	17.6%	18.1%

Question 5

Did you seek medical care for the back pain?

	Yes	No
Age		
<35	58.8%	41.2%
35 - 64	57.7%	42.3%
65+	54.7%	45.3%
Total	57.5%	42.5%
Education		
HS or Less	54.7%	45.3%
Some College/Assoc	59.8%	40.2%
College+	57.4%	42.6%
Total	57.5%	42.5%
Generation		
Silent Generation	54.4%	45.6%
Baby Boomers	54.5%	45.5%
Generation X	59.3%	40.7%
Millennials	58.8%	41.2%
Total	57.5%	42.5%
Income		
<\$25k	58.4%	41.6%
\$25k - \$49.9k	46.8%	53.2%
\$50k - \$99.9k	61.4%	38.6%
\$100k+	62.0%	38.0%
Total	57.5%	42.5%

Question 6

What kind of medical professional did you seek treatment from?

	Medical Doctor	Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistant	Chiropractor	Alternative medicine practitioner	Other
Age					
<35	69.1%	7.4%	12.7%	1.3%	9.5%
35 - 64	71.0%	1.8%	14.3%	3.9%	9.1%
65+	66.7%	1.9%	16.3%	0.5%	14.6%
Total	69.7%	3.5%	14.1%	2.5%	10.2%
Education					
HS or Less	72.2%	4.4%	19.7%	0.3%	3.3%
Some College/Assoc	69.6%	1.8%	15.3%	5.7%	7.6%
College+	68.3%	4.3%	10.2%	1.3%	15.8%
Total	69.7%	3.5%	14.1%	2.5%	10.2%
Generation					
Silent Generation	65.8%	3.8%	17.3%	0.2%	12.9%
Baby Boomers	64.7%	1.0%	24.4%	1.3%	8.6%
Generation X	74.3%	1.8%	7.9%	4.9%	11.0%
Millennials	69.1%	7.4%	12.7%	1.3%	9.5%
Total	69.7%	3.5%	14.1%	2.5%	10.2%
Income					
<\$25k	65.7%	2.3%	5.8%	8.7%	17.5%
\$25k - \$49.9k	62.0%	1.9%	26.5%	0.8%	8.8%
\$50k - \$99.9k	76.9%	4.8%	13.2%	1.1%	4.0%
\$100k+	73.6%	5.2%	6.8%	0.7%	13.7%
Total	69.7%	3.5%	14.1%	2.5%	10.2%

Question 7

What treatment was recommended? (Up to three responses accepted per respondent)

	Prescription painkillers	Steroids	Over-the- counter pain medication such as Advil® or Aleve®	Surgery	Injections	Massage	Exercise or physical therapy	Other*
Age								
<35	46.5%	21.9%	15.9%	12.4%	12.4%	28.3%	21.2%	38.7%
35 - 64	40.9%	17.4%	13.0%	11.5%	26.7%	13.6%	37.4%	33.7%
65+	23.2%	4.9%	8.2%	13.5%	10.7%	5.5%	31.3%	41.9%
Total	39.7%	16.7%	13.1%	12.1%	19.5%	16.9%	31.3%	36.6%
Education								
HS or Less	42.9%	14.5%	5.9%	9.3%	8.4%	12.8%	21.8%	28.2%
Some College/Assoc	36.2%	14.9%	20.3%	12.6%	28.4%	14.4%	32.4%	45.3%
College+	40.6%	19.4%	11.5%	13.3%	18.7%	20.9%	35.7%	34.5%
Total	39.7%	16.7%	13.1%	12.1%	19.5%	16.9%	31.3%	36.6%
Generation								
Silent Generation	21.6%	3.0%	5.8%	14.7%	11.7%	2.6%	24.8%	42.4%
Baby Boomers	27.5%	7.5%	7.8%	14.1%	8.7%	9.0%	34.1%	43.2%
Generation X	46.0%	21.5%	15.9%	10.0%	34.5%	15.5%	39.7%	29.3%
Millennials	46.5%	21.9%	15.9%	12.4%	12.4%	28.3%	21.2%	38.7%
Total	39.7%	16.7%	13.1%	12.1%	19.5%	16.9%	31.3%	36.6%
Income								
<\$25k	41.6%	18.6%	16.1%	11.2%	15.1%	4.3%	23.4%	41.8%
\$25k - \$49.9k	29.7%	12.5%	9.0%	15.4%	10.6%	10.7%	32.0%	36.8%
\$50k - \$99.9k	39.2%	19.1%	12.1%	10.5%	31.0%	23.6%	37.6%	38.2%
\$100k+	54.4%	17.6%	9.9%	12.7%	20.4%	21.6%	31.1%	23.2%
Total	39.7%	16.7%	13.1%	12.1%	19.5%	16.9%	31.3%	36.6%

* Includes heat, back brace, other alternative medicine procedures, rest, nothing, and other

Question 8

Did the pain:

	Go Away Completely	Get Better	Get Worse	Stay the Same
Age				
<35	39.1%	39.1%	1.7%	20.0%
35 - 64	18.5%	48.5%	6.8%	26.1%
65+	20.2%	43.7%	3.5%	32.6%
Total	25.1%	44.8%	4.7%	25.4%
Education				
HS or Less	18.3%	41.9%	7.0%	32.8%
Some College/Assoc	19.1%	40.8%	7.4%	32.8%
College+	33.5%	49.4%	1.4%	15.7%
Total	25.1%	44.8%	4.7%	25.4%
Generation				
Silent Generation	25.5%	36.6%	3.3%	34.6%
Baby Boomers	11.4%	44.3%	9.8%	34.5%
Generation X	22.7%	52.0%	4.0%	21.3%
Millennials	39.1%	39.1%	1.7%	20.0%
Total	25.1%	44.8%	4.7%	25.4%
Income				
<\$25k	20.2%	28.9%	13.1%	37.8%
\$25k - \$49.9k	13.2%	49.1%	4.1%	33.6%
\$50k - \$99.9k	24.7%	51.6%	2.3%	21.3%
\$100k+	45.4%	46.6%	0.7%	7.3%
Total	25.1%	44.8%	4.7%	25.4%

About Truven Health Analytics, part of the IBM Watson Health business

Truven Health Analytics®, part of the IBM Watson Health™ business, provides market-leading performance improvement solutions built on data integrity, advanced analytics and domain expertise. For more than 40 years, our insights and solutions have been providing hospitals and clinicians, employers and health plans, state and federal government agencies, life sciences companies and policymakers, the facts they need to make confident decisions that directly affect the health and well-being of people and organizations in the US and around the world. The company was acquired by IBM in 2016 to help form a new business, Watson Health. Watson Health aspires to improve lives and give hope by delivering innovation to address the world's most pressing health challenges through data and cognitive insights.

Truven Health Analytics owns some of the most trusted brands in healthcare, such as MarketScan®, 100 Top Hospitals®, Advantage Suite®, Micromedex®, Simpler® and ActionOI®. Truven Health has its principal offices in Ann Arbor, MI, Chicago, IL and Denver, CO.

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