

# THOMSON REUTERS-NPR HEALTH POLL PAINKILLERS

NOVEMBER 2011



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# THOMSON REUTERS-NPR HEALTH POLL

Each month, the Thomson Reuters-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's Scott Hensley on the health blog Shots (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/>) and on air.

Complete survey results are posted here:  
<http://healthcare.thomsonreuters.com/npr/>

NPR's reports on the findings are archived here:  
[http://www.npr.org/templates/archives/archive.php?thingId=137038712&ps=sh\\_sttag](http://www.npr.org/templates/archives/archive.php?thingId=137038712&ps=sh_sttag)

The Thomson Reuters-NPR Health Poll is powered by the Thomson Reuters PULSE™ Healthcare Survey, an independently funded telephone poll which collects information about health behavior, attitudes and utilization from more than 100,000 U.S. households annually.

The results depicted below represent responses from 3,009 survey participants interviewed from October 1-13, 2011. The margin of error is 1.8 percent.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The survey asked respondents their opinions and concerns regarding narcotic painkillers such as Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin and morphine. The poll found that, despite persistent concerns, 49.7% of the U.S. population has used narcotic painkillers.

- 30.5% of respondents who reported using narcotic painkillers did so for chronic pain, a rate that decreased among respondents with higher income and more education.
- 88% of respondents who said they had used narcotic painkillers did so for acute pain, while 4.6% said they had used them for pain associated with cancer.
- Over three-quarters (77.2%) of all respondents said they believe narcotic painkillers are linked to drug addiction, while 59.5% associate narcotic painkillers with depression.
- Over one-third (36.1%) of respondents who had used narcotic pain killers did so despite having concerns regarding their use.
- The top concern among painkiller users was potential side effects (44.9%), followed by fear of addiction (27.5%), and concern about potential long-term health impacts (15.5%).
- Those who have not used painkillers cited fear of addiction as their primary concern (38%), followed by association with drug abuse (24.8%), and side effects (20.4%).
- 30.8% of respondents said they questioned or refused a physician's recommendation of painkillers.



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# SURVEY DATA

Responses in **RED** show inter-year significance

## QUESTION 1: Have you ever been prescribed a narcotic painkiller such as Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin or morphine?

Age	Yes	No
<35	54.2%	45.8%
35 – 64	52.3%	47.7%
65+	<b>37.5%</b>	<b>62.5%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>49.7%</b>	<b>50.3%</b>

  

Income	Yes	No
< \$25k	44.2%	55.8%
\$25k – \$49.9k	51.8%	48.2%
\$50k – \$99.9k	53.1%	46.9%
\$100k+	50.7%	49.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49.7%</b>	<b>50.3%</b>

  

Education	Yes	No
High School or Less	38.6%	61.4%
Some College	57.4%	42.6%
College+	52.4%	47.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49.7%</b>	<b>50.3%</b>

## QUESTION 2: Was it prescribed for:

### 1) Chronic pain such as arthritis, back, neck or other disease related pain?

Age	Yes	No
<35	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>92.3%</b>
35 – 64	37.2%	62.8%
65+	35.3%	64.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.5%</b>	<b>69.5%</b>

  

Income	Yes	No
< \$25k	<b>51.0%</b>	<b>49.0%</b>
\$25k – \$49.9k	36.1%	63.9%
\$50k – \$99.9k	21.1%	78.9%
\$100k+	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>92.2%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.5%</b>	<b>69.5%</b>

  

Education	Yes	No
High School or Less	46.3%	53.7%
Some College	38.6%	61.4%
College+	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>85.0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.5%</b>	<b>69.5%</b>



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## 2) Acute pain such as pain from surgery or injury?

Age	Yes	No
<35	97.3%	2.7%
35 – 64	86.9%	13.1%
65+	79.1%	20.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88.0%</b>	<b>12.0%</b>

### Income

< \$25k	83.9%	16.1%
\$25k – \$49.9k	85.3%	14.7%
\$50k – \$99.9k	89.5%	10.5%
\$100k+	95.2%	4.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88.0%</b>	<b>12.0%</b>

### Education

High School or Less	86.7%	13.3%
Some College	84.5%	15.5%
College+	91.6%	8.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88.0%</b>	<b>12.0%</b>

## 3) Pain associated with cancer?

Age	Yes	No
<35	3.9%	96.1%
35 – 64	4.5%	95.5%
65+	6.3%	93.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>95.4%</b>

### Income

< \$25k	9.8%	90.2%
\$25k – \$49.9k	3.1%	96.9%
\$50k – \$99.9k	3.2%	96.8%
\$100k+	1.7%	98.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>95.4%</b>

### Education

High School or Less	7.6%	92.4%
Some College	3.8%	96.2%
College+	3.6%	96.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>95.4%</b>



### QUESTION 3: Do you have any concerns regarding the use of narcotic painkillers?

#### Users

Age	Yes	No
<35	37.2%	62.8%
35 – 64	36.8%	63.2%
65+	31.7%	68.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36.1%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

#### Income

< \$25k	35.9%	64.1%
\$25k – \$49.9k	35.3%	64.7%
\$50k – \$99.9k	36.7%	63.3%
\$100k+	30.5%	69.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36.1%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

#### Education

High School or Less	33.6%	66.4%
Some College	43.7%	56.3%
College+	31.2%	68.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36.1%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

#### Non-Users

Age	Yes	No
<35	21.0%	79.0%
35 – 64	30.9%	69.1%
65+	33.8%	66.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29.8%</b>	<b>70.2%</b>

#### Income

< \$25k	26.0%	74.0%
\$25k – \$49.9k	32.4%	67.6%
\$50k – \$99.9k	33.4%	66.6%
\$100k+	24.2%	75.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29.8%</b>	<b>70.2%</b>

#### Education

High School or Less	22.6%	77.4%
Some College	32.7%	67.3%
College+	35.0%	65.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29.8%</b>	<b>70.2%</b>



**QUESTION 4: Which of the following best describes your concerns?**

- 1) Fear of addiction
- 2) Effectiveness
- 3) Side effects
- 4) Long-term health impact
- 5) Religious reasons
- 6) Costs
- 7) Association with drug abuse

**Users**

Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<35	10.9%	12.7%	58.1%	5.7%	0.0%	2.1%	10.5%
35 – 64	32.5%	2.6%	38.5%	20.2%	1.5%	1.9%	2.7%
65+	29.9%	2.9%	53.8%	8.3%	0.0%	0.6%	4.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>44.9%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>

**Income**

<\$25k	34.9%	0.8%	37.0%	14.5%	0.0%	2.3%	10.5%
\$25k – \$49.9k	28.2%	1.3%	49.2%	17.5%	0.0%	0.6%	3.2%
\$50k – \$99.9k	17.7%	13.7%	42.7%	19.4%	0.0%	2.7%	3.8%
\$100k+	29.4%	2.4%	56.0%	6.3%	4.1%	0.0%	1.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>44.9%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>

**Education**

High School or Less	32.3%	0.6%	45.6%	20.2%	0.0%	0.5%	0.7%
Some College	32.8%	9.9%	28.2%	15.6%	1.6%	2.6%	9.3%
College+	17.8%	1.3%	64.8%	12.3%	0.8%	1.5%	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>44.9%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>

**Non-Users**

Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<35	37.1%	0.0%	17.4%	1.5%	0.0%	2.1%	43.9%
35 – 64	37.1%	0.5%	17.1%	13.4%	1.1%	4.6%	26.1%
65+	40.2%	2.9%	28.9%	13.5%	1.3%	0.6%	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>24.8%</b>

**Income**

<\$25k	45.8%	1.2%	19.7%	14.8%	0.9%	5.4%	12.3%
\$25k – \$49.9k	40.8%	1.8%	20.6%	10.9%	2.2%	0.7%	23.0%
\$50k – \$99.9k	37.2%	0.4%	19.8%	9.2%	0.7%	4.0%	28.8%
\$100k+	20.8%	1.1%	19.1%	8.7%	0.0%	0.0%	50.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>24.8%</b>

**Education**

High School or Less	35.3%	0.3%	27.9%	14.8%	2.2%	4.6%	14.8%
Some College	37.6%	1.3%	26.0%	6.8%	0.0%	0.5%	27.8%
College+	39.9%	1.4%	11.9%	13.2%	1.0%	3.3%	29.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>24.8%</b>



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**QUESTION 5: Have you ever questioned or refused doctor recommended pain killers?**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<35	35.9%	64.1%
35 – 64	31.0%	69.0%
65+	<b>25.3%</b>	<b>74.7%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.8%</b>	<b>69.2%</b>

<b>Income</b>		
<\$25k	29.8%	70.2%
\$25k – \$49.9k	30.1%	69.9%
\$50k – \$99.9k	35.0%	65.0%
\$100k+	24.9%	75.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.8%</b>	<b>69.2%</b>

<b>Education</b>		
High School or Less	25.8%	74.2%
Some College	37.5%	62.5%
College+	29.5%	70.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.8%</b>	<b>69.2%</b>

**QUESTION 6: Do you believe any of the following are linked to the use of narcotic pain killers?**

**1) Drug addiction**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<35	77.8%	22.2%
35 – 64	79.1%	20.9%
65+	71.3%	28.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.2%</b>	<b>22.8%</b>

<b>Income</b>		
<\$25k	<b>64.5%</b>	<b>35.5%</b>
\$25k – \$49.9k	79.1%	20.9%
\$50k – \$99.9k	<b>85.8%</b>	<b>14.2%</b>
\$100k+	84.9%	15.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.2%</b>	<b>22.8%</b>

<b>Education</b>		
High School or Less	68.7%	31.3%
Some College	79.5%	20.5%
College+	81.9%	18.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.2%</b>	<b>22.8%</b>



## 2) Depression

Age	Yes	No
<35	54.9%	45.1%
35 – 64	61.5%	38.5%
65+	58.0%	42.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59.5%</b>	<b>40.5%</b>

Income		
< \$25k	49.8%	50.2%
\$25k – \$49.9k	63.4%	36.6%
\$50k – \$99.9k	61.4%	38.6%
\$100k+	62.4%	37.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59.5%</b>	<b>40.5%</b>

Education		
High School or Less	52.5%	47.5%
Some College	65.6%	34.4%
College+	60.4%	39.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59.5%</b>	<b>40.5%</b>

## 3) Bone loss

Age	Yes	No
<35	20.5%	79.5%
35 – 64	22.8%	77.2%
65+	27.3%	72.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>76.8%</b>

Income		
< \$25k	28.9%	71.1%
\$25k – \$49.9k	26.8%	73.2%
\$50k – \$99.9k	17.7%	82.3%
\$100k+	9.9%	90.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>76.8%</b>

Education		
High School or Less	27.4%	72.6%
Some College	26.4%	73.6%
College+	17.3%	82.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>76.8%</b>

## 4) Constipation

Age	Yes	No
<35	49.2%	50.8%
35 – 64	52.1%	47.9%
65+	49.1%	50.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50.9%</b>	<b>49.1%</b>

Income		
< \$25k	51.1%	48.9%
\$25k – \$49.9k	52.8%	47.2%
\$50k – \$99.9k	51.4%	48.6%
\$100k+	52.1%	47.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50.9%</b>	<b>49.1%</b>

Education		
High School or Less	46.6%	53.4%
Some College	55.3%	44.7%
College+	50.9%	49.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50.9%</b>	<b>49.1%</b>



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