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# 1 in 8 U.S. Adults Have Tried Ozempic or Another GLP-1 Drug

By By Lisa Rapaport. Fact-Checked, 2024-05-13



The newest group of diabetes and weight loss drugs are administered via injection pens. Shutterstock

## Key Takeaways

- 1 in 8 adults in the U.S. have taken a GLP-1 drug like Ozempic or Mounjaro.
- More than half said it was difficult to afford the cost, even when insurance covered part of it.
- Only 1 percent of adults age 65 and older reported using a GLP-1 drug for weight loss - even though 40 percent are considered to be overweight or have obesity.

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Of the people who said they had tried one of these drugs, 3 out of 5 (62 percent) said they were taking them to manage a chronic condition, while the rest said they were taking them primarily to lose weight.

The poll focused on a family of medicines known as [GLP-1 receptor agonists](#), which can help control blood sugar levels and reduce hunger. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved two GLP-1 drugs made with the active ingredient semaglutide: [Ozempic](#) for type 2 diabetes and Wegovy for weight loss and [heart disease prevention](#). The agency also approved two drugs with the active ingredient tirzepatide: [Mounjaro](#) for type 2 diabetes and Zepbound for weight loss.

Among people living with one of the conditions that these drugs are approved for, the rates are even higher, according to [poll results](#) published by KFF, a health policy research nonprofit.

Overall, 43 percent of adults with [diabetes](#) have taken GLP-1 drugs, as have 26 percent of adults with [heart disease](#) and 22 percent of adults who are [overweight or have obesity](#), according to the poll.

"Use is reported by much larger shares of adults who have conditions that these drugs are prescribed for, including diabetes, heart disease or being diagnosed as overweight or obese, which is what we'd expect to see," says Alex Montero, a survey analyst for the KFF public opinion and survey research program.

## Many People Still Struggle to Afford GLP-1 Drugs

But the poll results also suggest that many people might struggle to start or keep taking GLP-1 drugs because of access and affordability issues.

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One in 5 insured adults who took GLP-1 drugs said they paid the full price themselves.

More than half of adults who had tried these drugs at some point said it was difficult to afford the cost, including 22 percent who said it was "very difficult." Most adults said at least some of the cost of GLP-1 medicines was covered by their insurance.

While it's hard to say how much costs prevent people from starting or continuing on GLP-1 drugs, the poll results for people age 65 and older suggests this is possible, Montero says. Medicare, the U.S. health program for people in that age group, doesn't cover any [weight loss](#) medicines unless they're prescribed to treat another medical condition.

## Potential Underuse of GLP-1 Drugs

The poll found that 8 percent of adults age 65 and older have taken GLP-1 drugs for a chronic condition, but just 1 percent have used these medicines for [obesity](#) .

Overall, 5 percent of all adults have used these drugs for weight loss, including 6 percent of people in their thirties and 7 percent of adults 18 to 29 years old.

"We can't directly measure the level of potential underuse of these drugs," Montero says. "But it is notable that just 1 percent of adults 65 and older say they've taken GLP-1 drugs specifically to lose weight, even though 4 in 10 are diagnosed as overweight or obese, which may reflect [Medicare's lack of coverage](#) for drugs used for obesity."

Even though most adults do go to their primary care doctor or a specialist for prescriptions, about 1 in 4 go elsewhere to get GLP-1 drugs, whether that be online or from medical spas or aesthetic medical centers.

This is another sign that costs and access may be an issue for some patients, says [Jody Dushay, MD](#) , an endocrinologist and an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School

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"It is not surprising due to all the hype about these medications, but it is very disturbing," Dr. Dushay says. "In my experience, no patients who have gotten these medications online or from a spa are getting the real medicine."

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### Sources

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