



# How Does the Public VIEW PHARMA?

**A**s an industry, pharma has made tremendous contributions toward advancing medicine. Pharma companies have not only driven continued innovation but also demonstrated strong social responsibility. Many have programs in place, for example, to help even the poorest patients afford their treatments.

Public perceptions, however, have often been out of synch with reality. Pharma has been investing in informing the public—and getting the story out about its role in bringing patients the best care. Are those efforts showing results? To find out, SSI recently performed a study of close to 2,400 adults in the US, UK, and Australia.

## Around Half of Consumers Trust Pharma — with J&J No. 1

About half of consumers consider pharma very or somewhat trustworthy. There is somewhat more distrust in the US, however. About 10% of US consumers consider pharma very untrustworthy, compared with 3% of UK consumers, and 4% of Australian consumers.

In all three countries studied, Johnson & Johnson is viewed as the most trustworthy pharmaceutical company. J&J is named as the most trusted pharma company by 25% of Australian consumers, 22% of American consumers, and 21% of British consumers. Interestingly, in the US and Australia, there is a large gap between J&J and the company coming in second — Bayer in both the US (10%) and in Australia (8%). In the UK, however, GlaxoSmithKline tied with J&J, named by 21% of respondents as most trustworthy. Bayer is named as most trustworthy by just 5% of UK consumers — earning it the third-place position.

In the US, Pfizer (7%) comes in third. In Australia, GSK comes in third (6%), followed closely by Pfizer (5%). Perhaps most interesting is the high percentage of “none of the above” in all countries. When presented with a list of the top pharma companies, 45% of respondents in Australia, 44% in the US and 39% in the UK say they would not choose any as most trustworthy.

This may be because so many pharma companies remain unfamiliar names to many consumers — even in the US, where DTC advertising is prevalent. Patients may know the medication they take, but often not the manufacturer.

## The Majority View Pharma as Innovative — Though Many Want More R&D Investment

About 67% of respondents in the US, 73% in Australia, and 82% in the UK believe that pharma has been very or somewhat innovative in advancing medicine. Many, however, would like to see pharma re-invest more of its profits in R&D.

When asked if pharma puts enough of its profits toward developing new treatments, 40% of Americans, 30% of British, and 32% of Australians say “no.” In all countries, there is a high percentage (more than 40% in the UK and Australia and 30% in the US) who say they don’t know.

## Physicians Remain the Most Trusted Information Source

In all three countries, physicians remain the source consumers turn to first for information about their medicines. About half of consumers in Australia, 46% in the UK, and 42% in the US go first to their doctors to learn about a drug. In the US and UK, medical websites are named as the second most popular “go to” information source, while in Australia pharmacists are the second most named source. Pharmacists place third in the US and UK.

Pharmaceutical company websites are not widely used to gather information. Just 4% of consumers in the US, 3% in the UK, and 4% in Australia turn to pharmaceutical company sites first when seeking to learn about a drug.

## Awareness Low of Patient Support Programs

Awareness remains low that pharmaceutical companies have programs to support pa-

Contributed by



**CHRIS DEANGELIS**, VP, Sales SSI

tients who can’t afford their medications. Awareness is highest (53%) in the US, perhaps because messages about these programs are often included in DTC ads. Awareness is very low in the UK (17%) and Australia (20%), where universal healthcare and prescription drug subsidies are available.

## Conclusions

A positive public opinion can be crucial — particularly when a company or brand faces a crisis, such as a recall. It’s the company — not the brand — that needs to respond to crises, so it’s important to have a name with established credibility. Companies should track consumer perceptions to understand where they need to create programs to help improve awareness and trust. **PV**

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