

Q1141 Perceptions of Dietary Supplements and the FDA

The study was conducted for The Pew Charitable Trusts via an online probability panel by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted May 17-May 29, 2019, among a sample of 1,000 total respondents. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-4.6 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. More information about SSRS can be obtained by visiting www.ssrs.com.

Sample	N size	Margin of error
Total	N=1,000	+/-4.6%
Supplement user	N=845	+/-5.0%
Nonsupplement user	N=155	+/-11.4%

Notes for reading the topline:

- Percentages may not always add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
- Values less than 0.5 percent are indicated by an asterisk (*).
- [Vol.] indicates a response was volunteered by the respondent, not offered as an explicit choice.
- Questions are presented in the order asked; question numbers may not be sequential.

Q1. Which of the following statements comes closer to your view of government regulations:

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	N=1,000	N=845	N=155
Most regulations are necessary and protect consumers	75%	76%	72%
Most regulations are unnecessary and harm the economy	25%	25%	28%
Web blank	0%	0%	0%

Q2. In general, how would you describe your own health?

	<i>Base</i>	Excellent/Very good			Good	Fair/Poor			Web blank
		Net	Excellent	Very good		Net	Fair	Poor	
Total	N=1,000	46%	11%	35%	38%	16%	15%	2%	0%
Supplement user	N=845	49%	11%	38%	35%	17%	15%	1%	0%
Nonsupplement user	N=155	35%	9%	26%	49%	16%	13%	3%	0%

Q3. In general, if used as directed, how safe do you think [INSERT ITEM] are?

a. Prescription drugs (e.g., antibiotics, statins, blood pressure medicine)

	<i>Base</i>	Safe			Not Safe			Web blank
		Net	Extremely safe	Pretty safe	Net	Not too safe	Not safe at all	
Total	N=1,000	83%	16%	67%	17%	15%	2%	0%
Supplement user	N=845	83%	16%	67%	17%	15%	2%	0%
Nonsupplement user	N=155	83%	17%	66%	17%	15%	2%	0%

b. Over the counter medications (e.g., Tylenol, Sudafed, Zyrtec)

	Base	Safe			Not Safe			Web blank
		Net	Extremely safe	Pretty safe	Net	Not too safe	Not safe at all	
Total	N=1,000	90%	18%	73%	10%	8%	2%	0%
Supplement user	N=845	91%	18%	72%	9%	8%	1%	0%
Nonsupplement user	N=155	88%	15%	73%	12%	9%	3%	0%

c. Dietary supplements (e.g., products that include vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanicals, and other substances such as fish oil and melatonin)

	Base	Safe			Not Safe			Web blank
		Net	Extremely safe	Pretty safe	Net	Not too safe	Not safe at all	
Total	N=1,000	85%	14%	71%	15%	13%	2%	0%
Supplement user	N=845	89%	16%	72%	11%	9%	2%	0%
Nonsupplement user	N=155	70%	6%	65%	30%	27%	2%	0%

d. Weight loss supplements (e.g., Hydroxycut, Garcinia Cambogia Extract)

	Base	Safe			Not Safe			Web blank
		Net	Extremely safe	Pretty safe	Net	Not too safe	Not safe at all	
Total	N=1,000	26%	1%	25%	74%	56%	17%	*
Supplement user	N=845	24%	1%	23%	76%	58%	18%	*
Nonsupplement user	N=155	35%	1%	34%	65%	50%	15%	0%

e. Exercise or athletic performance enhancing supplements (e.g., creatine, whey protein)

	Base	Safe			Not Safe			Web blank
		Net	Extremely safe	Pretty safe	Net	Not too safe	Not safe at all	
Total	N=1,000	58%	5%	53%	43%	35%	8%	0%
Supplement user	N=845	61%	5%	55%	39%	32%	7%	0%
Nonsupplement user	N=155	43%	3%	40%	57%	48%	9%	0%

f. Supplements to enhance sexual performance (e.g., Zytentz, Vigorexin, Natural Balance Cobra Sexual Energy)

	Base	Safe			Not Safe			Web blank
		Net	Extremely safe	Pretty safe	Net	Not too safe	Not safe at all	
Total	N=1,000	40%	2%	37%	60%	47%	14%	0%
Supplement user	N=845	38%	2%	36%	62%	49%	13%	0%
Nonsupplement user	N=155	47%	5%	42%	53%	39%	14%	0%

Q4. Have you ever personally used/taken any:

- c. Dietary supplements (e.g., products that include vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanicals, and other substances such as fish oil and melatonin)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=1,000</i>	<i>N=845</i>	<i>N=155</i>
Yes	75%	93%	0%
No	25	7%	99%
Web blank	*	0%	1%

- d. Weight loss supplements (e.g., Hydroxycut, Garcinia Cambogia Extract)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=1,000</i>	<i>N=845</i>	<i>N=155</i>
Yes	22	27%	0%
No	78	73%	99%
Web blank	*	*	1%

- e. Exercise or athletic performance enhancing supplements (e.g., creatine, whey protein)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=1,000</i>	<i>N=845</i>	<i>N=155</i>
Yes	29%	35%	0%
No	71%	65%	99%
Web blank	*	*	1%

- f. Supplements to enhance sexual performance (e.g., Zytenz, Vigorexin, Natural Balance Cobra Sexual Energy)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=1,000</i>	<i>N=845</i>	<i>N=155</i>
Yes	5%	7%	0%
No	94%	93%	99%
Web blank	*	*	1%

(Asked if ever used supplement type)

Q5. In the past two years, have you personally used/taken:

- c. Dietary supplements (e.g., products that include vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanicals, and other substances such as fish oil and melatonin)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=798</i>	<i>N=798</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Yes	87%	87%	--
No	13%	13%	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

d. Weight loss supplements (e.g., Hydroxycut, Garcinia Cambogia Extract)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=228</i>	<i>N=228</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Yes	45%	45%	--
No	56%	56%	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

e. Exercise or athletic performance enhancing supplements (e.g., creatine, whey protein)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=294</i>	<i>N=294</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Yes	67%	67%	--
No	33%	33%	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

f. Supplements to enhance sexual performance (e.g., Zytenz, Vigorexin, Natural Balance Cobra Sexual Energy)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=46</i>	<i>N=46</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Yes	50%	50%	--
No	50%	50%	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

(Asked if ever used any supplement)

Q5a. What was the main reason you decided to take a supplement?

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=845</i>	<i>N=845</i>	<i>N=0</i>
To support your health	52%	52%	--
To supplement your diet	24%	24%	--
Because your doctor recommended it	16%	16%	--
To prevent disease	2%	2%	--
To treat disease	1%	1%	--
[Vol.] To increase energy/strength/physical performance	1%	1%	
[Vol.] For weight loss	1%	1%	
Some other reason (specify)	4%	4%	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

(Asked if taken supplement type in the past 2 years)

Q6. Which of the following were important to you when you picked a [INSERT SUPPLEMENT TYPE]?

- c. Dietary supplement (e.g., products that include vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanicals, and other substances such as fish oil and melatonin)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=707</i>	<i>N=707</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Safety	41%	41%	--
Potential benefits	64%	64%	--
Brand reputation	36%	36%	--
Cost	47%	47%	--
Quality of ingredients	47%	47%	--
Product reviews	28%	28%	--
Something else (specify)	3%	3%	--
None of the above	1%	1%	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

- d. Weight loss supplement (e.g., Hydroxycut, Garcinia Cambogia Extract)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=106</i>	<i>N=106</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Safety	17%	17%	--
Potential benefits	70%	70%	--
Brand reputation	24%	24%	--
Cost	40%	40%	--
Quality of ingredients	34%	34%	--
Product reviews	49%	49%	--
Something else (specify)	1%	1%	--
None of the above	*	*	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

- e. Exercise or athletic performance enhancing supplement (e.g., creatine, whey protein)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=196</i>	<i>N=196</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Safety	32%	32%	--
Potential benefits	62%	62%	--
Brand reputation	33%	33%	--
Cost	55%	55%	--
Quality of ingredients	58%	58%	--
Product reviews	44%	44%	--
Something else (specify)	4%	4%	--
None of the above	*	*	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

- f. Supplement to enhance sexual performance (e.g., Zytenz, Vigorexin, Natural Balance Cobra Sexual Energy)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=24	N=24	N=0
Safety	12%	12%	--
Potential benefits	85%	85%	--
Brand reputation	21%	21%	--
Cost	35%	35%	--
Quality of ingredients	27%	27%	--
Product reviews	31%	31%	--
Something else (specify)	0%	0%	--
None of the above	0%	0%	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

- Q9. Have you or has anyone in your immediate family ever experienced any serious side effects (such as increased heart rate, high blood pressure, kidney problems, or liver damage) as a result of taking any:

- c. Dietary supplements (e.g., products that include vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanicals, and other substances such as fish oil and melatonin)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=1,000	N=845	N=155
Yes	5%	6%	1%
No	83%	84%	80%
Not sure	12%	10%	19%
Web blank	0%	0%	0%

- d. Weight loss supplements (e.g., Hydroxycut, Garcinia Cambogia Extract)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=1,000	N=845	N=155
Yes	7%	8%	1%
No	74%	72%	80%
Not sure	19%	19%	19%
Web blank	0%	0%	0%

- e. Exercise or athletic performance enhancing supplements (e.g., creatine, whey protein)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=1,000	N=845	N=155
Yes	4%	4%	2%
No	80%	80%	84%
Not sure	16%	16%	14%
Web blank	*	*	0%

- f. Supplements to enhance sexual performance (e.g., Zytentz, Vigorexin, Natural Balance Cobra Sexual Energy)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=1,000</i>	<i>N=845</i>	<i>N=155</i>
Yes	2%	2%	1%
No	75%	73%	83%
Not sure	23%	25%	17%
Web Blank	0%	0%	0%

For the following questions, **supplements** include all of the following:

- Dietary supplements (e.g., products that include vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanicals, and other substances such as fish oil and melatonin)
- Weight loss supplements (e.g., Hydroxycut, Garcinia Cambogia Extract)
- Exercise or athletic performance enhancing supplements (e.g., creatine, whey protein)
- Supplements to enhance sexual performance (e.g., Zytentz, Vigorexin, Natural Balance Cobra Sexual Energy)

(Asked if taken supplement type in the past 2 years)

- Q10. If you had a safety concern about a specific supplement you were taking, who would you turn to first for more information?

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=0</i>
My doctor or another healthcare provider	31%	31%	--
A pharmacist	13%	13%	--
The supplement manufacturer	3%	3%	--
The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)	6%	6%	--
Online resources	47%	47%	--
Some other place/person (specify)	*	*	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

- Q12. Thinking about who should be responsible for the safety of supplements, how responsible should [INSERT ITEM] be?

- a. companies that manufacture supplements

	<i>Base</i>	Responsible			A little/Not responsible			Web blank
		Net	Very responsible	Somewhat responsible	Net	A little responsible	Not at all responsible	
Total	<i>N=1,000</i>	97%	88%	9%	4%	3%	1%	0%
Supplement user	<i>N=845</i>	96%	87%	9%	4%	3%	1%	0%
Nonsupplement user	<i>N=155</i>	98%	88%	10%	2%	2%	0%	0%

b. the FDA, the federal agency that oversees supplements

	Base	Responsible			A little/Not responsible			Web blank
		Net	Very responsible	Somewhat responsible	Net	A little responsible	Not at all responsible	
Total	N=1,000	95%	75%	19%	5%	4%	1%	*
Supplement user	N=845	95%	75%	19%	5%	4%	1%	*
Nonsupplement user	N=155	95%	77%	19%	5%	5%	*	0%

c. the drugstores and other retailers (both stores and online) that sell supplements

	Base	Responsible			A little/Not responsible			Web blank
		Net	Very responsible	Somewhat responsible	Net	A little responsible	Not at all responsible	
Total	N=1,000	71%	33%	38%	29%	19%	10%	0%
Supplement User	N=845	72%	31%	40%	28%	19%	10%	0%
Nonsupplement user	N=155	70%	40%	30%	31%	21%	10%	0%

d. consumers themselves

	Base	Responsible			A little/Not responsible			Web blank
		Net	Very responsible	Somewhat responsible	Net	A little responsible	Not at all responsible	
Total	N=1,000	81%	50%	31%	20%	15%	5%	0%
Supplement user	N=845	79%	50%	29%	21%	16%	5%	0%
Nonsupplement user	N=155	86%	49%	36%	14%	10%	4%	0%

(Asked if taken supplements in the past 2 years)

Q8. In the past two years, did you buy your supplement(s) from:

a. A big-box store, such as Target or Walmart

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=744	N=744	N=0
Yes	66%	66%	--
No	33%	33%	--
Web blank	1%	1%	--

b. A grocery store

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=744	N=744	N=0
Yes	48%	48%	--
No	50%	50%	--
Web blank	2%	2%	--

c. A specialized retail store, such as GNC or Vitamin Shoppe

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Yes	32%	32%	--
No	66%	66%	--
Web blank	2%	2%	--

d. A stand-alone pharmacy or drugstore

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Yes	46%	46%	--
No	52%	52%	--
Web blank	2%	2%	--

e. A small convenience store or gas station

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Yes	4%	4%	--
No	92%	92%	--
Web blank	4%	4%	--

f. A large, mainly online retailer (e.g., Amazon)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Yes	37%	37%	--
No	60%	60%	--
Web blank	3%	3%	--

g. A smaller, independent online retailer (e.g., Ritual Care/Goop Wellness)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Yes	8%	8%	--
No	89%	89%	--
Web blank	3%	3%	--

g. [Vol.] A wholesale club (e.g., Costco, Sam's Club, etc.)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=744</i>	<i>N=0</i>
Yes	3%	3%	--
No	97%	97%	--
Web blank	0%	0%	--

h. Somewhere else (please specify)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=744	N=744	N=0
Yes	7%	7%	--
No	40%	40%	--
Web blank	53%	53%	--

(Asked if not taken a supplement in the past 2 years)

Q7a. Why have you never taken a supplement/not taken a supplement in the past two years?

a. They are ineffective

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=256	N=101	N=155
Yes	55%	55%	55%
No	39%	40%	38%
Web blank	6%	5%	7%

b. They are expensive

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=256	N=101	N=155
Yes	59%	60%	58%
No	36%	34%	37%
Web blank	5%	5%	5%

c. I am concerned about safety

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=256	N=101	N=155
Yes	56%	55%	56%
No	40%	45%	37%
Web blank	5%	1%	7%

d. I am concerned about the quality of the ingredients in supplement products

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=256	N=101	N=155
Yes	57%	53%	59%
No	37%	42%	34%
Web blank	6%	5%	7%

e. [Vol.] No need/don't think I need it (general)

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=256	N=101	N=155
Yes	12%	2%	18%
No	88%	98%	82%
Web blank	0%	0%	0%

f. [Vol.] No interest/just don't want to

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=256	N=101	N=155
Yes	2%	*	2%
No	99%	100%	98%
Web blank	0%	0%	0%

g. Other reason (specify)

	Total	Supplement User	Non-Supplement User
Base	N=256	N=101	N=155
Yes	10%	16%	7%
No	80%	69%	87%
Web blank	9%	16%	6%

Q13. Do you think that:

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
Base	N=1,000	N=845	N=155
Retailers would only sell supplements products that are safe	37%	38%	37%
Retailers have no way of knowing whether the supplement products they sell are safe	63%	63%	63%
Web blank	0%	0%	0%

As you may know, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is a federal agency of the United States that is responsible for protecting and advancing public health. The FDA regulates a wide range of medications and product categories including: food, tobacco products, supplements, prescription and over-the-counter pharmaceutical drugs, vaccines, biopharmaceuticals, and medical devices. Their level of oversight varies by product category.

Q14. Which statement do you think correctly describes how the FDA currently regulates supplements?

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N= 1,000</i>	<i>N=845</i>	<i>N=155</i>
The FDA tests supplements before they are marketed to ensure that they are safe.	23%	23%	22%
Supplement manufacturers must prove to the FDA that their products are safe.	29%	28%	32%
The FDA can primarily take action only after a supplement is on the market and it is shown to be unsafe.	32%	35%	19%
Not sure	16%	14%	27%
Web blank	0%	0%	0%

Under current law, the FDA does not test or approve supplements before they are made available to the public, and the FDA does not know which products are on the market and what they contain. The FDA is mainly limited to acting after a supplement product on the market has been shown to be harmful.

Q14a. Thinking about the FDA’s current oversight of supplements, which comes closest to your viewpoint:

	Total	Supplement user	Nonsupplement user
<i>Base</i>	<i>N=1,000</i>	<i>N=845</i>	<i>N=155</i>
The FDA’s oversight is too restrictive, and it limits consumer access to supplements	4%	3%	5%
The FDA’s oversight strikes the right balance, allowing consumer access while also ensuring consumer safety	26%	26%	26%
The FDA is not able to keep consumers safe from harmful supplements	71%	71%	70%
Web blank	*	*	0%

There are new proposals being considered regarding the federal oversight system for supplement products, including one that would require supplement manufacturers to provide the FDA with a list of all their products and ingredients. This would be called “mandatory product listing.” The next questions ask about that proposal and a few others. For each statement, please indicate whether you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose it.

Q15. How much do you support or oppose the following statement: [INSERT ITEM]?

- a. In order for the FDA to know what supplement products are on the market, manufacturers should be required to give the agency a list of the products they make and their ingredients.

	<i>Base</i>	Support			Oppose			Web blank
		Net	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Net	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	
Total	<i>N=1,000</i>	95%	79%	17%	5%	3%	2%	0%
Supplement user	<i>N=845</i>	95%	79%	17%	5%	3%	2%	0%
Nonsupplement user	<i>N=155</i>	96%	79%	16%	5%	4%	1%	0%

- b. If a mandatory product listing requirement is put into place, supplement manufacturers should pay a small fee to the FDA to help cover some of the costs of the listing database so that taxpayer dollars would not be needed to pay for it all.

	<i>Base</i>	Support			Oppose			Web blank
		Net	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Net	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	
Total	<i>N=1,000</i>	87%	52%	34%	13%	10%	4%	0%
Supplement user	<i>N=845</i>	87%	50%	36%	13%	9%	4%	0%
Nonsupplement user	<i>N=155</i>	86%	61%	25%	14%	12%	1%	0%

- c. Congress should ensure that the FDA has adequate funding to oversee supplements and to take appropriate action against unsafe products.

	<i>Base</i>	Support			Oppose			Web blank
		Net	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Net	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	
Total	<i>N=1,000</i>	91%	63%	29%	8%	5%	3%	*
Supplement user	<i>N=845</i>	91%	62%	30%	9%	5%	4%	*
Nonsupplement user	<i>N=155</i>	92%	66%	26%	7%	6%	1%	1%

- d. Many supplements contain ingredients which may interact with a medicine or impact a medical condition. The FDA should require that this information be included on supplement product labels.

	<i>Base</i>	Support			Oppose			Web blank
		Net	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Net	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	
Total	<i>N=1,000</i>	95%	80%	16%	5%	2%	2%	0%
Supplement user	<i>N=845</i>	96%	80%	16%	4%	2%	3%	0%
Nonsupplement user	<i>N=155</i>	94%	79%	15%	6%	4%	2%	0%