

WISCONSIN
EMPLOYER SURVEY

SUMMER 2026

HEALTHCARE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

SURVEY: Surging Healthcare Costs Spur Price Transparency

High medical costs fuel employer support for transparency reforms

An overwhelming number of Wisconsin employers reported increased health care costs, highlighting widespread concern about affordability across the state, according to the latest **Wisconsin Employer Survey**. Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) – the combined manufacturers’ association and state chamber of commerce – conducts the survey twice a year to gauge top issues facing the state’s business climate and economy.

Nearly all respondents (96 percent) reported offering healthcare benefits to employees. Among those with employer-sponsored plans, 93 percent experienced an increase in health care costs in 2026, while just one percent reported a decrease. When asked to list the factors that contributed to their company’s healthcare cost increases, 88 percent of respondents said, “higher costs from providers” and 51 percent said, “increased drug costs.”

WMC’s survey data reflects and reinforces recent health care reports and metrics. Identified by the Health Care Cost Institute and in WMC Foundation’s recent [Wisconsin Competitiveness Report](#), Wisconsin is the [second costliest state](#) in the nation for healthcare. Additionally, Wisconsin has the [nation’s highest medical payments under workers’ compensation](#) and the [fourth-highest hospital costs](#).

“Rising healthcare costs are one of the key drivers of Wisconsin’s affordability crisis and pose a real threat to Wisconsin families, businesses, and the state’s overall economic competitiveness,” said WMC Associate Vice President of Government Relations Rachel Ver Velde. “Higher employer health care costs don’t disappear; they show up in payroll decisions, wages, and job growth.”

Reinforcing this data on rising prices for employers, survey respondents support policy to help bring down healthcare costs. When asked how state government could help businesses, a plurality of respondents (39 percent) answered “make healthcare more affordable.” Additionally, 96 percent of employers supported policies to strengthen hospital price transparency, so employers and patients can better understand and compare costs. Of respondents, 85 percent said they “strongly support” price transparency legislation, and no respondents indicated opposition.

“Health care remains the only industry where consumers and patients don’t know the cost of care prior to receiving the service,” Ver Velde continued. “Two patients can receive the same procedure yet face dramatically different bills, creating confusion for families and employers alike. By advancing meaningful price transparency legislation, Wisconsin can create a more affordable system that puts patients first.”

About the Wisconsin Employer Survey

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce represents businesses of all sizes and from every sector of the economy. The **Wisconsin Employer Survey** provides a snapshot of where Wisconsin's employers stand on important issues and outlines their economic outlook for both Wisconsin and the United States. For the Summer 2026 edition, WMC surveyed 196 employers that make up a representative sample of its membership and the state's business community as a whole.

What is the **one thing** state government could do to help your business?

MAKE HEALTHCARE MORE AFFORDABLE	39%
REDUCE TAXES	23%
REDUCE / REFORM REGULATIONS	19%
EDUCATION REFORM	6%
REDUCE SPENDING	6%
TORT / LEGAL REFORM	4%
OTHER	3%

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Do you support or oppose policies that would **strengthen hospital price transparency requirements** in Wisconsin, so employers and patients can better understand and compare healthcare costs before receiving care?

96%
SUPPORT

4%
NEITHER

0%
OPPOSE

STRONGLY SUPPORT 85%
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT 11%

NEITHER SUPPORT
NOR OPPOSE 4%
NOT SURE 0%

SOMEWHAT OPPOSE 0%
STRONGLY OPPOSE 0%

Does your business offer employees
healthcare benefits?

YES

96%

NO

4%

If you offer an employer sponsored plan,
in 2026, **did your healthcare costs:**



93%
INCREASE



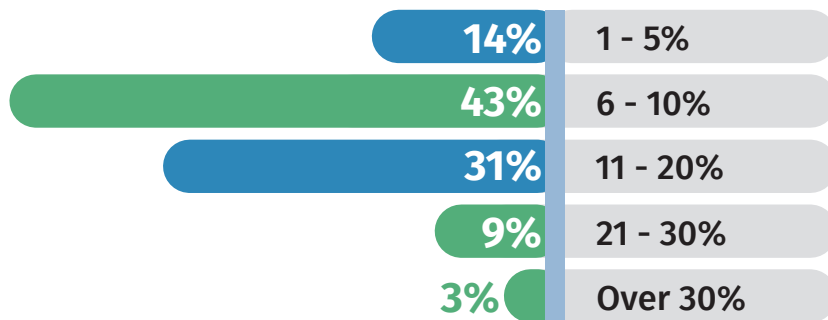
1%
DECREASE

6%
**STAY THE
SAME**

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If you answered **"increase,"**
how much will your healthcare costs increase?



If you said your **healthcare costs increased**
please check all factors that applied to your plan:

HIGHER COSTS FROM PROVIDERS	88%
INCREASED DRUG COSTS	51%
CASE & EXPERIENCE (DEMOGRAPHIC) CHANGES INCREASED	34%
RISK POOL TREND WORSENERD	22%
PROVIDER CONSOLIDATION REDUCED COMPETITION	22%
HEALTH STATUS OF THE GROUP WORSENERD	18%
OTHER	2%

** Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

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