



PRESS RELEASE

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Medicines: French people's confidence leaps to 85% *2015 Results of Observatoire Sociétal du médicament (French Societal Drug Observatory)*

For the 5th consecutive year, Leem's Observatoire Sociétal du médicament ⁽¹⁾ has delivered a detailed analysis of the French population's perception of, and relationship to, medicines. This year's survey focused on several key indicators of French people's relationship to medicines: their confidence in the products and in the companies operating in the sector, their level of information, and their understanding of the risks.

A slightly more upbeat mood

Although the French are among the most gloomy about the economic situation in their country (only 10% of them believe that it is good²), some indicators show that they are a little less pessimistic in 2015. Both the consumer confidence index and the perception of future living standards in France are rising.

Meanwhile, the controversies surrounding medicines that had impacted on the results of the 2014 Observatory were much less prevalent in early 2015.

The overwhelming majority of confidence indicators have returned to their level in 2013

French confidence in medicines generally has risen to 85% (+10 points), returning to a level close to that of previous years, after the slump recorded in 2014 (-12 points).

Medicines now enjoy the confidence of the population, particularly among the 60-plus age group (90% confidence) where consumption is higher than in the younger age groups (79% confidence among 18-24 year olds and 80% among 25-34 year olds). Moreover, those most vulnerable to disease have the greatest confidence in medicines: 93% for people with a long-term illness and, similarly, 93% for those on daily medication.

The rise in confidence applies to all types of medication apart from vaccines, where the level remains stable:

- +5 points for prescription medicines (93% of French say they have confidence in them);
- +6 points for reimbursable medicines (92%);
- +6 points for branded medicines (89%);

A similar rise can be seen in:

- non-prescription medicines (73%, +7 points);
- non-reimbursable medicines (75%, +7 points);
- and to a lesser extent in generics (68%, +2 points).

Vaccines are the exception. Confidence is undoubtedly high (71% of French people are confident in them) but remains unchanged in a context favourable to medicines as a whole. Nearly one in three of the French population (29%) still claims not to trust vaccines. This particular area of distrust is all the more worrying because it affects every social and demographic category (age, education level, income level, occupation, etc.).

The French welcome more information and turn to the professionals and product leaflets for information

At least six out of ten French people say they are poorly informed about medicines, irrespective of the subject. A deterioration is even observed with regard to side effects: 62% of French people say they are poorly informed (+7 points).

Although still low, the feeling of being informed is nevertheless gaining ground in some areas:

¹ Ipsos online survey conducted for Leem between 23 February and 31 March 2015 amongst 1,010 respondents (representative sample of the French population aged 18 years and over).

² Global @visor Survey – March 2015: Ipsos monthly online survey conducted in 25 countries

- drug safety: 30% of French people feel that they are well informed (+6 points on 2014)
- the marketing authorisation procedure: 20% (+3 points)
- how research operates in the field of medicine: 20% (+3 points)

Efficacy of medicines remains the subject about which the French consider themselves best informed (39%). Conversely, only 15% of the population feels well informed about clinical trials before a new drug is marketed and 11% about how drug prices are set.

It is in this context of a perceived information deficit that the general public continues to turn to local healthcare professionals for information about medicines: first, their family doctors (95% confidence), then nurses (91%) followed closely by pharmacists (90%).

The product leaflet still enjoys high credibility as an information source: 87% of French people trust it, up 3 points on 2014. It provides reassurance regardless of medicine type: prescribed (90%) or non-prescription (91%), originator (91%) or generic (92%).

In terms of credibility, pharmaceutical companies score 49% (up 6 points on 2014), the same as medicine books published (49%) and slightly ahead of whistleblowers (45%).

The French are fearful of diseases for which there is no treatment and of drug interactions

When asked about the risks they fear most, the answer given by the majority of French people is the fear that they may one day suffer from a disease for which there is no known treatment (65%), expressing particular concern for antibiotic resistance (60%). This is followed by drug interactions: 61% of French people are afraid of having to take a lot of medication and fear the risk of interactions; 50% are afraid to mix medicines that do not go together. Six out of ten French people who still have parents or grandparents also claim to pay attention to the medicines taken by their parents, and almost one in two by their grandparents.

The image of pharmaceutical companies is based primarily on confidence in the "product"

61% of French people say they trust pharmaceutical companies, an increase of 4 points, which restores confidence in the sector to its 2013 level (62%). This puts pharmaceuticals fourth in the ranking of key sectors most trusted by the French population, behind aeronautics (76%), automotive (69%) and construction (63%), but ahead of telecoms (52%), retailing and food (42%), nuclear (39%), oil and banking (31%).

In detail, the sector's image is improving on almost every image indicator used.

On the positive side, pharmaceutical companies are perceived as "useful" (87%, +2 points), "cutting-edge" (81%, +2 points) and "effective" (78%). These items relate directly to the medical contribution and efficacy of products with which French people are directly and personally familiar since nearly one in two people claims to take medication on a daily basis (apart from contraceptive pills).

However, against a backdrop of mounting drug-related controversies in France since 2011, there is still room for improvement in the perception of corporate image: indeed, only a minority of French people view pharmaceutical companies as ethical (37%) and transparent (18%).

Finally, when they look back at the past, 72% of French people believe that medicines have improved over the last 20 years. This shows that French people clearly distinguish the medical "product" and their trust in it from the pharmaceutical companies who develop it, about whom they have little knowledge other than the public controversy surrounding them.

"This new edition of the Observatoire Sociétal du médicament confirms some of our beliefs, according to Patrick Errard, Chairman of Leem. What stands out is that the French welcome more high-quality information about their medicines and that people's attitude towards their treatment depends largely on the level of information given to them. There is a need for clarity, but also commitment, and initiatives like the one we have undertaken since the start of the year to combat drug-induced disease in the elderly will undoubtedly help to improve the proper use of these treatments and reduce accidents, while raising the level of understanding - and hence trust - that patients have of their medication. "

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