



PRESS RELEASE

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What are French people saying about drugs today? *Leem reveals the 2014 findings of its “Observatoire Sociétal du médicament” (French Societal Drug Observatory)*

For the 4th consecutive year, the Leem “Observatoire Sociétal du Médicament” has delivered a detailed analysis of the French population's perception of, and relationship with, drugs⁽¹⁾. This year's survey looked at two major issues in particular detail: safety and innovation.

The general feeling of mistrust that is gaining ground in French society also extends to drugs.

This general mistrust (8 out of 10 French people say that you cannot be too careful when dealing with others⁽²⁾) is affecting all sectors of the country's economy. Pharmaceutical companies seem comparatively less affected than others, since the level of trust expressed by French people towards them is 'only' 5 points lower than in 2013 (at 57%), whilst the food industry scores 15 points lower (at 38%), retailing 13 points (at 39%), construction 10 points (at 61%) and telecoms 8 points (53%).

This puts pharmaceutical companies fourth in the ranking of key sectors most trusted by the French population, behind transport (69%), automotive (65%) and construction (61%), but ahead of telecoms (53%), nuclear (40%), retailing (39%), food (38%), banking and insurance (30%), and oil (27%).

In this environment, French confidence in drugs remains at a high level (75%), albeit with a marked reduction this year (-12 points).

This decline covers all types of drugs even though, as in previous years, the level of trust remains higher for those that come with an 'endorsement', whether medical, governmental or industrial: prescription drugs (88%)/non-prescription drugs (66%), refundable drugs (86%)/non-refundable drugs (68%) and branded drugs (83%)/ generic drugs (66%), with a more significant reduction in confidence for drugs that do come with an 'endorsement'.

French people also have greater confidence (85%) in those drugs they take themselves, of which they have a more 'intimate' knowledge: the decline in this category of drugs is only 7 points.

French confidence is undermined by concerns regarding drug safety

When asked about the kind of drugs information they find most 'personally' relevant, they refer spontaneously to side-effects (71%) and contraindications (58%). Efficacy scores much lower (15%), demonstrating that this is not questioned by the majority of French people.

Side-effects alone are the focus for a large proportion of the concerns expressed by the French: only 47% believe that they are more effectively controlled, reflecting a reduction of 11 points since 2013.

23% of French people also believe that safety levels have fallen, and 76% feel that they are not sufficiently well informed about drug safety.

¹ Ipsos online survey of French respondents (4th wave) conducted between 24 February and 3 March 2014 amongst a representative sample of the French population: 1,017 individuals aged 18 and over.

² Second wave of the Ipsos / Steria 'Fractures Françaises' survey conducted in January 2014.

This apprehension about safety has a direct impact on the decline in confidence observed by the survey. Perfectly logically, those French people who say that drug safety has worsened over the last 5 years are those with least confidence in the industry (52%, compared with 25% on average for the French population as a whole).

The accumulation of drug-related controversies in France since 2011 (especially in 2013) has had the effect of raising doubts amongst part of the population, with people questioning the ability of the healthcare system to monitor drugs effectively.

French people believe that the safety of drugs is a shared responsibility

The French population sees the safety of drugs as a responsibility shared between pharmaceutical companies (89%), healthcare and public authorities (83%), which shares the same level of responsibility as doctors (83%), ahead of pharmacists (75%). Patients themselves rank much lower at 40%.

Against this background of questions over safety (side-effects and contraindications), French people place the following levels of trust in others to provide them with information about drugs:

- Predominantly healthcare professionals (doctors 94%, nurses 89% and pharmacists 87%), researchers (87%) and leaflets (84%).
- Next come friends and family (60%), non-profit organisations (56%) and public authorities/bodies (52%).
- Followed by pharmaceutical companies (43%), ahead of the media (press 34%, radio 31%, TV 27% and Internet 24%)
- Lastly, politicians are ranked lowest at just 8%.

Overall, 82% of French people say that they are badly informed of the risk/benefit ratio.

Research and innovation - so important to the image of the industry - is another area where the French population expects more information.

The 2014 survey reveals that pharmaceutical companies are clearly seen as the prime sources of funding for research into new drugs (by 76% of the French population), way ahead of private donations (38%), the French state (33%), the European Union (13%) and hospitals (3%).

French people rate pharmaceutical industry R&D positively: 73% believe that many more discoveries are being made today in the world of drug development than were made 20 years ago, and the same proportion (73%) feel that drugs are better than they were 20 years ago. When asked about the dynamism of research, they give a rating of 6.5 out of 10, and rate the patient progress delivered by new drugs at 6.7 out of 10.

8 French people out of 10 say that, despite everything, they need more information about how research operates and about future drug innovations over the next 10 years.

The lessons to be learned from this survey: the Leem perspective

Leem, the industry organisation that federates pharmaceutical companies operating in France, interprets the findings of the Observatoire 2014 survey as a warning signal for every stakeholder in the healthcare system, since confidence in drugs is a collective issue.

Additionally, the widespread mistrust that is now permeating French society, the proliferation of unstructured information of varying reliability, and the confusion over the sources of information providers have all contributed to the decline in confidence amongst the French population observed this year.

The IPSOS survey therefore highlights a real need for public education. Pharmaceutical companies will contribute to this effort within their own scope of responsibility. Beyond that, this question of trust must be seen as a concern that is shared with all other stakeholders: public authorities, healthcare professionals, patient representative organisations, etc.

If this mistrust is allowed to become a permanent feature, it will inevitably raise sooner or later serious public health issues. This is why Leem is inviting all stakeholders to work together on reconsidering and redesigning the policy of drugs-related information.

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Age: The level of confidence in drugs increases with age. It is 82% in over-60s, 95% for prescription drugs and 93% for branded drugs.

Vaccines: nearly one in three of the French population (29%) have no confidence in vaccines (down by 6 points in one year to 71%). The French rate vaccine safety at 6.1 out of 10, which is lower than that for drugs in general (6.4 out of 10).

The precautionary principle: concerns over drug safety are highlighting a French reluctance to accept risk. 67% say that there should be zero risk when launching a new drug into the market, because of the potential danger involved. Conversely, only 28% believe that too many precautions can prevent progress being made in treatment.

Threats to quality and safety: drug counterfeiting (83%), online sales of drugs (66%) and relocation of production (50%).

The information leaflet: enjoys high credibility as an information source. 93% of French people find it useful, and 84% trust it. It provides reassurance: 76% of the French population always read it when taking a drug for the first time. How could it be improved? Only 77% believe it to be truthful and 69% understandable.

The full results can be found at: www.leem.org

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