

# Medicare program confuses 52% polled

## Rural residents, seniors, college grads cite trouble

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*Associated Press*

**WASHINGTON** — Most people, particularly senior citizens, say they are having a hard time understanding the new Medicare prescription-drug program, an AP-Ipsos poll found.

The drug benefit requires people to choose among dozens of competing private insurance plans. Along with senior citizens, those most likely to acknowledge difficulties live in rural areas or are college graduates.

"I pretty much completed a master's degree in psychology, and I can't understand it," said Raymond Lloyd, a Republican-leaning retiree from Silt, Colo. "For the elderly who don't have their full faculties and the poor people who are not well educated, God help 'em."

More than half of respondents, 52%, say they think the program that began enrolling people on Jan. 1 is tough to understand.

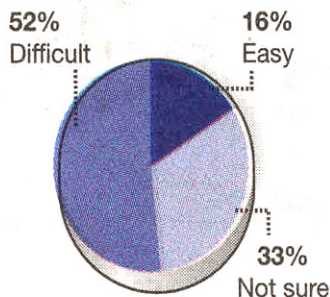
Two-thirds of older people surveyed and two-thirds of those who have signed up say they are confused by the program, which is intended to help many save more on their prescription drugs.

A third said they had not decided what they think of the new program, and 16% said they have little trouble figuring out the pro-

## MANY FIND NEW PLAN HARD TO UNDERSTAND

The response to the new Medicare prescription plan has been lukewarm — many find it confusing and have not noticed any significant savings.

### Is the new Medicare prescription drug program easy or hard to understand?



NOTE: 1,000 adults; margin of error ± 3 percentage points

SOURCE: Ipsos-Public Affairs for AP

gram.

One who finds it easy to understand is Kathy Herndon of Savannah, Ga., who has worked for three decades in a dentist's office.

"I'm sure it would be confusing unless you're used to dealing with it," she said.

The poorest people in the program have a specific plan chosen at first for them; those with higher incomes have to pick one. People who struggle with a selection often turn to their pharmacists.

Soon after enrollment opened, it became apparent there was widespread confusion, so the government increased the number of workers at a pharmacy help line from 150 to 4,000. Questions also can go through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services — 1-800-Medicare or [www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov) — or local aging agencies. ■

Associated Press manager of news surveys Trevor Tompson contributed to this story.