



Survey of Grocery Pharmacy Patients Reveals Growing Demand, Longer Lines, and Concerns About Staffing Levels

Patients report increased pharmacy visits, longer wait times, and mounting pressure on neighborhood pharmacies

As grocery pharmacists continue to negotiate for a new contract, the United Food and Commercial Workers Locals 324 and 770 are releasing new results from a recent survey of grocery pharmacy patients examining wait times, service conditions, and medication safety at neighborhood pharmacies.

The survey of 379 patients who fill prescriptions at grocery pharmacies in Southern and Central California, including Ralphs, Vons, Albertsons, and Pavilions, reveals growing demand for pharmacy services and increasing concern about whether staffing levels are keeping pace.

The results show:

- **67% of patients say pharmacy lines have increased** in the last four years.
- **64% say the number of times they visit their pharmacy has increased** during the same period.
- **More than half (52%) report waiting more than 10 minutes** for service.
- **Nearly 10% of patients reported experiencing a medication error.**

The findings paint a picture of pharmacies serving more patients with growing workloads while struggling to keep pace with demand.

The survey also found that patients overwhelmingly support pharmacists and pharmacy technicians while expressing concern about staffing levels and workload.

Key Survey Findings

Demand for Pharmacy Services Is Growing

Nearly two-thirds of patients report visiting their pharmacy more often than they did four years ago, reflecting the expanding role pharmacies play in providing healthcare services, including immunizations, and managing chronic conditions.

Longer Lines and Wait Times

Two-thirds of patients report that pharmacy lines have increased, while more than half say they wait longer than 10 minutes for service. Patients at Vons reported the highest increase in lines, with more than 77% saying wait times have worsened.

Patients See Staff Working Under Pressure

Across hundreds of responses, patients consistently described pharmacists and technicians as caring, professional, and hardworking—but stretched too thin.

Medication Safety Concerns

Thirty-five patients reported experiencing a medication error, underscoring concerns about the impact growing workloads can have in a healthcare setting where accuracy is critical and errors can be catastrophic.

What Patients Are Saying

“The pharmacists and their staff are amazing. I can see how much they care about our health, but it’s obvious that they need extra help in the pharmacy.”

“The pharmacy staff seem stressed and overworked. It doesn’t feel like they have enough help.”

“There have been times when prescriptions weren’t ready when they were supposed to be, or there was confusion about dosage. It makes you nervous when it comes to your health.”

“I waited an hour for my prescription. They kept telling me to come back in 20 minutes and it took an hour for it to finally be filled.”

“I’ve waited over 20 minutes several times. You can see they’re juggling phones, vaccines, insurance problems, and customers all at once.”

“The staff do their best but it’s so short staffed. They should not be overworked because that can cause room for error.”

“Every time I go they are understaffed and overworked. Once the pharmacist was hiding in tears because she was so tired.”

“The lines at Ralphs are too long since they took on the Rite Aid customers. I can’t even transfer a prescription because no one can get through.”

“I wish they had a lot more help. I’m always waiting in a long line. The pharmacist is super nice and friendly, but they are overworked.”

“My pharmacists need more help. They are very busy, especially since the Rite Aid pharmacy down the street closed.”

“Get your act together and schedule more labor. These workers are overworked. They picked up all the Rite Aid business. If things don’t change, the store is going to lose business.”

“Our pharmacists are overworked and don’t make the true value that they’re worth. They barely get breaks. They always go above and beyond for my care.”

“My pharmacist is so attentive to my family’s needs. In the past 2-3 years I have noticed that the amount of staff has been reduced and the pharmacist has to rush when answering my questions.”

“Been going to this pharmacy for over 20 years. My favorite, but they’re so busy now. There’s almost always a line and they need a bigger space and MORE PHARMACISTS.”

“The lines at the Vons pharmacy in Upland are sometimes ridiculous. Many times only one assistant is available. It is frustrating because this location has some of the best pharmacy staff around.”

“Get more staffing! I was even considering transferring my prescriptions because of the long lines.”

“People wanting their medication should not have to be burdened by waiting too long in lines.”

The survey was conducted in 2026 and included 379 grocery pharmacy patients across Southern California.

ABOUT UFCW PHARMACISTS

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union represents nearly 800 pharmacists who work at Ralphs, Vons, Albertsons, and Pavilions in Southern and Central California. These essential community healthcare providers have been negotiating their new contract since January and are calling for stronger staffing standards and competitive wages to retain experienced professionals. They argue that investing in pharmacy staffing is not just about workplace conditions, it is about protecting patient safety inside community grocery stores. Their contract expired March 1, 2026.