

The gap between UK pharmacies is not closing

We priced the same medicines at the same pharmacies a week apart. Of 246 matched price points, **0** changed — while the dearest pharmacy still charges 143% more than the cheapest for the identical product.

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Prices that changed between our August and September surveys

143%

How much more the dearest pharmacy charges than the cheapest, at 15mg

45

Pharmacies present in both surveys, compared like for like

1. Nothing moved

We surveyed prices on 30 August and again on 6 September 2026. 246 price points appear in both surveys, covering 45 pharmacies — the same pharmacy, the same medicine, the same strength, compared like for like.

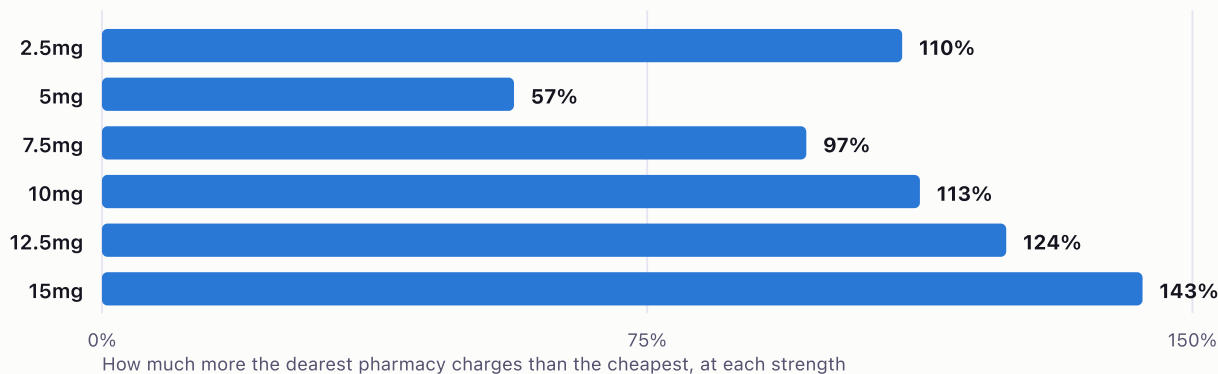
0 of them changed. Not one price in the matched set moved by a single penny over the week.

These are re-checks, not cached values: each price was independently re-read from the pharmacy's own page, and our records show the confirmations happening. The stability is in the market, not in our data collection.

2. Which matters because the gap is enormous

A week of stability would be unremarkable if prices were close together. They are not. At 15mg the dearest pharmacy charges **143%** more than the cheapest — £389 against £160 for the identical product. The gap exceeds 50% at every strength we can measure.

In a market where buyers could compare easily, a gap that size would be competed away. It is not being competed away, and over this week it did not narrow at all. That points to search costs rather than product differences: patients are not comparing, because comparing is hard.



Spread as a percentage of the cheapest price, at each strength, on 6 September 2026. Only strengths stocked by at least five pharmacies are shown.

STRENGTH	PHARMACIES	CHEAPEST	DEAREST	DEAREST IS HIGHER BY
2.5mg	31	£119.00	£249.99	110%
5mg	20	£149.99	£235.00	57%
7.5mg	20	£159.99	£315.00	97%
10mg	20	£159.99	£340.00	113%
12.5mg	21	£159.99	£359.00	124%
15mg	22	£159.99	£389.00	143%

3. Method

Both surveys read prices automatically from pharmacies' own public product pages, and only prices confirmed within the preceding 30 days are used. The comparison is restricted to rows present in both surveys at the same pharmacy, medicine and strength, so a pharmacy appearing or dropping out cannot register as a price change.

What one week can and cannot show

A week is a short window. Zero changes across it establishes that these prices are not adjusted frequently; it does not establish that they never move. UK list prices for this medicine moved by up to 170% in a single step during 2025, so this market plainly can reprice — sharply, and all at once.

This report deliberately contains no index or trend line. An index needs the same pharmacies observed across many points, and we have two. What is published here is a matched comparison between two dated surveys, which is a weaker and more honest claim.

The explanation offered in section 2 — that search costs sustain the gap — is an interpretation, not a measurement. We can show the gap and show that it persisted over a week. We cannot show why from price data alone.

4. Using this data

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