
Big Pharma inventory trends benchmarking **report 2026**

How 28 of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies
managed inventory in fiscal years 2023 to 2025

August 2026

AT A GLANCE

At a glance

~\$170bn

aggregate reported fiscal-year-end inventory across the 28-company benchmark in FY2025, compared with about \$151bn in FY2023

+25 days

rise in median DIO of the higher-revenue cohort (FY2025 revenue above \$40bn), from 173 to 198 days

-24 days

fall in median DIO of the lower-revenue cohort, from 220 to 196 days

454 days

highest FY2025 DIO in the higher-revenue cohort (Eli Lilly), up 156 days since 2023

- **Higher-revenue companies led the reported build-up.** Aggregate inventories of the 14 companies with FY2025 revenue above \$40bn grew 18% between 2023 and 2025, marginally outpacing their 17% revenue growth. Seven of the fourteen increased DIO.
- **Eli Lilly and Pfizer recorded the largest company-level DIO increases.** Eli Lilly's DIO climbed from 298 to 454 days (+156); Pfizer's rose from 149 to 242 days (+93), though Pfizer's 2023 ratio was depressed by large COVID-product inventory charges.
- **Parts of the lower-revenue cohort normalised.** Amgen's DIO fell from 411 to 189 days (-222) as acquisition-related inventory unwound. Biogen fell from a FY2024 peak of 389 to 329 days. Haleon declined for a second consecutive year; Teva remained well below its FY2023 level despite a modest rebound in FY2025.
- **Aggressive stock-building continues in pockets.** Daiichi Sankyo rose 149 days to 452, the largest sustained increase in the lower-revenue cohort, and Astellas added 90 days since 2023.
- **Regeneron reported the highest FY2025 DIO in the benchmark at 556 days**, even after a modest reduction in 2025.
- **The lowest FY2025 DIO values in the sample** were reported by Bristol-Myers Squibb (70 days), Haleon (95), AbbVie (99) and Gilead (104). DIO alone does not establish superior operational leanness or service performance.

Year-end DIO = fiscal-year-end reported inventory carrying value / (fiscal-year cost of sales / 365). It is an accounting proxy, not literal days of physical supply. Non-USD values were translated using the method described on page 9.

INTRODUCTION

A turning point, in two directions

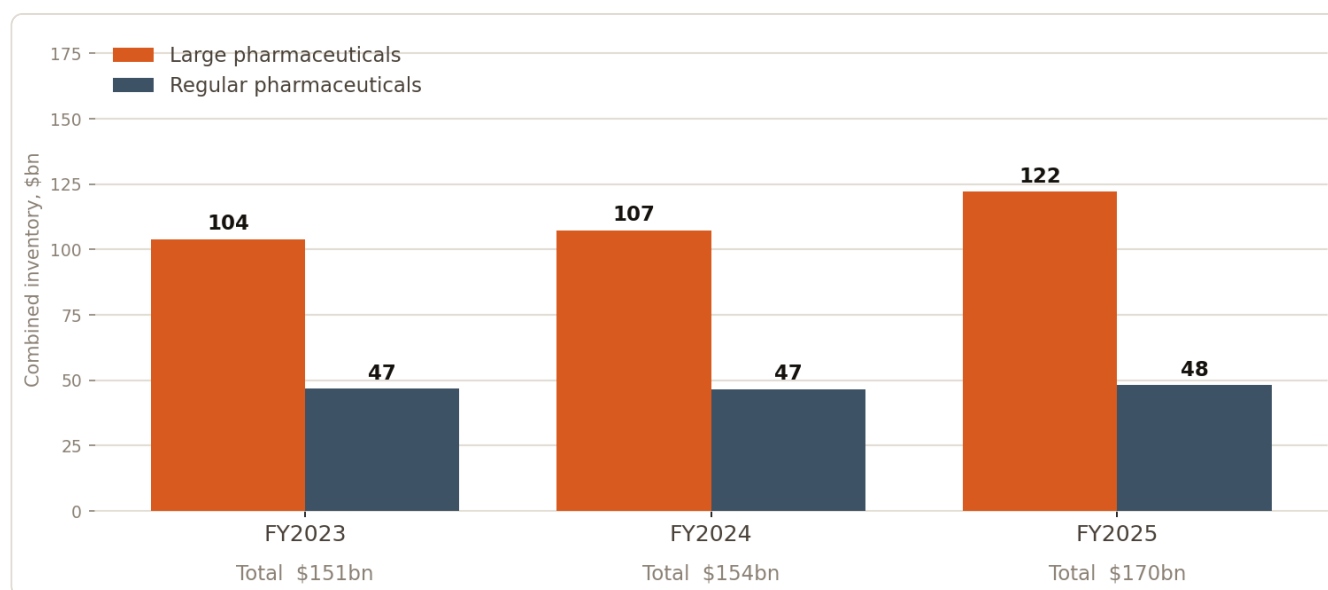
For years this benchmark told one story: pharmaceutical inventories kept rising almost across the board. Fiscal years 2023 to 2025 mark a turning point, but not where you might expect it. The picture has split in two.

Reported inventory in the higher-revenue cohort increased by approximately \$18bn, or 18%, while reported revenue increased by 17%. In the lower-revenue cohort, inventory increased by approximately 3% while revenue increased by 12%. Median DIO, meanwhile, rose for the higher-revenue cohort and declined in both annual intervals shown for the lower-revenue cohort.

High inventory can reflect supply-resilience decisions, regulatory requirements and long manufacturing lead times. Where inventory value grows faster than revenue, additional cash may be tied up in working capital, but public financial data alone cannot determine whether an increase is strategic or avoidable.

EXHIBIT 1

Combined inventory keeps climbing, and the higher-revenue cohort is doing the lifting



Combined reported inventory of the 28 benchmarked companies, USD bn, fiscal years 2023–25. Sum of reported company balances; not a measure of total industry inventory. Source: company filings; nVentic analysis.

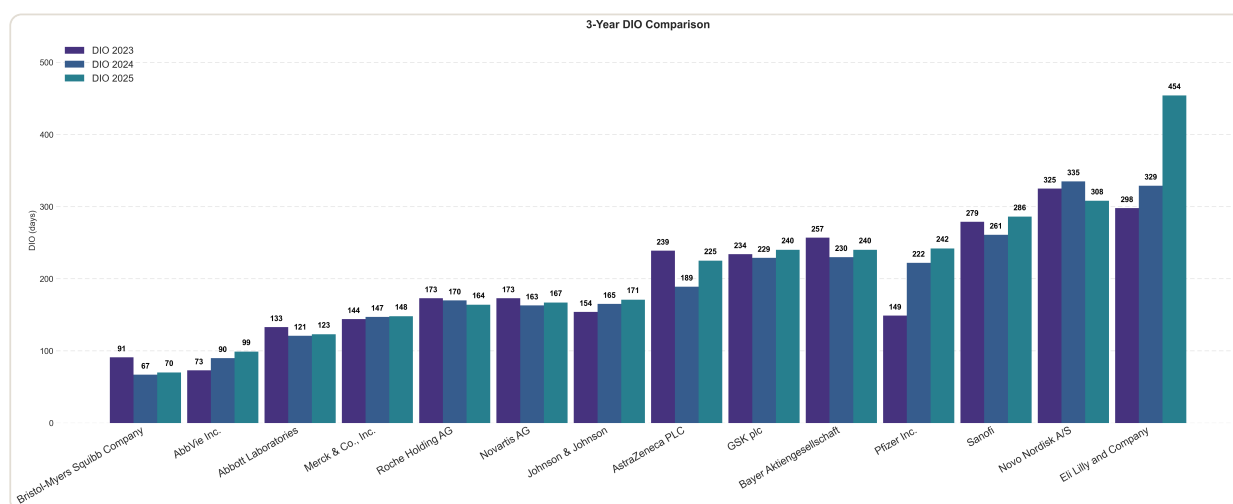
DIO TRENDS 2023–2025

The higher-revenue cohort

Seven of the 14 companies reduced DIO between FY2023 and FY2025, while seven recorded increases. The cohort's unweighted median nevertheless rose from 173 to 198 days. Eli Lilly and Pfizer recorded the largest company-level increases, and Eli Lilly was also the largest single dollar contributor to the cohort's inventory build, adding roughly \$8bn. Lilly's FY2025 filing reports about \$1.5bn of capitalised pre-launch inventory, primarily for its oral GLP-1 product; the remainder reflects broader launch and pipeline preparation. Novo Nordisk's inventory grew about 62%, yet its DIO fell, as discussed on page 7.

EXHIBIT 2

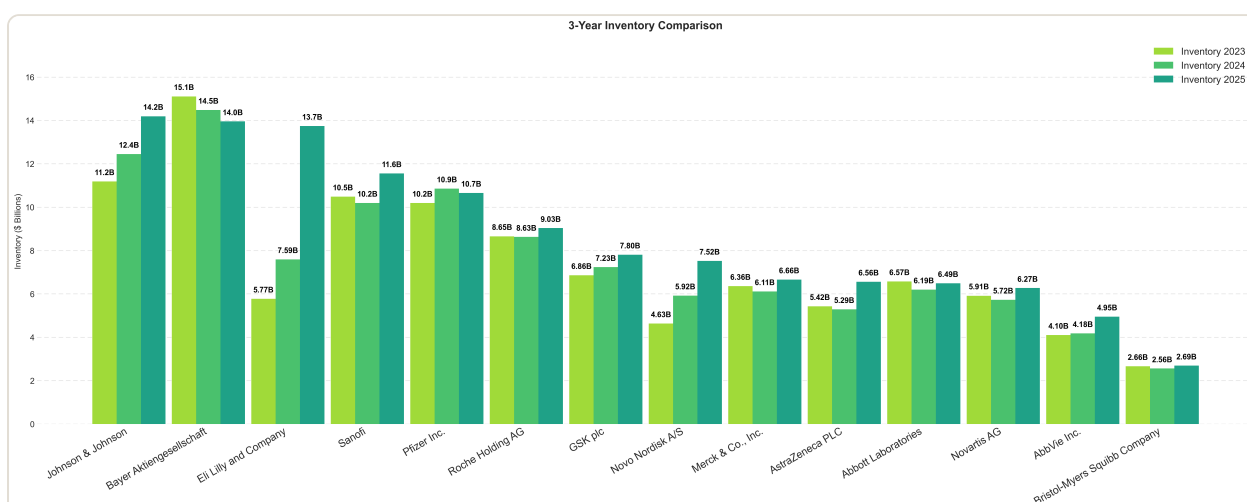
Year-end DIO, higher-revenue cohort



Year-end DIO, fiscal years 2023–25. Source: company filings; nVent analysis.

EXHIBIT 3

Reported inventory, higher-revenue cohort



Reported inventory carrying value, USD bn. Eli Lilly added roughly \$8bn over two years, the largest dollar increase in the cohort. Source: company filings; nVent analysis.

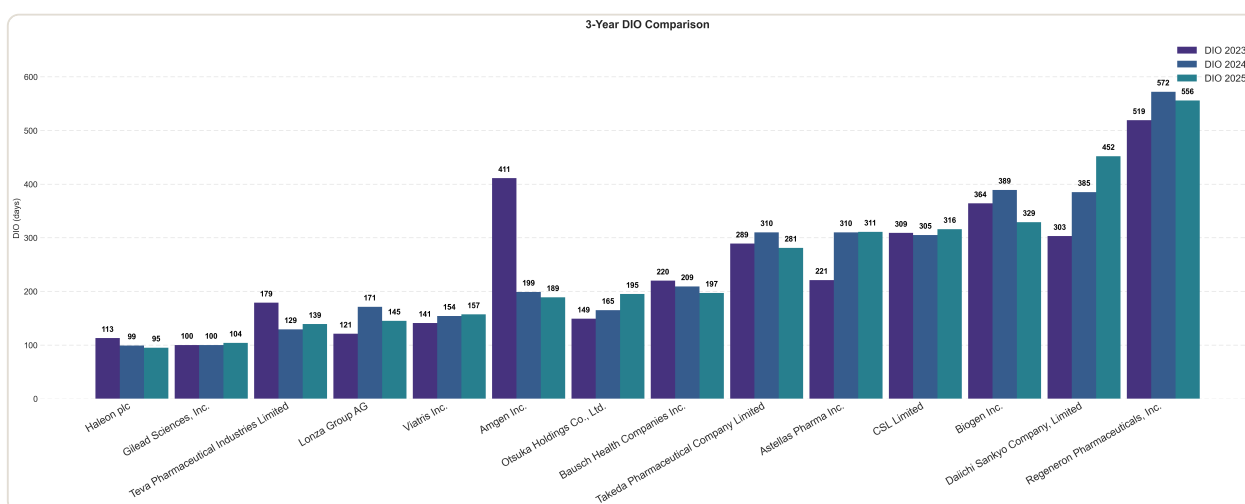
DIO TRENDS 2023–2025

The lower-revenue cohort

The cohort's median DIO fell from about 220 days in FY2023 to 196 days in FY2025. Amgen recorded the largest decline, with FY2023 materially affected by the Horizon acquisition: year-end inventory included Horizon's stock while that year's cost of sales reflected only the post-acquisition period, and acquisition-date fair-value adjustments raised the carrying value. Biogen's elevated ratio also reflects acquisition accounting for Reata, including an acquired-inventory fair-value step-up; it rose to 389 days in FY2024 before falling to 329 in FY2025. Daiichi Sankyo recorded the largest sustained increase in this cohort, rising 149 days to 452. Regeneron reported the benchmark's highest FY2025 DIO at 556 days.

EXHIBIT 4

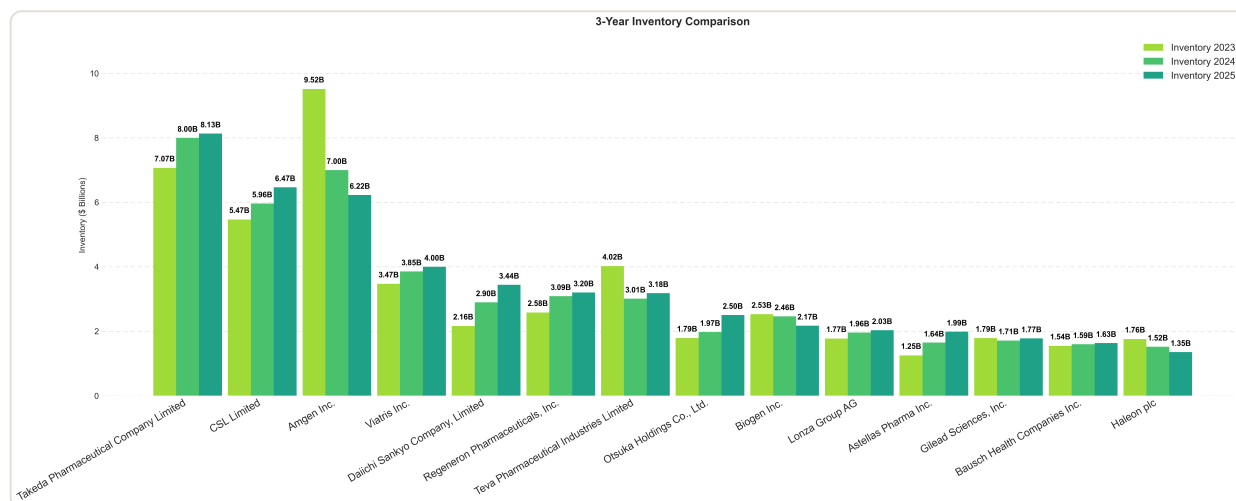
Year-end DIO, lower-revenue cohort



Year-end DIO, fiscal years 2023–25. Source: company filings; nVentic analysis.

EXHIBIT 5

Reported inventory, lower-revenue cohort



Reported inventory carrying value, USD bn. The cohort's combined inventory was broadly flat at about \$47bn. Source: company filings; nVentic analysis.

GROWTH AND EFFICIENCY

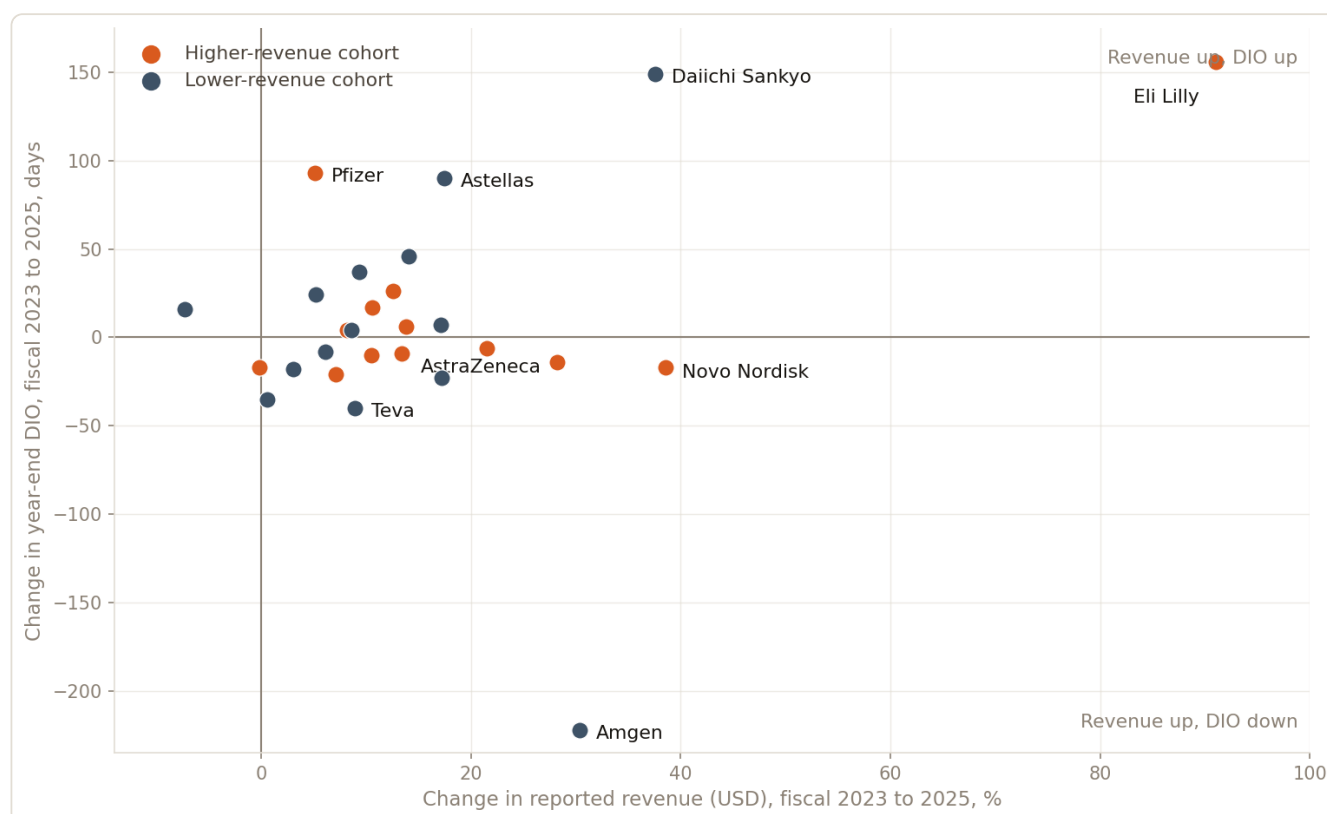
Growth and inventory efficiency

Plotting the change in reported revenue against the change in DIO shows association, not cause. Growth did not force efficiency to deteriorate: Novo Nordisk grew reported revenue about 39% while its DIO fell, and Amgen combined roughly 30% growth with the largest DIO reduction in the benchmark, though Amgen's figures are affected by the Horizon acquisition. AstraZeneca paired double-digit growth with a lower DIO, even as its absolute inventory balance rose.

The upper-right quadrant is where reported cover rose alongside growth. Eli Lilly's position, about 91% revenue growth with 156 days of added cover, reflects a deliberate pre-launch build. Pfizer's DIO rose 93 days on 5% growth, but its FY2023 ratio was depressed by large COVID-product inventory charges, so this is not 93 days of physical stock-building. Daiichi Sankyo's increase outran a strong but much smaller expansion.

EXHIBIT 6

Change in reported revenue vs change in DIO, fiscal 2023 to 2025



Each point is one benchmark company. Horizontal axis: cumulative change in reported revenue translated to USD, FY2023–25, including FX and M&A effects. Vertical axis: change in year-end DIO. The chart shows association, not causation. Source: company filings; nVentic analysis.

THE LAUNCH EFFECT

New molecules, new mountains of stock

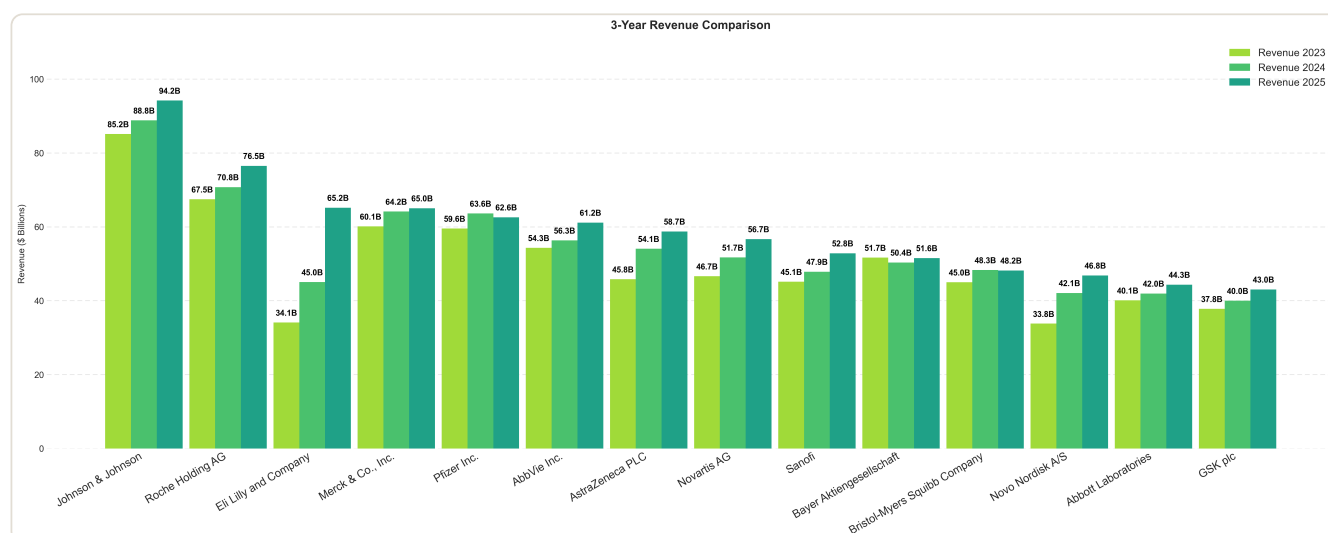
Blockbuster launches can materially increase inventory. The clearest current example is the incretin race. Eli Lilly more than doubled its reported inventory to \$13.7bn while revenue grew from \$34bn to \$65bn, and it disclosed about \$1.5bn of capitalised pre-launch inventory, primarily for orforglipron (approved as Foundayo in April 2026, after the FY2025 balance-sheet date). Manufacturing-capacity expansion is a separate, capital investment and is not counted in inventory.

Novo Nordisk's inventory grew about 62% while reported revenue grew about 39%. Its DIO nevertheless fell from 325 to 308 days, which means fiscal-year cost of sales grew faster than the fiscal-year-end inventory balance. Launch-driven inventory is judged less by its absolute size than by whether demand materialises.

That is the risk. Pre-launch builds are made against forecasts, which are uncertain in both directions. A launch that disappoints can leave excess or expiring inventory that must be written down when its carrying value is no longer recoverable. Similar caution applies at loss of exclusivity or product discontinuation, when demand can fall faster than expected. In our client work we therefore separate launch and lifecycle inventory from base-business inventory before benchmarking: a company can carry heavy launch stock legitimately and still have a significant optimisation opportunity in its established portfolio.

EXHIBIT 7

Reported revenue, higher-revenue cohort



Reported revenue, USD bn, fiscal years 2023–25. Eli Lilly alone added \$31bn, about a quarter of the cohort's growth, well ahead of the next contributors AstraZeneca, Novo Nordisk and Novartis. Source: company filings; nVentic analysis.

Sources: company filings; FDA (Foundayo/orforglipron approval, 1 April 2026).

WHY INVENTORIES BUILD

Common reasons companies carry or build inventory

Security of supply comes first. No pharmaceutical company wants to be responsible for a patient missing treatment, and the shortages of the pandemic years reinforced a buffer-first mentality. Stock is often the easiest insurance policy to buy, and the hardest to give back.

Long, rigid supply chains. End-to-end lead times can extend to many months or longer for some complex APIs and biologics: multi-step synthesis or biologics production, testing and release controls at multiple defined stages, and campaign-based manufacturing in large batches can all push stock into the chain.

Regulatory complexity. Market-specific packs, serialisation, country-by-country registration of manufacturing changes and retesting requirements in some importing markets (which mutual-recognition agreements can waive) can fragment inventory into pools that do not flexibly serve other markets.

Launches and patent cliffs. Companies may pre-build ahead of blockbuster launches, visible today in the GLP-1 race, while loss of exclusivity can prompt last-time builds and safety buffers as volumes shift to generics.

Acquisitions affect the optics. Business-combination accounting recognises acquired inventory at acquisition-date fair value, which may create a fair-value step-up. This can raise reported DIO through carrying value even where physical quantities are unchanged, as Amgen's FY2023 Horizon accounting illustrates.

Asymmetric incentives. A shortage is visible and escalated quickly; excess stock may surface externally only later, through aging, obsolescence and reserve metrics or eventual write-offs. Service-only incentives can bias decisions toward additional inventory when carrying cost and obsolescence risk are not balanced.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology

This is the ninth annual edition of nVentic's Big Pharma inventory benchmark. The methodology follows the framework introduced with the 2025 report.

Benchmark universe and cohorts. The sample comprises 28 selected publicly listed pharmaceutical, biotechnology, consumer-health, diversified-healthcare and life-sciences companies. The higher-revenue cohort is the 14 companies whose FY2025 revenue, translated to USD under the method below, exceeded approximately \$40bn; membership is held fixed across FY2023–25. The remaining 14 form the lower-revenue cohort. Privately held manufacturers (e.g. Boehringer Ingelheim) are excluded.

Data sources. Financial values were taken from publicly available company annual reports and regulatory filings. Calculations are by nVentic.

Currency translation. DIO is calculated in each company's reporting currency. For USD exhibits, fiscal-year-end inventory is translated at the fiscal-year-end closing rate, while revenue and cost of sales are translated at annual-average rates. USD growth rates are nominal and include exchange-rate effects.

DIO definition. Year-end DIO = fiscal-year-end reported inventory / fiscal-year cost of sales × 365. This ending-balance convention differs from turnover measures based on average inventory. It reduces the effect of company size but remains sensitive to product mix, outsourcing, accounting policy, acquisitions, write-offs, FX and fiscal-year timing. It is an accounting proxy, not literal SKU-level days of supply.

Scope and caveats. 28 companies, fiscal years 2023 to 2025; non-calendar reporters are included at their own fiscal year-ends. Reported inventory is stated net of reserves as disclosed and can be affected by restatements, acquisitions and discontinued operations. Sums use unrounded inputs; medians are unweighted. Inventory write-offs, product-launch effects and component-level breakdowns are covered in our bespoke client reports.

THE PATH TO OPTIMISATION

The path to optimisation

This public report provides a high-level view of reported industry trends. Actionable optimisation requires more granular operational data than public financial filings provide, and depends on deep, peer-group-specific operational analysis.

Our detailed client reports compare the evolution of inventory, cost of sales and revenue over a full six-year period, benchmark performance against Best Demonstrated Practice (selected peer reference points), estimate the working capital potential available through optimisation, and break inventory down into finished goods, WIP and raw materials, complemented by a full analysis of allowances and write-offs.

Benchmarks are indicators, not diagnoses. By coupling comparative data with a full nVentic evaluation, we build the bridge between benchmark figures and operational reality, down to SKU level.

About nVentic. nVentic is a Munich-based inventory optimisation company. We combine advanced analytics technology with deep supply chain expertise to help organisations reduce inventory, free up working capital and improve service levels, down to SKU level.

If you have questions about this report, or would like help improving your organisation's inventory levels (whether you feature in the benchmark or not), contact us at nventic.com/contact.

© 2026 nVentic GmbH. This report may be shared and cited with attribution to nVentic. Data is derived from public company filings; calculations by nVentic, and are provided for information purposes only.