

Medscape Report: Physicians Rank Healthcare Access, Substance Abuse and Racial Disparities as Top Social Concerns

Nearly all support gun background checks; majority support abortion access with some restrictions by trimester

NEW YORK, May 26, 2022 -- Physicians rank healthcare, substance/opioid abuse, and racial disparities as among the most important social issues facing the U.S., followed closely by gun control and climate change, according to the results of a new Medscape survey, Physicians' Views on Today's Divisive Social Issues Report 2022, released today.

A strong majority, 85%, said healthcare access was their top concern, followed by substance/opioid abuse (66%), racial disparities (54%), gun control (53%) and climate change (51%).

More than 2,300 U.S. based physicians from 29 specialties responded to the survey, which assessed their views on a range of issues, including healthcare access, racial discrimination, reproductive rights, gun control, immigration and refugee policies, gender discrimination, domestic violence, and LGBTQ+ rights. The survey was conducted between January 22 and March 2.

Click here for full report: <https://www.medscape.com/2022-social-issues-report>

Regarding the top five concerns -- healthcare, substance abuse, racial disparities, gun control and climate change:

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of physicians said they are concerned or very concerned about gun control, and the overwhelming majority favor background checks (96%) and restricting ownership to people 18 and older (90%); 70% say gun purchasers should be required to have a psychological evaluation.

Although more than two-thirds (68%) say the U.S. has made strides in combating racial inequality, 78% say that disparities must be addressed. More than half (55%) said patients are treated differently because of race.

Nearly half of respondents (48%) favored a healthcare system in which the government is at least partially responsible for contributing to the cost, with one in five supporting a single payer system.

More than 70% of physicians said climate change should be the top priority worldwide, with 67% indicating that it is a major threat to humanity.

A majority (77%) of physicians reported that they see patients with substance use issues in their practice (42% often).

Reproductive Rights, LGBTQ+ Rights

More than half of respondents (53%) said they are concerned or very concerned about reproductive rights. Nearly one in five doctors said abortion should be accessible no matter the reason, and regardless of trimester; 13% said it should be limited to the first trimester and 11% to the second trimester. Nearly one-third (32%) said abortion in the third trimester should be available only for an outstanding medical reason, and 18% of physicians said that it should only be available to save the life of the mother or in cases of rape and incest. Only 3% said it should be banned.

When asked if LGBTQ patients receive different levels of care, 45% of physicians said no, while 35% said yes and 20% indicated they weren't sure. Slightly more than one-third (36%) said they were concerned or very concerned with LGBTQ rights.

Immigration and Refugee Policies

About 60% of physicians said they were concerned or very concerned with immigration but split on their views about current policy; 28% said policies are too restrictive and 34% that they are not restrictive enough; 20% said they were appropriate.

Domestic Violence, Gender Discrimination

About two-thirds of physicians report substantial levels of concern about domestic violence, and only 8% think the U.S. does an adequate job of addressing the issue.

Concerns about gender discrimination differed significantly between male and female physicians. Female physicians were far more likely to report being concerned or very concerned about gender discrimination (67%) versus men (38%).

"In Medscape's first report on physician views on social issues, those that impact our health and our safety were paramount," said Leslie Kane, MA, senior director, Medscape Business of Medicine. "Physicians have a critical role in the national discussion on these issues, as they witness first-hand how healthcare access, racial disparities, climate, substance use, gun violence and other societal problems impact our health and well-being. Their points of view should be central to these debates."

Medscape Survey Methods

The Physicians' Views on Today's Divisive Social Issues Report 2022 was completed by 2,342 U.S. physicians representing more than 29 specialty areas. Data were weighted to American Medical Association membership by specialty, gender and region. Participants were invited to respond to an online survey. The margin of error is 2.03% at a 95% confidence level using a point estimate of 50%.

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