



POLL DATA SUMMARY VOL. 20

# AMERICA SPEAKS!

Survey data reflecting the views  
of Americans on medical, health,  
and scientific research

RESEARCH  
AMERICA  
DISCOVERY. INNOVATION. HEALTH.

## MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP



**The Hon. Michael N. Castle**  
Chair  
Research!America

Public opinion surveys have been a critical tool in informing Research!America's mission to advocate for science, discovery, and innovation to achieve better health for three decades. In this volume of *America Speaks!*, we continue to explore the views of Americans on medical, health, and scientific research.

Research!America was founded in 1989 during a challenging time for the science and medical research enterprise: a recession had put federal support for research funding at risk and too many policymakers appeared dismissive of the value of science. We began surveying the American public, believing then — as now — that effective science advocacy begins with understanding the public's attitudes about medical and science-related topics.

In this critical election year, we continue to keep our finger on the pulse of public opinion, identifying widespread support across the political spectrum for prioritizing faster medical progress. We are living in an era in which trust is being undermined and misinformation is easily spread, creating confusion and questioning expertise. Yet, our survey results affirm that Americans rank scientists high in credibility and view research as a problem solver.

Other findings warrant optimism as well: There is widespread agreement across the political spectrum that spending to treat, prevent, and cure disease is not enough, and there is willingness by a majority of Americans to pay more in taxes if those dollars go to medical research. This willingness has increased two years in a row. Public support for basic research is strong and also has been trending upward. A large majority favor doubling federal spending on medical research over the next five years.



**Mary Woolley**  
President and CEO  
Research!America

In surveys of two burgeoning scientific areas, Americans tell us genetic research is important to improve their family's health and they agree more donated organs and tissues will help researchers make medical and health breakthroughs. There is also robust support for federal investment in research to improve healthcare quality and safety.

Americans are deeply concerned about public health threats such as opioid addiction, mental health, climate change, vaping, gun violence and antibiotic resistance. At the same time and of great concern, belief in the importance of vaccines, and confidence in vaccine safety, have decreased. Not surprisingly, cost of health care tops the list of the most important issues facing our nation. In tackling the cost problem, we must be mindful of policies which might inadvertently choke off the very innovation needed to stop diseases and the costs they generate.

Public sentiment is clear: federal investment in research — from basic, to more targeted, to public health and health care delivery — is not keeping pace with current opportunities nor the critical need to find treatments and improve people's lives. Americans know research is a problem-solver. Equipped with this information, our role as advocates is to work with our members and partners to ensure that in this challenging election year, science is championed like never before. Let us join forces to use this data to advance the goals and aspirations of the American people. As we write this, America is grappling with a coronavirus outbreak; the value of research and the place of scientific evidence in decision making could not be more obvious or more paramount. It's an in-the-moment reminder we can't let up advocacy for the research that will find the solutions to what ails us.

## MESSAGE FROM THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



**James L. Madara, MD**  
CEO  
AMA

The American Medical Association (AMA) is pleased to join Research!America in releasing the 20th edition of the *Poll Data Summary* in the *America Speaks!* series. In placing our finger on the pulse of national public opinion in this election year, we were heartened to find widespread support for prioritizing health research to speed breakthroughs in treating, preventing, and curing disease.

This year's findings inspire optimism for securing bipartisan solutions to many of our nation's most pressing health problems, such as vaping and opioid use disorder. For example, for the second year in a row, the poll identified support that cuts across party lines for a tax increase to specifically benefit medical research. That willingness stems from broad-based agreement that current spending for this purpose is insufficient.

At the same time, a strong majority of poll respondents want our nation to advance its role as the global leader in medical and scientific research. Furthermore, support for basic research continues to grow stronger. This year's *Poll Data Summary* also points toward greater awareness of the important

role health research plays in advancing our quality of life.

It is gratifying that Americans firmly support organ and tissue donations from all walks of life and back genetics research as a pathway for more people to live longer, healthier lives.

As always, the AMA is grateful for the chance to partner with Research!America in providing advocacy, leadership, and outreach that supports medical and scientific research and promotes the betterment of public health.

Our core mission encompasses a broad range of proactive advocacy on all of the public health issues of our day. That mission is perfectly aligned with Research!America's drive to build support for greater research into the cure, treatment, and prevention of physical diseases and mental disorders.

The AMA is proud to be a founding member of Research!America and to stand with its diverse membership of institutions, professional societies, and businesses, in helping improve the health of the nation.

### SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- In this election year, 88% say the President and Congress should assign a high priority to ensuring faster medical progress.
- 6 in 10 say current spending on medical and health research is not enough.
- More than two-thirds would be willing to pay a dollar more per week in taxes if they knew the money would support additional medical research.
- A strong majority — 85% — say it is very or somewhat important for scientists to inform elected officials about their research and its impact on society.
- 8 in 10 Americans strongly or somewhat agree that more research is needed on the impact of vaping on health.



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“The health challenges the world faces today are more complex than ever: Alzheimer’s disease, mental health, obesity and diabetes, antibiotic resistance... If not addressed with a sense of urgency, these challenges will have a significant impact not only on this country, but the entire world.”

— Paul Stoffels, Chief Scientific Officer, Johnson & Johnson —

Look for these indications  
throughout this publication:



**NEW QUESTION**  
Not previously asked by  
Research!America.



DECREASED

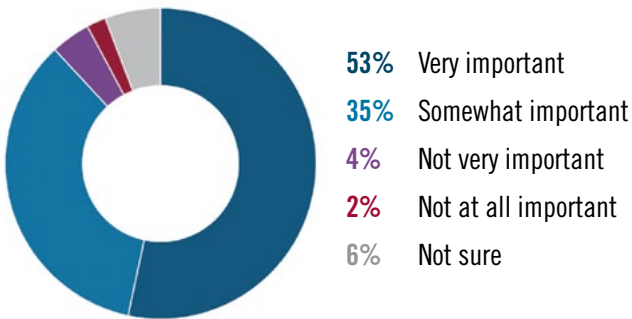


INCREASED

## THE PULSE OF PUBLIC OPINION

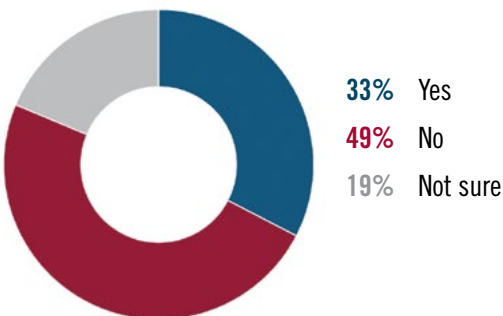
### Strong Majority Support Faster Medical Progress as a Federal Priority

How important is it for the President and Congress to assign a high priority to ensuring faster medical progress?



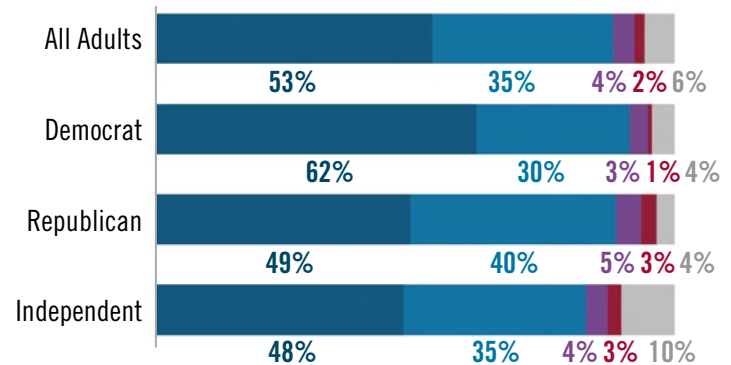
### Only 1 in 3 Americans Say We are Making Enough Progress in Health Research

Do you believe we are making enough progress in health research in the U.S.?



### Agreement Across Political Spectrum on Support for Faster Medical Progress

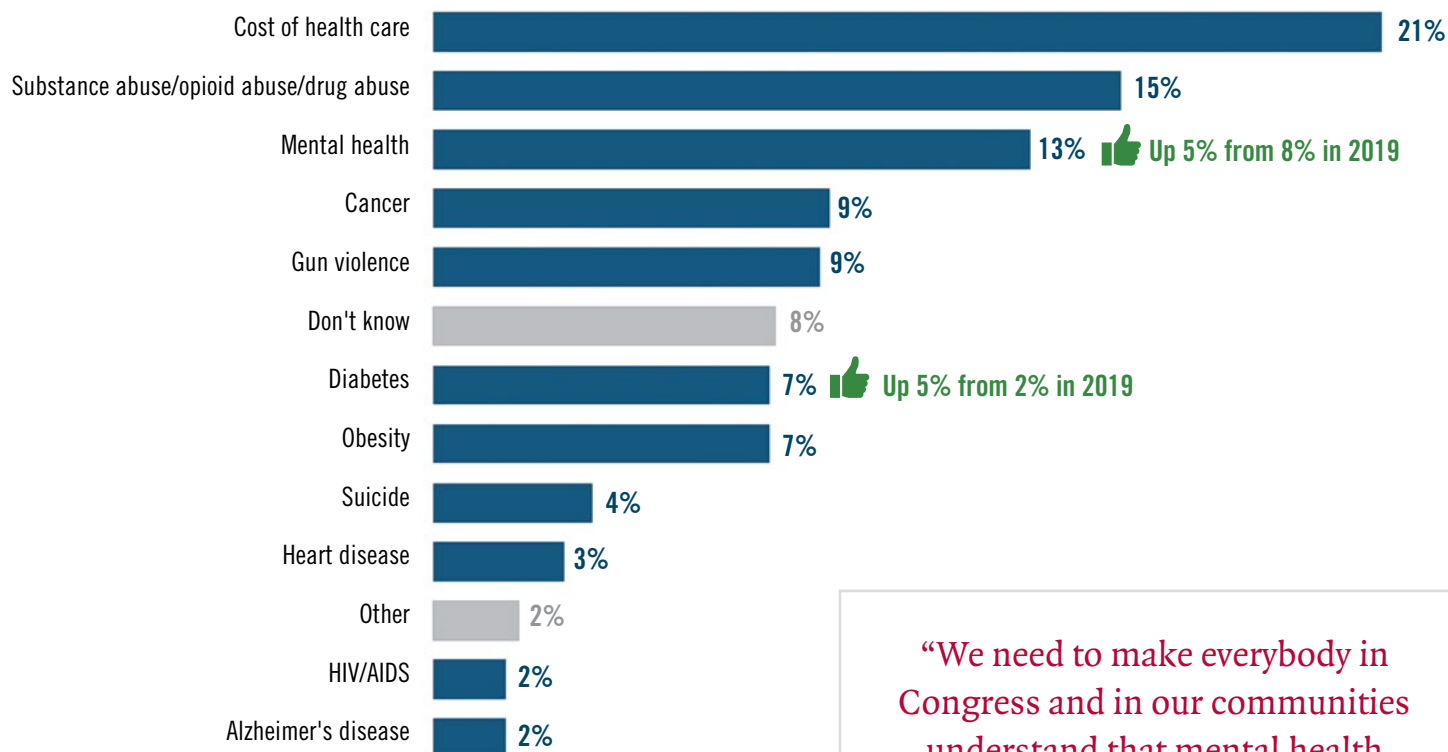
How important is it for the President and Congress to assign a high priority to ensuring faster medical progress?





### Top Health Issues Facing the Nation

What would you say is the single most important health issue facing the nation?



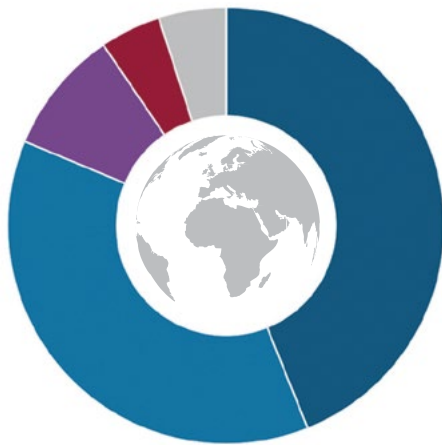
“We need to make everybody in Congress and in our communities understand that mental health is just as essential for your well-being as physical health.”

— Judy Chu, U.S. Representative (D-CA-27) —

## IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN RESEARCH

### Strong Majority Believe it is Important that the U.S. is a Global Leader in Health Research

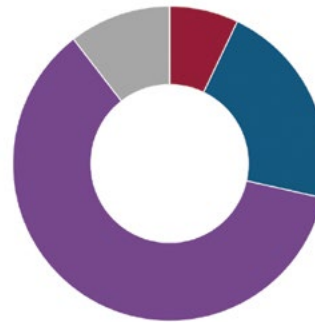
How important do you think it is that the U.S. is a global leader in research to improve health?



- 58%** Very important
- 32%** Somewhat important
- 4%** Not very important
- 2%** Not at all important
- 4%** Not sure

### Majority Say Current Spending on Research to Prevent, Cure and Treat Disease Is Not Enough

The U.S. spends about 5 cents of each health dollar on research to prevent, cure and treat disease and disability. Do you think that this is too much, the right amount or not enough?



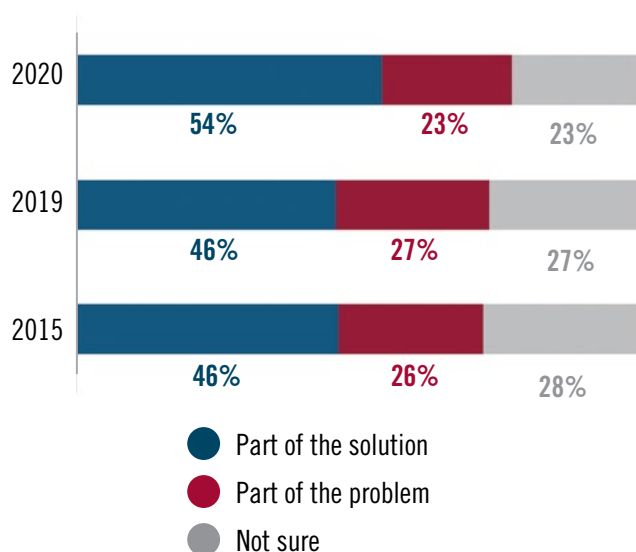
- 21%** The right amount
- 61%** Not enough
- 7%** Too much
- 11%** Not sure

“Every day, we move toward a new frontier in scientific advancement. Every day, we prove that there has never, ever, been a better time to be alive. Every day, more people are given hope of a brighter future.”

— Nita M. Lowey, U.S. Representative (D-NY-17) —

## Increase in Americans Saying Medical Research is part of the Solution

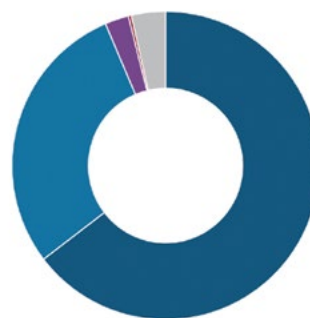
When it comes to rising health care costs, would you say medical research is part of the problem or part of the solution?



NEW

## Strong Majority of Americans Think Health Care Research is Important

How important is research that examines health care outcomes, health care efficiency, and quality, safety and effectiveness in health care?



65% Very important  
 29% Somewhat important  
 3% Not very important  
 0% Not at all important  
 4% Not sure

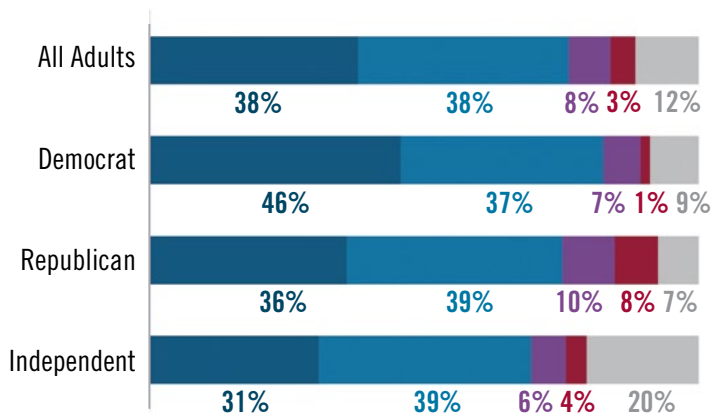
**“We must prioritize our nation’s health needs by funding biomedical research and organizations such as the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and others. Investments in modern medicine are essential to spur innovation for the next generation of treatments.”**

— Richard Shelby, U.S. Senator (R-AL) —



## Across Political Spectrum: Support for Doubling Medical Research Funding over Next Five Years

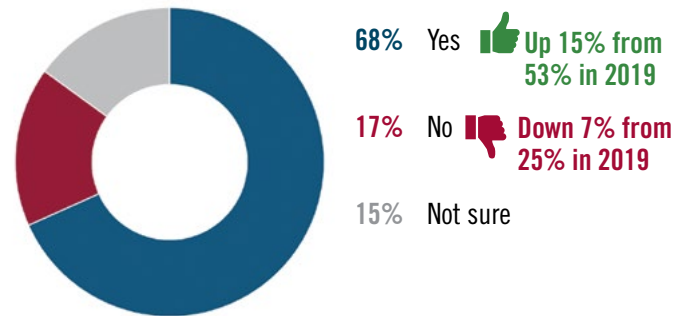
Do you favor or oppose doubling federal spending on medical research over the next five years?



- Strongly favor
- Somewhat favor
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Not sure

## Majority Willing to Pay More in Taxes if Dollars go to Medical Research

Would you be willing to pay \$1 per week more in taxes if you were certain that all of the money would be spent on additional medical research?

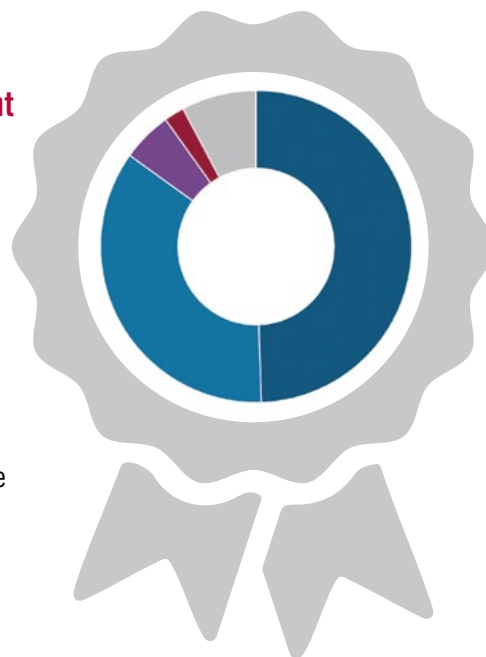


“Scientists and science supporters should know that elected officials are accessible. [And] as scientists, it is our responsibility to engage, to avail ourselves of what is possible.”

— Sudip Parikh, PhD, Chief Executive Officer,  
American Association for the Advancement of Science —

## Most Americans Think Basic Research is Necessary and Should be Supported by the Federal Government

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Even if it brings no immediate benefits, basic scientific research that advances the frontiers of knowledge is necessary and should be supported by the federal government.



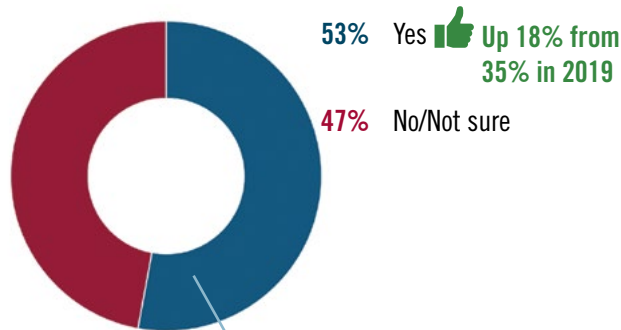
“Research provides the foundation for so much of what we enjoy today, from biomedical miracles to digital tools and toys, to the materials that enable space travel and undersea exploration. Building the kind of innovation economy our country has enjoyed over the last more than 50 years doesn’t take a village – it takes a nation.”

— **Susan Hockfield**, PhD, Professor of Neuroscience and  
President Emerita at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology —

# THE PUBLIC CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

## Only Half of Americans Can Name a Place Where Medical or Health Research is Conducted

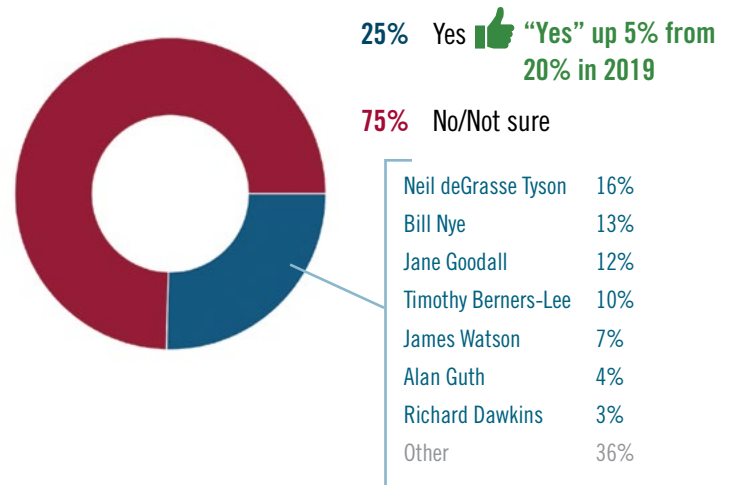
Can you name any institution, company or organization where medical or health research is conducted?



St. Jude Children's Research Hospital	12%
Mayo Clinic	12%
Johns Hopkins University/Hospital	7%
Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	5%
National Institutes of Health (NIH)	5%
Cleveland Clinic	3%
Pfizer Inc.	3%
Other	54%

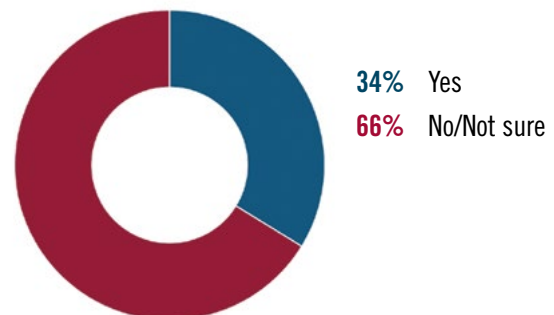
## Most Americans Cannot Name a Living Scientist

Can you name a living scientist?



## Majority of Americans Do Not Know That Research is Conducted in All 50 States

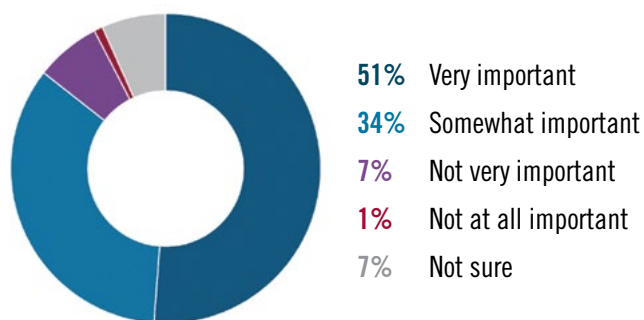
To the best of your knowledge, would you say that medical research in the U.S. is conducted in all 50 states?



# 10 AMERICA SPEAKS!

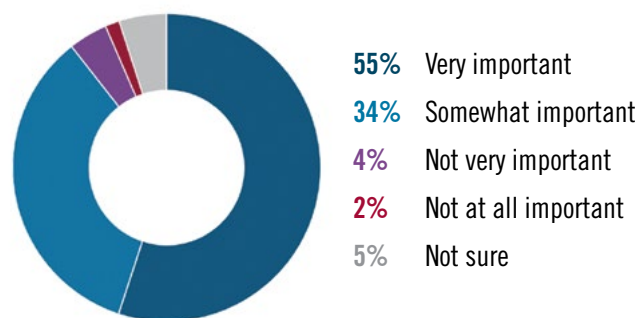
## Strong Majority of Americans Think Scientists Should Inform Elected Officials About Their Research

How important is it for scientists to inform elected officials about their research and its impact on society?



## Strong Majority of Americans Think Scientists Should Inform the Public About Their Research

How important is it for scientists to inform the public about their research and its impact on society?



## Large Majority of Americans Willing to Share Data for Research & Other Ways to Advance Health

For the following, please indicate your willingness to share your personal health information, assuming that appropriate privacy protections are in place.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

To advance medical research



So researchers can better understand diseases and develop new ways to prevent, treat and cure them



So health care providers can improve patient care



So public health officials can better track disease and disability and the causes



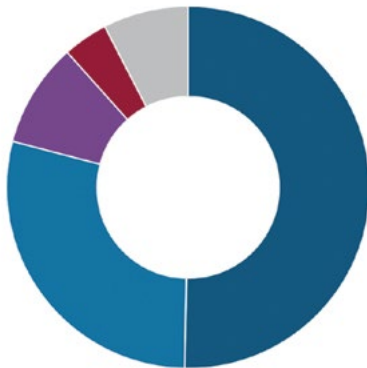


## PUBLIC HEALTH THREATS

**NEW**

### Large Majority of Americans Agree Opioid Abuse and Addiction is a Major Problem in Their Community

Please indicate the extent to which you agree that opioid abuse and addiction is a major problem in your community.



- 50% Strongly agree
- 29% Somewhat agree
- 9% Somewhat disagree
- 4% Strongly disagree
- 8% Not sure

### Only 1 in 4 See Local Improvement in Opioid Crisis

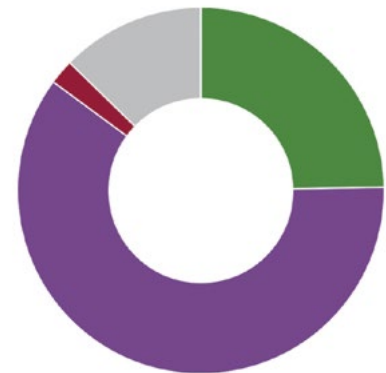
In the past 5 years, do you think the problem of people being addicted to opioids in your local community has gotten better, gotten worse, or remained about the same?



- 10% A lot better
- 16% Somewhat better
- 24% Somewhat worse
- 22% A lot worse
- 15% Mostly the same
- 14% Not sure

### Majority of Americans Think Public Investment in Mental Health Research is Not Enough

Do you think public investment in mental health research is the right amount, not enough, or about right?

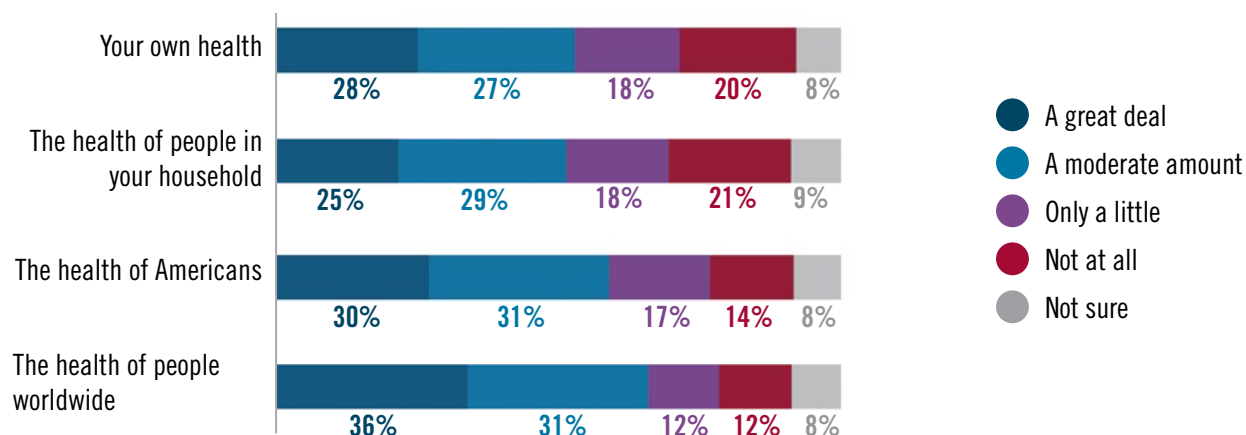


- 25% The right amount
- 60% Not enough
- 2% Too much
- 13% Not sure

NEW

## Majority of Americans Think Climate Change is Harming Health

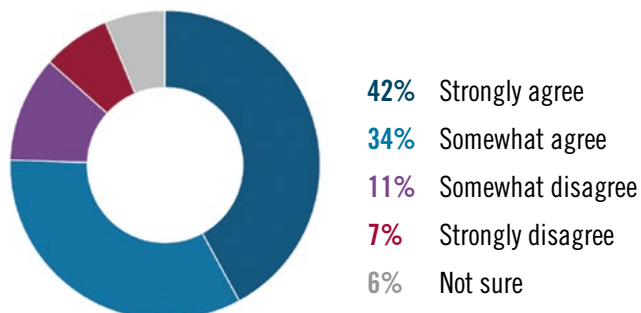
How much, if at all, do you think climate change is currently harming:



NEW

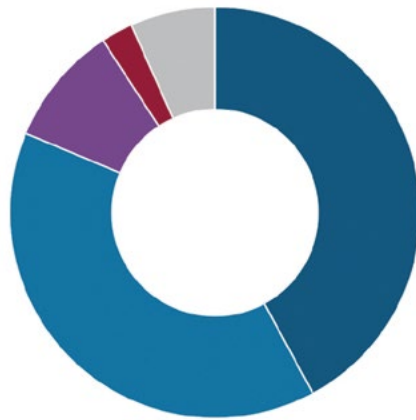
## Majority of Americans Agree the Federal Government Should Support Gun Violence Research

Please indicate the extent to which you agree that the federal government should support research to better understand and prevent gun violence.



### 4 in 5 Americans Concerned Antibiotic Resistance Will Make Infections Difficult to Treat or Deadly

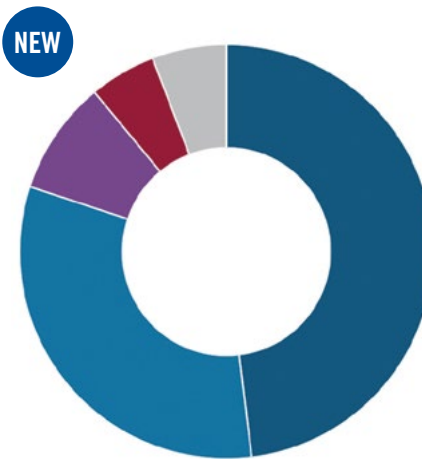
How concerned are you that antibiotic resistance will make more infections difficult to treat or even deadly?



**42%** Very concerned  
**39%** Somewhat concerned  
**10%** Not too concerned  
**3%** Not at all concerned  
**7%** Don't know/Not sure

### 8 in 10 Americans Agree More Vaping Research is Needed

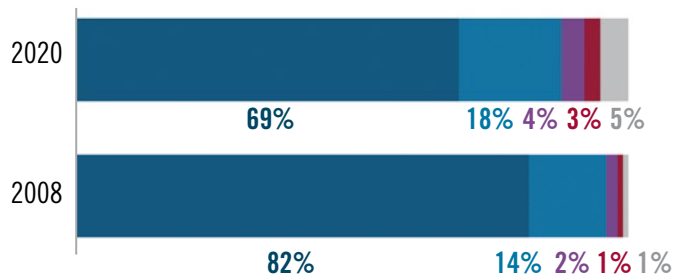
Please indicate the extent to which you agree that more research is needed to address the impact of vaping on health.



**48%** Strongly agree  
**32%** Somewhat agree  
**9%** Somewhat disagree  
**5%** Strongly disagree  
**6%** Not sure

### Significant Decline in those who Believe it is “Very Important” for Parents to have Children Vaccinated

How important do you believe it is for parents to have their children vaccinated?

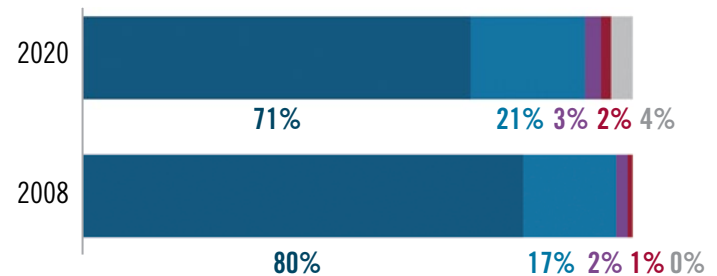


Very important   Somewhat important   Not very important   Not at all important   Not sure

People saying “very important” decreased by 13% since 2008

### Decline in those who Believe Vaccines are Important to the Health of Our Society

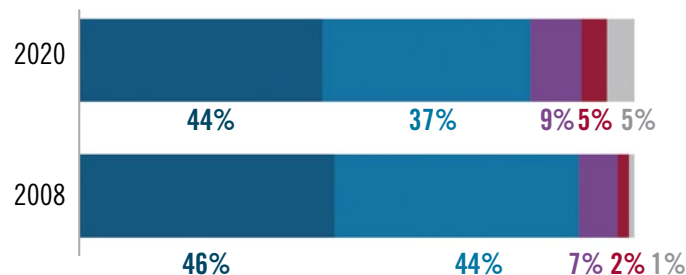
Thinking about the common vaccines available today such as polio, tetanus, measles, and flu, how important do you believe vaccines are to the health of our society today?



People saying “very important” decreased by 9% since 2008

### Decline in Confidence in the Safety of Vaccines

In general, how confident are you in the safety of vaccines used today?



Very confident   Somewhat confident   Not too confident   Not at all confident   Don't know

Confidence has declined by 9% since 2008



## HOPE FOR THE FUTURE: GENETICS RESEARCH

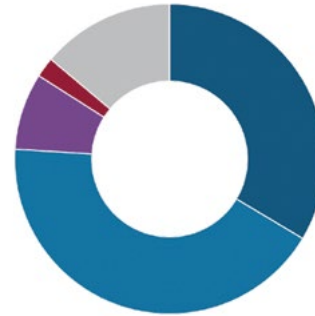
### Americans Are Curious About Human Genetics Research

Please select from the following the top five words that best reflect your attitudes towards human genetics research:



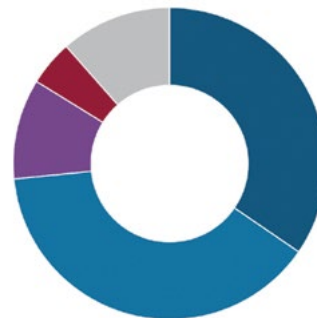
### Americans Think Genetic Research is Important to Improving Family Health

Do you agree or disagree that genetic research is important to improving your family's health?



### Americans Support Federal Funding For Genetic Research

How important is it to increase federal funding to support genetic research?



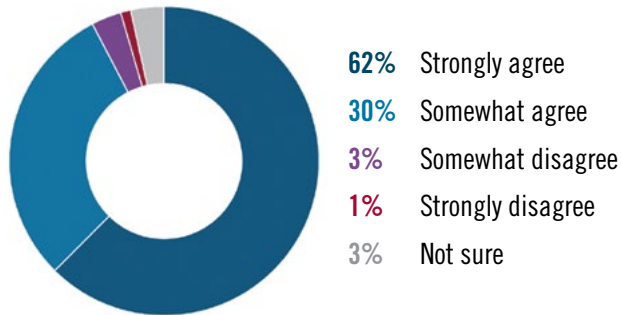
“It is an exciting time for human genetics and genomics, and emerging knowledge is speeding discovery and applications in research, medicine, and society. It’s [also] exciting how curious and hopeful Americans are about this fast-paced area of research.”

— Anthony Wynshaw-Boris, MD, PhD, President, American Society for Human Genetics —

## HOPE FOR THE FUTURE: ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

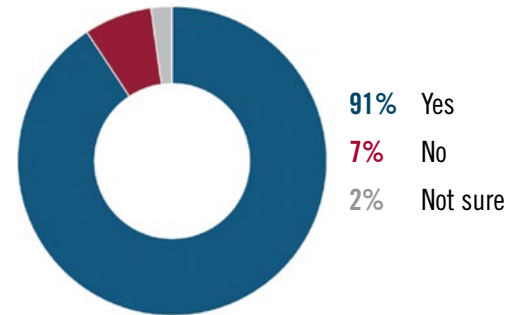
### Most Americans Agree Organ/Tissue Donations Help Make Medical and Health Breakthroughs

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: Donated organs and tissues help researchers make medical and health breakthroughs



### Majority of Americans Are Familiar with Organ and Tissue Donation

Organs and tissues can be donated from a person who has died for use in a person who is alive. Prior to this survey, had you ever heard of organ and tissue donation?

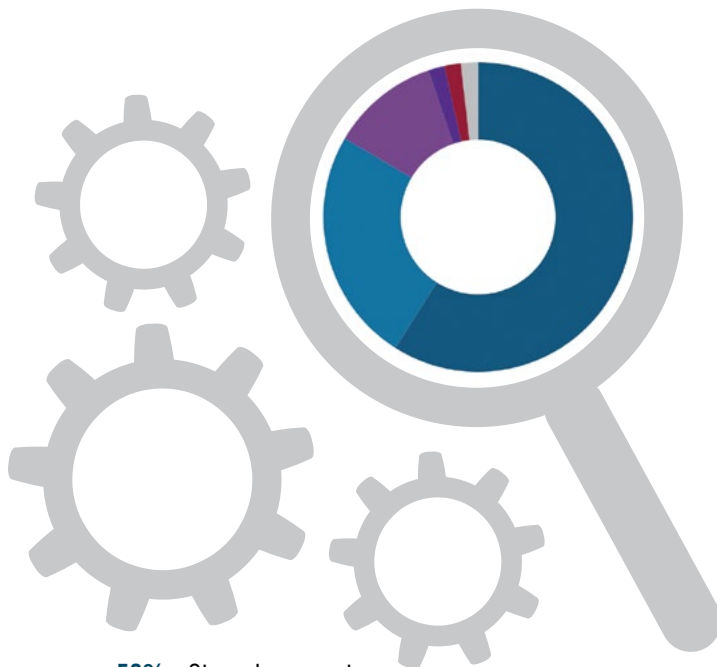


**“The gifts of organ and tissue donations are selfless acts of generosity that provide opportunities to advance discovery, improve health, and save lives. Knowing that the public values this research and wants us to continue to do more of it means we have to tell more of our story.”**

— **Bill Leinweber**, President and CEO of the National Disease Research Interchange (NDRI) —

## Americans Support Organ/Tissue Donation for Research at Death

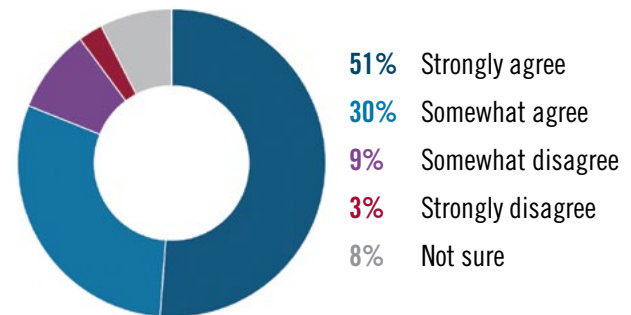
In general, do you support or oppose the donation of organs and tissue for research at death?



- 59%** Strongly support
- 25%** Somewhat support
- 11%** Neither support nor oppose
- 2%** Somewhat oppose
- 2%** Strongly oppose
- 2%** Not sure

## Americans Aware of Organ/Tissue Shortages and Agree the Public Should be Encouraged to Donate

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: There are significant shortages of both organs and tissues for donation and for research and the public should be encouraged to become donors.

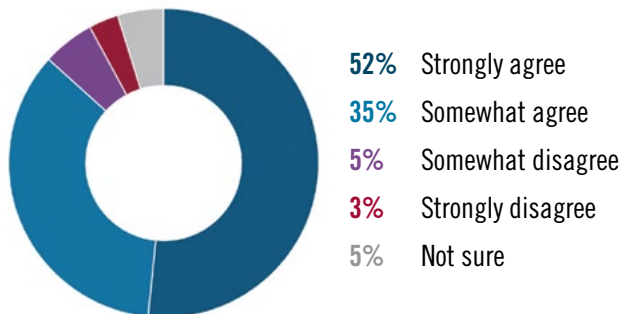


- 51%** Strongly agree
- 30%** Somewhat agree
- 9%** Somewhat disagree
- 3%** Strongly disagree
- 8%** Not sure

## IOWA FOCUS

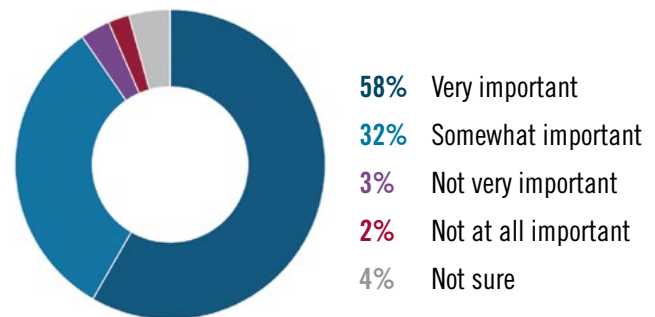
### Large Majority of Iowans Want to Hear Presidential Candidates Discuss Science-Related Issues

Do you agree or disagree that the presidential candidates should participate in a debate to discuss key science-based challenges facing the United States, such as health care, climate change, energy, education, innovation and the economy?



### Iowans Value U.S. Leadership In Science and Technology Research

How important is it to you that the U.S. be a world leader in science and technology research?



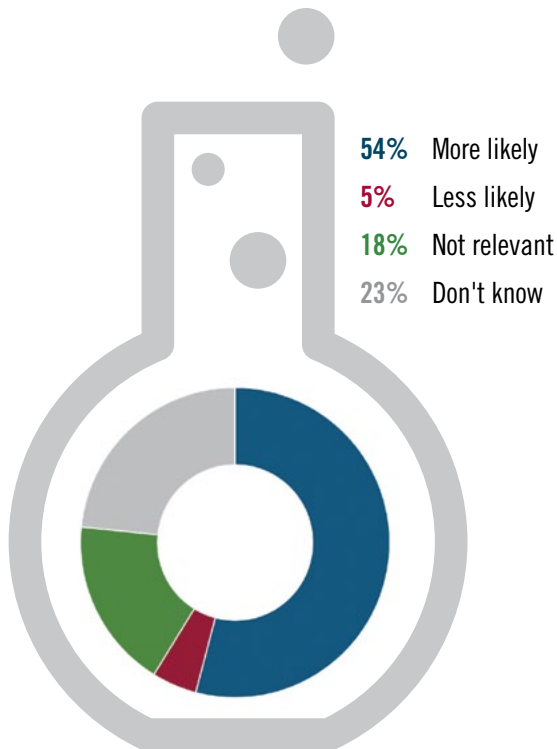
**“Science policies related to our health, environment, economy, and national security impact every American, and these results suggest candidates ...should be prepared to develop and discuss their policies well before Election Day”**

— Sheril Kirshenbaum, Executive Director, Science Debate —



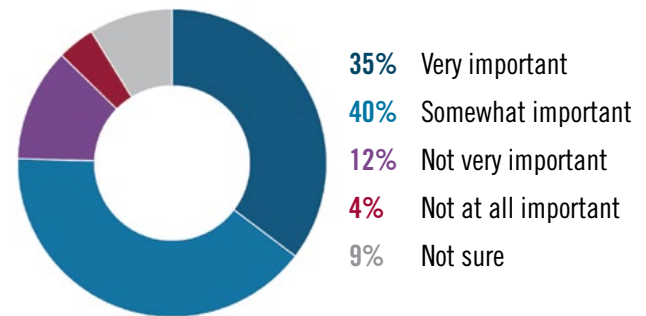
## Majority of Iowans More Likely to Vote for Pro-Science Candidate

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for a candidate considered pro-science?



## 75% of Iowans Think Candidates Should Have a Science Advisor

How important is it that candidates for president have a science advisor?



## METHODOLOGY

- Online surveys are conducted with an approximate sample size of 800-1000+ adults (ages 18 and up) and a maximum theoretical sampling error of +/- 3.5%.
- Data are demographically representative of adult U.S. residents.
- Survey data in this publication was conducted by Zogby Analytics.

Zogby  
Analytics

- Due to rounding, the total may not add to 100% on some charts.

**Research!America** began commissioning polls in 1992 in an effort to understand public attitudes toward medical, health, and scientific research.

The results of Research!America's polls have proven invaluable to our alliance of member organizations and, in turn, to the fulfillment of our mission to advocate for science, discovery, and innovation to achieve better health for all. In response to growing usage and demand, Research!America has expanded its portfolio, which includes state, national, and issue-specific polling.

**Poll data is available by request or at [www.researchamerica.org](http://www.researchamerica.org).**

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*\*\* On Leave of Absence*

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