

Global consumers are turning to new sources for health information

Article

The trend: Consumers around the world are losing trust in their healthcare systems and providers. That's the starting point for the [2023 Edelman Trust Barometer: Trust and Health](#) report.

- More than 12,000 consumers were surveyed in 13 countries: Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, South Korea, the UK, and the US. Responses from Nigeria were not included in the final results due to methodology.

Factors affecting erosion of trust:

1. **Economic fears**, beginning with inflation, cost, and lack of affordability.
2. **Polarization** stemming from distrust in media, a sense the system is unfair, and societal fears.
3. **Dispersion of authority**. Although national authorities and medical professionals are still trusted, friends and family have surged in influence.
4. **Patient empowerment** means people are more engaged with health information and comparing findings. They expect healthcare providers to treat them as an equal partner.

Piling on: Since the pandemic began, numerous studies and reports have documented consumers' growing distrust in healthcare providers, insurers, and the system itself.

- **Trilliant Health's** 2022 Trends Shaping the Healthcare Economy report revealed that consumers' trust in doctors and hospitals progressively declined throughout the pandemic.
- Insurers are consistently seen as the least trustworthy among all healthcare stakeholders, per that report.
- Medical misinformation was cited in a recent de Beaumont/Morning Consult poll of physicians and patients.

What's new now: Consumers everywhere **now expect every organization** in their country to play a role in making them as healthy as possible.

- While **87% said their country's health system** played a leading role...
- **Employers (79%), government (76%), business (70%),** and the **media (66%)** were also considered responsible for an individual's health and well-being.
- The term **"health"** has broadened to include mental, physical, and social health (friends and family), and community livability (safe environment, healthy planet).

Patient empowerment is a double-edged sword. Just as consumers are expecting more institutions to care for their health, they're also turning to online sources, friends, and family as trusted sources of health information.

- **44%** of young adults (ages 18 to 34) said the average person who has done their own research is **just as knowledgeable as a doctor** on most health matters, per Edelman's findings.
- Among those who think their healthcare system is failing, **49% have followed advice from friends and family** that contradicts their doctor's advice, and **29%** who think their healthcare system is working did the same.
- **Social media is gaining trust:** **47%** of respondents who don't trust their healthcare system followed advice they found on social media, even though it contradicts their doctor's advice. And **25%** of those who trust their healthcare system did the same.

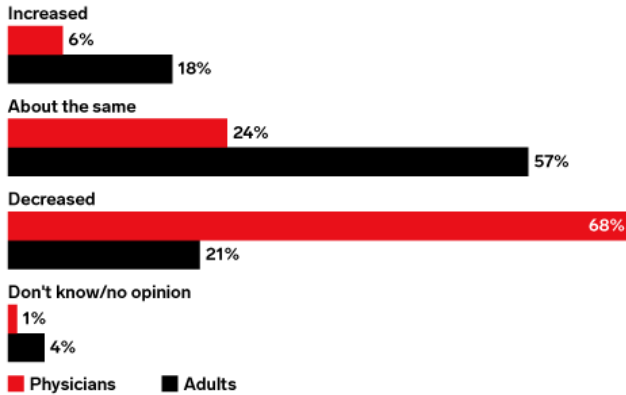
Our take: The trend isn't new, but **growing global distrust in healthcare institutions** is a threat to government, businesses, and media organizations, too. It's being addressed in small ways by some digital platforms, but more serious efforts are necessary.

- **Meta's** independent oversight panel issued a report that recommended changes to its misinformation policy while pointing out the company's **failure to address the impact of its social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp—**on public health and human rights, per The Verge.
- Telemental health provider **Talkspace** launched a **Mental Health Conditions Library** that is free to people looking online for clinically evaluated information on mental health.

Small steps, but **acknowledgement of a problem is the first step to solving it.**

How Do US Physicians vs. Adults Believe Patient Trust in Physicians Has Changed?

% of respondents, Dec 2022



Note: in the past two years; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: de Beaumont, "US Physicians: Medical Misinformation is Harming Patients' Health" conducted by Morning Consult, March 29, 2023

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