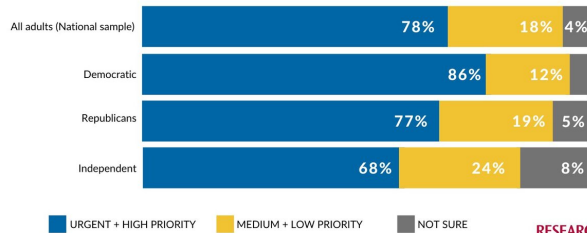


# Americans agree: Improving our public health system is an urgent priority

30 October 2020

## Strong Majority of Americans Place an Urgent or High Priority on Improving the Public Health System

How much of a priority is improving the public health system?



Source: A Research!America poll of U.S. adults conducted in partnership with Zogby Analytics in August 2020.



Credit: Research!America

As COVID-19 infections escalate, Americans across the political divide demonstrate pronounced support for public health. According to a recently-commissioned survey by Research!America on behalf of a working group formed to address our nation's commitment to science, a strong bipartisan majority of Americans place an urgent or high priority on improving our nation's public health system (78%) and, further, are willing to pay \$1 more per week in taxes to support an emergency public health fund to address health threats like a pandemic (71%). Additionally, 82% of Americans agree it is important for elected leaders to listen to public health officials.

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of Americans, across the partisan divide, say the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that major changes are needed in our [public health](#) system, including more funding. COVID-19 has also shined a [bright light](#) on the problem of [health](#) disparities in the United States, with a strong bipartisan majority of Americans saying that eliminating health disparities is an urgent or high priority (72%). In addition, 82% support research to help tackle this challenge.

A number of recent surveys report that fewer than half of Americans would agree to a COVID-19 vaccination. This newly commissioned survey reveals that the likelihood of getting the vaccine is greatly affected by who recommends it. Almost 43% of respondents said they would be very likely to get the vaccine if recommended by "your doctor"; another 43% if it was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration; and 39% if recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. By contrast, only 23% would be very likely to get the vaccine if it is recommended by a family member and even fewer, 19%, if recommended by a celebrity they trusted.

"As COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on our communities, it's important for policymakers to know that a clear bipartisan majority of Americans place a high priority on the urgency of improving our nation's public health system," said Mary Woolley, Research!America's President and CEO and a co-chair of the working group.

"This survey tells us that, overwhelmingly, Americans recognize the crucial importance of public health. In order to meet our future challenges as a nation, we must commit to greatly increasing investment in this area, including investment in the science that drives preparedness, prevention, and response," said Keith Yamamoto, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor for Science Policy and Strategy at the University of California, San Francisco, a co-chair of the working group.

"Policymakers should take note of the public's sense of urgency and act quickly to assure that challenges to our health and quality of life—indeed, our safety and security as a nation—are met and overcome," said Sudip Parikh, Ph.D., CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and also a working group co-chair.

Other results show:

- Americans remain concerned about ongoing issues affecting the public health of the nation: 79% say ensuring a safe drinking water supply is an urgent or high priority, and 72% indicate that addressing drug and opioid abuse is an urgent or high priority.
- While a strong majority of all Americans are concerned about the future impact of climate change on their health (70%), people of color report even greater concern: African Americans 74%, Hispanics 83%, and Asian Americans 82%.
- Concern is also significant regarding the high number of U.S. hospitalizations from preventable causes and avoidable deaths, compared to peer nations; nearly 7 in 10 Americans say they are very or somewhat concerned about this.

**More information:** Survey:

[www.researchamerica.org/sites/.../20PublicHealthSurvey%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.researchamerica.org/sites/.../20PublicHealthSurvey%20(1).pdf)

Provided by Research!America

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