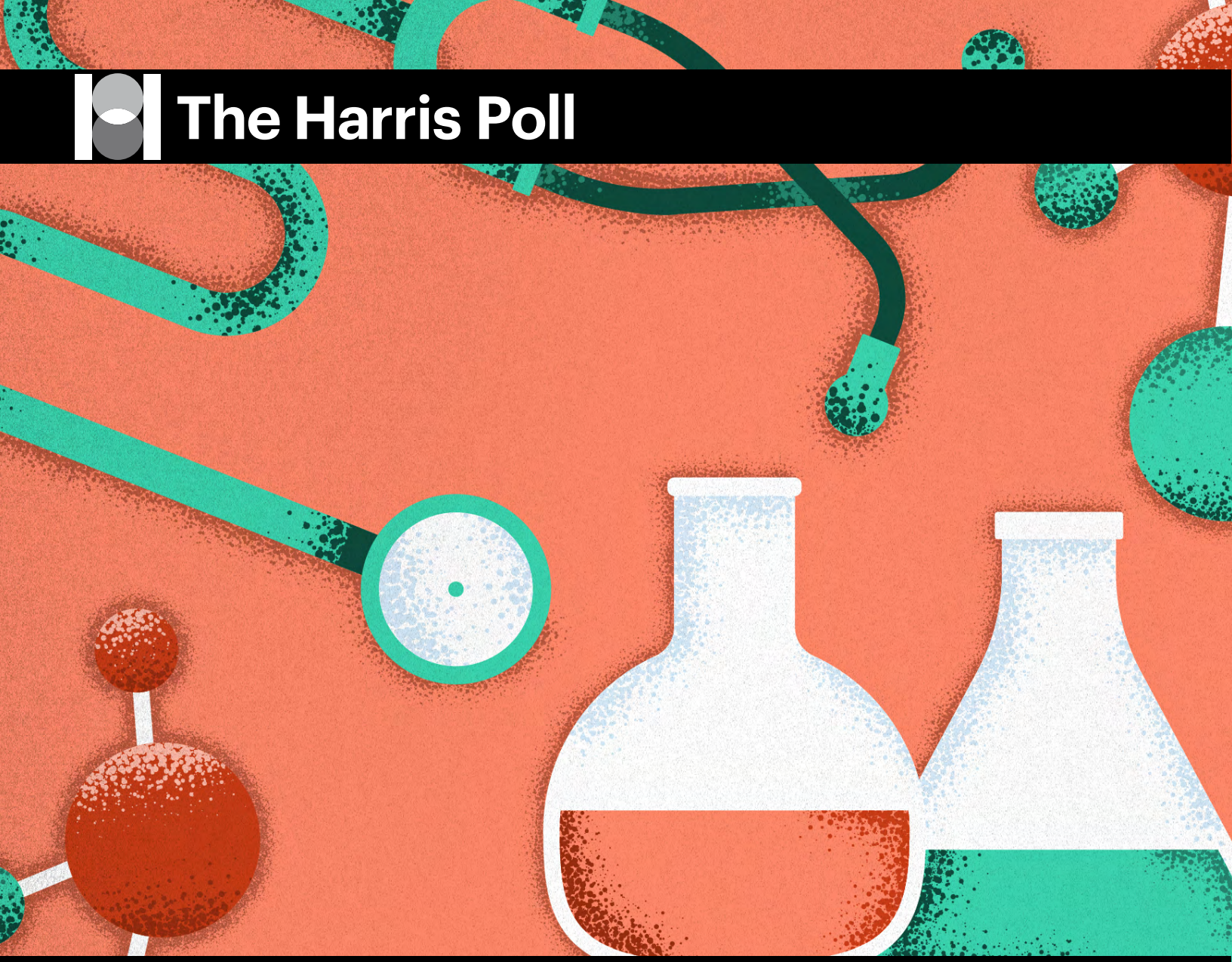
The Harris Poll



Warning Signs

Scientists and Doctors Worry about the Future of American Innovation

Survey of doctors, scientists, engineers, and graduate students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, commissioned by Bayer

November 2026

The scientists who could solve humanity's greatest challenges are sounding the alarm. America should listen.

A new survey of over 700 primary care physicians, scientists, engineers, and graduate students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, conducted by The Harris Poll and commissioned by Bayer, sounds an alarm about the threats to the innovation and progress we need to solve humanity's greatest health challenges.

The doctors, scientists, and graduate students surveyed are confident in America's leadership in science and believe breakthroughs on our biggest health challenges are just a few years away.

But that optimism comes with a stark warning about the **impact of increasing misinformation, public skepticism, political interference,** and **reduced funding** on that badly needed progress. This alert comes from a group that the public holds in extremely high regard (84% of Americans trust information about health and science from medical doctors and 79% trust such information from scientists).[1]

> America's doctors and scientists of today and tomorrow agree that supporting an environment where science and innovation can thrive will deliver greater U.S. economic returns and improve America's health and wellbeing.

The following report details the key findings from the survey, with implications for what it means for the future of American science leadership.

[1] Harris Poll's March report "Science Under Siege," based on a survey of 2,023 US adults.

Doctors and scientists see big breakthroughs on the horizon if science is prioritized.

Confidence in America's scientific leadership is high. Roughly nine-in-10 doctors (96%), scientists (86%), and graduate students (90%) regard the United States as a current world leader in scientific research, and they expect it to remain so. Doctors (94%), scientists (89%), and graduate students (90%) nearly universally expect the U.S. to be a world leader in scientific research in ten years.



Scientists are far more optimistic than the public.

The Harris Poll's March 2026 survey found that just 69% of the public believed the U.S. would be a world leader in scientific research in ten years.

20+ points lower
than doctors', scientists', and graduate students' beliefs.

Doctors, scientists, and graduate students are in strong agreement that proper investment in science and research pays off for all of us, both economically and in terms of benefits to our health:

1. U.S. economic growth

There is near-universal agreement that **every dollar invested in scientific research creates greater economic returns for the U.S. economy** (97% of doctors, 96% of scientists, and 96% of graduate students). Recent data published by the Federal Reserve confirms this to be true: Scientific R&D spending generates returns of 140% to 210% in long-term economic return.[2]

96%
Of scientists agree that research investment leads to U.S. economic returns.

2. Urgent health challenges solved sooner

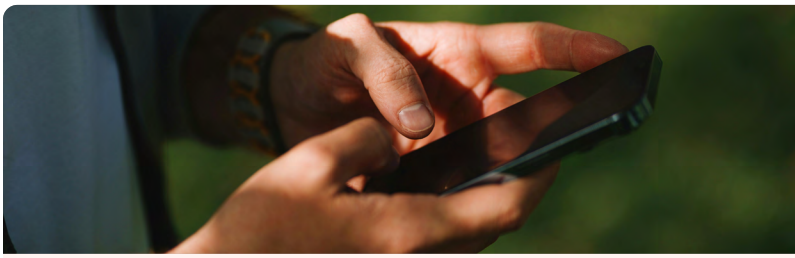
In addition to fueling economic growth, doctors, scientists, and graduate students agree that greater investment in science, research, and innovation can dramatically improve our health. Nine-in-10 (91% of doctors, 90% of scientists, and 87% of graduate students) agree that with enough funding and investment in R&D, **we're only a few years away from solving some of humanity's most urgent health challenges.**

9-in-10 doctors & scientists
say we're close to solving humanity's most urgent health challenges with the right funding and investment.

"We are finding cures for illnesses we never thought we would be able to cure in history."
– Scientist in chemistry

[2] Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, 2024 (https://www.dallasfed.org/~/media/documents/research/papers/2023/wp2305r2.pdf)

However, scientists and doctors believe misinformation and public cynicism threatens breakthroughs.



Nine-in-10 are concerned about online science and health misinformation.

Concern about false or misleading information about science or health spreading online is nearly universal: 89% of doctors, 91% of scientists, and 95% of graduate students are very or somewhat concerned about it.

They also agree that this misinformation is getting worse: 89% of doctors, 93% of scientists, and 85% of graduate students agree that false or misleading information about science and health is a bigger problem now than it was five years ago. As one doctor put it, **"false claims spread on social media faster than scientists can correct them."**

Online content creators are seen as a leading source of misinformation.

Across the three audiences, two-thirds say online content creators and social media influencers are very much or somewhat to blame for spreading false or misleading information about science and health in the media and online (66% of doctors, 68% of scientists, and 64% of graduate students). The public shares this sentiment: 71% of the total U.S. population in our March survey felt that online content creators are very much or somewhat to blame for misinformation.

THE IMPACT

1. Direct ties between misinformation and negative health outcomes

Eight-in-10 doctors (81%) agree that Americans' cynicism towards medical professionals has gotten worse in recent years – and they blame misinformation for this shift.

Ninety percent of doctors agree that false or misleading information about science and health can lead people to **make decisions that negatively affect their health.** This spread of misinformation has led to a trend of "[...] trying to cure yourself, which can cause frustration [...] or turning to more pseudoscientific methods [...]," according to one scientist.

The public is similarly concerned and angry about misinformation. Our March survey revealed that 82% of the U.S. public says that encountering false or misleading information about science and health makes them worry about the well-being of themselves or their family.

2. Public cynicism may lead to fewer U.S. doctors and researchers available to care for patients and advance breakthroughs

Public skepticism towards science is affecting more than morale: 72% of graduate students, 71% of scientists, and 69% of doctors say Americans' cynicism towards people in their field has led them to **rethink their career choices.**

When 89% of graduate students, 84% of scientists, and 81% of doctors already say the U.S. is at risk of losing talented scientists, researchers, and health professionals to other countries – **we simply have fewer good doctors and scientists to lose.**

Why this matters

Losing even more doctors, scientists, and other science and health professionals puts Americans' health at risk and threatens our country's ability to power innovation and breakthroughs that can solve our biggest challenges.

Scientists say funding is drying up and political interference is holding us back.

Limited funding availability is holding back breakthroughs.

Ninety-one percent of scientists say that they expect funding availability to limit their research or career prospects. One scientist said "scientific research has deteriorated due to funding being reduced" — **making important studies more difficult to complete and leaving life-changing breakthroughs more out-of-reach.**

The next generation is also concerned, with 80% of graduate students in the field worried that funding availability will limit their career prospects — threatening future breakthroughs.

> **"Unpredictable grant schedules leave promising projects unfinished and force researchers towards short-term survival."**
>
> ***– Graduate Student***



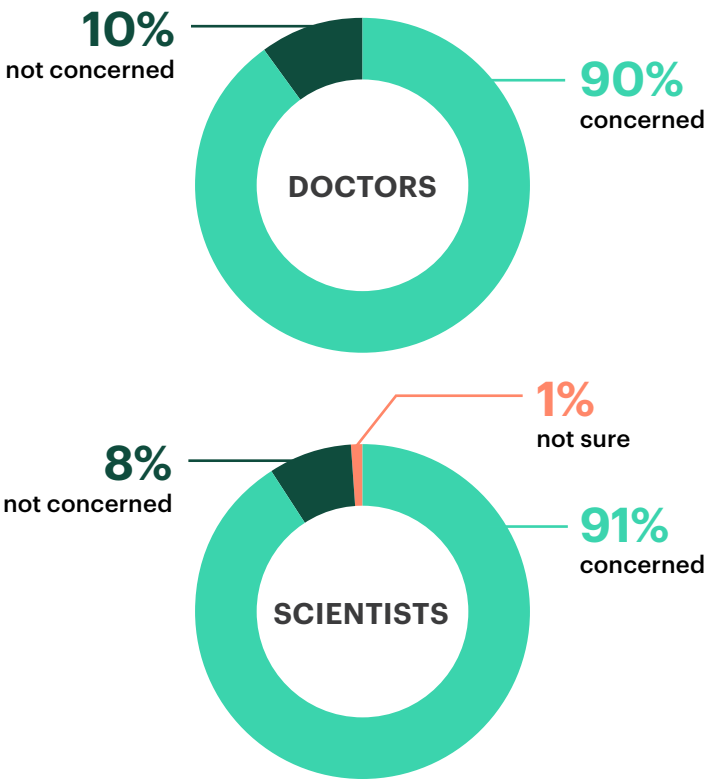
Political interference in science and research is a bipartisan concern.

Regardless of how they identify politically, scientists and doctors are concerned about politicians interfering in scientific research priorities.

Large proportions also blame politicians for spreading false or misleading information about science and health in the media and online (69% of doctors, 76% of scientists, and 63% of graduate students) — further limiting scientists' and doctors' abilities to innovate and find new cures.

As one scientist working in the biomedical and bioengineering field described the situation, "increased political polarization and public skepticism toward science create more uncertainty."

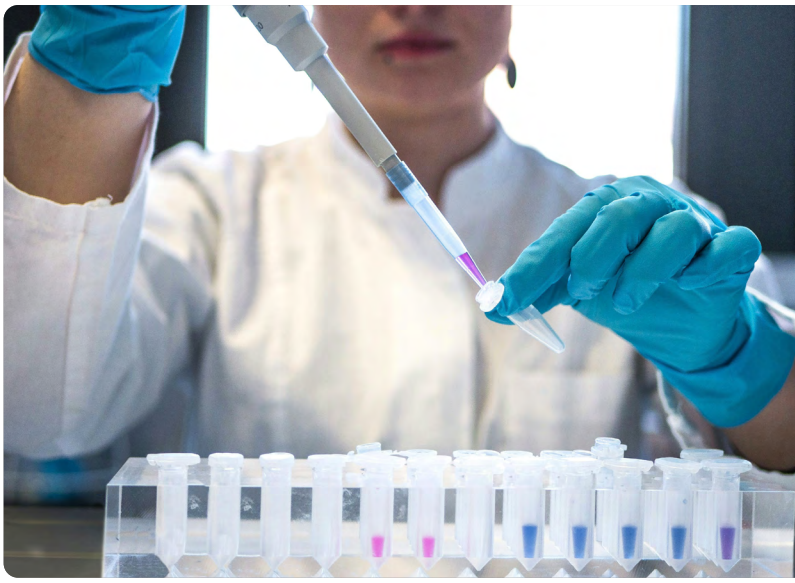
CONCERN WITH POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PRIORITIES



Private investment in scientific research and innovation offers a short-term fix.

In the wake of funding challenges, scientists and doctors agree that the private sector offers a solution.

Roughly nine-in-10 doctors (91%) and over eight-in-10 scientists and graduate students (84% and 85%, respectively) believe that private sector investments are having a positive impact on the state of scientific research and medical advances in the U.S. today.



> **"Improved funding mechanisms can help promising studies move forward."**
>
> ***– Scientist in chemistry***

There is near-universal agreement in the field that private investment *plays an essential role in translating scientific discoveries into real-world products and treatments* (96% of doctors, 93% of scientists, and 96% of graduate students).

Why this matters

Private sector funding will continue driving progress — **but even that is at risk of slowing down due to misinformation.** Sustaining an environment that enables scientists and medical researchers to develop the next generation of innovations and cures is critical.



WHAT THIS MEANS

The findings from this survey send a clear signal: America's scientific community is confident in its capabilities but is alarmed by the worsening conditions that threaten science.

Doctors, scientists, and the next generation of researchers agree that the U.S. holds a commanding position in global science but that this position is slipping. Misinformation is eroding public trust, political interference is distorting research priorities, and funding shortfalls are forcing talent in health and science to question whether they have a future in the field. Private sector investment is helping to fill the gap, but it's just a bridge solution that cannot substitute for a long-term broader ecosystem of public support and institutional credibility that scientific breakthroughs require.

The stakes are not abstract: we're at risk of missing out on cures that could save lives, economic growth that strengthens the country, and a generation of researchers who may yet choose a different path. Protecting that future requires attention and action now.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

This survey was conducted online in the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Bayer among 202 doctors (primary care physicians), 250 scientists, and 254 graduate students in STEM. The survey was conducted September 23rd through October 14th, 2026.

Raw data were weighted where necessary by the following variables to bring them in line with their actual proportions in each respective population:

- Doctors: gender and age
- Scientists or engineers: company size (# of employees)
- Graduate students in STEM: age by gender, education, race/ethnicity, region, household income, household size, marital status and political affiliation.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys.

The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the total sample data is accurate to within the following percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed populations of interest.

- Doctors: ±7.3 percentage points
- Scientists or engineers: ±6.9 percentage points
- Graduate students in STEM: ±8.9 percentage points

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

ABOUT THE HARRIS POLL

The Harris Poll is one of the longest-running and most respected surveys in American history, tracking public opinion, corporate reputation, and brand health since 1956. As part of Stagwell (NASDAQ:STGW), The Harris Poll delivers research, analytics, and measurement solutions to the world's leading brands. With a global reach of more than ninety countries, The Harris Poll offers advisory services across sectors to world leaders, CEOs, and business decision-makers with state-of-the-art analytics, real-time software services, and practitioners in marketing, reputation, customer experience, trends, futures, and thought leadership/research-for-public release. The Harris Poll translates shifting social sentiment into a competitive marketplace advantage.