

01 Divisive health beliefs are pervasive, not fringe.

70% of people worldwide believe at least one of six divisive health claims about foods, vaccines, and medicines to be true, including 32% who believe fluoride in water is harmful or unhelpful to health and 25% who believe vaccines are used for population control.

02 Belief in divisive health claims is widespread, crossing age, political, and educational divides.

Education level does not meaningfully impact belief in divisive health claims: 69% of people with a university degree believe at least one divisive health claim to be true, nearly identical to the 70% of those without a university degree. These beliefs also cut across demographic groups, including both the political right (78%) and the left (64%).

03 People with many divisive health beliefs trust more voices on health matters than those who don't.

Those who don't believe any divisive health claims only trust their doctor and medical experts to tell the truth on health issues. Those who believe many divisive health claims trust doctors, medical experts, friends and family, and their CEO (among employees).

04 People with more divisive health beliefs are greater immersed in information.

People who hold many divisive health beliefs are more than twice as likely to consume traditional health news and health news from differing political views than those who do not view any as true. They're also more likely to consult AI to get answers to health questions.

05 Consumers worldwide are dramatically less confident about their health choices than just a year ago.

The public's confidence in their ability to find answers to health questions and make informed health decisions has fallen 10 points in a single year to 51%, with significant declines in 14 of 16 markets.

06 Most believe their country is divided on health issues.

63% of people say their country is divided on key health and healthcare issues. This perception is most pronounced in the United States (86%), followed by India and Mexico (both 73%).

07 Trust in media to accurately cover health information still lags pre-COVID levels.

Down 11 points since January 2019, trust in media to report accurate health information lingers below pre-COVID levels at 46% globally.

08 Consumers are adopting AI across healthcare touchpoints.

64% of respondents believe fluent AI users can perform at least one task as well as – or better than – a doctor, including performing basic medical procedures (22%), and determining proper treatment or medication (21%).

09 Doctors lead over uncredentialed sources on diagnosis and treatment, but prevention is more contested.

While doctors remain more influential than uncredentialed sources, such as AI or family and friends, on personal health decisions like diagnosis (+25 point advantage over uncredentialed sources) and short-term treatment (+15 pt advantage), their lead narrows on prevention of disease (+6 pt advantage). In areas like diet and nutrition, and vitamins and supplements, uncredentialed sources are more influential (+7 pt advantage over doctors).

10 Rather than acting only as authorities, providers must be guides.

People need help with making sense of information, compared to simply needing more of it. To carry more influence over patients following their recommendations, HCPs should admit they may not have all the answers, avoid trying to prove people wrong, show examples of recommendations working for others, and maintain a presence in the community.