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While Americans view their mental and physical health as equally important, they don't think the healthcare system does

30-country Ipsos survey for World Mental Health Day 2021 highlights wide age and gender gaps in how frequently people think about their mental health

New York, NY, October 8, 2021 — A new Ipsos poll finds that eight in 10 adults on average across 30 countries (79%), including the United States (82%), say that their mental and physical health are equally important to them. Only 6% both globally and in the U.S. say their physical health is more important. However, more say their country's healthcare system gives more importance to the treatment of physical health than say it gives equal importance to the treatment of mental and physical health (55% vs.28% in the U.S., 45% vs. 35% on average globally).

The survey finds younger people and women are more likely to often think about their mental health, especially in the U.S.

Mental health ranks second behind COVID-19 among the health problems Americans view as the biggest ones facing people in their country. Across all 30 countries, mental health ranks third behind COVID-19 and cancer, ahead of stress, obesity, diabetes, and various forms of substance abuse.

These are some of the findings of a survey of more than 21,500 adults under the age of 75 conducted on Ipsos' Global Advisor platform in August and September 2021.

Detailed Findings

How often do you think about your mental/physical wellbeing?

While over half in the U.S. (54%) and on average across 30 countries (53%) say they think about their mental wellbeing "fairly often" or "very often", adults surveyed are more likely to often think about their physical wellbeing (77% in the U.S. and 68% on average globally).

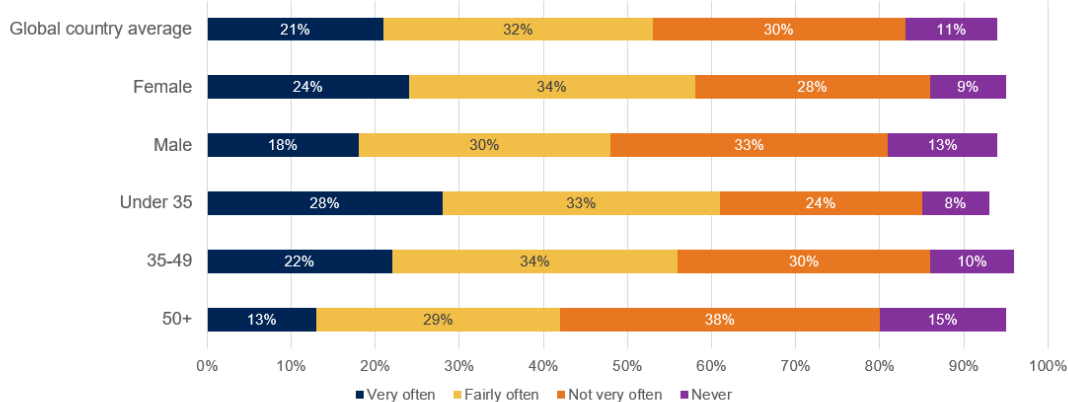
Women tend to often think about their mental health more than men do: by a difference of 10 points on average globally (58% vs. 48%) and 23 points in the U.S. (65% vs. 42%). The survey highlights even wider differences across age groups. On average globally, there is a difference of 19 points between the percentage of those under the age of 35 and those aged 50 and older who often think about their mental wellbeing (61% vs. 42%). In the U.S. the difference is a gaping 43 points (75% vs. 33%).

In contrast, there are few differences across gender and age groups when it comes to how often people think about their physical health.



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Q: How often do you think about your own mental wellbeing?



Base: 21,513 online adults in 30 countries, August 20th – September 3rd 2021

The countries where people report thinking about their mental health often most are Brazil (75%), South Africa (73%), and Colombia (71%).

People in China, South Korea, Russia, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Sweden are those most likely to say that they **do not think** about their mental wellbeing often.

How important are mental and physical health to you?

On average across the 30 countries surveyed, eight in 10 adults (79%) say they consider their mental and physical health to be equally important when it comes to their personal health. In the U.S., 82% say so.

The largest proportions of adults surveyed saying their mental and physical health are “equally important” are found in Hungary (90%), Mexico (88%), Colombia (86%), Peru (86%), and Chile (86%).

Among those who think one is more important than the other, more people are likely to select mental health than physical health (12% vs. 6% on average globally, 9% vs. 6% in the U.S.).

The countries with the largest proportions of people saying that mental health is more important are Saudi Arabia (26%), India (24%), Sweden (20%), Turkey (18%), and Brazil (16%). In the U.S., those under 35 are more likely than their elders either to say mental health is more important (16%).

The countries with the largest proportions of people saying that physical health is more important are Saudi Arabia (14%), India (13%), Japan (10%), China (10%), and Australia (10%).



PRESS RELEASE

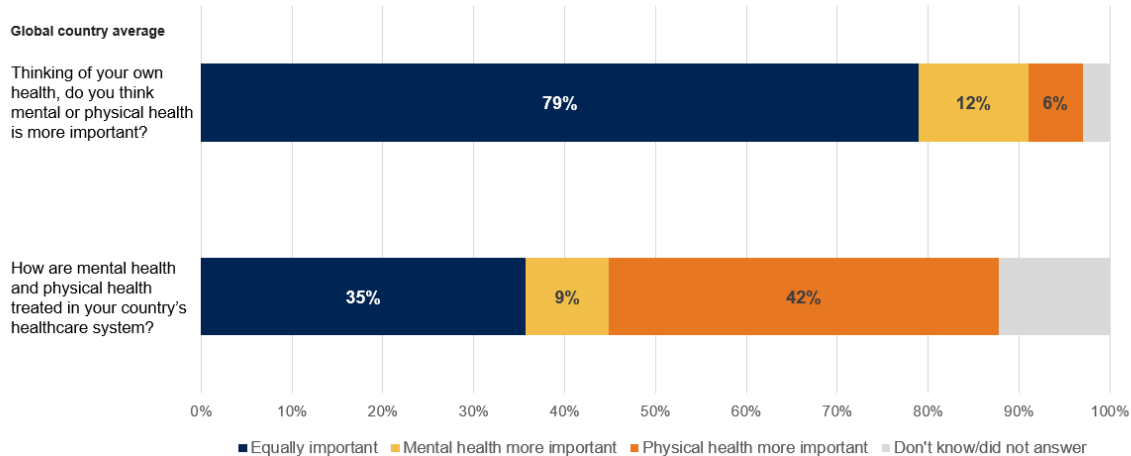
How are mental and physical health treated in healthcare systems?

Despite widespread agreement that mental and physical health are equally important to them, people are less likely to think that their country's healthcare systems treat both equally: 28% in the U.S. and 35% globally say this is the case, while 55% in the U.S. and 42% globally say that physical health is treated with greater importance. Only 6% in the U.S. and 9% globally think mental health is treated as being more important.

Along with the U.S., the countries where people are most likely to say physical health is treated with greater importance than is mental health include Great Britain (60%), Brazil (55%), South Africa (54%), and Sweden (54%).

The countries where more think that both mental and physical health are treated as equally important are Malaysia (60%), China (54%), Japan (47%), and Mexico (45%).

This points to a discrepancy when it comes to how important mental health is to the public and how it is perceived to be treated by healthcare services in their country: globally, only 6% say that their physical health is more important than their mental health but 42% think that this is treated with greater importance.



Mental health as a top global health concern.

On average, across 30 countries, mental health ranks third among the health problems perceived to be the biggest ones facing people in one's country.

Globally, almost a third (31%) rank mental health as a top health issue, only 3 points shy of cancer (34%). The top health concern in 2021 is the coronavirus/COVID-19 (70%), as it was already last year when it was first introduced in the survey.



PRESS RELEASE

In the U.S., mental health ranks second with 35%, only behind COVID-19 (68%), ahead of cancer (22%), obesity (20%), and drug abuse (20%).

Mental health is the top health concern in Sweden (63%) and Chile (59%). After these two, the countries whose citizens are particularly likely to rank mental health as a key health concern are: Australia (47%), Canada (43%), Colombia (41%), Singapore (40%), Brazil (40%), and Great Britain (40%).

The countries where fewer of those surveyed rank mental health among the top health concerns are Japan (9%), Mexico (11%), France (12%), and Saudi Arabia (14%).

About the Study

These are the results of a 30-market survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform. Ipsos interviewed a total of 21,513 adults aged 18-74 in the United States, Canada, Israel, Malaysia, South Africa, and Turkey, aged 21-74 in Singapore, and 16-74 in 24 other markets between Friday, August 20 and Friday, September 3, 2021.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals in each of Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, mainland China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the U.S., and 500 individuals in each of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, India, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey.

The samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.S. can be taken as representative of their general adult population under the age of 75.

The samples in Brazil, mainland China, Chile, Colombia, India, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, and Turkey are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for these countries should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more “connected” segment of their population.

The data is weighted so that each country’s sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data.

The ‘Global Country Average’ reflects the average result for all the countries and markets where the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country or market and is not intended to suggest a total result.

Where results do not sum to 100 or the ‘difference’ appears to be +/-1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of “don’t know” or not stated responses.



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The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on Ipsos' use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.

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About Ipsos

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Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts, and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions, and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers, or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

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