Bridging the Gap: Prevention vs Wellness

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Substack: https://robcaliff272993.substack.com/

DukeHealth Duke Heart & Vascular Duke University School of Medicine Duke Clinical Research Institute

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Considerations

- I have been a political appointee twice
  - That included 2 Senate confirmations — there is nothing you could ask or say that would be offensive relative to my previous experience
- I am 75 years old and not looking for a job
- I am not applying for NIH grants
- I've worked in almost every sector
  - Academia, health delivery systems, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, biotech, "big tech" AND government
  - And I'm a patient
- So, I have opinions — feel free to disagree or argue
- Current engagements with medical products industry:
  - Population Health Partners, American Health Associates, BridgeBio, Vega Health, Atman, UpDoc AI, 23&Me, Coethia

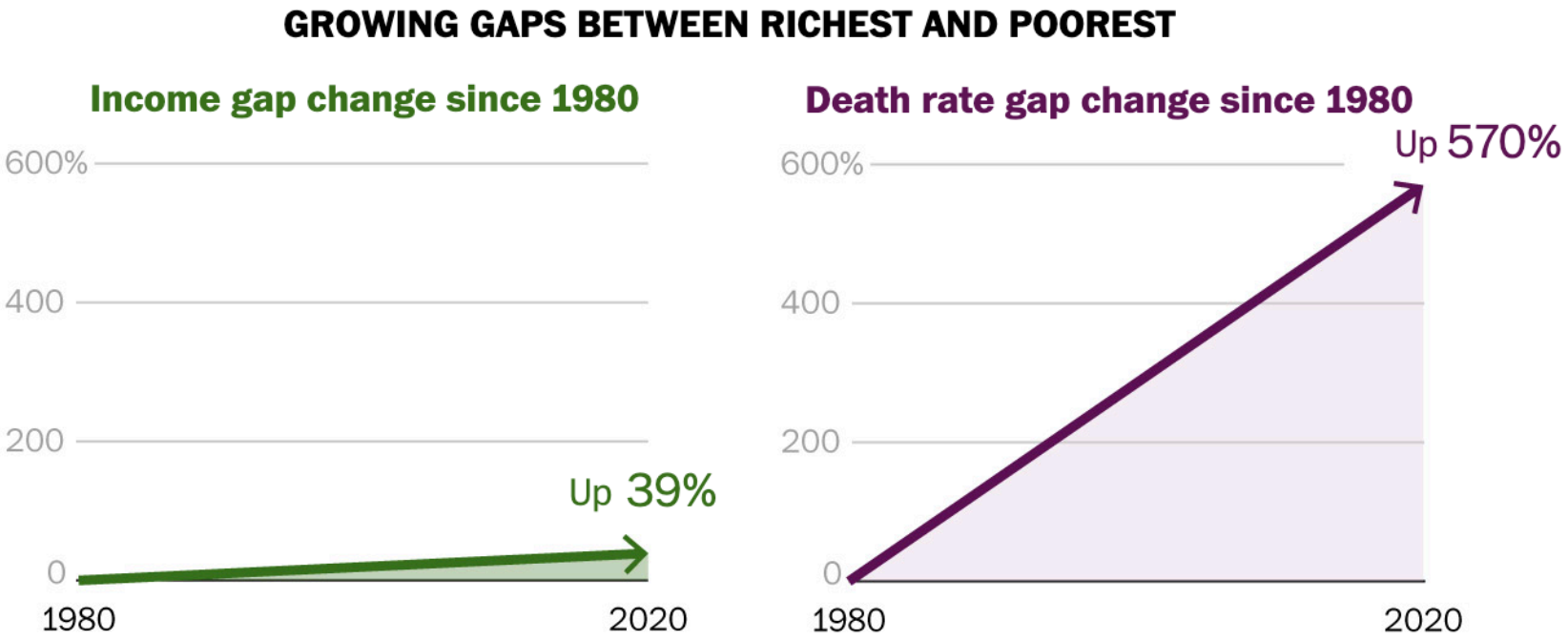
Key Points

- Cardiovascular disease accounts for a significant portion of our chasm between what is possible for healthy longevity and the current status of health in the U.S.
- Most of the gap can be closed by simple, well-known, repetitive behaviors that are very difficult to sustain in the US environment, particularly for disadvantaged people
- Wealthy people are pushing the envelope with a combination of effective (gym, weight loss, etc.) and ineffective (supplements, peptides, etc) tactics
- Our behavior (the traditional biomedical establishment) has left an opening for an industry that preys on people who are mistrustful of the system or have a false sense of ”doing your own research”
- We need to engage in the arena where beliefs and behaviors are being molded and change the way we engage

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Death gap widening between rich and poor

The Post compared death rates for people living in the poorest 10 percent of counties to rates for people living in the wealthiest 10 percent of counties over the past four decades. In that time, the gap between rich and poor death rates grew significantly wider, with rich communities' death rates improving for many years while poor areas largely stayed the same and then worsened. Death rates also grew many times faster than the difference in income between the poorest and richest areas.



https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/interactive/2023/american-life-expectancy-dropping/

https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2023/10/02/takeaways-us-life-expectancy-crisis/

The economy is more reliant on spending by the wealthiest households

Share of personal outlays by income level



*Personal outlays are the sum of personal consumption expenditures, nonmortgage interest payments and net transfers to government and persons out of the U.S.

Source: Moody's

MARKETS & FINANCE | HEARD ON THE STREET Follow

Billionaires' Low Taxes Are Becoming a Problem for the Economy

Tax avoidance by the superwealthy is an economic issue as well as a political one

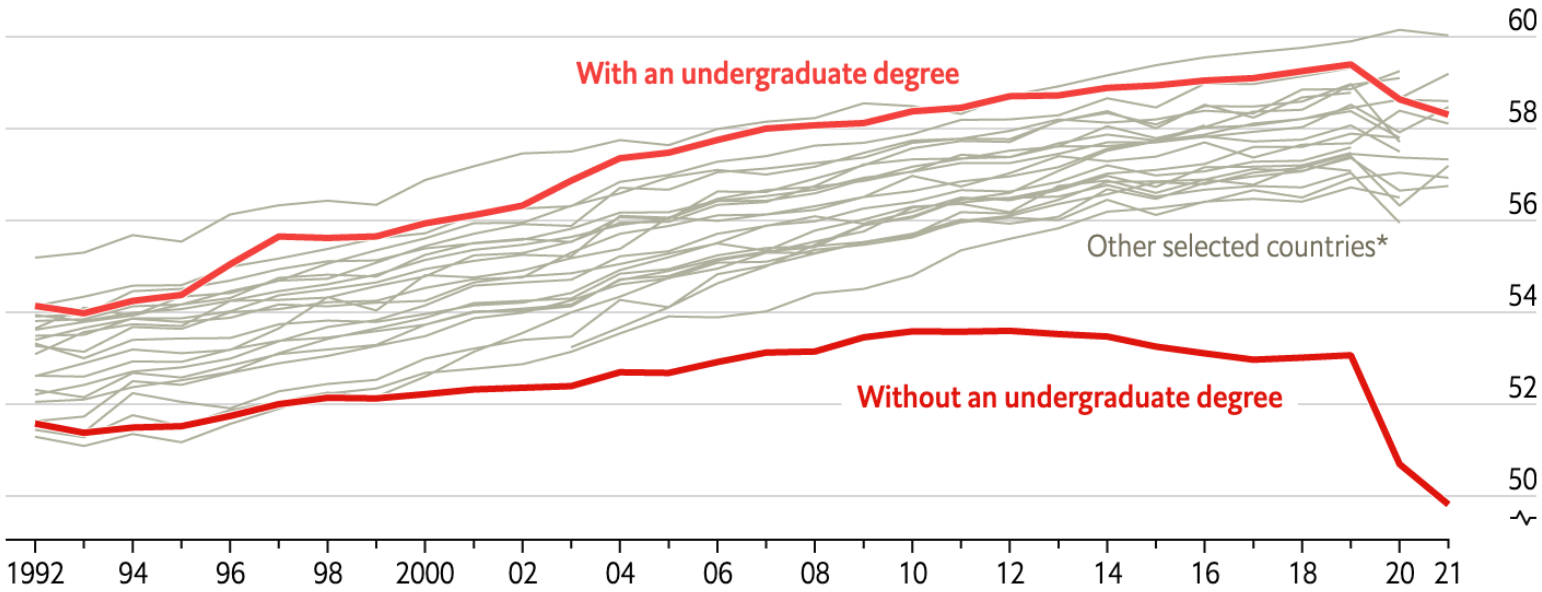
By Carol Ryan Follow

Feb. 18, 2026 5:30 am ET

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Survival of the richest

United States, remaining life expectancy at age 25, years



*Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland

Sources: Human Mortality Database; "Accounting for the widening mortality gap between American adults with and without a BA", A. Case and A. Deaton, *BPEA*, 2023

The Economist

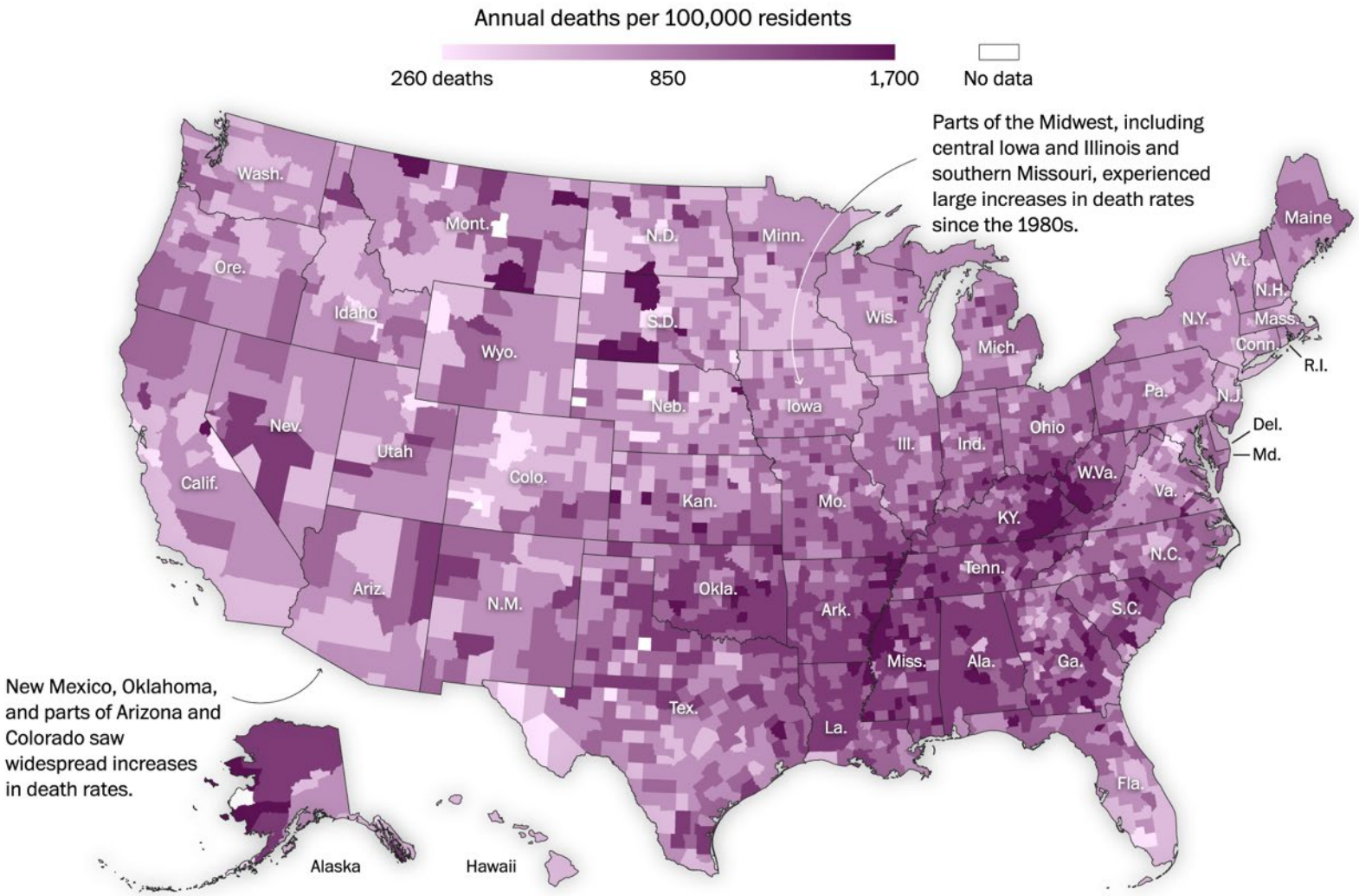
Graphic detail | Daily chart

America's university graduates live much longer than non-graduates

And the gap is widening

Where adults in their prime are dying

Deaths of adults 35 to 64 are concentrated in the nation's interior, including Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta and parts of the Midwest. In recent decades, death rates have been rising in the interior while declining in coastal regions.



Note: Age-adjusted death rates by counties for 2015-2019.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/interactive/2023/american-life-expectancy-dropping/

https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2023/10/02/takeaways-us-life-expectancy-crisis/

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As Healthcare Becomes Increasingly Out Of Reach

44% Americans

Have **skipped/delayed care** in the past two years, with 40% saying the reason was **concern about cost**

51% Americans

Couldn't pay off an unexpected **$5,000** health care out-of-pocket expense

Worries Extend Into Retirement Considerations

66% Americans

Are **terrified of what healthcare costs** may do to their retirement plans

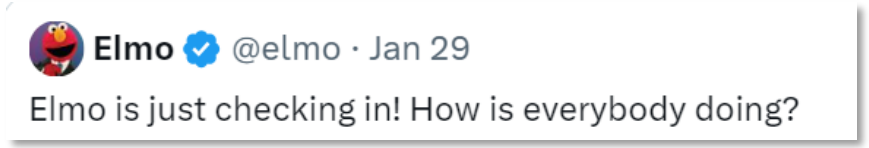
69% Americans with Chronic Conditions

Don't have a financial plan **on how to pay** for healthcare costs in retirement

MILKEN INSTITUTE | The Harris Poll | AAPA | Nationwide

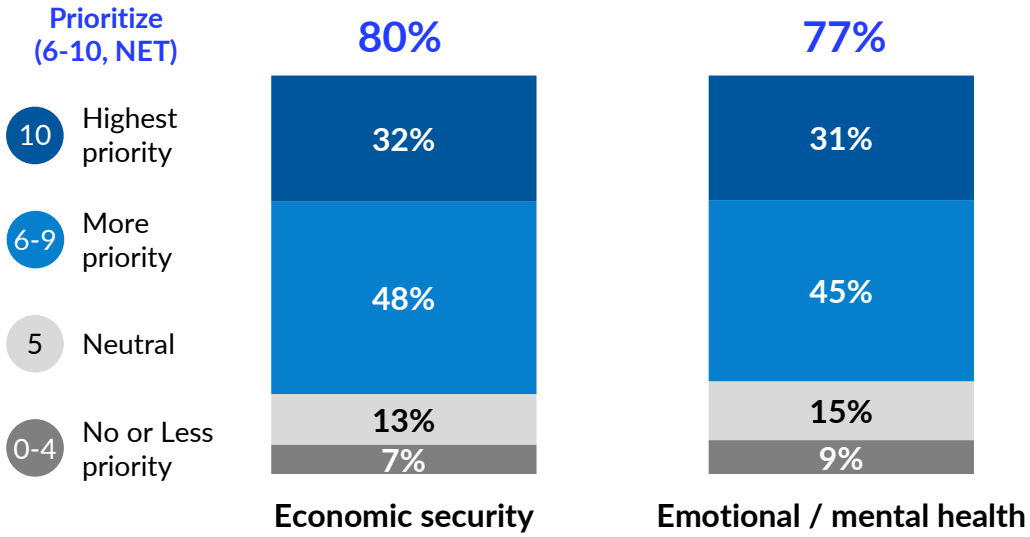
Source: AAPA-Harris Poll (February/March 2023; n=2,519; U.S.); Nationwide-Harris Poll (August/September 2023; n=1,260; U.S.);

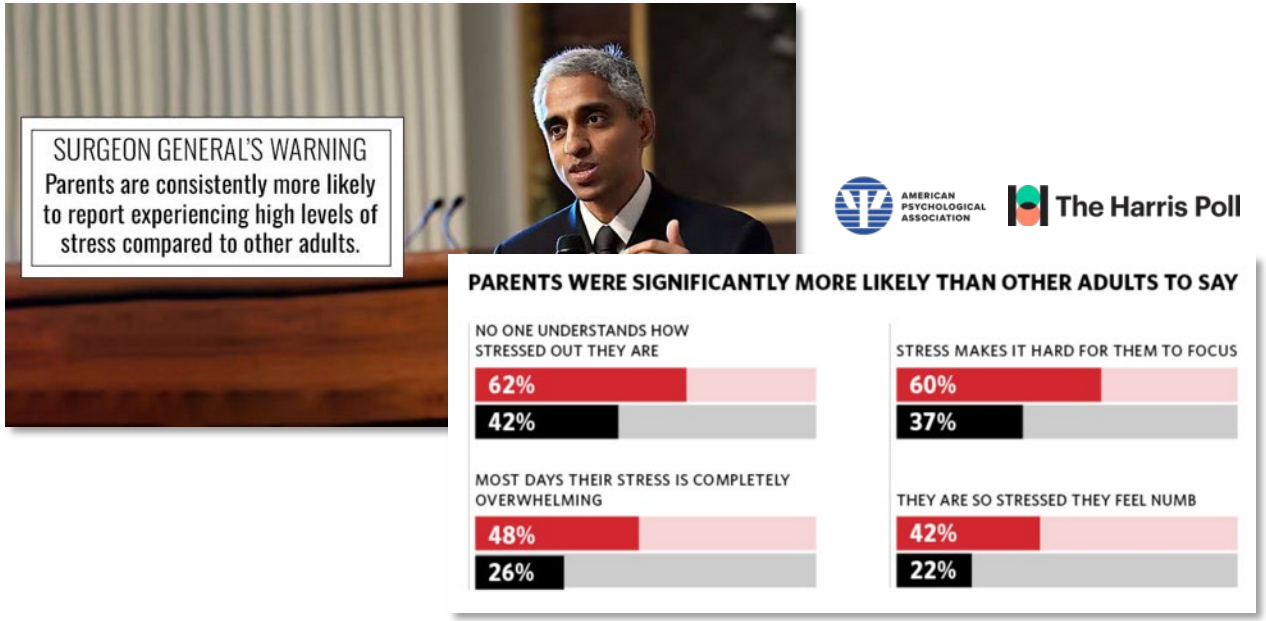
How Americans Feel About Their Health Today



To best solve issues affecting the well-being of future generations in the US, what specific areas should we prioritize?

Importance of investing in…





66% Americans

Agree, "I have to be responsible for my health because **no one else seems to care**"

(Gen Z: 56%, MLS: 77%, Gen X: 67%, Boomers: 63%)

52% Americans

Say following social media health and wellness trends **is more accessible** than trying to connect with medical professionals

(Gen Z: 54%, MLS: 62%, Gen X: 55%, Boomers: 38%)

MILKEN INSTITUTE · The Harris Poll · SESAME WORKSHOP

Source: Sesame Workshop-Harris Poll (May 2024; n=2,012; U.S.); APA-Harris Poll (August 2023; n=3,185; U.S.); The Harris Poll-Milken Institute FHS Collaboration (November 2024; n=2106; U.S.);

This Issue | Views 186,252 | Citations 39 | Altmetric 1153 | Comments 38

Viewpoint

FREE

January 30, 2023

Salve Lucrum: The Existential Threat of Greed in US Health Care

Donald M. Berwick, MD, MPP[1]

» Author Affiliations | Article Information

JAMA. 2023;329(8):629-630. doi:10.1001/jama.2023.0846

The deep pockets of health-harming industries

Lancet Diabetes Endocrinol 2024

Published Online
July 9, 2024
https://doi.org/10.1016/
S2213-8587(24)00196-7

Health care in the USA: money has become the mission

Adam Gaffney, Steffie Woolhandler, David U Himmelstein, Danny McCormick

www.thelancet.com **Published online October 21, 2025 https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(25)01669-1**

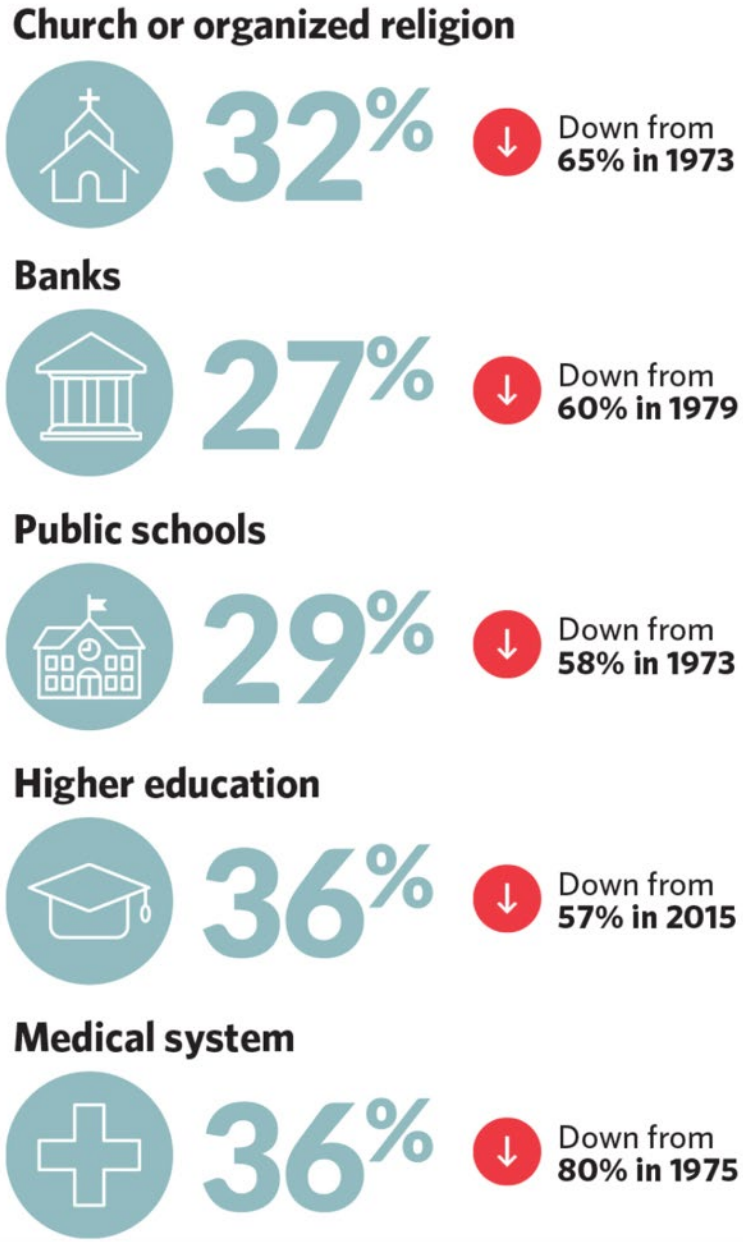
MEDICINE AND SOCIETY

The Financialization of Health in the United States

Authors: Joseph Dov Bruch, Ph.D., Victor Roy, M.D., Ph.D., and Colleen M. Grogan, Ph.D. Author Info & Affiliations

Published January 10, 2024 | N Engl J Med 2024;390:178-182 | DOI: 10.1056/NEJMms2308188 | VOL. 390 NO. 2

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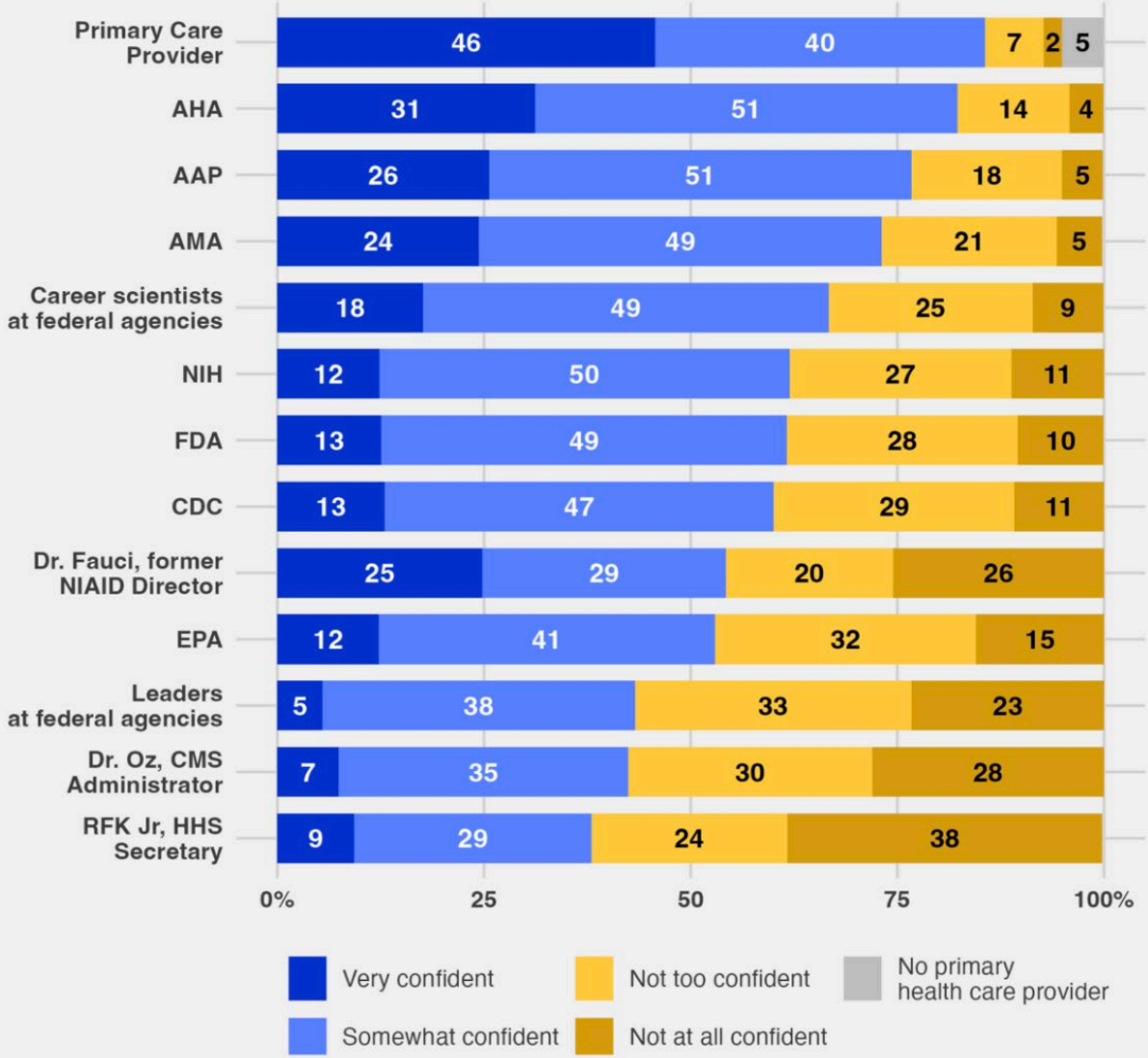
A DECLINE IN TRUST ACROSS AN ARRAY OF INSTITUTIONS

Gallup regularly surveys Americans on their trust in a range of institutions, and most have shown steep declines. U.S. adults who said in 2024 they had a great deal or quite a lot of trust in:

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Confidence in Custodians of Public Health

How confident, if at all, are you that _____ is providing* the public with trustworthy information about matters concerning public health**?



*For Dr. Fauci, former NIAID Director, the question said 'provided' instead of 'is providing' since he is a former federal government official.
**The EPA item asked about 'matters concerning the effects of climate change on public health'.
Source: Annenberg Science and Public Health (ASAPH) Survey Feb. 2026, N=1650, MOE=+/-3.5%
©2026 Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania

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A Community of Shared Standards

“Doctors . . . **claim authority,** Not as individuals, but **as members of a community that has objectively validated their competence.**

The professional offers judgments and advice, not as a personal act based on privately revealed or idiosyncratic criteria, but as a representative of **a community of shared standards.**”

Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine,* 1982 (p. 12):

The New York Times

A.I. Is Making Doctors Answer a Question: What Are They Really Good For?

Many physicians find chatbots threatening, but that doesn't mean they're giving up on medicine.

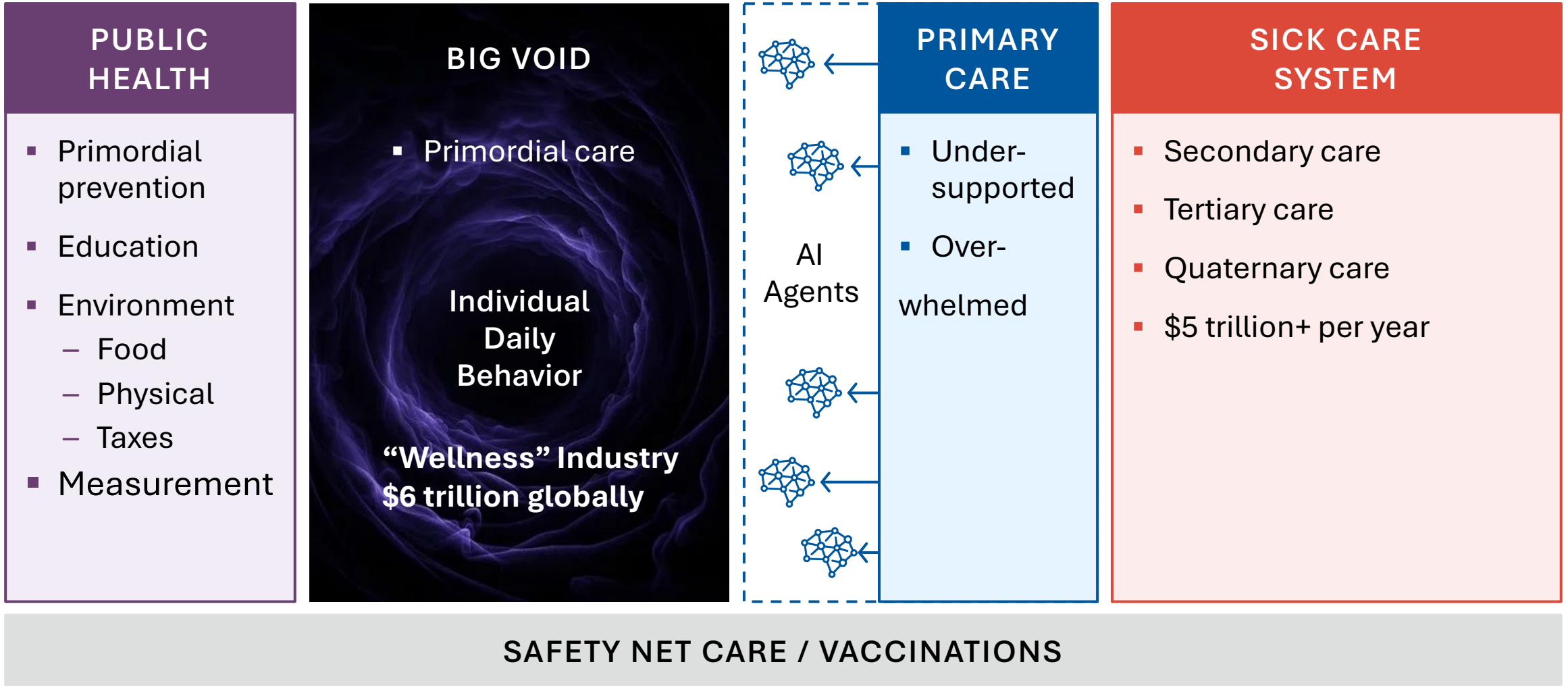


By Gina Kolata

Feb. 9, 2026



One View of the “Health System”



VIEWPOINT

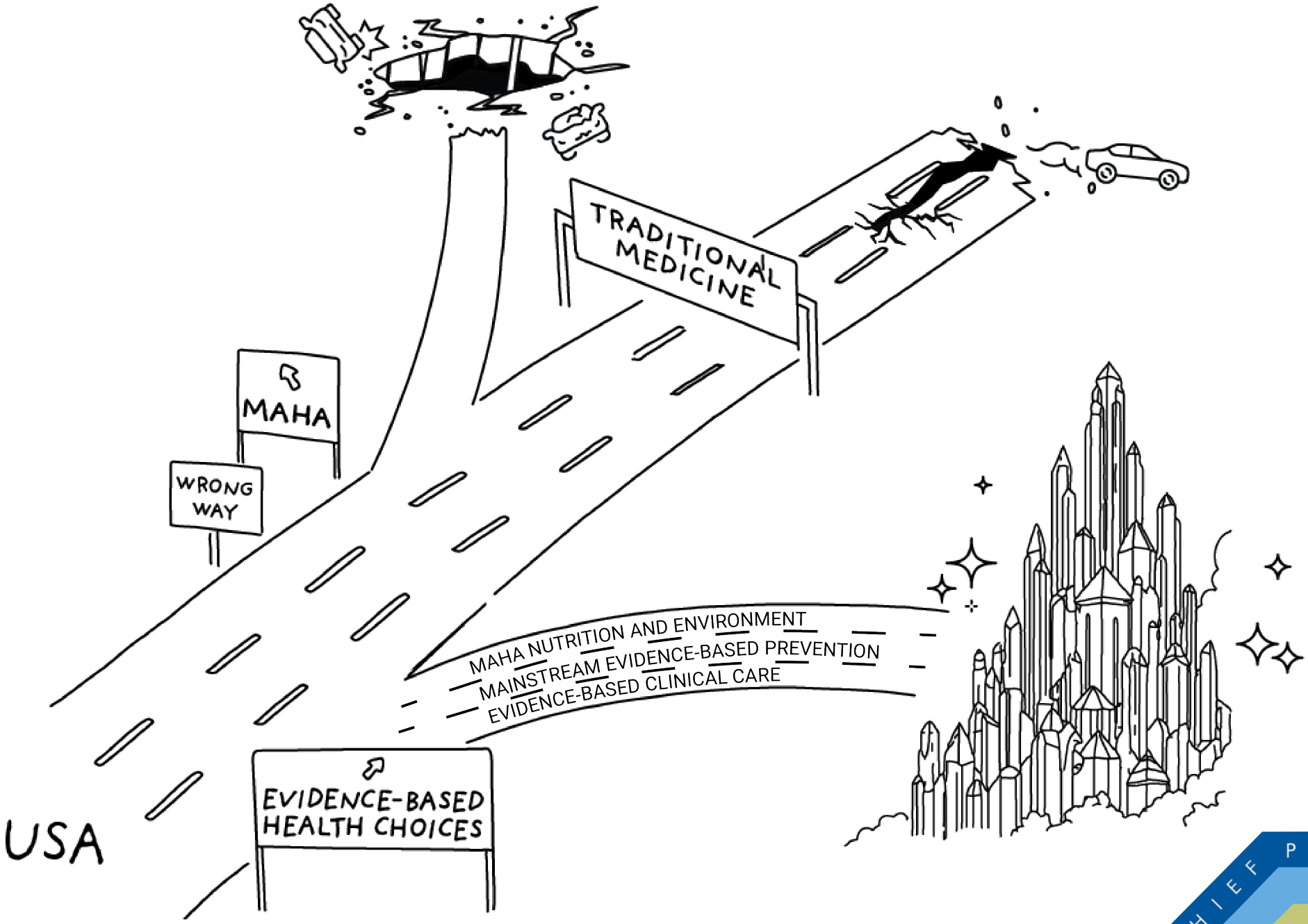
Primordial Care—The Space in Between

Beverly G. Tchang, MD

Table. Comparison of Primordial Prevention, Primary Care, and Primordial Care[a]

Concept	Definition	Level of operation	Institution or care provider	Recipient	Examples
Primordial prevention	Public health strategies aimed at preventing the emergence of risk factors for incident or worsening disease	Population, medical	Governments, public health agencies, community organizations	General populations or groups at elevated risk	Tobacco control policies, urban planning to encourage physical activity, school nutrition programs
Primary care	The first point of contact within the formal health care system; provides integrated, coordinated, comprehensive, continuous, and accessible health services to address personal health needs	Individual, medical	Physicians, advanced practice providers	Individuals seeking preventive care, diagnosis, or treatment	Health maintenance visits, chronic disease management, immunizations, specialist referrals
Primordial care	A pre–health care stage in which individuals engage with health concerns outside the formal health care system through self-directed online inquiries, peer consultations, or consumer health tools before seeking medical evaluation	Individual, extramedical	Individual	Individuals with or without symptoms who are seeking optimization or early interpretation of health concerns	Symptom searches, consumer laboratory testing, wearable data tracking, peer or social media advice, supplements

[a] This table was edited with the assistance of ChatGPT-4 (OpenAI) on September 2, 2025 (no browser extensions were used). The author takes responsibility for the integrity of the content generated.



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HEALTH - MAHA EXIT
MEASLES
RAW MILK
SWIMMING HOLE
Bird FLU
BEEF TALLOW
UNPROVEN SUPPLEMENTS
mRNA
Human Flu & COVID


HEALTH - EBM EXIT
THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD
RELEVANT EDUCATION
EFFECTIVE MEDICINE
THE LANCET
PEER REVIEW
VACCINES
REAL-WORLD EVIDENCE
HIV MEDICINE
mRNA
SNAP
USAID
SUPPORT TO FEED THE HUNGRY

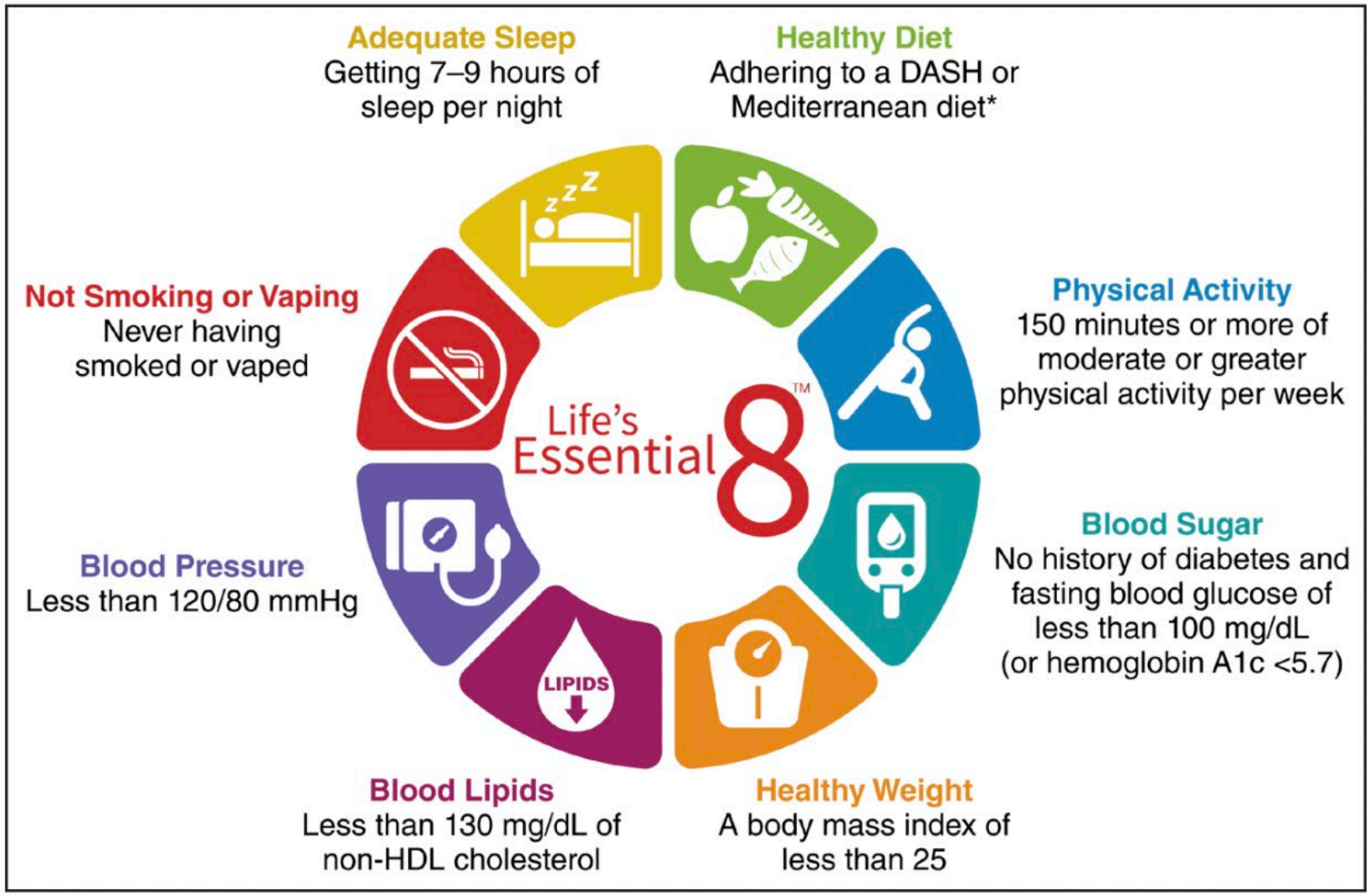


Figure 1. Life's Essential 8.

Life's Essential 8 are the key measures for improving and maintaining cardiovascular health as defined by the American Heart Association. They consist of 4 health behaviors (physical activity, healthy diet, adequate sleep, not smoking or vaping) and 4 health factors (blood pressure, blood lipids, healthy weight, and blood sugar). DASH indicates Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. *Healthy Eating Index score <50.





https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZ7Z5LTJWHM


The wealth gap is a health gap.
hims





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DO-IT-YOURSELF MEDICINE?

In January 2025, after the social-media giant Meta decided to loosen its approach to content moderation, Joe Rogan interviewed Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg on his podcast.[14] Although the episode generated many viral clips, the part I found most memorable involved the two men discussing their orthopedic woes. After Zuckerberg describes the patellar tendon grafting he underwent a year earlier, Rogan asks whether he incorporated peptides into his recovery. When Zuckerberg says no, Rogan jokes, "Do you hate healing?"

"I don't know," Zuckerberg says sheepishly. "I just took my doctor's advice on it."

"Don't do that anymore," Rogan says. "I mean, next time, there's other people to talk to."

THE PRIMARY CARE PUZZLE

Is a Long-Simmering Crisis Boiling Over? U.S. Primary Care Today

Lisa Rosenbaum, M.D.[1]

N ENGL J MED 393;15 NEJM.ORG OCTOBER 16, 2025

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STAT Reporting from the frontiers of health and medicine

OPINION | FIRST OPINION

How to disrupt the health misinformation business model

People need access to reliable evidence at the moment they encounter a questionable health claim



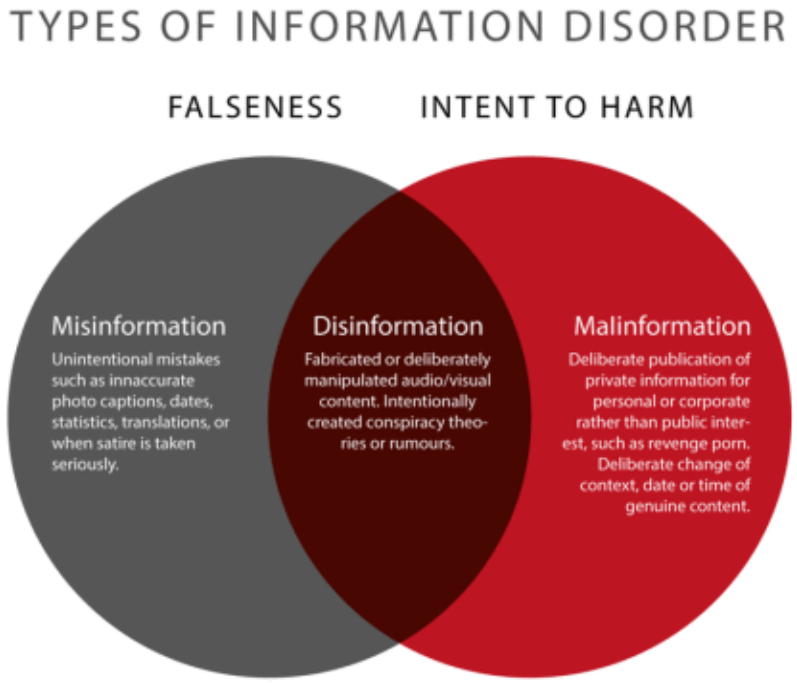
By Paul Martin Jensen and Avi Tuschman Aug. 13, 2026

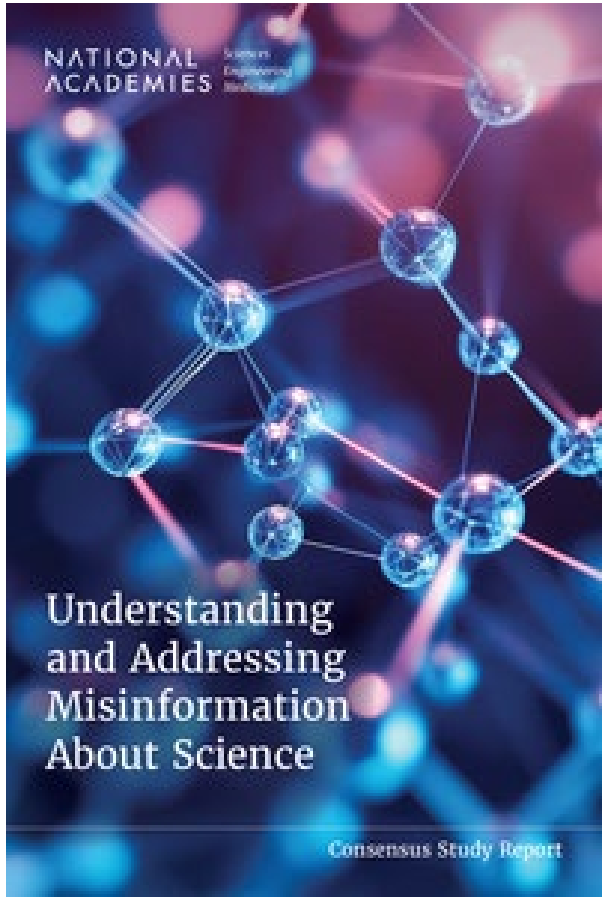
Jensen is co-founder of Etalia and advises health executives and researchers in strategic communication. Tuschman is a Stanford StartX entrepreneur and founder and CEO of Crickit.ai.

Amass online followers by stoking fears of mainstream medicine. Brand yourself as the underdog battling the establishment. Build trust by appearing more human and vulnerable than a conventional clinician, scientist, or pharmaceutical brand. Then refer your followers to an online store selling supplements, "cleanses," or coaching programs."

Varying Forms of Misinformation Carry Different Levels of Threat

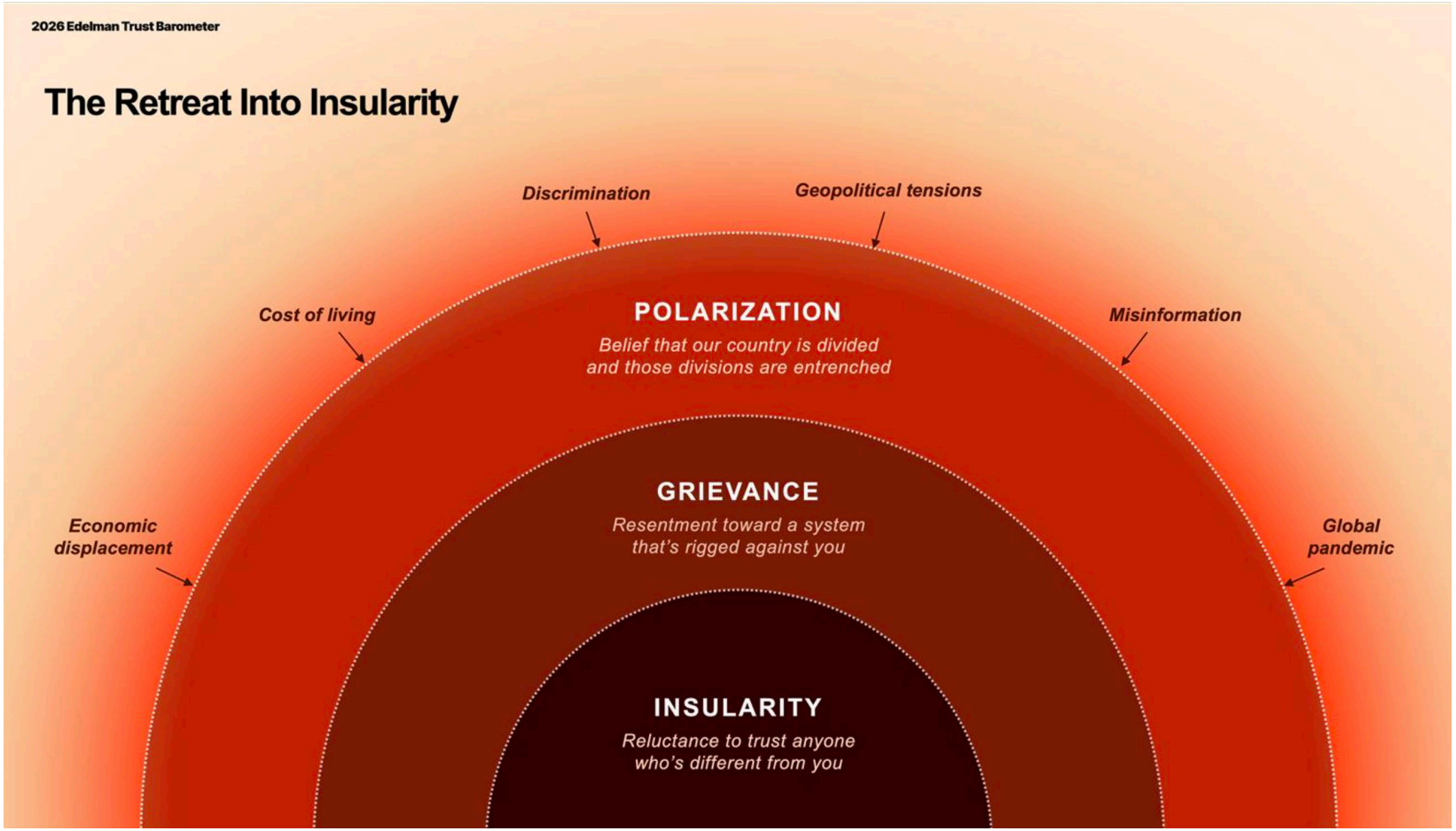
- "Disinformation," is intended to mislead and is disseminated with knowledge that those who succumb to it could be harmed
- "Malinformation" is which represents a purposeful effort to harm others directly by spreading incorrect information.





https://flowersforsocrates.com/2018/08/12/disinformation-misinformation-malinformation-involves-framing/

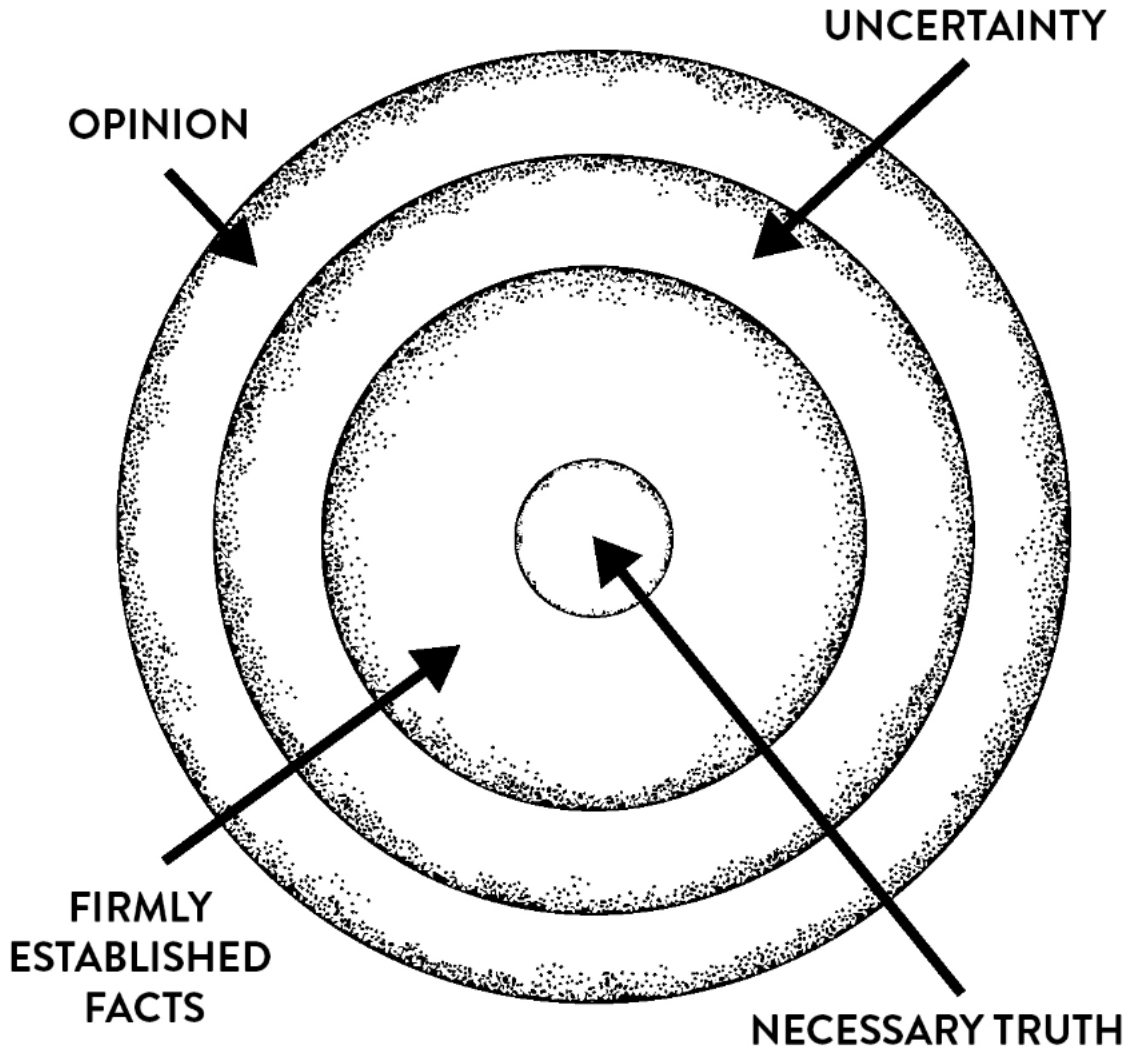
3 possible strategies: trust brokering, mingling and let it crash



The takeaway headline number this year: **70% of respondents** globally say they are hesitant or unwilling to trust someone who differs from them in values, information sources, or worldview.

Truth is a rare and expensive type of information

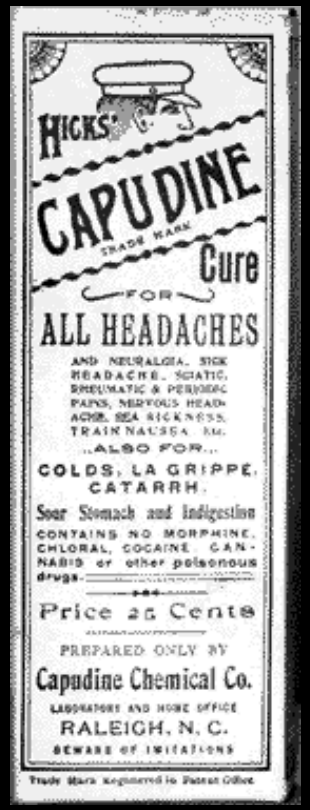
—Hirari



Truth is behind the paywall

Lies are free

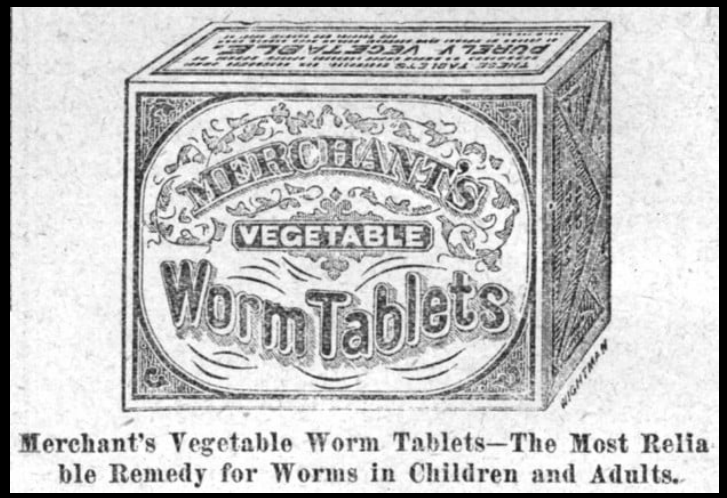
Francis S Collins; The Road to Wisdom 2024

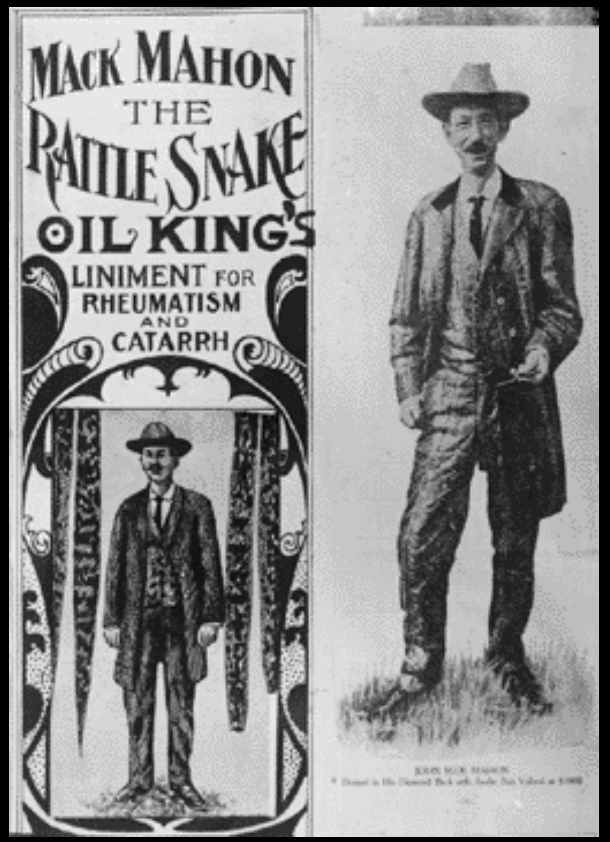

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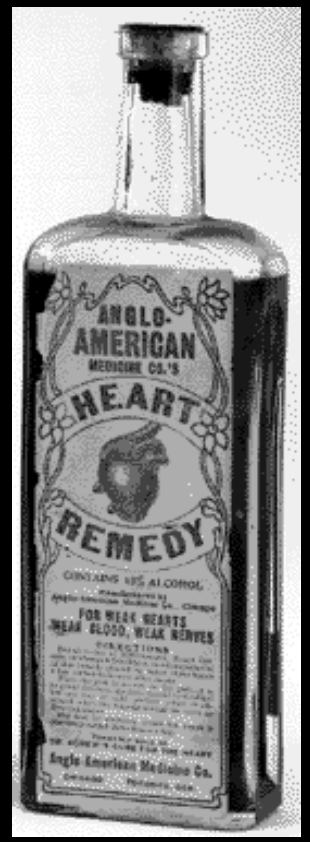

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EMPRESS EUGENIE
Complexion Cream


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PEAK
BULLSHIT

For Expertise to Matter, Nonpartisan Institutions Need New Communications Strategies

To avoid irrelevance when they are needed most, experts and nonpartisan analysts must rethink not just their channels of communication but also their theory of influence.

By Renée DiResta and Rachel Kleinfeld

Published on September 10, 2025

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Public intellectuals and experts who publish only through legacy media outlets are engaging a narrow, affluent, and educated demographic that is increasingly talking to itself.

> The requirements to succeed on new media platforms are almost precisely the opposite of what successful experts have trained themselves to do: maintain an institutional tone of formal detachment and stay ruthlessly on-message at all times.

Purpose

Coethia, a public benefit corporation,
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to foster **a connected health science ecosystem**
that **listens to** the public and **communicates clearly**.