

Large Majorities of U.S. Adults Support Easy – and Free – Online Access to Federally-Funded Research Findings on Health Issues and Other Topics

Large majorities of U.S. adults agree that the results of federally funded research on health issues and other topics should be readily available (for free, and online) to doctors and the general public. Furthermore, availability of this type of research data on the Internet—and at no charge—will help those who cope with chronic illnesses or disabilities to get the latest information that can assist them.

These are some of the results of a Harris Poll of 2,501 U.S. adults surveyed online by Harris Interactive between April 11 and 17, 2006.

Specifically, the survey found large majorities who agree with how the results should be accessed:

- 83% of adults say they strongly (61%) or somewhat (22%) agree that since this research is paid for by tax dollars, the results should be easily available (free and online) to doctors.
- 82% of adults say they strongly (57%) or somewhat (25%) agree that if tax dollars pay for scientific research, people should have free access to the results of the research on the Internet.
- 81% of adults say they strongly (49%) or somewhat (32%) agree that having this information easily available (for free and online) will help those living with a chronic illness or disability get the latest information which will assist people coping with that chronic illness or disability.

Six in 10 (62%) adults agree that if these research results are easily available (for free and online), it will help speed up finding potential cures for diseases (31% strongly agree, 31% agree). Another 10 percent disagree and almost three in 10 (28%) have no opinion.

Finally, just over half (53%) of adults disagree that “regardless of who pays for the research, it’s better for scientific journals to publish the information and make it available by paid subscription.” About one in six adults (17%) say they strongly or somewhat agree with that and 30 percent are split and neither agree nor disagree.

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TABLE 1
Access To Scientific Research

“Let’s talk a little now about scientific research that is paid for by tax dollars. The federal government uses tax dollars to pay for research studies on health issues and many other topics. Currently, taxpayers can see the results of this research by reading an article or a book that they either purchase or access through a library. Thinking about this type of scientific research, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?”

Base: All Adults

	Agree			Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree		
	Agree (NET)	Strongly	Some-what		Disagree (NET)	Some-what	Strongly
Since this research is paid for by tax dollars, the results should be easily available (free and online) to doctors.	83	61	22	13	3	2	2
If tax dollars pay for scientific research, people should have free access to the results of the research on the Internet.	82	57	25	14	4	2	2
Having this information easily available (for free and online) will help those living with a chronic illness or disability get the latest information which will assist people coping with that chronic illness or disability.	81	49	32	15	5	3	2
If these research results are easily available (for free and online), it will help speed up finding potential cures for diseases.	62	31	31	28	10	7	3
Regardless of who pays for the research, it’s better for scientific journals to publish the information and make it available by paid subscription.	17	7	10	30	53	26	26

Note: Results may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States between April 11 and 17, 2006 among 2,501 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All surveys are subject to several sources of error. These include: sampling error (because only a sample of a population is interviewed); measurement error due to question wording and/or question order, deliberately or unintentionally inaccurate responses, nonresponse (including refusals), interviewer effects (when live interviewers are used) and weighting.

With one exception (sampling error) the magnitude of the errors that result cannot be estimated. There is, therefore, no way to calculate a finite "margin of error" for any survey and the use of these words should be avoided.

With pure probability samples, with 100 percent response rates, it is possible to calculate the probability that the sampling error (but not other sources of error) is not greater than some number. With a pure probability sample of 2,501 adults one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 2 percentage points. However that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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