
Chartpack



HARVARD
SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health

Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views

December 2002

Methodology

The Harvard School of Public Health and Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation's *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views* is based on two surveys, one of physicians and one of the public, both designed and analyzed by a team of researchers from Harvard School of Public Health and the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Physician Survey

The fieldwork for the survey of physicians was conducted April 24-July 22, 2002 by mail or online with 831 physicians by Harris Interactive, Inc. The sample was drawn from the national list of physicians provided by Medical Marketing Service, Inc. This list includes both American Medical Association members and non-members and is updated weekly. The margin of sampling error was +/-3.5 percentage points.

General Public Sample

The survey of the public was conducted by telephone April 11- June 11, 2002 with a nationally representative sample of 1,207 adults 18 years and older. The fieldwork for the survey was conducted in Spanish and English by ICR/International Communications Research. The margin of sampling error was +/-2.6 percentage points.

Please note that for both surveys sampling error may be larger for other subgroups and that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in these or any other public opinion poll.

Please note, percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

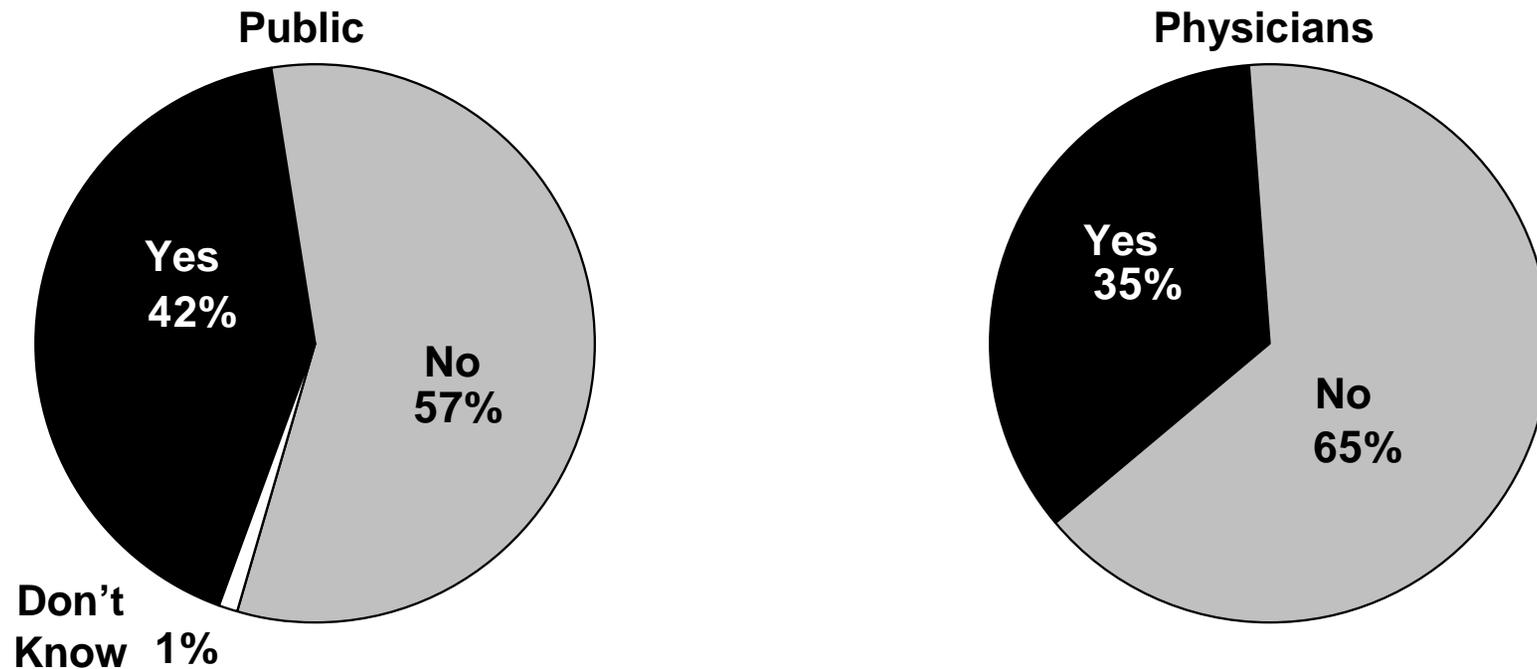
Copies of the survey topline, the chartpack based on these results, and New England Journal of Medicine article based on these findings are available online at www.kff.org or by calling the Foundation's publications request line at 1-800-656-4533 (publication #3304).

Section 1: Personal Experience with Serious Medical Errors

Chart 1

Personal Experience with Medical Errors

The percentage who said they have been personally involved in a situation where a preventable medical error was made in their own medical care or that of a family member?*



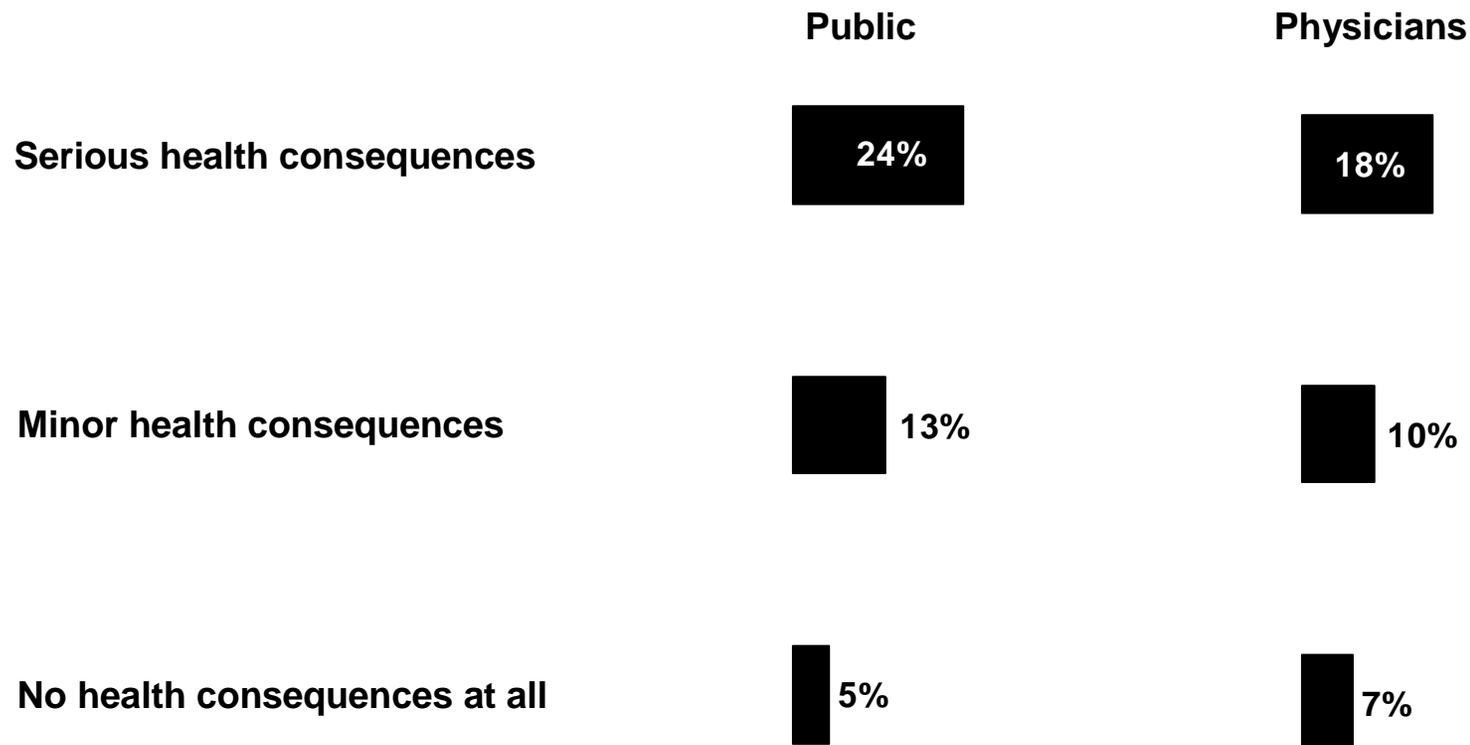
* Earlier in the survey the public and physicians were read the following to ensure all respondents were using a common definition of Medical Errors: Sometimes when people are ill and receive medical care, mistakes are made that result in serious harm, such as death, disability, or additional or prolonged treatment. These are called medical errors. Some of these errors are preventable, while others may not be.

Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 2

Health Consequences of Medical Errors

Among the general public and physicians, the percentage who experienced a medical error that resulted in...

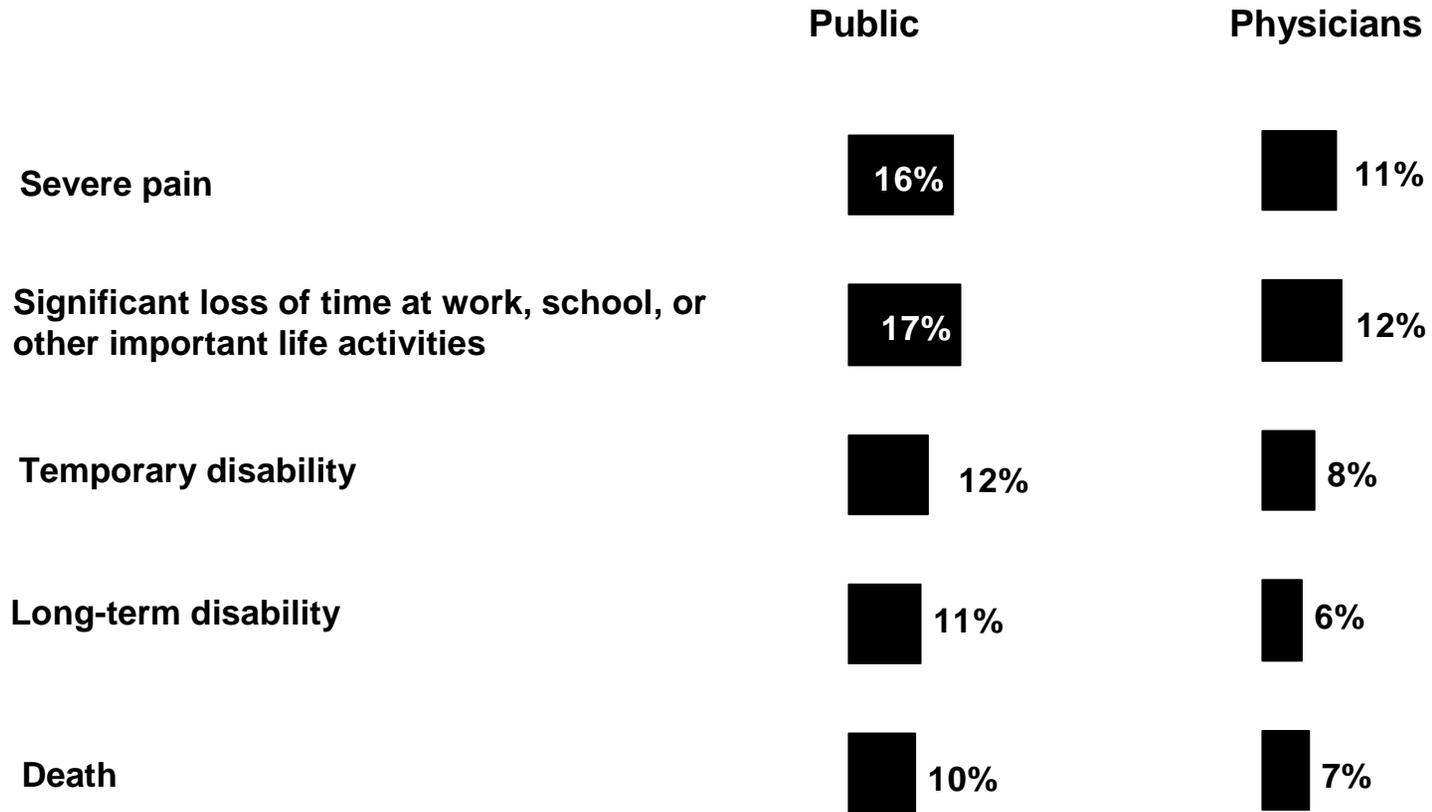


Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 3

Results of Medical Errors with Serious Health Consequences

Among the public and physicians, the percentage who have experienced serious health consequences due to a medical error which included...

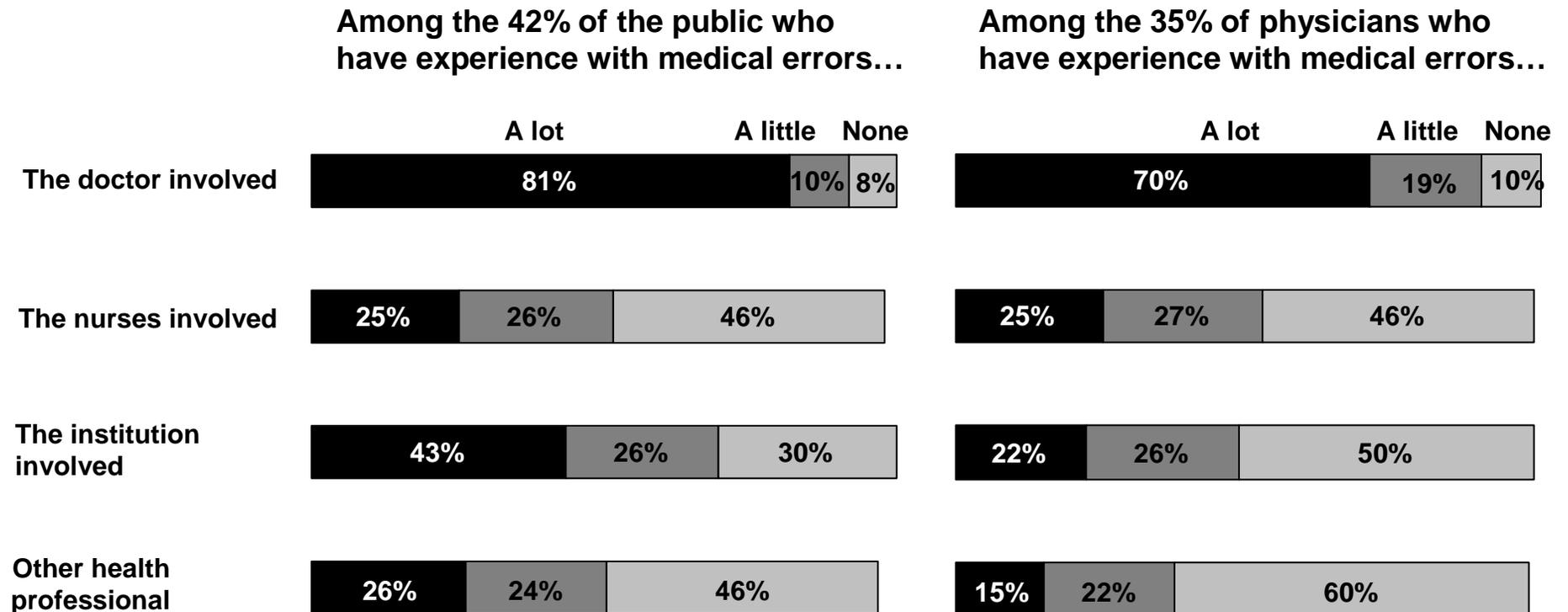


Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 4

Level of Responsibility for Medical Errors Among Health Care Professionals and Institutions

Among those who have had experiences with medical errors, how much responsibility do they place on each of the following...



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

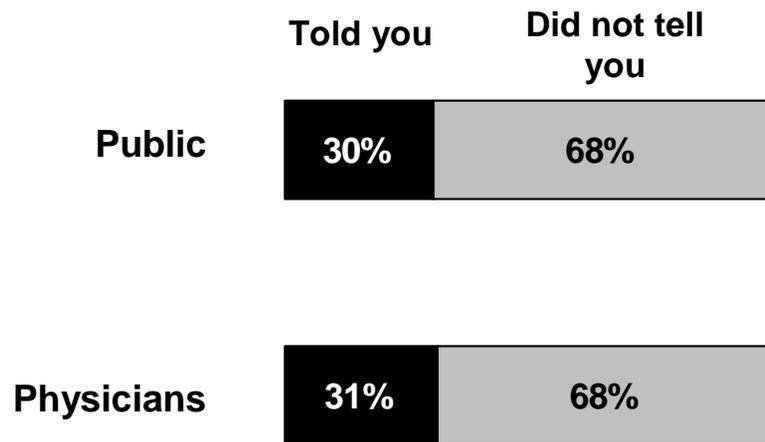
Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 5

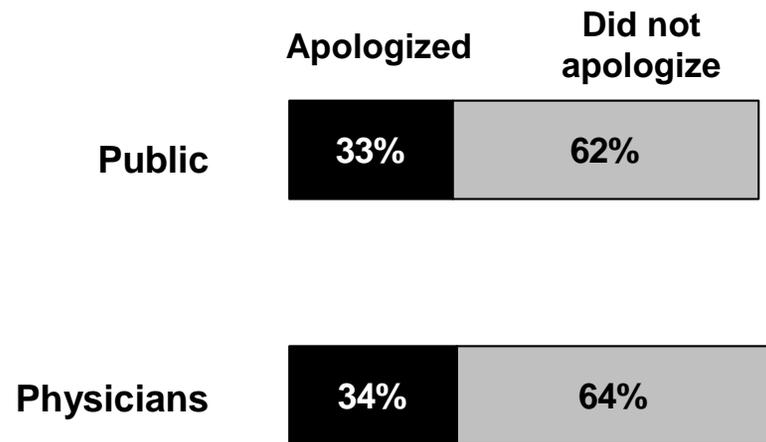
Reaction of Health Care Professional to Medical Error

Among the 42% of the public and the 35% of physicians who have had experience with medical errors, did the doctor or health professional involved ...

Tell you that a medical error had been made in your or your family member's treatment, or didn't they tell you?



Apologize to you or your family member for the medical error that was made, or didn't they apologize?



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 6

For Those Who Experience Medical Errors, What Proportion of These Errors Result in Lawsuits?

Among those who have experiences with medical errors, did they or their family member sue the health care professional for malpractice, or not?

	Of the 42% of the public that have experience with medical errors...	Of the 35% of physicians that have experience with medical errors...
Sued	6%	2%
Did Not Sue	93%	97%

Note: Don't know responses not shown.

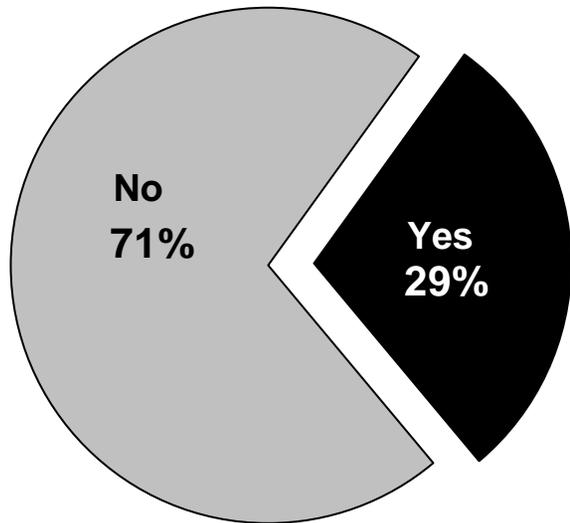
Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 7

Physicians Past Experience With Medical Errors and Likelihood That They Will Happen Again

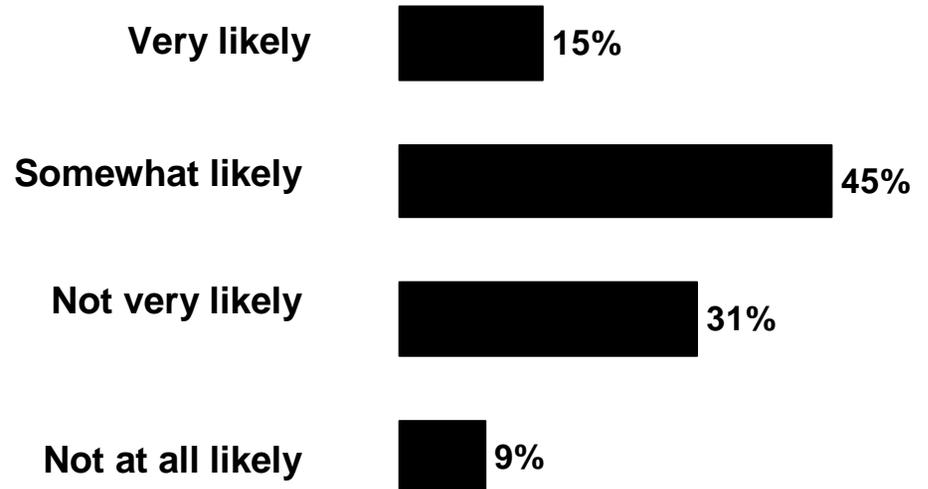
Among all physicians ...

During the past year in your role as a physician, have you seen a medical error that resulted in serious harm to a patient?



Among the 29% of physicians who have seen a medical error that resulted in serious harm ...

Thinking about the institution where this medical error occurred, how likely do you think it is that another error like this one will happen again in the next year?



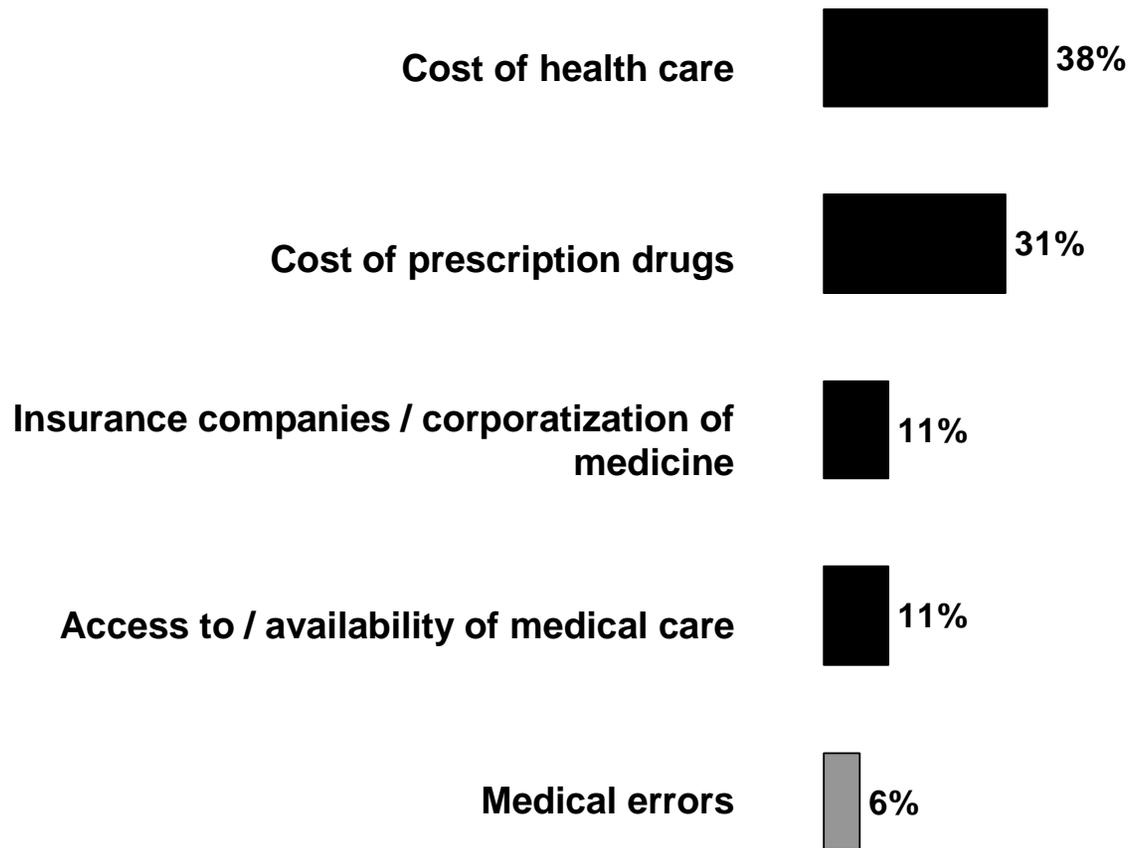
Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Section 2: Views About Serious Medical Errors

Chart 8

Two Main Problems Facing Health Care and Medicine in the United States According to the General Public

When asked to name the two main problems facing health care and medicine in the United States today, the percentage of the public who name the following ...

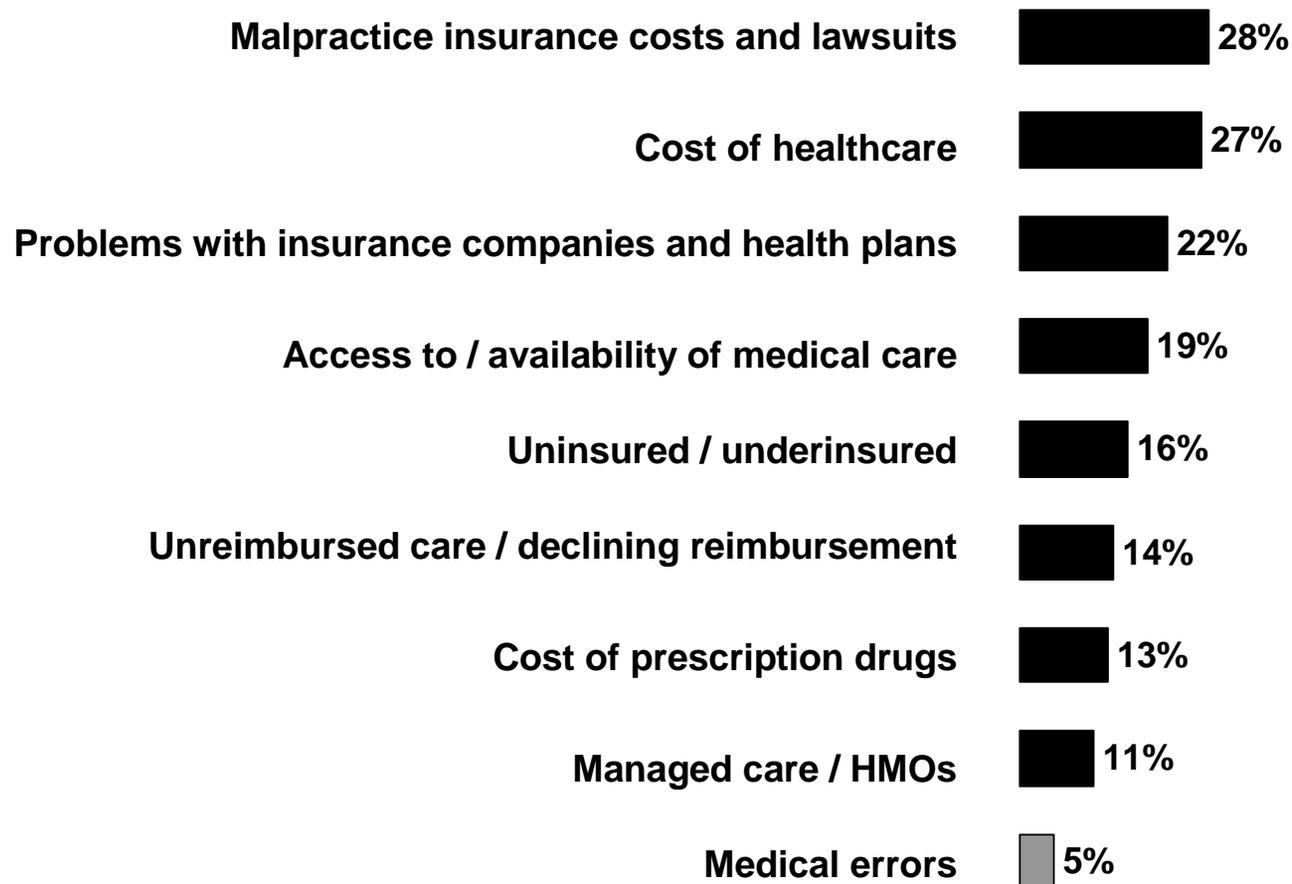


Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 9

Two Main Problems Facing Health Care and Medicine in the United States According to Physicians

When asked to name the two main problems facing health care and medicine in the United States today, the percentage of physicians who named the following ...

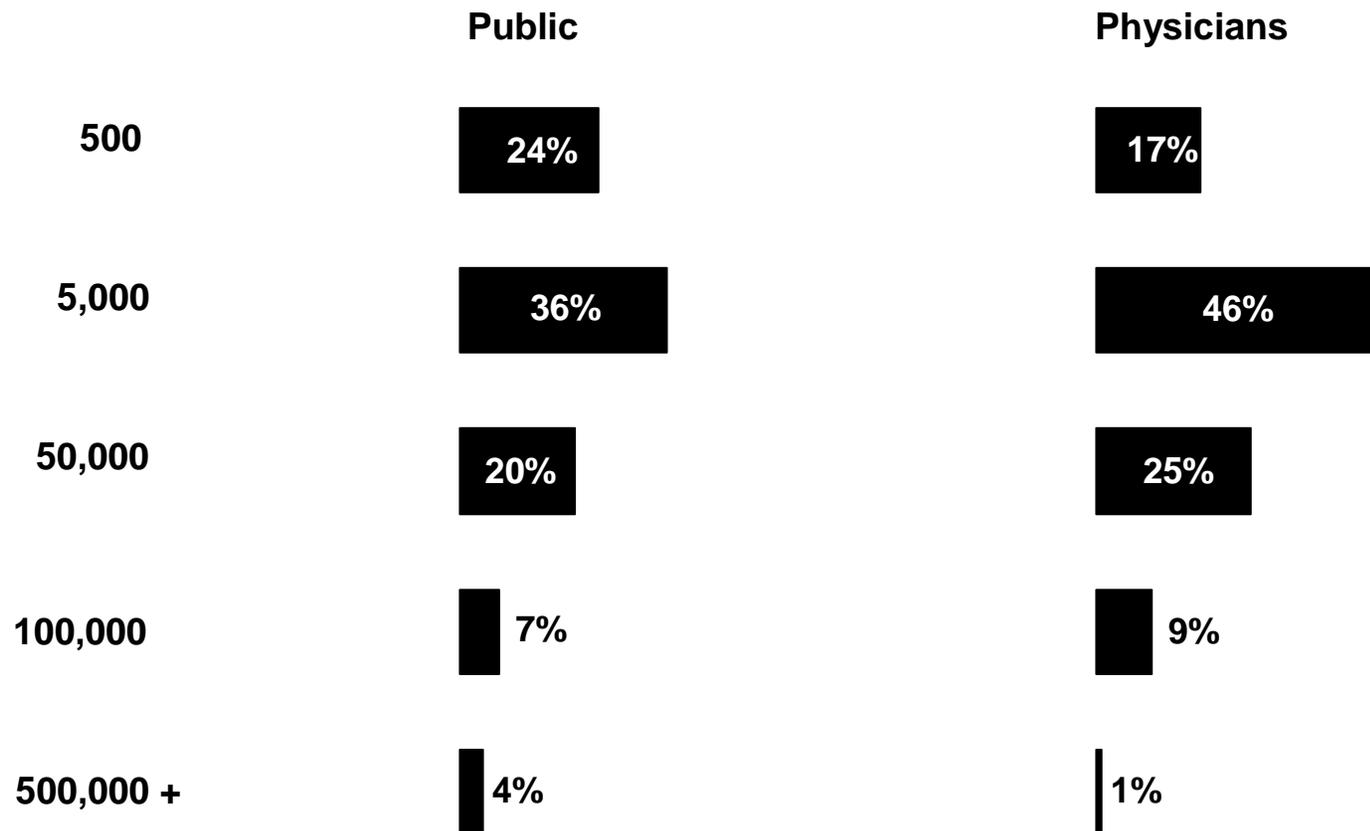


Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 10

Perceived Number of Deaths Due to Medical Errors

About how many Americans, do you think, die in hospitals each year as a result of a preventable medical error?



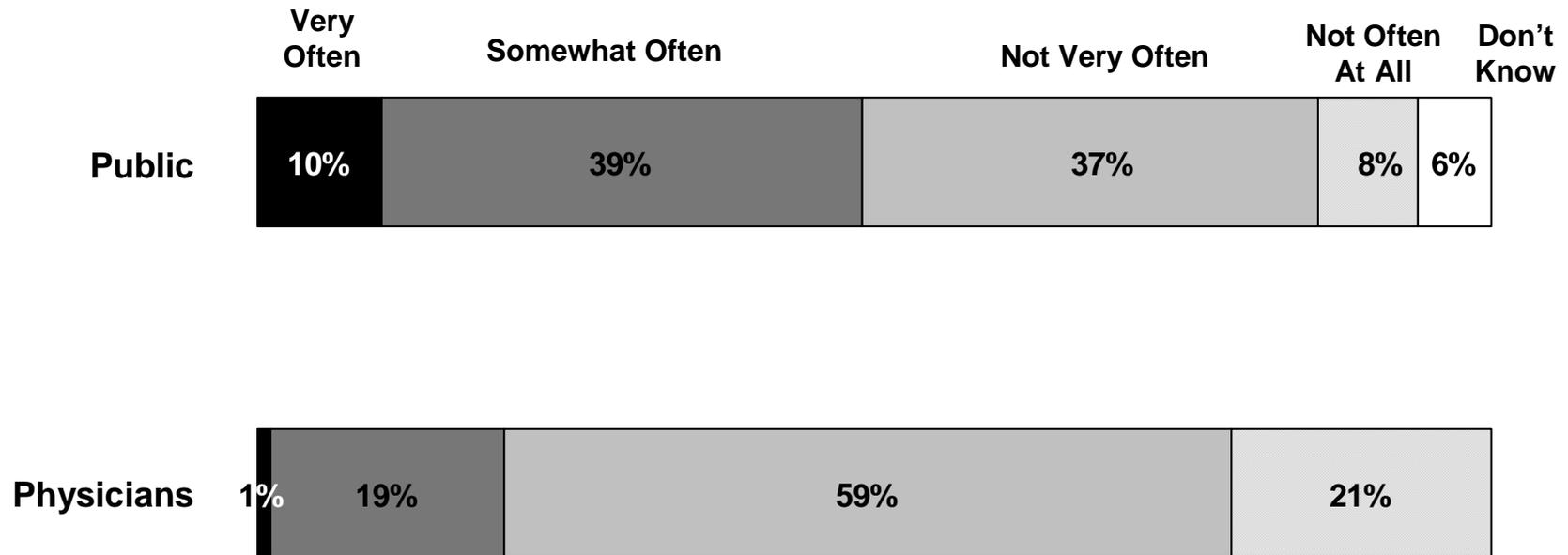
Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 11

Perceived Frequency of Preventable Medical Errors

When people seek help from a health professional, how often do you think preventable medical errors are made in their care?

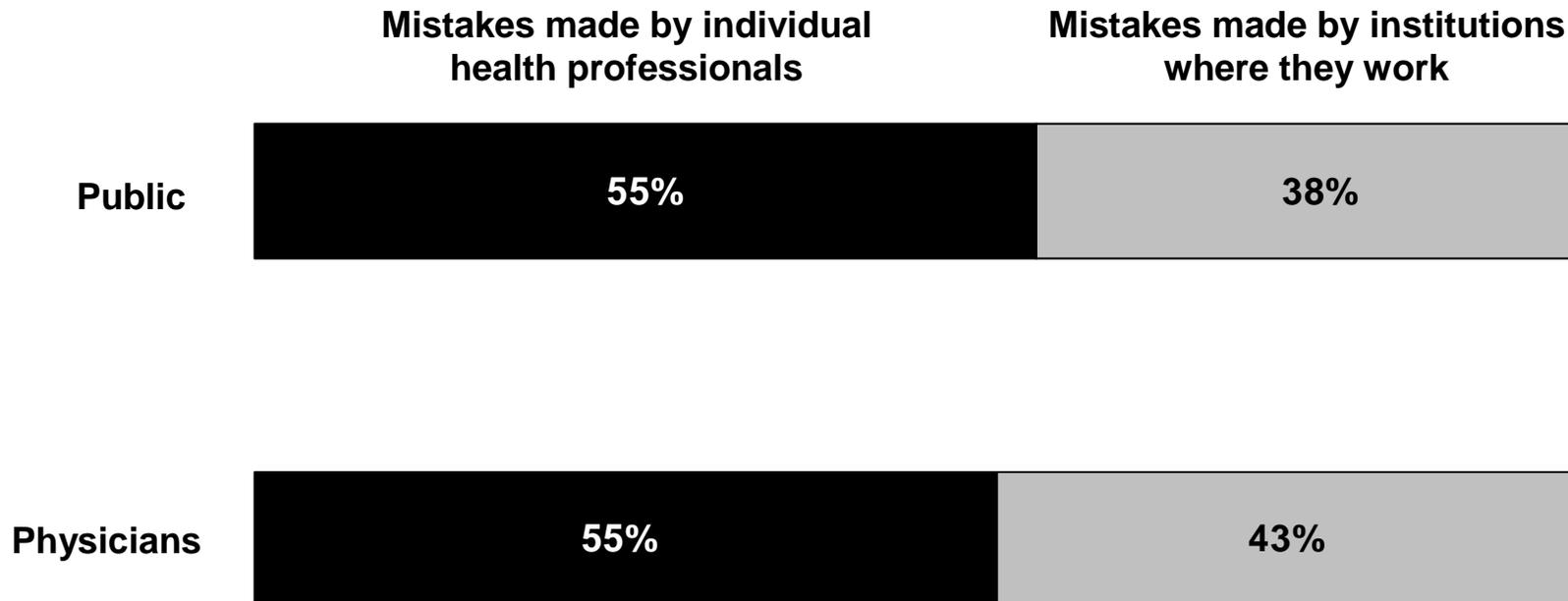


Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 12

Who is Responsible for Preventable Medical Errors?

Which of the following do you think is the more important cause of preventable medical errors that result in serious harm?



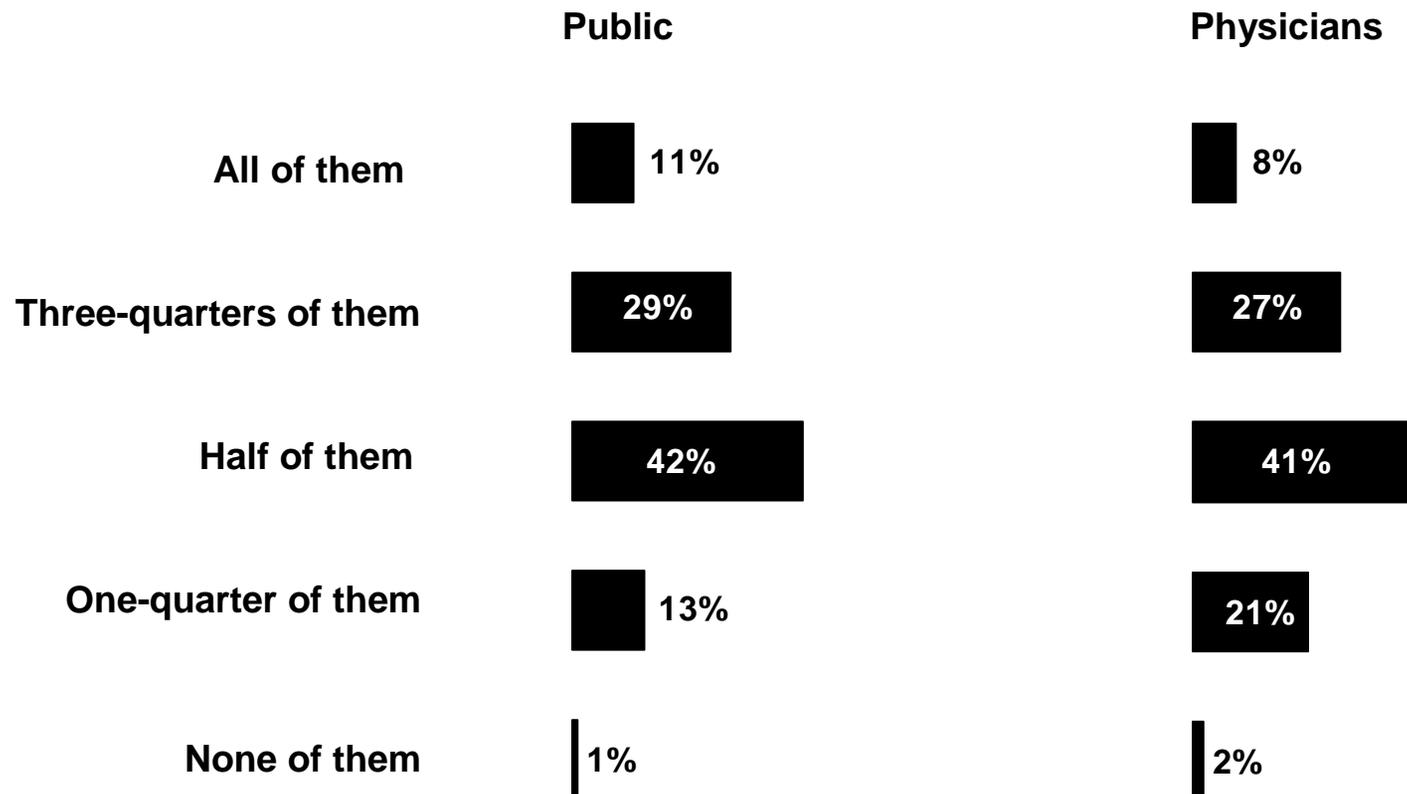
Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 13

Perceptions About Whether Deaths Due to Medical Error Are Preventable

The proportion of deaths due to medical error that respondents feel could be realistically prevented...



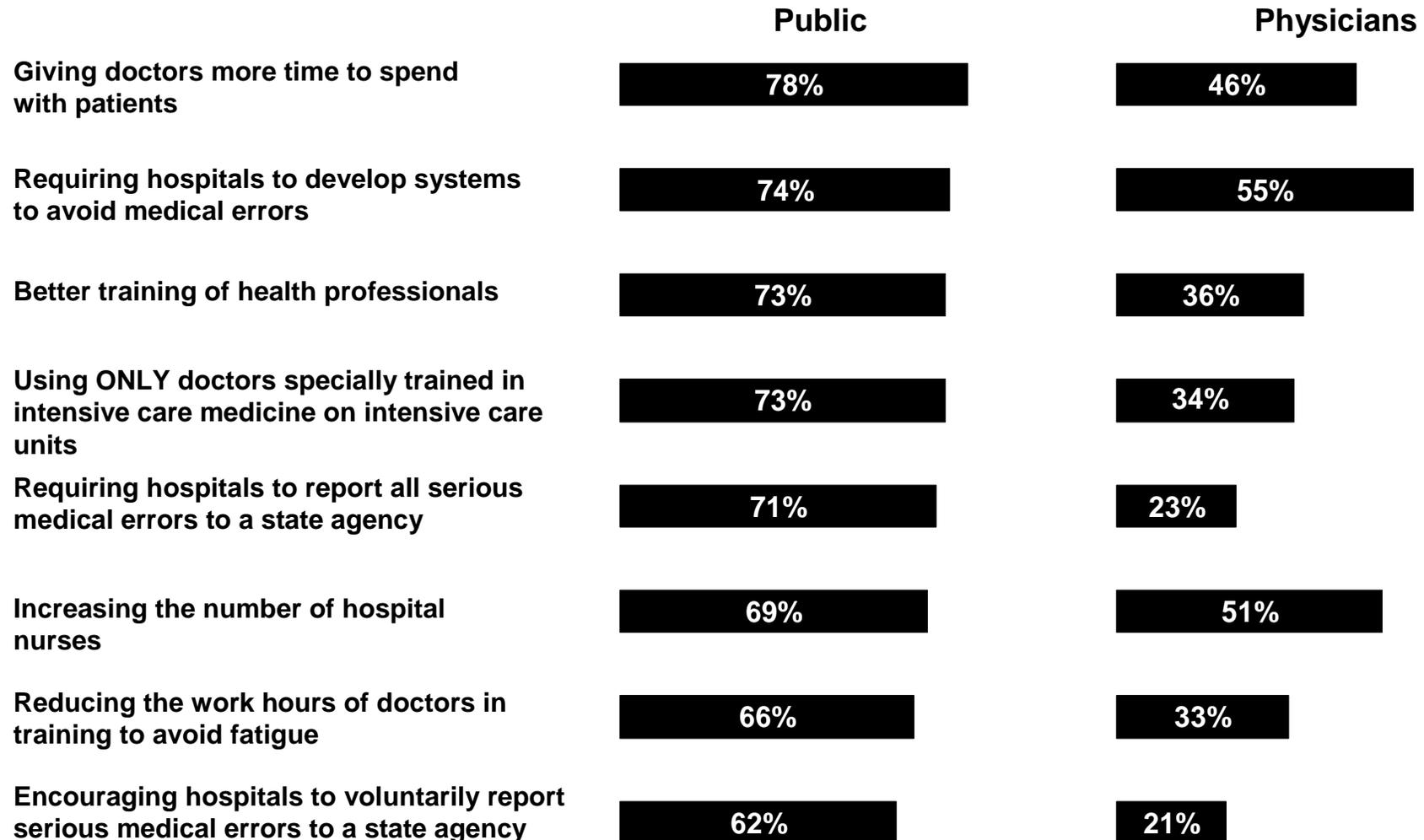
Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 14

Possible Solutions to Prevent Medical Errors

Percentage who feel each solution would be very effective in reducing preventable medical errors...

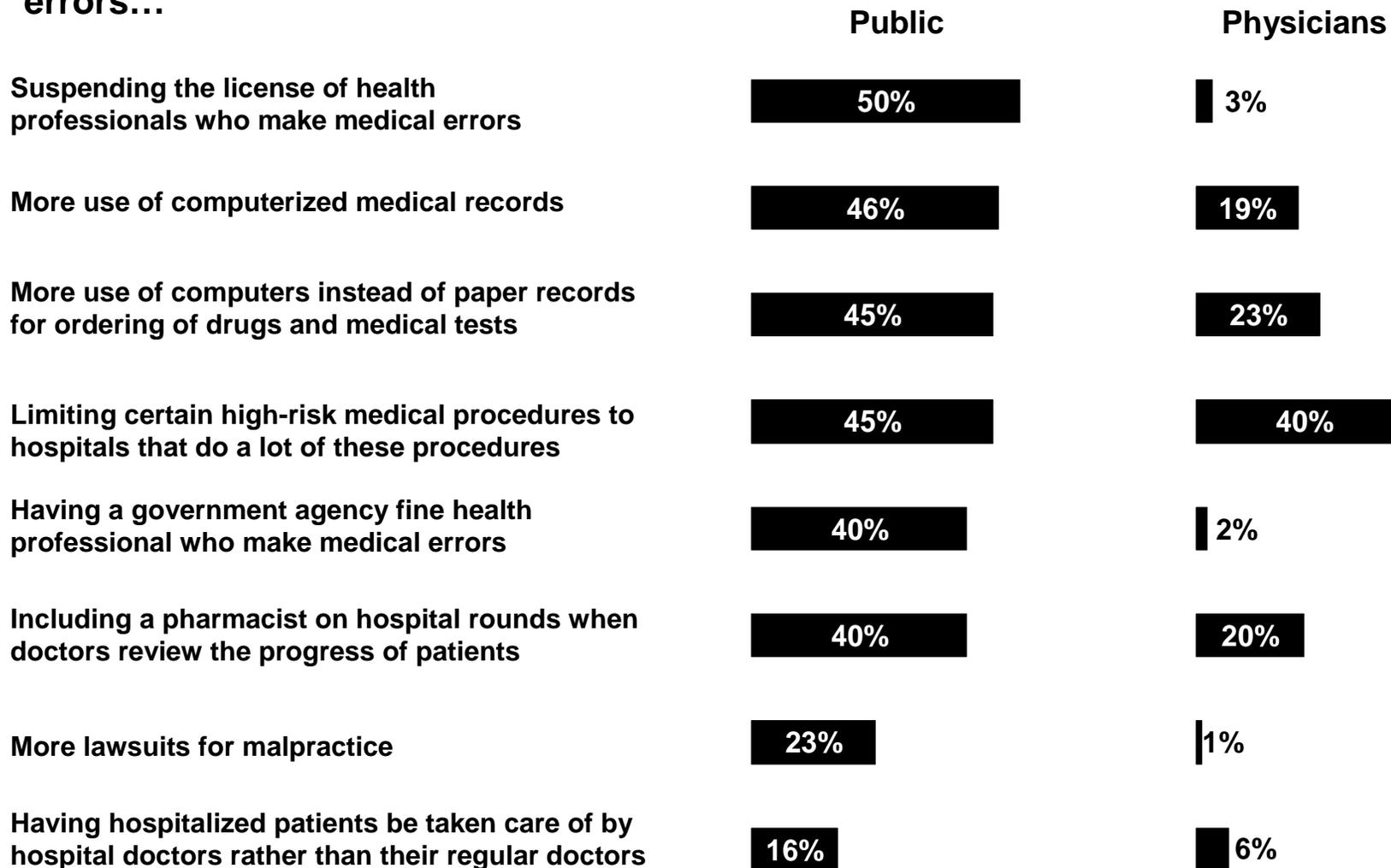


Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 15

Possible Solutions to Prevent Medical Errors, con't.

Percentage who feel each solution would be very effective in reducing preventable medical errors...

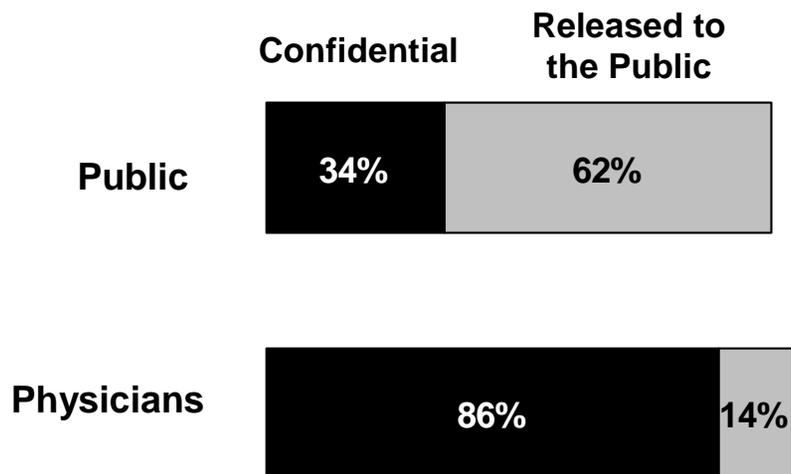


Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

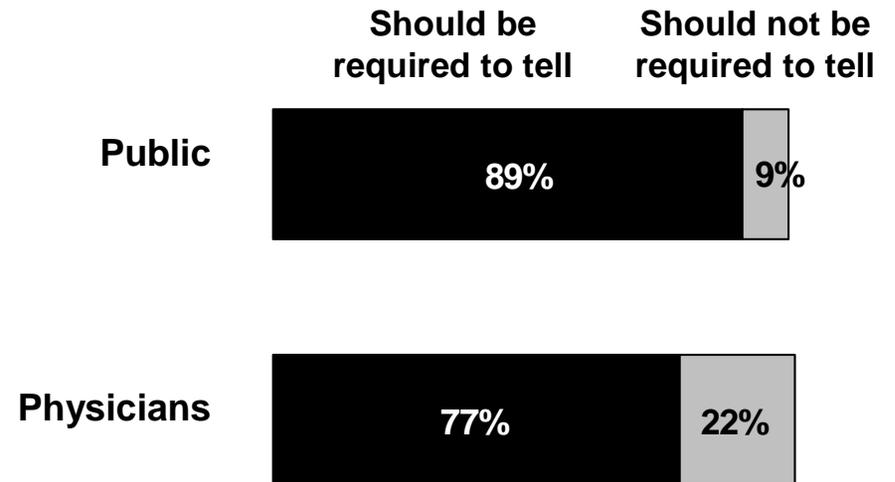
Chart 16

Reporting of Medical Errors

Should hospital reports of serious medical errors be confidential and only used to learn how to prevent future mistakes or should they also be released to the public?



Should physicians be required to tell patients if a preventable medical error resulting in serious harm is made in their care, or not?



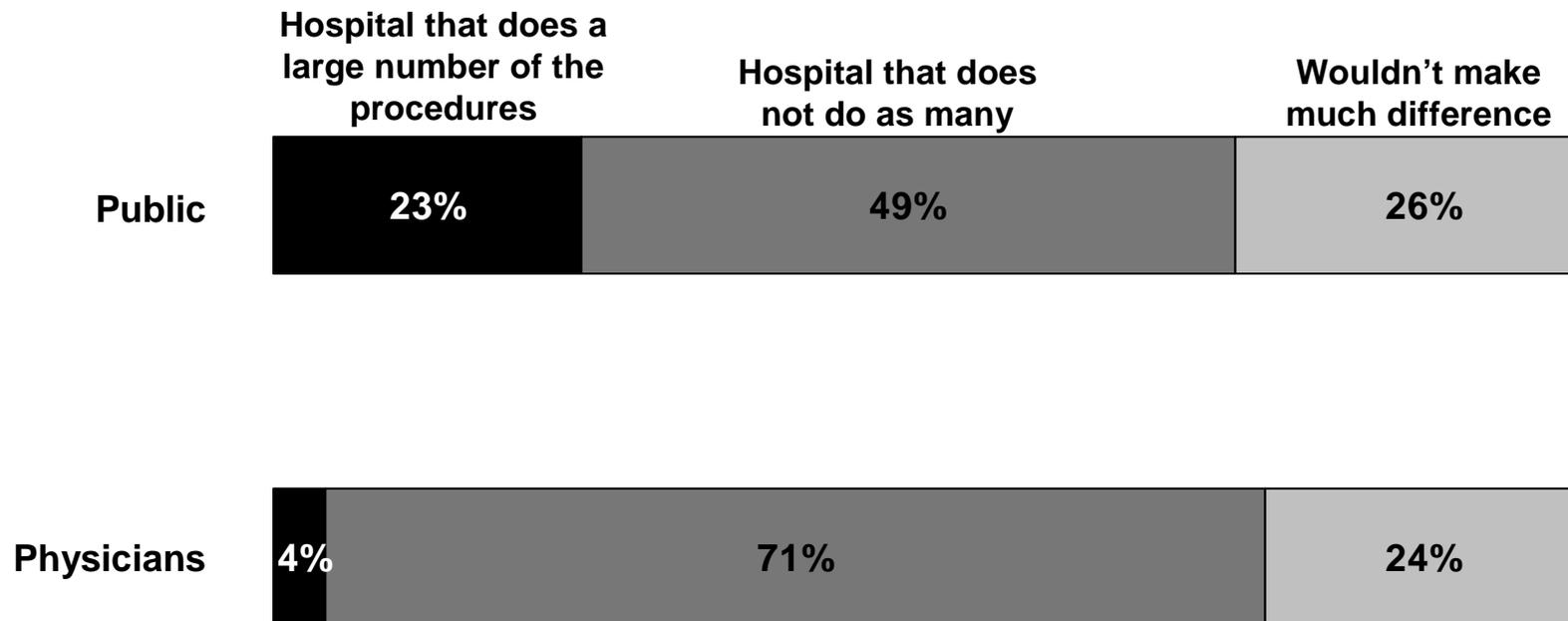
Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 17

Where Are Medical Errors Most Likely To Occur?

Suppose a patient needs a specialized medical procedure. This person can choose either a hospital that does a large number of these procedures or a hospital that does not do as many. At which hospital do you think this patient would be more likely to have a preventable medical error made in their care, or wouldn't it make much difference?



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 18

Perceived Causes of Preventable Medical Errors

Percentage who feel each is a very important cause of preventable medical errors...

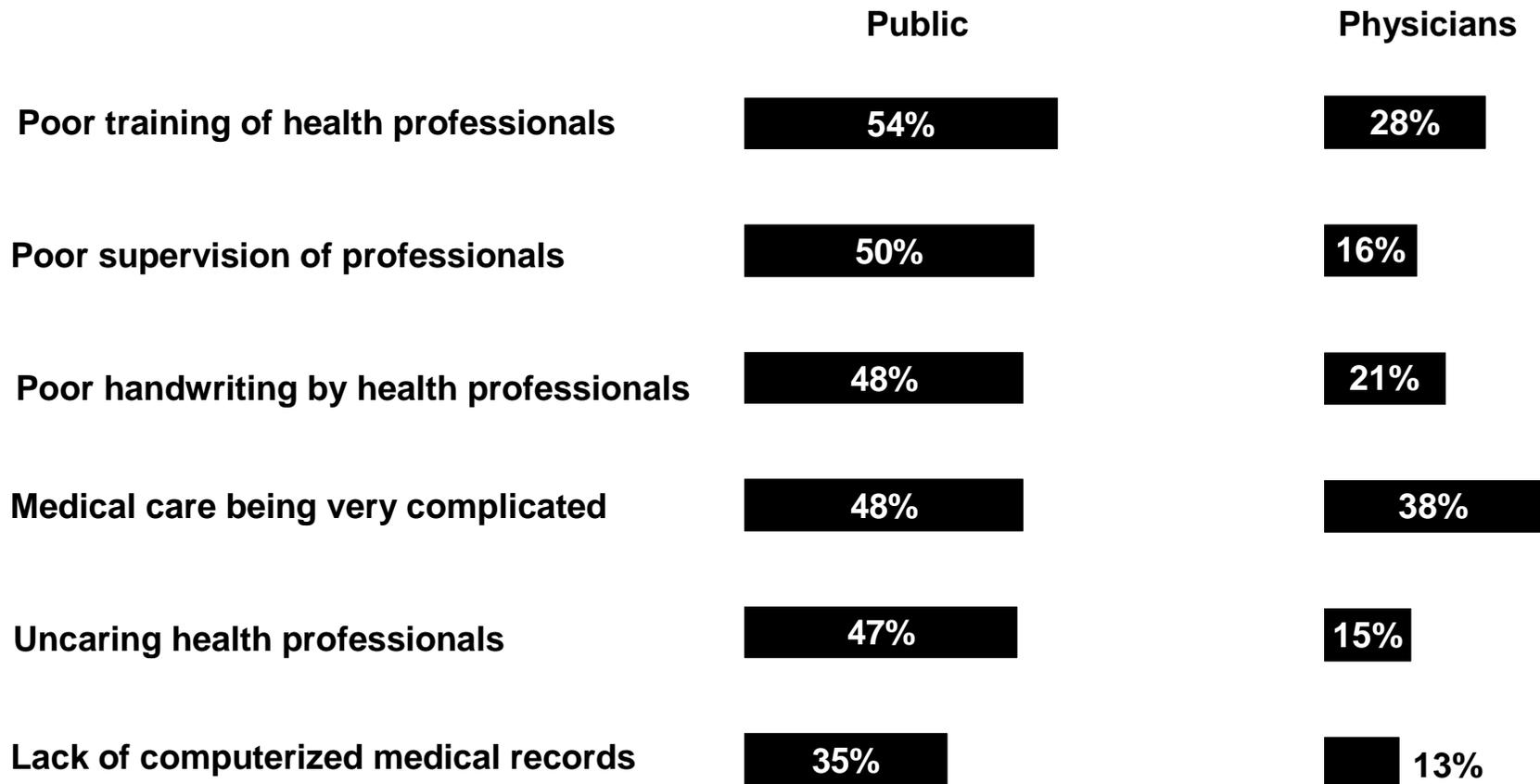
	Public	Physicians
Doctors not having enough time with patients	72%	37%
Overwork, stress, or fatigue of health professionals	70%	50%
Health professionals not working together or not communicating as a team	67%	39%
Not enough nurses in hospitals	65%	53%
The influence of HMOs and other managed care plans on treatment decisions	62%	39%

Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)

Chart 19

Perceived Causes of Preventable Medical Errors, con't.

Percentage who feel each is a very important cause of preventable medical errors...



Source: Harvard School of Public Health / Kaiser Family Foundation *Medical Errors: Practicing Physician and Public Views*, Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* December 12, 2002 (surveys conducted April-July 2002)



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