



2021 Sepsis Alliance Annual Sepsis Awareness Survey





Methodology

[Sepsis.org](https://sepsis.org)



The survey was conducted online within the United States by Radius Global Market Research on behalf of Sepsis Alliance in June and July 2021, among 2,000 adults living in the U.S. The results were weighted to the U.S. census for age, gender, region, and income. Surveys were conducted in English.

About Radius Global Market Research

Radius Global Market Research (www.radius-global.com) is one of the largest independent market-research companies. For more than 50 years, the business has partnered with global marketers to develop insight-based strategies that drive brand performance. A superior level of senior team involvement is the hallmark of Radius GMR's approach. Radius GMR is based in New York. Global operations include London-based Radius Europe, Radius MEA in Dubai, and Radius Asia in Beijing.



Background on Sepsis

[Sepsis.org](https://sepsis.org)

Sepsis is a common and deadly complication of COVID-19.^{1,2}

What is sepsis?

Sepsis is the body's life-threatening response to an infection that affects 1.7 million people and takes approximately 270,000 lives every year in the United States alone.³

- Sepsis is the #1 cause of death in hospitals.⁴
- Sepsis is the #1 cost of hospitalization in the U.S. consuming more than \$53 billion in in-hospital costs each year.^{5,6}
- As many as 87% of all sepsis cases originate in the community.³
- Mortality rates are high. The risk of mortality from sepsis increases by 4-9% for every hour that treatment is delayed.^{7,8,9}
- Sepsis affects over 49 million people worldwide each year and is the largest killer of children – nearly 3.4 million each year.^{10,11}
- Black and "other nonwhite" individuals have nearly twice the incidence of sepsis as whites (1.89 times the risk for Blacks, and 1.9 times the risk for "other nonwhite" individuals).¹³
- Black patients admitted to the emergency room are assigned to significantly lower priority status and experience significantly longer wait times (10.9 minutes longer on average) as compared to case-matched white patients.¹⁴
- Every day, there is an average of 38 amputations in the U.S. as the result of sepsis.¹²



Executive Summary

[Sepsis.org](https://sepsis.org)

Executive Summary



The 2021 Sepsis Alliance annual sepsis awareness survey showed awareness of the term “sepsis” returned to its 2019 level of 65%, with Black adults showing the lowest awareness of the term and white adults the highest. The awareness level is a return to the pre-pandemic awareness level reported in 2018 and 2019. The extreme interest in medical information at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic may be responsible for the jump in awareness to 71% in 2020.

Sepsis is the body’s overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection, which affects an estimated 49 million people worldwide each year. This year’s survey found that over 40% of adults state that they do not know sepsis is a complication of an infection.

Sepsis Alliance has become increasingly aware of disparities in healthcare based on socioeconomic status, race, and other factors and has dedicated made an organization-wide commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) work. The survey found that those who identify as white are significantly more likely to be aware of the term “sepsis” (67%) than those who identify as Black (57%), though Black and “other nonwhite” individuals have nearly twice the incidence of sepsis as white individuals.

Executive Summary Continued



Additionally, of those aware of the word sepsis, only 51% are aware of the term “post-sepsis syndrome,” which is used to describe the combination of effects one might experience after surviving sepsis. Over 50% of sepsis survivors experience post-sepsis syndrome, which can include muscle or joint pain, hair loss, reduced organ function, depression, and other psychological, emotional, and physical effects.

The 2021 awareness survey found that nearly three-quarters of those surveyed are concerned about health inequities and the lack of public education about sepsis.

Key Findings



- Overall awareness of the term sepsis returned to pre-pandemic levels at 65% of US adults in 2021
- Those who identify as white (67%) are significantly more likely to have heard the term sepsis than those who identify as Black (57%) and Asian (60%).
- Over 40% of US adults state that they do not know that sepsis is a complication of an infection.
- A majority of adults are aware of the term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) but only 42% of adults have heard of post-sepsis syndrome (PSS). Of those adults aware of the term sepsis, only 51% are aware of PSS.
- Overall, 40% of U.S. adults state they do not know the potential aftereffects of sepsis.
- Most adults are concerned about the lack of public education about sepsis (73%), limited government funding for sepsis research (68%), and health inequities related to race or ethnicity (68%), socioeconomic status (70%), and gender identity and expression (63%).



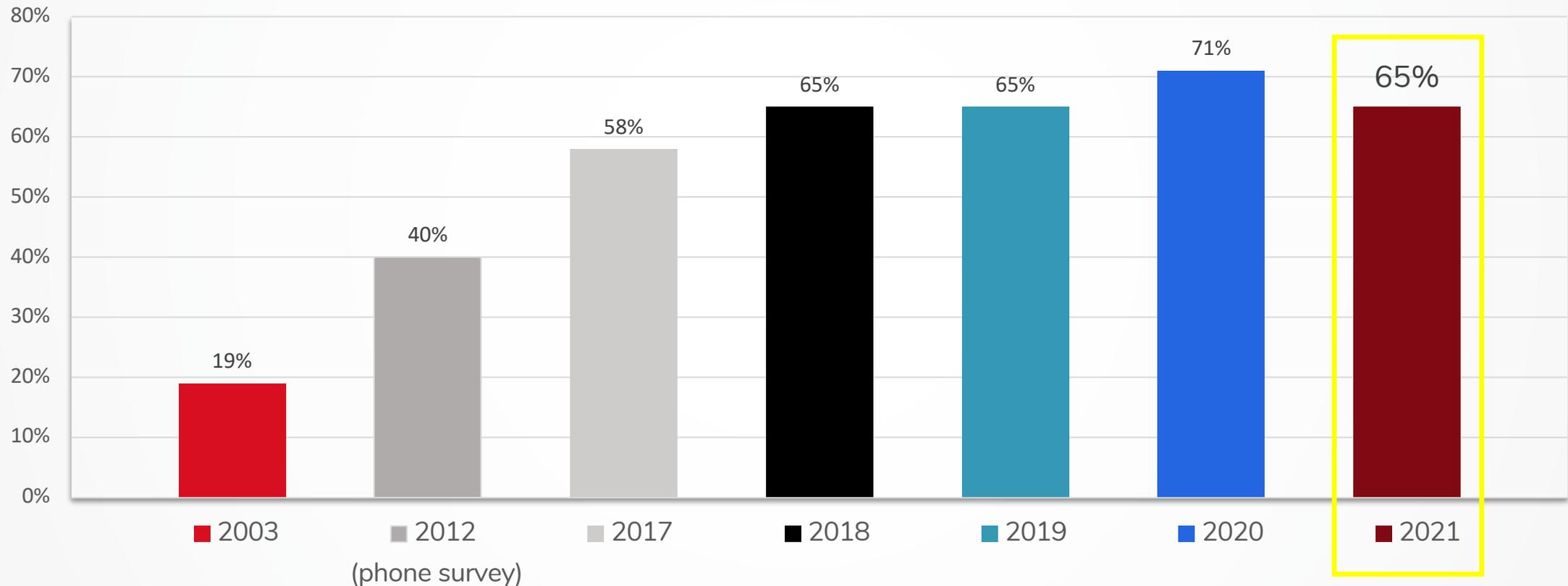
Study Details

[Sepsis.org](https://sepsis.org)

Overall awareness of the term sepsis returned to 65% of U.S. adults in 2021.



Aware of the term sepsis

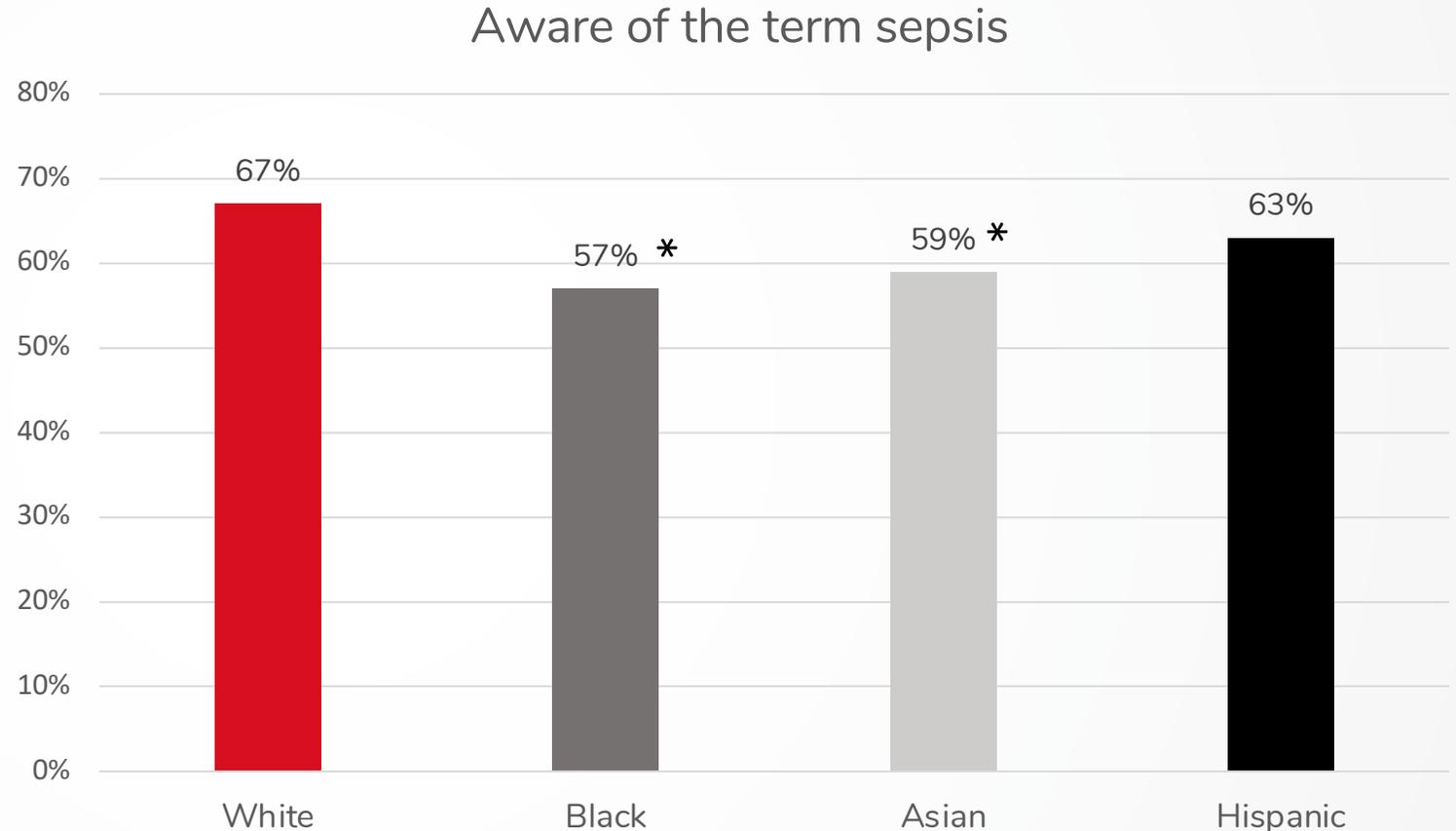


Q. Have you ever heard the term sepsis?

Awareness of the term sepsis differs by race and ethnicity.



- Those who identify as Black or Asian are significantly less likely to have heard the term “sepsis” than those who identify as white.
- There is no significant difference between white and Hispanic respondents’ awareness of the term “sepsis.”



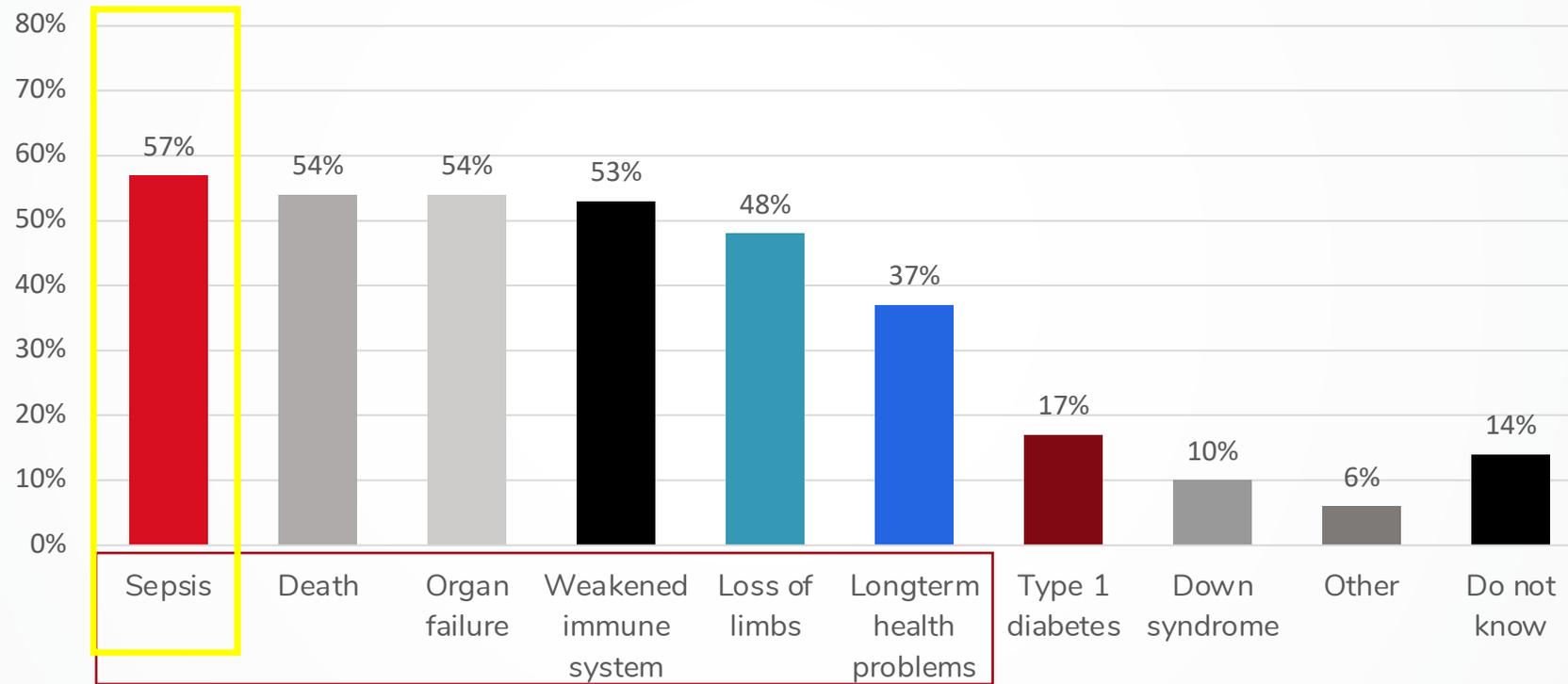
* = significantly lower than White

Q. Have you ever heard the term sepsis?

Only 57% of adults know that sepsis is a complication of an infection.



Complications of an infection



Correct complications of an infection

Q. Which of the following, if any, are the complications of an infection?

There is generally low awareness of post-sepsis syndrome, while the majority are aware of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



| | Overall |
|---------------------------------------|---------|
| Post-sepsis syndrome | 42% |
| Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) | 86% |

Q. How aware are you, if at all, the following terms?

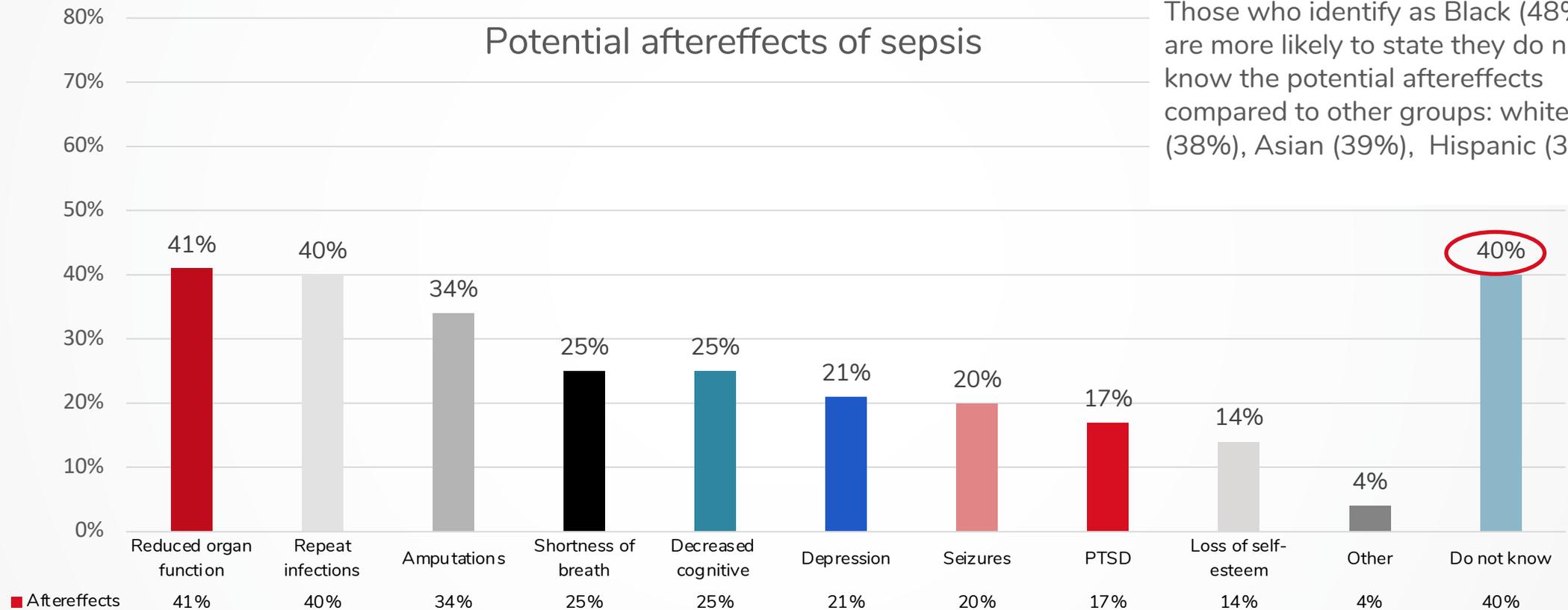
Among those who are aware of sepsis, only 51% are aware of the term post-sepsis syndrome.



| | Those aware of the term sepsis, and aware of the following terms |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) | 93% |
| Post-sepsis syndrome | 51% |

Q. How aware are you, if at all, the following terms?

Although 1.4 million people survive sepsis each year in the U.S., 40% of U.S. adults state they do not know the potential aftereffects of sepsis.



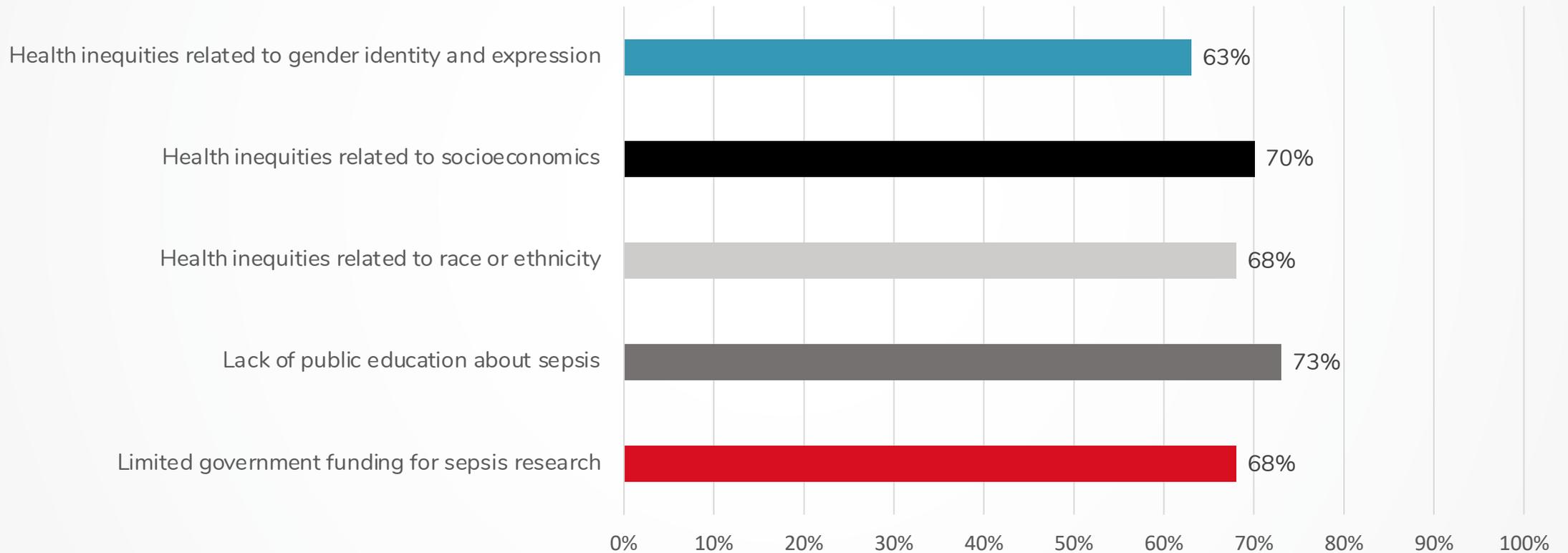
Those who identify as Black (48%) are more likely to state they do not know the potential aftereffects compared to other groups: white (38%), Asian (39%), Hispanic (39%).

Q. Which of the following, if any, are potential aftereffects of sepsis?

Most U.S. adults are concerned about health inequities, lack of public sepsis education, and limited government funding for sepsis research.



Concerned



Q. How concerned, if at all, are you about the following?

References

1. Zhou F, et al. Lancet. 2020; 395 (10229), 1054-1062. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30566-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30566-3/fulltext)
2. Chen T, et al. BMJ. 2020; 368:m1091. <https://www.bmj.com/content/368/bmj.m1091>
3. Rhee C, et al. JAMA. 2017;318(13):1241-1249. <http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2654187>
4. Liu V, et al. JAMA. 2014;312(1):90-92. <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1873131&resultClick=3>
5. Torio C, Moore B. HCUP Statistical Brief #204. May 2016. <https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb204-Most-Expensive-Hospital-Conditions.pdf>
6. Buchman TG, Simpson SQ, Sciarretta KL, et al. Crit Care Med. 2020;48(3):302-318. https://journals.lww.com/ccmjournal/FullText/2020/03000/Sepsis_Among_Medicare_Beneficiaries__3__The.4.aspx
7. Liu VX, et al. Am J Respir Crit Care Med. 2017;196(7):856-863. <https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/full/10.1164/rccm.201609-1848OC>
8. Kumar A, et al. Crit Care Med. 2006;34(6):1589-1596. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16625125/>
9. Seymour CW, et al. N Engl J Med. 2017;376(23):2235-2244. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1703058>
10. Rudd KE, et al. Lancet. 2020;395(10219):200-211 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32989-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32989-7/fulltext)
11. Kisson N, and Carapetis J. J Infect. 2015;71 Suppl 1:S21-26. [https://www.journalofinfection.com/article/S0163-4453\(15\)00109-7/fulltext](https://www.journalofinfection.com/article/S0163-4453(15)00109-7/fulltext)
12. Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project, Nationwide Inpatient Sample, 2012. Accessed April 6, 2016
13. Martin, G. S., Mannino, D. M., Eaton, S. and Moss, M. (2003) The epidemiology of sepsis in the United States from 1979 through 2000, New England Journal of Medicine, 348(16), 1546-1554.
14. Schrader, C. D. and Lewis, L. M. (2013) Racial disparity in emergency department triage, J Emerg Med, 44(2), 511-518.



SEPSIS
ALLIANCE

[Sepsis.org](https://www.sepsis.org)