

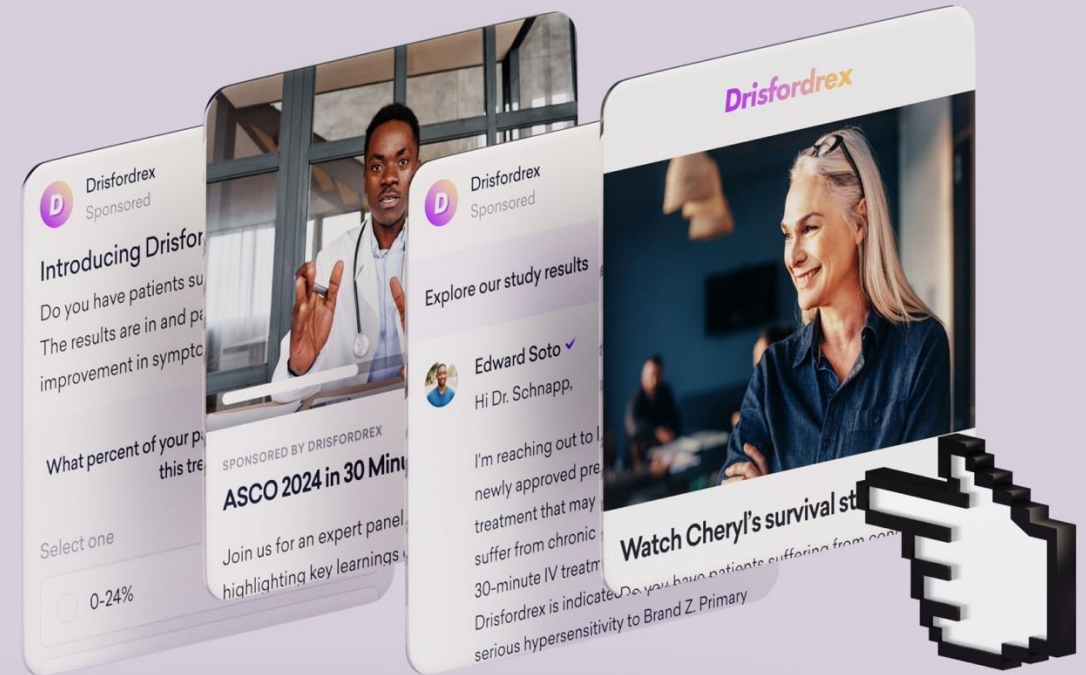
HCP SENTIMENT PART 20

Misinformation in the Exam Room

How Social Media, AI, and Misinformation Are Changing Patient Expectations

Published September 2026

sermo



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4 Things You Need To Know



1. The misinformation landscape

ONLINE HEALTH INFORMATION IS NOW PART OF THE EXAM ROOM

85%

of physicians

say patients reference information from social media, online influencers, or AI tools multiple times during a typical appointment.

ChatGPT and other AI chatbots are cited most often (62%).

75%

of physicians

spend at least 4 minutes of a typical patient visit addressing misinformation—about a quarter of a standard 15- to 20-minute appointment.

One in five physicians (22%) spends 7 minutes or more addressing misinformation, consuming as much as half of the visit.

2. Impact on patient care

MISINFORMATION IS GETTING IN THE WAY OF PATIENT CARE

91%

of physicians

say misinformation sometimes, often, or very often contributes to treatment delays, reduced adherence, or resistance to physician recommendations.

79%

of physicians

agree that addressing patient misconceptions can significantly delay treatment decisions.

3. Current approaches & resource needs

PHYSICIANS ARE UNDEREQUIPPED TO FIGHT BACK

How Well Available Resources Meet Physician' Needs



4. Opportunities for pharmaceutical companies and healthcare stakeholders

PHYSICIANS ARE ASKING FOR BETTER PATIENT EDUCATION

MOST VALUABLE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

Patient-friendly evidence summaries **54%**

Disease-specific myth-versus-fact resources **48%**

Treatment benefit and risk explainers **38%**

FAQs addressing common misconceptions **34%**

Guidance on evaluating credible vs. noncredible health information **32%**

MOST EFFECTIVE FORMATS

Short educational videos **45%**

Patient-friendly websites **43%**

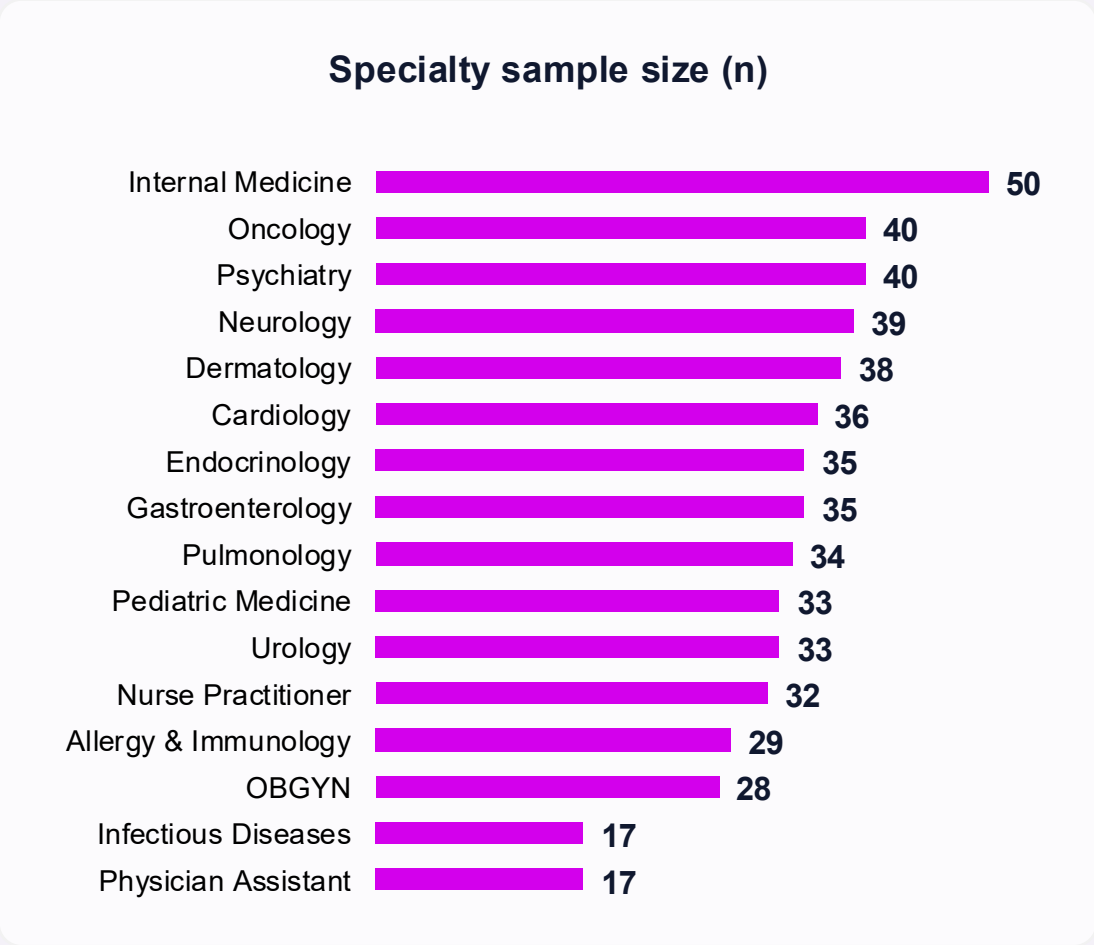
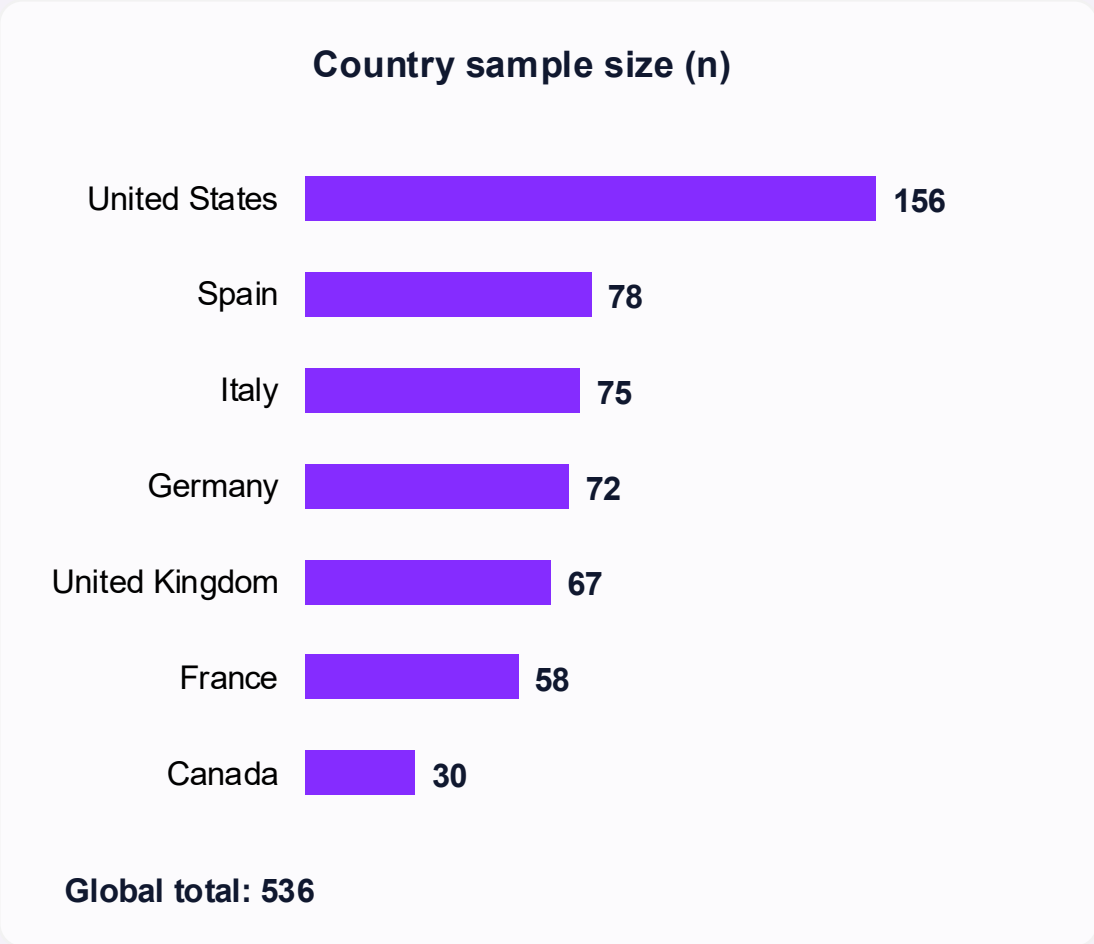
Printable patient handouts **42%**

Infographics **31%**

Social media content
developed by trusted healthcare organizations **23%**

Research sample overview

Report insights are powered by Sermo’s proprietary RealTime technology and are based on a **survey of 536 HCPs across North America and the EU5 conducted in October 2026**. Statistical significance was tested at the 90% confidence level against the global total



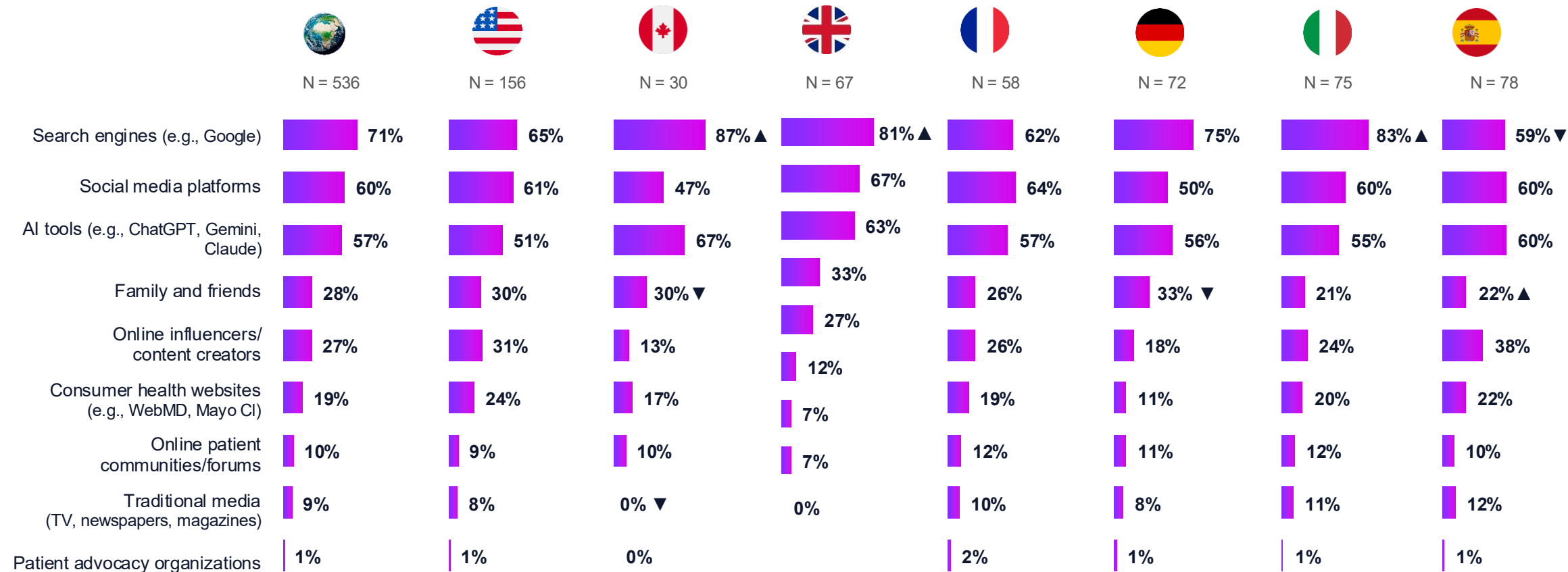
The Misinformation Landscape



Search engines, social media and AI tools are the most influential sources shaping patient perceptions

Q: In your experience, which of the following sources are most influential in shaping patient perceptions before they enter the exam room?

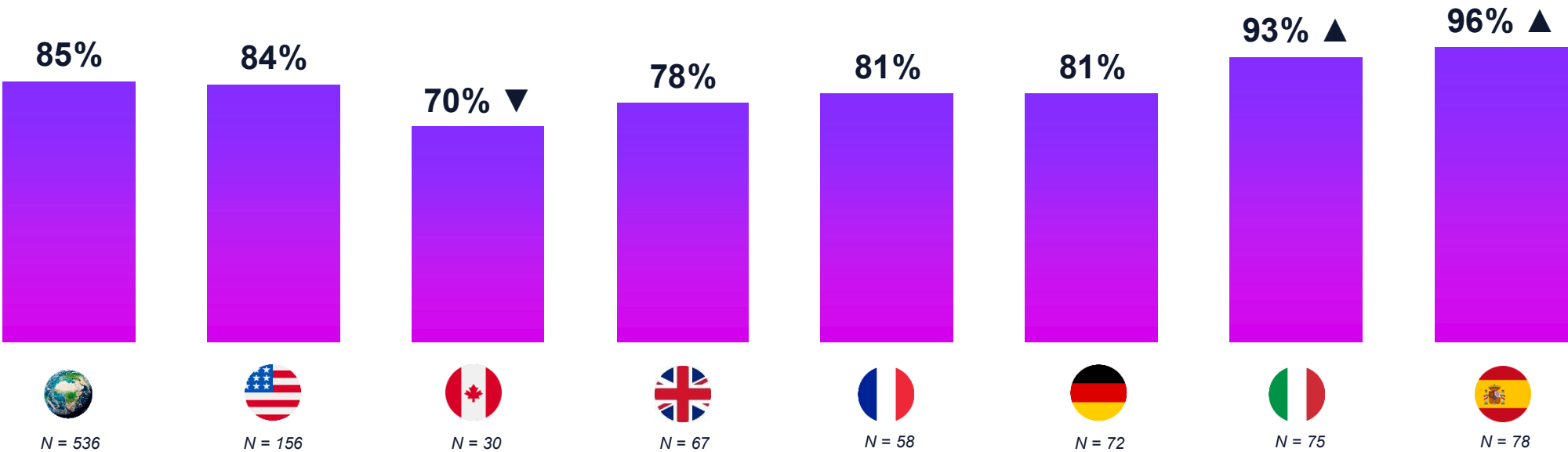
% of physicians selecting each option



Physicians report that patients reference online health information several or multiple times per appointment

Q: How often do patients reference health information obtained from social media platforms, online influencers/content creators, or AI tools?

% of physicians reporting that patients reference such information at least several times per appointment

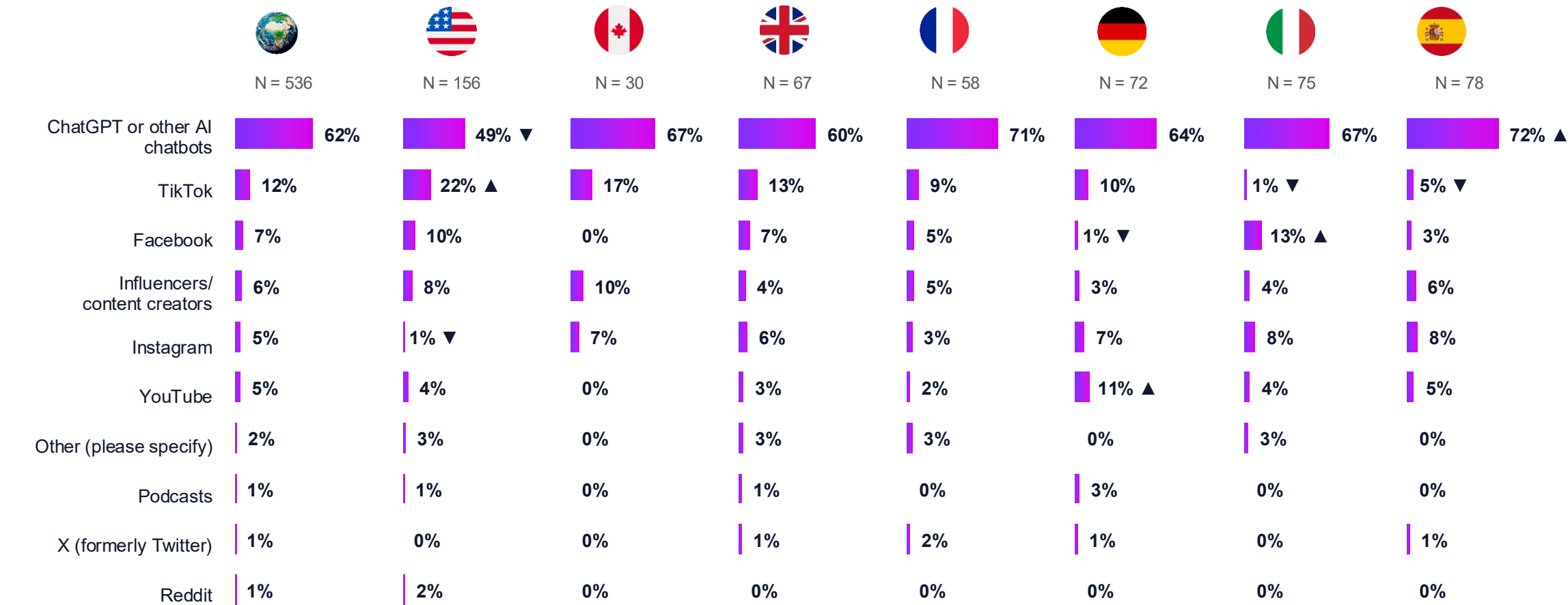


▲ ▼ = Statistically significant difference from the global total at 90% confidence

When patients do reference outside information, it is predominantly from AI tools

Q: When patients reference information from social media platforms, online influencers/content creators, or AI tools, which platform or source is mentioned most often?

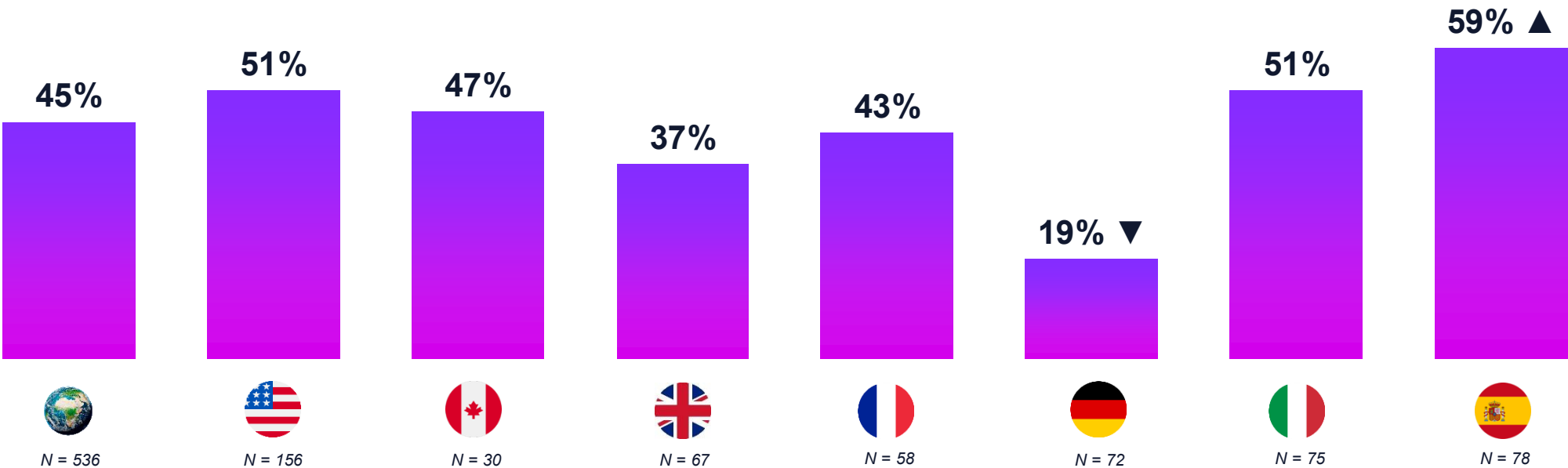
% of physicians selecting each option



Physicians estimate that just under half of patients who raise online health information present information that is inaccurate, misleading, or incomplete

Q: Approximately what percentage of patients who discuss health information obtained online present information that is inaccurate, misleading, or incomplete?

% saying more than half of such patients present inaccurate information (top 2 box out of 5)

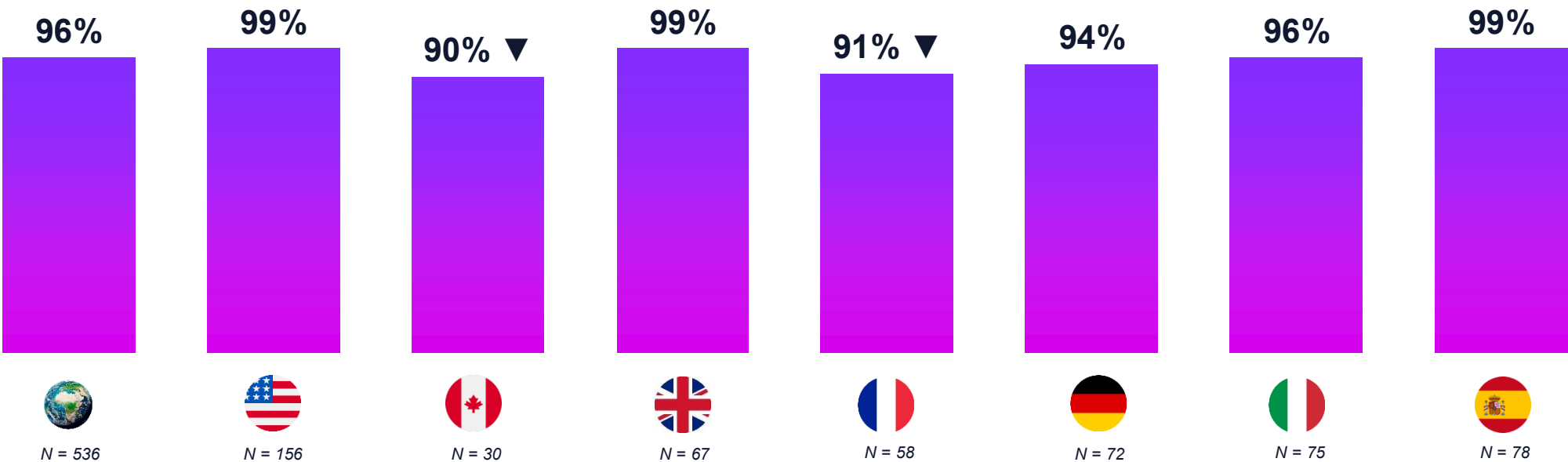


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Nearly all physicians report spending more time addressing misinformation than they did three years ago

Q: Compared with three years ago, how has the amount of time you spend addressing misinformation from social media, influencers, or AI-generated health content changed?

% saying time spent addressing misinformation has increased vs 3 years ago (top 2 box out of 4)

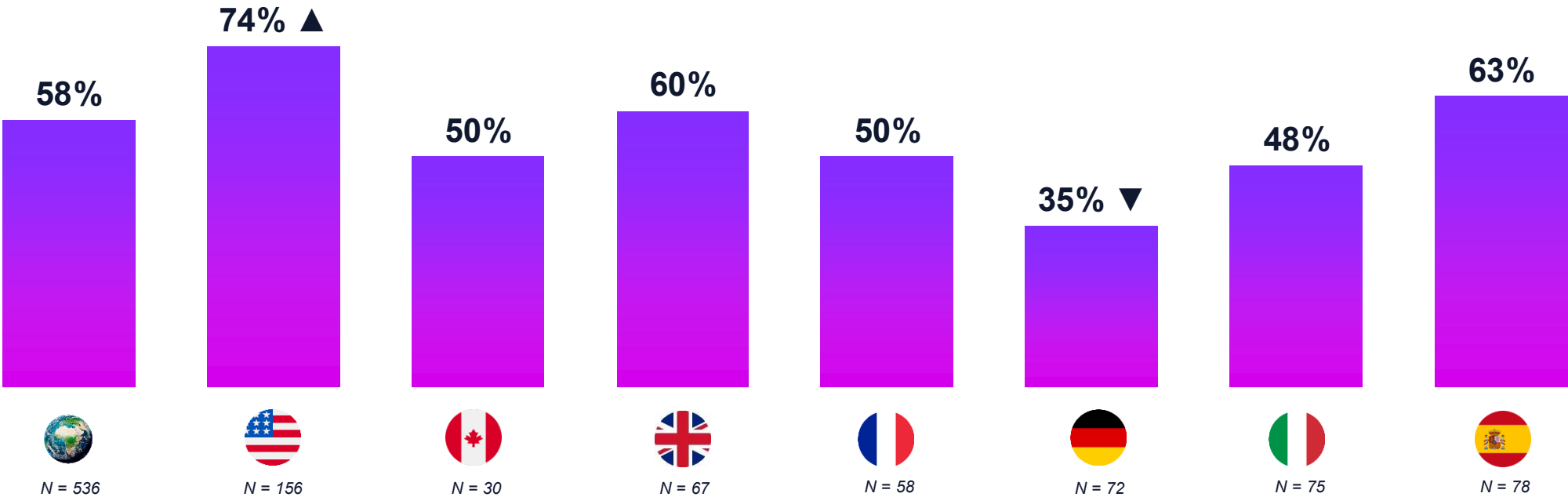


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Most physicians report that patients' trust in their medical recommendations has declined over the past three years, particularly in the U.S.

Q: Compared with 3 years ago, how would you describe patients' trust in your medical recommendations?

% saying patient trust in their recommendations has decreased vs 3 years ago (bottom 2 box out of 4)



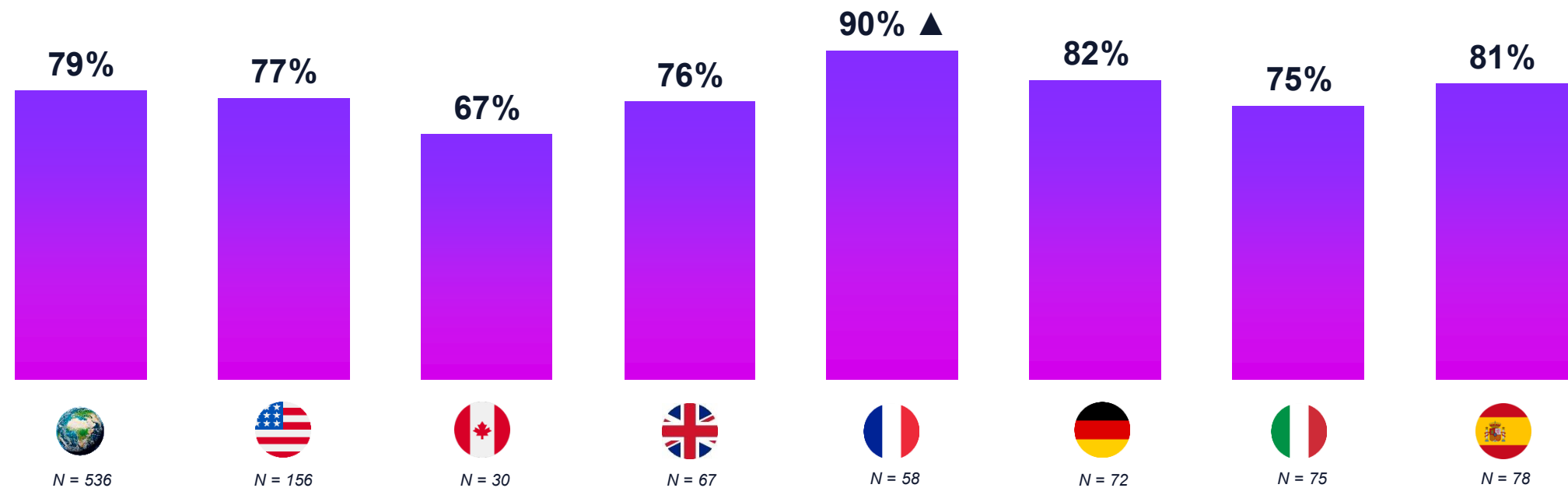
Source: Sermo HCP Sentiment — Misinformation in the Exam Room, October 2026. N=536 physicians in North America & EU5; Q6

▲ ▼ = Statistically significant difference from the global total at 90% confidence

Four in five physicians rate AI-sourced health information as more accurate than information from traditional search engines or social media

Q: How accurate is the health information patients bring from AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude compared with information from traditional search engines or social media?

% rating AI-sourced information as more accurate than traditional online sources (top 2 box out of 4)

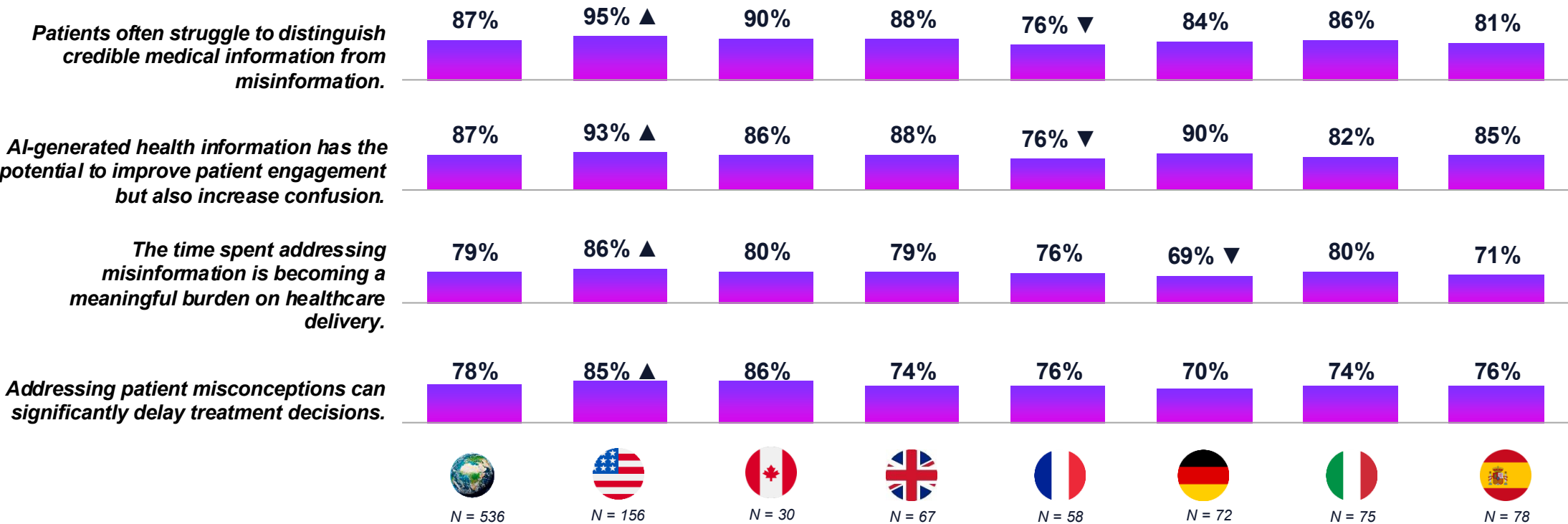


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Physicians broadly agree that patients struggle to distinguish credible medical information from misinformation. They also recognize that AI-generated health information could improve patient engagement while increasing confusion

Q: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. Select one response per row

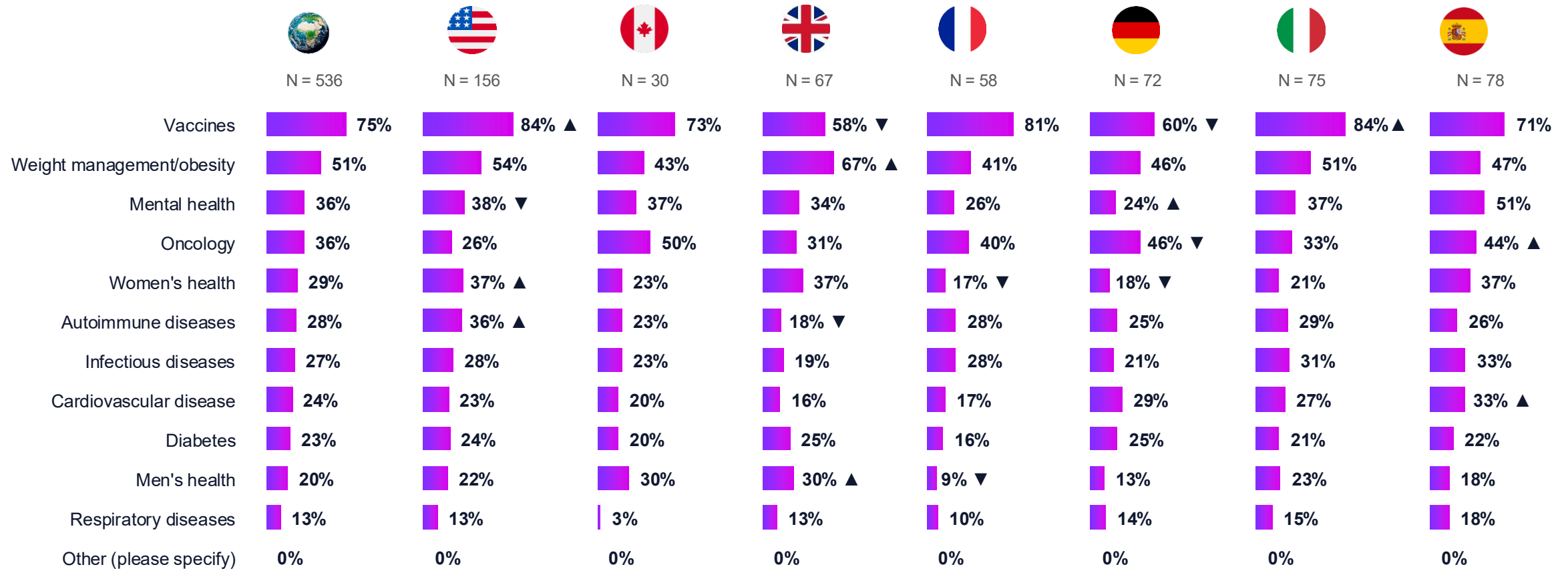
% agreeing with each statement (top 2 box out of 4)



Vaccines are the area in which physicians encounter the most misinformation in every market except the U.K.

Q: In which therapeutic areas do you encounter the most misinformation?

% of physicians selecting each option



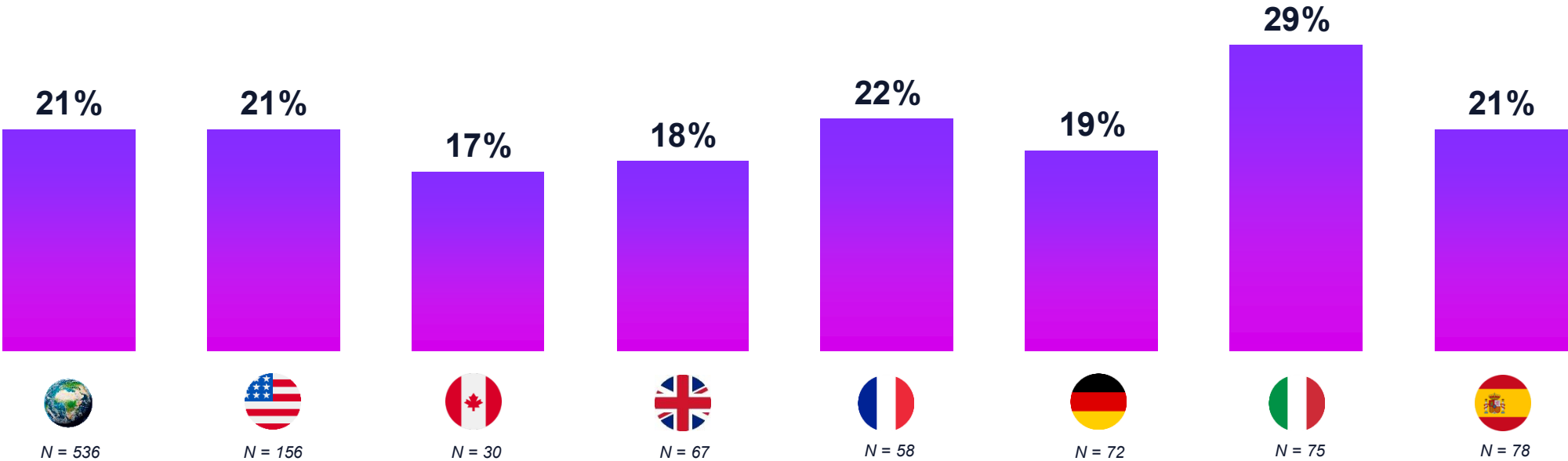
Impact on Patient Care



One in five physicians spends seven minutes or more per appointment addressing medical misinformation

Q: On average, how much appointment time do you spend addressing or correcting misinformation?

% spending 7 or more minutes per appointment addressing misinformation (top 2 box out of 5)

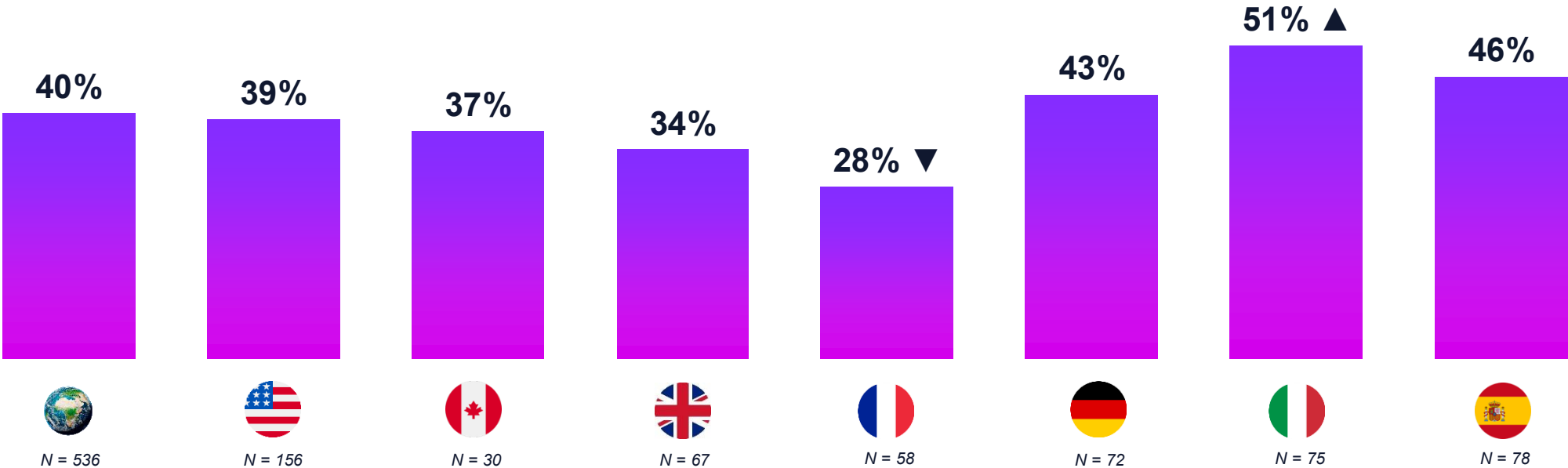


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Four in 10 physicians report that misinformation often contributes to treatment delays, nonadherence, or resistance to physician recommendations

Q: How often does misinformation contribute to treatment delays, reduced adherence, or resistance to physician recommendations?

% saying misinformation often contributes to delays, nonadherence or resistance (top 2 box out of 5)

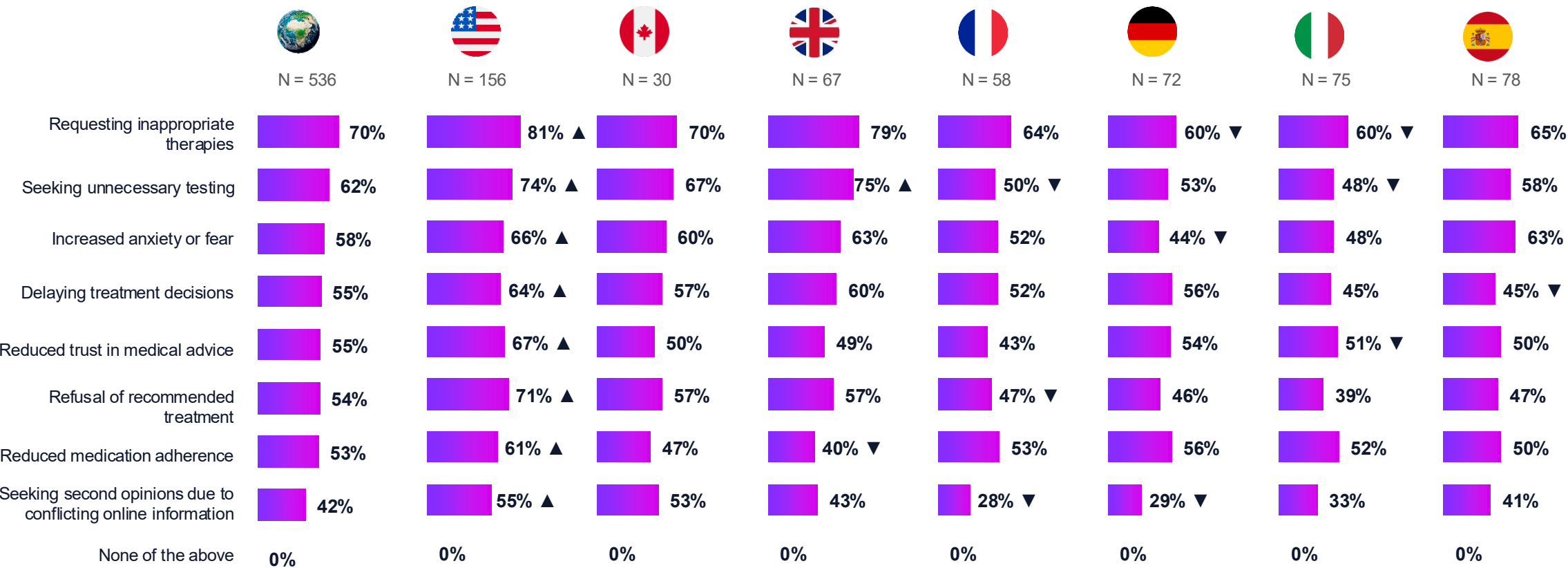


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Physicians report a wide range of misinformation-related patient behaviors, most commonly requests for inappropriate therapies and unnecessary testing

Q: Which patient behaviors have you observed because of misinformation?

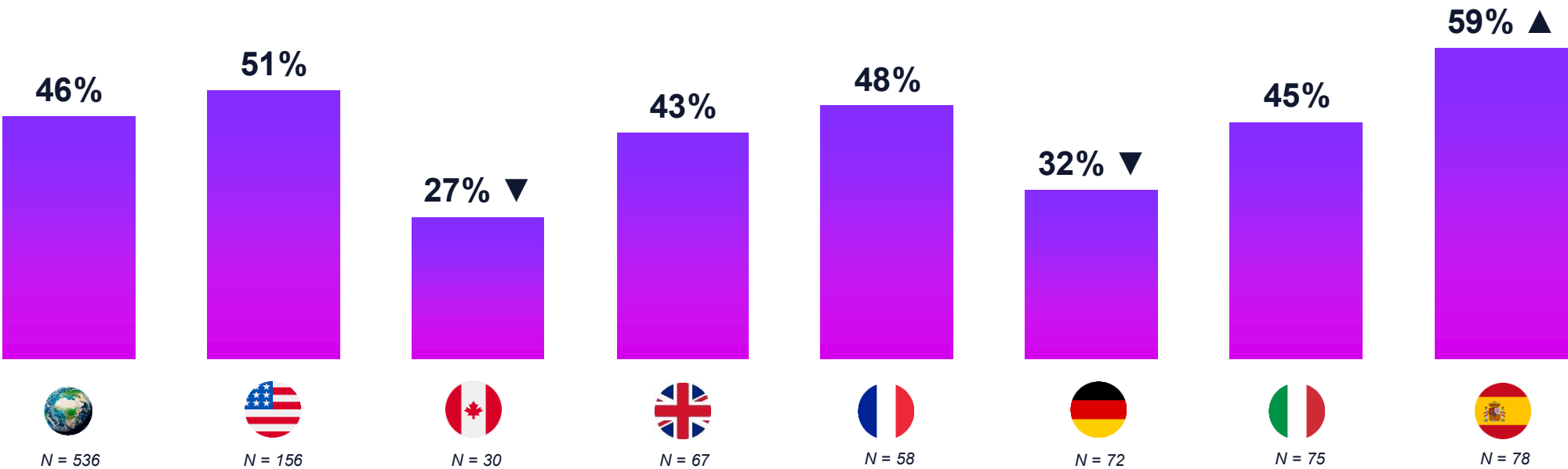
% of physicians selecting each option



Nearly half of physicians are very or extremely concerned that health misinformation may affect their ability to deliver effective patient care

Q: How concerned are you about the impact of health misinformation on your ability to deliver effective patient care?

% very or extremely concerned about the impact on patient care (top 2 box out of 5)

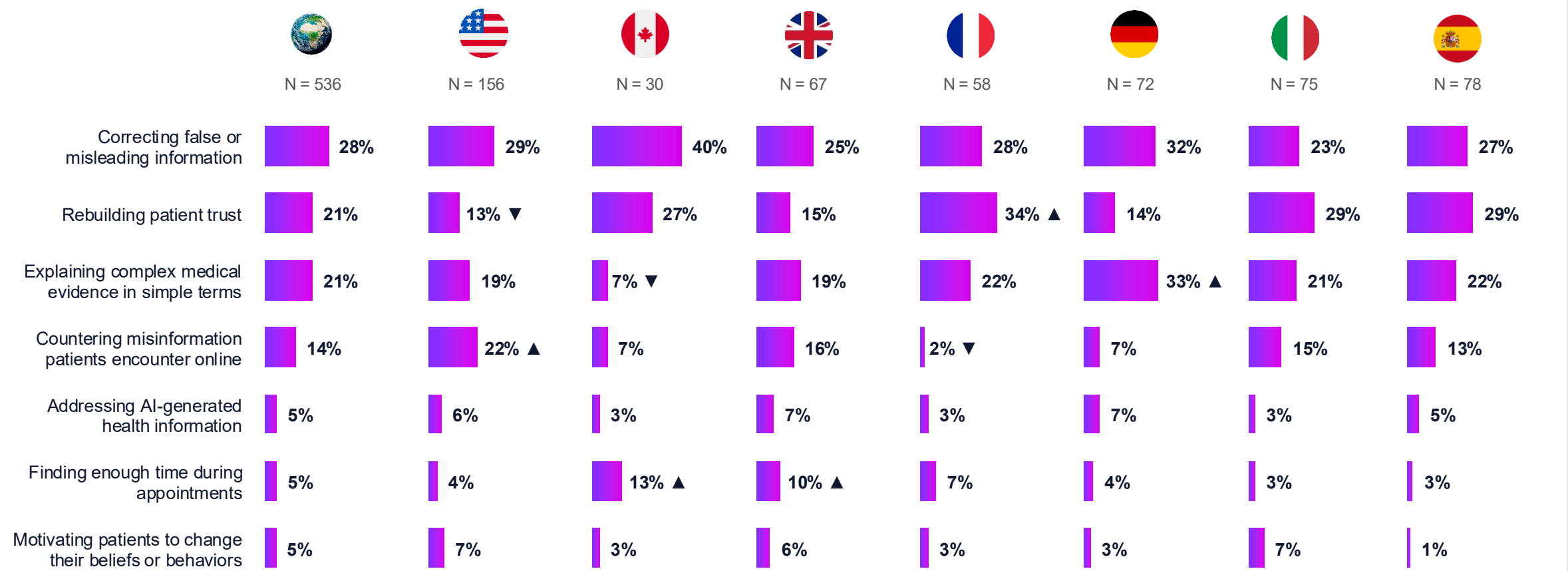


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Correcting false information, rebuilding patient trust, and explaining complex medical evidence are the most challenging aspects of addressing misinformation

Q: Which aspect of addressing patient misinformation is most challenging?

% of physicians selecting each option



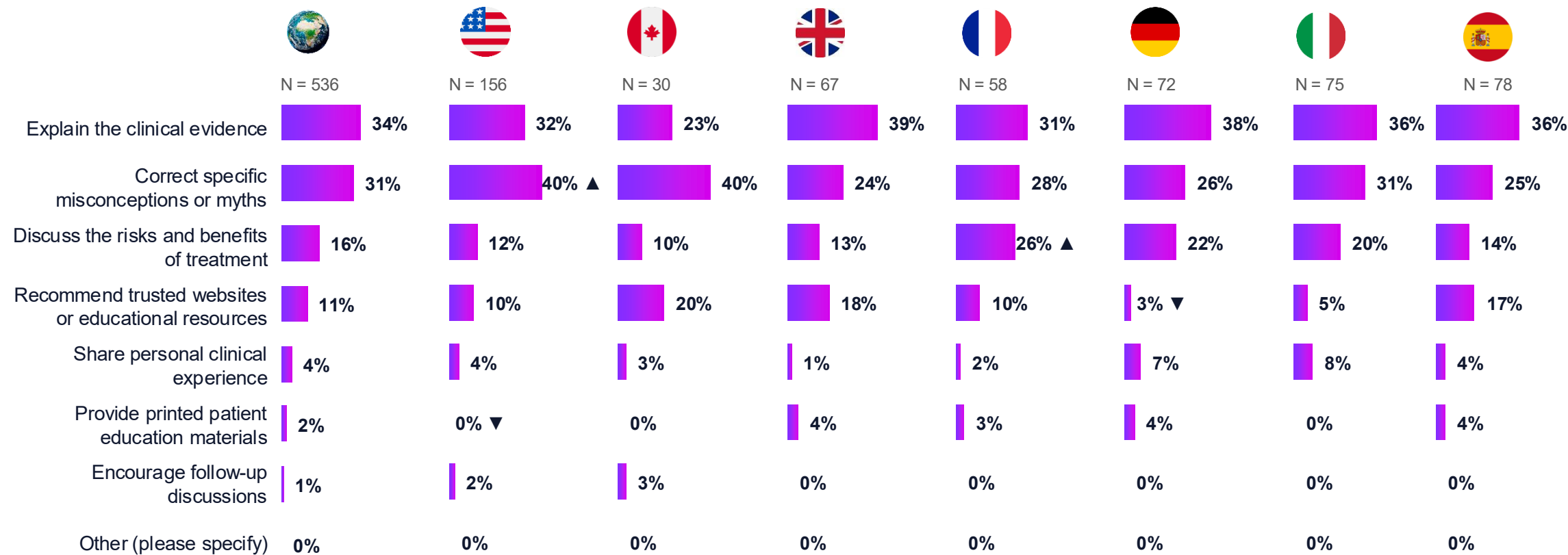
Current Approaches & Resource Needs



The most common approaches to addressing misinformation are explaining the clinical evidence and correcting specific misconceptions

Q: When patients present inaccurate, misleading, or incomplete health information, which approach do you use most often to address their concerns?

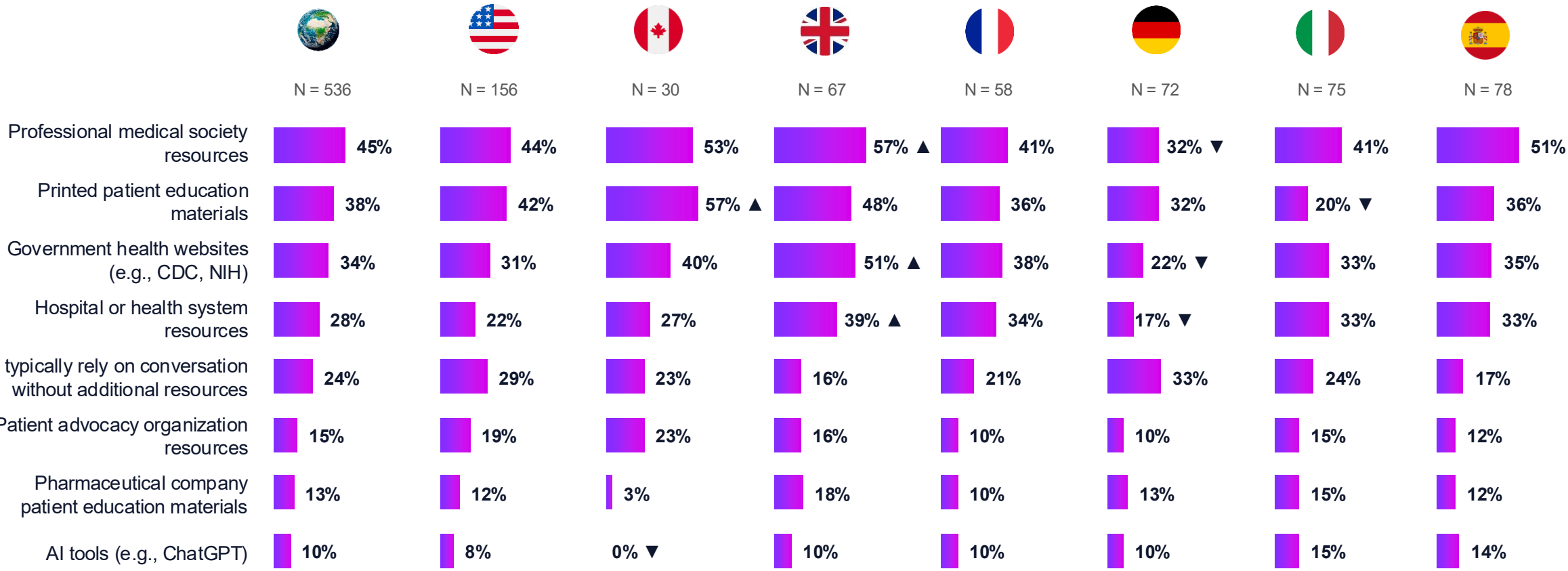
% of physicians selecting each option



Professional medical society, government, and hospital or health system resources are used most often, while AI tools, pharmaceutical company materials, and patient advocacy organization resources are used least often

Q: Which of the following resources do you currently use to support conversations with patients about misinformation?

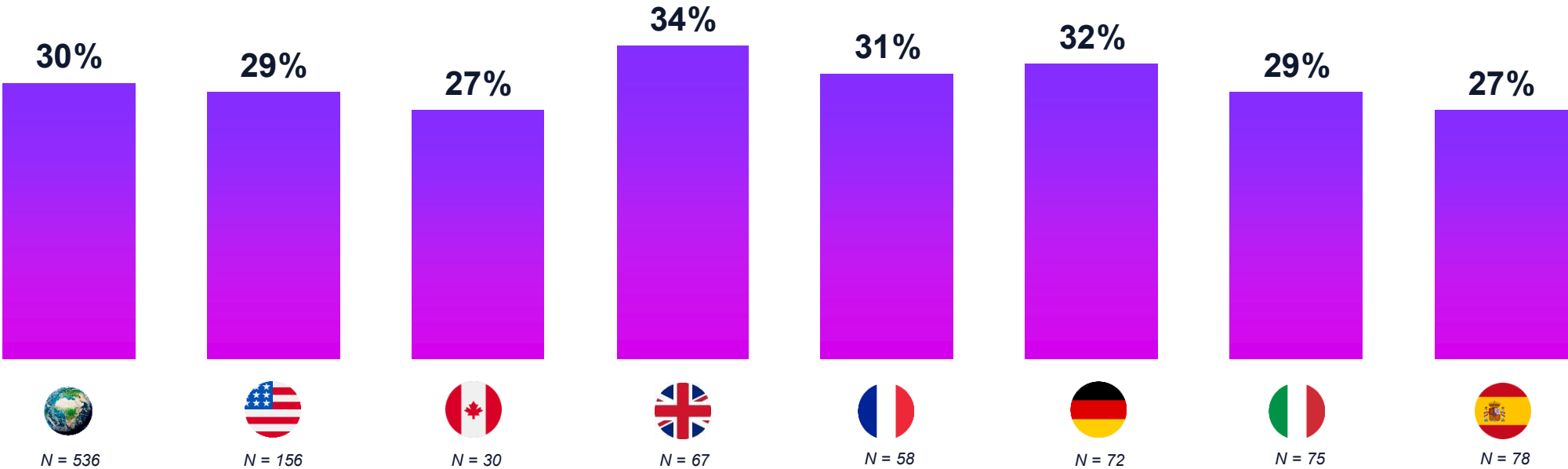
% of physicians selecting each option



Only three in ten physicians say the available patient education resources meet their needs well

Q: How well are the patient education resources currently available to you to meet your needs when addressing misinformation?

% saying available patient education resources meet their needs well (top 2 box out of 5)



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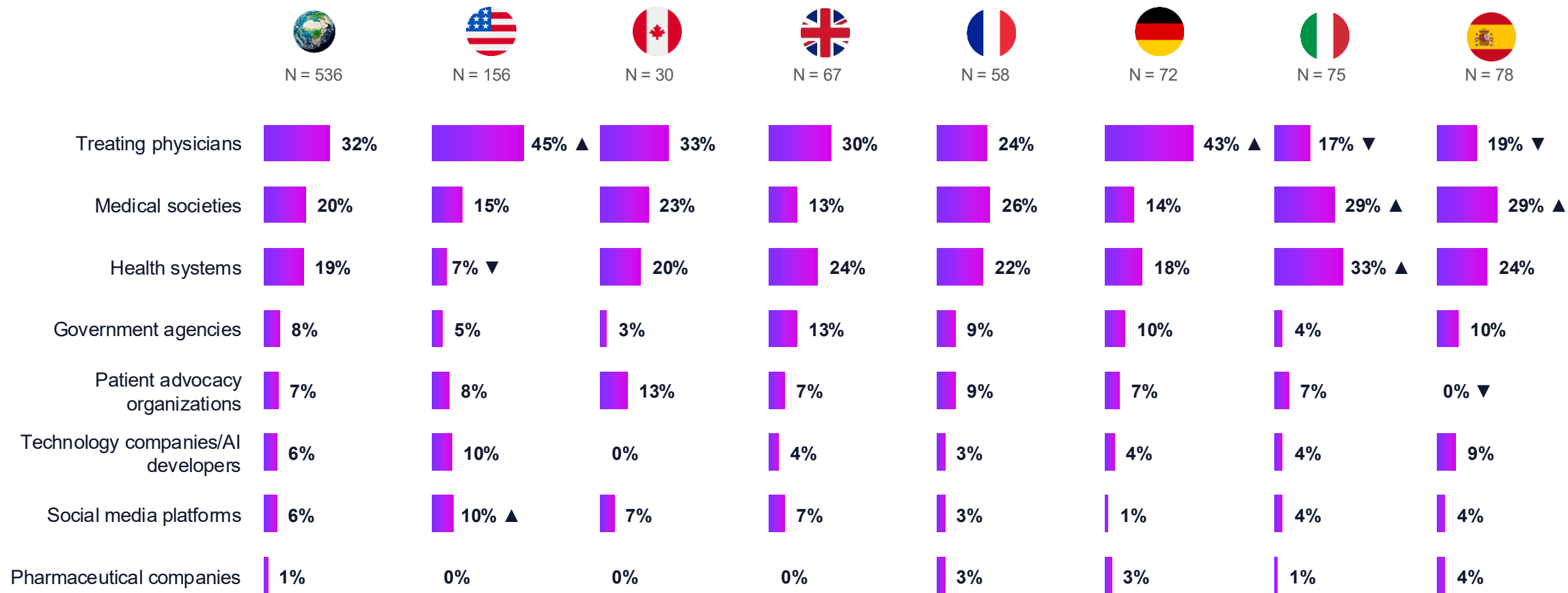
Opportunities for Pharmaceutical Companies and Healthcare Stakeholders



Physicians view treating physicians as best positioned to address misinformation, followed by medical societies and health systems

Q: Which organization type is best positioned to combat health misinformation?

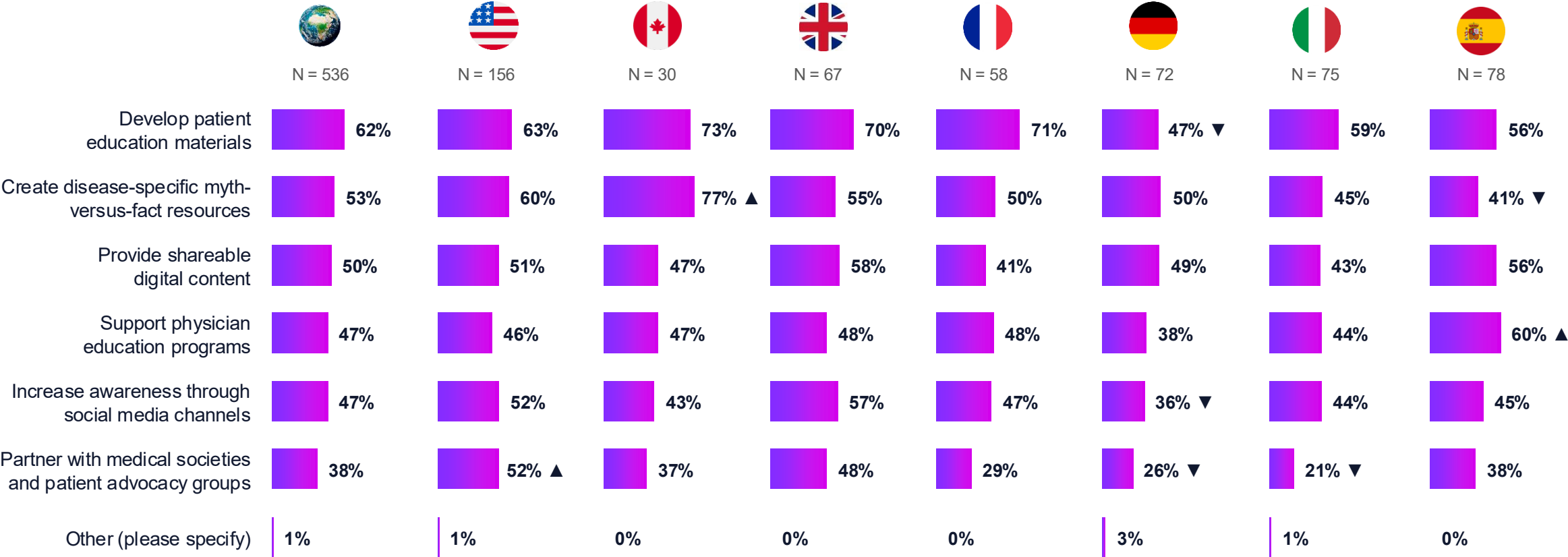
% of physicians selecting each option



Physicians see the clearest role for pharmaceutical companies in developing patient education materials and disease-specific myth-versus-fact resources

Q: What role should pharmaceutical companies play in helping physicians address patient misinformation?

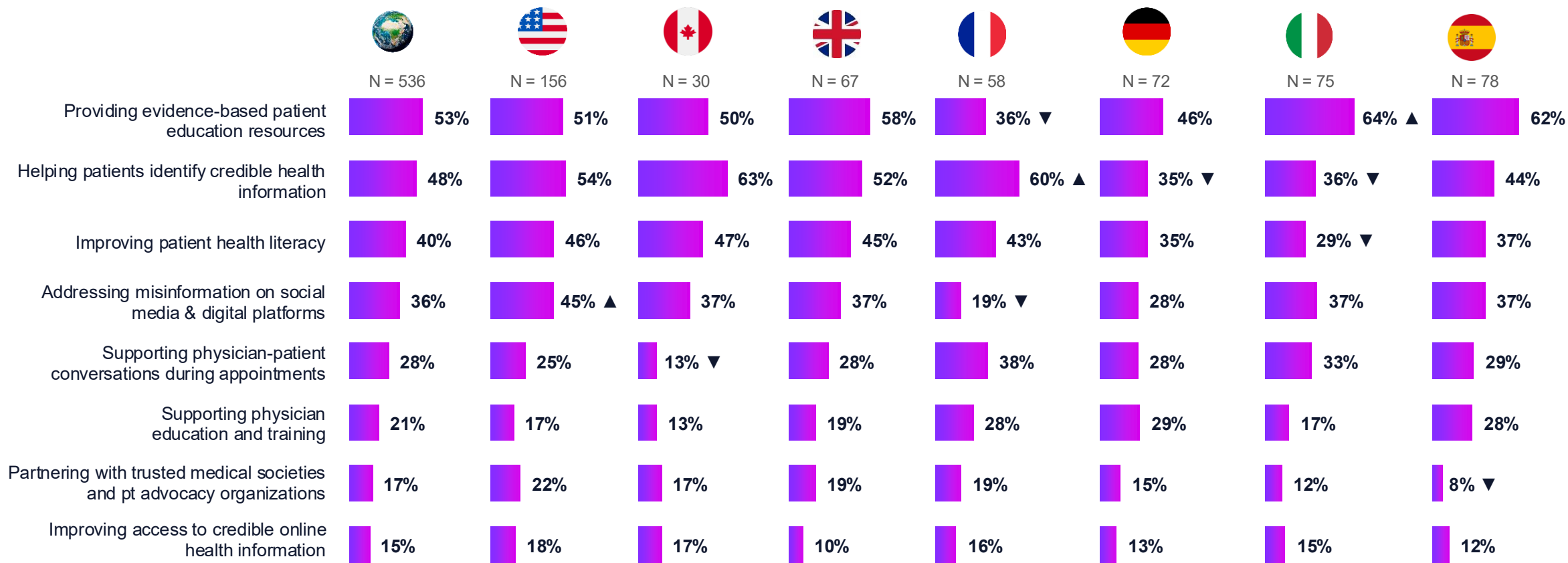
% of physicians selecting each option



The greatest opportunities for pharmaceutical companies are providing evidence-based patient education resources and helping patients identify credible health information

Q: Which areas represent the greatest opportunity for pharmaceutical companies to support physicians in addressing patient misinformation?

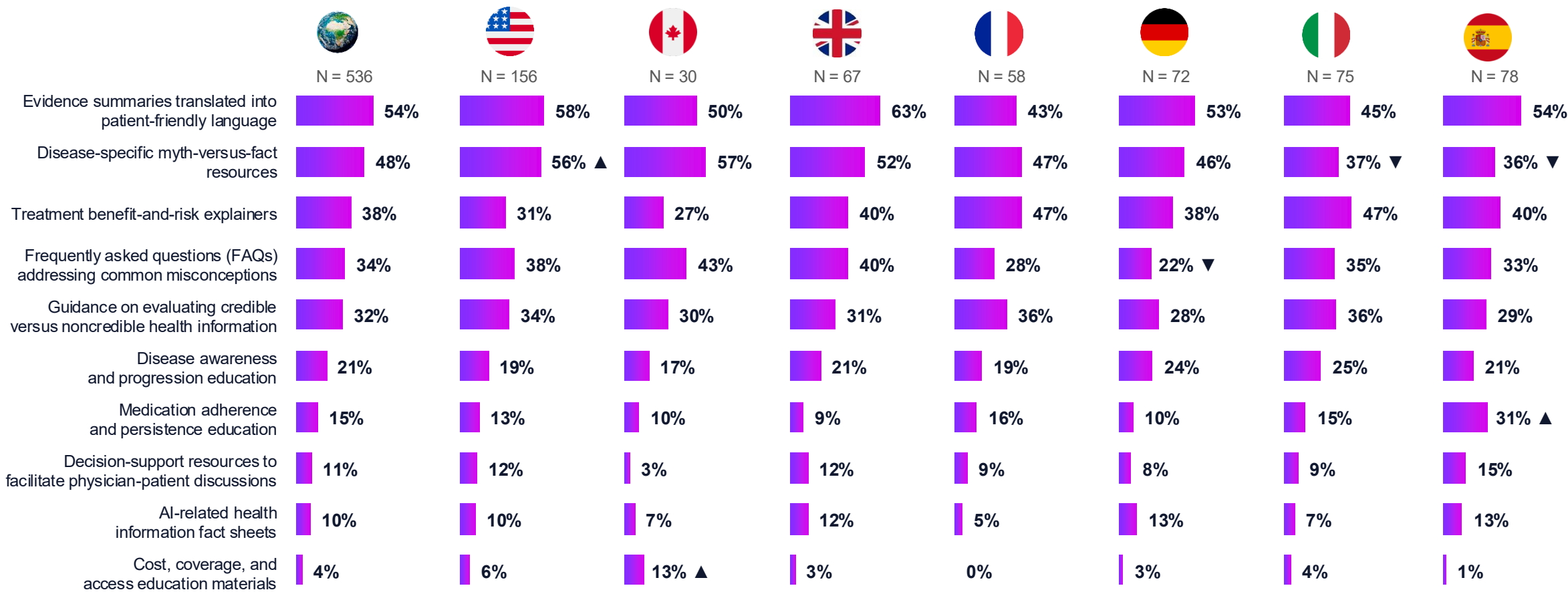
% of physicians selecting each option



Physicians identify patient-friendly evidence summaries and disease-specific myth-versus-fact resources as the most valuable content

Q: Which types of educational content would be most valuable in helping you address patient misinformation?

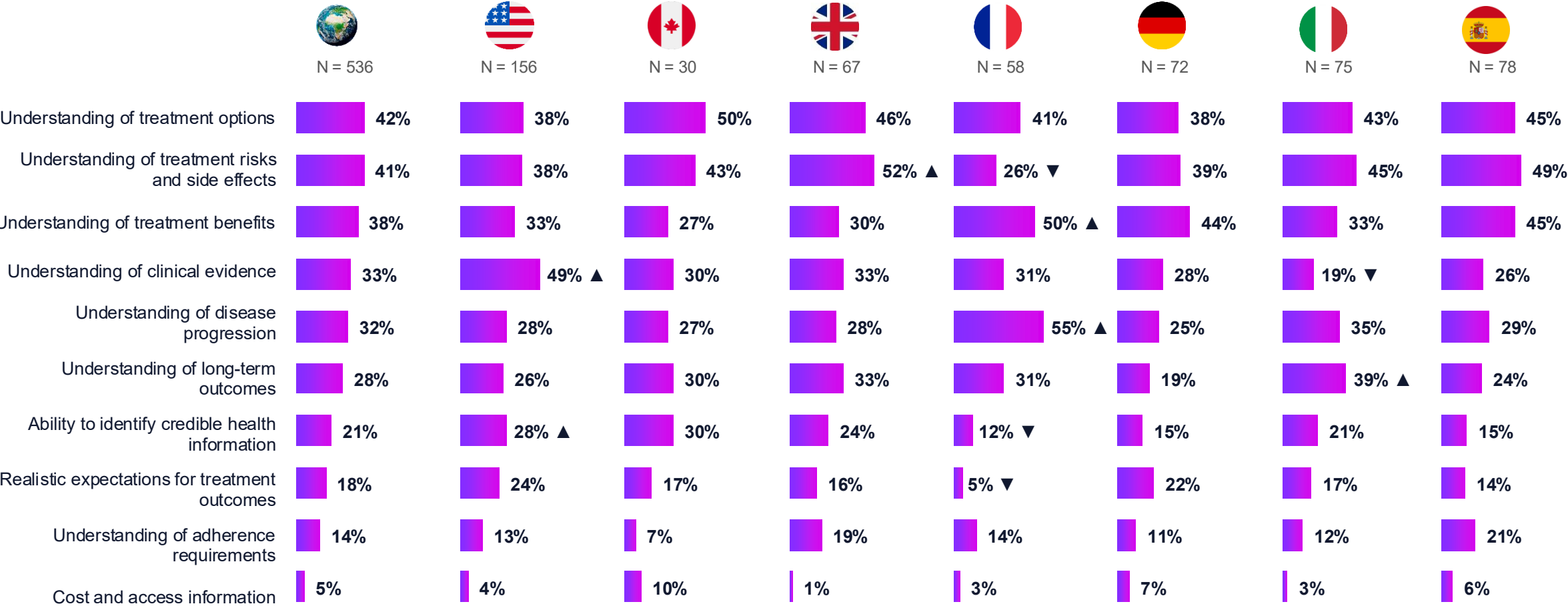
% of physicians selecting each option



Patients arrive at treatment discussions with a range of information gaps, most commonly around treatment options, risks, and side effects

Q: What information do patients most often lack when they arrive for treatment discussions?

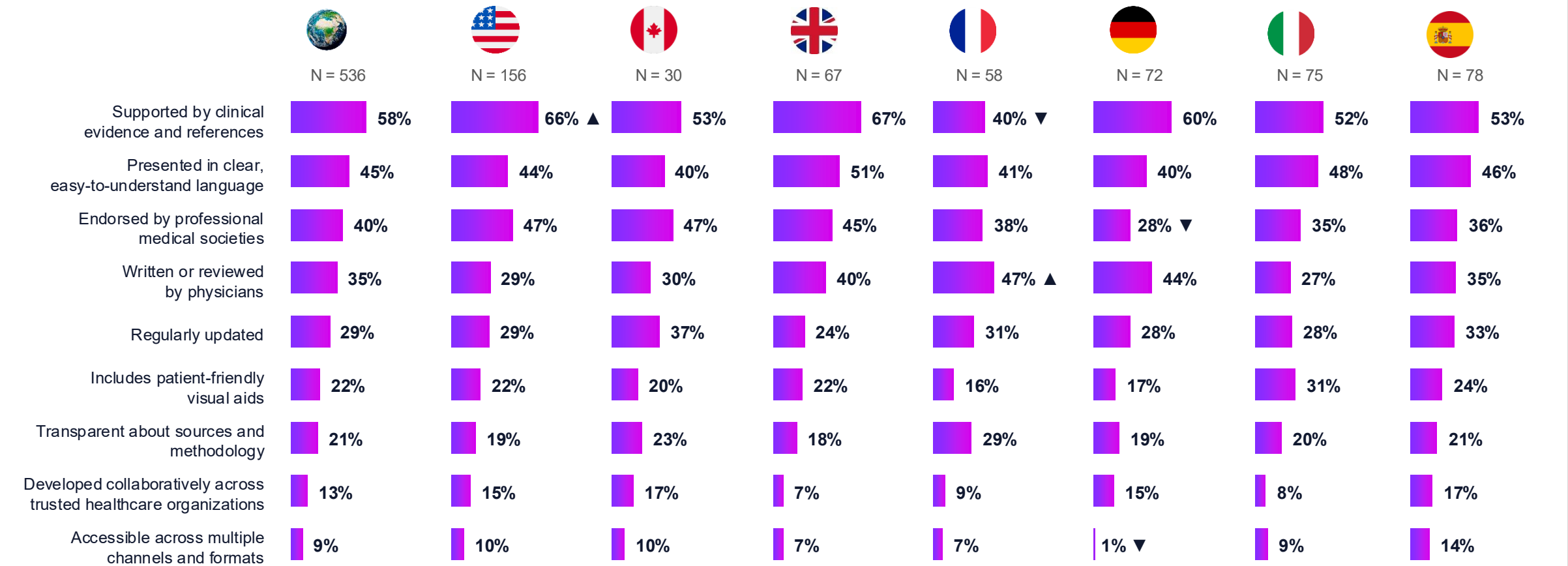
% of physicians selecting each option



Physicians consider patient education supported by clinical evidence and references to be the most credible and trustworthy

Q: Which characteristics make patient education materials most credible and trustworthy?

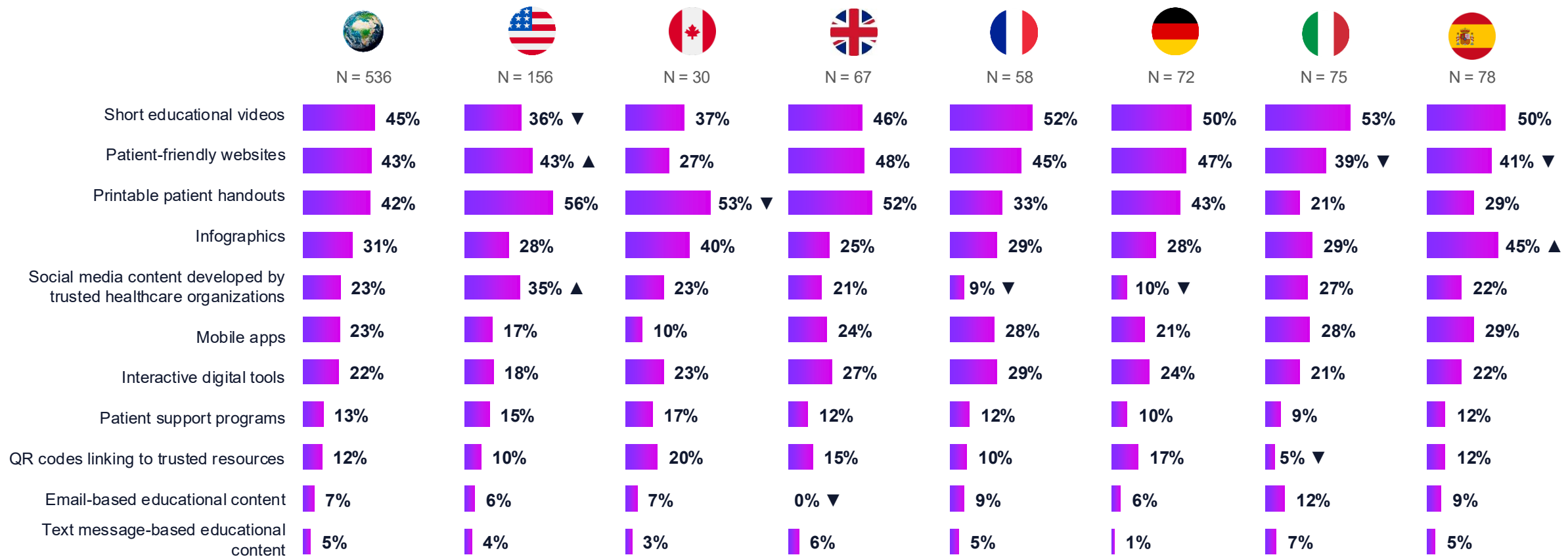
% of physicians selecting each option



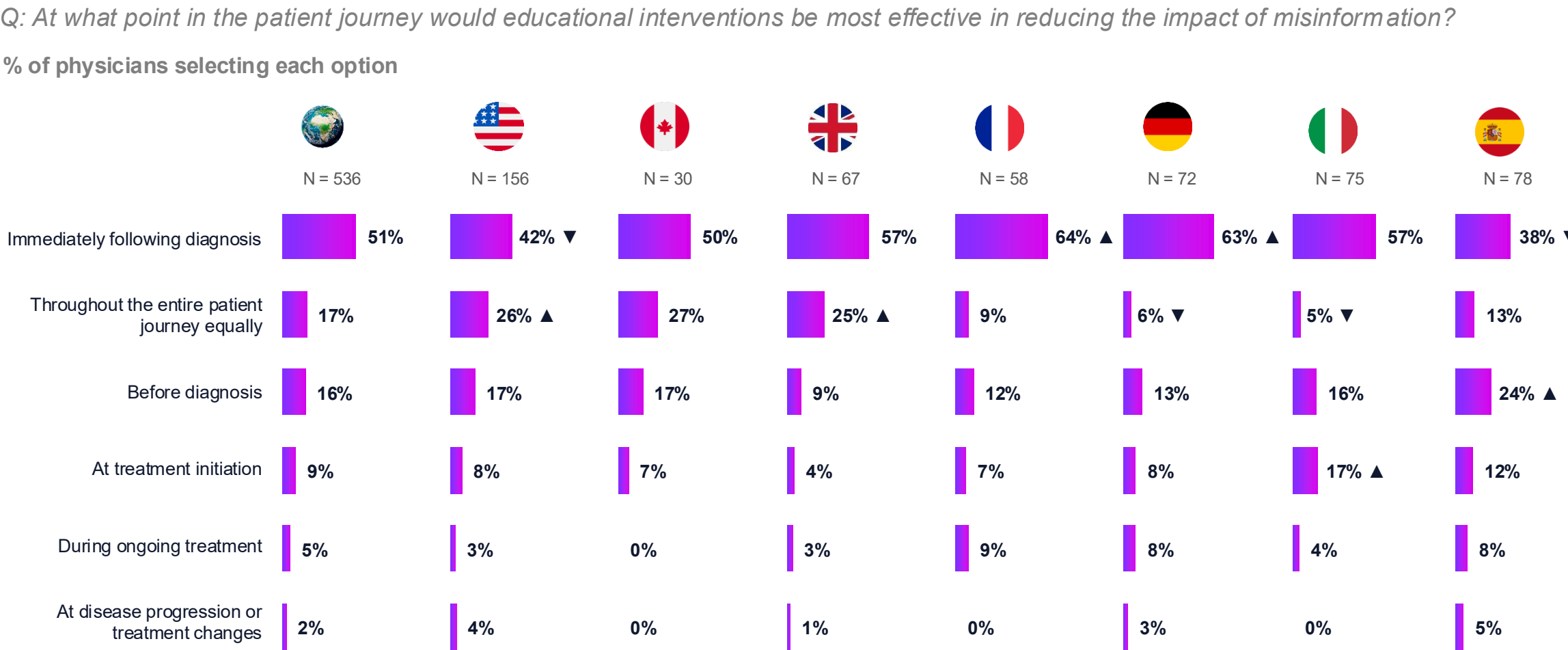
No single format dominates, although physicians most often cite short educational videos, patient-friendly websites, and printable patient handouts as effective formats for delivering trustworthy health information

Q: Which formats are most effective for delivering trustworthy health information to patients?

% of physicians selecting each option



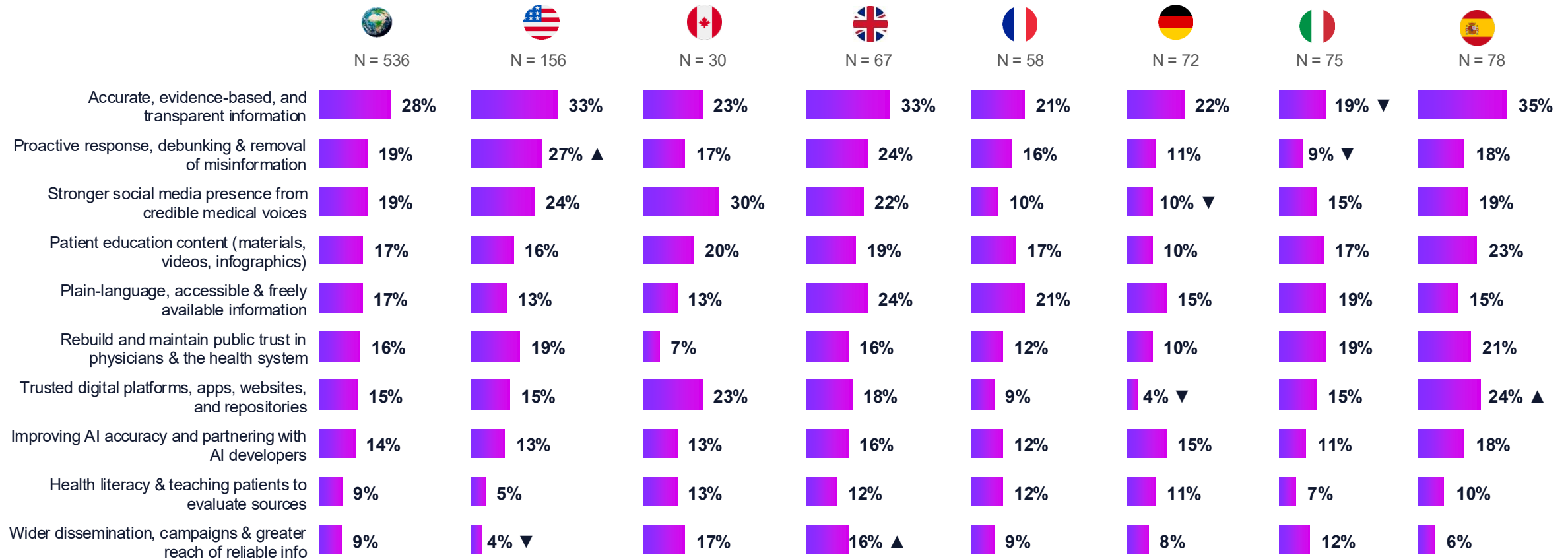
Physicians most often identify the period immediately following diagnosis as the most effective point for educational intervention



In unprompted responses, physicians most often identified the delivery of accurate, evidence-based, and transparent information as the healthcare industry's top priority for the next five years

Q: Looking ahead, what should be the healthcare industry's top priority in combating health misinformation over the next five years?

% of physicians suggesting each option (top 10 responses)



Thank you!

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