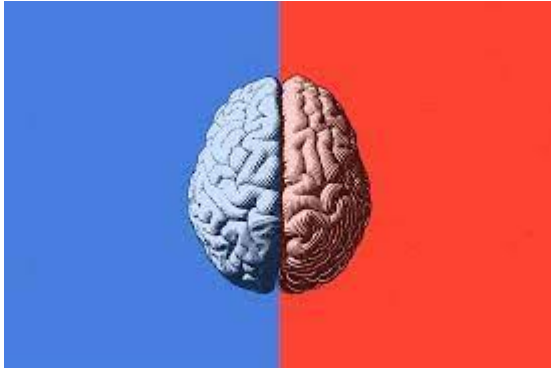


Mental Health, Your Voice, Your VOTE



As the midterm elections approach, understanding public perceptions of healthcare issues can allow one to predict electoral outcomes which will impact public health policy. A recent American Psychiatric Association (APA) survey found that nearly 80% of Americans believe mental health issues in the United States constitute a public health emergency and require more attention from lawmakers. In a press

statement released by the APA, the organization concluded that approximately 71% of adults surveyed state that they are more likely to vote for a political candidate who prioritizes mental health.

Healthcare and public policy are uniquely intertwined in a way that impacts patients, payers, providers, and other industry members. While the rates of mental health issues continue to change, what has remained consistent are the barriers to accessing mental health services. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, the United States will be short between 14,280 and 31,109 psychiatrists in the coming years. Aside from the shortage of medical professionals, coverage and availability of treatment provide an additional barrier.

Constituents want lawmakers to promote policy solutions that advance mental health. Those solutions exist and can be put into practice on the state or federal level. Our health and well-being are universal concerns that transcend political and party divides. The APA results indicate that awareness of mental health issues is increasing. As advocacy efforts and public attitudes change, policymakers should consider implementing changes to improve mental healthcare accessibility. For providers, these results indicate that Americans are eager for better mental health services. Providers are encouraged to lobby for improved research funding, access to care, and mental health coverage to their state and federal governments.

Assuming that the elections reflect the results of this study, Americans may see improved mental health coverage and equitable access to care in the coming years.

To check your voter registration status or to register to vote, go to www.vote.org. The fate of your mental health rests in your voice, your VOTE.