

# Survey: When Choosing Doctors, Americans Say Board Certification Matters

To understand consumer awareness and perceptions of Board Certification, the American Board of Medical Specialties—the non-profit organization that oversees most medical specialty Certification in the United States—enlisted the research organization NORC at the University of Chicago to conduct a national, statistically significant survey of U.S. consumers.

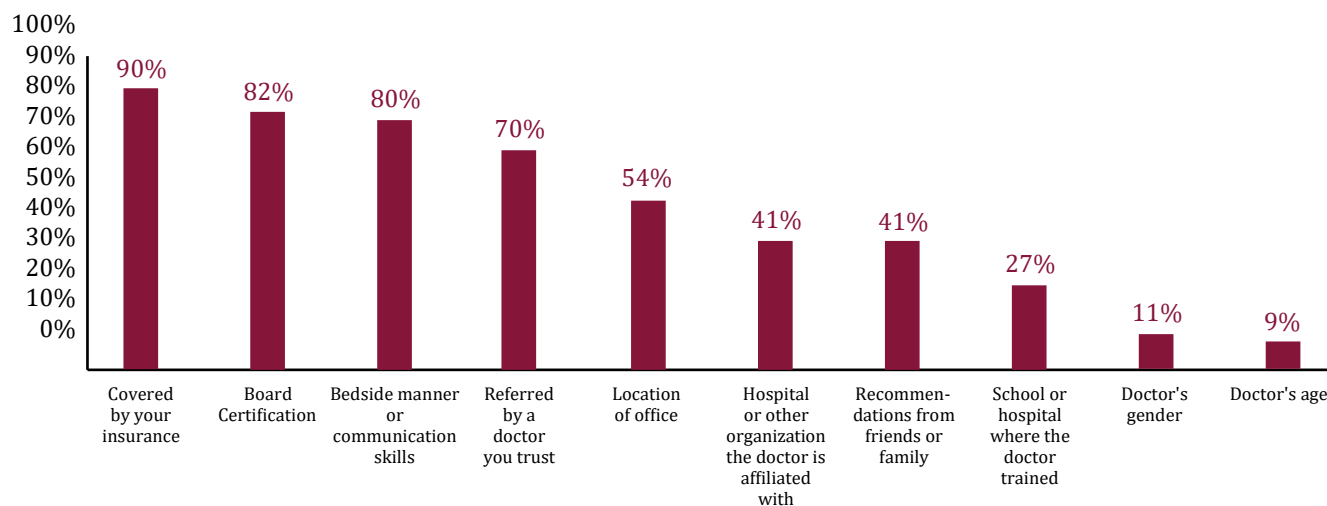
## FINDINGS

### Americans say Board Certification is important when choosing doctors.

**Board Certification status ranks second in importance only to whether a doctor accepts the patient's insurance.** The most important factors for people when choosing a doctor are (1) whether the physician is covered by their insurance (90%), (2) Board Certification status (82%), (3) bedside manner or communication skills (80%), and (4) referred by a doctor you trust (70%).

When asked how often they consider Board Certification status when selecting a doctor, more than two-thirds of consumers (67%) say they always or sometimes take it into account.

Percentage of respondents who say each factor is "important" when choosing a doctor



### People see Board Certification as a higher standard.

**People believe doctors, after obtaining a state license, should do more to practice medicine for the remainder of their careers.** When asked if—after completing medical school, residency and being licensed by a state to practice medicine—doctors should be able to practice medicine for the remainder of their careers with no additional testing, 76 percent disagree (49% strongly disagree; 27% somewhat disagree).

**People say Board Certified doctors deliver a higher quality of care than doctors who are not Board Certified.** When asked to compare doctors who are Board Certified to doctors who are not, 77 percent of consumers say Board Certified doctors provide a higher quality of care (21% strongly agree; 56% somewhat agree); 77 percent say Board Certified doctors demonstrate a higher level of expertise (22% strongly agree; 55% somewhat agree); and 73 percent say Board Certified doctors better demonstrate that they keep up with changes in medicine (20% strongly agree; 53% somewhat agree).



## ABOUT BOARD CERTIFICATION

*After graduating from medical school, doctors who want to treat patients must complete an internship and some additional medical education, and then pass a general exam to be licensed by the state where they intend to practice. Many doctors, however, choose to become Board Certified in one or more specialties—like dermatology, pediatrics or surgery. This requires further, extensive specialty-specific training and passing an exam that includes questions specific to their medical specialty. Doctors with an ongoing commitment to Board Certification participate in assessment and education beyond what is required of their peers, and continuously work to improve the care they deliver.*

### **People expect their doctors to stay up to date.**

Virtually all Americans expect their doctor to stay up to date with the latest medical advances and believe it should be required. In total, 98 percent of Americans expect their doctors to stay up to date with advances in their specialty (82% strongly agree; 16% somewhat agree).

Additionally, 95 percent of Americans think doctors should be required to demonstrate that they stay up to date with the latest advances in their specialty (62% strongly agree; 33% somewhat agree).

### **People want their doctors to participate in ongoing education and assessment activities.**

When asked if they expect their doctor to participate in an ongoing education and assessment process to ensure that he or she stays up to date with the latest advances in medicine, 95 percent of Americans say they agree (65% strongly agree; 30% somewhat agree).

## METHODOLOGY

NORC at the University of Chicago conducted the survey from May 9, 2018 to June 11, 2018. The survey was fielded using NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Respondents were contacted by phone and online. In total, 1,792 adults were surveyed, representing a mix of genders, races and ethnicities, education levels, and ages. The results have a margin of error of 3.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.

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*The survey was funded by the American Board of Medical Specialties.*

### **About the American Board of Medical Specialties**

Established in 1933, the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) is the leading not-for-profit organization overseeing physician certification in the United States. ABMS establishes the standards its 24 Member Boards use to develop and implement educational and professional evaluation, assessment, and certification of physician specialists, helping to improve the quality of care to the patients, families and communities we serve. More than 880,000 physicians are certified in one or more of the approved 40 specialties and 85 subspecialties offered by the [ABMS Member Boards](#). For more information about ABMS, visit [abms.org](http://abms.org) or call (312) 436-2600.