

Poll: Increasing violence in emergency departments contributes to physician burnout and impacts patient care

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Violence in the nation's emergency departments is increasing. More than 8 in 10 emergency physicians believe the rate of violence experienced in

emergency departments has increased with 45% saying it has greatly increased over the past five years according to a new poll conducted by the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) and Marketing General Incorporated (MGI).

"Violence in the emergency department continues to threaten and harm emergency physicians and [patients](#)," says Chris Kang, MD, FACEP, FAWM, president-elect of ACEP. "Over the past five years, emergency physicians have witnessed and experienced a steady increase in assaults made worse by the pandemic. This report underscores how attacks on emergency physicians, care teams, and staff are rampant and must be addressed."

The 2022 poll updates findings gathered in 2018 and shows that the frequency of [violence](#) in emergency departments is increasing with two-thirds of emergency physicians report being assaulted in the past year alone (66%), while more than one-third of respondents say they have been assaulted more than once.

"Emergency physicians should not have to compromise their duty to care for patients because of their injuries and worries about their [personal safety](#)," said Dr. Kang. "In addition to physical risks, the persistent threat of violence detracts from [patient care](#) and contributes significantly to emergency physicians' mental health challenges and burnout."

Emergency physicians almost unanimously agree that violence in the emergency department has adversely impacted patient care (89%). In addition to increasing wait times, these attacks often result in patients leaving the emergency department without being seen by a physician.

Violence in emergency departments also exacerbates already high rates of burnout and impacts healthcare workers' mental health. Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) of emergency physicians report a loss of productivity because of

violence, and 85% report [emotional trauma](#) and an increase in anxiety because of violence.

COVID-19 has had a chilling effect on the levels of trust and has heightened violence between patients, the care team, and staff. Two-thirds of emergency physicians (66%) believe COVID-19 has increased the amount of violence in emergency departments, and 69% of emergency physicians say that COVID-19 has decreased the level of trust between patients and physicians or [emergency department](#) staff.

"As emergency departments are no longer respected as safe zones, inadequate protections for emergency [medical professionals](#) and staff, and patients combined with insufficient accountability from hospitals, communities, and assailants can only encourage violence to continue," said Dr. Kang. "We must do more to make sure that physicians and staff can perform their duties without needing to worry about threats to their well-being or safety."

This poll was conducted online between July 25 and August 1, 2022, with 2,712 [emergency physicians](#) and has a margin of error of 1.9 percent.

More information: Poll results: www.emergencyphysicians.org/glossary-2022-abridged.pdf

Provided by American College of Emergency Physicians

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