



ANXIETY SCREENING RESEARCH REPORT

# Why Universal Anxiety Screening Matters

More than half of all patients evaluated for anxiety are ultimately diagnosed with the condition, yet thousands never receive any screening. The upshot? Better systems are needed to combat stigma, slash through red tape, aid under-resourced providers, and finally reach those who are suffering.

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# The United States of Anxiety

## Screening for Depression and Suicide Risk in Adults

In June 2023, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) made a paradigm-shifting mental health [recommendation](#): Every adult between the ages of 19 and 64, regardless of symptoms, should receive routine screenings for anxiety—a decree that came hot on the heels of a [previous one](#), which indicated that all children aged 8 to 18 should also be routinely screened for the condition.

Taken together, these standards make a bold statement about the state of our collective mental health, which [dipped sharply](#) in 2020 and has yet to fully recover.

## Calm Survey

To dig a layer deeper on this state of affairs, Calm conducted a survey of more than 1,000 adults, as well as several in-depth interviews with primary care physicians.

Our aim? To learn what is happening on the ground—in the cultural imagination and the neighborhood clinic, the average household and the typical medical practice. What do patients need? What can providers offer? And what can be done to close the gap between the two?

Here's what we learned—and where the industry should go from here.



of Americans believe the nation is in the midst of a mental health crisis according to a Kaiser Family Foundation [survey](#).





## Anxiety is Top of Mind for Most

Nearly three in 10 respondents (29%) say they suffer from **anxiety**, while a further 21% said they think they may suffer from the condition. But Calm's survey shows that, even for those not personally experiencing these difficulties, mental health remains an important and pervasive issue.

### Mental Health Engagement/Awareness by the Numbers

of survey respondents say their mental health is important to the



say they feel educated about the mental health issues our country is facing



are aware of the USPSTF's recommendation about universal anxiety screening



over 18 say they've been screened for anxiety in the last year



of parents with kids under 18 say their children have been screened in the last year



82% of those who say they suffer from anxiety feel comfortable talking with their doctor about it, while only 67% say they feel comfortable talking about these issues with family.

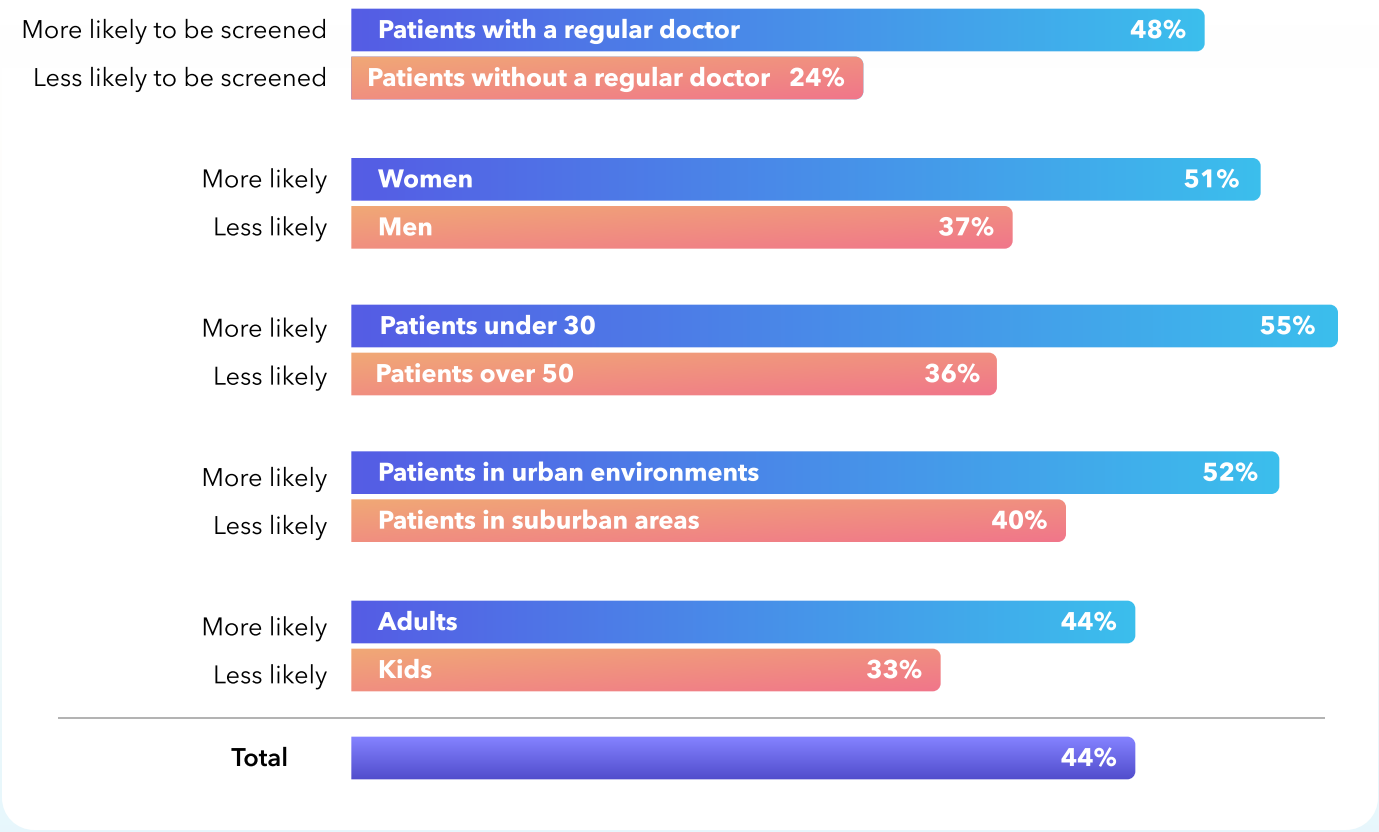
Survey respondents who are women (33%), under 30 years of age (48%), or with a household income of less than \$50k (40%) were **most likely to report living with anxiety.**

# How Routine is *Routine* Screening?

Despite USPSTF recommendations, clinical evaluations remain limited for many.



## Who Gets Evaluated for Anxiety—and Who Doesn't?



# What's Working

With most patients indicating strong satisfaction with their anxiety screenings, we asked what they felt was most successful about them. Patients who are happy with screenings say the experience is...

## Actionable:

"[It] made me realize what I was going through and helped me form a plan of action to ease my anxiety level."

## Informative:

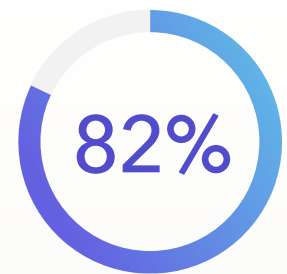
"It was an easy process and helped me to understand things that may be affecting me."

## Simple and Easy:

"It was straightforward and easy to complete."

## Generally Satisfying:

"It was a good experience and made me feel better overall."



of respondents who were screened for anxiety were happy with the evaluation process, with **57%** rating it "good" and **25%** rating it "excellent."

*"Because the [USPSTF] recommendation was somewhat new, some of the families that had seen me for prior years...were kind of curious about why we were talking about it, or why we were interested in it... [I would say to them that] the last couple of years were hard on everybody, and so we're just making sure that we touch base with everybody about how they're feeling. And so, I think it's been really well understood that that's just kind of what we're doing."*

– Primary Care Physician on the best way to bring up screening with patients

# Where Improvement is Needed

Though patients and providers agree that screening is essential, some indicate that the process could use some rethinking.

## What Patients Value Most—and Want More of—in Anxiety Screenings:

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 Empathy                      | 4 The Ability to Ask Questions and Discuss Results   |
| 2 Easy-to-Understand Questions | 5 Not Feeling like Provider is Just “Checking a Box” |
| 3 Thoroughness                 | 6 Less Discomfort with Answering Personal Questions  |

## The Payer/Provider Perspective

*“It’s very clunky. Say you gave them a sheet of paper—first of all, you are asking someone who is anxious to take this test. It’s not the best setup. You ask, Is it all the time, some of the time? How do you define that? It’s kind of unwieldy, time-consuming, and a bit confusing. I think we need a different tool. I think a written survey is not the way to go. But do I have an alternative on hand? No.”*

– Primary Care Provider on the limitations of written screenings

*“I get a half hour with every patient, but I don’t get two hours with every patient...if they came in to talk about how they were feeling anxious, you betcha we’re going to spend 30 minutes talking about anxiety, and that’s going to be a very in-depth conversation. But if you came in for your diabetes visit and then we discovered you were anxious and your blood pressure was high, then we have to juggle.”*

– Primary Care Provider on physicians’ time constraints

*“If you’re going to screen for something, you’re supposed to have the ability to match it with resources. And so, there’s a lot of the country right now that’s under-resourced for mental health benefits, both from insurance and from service providers. I’m leery about screening for things that I don’t have answers for.”*

– Primary Care Provider on post-screening follow-through

*“There was a great article...where they calculated out that, if primary care doctors actually did all the stuff that is now expected of them, you would need like 32 hours in the day or something like that. The problem is we are...asking primary care doctors to be your psychiatrist, your cardiologist, your neurologist, your orthopedist, and there are some practical realities.”*

– Health Plan Executive on provider limitations





## The Big Takeaway

**The recommendations are clear:** Virtually every American should be receiving routine, standardized anxiety screenings. Yet current assessment approaches are lacking in a few key ways—they fail to reach everyone, aren't always easy to engage with, and often occur in a vacuum, with providers often unequipped to refer patients to trusted therapists or other resources. But armed with this report's findings and Calm's toolbox of dynamic assessment resources, payers and providers can begin to reframe their screening methods to better serve those in need.

### About Calm Health

Calm Health builds mental health care solutions for payers, providers and self-insured employers to bridge the gap between mental and physical health care. Calm Health's offerings can efficiently screen patients for anxiety and depression, direct them to the appropriate level of care, provide personalized care plans including content from licensed clinicians, and measure health outcomes. Calm Health is designed to comply with HIPAA and HITRUST requirements and can easily integrate into existing health technology systems.

To learn more about how Calm Health can support your population in offering universal anxiety screenings, visit [calmhealth.com](https://calmhealth.com)