

# Public perceptions of doctors of chiropractic: results of a national survey and examination of variation according to respondents' likelihood to use chiropractic, experience with chiropractic, and chiropractic supply in local healthcare markets

William B Weeks, MD, PhD, MBA

Christine M Goertz, DC, PhD

William C Meeker, DC, MPH

Dennis M Marchiori, DC, PhD

# Objectives

To determine whether

- Perceptions of doctors of chiropractic (DCs) varied according to likeliness to use chiropractic care,
- Particular demographic characteristics were associated with chiropractic care use, and
- Perceptions of DCs varied according to the per-capita supply of DCs in local healthcare markets

# Methods

We analyzed results from a 26-item nationally representative survey of 5,422 members of The Gallup Panel that was conducted in the spring of 2015 (response rate = 29%) that sought to elicit the perceptions and use of DCs by US adults.

# Comparison groups

We compared survey responses across

- Respondents who had different likelihoods to use DCs for treatment of neck or back pain, and
- Respondents who had different experiences using DCs

**Table1. Comparison groups**

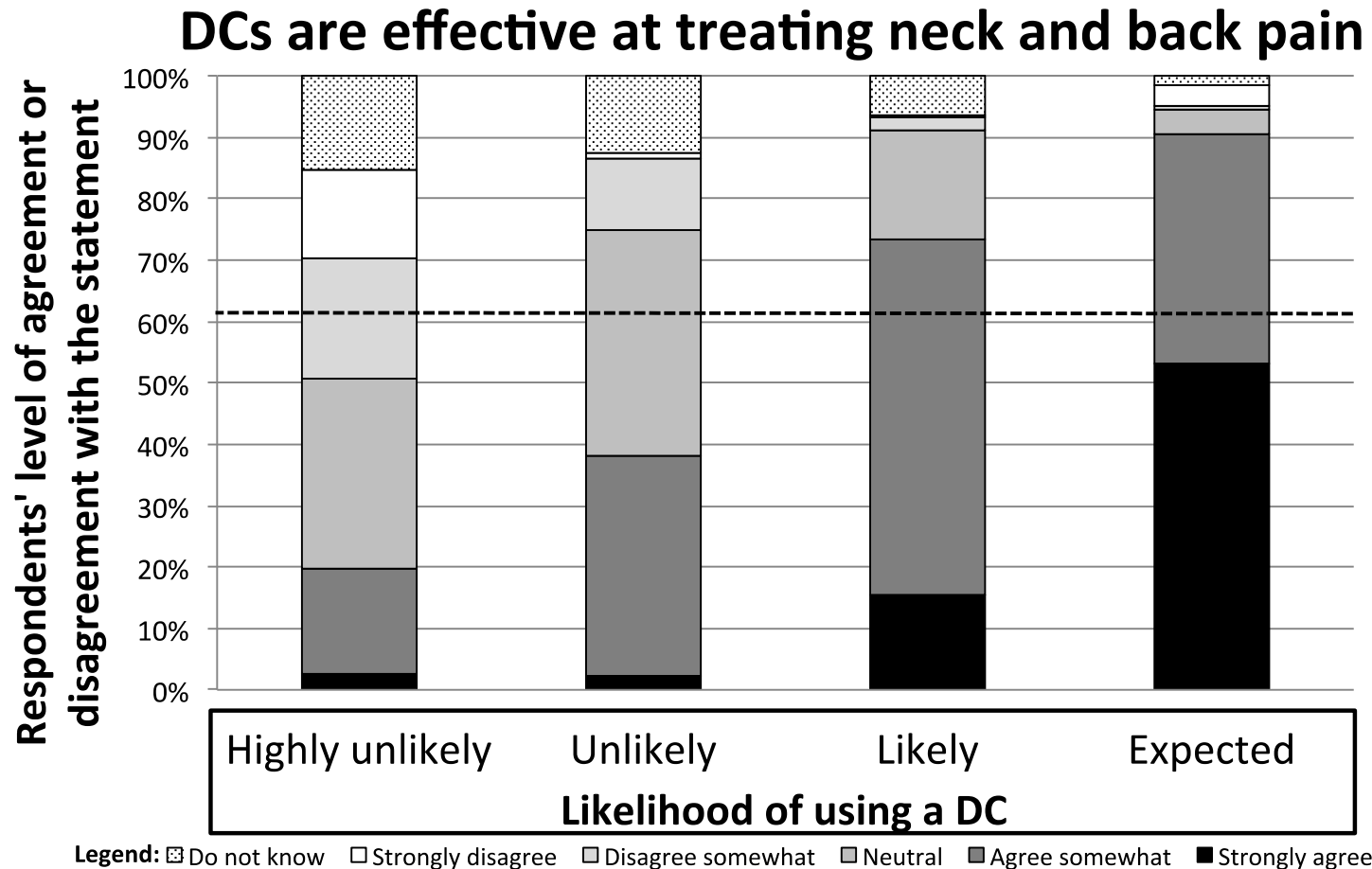
	<b>Likelihood to use a DC for treatment of neck or back pain based on responses to two survey questions:</b>					<b>Total</b>
	Expected to use	Likely to use	Unlikely to use	Highly unlikely to use	Don't know	
N	1876	1,163	1,171	991	127	<b>5,328</b>
%	35.2%	21.8%	22.0%	18.6%	2.4%	<b>100%</b>

	<b>The respondent has used a DC .....</b>				<b>Total</b>
	within the last 12 months	within the last 5 years	more than 5 years ago	Never	
N	744	639	1,314	2,631	<b>5,328</b>
%	14.0%	12.0%	24.7%	49.4%	<b>100%</b>

# Patients who used DCs were

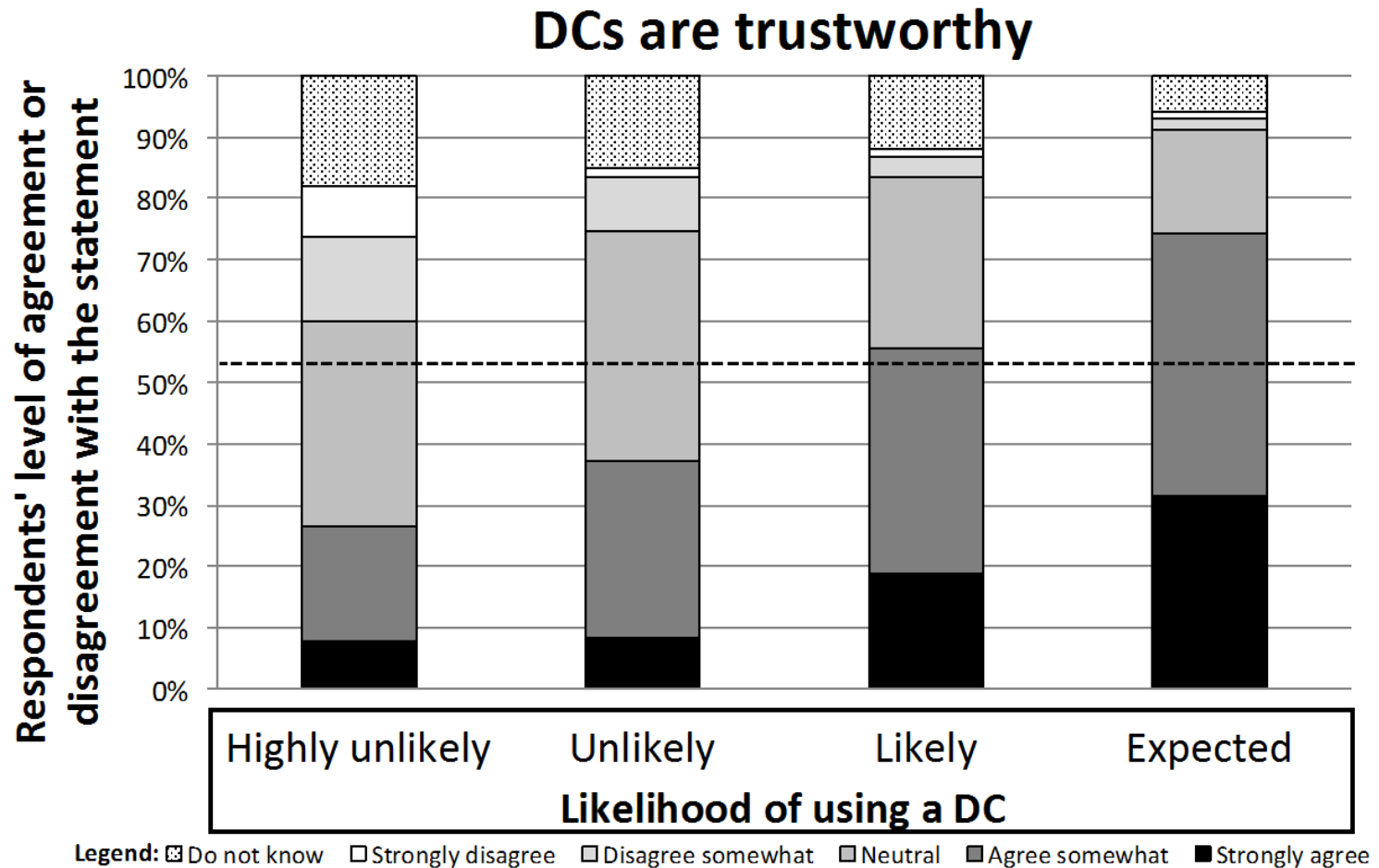
- More likely to be
  - Female
  - White
  - Older
  - Employed full time

Expected users were more likely to perceive that DCs are effective at treating neck and back pain.... (p<0.001)



The dotted horizontal line indicates the overall proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to the question.

...and more likely to perceive that DCs are trustworthy ( $p < 0.001$ ).

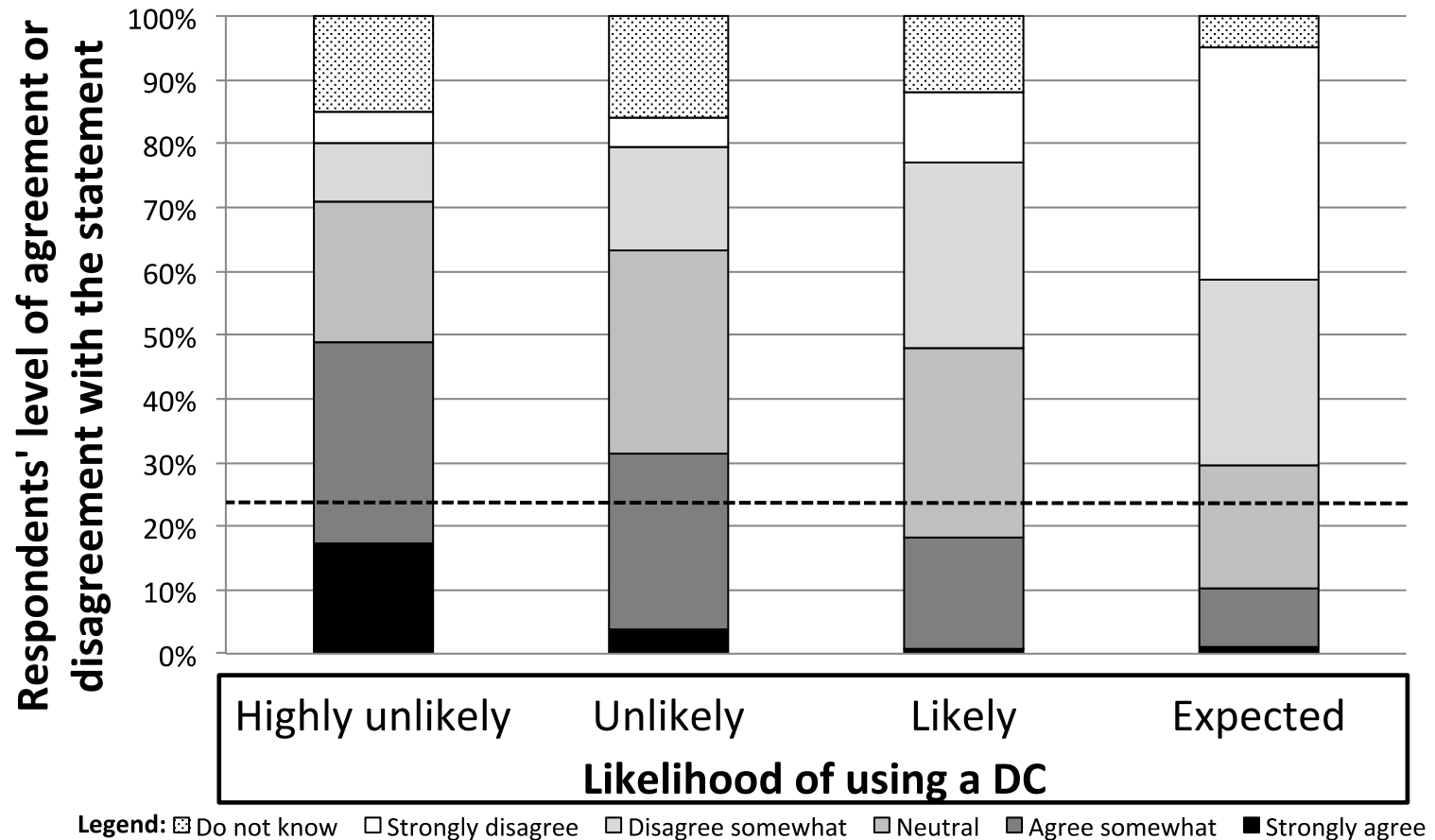


The dotted horizontal line indicates the overall proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to the question.



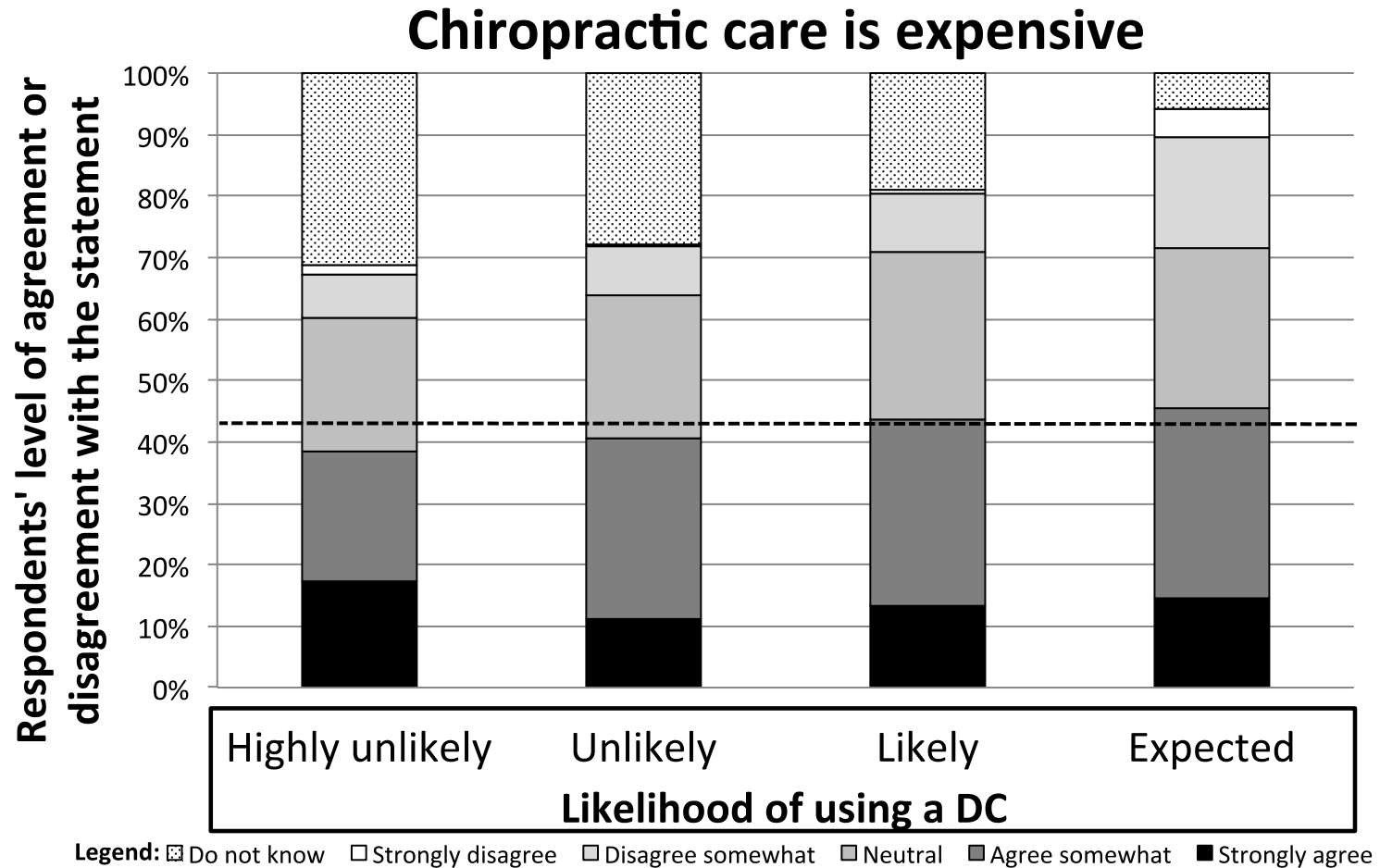
Expected users were less likely to perceive chiropractic care as dangerous....  
( $p < 0.001$ )

## Chiropractic care is dangerous



The dotted horizontal line indicates the overall proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to the question.

....but more likely to perceive that chiropractic care is expensive( $p < 0.001$ ).



The dotted horizontal line indicates the overall proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to the question.

# We also found

- That patients who had used DCs tended to want to use them for treatment of back or neck pain as opposed to for general healthcare issues
- That a higher per-capita supply of DCs was associated with higher utilization rates and a more favorable regard for DCs.

# Summary

- Our analysis of a national sample of US adults found that 14.0% of US adults have used chiropractic care in the prior 12 months.
- The study found that 61.4% of US adults believed that chiropractic care was effective at treating neck and back pain.
- Among survey respondents, 52.6% thought doctors of chiropractic (DCs) were trustworthy, while 24.2% perceived chiropractic care as being dangerous.
- As respondents' likelihood to use a DC increased, perceptions of effectiveness and trustworthiness increased, and perceptions of danger decreased.
- A higher per-capita supply of DCs in the local healthcare market was associated with a higher utilization rate and more positive perception of DCs.

# For more information

Read the paper

Read the report ([www.palmer.edu/gallup-report](http://www.palmer.edu/gallup-report))

Contact Dr. Weeks at [wbw@dartmouth.edu](mailto:wbw@dartmouth.edu)