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National Poll on Children's Health

School Violence, Gun-Related Injuries in Top 10 Child Health Concerns in U.S.

In this year's eighth annual survey of top health concerns conducted by the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, adults rate health concerns for kids in their local communities as well as for kids across the U.S.

These top 10 lists have strong similarities – obesity, smoking and tobacco use, bullying and drug abuse are in the top 4 concerns among adults for children's health in their local communities and for children across the country. There are also key differences: school violence and gun-related injuries are among the top 10 concerns for children's health across the U.S., but not for children in adults' local communities.

Childhood obesity remains the leading health concern for children in their communities and for kids across the country. Smoking & tobacco use is the second for kids in their own community while bullying is seen as second for kids across the country. Drug abuse is the third most commonly identified child health problems by adults for kids in their own community as well across the U.S. (Figure 1).

Report Highlights

Adults rate childhood obesity at the top of the list of big health problems for kids in their communities and for kids across the U.S.

Bullying is rated as the #2 health concern for kids across the country.

School violence is rated as #5 health concern for kids across the country.

Contact us

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, and the University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit.

Figure 1: TOP 10 U.S. CHILDREN'S HEALTH CONCERNS RATED AS A "BIG PROBLEM" BY ADULTS IN 2014



LOCAL COMMUNITY		ACROSS THE COUNTRY
Childhood Obesity • 29%	1	Childhood Obesity • 55%
Smoking & Tobacco Use • 26%	2	Bullying • 52%
Drug Abuse • 26%	3	Drug Abuse • 49%
Bullying • 23%	4	Smoking & Tobacco Use • 47%
Stress • 22%	5	School Violence • 44%
Alcohol Abuse • 19%	6	Child Abuse & Neglect • 42%
Internet Safety • 18%	7	Alcohol Abuse • 41%
Child Abuse & Neglect • 18%	8	Internet Safety • 40%
Teen Pregnancy • 16%	9	Gun Related Injuries • 39%
Not Enough Opportunities for Physical Activity • 15%	10	Teen Pregnancy • 37%

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by GfK Custom Research, LLC (GfK), for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital via a method used in many published studies. The survey was administered in June 2014 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults age 18 and older (n=2,027) from GfK's web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 58% among the panel members contacted to participate. The margin of error is ± 1 to 4 percentage points.

Many of the top 10 health concerns in local communities and at the national level relate to health behaviors for children and teens: childhood obesity, smoking & tobacco use, drug & alcohol abuse, bullying and teen pregnancy. Top child health concerns at the local community level this year also include stress, internet safety, child abuse & neglect, and not enough opportunities for physical activity.

Childhood obesity tops the list of biggest child health problems in the minds of adults in their local communities and across the country. Along with obesity, from 2007 through 2014 drug abuse and smoking have also consistently been rated at or near the top of the list of health problems for kids from the perspective of adults (not just parents).

This year, other child health concerns rated as a “big problem” for children and teens across the U.S. include: stress (37%), unsafe neighborhoods (35%), sexting (35%), depression (32%), suicide (31%), hunger (31%), motor vehicle accidents (30%), sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS (29%), ADHD/ADD (26%), not enough opportunities for physical activity (26%), autism (22%), racial inequality in infant mortality (17%), food allergies (16%), safety of medications (14%), outbreaks of illnesses that can be prevented by vaccines (13%), and safety of vaccines (9%).

In comparison, other child health concerns rated as a “big problem” for children and teens in the respondents' own community include: ADHD (14%), unsafe neighborhoods (14%), sexting (14%), depression (13%), school violence (13%), suicide (12%), motor vehicle accidents (12%), gun related injuries (12%), hunger (11%), sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS (11%), autism (9%), food allergies (7%), racial inequality in infant mortality (6%), outbreaks of illnesses that can be prevented by vaccines (5%), safety of medications (5%), and safety of vaccines (4%).

Implications

Each year, the National Poll on Children's Health takes the pulse of the views of adults in the U.S. about child health issues, as a way to help inform program priorities in medicine and public health and measure whether information about specific health challenges for children and adolescents are reaching the public. For the first time this year, we asked the public to provide their views from two perspectives – child health problems in their local communities, and also across the U.S.

The results of this latest Poll reinforce the consistent concern of adults about the problems of childhood obesity, smoking and tobacco use, drug use, and bullying for children. Moreover, the top 10 child health concerns reveal how strongly the public perceives that behaviors – of the children and the adults around them – are a root cause of many problems.

School violence and gun-related injuries were rated among the top 10 child health concerns by adults at the national level, which is a new finding in this year's Poll. The presence of these concerns among the top 10 nationally, but not at the local community level, may reflect broad awareness about events that have affected several schools but may not be perceived by many adults as a problem in their local communities at this time.

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