

# Presidential candidates should address childhood obesity and bullying, poll says

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During this presidential election season, there will be plenty of debate between the candidates on the issues. But when it comes to childhood health concerns, a new poll shows many adults agree on the top priorities they want to see the candidates address: childhood obesity and bullying.

The University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital [National Poll](#) on Children's [Health](#) recently asked adults to name the top child health concerns that the [presidential candidates](#) should address.

In a survey of more than 2,100 adults, participants selected the single most important child health issue from a list of 24 common child health concerns. Overall, [childhood obesity](#) was ranked highest, followed by bullying, drug abuse and child abuse and neglect.

In the poll, about one in six adults (17 percent) ranked childhood obesity first, and one in 7 (15 percent) put bullying as the top concern. Drug abuse was ranked highest by 11 percent and 8 percent chose child abuse and neglect. Together, these four priorities were the choice of over half of U.S. adults.

Answers did not differ based on the respondents' political party affiliation or race/ethnicity.

"[Healthcare reform](#) is a major topic during this election season, but much of that focuses on [uninsured adults](#) and the costs of healthcare. The health of children usually is not the focus of the political talk," says

Matthew M. Davis M.D., M.A.P.P., director of the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health. But many serious health problems for adults stem from behaviors and patterns that begin in childhood—for instance, obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and depression, Davis says, which reinforces the need for policies of early intervention.

"By asking about children's health and health policy, we hope to bring the public's voice to the policymakers. We found that no matter their politics or race/ethnicity, adults in the US agree on these top child health priorities," says Davis, who also is associate professor in the [Child Health](#) Evaluation and Research Unit and the Division of General Medicine at the U-M Medical School, and associate professor of Public Policy at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

Davis says the high ranking of childhood obesity is consistent with previous poll results and other national data, and reinforces the need for policies to help children and parents.

"The federal government is currently responsible for many programs that may have an impact on childhood obesity, like school lunches, encouragement of physical activity and subsidies for specific food items," Davis says. "But the public is aware that more may be needed, and seems eager to hear from presidential candidates that they've made this a priority."

The public also recognizes that bullying, whether on the playground, at school or even online, also can lead to both immediate and lasting health problems for children.

"These are common issues that we can agree on, no matter your choice of presidential candidates. These four issues -- childhood obesity, bullying, drug abuse and child abuse and neglect – were the choice of more than half of the adults that we polled," Davis says.

**More information:** Full report: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health [mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/p ... ood-obesity-bullying](https://mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/poll-on-childhood-obesity-bullying)

Provided by University of Michigan Health System

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