

School violence, gun-related injury among top 10 child health concerns nationally

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Childhood obesity remains the top health concern for children in 2014, but when asked about national concerns, adults put school violence and gun-related injuries in the top 10, according to a new University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

In the poll's annual top 10 list, a nationwide sample of adults were asked to identify the biggest health concerns for kids in their communities, as well as kids nationwide. Overall, [childhood obesity](#) is rated at the top of both lists: 29 percent of adults said obesity is a 'big problem' for children in their [local communities](#) and 55 percent said it is 'big problem' across the country.

The top 10 rankings for 2014 are:

LOCAL COMMUNITY

- Childhood obesity-29 %
- Smoking and tobacco use-26%
- Drug Abuse-26%
- Bullying-23 %
- Stress-22%
- Alcohol abuse-19%
- Internet safety-18%
- Child abuse and neglect-18%

- Teen pregnancy-16%
- Not enough physical activity options-15%

ACROSS THE U.S.

- Childhood obesity-55%
- Bullying-52%
- Drug Abuse-49%
- Smoking and tobacco use-47%
- School violence-44%
- Child abuse and neglect-42%
- Alcohol abuse-41%
- Internet safety-40%
- Gun-related injuries-39%
- Teen pregnancy-37%

"Obesity remains a top [child health](#) problem overall, which has been a persistent concern in our annual top 10 polls along with others like bullying, smoking and drug abuse," 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 this year's top 10 lists differ in key ways. School violence and gun-related injuries are on the list of big child health problems from a national perspective, but not a local community perspective."

Recent shootings and other instances of violence in schools may have prompted concern among [adults](#) from a national perspective, says Davis, who also is professor of pediatrics, internal medicine, public policy and health management and policy at the U-M Medical School, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy and School of Public Health.

The poll shows a strong link between many of the top 10 child health

concerns to health behaviors of children and their families, says Davis, also a member of the U-M Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation. These concerns indicate that the public understands the powerful role of behavior in health – in terms of short-term impact and long-term consequences. Childhood obesity is a good example.

"Recent data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that rates of obesity in early childhood are decreasing in some states," says Davis.

"But we know obesity among children remains substantially higher than it was in generations past. So this poll reminds us that much of the public recognizes the need to keep working hard on this problem."

Davis says he hopes the results of this poll help health professionals, community leaders and elected representatives prioritize the threats to children's health in their own communities.

"We need to work hard together on these issues of greatest concern to the public, and take note of the particular national concern about [school violence](#) and gun-related injuries so we can address how to improve and safeguard our [children's health](#)," he says.

More information: Full report: [C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health](#)

Provided by University of Michigan Health System

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