



Americans rate the flu epidemic, cancer, and obesity as top health concerns.

Nearly three in four Americans say the government needs to spend more on health priorities and emerging threats.

Spending on health threats viewed as vital to improving homeland security.

January 29, 2004

The following are key findings from our survey conducted in January 2004 on behalf of the American Cancer Society and Trust for America’s Health.

Flu ranked as year’s top health concern.

- The flu epidemic is the single greatest potential health threat (35%) featured in recent news stories that concern Americans at this time. Other potential health threats that concern the American public include anthrax or other biological or chemical terrorism concerns (19%), West Nile (15%), and “Mad Cow” disease at (13%).
- A higher percentage of women than men think that flu epidemic is a bigger concern (40% vs. 30%).

Cancer and obesity viewed as biggest health risks facing people in their community.

Cancer	25%
Obesity	21%
Heart disease	17%
Diabetes	15%
Lack of necessary vaccines such as flu shots.....	7%
Alzheimer	5%
Anthrax or other bioterrorism.....	4%

- Even young Americans must worry about their weight. Adults under the age of 35 are twice as likely (23%-12%) to say obesity is the biggest single health risk not heart disease, while adults 35 or older are equally concerned about heart disease (19%) and obesity (19%). However, adults of every age say cancer is the biggest health risk facing people in their community.

Americans want government to spend more on public health.

- Over three in four (78%) Americans want the government to spend more to protect the nation's health against major diseases and emerging bio-threats.

Increased spending on health threats is important to homeland security

- Most Americans (56%) say there is a clear relationship between increased spending on emerging health threats such as bio-terrorism and improving our homeland security system. They think that increasing spending on emerging health threats is key to improving our homeland security. Another 37% say increased spending on emerging health threats may be important but is not connected to homeland security
- There is bi-partisan agreement on this point. Both Republicans (54%) and Democrats (58%) are in agreement that increasing the spending on health risks will improve our national system of homeland security.

Nation seen as unprepared for major health threats

- There is some question about how fully US is prepared to handle major health threats. Twelve percent of Americans say that we are "not at all prepared" while 7% say we are "extremely well prepared". However, 49% also say we are at least "somewhat prepared" to handle major health threats.

Better than eight in ten Americans favor increase in biomedical research

- 86% of the American public wants the federal government to increase spending on biomedical research. A 53% majority of all Americans say they would like to see an increase of up to 10% above current level of spending on biomedical research, with another 33% who would increase spending even more than 10%.

Methodology

Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates conducted 911 telephone interviews nation wide among adults 18 years or older on January 13-14, 2004. The overall margin of error is +/- 3.3% at 95% confidence level.