

Poll On America's Top Health Concerns From The American Cancer Society And Trust For America's Health

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 public health viewed as vital to improving homeland security.

The following are key findings from a survey conducted in January 2004 by Penn Schoen & Berland Associates on behalf of the American Cancer Society and Trust for America's Health.

Flu ranked as the year's top health concern

■ The flu epidemic is the single greatest potential health threat (35%) featured in recent news stories that concerns 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%), "Mad Cow" disease (13%), and SARS (9%).

■ 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 communities

Cancer	25%
Obesity	21%
Heart disease	17%
Diabetes	15%
Lack of necessary vaccines such as flu shots	7%
Alzheimer's	5%
Anthrax or other bioterrorism	4%
Don't know/ No response	10%

Americans want government to spend more on public health

■ More than 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.



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non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority.



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Nation seen as unprepared for major health threats

■ There is some question about how fully the 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.

2003 TOP U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH HEADLINES

Last year, while threats like bioterrorism, SARS, and Mad Cow were very prominent in media headlines, this poll shows that people are more concerned with health matters that impact the daily lives of their families and communities.

JANUARY

“Despite Concerns, Smallpox Vaccination Program Moving Ahead, Officials Say,” *Associated Press*, 1/18/03

“Puzzling Rise in Early Births; For 20 Years the Rate of Premature Births in the U.S. Has Climbed. Doctors Are Still Trying to Find Out Why,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1/20/03

FEBRUARY

“FDA Budget Looks to Protect Nation’s Food,” *UPI*, 2/3/03

“Labs Unprepared for Chemical Attacks; Most State Facilities Rated at 4 or Below on a Scale of 1 to 10,” *Washington Post*, 2/7/03

MARCH

“New Fish Consumption Advisories Include Mercury Warnings,” *Associated Press*, 3/8/03

“Rare Health Alert Is Issued by W.H.O. For Mystery Illness,” *New York Times* 3/16/03

APRIL

“Congress, White House OK Smallpox Vaccine Compensation,” *Los Angeles Times*, 4/12/03

“Being Overweight Linked to Dying of Cancer,” *USA Today*, 4/23/03

“SARS Cases Continue to Mount Worldwide,” *UPI*, 4/30/03

MAY

“Case of Mad Cow in Canada Shakes Markets,” *Wall Street Journal*, 5/21/03

“Howard U. Plans Genetics Database; School Says Data on African Americans Could Lead to Better Medical Care,” *Washington Post*, 5/28/03

JUNE

“Monkeypox Appears to Spread,” *Wall Street Journal*, 6/9/03

“Animal-Borne Illnesses Abound,” *USA Today*, 6/18/03

“Hormone Pills May Spur Breast Cancer,” *Associated Press*, 6/25/03

“U.N. Warns of Cancer Crisis in Developing World,” *Reuters*, 6/26/03

JULY

“Year’s First West Nile Case Confirmed,” *Los Angeles Times*, 7/8/03

“Rise in HIV Cases Stirs Fears of a Resurgence,” *Wall Street Journal*, 7/29/03

AUGUST

“Most Heart Attacks Caused by an Unhealthy Lifestyle,” *USA Today*, 8/20/03

“Suburban Sprawl Adds Health Concerns, Studies Say,” *New York Times*, 8/31/03

SEPTEMBER

“Mixed Progress against Cancer as Decline in Deaths Slows, Report Says,” *Associated Press*, 9/3/03

“Survey: Few Doctors Well-Prepared to Deal with Bioterrorism,” *Scripps-Howard News Service*, 9/9/03

OCTOBER

“2 Years After Anthrax Letters, Survivors Still Suffer Effects,” *USA Today*, 10/3/03

“Extreme Obesity is Ballooning in U.S. Adults,” *Associated Press*, 10/13/03

NOVEMBER

“Major Hepatitis A Outbreak Tied to Green Onions,” *Washington Post*, 11/25/03

“Influenza Season Kicks in Early, Four Dead,” *UPI*, 11/27/03

DECEMBER

“CDC Steps Up Efforts to Track Flu, Assess Security,” *Wall Street Journal*, 12/19/03

“U.S. is Examining a Mad Cow Case, First in Country,” *New York Times*, 12/24/03