



# Mott Poll Report

August 21, 2023  
Volume 43  
Issue 6

## Overuse of Devices And Social Media Top Parent Concerns

The C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked a national sample of parents to rate their level of concern about a variety of health topics. Parents rated each topic as a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem for children and teens in the United States. The leading concerns rated by parents as a big problem for children and teens are presented below.

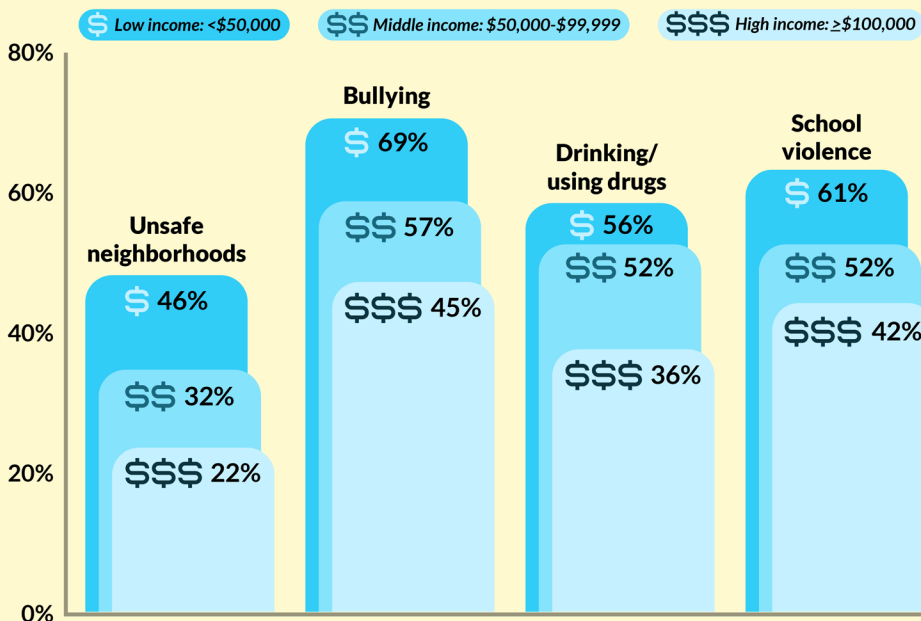
### 2023 Top 10 Child Health Concerns for Parents:

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|---|---|
| 1. Overuse of devices/screen time (67%) | 6. Stress/anxiety (52%)                       |
| 2. Social media (66%)                   | 7. Unhealthy diet (52%)                       |
| 3. Internet safety (62%)                | 8. Costs of healthcare/health insurance (50%) |
| 4. Depression/suicide (57%)             | 9. School violence (49%)                      |
| 5. Bullying (53%)                       | 10. Smoking/vaping (48%)                      |

Falling just outside the Top 10 are obesity (48%), guns/gun injuries (47%), lack of mental health services (47%), poverty (45%), drinking/using drugs (44%), child abuse/neglect (42%), followed by unequal access to health care (35%), parental stress (35%), inaccurate/misleading health information (31%), teen pregnancy/sexual activity (31%), discrimination (31%), unsafe neighborhoods (30%), gay/gender issues (LGBTQ) (29%), and health risks from polluted water and air (23%). At the bottom of the list are safety of vaccines (16%), over-involved parents/parents doing too much (13%) and COVID (12%).

Several issues are viewed as a big problem by a higher proportion of parents in low-income (<\$50,000) households; these include depression/suicide, bullying, school violence, unsafe neighborhoods, drinking/drugs, smoking/vaping, teen pregnancy/sexual activity, child abuse/neglect, parental stress, discrimination, COVID, and health risks from pollution. In contrast, overuse of devices and social media are viewed as big problems by a higher proportion of parents in middle- (\$50,000-\$99,999) and high-income (≥\$100,000) households. Parents across income groups have similar ratings for unhealthy diet, obesity, costs of healthcare, and lack of mental health services.

### Parents from lower-income households are more likely to view issues as a big problem for children 0-18



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2023

### Report Highlights

Top parental concerns center on children's and teens' use of devices and social media.

Over half of parents rate mental health issues as a big problem.

Parents in low-income households rate more issues as a big problem for children and teens.

## Data Source & Methods

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Ipsos Public Affairs, LLC (Ipsos) for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. The survey was administered in February 2023 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults who were parents of at least one child age 0-18 years living in their household (n=2,100). Adults were selected from Ipsos'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 62% among panel members contacted to participate. This report is based on responses from 2,099 parents with at least one child age 0-18. The margin of error for results presented in this report is ±2 to 5 percentage points.

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics, and the Susan B. Meister Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Center.

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## C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Co-Director: Sarah J. Clark, MPH  
Co-Director: Susan J. Woolford, MD, MPH  
Contributing Editor: Gary L. Freed, MD, MPH  
Poll Manager: Dianne C. Singer, MPH  
Data Analyst: Acham Gebremariam, MS  
Publication Designer: Sara L. Schultz, MPS



**SUSAN B. MEISTER  
CHILD HEALTH EVALUATION  
AND RESEARCH CENTER**  
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## Implications

Since 2007, the Mott Poll has released periodic reports on parents' level of concern about a variety of health-related issues for US children and teens. The top issues centered around the role of social media and the internet in children's lives, with two-thirds of parents expressing concerns about children's increased use of social media, as well as overall screen time. These topics became more prominent during the pandemic, and this report shows that parent concerns have not faded. As shown in prior Mott Poll Reports, children are using social media at younger ages, and parents struggle with how to appropriately monitor this area and help their children avoid the negative aspects of its use.

Poll results also demonstrate parents' continued concern about children's mental health. Over half of parents cited mental health topics as big problems of US children, such as depression/suicide, and stress/anxiety, and related topics like bullying. Notably, nearly half of parents cited lack of mental health services as a big problem. The mismatch between the growing number of youth with mental health concerns and the limited access to mental health services has short and long-term implications for children's well-being.

Parents also expressed a high level of concern about violence in school, which may reflect direct experience with school shootings or fights as well as media coverage about such events. In addition, changes to the school environment (e.g., metal detectors, armed guards, locked doors) and active shooter drills may remind children and parents about the potential for school violence. Parents may struggle with how to manage their own stress and anxiety while they try to reassure their child. They may want to talk with their child periodically about how they perceive their safety in school and their emotions regarding unsafe school incidents. Parents can talk with their child's teacher or principal to make sure adequate protocols are in place if an unsafe situation arises.

New to the Top 10 is concern about the costs of healthcare for children, including costs of getting health insurance. In recent years, federal policies required states to maintain Medicaid enrollment through the duration of the pandemic. As these requirements are ending, families that no longer qualify will face the challenge of finding affordable coverage for their children.

Unhealthy eating and obesity continue to rate as important issues, but have been overtaken by concerns about mental health and social media/screen time. For both ongoing and emerging concerns, parents may find their child's health care provider can serve as an effective partner to help address these problems.

This Mott Poll also highlights the greater level of concern about a host of issues among parents from lower-income households. This may reflect their day-to-day experiences dealing with environmental challenges such as unsafe neighborhoods, as well as bullying or discrimination that may be more frequently experienced by children from low-income families. In addition, low-income parents reported higher levels of concern about mental health and substance use; while these problems affect children and teens across the income spectrum, it's possible that low-income parents feel more vulnerable about these problems. Overall, parents from low-income households rated a higher number of topics as big problems; concern about a greater number of child health issues may contribute to their higher reports of parental stress as a big problem.