

DE BEAUMONT FOUNDATION HARVARD T.H. CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Priorities for Local Health Departments 2026

Topline Results

This survey was fielded for the Harvard Opinion Research Program (HORP) based at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, in partnership with the de Beaumont Foundation's Public Health Listening Lab. The research was supported by the de Beaumont Foundation. It was fielded online and via telephone (cell phone and landline) by SSRS, an independent research company. This survey is nationally representative of U.S. adults. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish, March 19 – April 1, 2026, among a sample of 2205 adults ages 18 or older in the United States. Republicans include adults who lean Republican, Democrats include adults who lean Democrat, and Independents includes adults who identify as "other" or are unaffiliated. The margin of error at the 95% confidence interval is +/- 2.0 percentage points.

NOTE: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding, DK=Don't know, Ref=Refused, NA=Not Applicable, *percentage less than 0.5.

*READ/SHOW TO GROUP 1*¹: The next questions are about your local public health department, meaning your city, county, or regional health department. Regardless of how familiar you are with the activities of your local health department...

Q8. In your view, in the next year, should each of the following health issues be a top priority for your local public health department, a lower priority, or should they not address this issue at all? (*SCRAMBLE ORDER OF A-K*)

	A top priority	A lower priority	Should not address this issue	
k. Ensuring the safety of tap water	86	12	2	n=1,102
Republican	84	13	3	n=447
Democrat	87	12	1	n=460
Independent	86	13	1	n=195
d. Addressing mental illness	83	15	2	n=1,102
Republican	78	20	2	n=447
Democrat	88	10	2	n=460
Independent	82	14	4	n=195
g. Reducing maternal and infant mortality, or deaths among moms and babies	81	16	3	n=1,102
Republican	79	17	4	n=447
Democrat	84	14	3	n=460
Independent	81	17	2	n=195
h. Preventing chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes	80	17	3	n=1,102
Republican	76	20	4	n=447
Democrat	82	15	2	n=460
Independent	83	15	2	n=195
j. Providing screenings and health services for people who cannot afford them otherwise	78	19	3	n=1,102
Republican	67	28	5	n=447
Democrat	88	11	1	n=460
Independent	83	14	3	n=195
c. Protecting against new viruses that could become a pandemic, like the bird flu	74	21	5	n=1,102
Republican	61	33	6	n=447
Democrat	87	10	3	n=460
Independent	74	21	5	n=195
e. Preventing and addressing opioid and other substance addiction	72	25	3	n=1,102
Republican	69	27	4	n=447
Democrat	76	23	1	n=460
Independent	69	29	3	n=195

¹ The sample was randomly split into two groups of approximately equal size to minimize respondent burden and still obtain enough interviews for analytical purposes

Q8 Continued...

	A top priority	A lower priority	Should not address this issue	
i. Promoting healthier food and nutrition	71	26	3	n=1,102
Republican	71	24	5	n=447
Democrat	68	31	1	n=460
Independent	75	21	3	n=195
a. Protecting people from common health risks like foodborne illness in restaurants	65	32	3	n=1,102
Republican	63	32	5	n=447
Democrat	68	30	2	n=460
Independent	63	35	3	n=195
b. Protecting people from common infectious diseases, like the flu	62	33	5	n=1,102
Republican	51	41	9	n=447
Democrat	74	24	1	n=460
Independent	58	38	5	n=195
f. Preventing and reducing tobacco and vaping use	43	47	10	n=1,102
Republican	39	48	13	n=447
Democrat	45	50	6	n=460
Independent	47	41	12	n=195