

# What Kentuckians Think Are The Most Important Health Issues Facing Kentucky's Men, Women, and Children



Results From The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati  
and the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky



Improving the health of residents in Kentucky is critical to the missions of both the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati. As part of the most recent *Kentucky Health Issues Poll* (KHIP), Kentucky adults were asked what they thought was the most important health issue for men, women, and children in the Commonwealth.

## Cancer Leading Concern, Heart Disease Leading Cause of Death for Men

Just over 1 in 3 Kentucky adults (36%) identified cancer as the most important health issue for men, followed by heart disease (31%), and obesity (8%). Another 7% of Kentucky adults listed other health issues, and 9% said they didn't know what the most important health issue was.

In 2009, heart disease was the leading cause of death for men in Kentucky, followed closely by cancer and injuries.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The data on the leading causes of death in Kentucky for 2009 is still considered preliminary. Source: Sands, H. Hollie. Sands@ky.gov (2011, March 1). *Leading Causes of Death KY and ADD 2009* [personal email]

## "What would you say is the most important healthcare issue facing men, women, and children in Kentucky?"

Men	Women	Children**
1. Cancer	1. Cancer*	1. Obesity
2. Heart Disease*	2. Heart Disease	2. Diabetes
3. Obesity	3. Obesity	3. Cancer

\*Actual leading cause of death

\*\*Injuries are the actual leading cause of death for children (ages 1-17)

## Cancer Leading Concern and Leading Cause of Death for Women

About 6 in 10 Kentucky adults (61%) said that cancer in general was the most important health issue facing women, with 5 in 10 (52%) specifying breast cancer as the most important issue. These were followed by heart disease (9%), and obesity (6%). Another 8% of Kentucky adults listed other health issues, and 9% said they didn't know what the most important health issue was.

In 2009, cancer was the leading cause of death for Kentucky women<sup>2</sup>, nearly tied by second-

<sup>2</sup> More than twice as many women die from lung cancer as breast cancer. In 2007, 1410 KY women died from lung cancer and 613 KY women died from breast cancer.

ranked heart disease, and followed by chronic lung diseases.

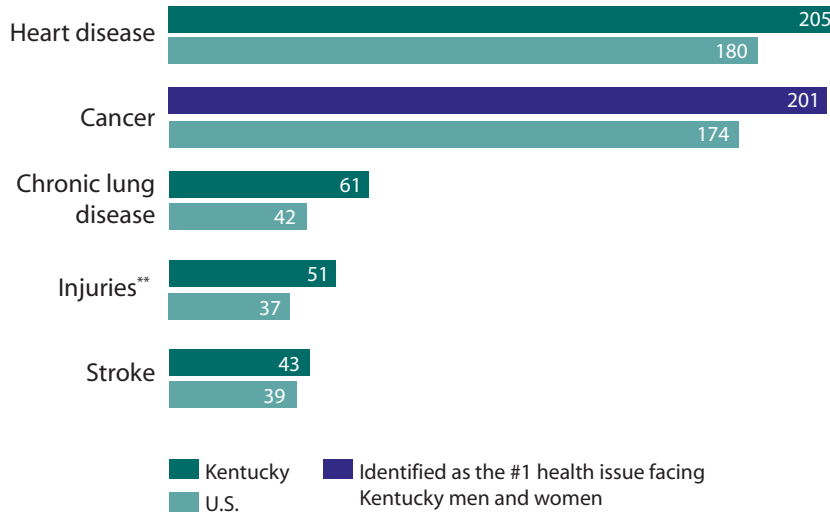
## Obesity Leading Concern, Injuries Leading Cause of Death for Children

Kentucky adults identified obesity (29%), diabetes (9%), and cancer (8%) as the most important health care issues facing children. Another 14% of Kentucky adults listed other health issues, and 15% said they didn't know what the most important health issue was.

*(continued on back)*

Source: Kentucky Cancer Registry. (2007). *Age-Adjusted Cancer Mortality Rates in Kentucky, Female Lung and Bronchus, 2007 and Female Breast, 2007*. Available at <http://www.kcr.uky.edu/>

**Number of deaths per 100,000 people who died from these specific causes, adjusted for age\***



\* The age-adjusted death rate allows for comparison across geographic area, by controlling for the effect of different population age distributions in different geographic areas.

\*\* Injuries include all unintentional injuries, including all transportation accidents, falls, accidental discharge of firearms, and poisoning, among other things.

Sources: U.S.: Data for the number of deaths are from the National Vital Statistics Report for 2009.<sup>5</sup> Kentucky: Preliminary State Data.<sup>1</sup> Data for the most important health issue are from the 2010 KHIP.

It is important to consider the lifelong health implications of children’s health issues, because childhood mortality is relatively rare.

In 2005, 180 children ages 1–17 died in Kentucky.<sup>3</sup> Nearly half of those deaths were caused by unintentional injuries, followed by causes in the “other” category and cancer.

**Kentuckians are Dying from Heart Disease, Cancer at Higher Rates than all Americans**

The health awareness of people in the Commonwealth is important because Kentuckians have a lower life expectancy than Americans in general: at birth, Kentuckians

can expect to live an average of 75.5 years, compared to 78 years for Americans.<sup>4</sup>

In 2009, the leading causes of death for Kentuckians were heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, injuries, and stroke. A larger proportion of Kentuckians were dying from these diseases than Americans in general.<sup>5</sup> With the exception of injuries, these causes of death are chronic conditions which can be reduced.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), avoiding tobacco, being physically active, and eating well greatly reduce a person’s risk for

developing chronic conditions.<sup>6</sup> Kentucky still has a lot of room for improvement, as it has some of the highest rates of smoking and obesity in the country.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Public Health. (2005). *Vital Statistics Reports, Leading Cause of Resident Deaths by Age Group Number and Age-Specific Rate: Kentucky, 2005 Table 2-I*. Retrieved from: <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/vital/2005+Vital+Statistics+Reports.htm>

<sup>4</sup> *The Measure of America (2009). American Human Development Report 2008-2009*, available at: [www.measureofamerica.org](http://www.measureofamerica.org)

<sup>5</sup> Kochanek KD, Xu JQ, Murphy SL, Miniño AM, Kung HC. *Deaths: Preliminary Data for 2009. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 59 no 4.*

Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2011. Available at: [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr59/nvsr59\\_04.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr59/nvsr59_04.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> *Kentucky: Burden of Chronic Diseases. (2008). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.* Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/states/pdf/kentucky.pdf>