



Kentucky adults have varied views about what 'public health' means

The public health system comprises many organizations including local and state health departments, federally qualified health centers, hospitals, health and public safety organizations, nonprofits, and others supporting health in our communities.¹ This system provides vaccinations, monitors diseases, investigates health hazards, enforces laws that protect health and safety, and mobilizes to identify and solve community health problems.²

The public health system is critical to improving the health of all Kentuckians. The 2018 **Kentucky Health Issues Poll (KHIP)** asked two questions about the topic to learn more about what Kentucky adults think when they hear the term "public health."

KHIP is sponsored jointly by Interact for Health and the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.

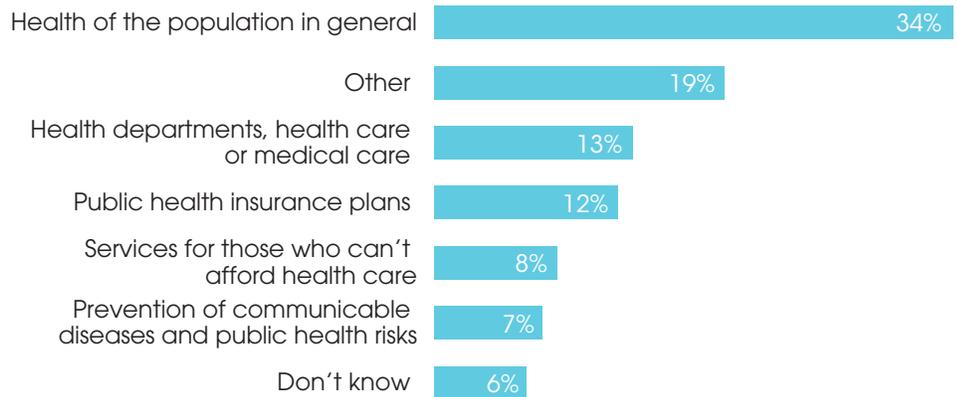
'Public health' is health of the population

About 1 in 3 Kentucky adults (34%) said "public health" meant

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Public Health System & the 10 Essential Public Health Services. June 2018. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2XxhNSc>.

² Ibid.

What do the words 'public health' mean to you? (Respondents could provide any answer.)



If you read or hear somebody talking about 'public health,' how well do you feel that you understand what they mean by those two words?



SOURCE: 2018 Kentucky Health Issues Poll (released March 2019)



the health of the population in general. About 1 in 5 offered a wide variety of other replies (19%). About 1 in 10 gave specific responses related to organizations or services that are part of the public health system, such as "health departments," "public health insurance plans," "services for those who can't afford health care" and "prevention of communicable diseases."

8 in 10 understand 'public health'

About 8 in 10 Kentucky adults said they understood "public health" very well (33%) or somewhat well (46%). One in five (21%) reported that they did not understand the term.

Continued on next page

These findings, unless otherwise noted, are from the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, funded by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and Interact for Health. The Kentucky Health Issues Poll was conducted Aug. 26-Oct. 21, 2018, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 1,569 adults from throughout Kentucky was interviewed by telephone. This included 697 landline interviews and 872 cell phone interviews with cell phone users. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to ±2.5%. There are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as nonresponse, question wording or context effects that can introduce error or bias. For more information about the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, please visit www.healthy-ky.org or www.interactforhealth.org/about-khip/.

Although many Kentucky adults said they understand “public health” as the health of the population in general, many also said they do not fully understand the term. This trend has been observed historically in similar studies about how the term “public health” is understood by the public.^{3,4}

³ CDC. MMWR Weekly. Public Opinion About Public Health-United States, 1999. (Mar. 2000). 49(12); 258-260.

⁴ Lezin, N et al. Perceptions of Public Health. Public Health Reports. (1998). 113; 324-329.