

Kansas Policymakers Survey Report

Authors: Katy Vaughan, Katie Heinrich, Mellina Stephen & Melinda Kellogg

ADDRESSING THE POLITICAL CLIMATE OF KANSAS AND PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR A SECURE AND HEALTHY FUTURE.



This survey was conducted to assess the political climate in the Senate and House in Kansas regarding health at the beginning of the new gubernatorial term (January 2011).

Legislators were mailed a hard copy of the survey and also emailed a link with the option of completing the survey online. Of the 181 policymakers contacted, 49 (27%) responded within the allotted two weeks. About 90% of respondents were in elected positions. Approximately 75% of survey respondents were Republican, while 18% were Democrat, and 7% were from another party.

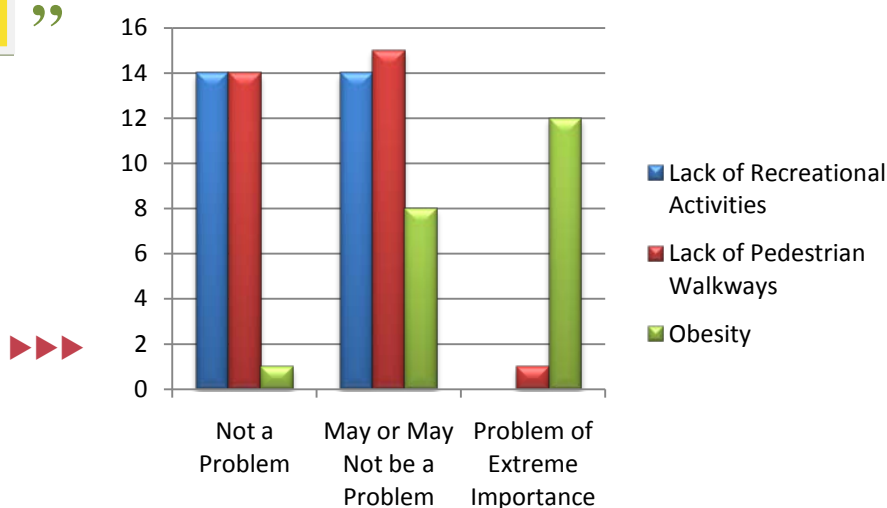
Topics Addressed in this Survey:

- Access to Healthcare
- Obesity
- Nutrition
- Underage Drinking
- Poverty
- Quality of Public Education
- Recreational Facilities
- Education Planning
- Public Health Training

“ 60% of policymakers said more active participation from citizens was the best way to identify problems addressed in the survey. ”

Respondents thought there were many problems facing Kansas. Some of the topics that survey respondents thought were problems of importance were obesity, high taxes and quality of public education.

Policymakers rated obesity as a problem; however, the underlying contributors of few recreational activities and lack of pedestrian walkways were not thought to be problems of importance.

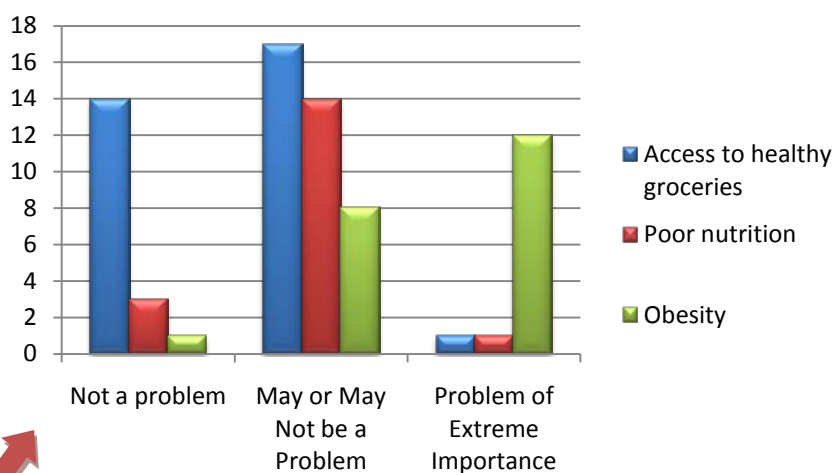


The table below shows policymakers' average ratings for each issue along with the percentage rating the issue as a problem of extreme importance.

Issue Ratings

(1=not a problem to 5=problem of extreme importance)

Issue	Mean (SD)	% rating as a problem of extreme importance
Obesity: Nutrition & Physical Activity		
Obesity	3.72 (1.07)	25.0
Poor nutrition	3.00 (0.99)	2.2
Poorly planned development and sprawl	2.85 (0.91)	2.1
Access to healthy groceries	2.37 (1.09)	2.0
Increasing traffic	2.34 (0.89)	0.0
Lack of pedestrian walkways, crosswalks, and sidewalks	2.25 (1.04)	2.1
Pedestrian safety	2.23 (0.84)	0.0
Lack of recreational activities	2.21 (0.99)	0.0
Economic Issues		
Lack of good jobs	3.90 (0.93)	26.5
High taxes	3.51 (1.23)	28.6
Poverty	3.36 (1.05)	12.8
Lack of affordable housing	3.02 (1.01)	4.1
Cost of living	2.88 (0.95)	2.0
Homelessness	2.86 (0.96)	4.1
Other Health Issues		
Access to healthcare	3.20 (1.29)	18.4
Lack of public health training	2.80 (1.05)	2.1
Pandemic influenza	2.38 (0.95)	0.0
Government Response to Natural Disasters	2.20 (0.89)	0.0
Air Pollution	1.98 (1.05)	0.0
Global Warming	1.94 (1.24)	6.3
Problem Behaviors		
Drug abuse	3.71 (0.96)	20.4
Crime	3.30 (0.89)	10.2
Underage drinking	3.29 (0.97)	6.3
Other Issues		
Quality of public education	3.38 (1.29)	25.0
Ethics in government	3.00 (1.14)	8.2



This graph shows that many policymakers view obesity as a significant problem, but they have mixed opinions on two notable underlying causes of obesity: poor nutrition and access to healthy groceries.

The top 5 issues written in by policymakers were:

1. Budget/spending/taxes
2. Education
3. Jobs/business/economy
4. Government regulation/efficiency
5. Healthcare



Overall problems that were rated of greatest importance:

1. Lack of Good Jobs
2. Obesity
3. Drug Abuse
4. High Taxes
5. Quality of Public Education



In general, Democrats rated each issue as a more extreme problem than Republicans, except for high taxes and drug abuse.