

Child Health Poll: Tennessee Parents Trust Their Children's Health Care Providers the Most for Information About Vaccines

By Jake Lowary

New analyses of the latest annual Tennessee [Child Health Poll](#) conducted by the [Vanderbilt Center for Child Health Policy](#) in late 2022 has found parents across the state reporting their children's health care providers as the most trusted source for information about vaccines.

The analysis is the latest in an ongoing study of annual poll results of more than 1,000 Tennessee parents across the state, which covers a range of issues impacting parents and their children from insurance status to mental health and well-being.

Statewide, nearly 64% of parents said they trusted the information they received from health care providers about vaccines, a large increase from 44% and 41% in 2021 and 2020, respectively. No other sources of information were trusted by more than half of parents, but 30% to 40% of parents have said year to year they trusted vaccine information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, scientific research, and their local health department.

"Parents should feel comfortable bringing all their questions about vaccines to their child's health care providers, and health care providers need to be prepared to acknowledge parents' concerns, meet families where they are, and provide clear science-based recommendations," said Joe Zickafoose, MD, MS, assistant professor of Pediatrics at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt and a member of the Vanderbilt Center for Child Health Policy.

Statewide, 57% of parents said they trusted the information they receive about shots, an increase from 51% in 2021, though below 2020 when 61% of parents said they trusted information about shots.

Regionally, more than half of parents polled in each grand division of the state said they trusted information about shots, though more parents in East and West Tennessee reported distrust. Among racial and ethnic groups, 59% of white parents statewide polled in late 2022 said they trusted the information they got about shots, up from 50% in 2021. Fewer Black parents (50%) reported trusting information than in 2021 (54%).

Seventy-six percent of parents said it was important for their children to get recommended vaccinations to protect themselves, and 72% of parents said it was important to get vaccinations to protect others. The findings suggest the majority of parents value the collective benefits of childhood vaccinations for a healthier community. The survey did not delineate parents' views on specific vaccines, like influenza, COVID-19, tetanus, or chickenpox.

"Vaccines are only developed for diseases that have the potential to cause significant harm and even death — infection is always a greater risk than the vaccine or they would not be recommended," said Elizabeth Williams, MD, MPH, assistant professor of Pediatrics at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt.

The [Vanderbilt Child Health Poll](#) is conducted annually to gauge parents' concerns about a wide range of topics. The data is collected from a representative sample of Tennessee parents

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| across each of the three grand divisions of the state on top issues from education and schooling to food security, insurance status, mental health and other topics. The research was funded in part by a grant from the Boedecker Foundation.

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