

Pesticides in Maine:

A growing public health concern



A report from
Physicians for Social Responsibility Maine Chapter
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Exposure to pesticides puts our children's health at risk

PSR Maine believes that our children are the key to Maine's future when they are healthy, happy, and ready to learn. Children should be protected no matter where they live, learn, and play.

As health professionals, we know that exposures to pesticides put children at risk. We are concerned about the dangers of pesticide exposures and the skyrocketing use of pesticides.

Children in any household absorb more pesticides relative to their weight than adults. Their exploratory activities include crawling, playing on the floor or in the grass, and hand-to-mouth behaviors -- all avenues for greater exposure. The complex processes involved with the development of their brains and organ systems are uniquely susceptible to damage from pesticide exposure.

Numerous medical studies show that pesticides are linked to a variety of health concerns including leukemia, skin cancer, brain tumors, ADHD and other learning disabilities, birth defects, and asthma.

Despite the health risks, the use of pesticides is growing exponentially

National and state data points to a dramatic increase in pesticide use

- In the US, glyphosate (the active ingredient used in Roundup) use has increased by more than 250 fold in the past 4 decades — from 0.4 million kg in 1974 to 113 million kg in 2014.
- In Maine, it is estimated between 1995-2011 use/sales increased 700%. Maine data has been limited and no reporting to the public has happened since 2011.



Even pets are at risk. One study found pesticides in the urine of dogs and another study found that pets track pesticides into the home onto floors and furniture.

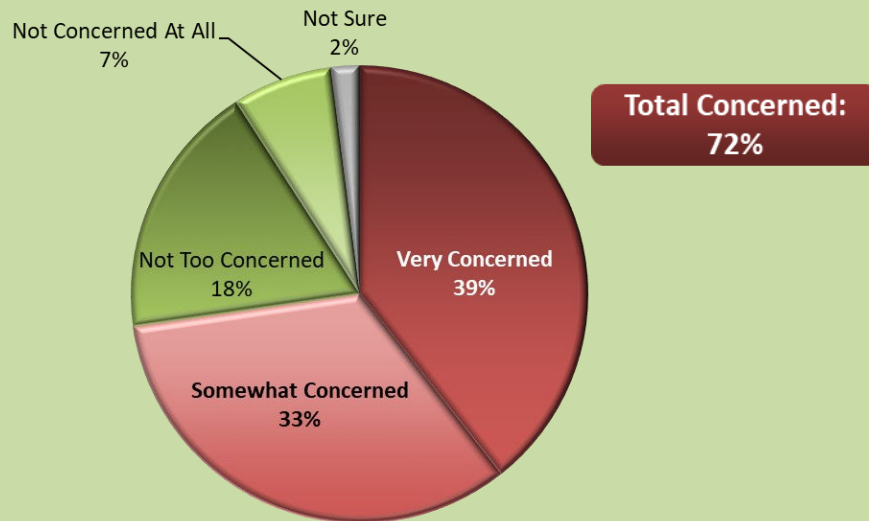
A study in 2001 found that a popular pesticide used on lawns, 2,4-D, was discovered on surfaces of the home a week after application.

Dr Philip Landrigan, world renowned pediatrician and epidemiologist who first discovered the health impacts of lead on children, said that **one of his biggest worries is pesticides because of the exposure to children.**

Maine people want action on pesticides

Voters expressed strong concerns about the the health of their children and pets

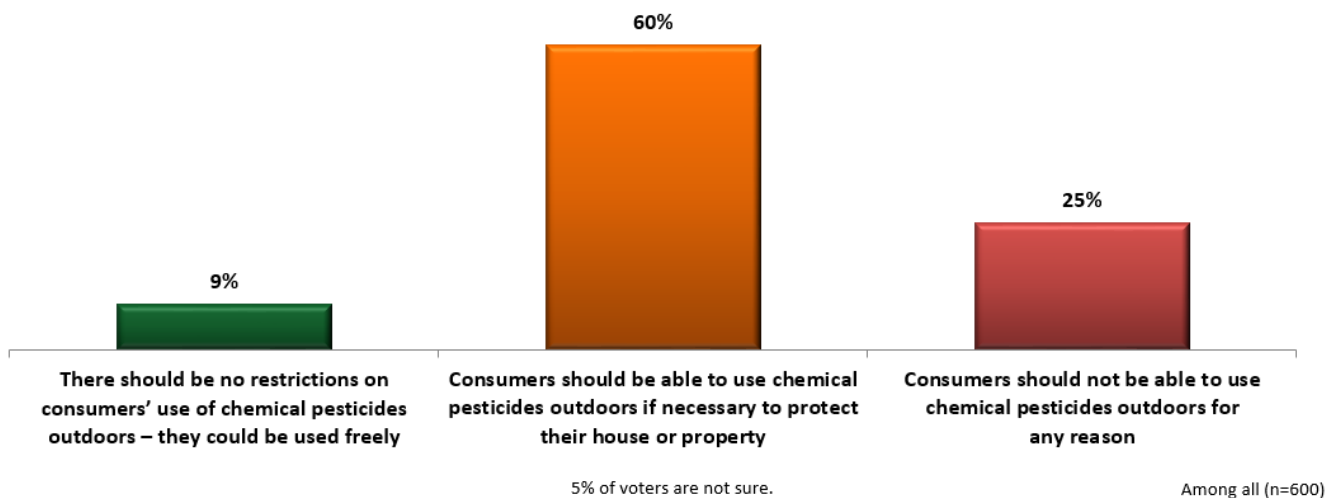
In a November survey, Maine voters were asked how concerned they are about the potential for negative impacts on their health, their children’s health, or pet’s health from exposure to chemical pesticides?



Few believe pesticides should be used without restriction

An overwhelming majority of Maine voters want to protect their property and many feel that chemical pesticides should never be used, but very few feel there should be no restrictions whatsoever.

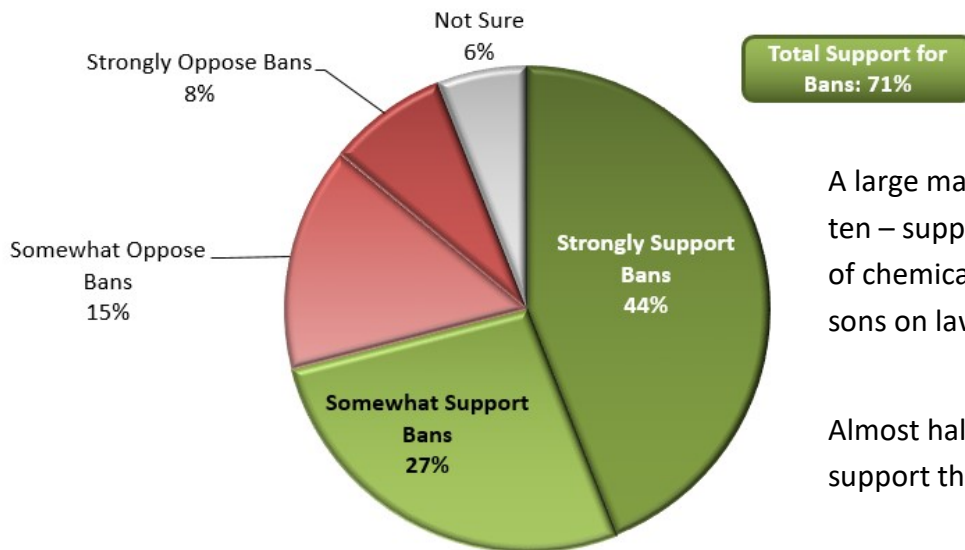
Views toward restrictions on consumer’s use of chemical pesticides



Voters strongly support banning the use of pesticides for cosmetic-only purposes

A number of cities and towns in Maine have banned the use of chemical pesticides to make lawns look better. In general, would you...

Support for Municipal Bans on Chemical Pesticides



A large majority of voters – seven out of ten – support municipal bans on the use of chemical pesticides for cosmetic reasons on lawns.

Almost half of all surveyed voters strongly support those bans.

Some Maine towns have taken action, but more needs to be done

According to the Maine Board of Pesticide Control, there are 29 municipalities in Maine that have ordinances restricting pesticide use (this figure does not include towns like Scarborough that have policies).

Some restrictions are very site specific (aerial application adjacent to Trafton Lake restricted in Limestone) and some very broad (full citywide bans as in Ogunquit, Portland, and South Portland).

Maine can do better.

PSR strongly supports action to protect kids health.

Bans on pesticides used for cosmetically appealing lawns, especially around schools, playgrounds, and daycare centers, will help reduce dangerous exposures and protect all health.

For additional information visit our website or contact us at:

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