The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

THE ZIKA VIRUS: AMERICANS' AWARENESS AND OPINIONS OF THE U.S. RESPONSE

A new poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds a significant number of Americans who say they have heard only a little or nothing at all about the Zika virus. Those who are aware of the virus express low levels of concern.

In February, the World Health Organization issued a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) heightened its efforts in response to Zika and the cases of microcephaly and other neurological disorders that are associated with the virus.[1]

As of March 30, the CDC reports 312 cases of the virus in the United States, all of which are associated with travel to affected areas. While there have not been any cases of local transmission of Zika via infected mosquitos within the United States, U.S. territories such as Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa have together reported 349 locally acquired cases.[2]

The poll finds that three-quarters of Americans who have heard at least a little about Zika are aware that the virus is linked to birth defects in babies born to infected mothers. Yet most Americans are unclear about options to test for the virus and the current availability or unavailability of effective medicines to treat and vaccines to prevent Zika.

In March, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) made a preliminary announcement that the release of genetically

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Three Things You Should Know

1) **Four in 10 Americans** have heard only a little or nothing at all about the Zika virus.
2) **Ninety percent of those who have heard of Zika** know that it can be spread through the bite of a mosquito carrying the virus; however, only 57 percent are aware that Zika can be spread through sexual intercourse with an infected person.
3) **Despite the ongoing Zika outbreak in Brazil,** only a quarter of Americans believe that American athletes should withdraw from the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

[1] http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2016/1st-emergency-committee-zika/en/
[2] http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html

engineered male mosquitos, which mate with females but don't produce viable offspring, in a field trial in Florida would not cause harm to the environment.[3]

The poll suggests there is public support for this and other policy approaches to preventing the spread of Zika in the United States through mosquito control.

The nationwide poll of 1,004 adults used AmeriSpeak, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Interviews were conducted between March 17 and 21, 2016, online and using landlines and cell phones.

FOUR IN 10 AMERICANS LACK AWARENESS ABOUT THE ZIKA VIRUS. THOSE WHO ARE AWARE OF THE VIRUS AREN'T PARTICULARLY WORRIED ABOUT ITS POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EFFECTS.

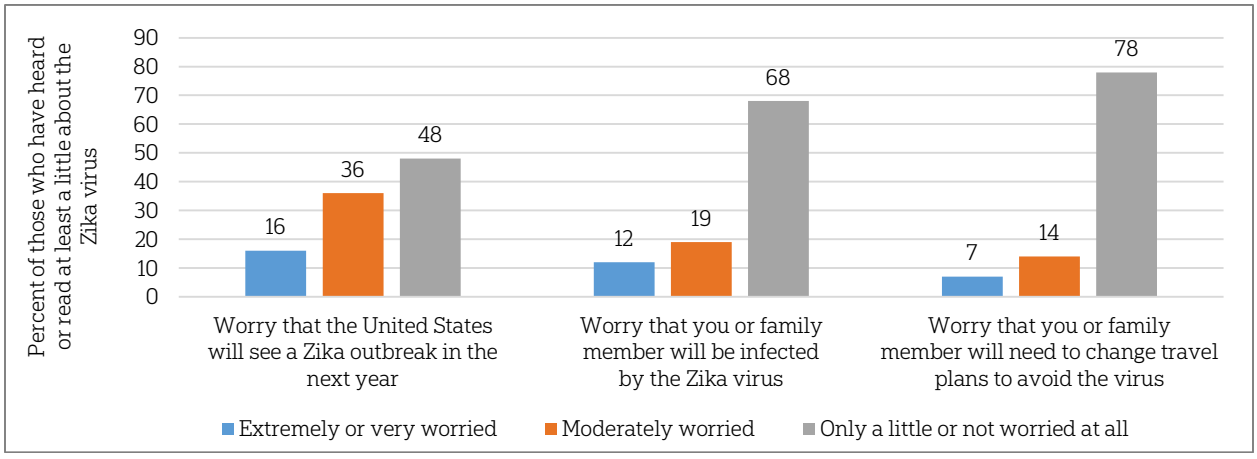
Six in 10 Americans have heard or read some or a lot about the Zika virus. Despite the media coverage of Zika cases in the United States and around the world, 24 percent of Americans say they have heard only a little about Zika, and 15 percent say they haven't heard anything at all.

Older Americans have heard or read more about the virus than their younger counterparts. Seventy-one percent of Americans age 65 and older, 76 percent of Americans age 60-64, and 66 percent of Americans age 40-59 say they have heard a lot or some about the virus, compared with 50 percent of Americans age 30-39 and 43 percent of Americans age 18-29.

Those living in the Western United States (50 percent) are less likely than those living in the Northeast (75 percent) and the South (61 percent) to say they've heard a lot or some about the virus. Fifty-eight percent of those in the Midwest say the same.

Among those who are aware of Zika, few are extremely or very worried about its potential negative impact in the United States.

Americans are not concerned about the potential negative effects of the Zika virus on their lives or in the United States in general.



Questions: How worried, are you that: The U.S. will see a large number of cases of the Zika virus in the next 12 months; you or someone in your family will be infected by the Zika virus; you or someone in your family will need to change travel plans to avoid the Zika virus?

[3] http://www.fda.gov/%20EmergencyPreparedness/Counterterrorism/MedicalCountermeasures/MCMIssues/ucm485199.htm

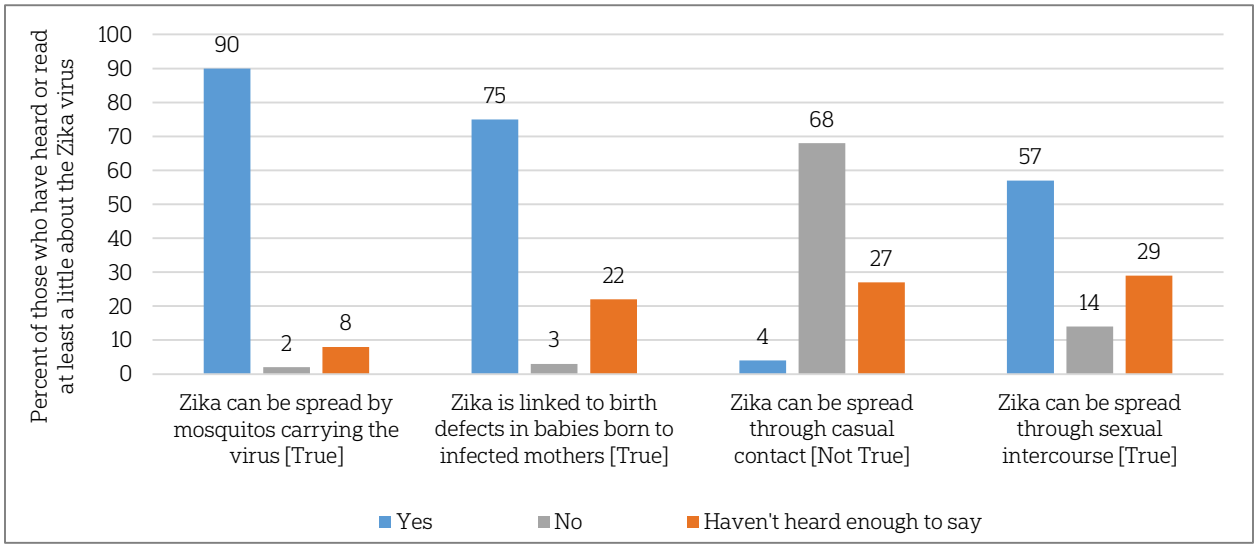
Hispanics are more than twice as likely as whites to say they are extremely or very worried the United States will see a large number of Zika cases in the next 12 months (26 percent vs. 12 percent) and that they or someone in their family will be infected by the virus (19 percent vs. 9 percent).

Women are nearly twice as likely as men to express that they are extremely or very worried the United States will see a large number of cases of the virus in the next 12 months (21 percent vs. 12 percent).

THOSE AWARE OF THE VIRUS ARE GENERALLY INFORMED ABOUT HOW ZIKA IS SPREAD, BUT MANY LACK INFORMATION ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY OF TREATMENTS, VACCINES, AND TESTS FOR THE VIRUS.

Among those who are aware of Zika, 9 in 10 know that it can be spread through the bite of a mosquito carrying the virus, and 68 percent are aware that you cannot be infected with the virus through casual contact, like shaking hands, with someone who is infected. Fewer, but still a majority (57 percent) of those who are aware of the virus, know that Zika can be spread through sexual intercourse with an infected person. Three-quarters are aware that the virus is linked to birth defects in babies born to infected mothers, including 81 percent of women and 69 percent of men.

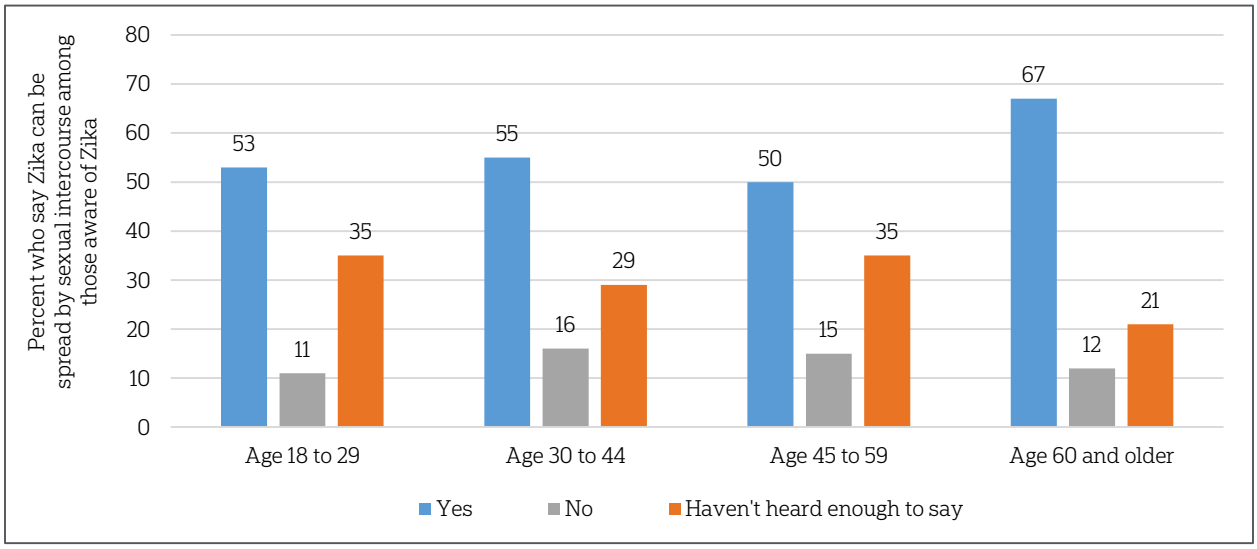
A majority of Americans aware of the virus understand how it is spread.



Questions: As far as you know, can a person become infected with Zika virus from each of the following, or not: Having sex with someone who is infected; the bite of a mosquito carrying the virus; casual contact, like shaking hands, with someone who is infected?
To the best of your knowledge, is the Zika virus linked to birth defects in babies born to infected mothers, is it not linked with birth defects, or have you not heard enough to say?

Older Americans are more aware of the possible sexual transmission of Zika than their younger counterparts.

Americans under age 60 are less likely to be informed about transmission of Zika via sexual intercourse.



Question: As far as you know, can a person become infected with Zika virus from each of the following, or not: Having sex with someone who is infected?

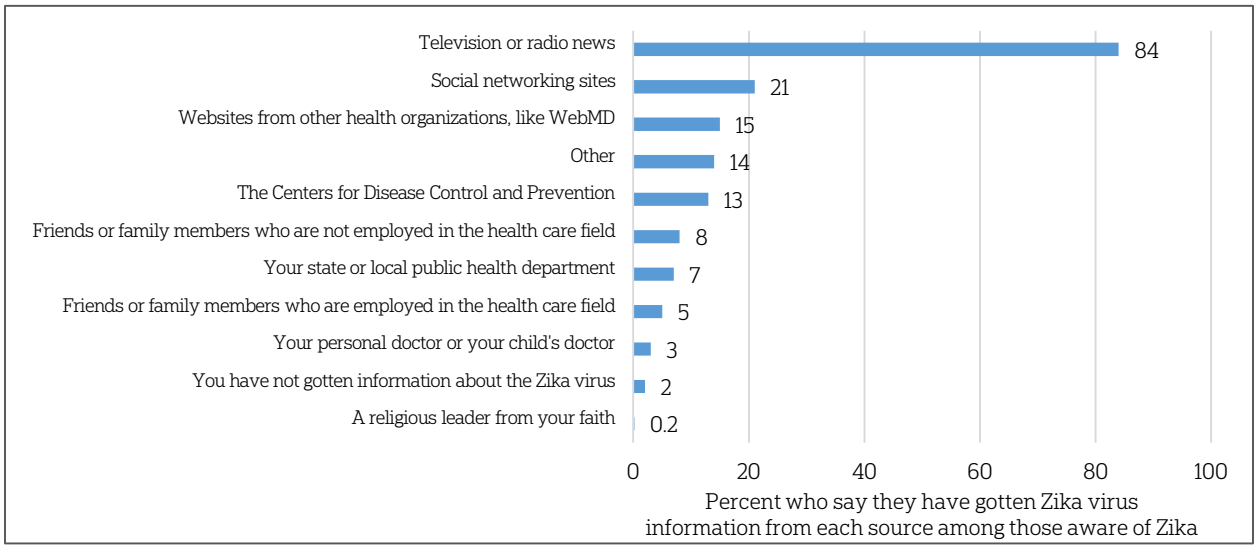
When it comes to knowledge about the availability of vaccines to prevent, tests to diagnose, and effective medicines to treat Zika, most Americans are unclear about the current status. Of those who are aware of Zika, 34 percent know there is not an effective medicine to treat it, but 59 percent haven't heard enough to say. Forty percent are aware that scientists have developed a test to diagnose the virus, but 53 percent haven't heard enough to say.[4] And 45 percent are aware that there is not an effective vaccine to prevent Zika, but 52 percent haven't heard enough to say.

THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS AWARE OF ZIKA ARE GETTING THEIR INFORMATION ABOUT THE VIRUS FROM TELEVISION OR RADIO NEWS BROADCASTS.

Far and away the most popular source of information about Zika among those aware of the virus is television or radio news. Social networking sites are the next most common source of information. Similar numbers of Americans have gotten information from the CDC, websites from other health organizations, such as WebMD, and other sources. Few Americans have received information about the virus from friends or family, a state or local public health department, a personal doctor, or a religious leader.

[4] There are not yet any commercially available diagnostic tests cleared by the FDA for the detection of the Zika virus.

Among those aware of the virus, television or radio news is the most common source of information about Zika.



Question: From which sources have you gotten information about the Zika virus?

Americans with higher levels of knowledge about the virus[5] are more likely than those less informed to get their information from the CDC (20 percent vs. 7 percent), websites from other health organizations (23 percent vs. 9 percent), television or radio news (88 percent vs. 81 percent), and other sources (18 percent vs. 11 percent).

Though there are many sources of information about Zika available, a majority of Americans (56 percent) say they've only gotten information from a single source. Another 24 percent say they've gotten information from two sources. Just 2 percent say they've gotten information about the virus from five or more sources.

A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS SUPPORT SEVERAL MOSQUITO CONTROL MEASURES TO REDUCE ZIKA'S SPREAD, THOUGH FEW EXPRESS CONFIDENCE IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO AN OUTBREAK.

Once informed about the virus,[6] a majority of Americans express strong or moderate support for mosquito control measures to reduce the spread of Zika. In particular, 62 percent strongly or moderately support rules and regulations that mandate homeowners and businesses to remove standing water and other mosquito breeding sites from their property. Introducing genetically

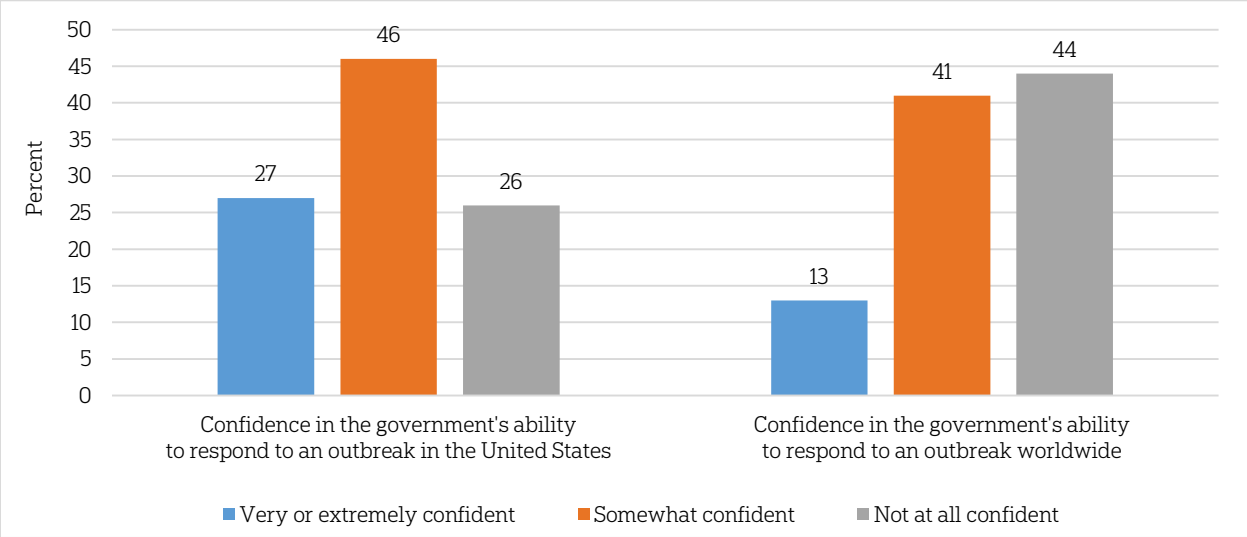
[5] Level of knowledge was indexed based on the number of correct answers given to the following questions: Q13a, Q13b, Q13c, Q14, Q15a, Q15b, and Q15c. Those who answered at least five of the questions correctly are considered to have "higher levels of knowledge" about the Zika virus.

[6] All respondents were given the following statement about the Zika virus prior to answering questions about the government response to the virus, public policies aimed at preventing the spread of the virus, and the response of Olympic athletes to the spread of the virus in Brazil: "As you may know, the Zika virus is spread to people primarily through being bitten by an infected mosquito, but can also be spread through human sexual contact with an infected man. Symptoms associated with the illness are generally mild and go away within a week. However, the Zika virus has been linked to a serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly in babies of mothers infected during pregnancy. Microcephaly is linked with a range of problems, including: seizures, developmental delays, intellectual disabilities, feeding problems, and hearing and vision problems. The condition can be life threatening. Currently, no vaccine exists to prevent the spread of the Zika virus and much is still unknown about the disease. Locations where the Zika virus is currently being spread by mosquitos include Africa, the Americas, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands."

modified male mosquitos in areas affected by the virus, and the application of pesticides and larvicides in public spaces receive support from 56 percent of Americans. Temporarily allowing organic farmers to use pesticides and larvicides to control mosquitos without losing their organic certification is less popular, with 46 percent of Americans expressing support for this measure.

Confidence among Americans that the federal government can effectively respond to an outbreak of the Zika virus in the United States or in the rest of the world is tempered.

Americans lack confidence in the federal government's ability to respond to a Zika outbreak either in the United States or worldwide.



Question: How confident are you in the federal government's ability to respond effectively to an outbreak of the Zika virus: in the United States, worldwide?

Though confidence is low among both parties, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say they are confident in the government's ability to respond to an outbreak in the United States (33 percent vs. 22 percent) and worldwide (17 percent vs. 9 percent). Democrats are also more likely than Republicans to support rules and regulations that mandate homeowners and businesses remove standing water and other mosquito breeding sites from their property (69 percent vs. 55 percent).

A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS HAVE TAKEN AT LEAST ONE ACTION TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF ZIKA OR REDUCE THEIR OWN PERSONAL RISK.

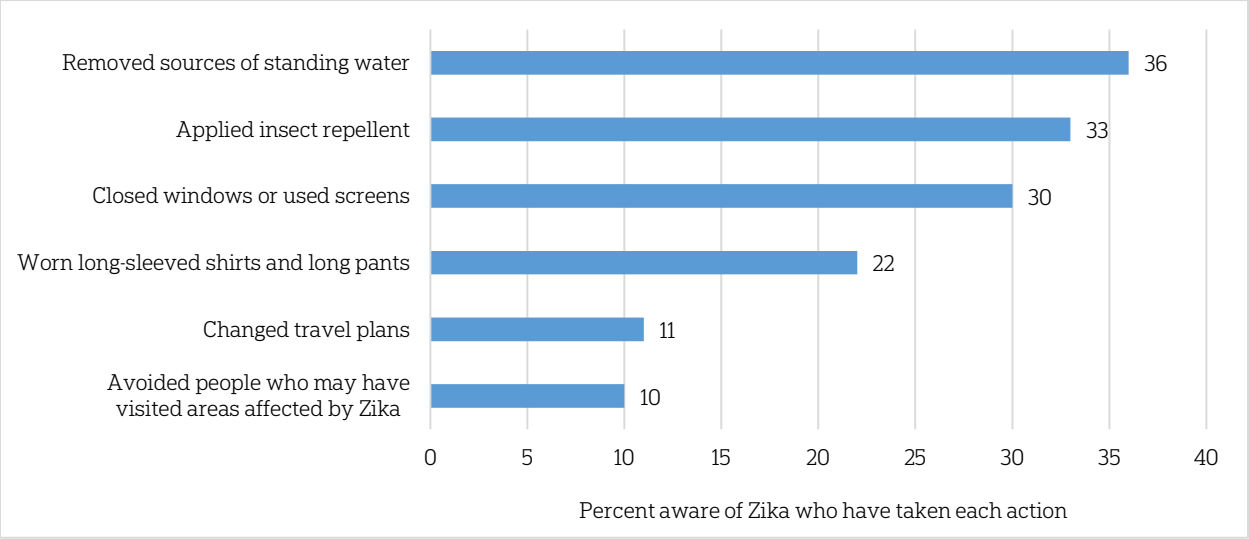
Beyond support for widespread mosquito control measures, Americans are also taking personal precautions to protect themselves and prevent the spread of Zika.

The CDC recommends a number of actions that individuals can take to prevent the spread of the virus and reduce their own personal risk. These actions include applying insect repellent, wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, closing windows and using air conditioning, putting screens in windows, removing sources of standing water, and avoiding travel to areas where the Zika virus is currently being spread by mosquitos.

Over half of Americans aware of Zika have taken at least one of these actions in response to the virus.

In addition, 10 percent of Americans say they have avoided people who they think may have recently visited areas affected by the virus, an action that is not recommended by the CDC.

Americans have taken action to avoid contracting Zika.



Question: In response to reports of the Zika virus, have you or has someone in your household done any of the following, or haven't you done this?

Americans getting their information about the Zika virus from the CDC are more likely to take specific preventive actions. Compared to those who got information from other sources, those who got information from the CDC are more likely to have applied insect repellent (44 percent vs. 31 percent) and to have changed travel plans (23 percent vs. 9 percent).

DESPITE THE ONGOING OUTBREAK OF THE ZIKA VIRUS IN BRAZIL, FEW THINK AMERICAN ATHLETES SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM COMPETITION.

With the 2016 summer Olympics being hosted in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, athletes and others who travel to attend the event may be at risk of infection. Twenty-five percent of Americans say female athletes representing the United States should withdraw from participating in the Olympics, and 22 percent say male athletes should withdraw.

Hispanics are more likely than whites to say that both female (30 percent vs. 20 percent) and male athletes (27 percent vs. 18 percent) should withdraw from Olympic competition.

Men and women do not differ in their attitudes toward athlete participation in the Olympics.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Data were collected using AmeriSpeak®, which is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face).

Interviews for this survey were conducted between March 17 and 21, 2016, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak®, and 1,004 completed the survey—785 via the web and 219 via telephone. The final stage completion rate is 29.2 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 36.9 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 93.9 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 10.1 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and household phone status. The weighted data, which reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over, were used for all analyses.

All differences reported between subgroups of the U.S. population are at the 95 percent level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5 percent (or lower) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling.

A comprehensive listing of the questions, complete with tabulations of top-level results for each question, is available on The AP-NORC Center website: www.apnorc.org.

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