

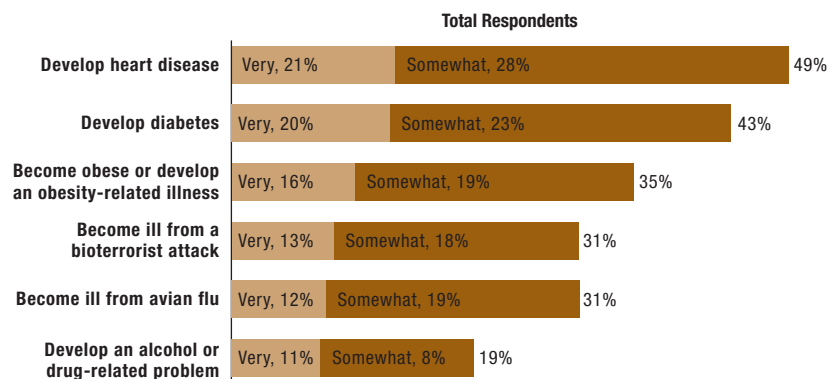


What are Americans' Most Pressing Health Concerns?

Background

Understanding what the American public thinks is important in informing the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) work in public health. In June 2006, the Harvard School of Public Health, funded by the RWJF, conducted a national survey to determine the health concerns important to Americans. Results of the survey are highlighted below. These data provide insight into the public's concerns about their personal health risks as well as issues of preparedness.

How concerned are you that each of the following will happen to you or an immediate family member during the next 12 months?



Harvard School of Public Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Public Health Survey, July 2006.

Key Findings

- The largest proportion of respondents are very or somewhat concerned that they or an immediate family member will develop heart disease (49%) or diabetes (43%) in the next 12 months. African Americans are significantly more likely than Whites and Hispanic Americans to be very or somewhat concerned that they or an immediate family member will develop diabetes (66% versus 40% and 51%, respectively) or heart disease (65% versus 49% and 46%, respectively) in the next 12 months.
- Thirty-five percent of Americans are very or somewhat concerned that they or an immediate family member will become obese or develop an obesity-related illness. Compared to 31 percent of Whites, a significantly higher percentage of African Americans (50%) and Hispanic Americans (44%) are very or somewhat concerned that they or an immediate family member will become obese or develop an obesity-related illness in the next year.
- Significantly higher percentages of African Americans (49%) and Hispanic Americans (43%) are more concerned than Whites (26%) that they or an immediate family member will become ill from a bioterrorist attack in the next year.

- Approximately half of all respondents report that they are concerned about an avian flu pandemic. Most respondents, however, are not closely following stories about avian flu. African Americans (69%) and Hispanic Americans (66%) are significantly more likely than Whites (45%) to be concerned about an avian flu pandemic.
- Thirty-eight percent of Americans received a flu shot in the past year. Whites were more likely than Hispanic Americans to receive a flu shot in the past year (39% compared to 30%, respectively). Forty percent of African Americans received a flu shot in the past year.
- A very small percentage of Americans (14%) are employed in a workplace that has a plan to respond to a possible pandemic outbreak of avian flu. Among employed individuals, 12 percent work for employers whose plan includes encouraging sick employees to stay at home; 5 percent work for employers whose plan includes expanding options to work from home and 8 percent work for employers whose plan includes providing information regarding what supplies to have at home.
- Forty-eight percent of respondents believe that the federal Department of Health and Human Services is very or somewhat prepared to contain the spread of disease and provide needed services in the event of a pandemic. A significantly higher percentage of African Americans than Whites indicate similar confidence about federal preparedness (58% versus 47%, respectively). Fifty-five percent of Hispanic Americans indicate that the federal Department of Health and Human Services is prepared to contain the spread of disease in the event of a worldwide flu pandemic.
- Thirty-one percent of Whites, versus 23 percent of African Americans and 22 percent of Hispanic Americans believe their state health department is not prepared to contain the spread of disease and provide needed services in the event of a worldwide flu pandemic.

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Methodology¹

This study was prepared by the Harvard School of Public Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Design and analysis of the study was conducted by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health. Robert J. Blendon, Sc.D., served as the project director. The research team included John M. Benson, M.A., Chantal Fleischfresser, Tami Buhr and Kathleen Weldon of the Harvard School of Public Health and Melissa J. Herrmann of ICR/International Communications Research.

This telephone survey was conducted by ICR/International Communications Research (Media, PA) between June 7 and June 21, 2006. Of the nationally representative sample of 2,007 adults 18 and over, 206 were African American, 217 Hispanic American, 501 were from California and 514 were from North Carolina. Overall results were weighted to represent the total adult population of the U.S. as a whole. The margin of error was plus or minus 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

¹ Harvard School of Public Health/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/ICR, July 2006