

Poll: Half of Americans wary of travel to US Zika zones

September 1 2016, by Curt Anderson

Nearly half of Americans polled say they are wary of traveling to places in the U.S. where people have been infected with the Zika virus by mosquitoes, such as parts of Florida.

A poll released Thursday on Americans' health care attitudes by the Kaiser Family Foundation found 48 percent would be uncomfortable traveling to Zika infection areas within the U.S., and up to 61 percent felt uneasy about traveling to Puerto Rico or non-U.S. Zika zones.

Most Zika cases contacted directly through mosquito bites in Florida are in the Miami area, not the tourist mecca of Orlando which is home to the Walt Disney World, Universal and SeaWorld theme parks.

"There are no non-travel related cases in Orange County or central Florida," Gov. Rick Scott said earlier this week at an appearance in the Orlando area.

But Miami is a major tourism draw, with more than 15.5 million people making overnight visits to the city and its nearby beaches last year. And overall, Florida set a new record for tourism with more than 105 million people from out of state and other countries visiting the state in 2015.

As of Wednesday, the state Department of Health has reported 47 non-travel related Zika cases in Florida. The arts district of Wynwood north of downtown Miami and a section of Miami Beach have been singled out as mosquito transmission areas.

The Kaiser poll also found that a third of those interviewed believe Congress should make it a top priority to pass legislation increasing money to combat the virus. President Barack Obama proposed \$1.9 billion in emergency funding for Zika in February, but Congress has been unable to agree on a final bill.

Poll respondents identifying as Democrats were more likely than Republicans or independents to view Zika funding as a top priority for Congress, according to the poll.

Scott, a Republican, has repeatedly called on Congress to send the president a Zika funding bill, calling the issue one of urgent international importance.

"We still need the federal government to show up," Scott told reporters recently in Miami. "It's not just a Florida issue."

The poll of 1,211 adults conducted Aug. 18-24 has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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