

Many Americans say infectious and emerging diseases in other countries will threaten the US

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An overwhelming majority of Americans (95%) think infectious and emerging diseases facing other countries will pose a 'major' or 'minor' threat to the U.S. in the next few years, but more than half (61%) say they are confident the federal government can prevent a major infectious disease outbreak in the U.S., according to a new national public opinion survey commissioned by Research!America and the American Society for Microbiology.

About a third (34%) agree that the global community will experience an epidemic in the next 10 years that includes cases in the U.S. But few agree that the global community is prepared to respond to another epidemic like Ebola (28%) and that the U.S. is prepared to respond to such an epidemic (34%). A large majority of respondents (89%) say the federal government should fund international programs on the surveillance and detection of [infectious disease outbreaks](#), and 70% say the [federal government](#) should do more to educate the public about global disease outbreaks and the risk to the U.S.

"The findings indicate that many Americans are unaware of the cutting-edge research and [public health strategies](#) to protect citizens against deadly epidemics like Ebola," said Mary Woolley, president and CEO, Research!America. "With the recent Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is essential for all stakeholders, from government to industry, to educate the public about efforts to prevent and contain

threats to the [health](#), safety and economic security of Americans and individuals worldwide."

A strong majority of respondents (81%) agree that Americans should be concerned about [global health](#). As for the global health problem that concerns them the most, nearly half (47%) said vaccination for childhood diseases like polio. In thinking about the common vaccines available today such as polio, tetanus, measles and flu, 70% of Americans say vaccines are very important to the health of our society, a 10% decrease compared to a similar survey commissioned in 2008.

The findings reveal a shift over the last decade in Americans' attitudes about vaccines developed in the U.S. Seventy-seven percent are confident in the current system in the U.S. for evaluating the safety of vaccines and recommendations for when they should be given, an 8% decrease from 2008.

Roughly two-thirds (67%) are confident that the current system ensures an adequate supply of necessary vaccines to prevent shortages, down 11% from 2008. Fifty-nine percent of Americans strongly believe that they have benefited from the development of vaccines over the last 50 years, a 16% decrease from 2008.

When asked how important they believe it is for parents to have their children vaccinated, 71% of respondents said 'very important,' compared to 82% in 2008. And more than half of those surveyed (53%) say they did not get the [flu vaccine](#) during the last flu season. Among those who said no, 48% said they do not trust the flu vaccine, 40% said they do not feel they need it to prevent the flu and 26% said the flu vaccine is not effective and therefore not worth getting. But many agree (61%) that when parents decide not to vaccinate it puts their children and their communities at risk, a 10% increase from 2008. Forty-five percent do not think the public receives enough information from their doctors

about vaccinations.

"The American Society for Microbiology has always been a strong proponent for vaccines as essential for public health and security around the world," said ASM President Peggy Cotter. "Partnering with Research!America to assess public attitudes and knowledge about vaccines is a crucial step toward promoting policies and funding that will keep us ahead of future challenges, whether they are emerging diseases or long-established ones."

A [universal flu vaccine](#) would safeguard against multiple strains of the flu over time, including those that can cause pandemics, and eliminate the need for an annual flu shot. Yet many do not know about the development of a universal vaccine. Less than a quarter of respondents (21%) say they recall hearing anything about a universal flu vaccine but nearly half (49%) strongly favor increased federal spending on research to improve and find new vaccines, a 15% increase compared to 2008. The FY18 omnibus bill included \$100 million for the National Institutes of Health to develop a universal flu vaccine. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has released a strategic plan for a universal flu vaccine that would provide durable protection for all age groups.

Among other findings:

- More than half of respondents (54%) say they have heard about vaccines in the media, followed by the internet (45%), doctor/healthcare provider (41%), advertisements (38%), social media (36%), friends/family (29%), government (10%), and patient organization (6%).
- Sixty-two percent say they have spoken with a physician, pharmacist or another healthcare professional about getting the flu [vaccine](#).

- A vast majority (81%) agree if someone else's child is not vaccinated, other children are at risk for disease.
- Seventy-nine percent agree that the U.S. is a global leader in research to improve health, a 9% increase compared to 2008, and an overwhelming majority (93%) think it is important that the U.S. is a global leader.
- When asked who should be responsible for funding global health research, nearly three-quarters of respondents (73%) said the World Health Organization, followed by the U.S. government (65%), businesses (52%), United Nations (50%), foundations (45%), private citizens (36%) and state government (26%).

The nationwide survey of 1,004 U.S. adults was conducted by Zogby Analytics for Research!America and the American Society for Microbiology in May 2018. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 percentage points. To view the survey, visit <http://www.researchamerica.org/outbreaksurvey>.

Provided by Research!America

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