

Majority of U.S. Adults Think Chemicals and Pollutants are More of a Threat Now Than They Were

Contributed by Harris Interactive

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Majority of U.S. Adults Think Chemicals and Pollutants are More of a Threat Now Than They Were 10 Years Ago

Three in five adults have taken one or more steps to reduce their exposure to chemicals and pollutants

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – April 26, 2005 – A majority (58%) of U.S. adults believe that chemicals and pollutants are more of a threat to people like them now than they were 10 years ago. The public appears to be more worried about certain outdoor air pollutants and chemicals than those indoors but about one in five (21%) adults report that they or someone in their household has experienced a chronic health problem (e.g., allergies, lung condition, chronic fatigue, etc.) attributed to indoor air pollutants or chemicals. Many adults are taking proactive steps to reduce their exposure to potentially harmful chemicals and pollutants.

These are some of the results of a Harris Interactive® online survey of 2,130 U.S. adults conducted between April 15 and 19, 2005 for The Wall Street Journal Online's Health Industry Edition.

Many adults are very or somewhat worried about several types of outdoor and indoor chemicals or pollutants that might impact their health or the health of their immediate family.

- One-quarter (25%) of adults are very worried and another 40 percent are somewhat worried about chemicals or pesticides that are used to grow the foods they eat.
- One in four (25%) are very worried and 38 percent are somewhat worried about chemicals from manufacturing sites or other industrial sites that might contaminate the soil, water or air around their home.
- Twenty-two percent (22%) are very worried about outdoor air pollution caused by vehicles, power plants, manufacturing and other man-made sources. A further 47 percent are somewhat worried about this.
- Fourteen percent (14%) are very worried and 36 percent are somewhat worried about indoor air pollutants such as chemicals in furnishings, carpeting, paints, construction materials, etc.
- Thirteen percent (13%) are very worried about Radon, a naturally-occurring gas that can accumulate in enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces such as basements and garages. An additional one-third (32%) is somewhat worried about Radon.

On a more positive note, a majority (61%) of adults report having taken one or more steps to reduce their exposure to chemicals or pollutants. Steps taken include:

- Purchasing natural or biodegradable cleaning products (34%)
- Purchasing air purifiers or other types of ventilation systems to eliminate indoor pollutants from their home (34%)
- Purchasing organic produce or other foods (24%)
- Using chemical-free paints, furnishings or other construction materials in their home (17%)
- Having their homes tested for radon, lead, asbestos or other indoor pollutants (13%)
- Moving to another location, such as changing homes, jobs, etc. (6%)
- Something else (7%).

TABLE 1 CONCERNS ABOUT HEALTH THREATS OVER TIME

"Compared to 10 years ago, do you think chemicals and pollutants are more of a threat or less of a threat to the health of people like you?"

Base: All Adults

Total
58%
More of a threat
58
Less of a threat
17
No difference
19
Don't know
7

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 2

PUBLIC CONCERNS ABOUT HEALTH IMPACT OF CHEMICALS AND POLLUTANTS

"How worried are you that the following types of chemicals or pollutants might impact your health or the health of your immediate family?"

Base: All Adults

Very Worried
Somewhat Worried

Not Very Worried
Not at All Worried

%
%
%
%

Outdoor air pollution caused by vehicles, power plants, manufacturing and other man-made sources

22
47
23
8

Indoor air pollutants such as chemicals in furnishings, carpeting, paints, construction materials, etc.

14
36
39
12

Chemicals from manufacturing sites or other industrial sites that might contaminate the soil, water or air around your home

25
38
27
10

Chemicals or pesticides that are used to grow the foods you eat

25
40
27
8

Radon, a naturally-occurring gas that can accumulate in enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces such as basements and garages

13
32
39
16

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 3

CHRONIC HEALTH PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH INDOOR AIR POLLUTANTS OR CHEMICALS

"Have you or has anyone in your household experienced a chronic health problem like allergies, a lung condition, chronic fatigue or some other type of ongoing health problem that has been attributed to indoor air pollutants or chemicals?"

Base: All Adults

Total

?

Yes

21

No

67

Don't know

12

TABLE 4

ACTIONS TAKEN TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO CHEMICALS OR POLLUTANTS

"What steps, if any, have you taken to reduce your exposure to chemicals or pollutants?"

Choose all that apply."

Base: All Adults

Total

?

Have Taken One or More Steps to Reduce Exposure (Net)

61

Purchased natural or biodegradable cleaning products

Purchased air purifiers or other types of ventilation systems to eliminate indoor pollutants from my home

Purchased organic produce or other foods

Used chemical-free paints, furnishings or other construction materials in my home

Had my home tested for radon, lead, asbestos or other indoor pollutants

Moved to another location (e.g., changed homes, jobs, etc.)

Something else?

Nothing

39

Downloadable PDFs of Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Polls are posted at

http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_wsj.asp.

Methodology This poll was conducted online in the United States between April 15 and 19, 2005 among a nationwide cross section of 2,130 adults aged 18 and over. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, income and region were weighted where necessary to align with population proportions. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

In theory, with probability samples of this size, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. This includes refusals to be interviewed (nonresponse), question wording and question order, and weighting. It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. This online sample is not a probability sample.

About the Survey The Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll is an exclusive poll that is published in the award-winning Health Industry Edition of The Wall Street Journal Online at www.wsj.com/health.

About The Wall Street Journal Online The Wall Street Journal Online at WSJ.com, published by Dow Jones & Company (NYSE: DJ; www.dowjones.com), offers authoritative analysis, breaking news and commentary from top industry journalists. Launched in 1996, the Online Journal is the largest paid subscription news site on the Web, with more than 689,000 subscribers world-wide. The Online Journal provides in-depth business news and financial information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with insight and analysis, including breaking business and technology news and analysis from around the world. It draws on the Dow Jones network of more than 1,500 reporters and editors -- the largest staff of business and financial journalists in the world. For the second consecutive year in 2003, the Online Journal received a WebAward for the "Best Newspaper Web Site" and was also cited by Yahoo! Internet Life magazine as the "Best Business News" site (2002 & 2001).

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