

WHAT SHAPES HEALTH

NPR

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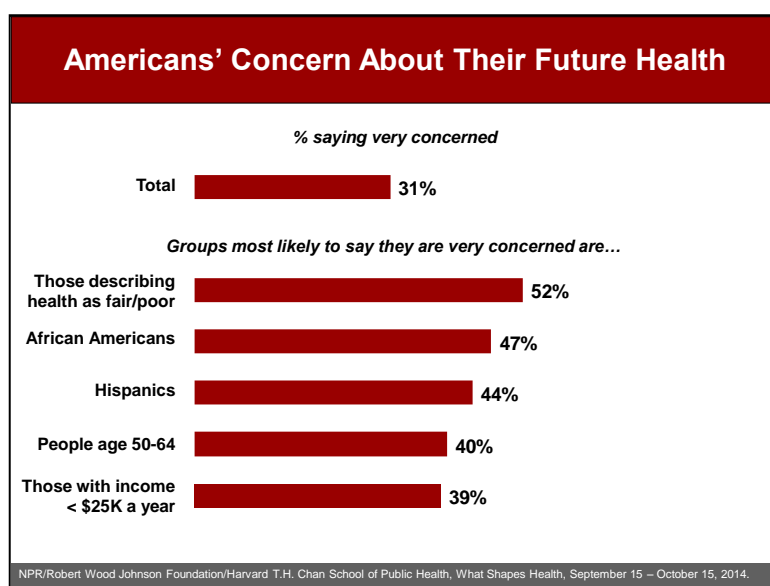


March 2015

What Shapes Health

I. How Concerned are Americans with Their Health?

As a nation, Americans are concerned about their health. About six in ten Americans (62%) say they are very concerned (31%) or somewhat concerned (31%) about their health in the future.¹ About one-third (36%) are not too (24%) or not at all concerned (12%). Regardless of their background, a majority of Americans are concerned about their health.



The groups most likely to say they are very concerned about their future health are those who describe their own health as fair or poor (52% very concerned), African Americans (47%), Hispanics (44%), people age 50-64 (40%), and those with household incomes of less than \$25,000 a year (39%).

About four in ten Americans (42%) believe that they are in better health than their parents were at their age. About an equal proportion (45%) believes their own health is about the same as

their parents' health was. About one in ten (9%) think they are in worse health than their parents were at the same age. Americans age 50 or older are the most likely to say they are in better health than their parents were (50%).

Throughout the survey, respondents were requested to think about “health” in a broad sense, meaning “both freedom from disease, mental illness, and disability, as well as having a sense of physical and mental well-being.”

¹ Half of the survey respondents were asked about their “health.” The other half were asked about their “health and physical and mental well-being.” The results from the two versions were nearly identical and were combined for this discussion of Americans’ concern about their future health.

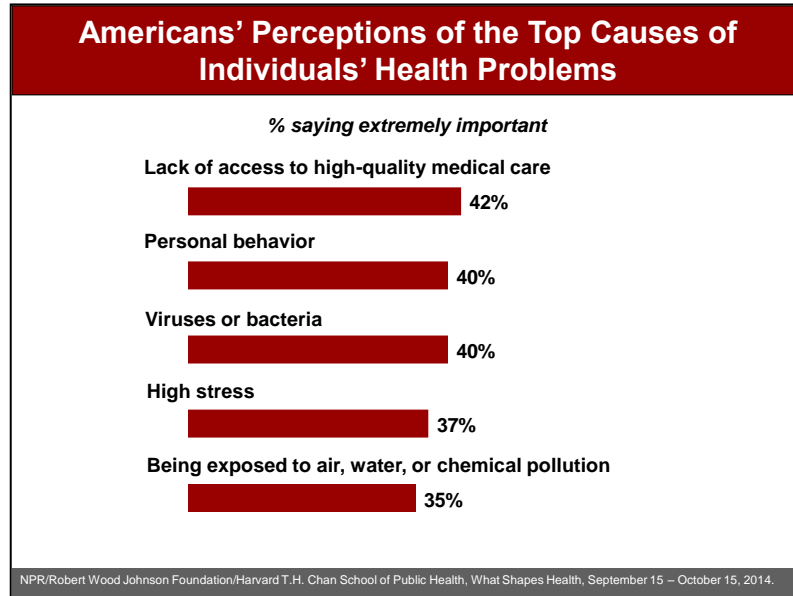
II. What Do Americans Believe Causes Health Problems?

Americans do not see a single most important cause of individuals' health problems. When given a list of 14 things that might cause ill health, the top five causes seen by the public as extremely important are lack of access to high-quality medical care (42%), personal behavior (40%), viruses or bacteria (40%), high stress (37%), and being exposed to air, water, or chemical pollution (35%).

About six in ten (62%) believe that the behavior of their family and friends is extremely (29%) or very important (33%) in influencing their own long-term health.

When asked specifically about things that happen to a person in childhood that can cause health problems later in life when they are adults, a majority

(54%) said they thought being abused or neglected in childhood was extremely important. In addition, more than four in ten listed the following childhood experiences as extremely important causes of a person's health problems later in life: living in a polluted area (44%), eating a poor diet (44%), and not getting vaccinations (43%).



III. Do Americans Differ in Their Views about the Causes of Ill Health by Race/Ethnicity and Income?

When it comes to the causes of health problems, African Americans, Hispanics, and low-income Americans have somewhat different perceptions than others. African Americans are more likely than whites to perceive lack of access to high-quality medical care (56% to 41%), God’s will (47% to 29%), having a low income (45% to 23%), and not having enough education (41% to 26%) as extremely important causes of individuals’ health problems. Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites (46% to 31%) to say that bad working conditions are extremely important.

Low-income Americans (those with household incomes less than \$25,000 a year) are more likely than high-income Americans (\$75,000 a year or more) to believe poor neighborhood and housing conditions (40% to 27%) and bad working conditions (40% to 26%) are extremely important.

Americans’ Perceptions of the Top Causes of Individuals’ Health Problems by Household Income			
	Total	<\$25K/yr	\$75K+/yr
Lack of access to high-quality medical care	42	48	40
Personal behavior	40	41	43
Viruses or bacteria	40	42	38
High stress	37	43	37
Being exposed to air, water, or chemical pollution	35	35	32
Lack of friends and family members the person can talk to and rely on	34	39	33
Poor neighborhood and housing conditions	33	40*	27
Being abused as an adult	33	32	29
Bad working conditions	33	40*	26
Not having enough education	31	31	28
God’s will	29	37	25
Having a low income	27	32	22
Bad genes	19	22	18
Bad luck	9	11	5

*=significantly higher proportion than for \$75K+/yr (p<.05)

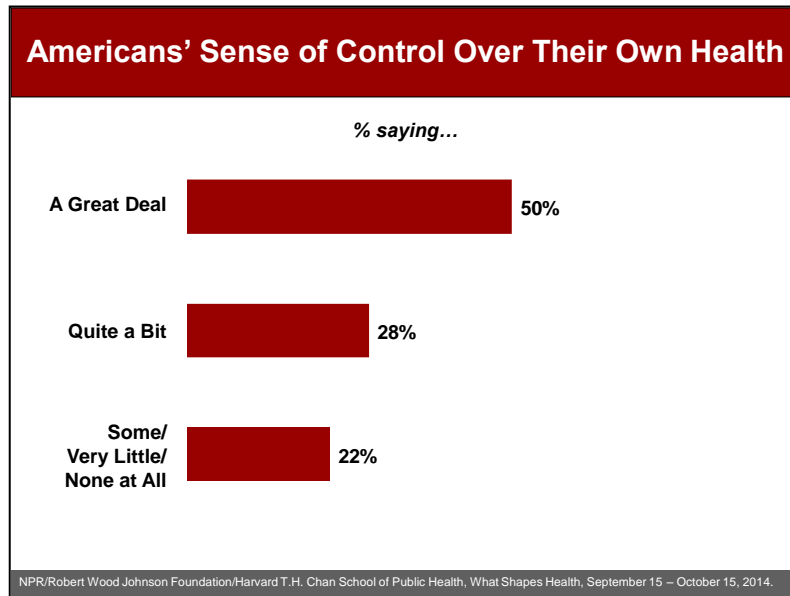
NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, What Shapes Health, September 15 – October 15, 2014.

A similar pattern appears when considering childhood experiences that can cause future health problems for individuals. African Americans are more likely than whites to believe eating a poor diet in childhood (55% to 42%), not getting vaccinations as a child (54% to 43%), living in poverty in childhood (47% to 31%), not graduating from high school (46% to 26%), and being born premature or underweight (34% to 20%) are extremely important.

Low-income Americans are more likely than high-income Americans to believe that the following childhood experiences are extremely important causes of future health problems: being abused or neglected in childhood (61% to 51%), living in a polluted environment in childhood (49% to 37%), eating a poor diet in childhood (50% to 36%), living in poverty in childhood (39% to 30%), and being born premature or underweight (30% to 18%).

IV. Do People Believe They Can Control Their Own Health?

Half of Americans believe they have a great deal of control over their health. Previous studies have shown that individuals' beliefs about the control they have over their health may be related to their future health outcomes.²



Half of Americans (50%) believe they have a great deal of control over their own health. About three in ten (28%) believe they have quite a bit of control, while about two in ten (22%) believe they do not have much control over their health (some, very little, or none at all).

Those who do not feel a sense of control differ significantly by socioeconomic and other measures. Americans who are better off financially, more highly educated, and in good health are more likely to believe

that they have control over their health. Those with less advantaged backgrounds are less likely to be optimistic. Those with household incomes of less than \$50,000 a year are more than twice as likely as those with incomes of \$50,000 or more (28% to 13%) to believe they do not have much control over their health. Similarly, those with a high school diploma or less are more likely than college graduates (27% to 15%) to feel a lack of control. Hispanics (31%) are more likely than non-Hispanic whites (19%) and African Americans (17%) to think they do not have much control. In addition, half (50%) of Americans who describe their own health as fair or poor believe they do not have much control over their own health.

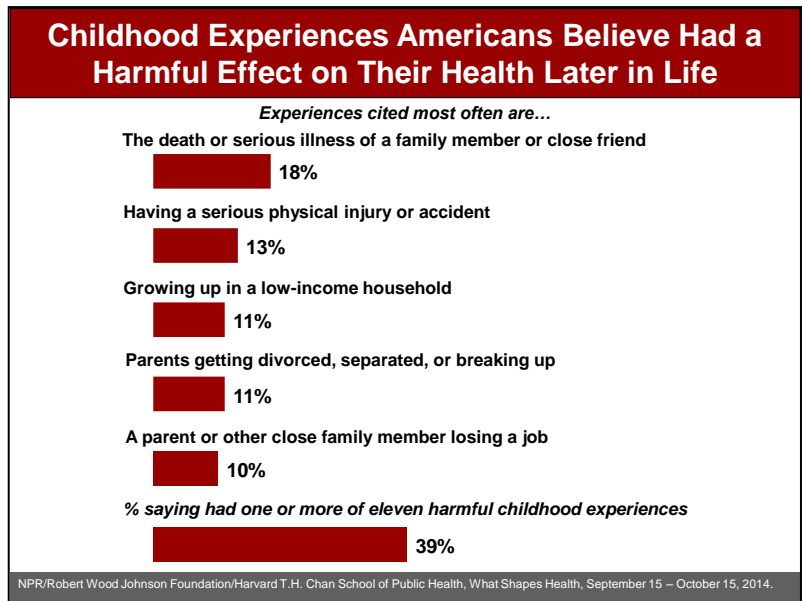
Those who think they have control over their health are more likely than those who do not think they do to report that they put a great deal or quite a bit of effort into improving their own health (71% to 52%).

² Henninger DE, Whitson HE, Chen HJ, Ariel D, "Higher Medical Morbidity Burden is Associated with External Locus of Control," *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 2012(4);60:751-755; Infurna FJ, Ram N, Gerstorf D, "Level and Change in Perceived Control Predicts 19-Year Mortality: Findings from the Americans' Changing Lives Study," *Developmental Psychology* 2013;49(10):1833-1847; Gale CR, Batty D, Deary IJ, "Locus of Control at Age 10 Years and Health Outcomes and Behaviors at Age 30 Years: The 1970 British Cohort Study," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 2008;70(4):397-403.

V. Do Americans Perceive Childhood Experiences as Having a Harmful Effect on Their Health as Adults?

A substantial number of Americans report having had negative experiences in childhood that they believe impacted their future health. Nearly four in ten Americans (39%) report that they had one or more childhood experiences that they believe have had a harmful effect on their health later in life. The five childhood experiences Americans cite most often (from a list of 11) as having had a harmful effect on their later health are the death or serious illness of a family member or close friend (18%), having a serious physical injury or accident (13%), growing up in a low-income household (11%), parents getting divorced, separated, or breaking up (11%), and a parent or other close family member losing a job (10%).

Americans' reported beliefs about the harmful effects of childhood experiences correspond to the conclusions from a number of scientific studies. Published studies have shown that adverse childhood experiences are associated with an increased risk of illness or premature mortality.³



Among those who believe they do not have much control over their own health, fully half (50%) report having had experiences in childhood they thought had harmful health effects later in life.

The groups most likely to report having had one or more negative experiences in childhood that they believe had a harmful effect on their later health are those who say they are in fair or poor health (65%) and those with household incomes of less than \$25,000 a year (51%).

³ Gilbert LK, Breiding MJ, Merrick MT, et al., "Childhood Adversity and Adult Chronic Disease: An Update from Ten States and the District of Columbia, 2010," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2014, e-pub ahead of print, Oct 6, doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2014.09.006; Brown DW, Anda RF, Tiemeier H, et al., "Adverse Childhood Experiences and the Risk of Premature Mortality," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2009;37(5):389-396.

Childhood Experiences Americans Believe Had a Harmful Effect on Their Health Later in Life by Household Income

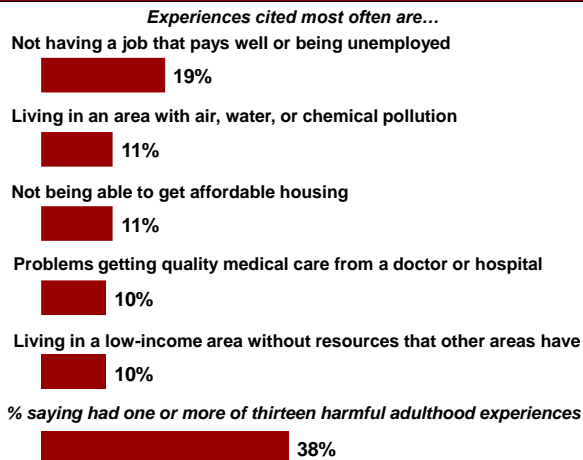
	Total	<\$25K/yr	\$75K+/yr
One of more of the following:	39	51*	37
The death or serious illness of a family member or close friend	18	26*	17
Having a serious physical injury or accident	13	17	12
Growing up in a low-income household	11	15*	6
Parents getting divorced, separated, or breaking up	11	17*	9
A parent or other close family member losing a job	10	12*	6
Growing up in a single-parent home for some part of your childhood	9	12	7
Having a serious health problem during your childhood	8	8	7
Growing up in a high-pollution area	7	9	5
Growing up in a high-crime area	6	11*	4
Growing up in bad housing	6	10*	3
Going to poor-quality schools	6	7	6

*=significantly higher proportion than for \$75K+/yr (p<.05)

NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, What Shapes Health, September 15 – October 15, 2014.

VI. Do Americans Perceive Experiences in Adulthood as Having a Harmful Effect on Their Health?

Adulthood Experiences Americans Believe Have Had a Harmful Effect on Their Health



NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, What Shapes Health, September 15 – October 15, 2014.

Just as in the case of childhood experiences, a substantial proportion of Americans report having had experiences in adulthood that they believe have negatively impacted their health. Nearly four in ten (38%) report that they have had one or more experiences as adults that they believe have had a harmful effect on their health. The five adulthood experiences cited most often (from a list of 13) as having had a harmful effect on their health are not having a job that pays well or being unemployed (19%), living in an area with air,

water, or chemical pollution (11%), not being able to get affordable housing (11%), problems getting quality medical care from a doctor or hospital (10%), and living in a low-income area without the resources that other communities have (10%).

Of note, African Americans and Hispanics cite additional top-rated harmful adulthood experiences. One in five African Americans (21%) report having experienced racial or ethnic discrimination in adulthood that they believe has had a harmful effect on their health. One in six Hispanics (17%) report that the adulthood experience of living in a low-income area without the resources that other communities have has had a harmful effect on their health.

The groups most likely to report having had one or more negative experiences in adulthood that they believe have had a harmful effect on their health are those who say they are in fair or poor health (56%) and those with household incomes of less than \$25,000 a year (53%).

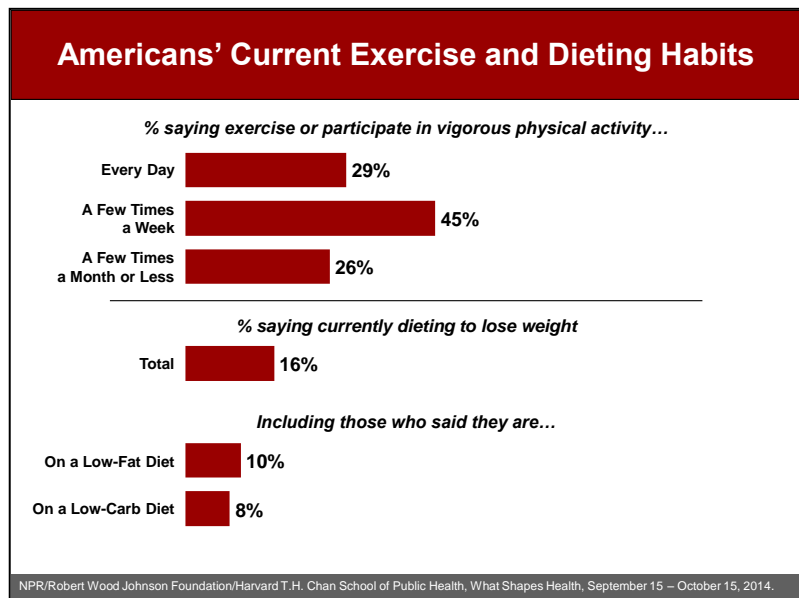
VII. What Are People Doing to Stay Healthy?

Although many experts believe that Americans are not doing enough to maintain or improve their health, the public reports doing a number of things experts recommend.

Two-thirds of Americans report that they put a great deal (27%) or quite a bit (40%) of effort into trying to maintain or improve their own health. About one-third (32%) say they do not put in much effort (some, very little, none at all). Those who are concerned with their future health are more likely than those who are less concerned (71% to 61%) to say they put in substantial effort.

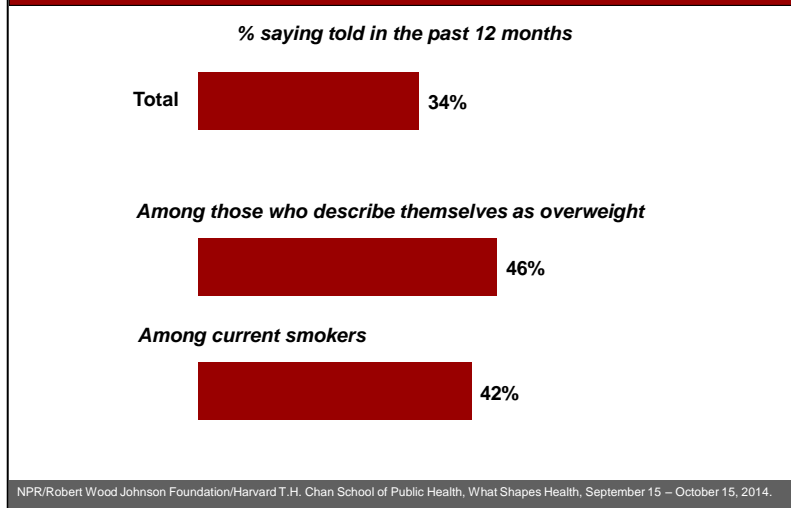
When given a list of 20 things that might help maintain or improve their health, the top five things Americans say they are currently doing are frequently eating healthy fruits and vegetables (87%), actively trying to reduce stress (83%), limiting the amount of fast food they eat (82%), limiting the amount of alcohol they drink (79%), and limiting the amount of sugar-sweetened soda or sports drinks they drink (79%). The survey did not ask people how frequently they took these actions.

About three in ten Americans (29%) report that they exercise or participate in vigorous physical activity every day, while 45% say they do so a few times a week, and about one in four (26%) report that they exercise or do vigorous physical activities a few times a month or less.



One in six Americans (16%) report that they are currently on a diet to lose weight, including 10% who say they are on a low-fat diet and 8% who say they are on a low-carbohydrate diet.

Americans Told by Health Professionals to Take Steps to Maintain or Improve Their Health



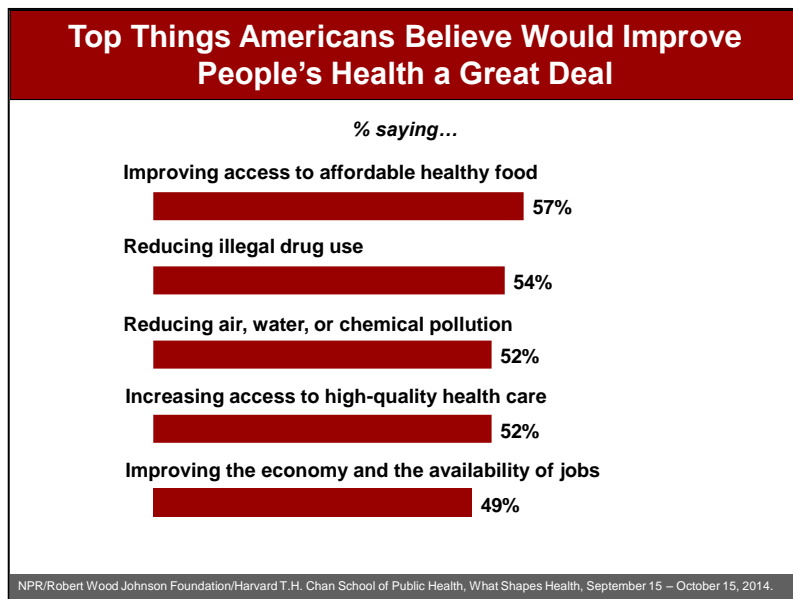
A substantial number of Americans say people close to them have told them that they need to make an effort to maintain or improve their health. About one in three (34%) report that a health professional has told them that they need to take steps to maintain or improve their health. About three in ten (28%) say that a family member has told them that they need to take such steps.

Nearly half (46%) of Americans who describe themselves as being overweight and 42% of

current smokers report that a health professional has told them they need to take steps to maintain or improve their health.

VIII. What Do People Believe Could Be Done to Make People Healthier?

Americans have a very broad view of the sorts of actions that could be taken to improve people's health. The top five things (from a list of 16) that Americans believe would improve people's health a great deal are: improving access to affordable healthy food (57%), reducing illegal drug use (54%), reducing air, water, or chemical pollution (52%), increasing access to high-quality health care (52%), and improving the economy and the availability of jobs (49%).



IX. What Do Americans Mean by “Health?”

When asked to say in their own words what “health” or “health and physical and mental well-being” mean to them, Americans give a broad range of answers. Generally speaking, their answers fall into three categories: (1) being healthy or not ill; (2) personal well-being; and (3) lifestyle or taking care of yourself.

The answers differ somewhat depending on which of the two words or phrases is used. When half the sample was asked what “health” means to them, 38% defined it in terms of being healthy or not ill. Three in ten (30%) saw it as personal well-being, and 18% defined it as lifestyle or taking care of yourself.

Answers differed for the half-sample who were asked what “health and physical or mental well-being” means to them. About one-third (34%) defined the phrase in terms of personal well-being. About one-fourth (27%) thought of it as being healthy or not ill, and 19% defined it as lifestyle or taking care of yourself.

When Americans think about health, it is not just about sickness, but about a broad range of concerns.

X. Conclusions

The United States is a country where most people are concerned about their health. In fact, about one-third (31%) say they are very concerned. Americans do not see a single problem that leads to ill health; rather, they see a broad range of causes. The top five causes of health problems that Americans see as extremely important are lack of access to high-quality medical care (42%), personal behavior (40%), viruses or bacteria (40%), high stress (37%), and being exposed to air, water, or chemical pollution (35%).

In addition, it turns out that a substantial number of Americans have had negative experiences in their childhood or adulthood that they believe had a longer-term impact on their health. Nearly four in ten (39%) report having had adverse experiences in childhood that they believe have had a harmful effect on their later health. The two childhood experiences Americans cite most often as having had a harmful effect on their later health are the death or serious illness of a family member or close friend (18%) and having a serious physical injury or accident (13%). Similarly, about four in ten (38%) report that they have had one or more experiences as adults that they believe have had a harmful effect on their health. These findings suggest the importance of paying attention to key events and life circumstances that may shape individuals’ future health.

In terms of improving the health of the nation and their own communities, Americans think very broadly about the issues that have to be addressed in the future. The public recognizes that effective steps in improving health go beyond medical care, including economic, environmental, and school-, work-, and diet-related measures.

Methodology

This poll is part of an on-going series of surveys developed by researchers at the Harvard Opinion Research Program (HORP) at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and NPR. The research team consists of the following members at each institution.

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health: Robert J. Blendon, Professor of Health Policy and Political Analysis and Executive Director of HORP; John M. Benson, Research Scientist and Managing Director of HORP; Justin M. Sayde, Administrative and Research Manager; and Mary T. Gorski, Research Fellow.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Fred Mann, Vice President, Communications; Carolyn Miller, Senior Program Officer, Research and Evaluation; and Brooke Van Roekel, Director Audience Engagement and Marketing.

NPR: Anne Gudenkauf, Senior Supervising Editor, Science Desk; and Joe Neel, Deputy Senior Supervising Editor, Science Desk.

Interviews were conducted via telephone (including both landline and cell phone) by SSRS of Media (PA), September 15 – October 15, 2014, among a nationally representative sample of 2,423 respondents age 18 and older. The interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for total respondents is +/- 2.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Possible sources of non-sampling error include non-response bias, as well as question wording and ordering effects. Non-response in telephone surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population. To compensate for these known biases and for variations in probability of selection within and across households, sample data are weighted by household size, cell phone/landline use and demographics (sex, age, race/ethnicity, education, number of adults in household and census region) to reflect the true population. Other techniques, including random-digit dialing, replicate subsamples, and systematic respondent selection within households, are used to ensure that the sample is representative.

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This survey was conducted for National Public Radio, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health via telephone (landline and cell phone) by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted September 15 – October 15, 2014, among a nationally representative sample of 2,423 respondents age 18 or older. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-2.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

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I. WHAT HEALTH MEANS TO YOU

(Random Half Sample Q1/Q2 Series Respondents; n=1,214)

1. How concerned are you about your health in the future—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

Very concerned	31
Somewhat concerned	31
Not too concerned	25
Not at all concerned	12
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half Sample Q3/Q4 Series Respondents; n=1,209)

3. How concerned are you about your health and physical and mental well-being in the future—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

Very concerned	31
Somewhat concerned	31
Not too concerned	24
Not at all concerned	12
Don't know/Refused	2

Combined results of Q1 and Q3 (n=2,423)

Very concerned	31
Somewhat concerned	31
Not too concerned	24
Not at all concerned	12
Don't know/Refused	2

(Random Half Sample Q1/Q2 Series Respondents; n=1,214)

2. When you hear the word “health,” what does it mean to you?

Being healthy, not sick (Net)	38
Being healthy/healthy body/in good physical health/physical well being	19
Not being sick/in pain/not having diseases/health problems	10
Bad health/health problems (sicknesses/diseases/cancer/due to accidents/etc.)	3
Life/longevity	4
Having health insurance/good health insurance	2
Well-being (Net)	30
Mental/emotional/physical/spiritual/state of mind and body	6
Good life/good quality of life/being able to do whatever you want to do/personal satisfaction/independence	6
Wellness/general/overall wellness/feeling good overall/all health aspects (general/overall)	18
Lifestyle, taking care of yourself (Net)	18
Being/keeping in good shape/physically fit	3
Exercising/being active	1
Eating properly/maintaining healthy weight	3
Taking care of your body (other)	2
Taking care of yourself/taking preventative actions (general/overall)	6
Healthy lifestyle/well-rounded	3
Nothing	1
Other	9
Don't know/Refused	4

(Random Half Sample Q3/Q4 Series Respondents; n=1,209)

4. When you hear the term “health and physical and mental well-being,” what does that mean to you?

Being healthy, not sick (Net)	27
Being healthy/healthy body/in good physical health/physical well being	17
Not being sick/in pain/not having diseases/health problems	4
Bad health/health problems (sicknesses/diseases/cancer/due to accidents/etc.)	2
Life/longevity	3
Having health insurance/good health insurance	1
Well-being (Net)	34
Mental/emotional/physical/spiritual/state of mind and body	17
Good life/good quality of life/being able to do whatever you want to do/personal satisfaction/independence	7
Wellness/general/overall wellness/feeling good overall/all health aspects (general/overall)	10
Lifestyle, taking care of yourself (Net)	19
Being/keeping in good shape/physically fit	2
Exercising/being active	2
Eating properly/maintaining healthy weight	2
Taking care of your body (other)	2
Taking care of yourself/taking preventative actions (general/overall)	8
Healthy lifestyle/well-rounded	3
Nothing	3
Other	12
Don't know/Refused	5

II. WHAT PEOPLE ARE DOING TO STAY HEALTHY

For the rest of this survey, we are going to ask for your attitudes and experiences about health, in a broad sense. When we say “health,” we mean both freedom from disease, mental illness, and disability, as well as having a sense of physical and mental well-being.

5. How much control do you think you have over your own health—a great deal, quite a bit, some, very little, or none at all?

A great deal	50
Quite a bit	28
Some	16
Very little	4
None at all	2
Don't know/Refused	*

6. How much effort would you say you put into trying to maintain or improve your own health? Would you say a great deal of effort, quite a bit, some, very little, or none at all?

A great deal	27
Quite a bit	40
Some	26
Very little	5
None at all	1
Don't know/Refused	1

(Respondents that put effort into improving their health)

Q6a. How often do you do something to try to maintain or improve your own health—more than once a day, once a day, a few times a week, once a week, or less than once a week?

Combo Table Q6/Q6a Total Respondents (n=2,423)

A great deal/Quite a bit of effort into maintain/improve health	67
More than once a day	25
Once a day	25
A few times a week	15
Once a week	2
Less than once a week	1
Some effort into maintain/improve health	26
Very little effort into maintain/improve health	5
No effort at all	1
Don't know/Refused	1

7. In general, how would you describe your own health—excellent, very good, good, fair or poor?

Excellent	17
Very good	35
Good	32
Fair	12
Poor	4
Don't know/Refused	*

8. During the past five years, do you think your health in general has gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

Better	20
Worse	24
Stayed about the same	56
Don't know/Refused	*

9. I'm going to read you a list of things that some people do because they think these things might help maintain or improve their health. For each one, please tell me whether or not that is something you currently do.

(Rank-ordered by % saying "yes")

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

- i. Frequently eat healthy fruits and vegetables

Yes	87
No	13
Don't know/Refused	*

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

- q. Actively try to reduce stress

Yes	83
No	16
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

- d. Limit the amount of fast food you eat

Yes	82
No	17
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

- a. Exercise or get physical activity during your leisure time

Yes	81
No	18
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

- f. Limit the amount of alcohol you drink

Yes	79
No	19
Don't know/Refused	2

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

- g. Limit the amount of sugar-sweetened soda or sports drinks you drink

Yes	79
No	19
Don't know/Refused	2

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

- c. Limit the amount of sugar you eat and drink

Yes	78
No	21
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

- n. Get enough sleep

Yes	77
No	22
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

- t. Get appropriate vaccinations

Yes	77
No	22
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

- j. Limit portion sizes of food and beverages you eat or drink

Yes	75
No	24
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

- o. Go to the doctor regularly

Yes	74
No	26
Don't know/Refused	*

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

p. Go to the dentist regularly

Yes	71
No	29
Don't know/Refused	--

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

k. Limit the amount of high-cholesterol food you eat

Yes	69
No	30
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

h. Eat whole grains or a high-fiber diet

Yes	68
No	31
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

r. Use hand sanitizer

Yes	68
No	31
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

l. Pray for your health and well-being

Yes	68
No	32
Don't know/Refused	*

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

b. Limit the amount of high-salt food you eat

Yes	67
No	32
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

- s. Have a pet for your health and well-being

Yes	52
No	47
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

- m. Meditate for your health and well-being

Yes	41
No	58
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

- e. Eat organic foods

Yes	38
No	61
Don't know/Refused	1

(Random Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

- u. Eat a gluten-free diet

Yes	24
No	74
Don't know/Refused	2

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

10. Are you currently on a diet to lose weight, or are you not on a diet to lose weight right now?

Yes	16
No	83
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents who are on a diet)

11. Are you currently on a low-carbohydrate diet, or not?

**Combo Table Q10/Q11
Half Sample A Respondents**

Yes, currently on a diet	16
Yes, currently on a low-carbohydrate diet	8
No, NOT currently on a low-carbohydrate diet	8
No, not currently on a diet	83
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents who are on a diet)

12. Are you currently on a low-fat diet, or not?

**Combo Table Q10/Q12
Half Sample A Respondents**

Yes, currently on a diet	16
Yes, currently on a low-fat diet	10
No, NOT currently on a low-fat diet	6
No, not currently on a diet	83
Don't know/Refused	1

III. WHAT COULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE PEOPLE'S HEALTH

Just a reminder, when we say when we say “health,” we mean both freedom from disease, mental illness, and disability, as well as having a sense of physical and mental well-being.

13. I'm going to read you a list of things that some people have suggested might help improve people's health. For each one, please tell me how much you think it would improve people's health. How about (INSERT ITEM)? Do you think that would improve people's health a great deal, quite a bit, some, very little, or not at all?

(Rank-ordered by % saying “A great deal”)

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=620)

g. Improving access to affordable healthy food

A great deal	57
Quite a bit	22
Some	12
Very little	4
None at all	4
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=622)

n. Reducing illegal drug use

A great deal	54
Quite a bit	19
Some	14
Very little	4
None at all	6
Don't know/Refused	3

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=623)

d. Increasing access to high-quality health care

A great deal	52
Quite a bit	25
Some	15
Very little	4
None at all	3
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=651)

c. Reducing air, water, or chemical pollution

A great deal	52
Quite a bit	24
Some	15
Very little	4
None at all	3
Don't know/Refused	2

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=605)

a. Improving the economy and the availability of jobs

A great deal	49
Quite a bit	27
Some	17
Very little	3
None at all	3
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=575)

b. Improving the availability of places for people to exercise indoors and outdoors

A great deal	47
Quite a bit	22
Some	18
Very little	7
None at all	5
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=622)

j. Providing better schools

A great deal	45
Quite a bit	19
Some	21
Very little	7
None at all	7
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=615)

f. Reducing crime and improving neighborhood safety

A great deal	44
Quite a bit	23
Some	21
Very little	6
None at all	5
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=579)

k. Improving access to high-quality child care and pre-kindergarten education

A great deal	42
Quite a bit	22
Some	20
Very little	6
None at all	8
Don't know/Refused	2

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=587)

p. Adequate paid individual and family sick leave at work

A great deal	41
Quite a bit	19
Some	25
Very little	7
None at all	5
Don't know/Refused	3

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=618)

i. Reducing racial and ethnic discrimination

A great deal	40
Quite a bit	16
Some	21
Very little	10
None at all	10
Don't know/Refused	3

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=575)

h. Improving access to quality affordable housing

A great deal	35
Quite a bit	23
Some	26
Very little	8
None at all	6
Don't know/Refused	2

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=604)

o. Offering more after-school programs

A great deal	31
Quite a bit	24
Some	26
Very little	9
None at all	6
Don't know/Refused	4

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=563)

e. Narrowing the difference in income between the rich and the poor

A great deal	31
Quite a bit	15
Some	25
Very little	11
None at all	14
Don't know/Refused	4

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=602)

l. Improving access to public transportation

A great deal	27
Quite a bit	15
Some	29
Very little	14
None at all	11
Don't know/Refused	4

(Half Sample A Respondents- Each asked eight random items; n=627)

m. Improving garbage collection

A great deal	22
Quite a bit	13
Some	27
Very little	18
None at all	17
Don't know/Refused	3

IV. BELIEFS ABOUT WHAT SHAPES HEALTH

14. There can be many causes of problems with a person's health. How important do you think each of the following is as a cause of such problems? How about (INSERT ITEM)? Would you say that is extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

(Rank-ordered by % saying "Extremely important")**(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)**

d. Lack of access to high-quality medical care

Extremely important	42
Very important	37
Somewhat important	16
Not too important	2
Not at all important	2
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

c. Personal behavior

Extremely important	40
Very important	44
Somewhat important	14
Not too important	2
Not at all important	1
Don't know/Refused	*

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

b. Viruses or bacteria

Extremely important	40
Very important	40
Somewhat important	16
Not too important	1
Not at all important	1
Don't know/Refused	2

(Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

n. High stress

Extremely important	37
Very important	44
Somewhat important	15
Not too important	2
Not at all important	1
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

g. Being exposed to air, water, or chemical pollution

Extremely important	35
Very important	38
Somewhat important	21
Not too important	2
Not at all important	2
Don't know/Refused	2

(Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

m. Lack of friends and family members the person can talk to and rely on

Extremely important	34
Very important	45
Somewhat important	17
Not too important	2
Not at all important	2
Don't know/Refused	*

(Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

k. Bad working conditions

Extremely important	33
Very important	43
Somewhat important	20
Not too important	2
Not at all important	1
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

i. Poor neighborhood and housing conditions

Extremely important	33
Very important	39
Somewhat important	24
Not too important	3
Not at all important	1
Don't know/Refused	*

(Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

h. Being abused as an adult

Extremely important	33
Very important	37
Somewhat important	19
Not too important	3
Not at all important	5
Don't know/Refused	3

(Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

i. Not having enough education

Extremely important	31
Very important	37
Somewhat important	25
Not too important	2
Not at all important	4
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=606)

j. God's will

Extremely important	29
Very important	28
Somewhat important	22
Not too important	6
Not at all important	12
Don't know/Refused	3

(Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

f. Having a low income

Extremely important	27
Very important	30
Somewhat important	30
Not too important	6
Not at all important	7
Don't know/Refused	*

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

a. Bad genes

Extremely important	19
Very important	30
Somewhat important	36
Not too important	6
Not at all important	5
Don't know/Refused	4

(Half of Half Sample A Respondents; n=605)

e. Bad luck

Extremely important	9
Very important	7
Somewhat important	30
Not too important	19
Not at all important	32
Don't know/Refused	3

15. There can be things that happen in childhood that can cause problems with a person's health later in life when they are adults. How important do you think each of the following is as a cause of such problems?

(Rank-ordered by % saying "Extremely important")

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

d. Being abused or neglected in childhood

Extremely important	54
Very important	35
Somewhat important	8
Not too important	1
Not at all important	1
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

b. Eating a poor diet in childhood

Extremely important	44
Very important	39
Somewhat important	14
Not too important	1
Not at all important	1
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

e. Living in a polluted environment in childhood

Extremely important	44
Very important	36
Somewhat important	14
Not too important	2
Not at all important	2
Don't know/Refused	2

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

f. Not getting vaccinations as a child

Extremely important	43
Very important	34
Somewhat important	15
Not too important	3
Not at all important	3
Don't know/Refused	2

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

c. Living in poverty in childhood

Extremely important	31
Very important	35
Somewhat important	24
Not too important	5
Not at all important	4
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

g. Not graduating from high school

Extremely important	29
Very important	33
Somewhat important	25
Not too important	8
Not at all important	4
Don't know/Refused	1

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

a. Being born premature or underweight

Extremely important	23
Very important	28
Somewhat important	34
Not too important	7
Not at all important	5
Don't know/Refused	3

V. COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

16. Do you participate in any unpaid activities in community or volunteer organizations, or not?

This includes health-related, sports-related, school, civic, political or social organizations, or religious organizations other than attending services.

Yes	55
No	45

(Half Sample A Respondents who participate in community activities; n=717)

16a. How often do you participate in these activities? Every day, at least once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or less than that?

Every day	9
At least once a week	40
Once or twice a month	35
A few times a year	15
Less than that	1
Don't know/Refused	*

Combo Table Q16/Q16a Half Sample A Respondents

Yes participate in community/volunteer organizations	55
Every day	5
At least once a week	22
Once or twice a month	19
A few times a year	8
Less than that	*
Don't know/Refused	*
No, do NOT participate in community/volunteer organizations	45

(Half Sample A Respondents who participate in community activities; n=717)

17. Do you think your being involved in such activities helps you maintain or improve your health, or not?

Yes	83
No	17
Don't know/Refused	*

18. In the past 12 months has (INSERT ITEM) told you that you needed to take steps to maintain or improve your health, or not?

a. A family member or friend

Yes	28
No	72
Don't know/Refused	*

b. A health professional, such as a doctor or nurse

Yes	34
No	66
Don't know/Refused	*

(Half Sample A Respondents; n=1,211)

19. How important do you think the behavior of your family and friends is in influencing your long-term health—extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

Extremely important	29
Very important	33
Somewhat important	27
Not too important	6
Not at all important	4
Don't know/Refused	1

20. Thinking now about your closest family and friends, how many of them (INSERT ITEM)?

a. Are overweight

Most	8
Many	5
Some	26
Only a few	46
None	15
Don't know/Refused	*

b. Exercise regularly

Most	21
Many	11
Some	31
Only a few	27
None	7
Don't know/Refused	3

c. Smoke

Most	7
Many	3
Some	13
Only a few	38
None	38
Don't know/Refused	1

VI. EXPERIENCES

Just a reminder, when we say when we say “health,” we mean both freedom from disease, mental illness, and disability, as well as having a sense of physical and mental well-being.

(Half Sample B Respondents; n=1,212)

21. For each of the following, please tell me whether or not you have experienced this problem as an adult. How about (INSERT ITEM)? Have you experienced this problem **as an adult**, or not? (IF YES, ASK) Do you think this has had a harmful effect on your health, or not?

(Rank-ordered by % saying “Yes, have experienced; harmful effect on health”)

- a. Not having a job that pays well or being unemployed

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	19
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	15
No, have NOT experienced	63
Don't know/Refused	3

- c. Living in an area with air, water, or chemical pollution

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	11
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	9
No, have NOT experienced	79
Don't know/Refused	1

- g. Not being able to get affordable housing

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	11
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	7
No, have NOT experienced	81
Don't know/Refused	1

- d. Problems getting quality medical care from a doctor or hospital

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	10
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	6
No, have NOT experienced	84
Don't know/Refused	*

- e. Living in a low-income area without the resources that other communities have

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	10
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	10
No, have NOT experienced	79
Don't know/Refused	1

h. Experiencing racial or ethnic discrimination

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	9
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	12
No, have NOT experienced	79
Don't know/Refused	*

b. Not having places to exercise

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	8
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	6
No, have NOT experienced	85
Don't know/Refused	1

l. Not having places to ride a bicycle safely

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	8
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	10
No, have NOT experienced	79
Not applicable (vol)	2
Don't know/Refused	1

f. Living in a high-crime area

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	7
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	14
No, have NOT experienced	79
Don't know/Refused	1

k. Living in an area with poor public transportation

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	7
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	22
No, have NOT experienced	69
Don't know/Refused	2

i. Living in an area with poor-quality schools

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	5
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	10
No, have NOT experienced	82
Don't know/Refused	3

j. Not having access to high-quality child care

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	3
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	5
No, have NOT experienced	88
Don't know/Refused	4

m. Living in an area with inadequate garbage collection

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	2
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	6
No, have NOT experienced	91
Don't know/Refused	1

Combo Q21a-Q21m

Had one or more of these 13 experiences as an adult and believe (it has/they have had) a harmful effect on your health

Base: Half Sample B Respondents

Yes, experienced and harmful effect	38
No	62

(Half sample B Respondents; n=1,212)

22. I'm going to read a list of things that sometimes happen to people in childhood. How about (INSERT ITEM)? Did you have that experience **in childhood**, or not? (IF YES, ASK) Do you think this has had a harmful effect on your health later in your life, or not?

(Rank-ordered by % saying "Yes, have experienced; harmful effect on health")

i. The death or serious illness of a family member or close friend

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	18
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	31
No, have NOT experienced	50
Don't know/Refused	1

g. Having a serious physical injury or accident

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	13
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	8
No, have NOT experienced	78
Don't know/Refused	1

b. Growing up in a low-income household

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	11
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	24
No, have NOT experienced	65
Don't know/Refused	*

j. Parents getting divorced, separated, or breaking up

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	11
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	18
No, have NOT experienced	70
Don't know/Refused	1

h. A parent or other close family member losing a job

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	10
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	18
No, have NOT experienced	71
Don't know/Refused	1

k. Growing up in a single-parent home for some part of your childhood

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	9
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	21
No, have NOT experienced	70
Don't know/Refused	*

a. Having a serious health problem during your childhood

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	8
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	7
No, have NOT experienced	85
Don't know/Refused	*

d. Growing up in a high-pollution area

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	7
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	6
No, have NOT experienced	86
Don't know/Refused	1

c. Growing up in a high-crime area

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	6
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	9
No, have NOT experienced	84
Don't know/Refused	1

e. Growing up in bad housing

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	6
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	7
No, have NOT experienced	87
Don't know/Refused	*

f. Going to poor-quality schools

Yes, have experienced, harmful effect on health	6
Yes, have experienced, NO harmful effect on health	8
No, have NOT experienced	85
Don't know/Refused	1

Combo Q22a-Q22k

Had one or more of these 11 experiences in childhood and believe it/they had a harmful effect on your future health

Base: Half Sample B Respondents

Yes, experienced as child and harmful effect	39
No	61

Combo Q21a-Q21m/Q22a-Q22k

Had one or more of these 24 experiences as an adult or child adult and believe it/they had a harmful effect on your health

Base: Half Sample B Respondents

Yes, experienced as adult or child and harmful effect	52
No	48

VII. HEALTH DEMOGRAPHICS

23. At any time in the past 12 months, did you receive health care from a doctor or some other health professional, or not?

Yes	76
No	24
Don't know/Refused	*

24. At any time in the past 12 months, did you have a problem getting health care you needed, or not? (IF YES ASK) Was that for a serious health problem, or for a health problem that was not serious?

Yes, had a problem getting health care	10
Yes, for a serious health problem	6
Yes, for a problem that was not serious	4
No	89
Don't know/Refused	1

25. Think of your parents when they were your age. Would you say you are in better health than they were, in worse health than they were, or about the same?

Better	42
Worse	9
Stayed about the same	45
Parents were deceased before respondent's age/didn't know parents (vol)	1
Depends which parent	1
Don't know/Refused	2

26. In the past five years, have you had a serious illness, medical condition, injury, or disability that has required a lot of health care, or not?

Yes	29
No	71
Don't know/Refused	*

27. In the past five years, has a close family member had a serious illness, medical condition, injury, or disability that has required a lot of health care, or not?

Yes	54
No	45
Don't know/Refused	1

28. Has a doctor or other health professional ever told you that you have a chronic or long-term illness or condition, such as heart disease, lung disease, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma or a mental health condition, or haven't they?

Yes	38
No	62
Don't know/Refused	*

29. How often do you exercise or participate in vigorous physical activity—every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, or less frequently than that?

Every day	29
A few times a week	45
A few times a month	13
Less frequently than that	13
Don't know/Refused	*

30. How would you describe your weight? Would you say you are very underweight, a little underweight, about the right weight, a little overweight, or very overweight?

Very underweight	1
A little underweight	7
About the right weight	45
A little overweight	39
Very overweight	7
Don't know/Refused	1

31. Are you a current smoker, former smoker or have you never smoked?

Current smoker	15
Former smoker	28
Never smoked	56
Don't know/Refused	1

32. Now I'm going to read you a list of different kinds of health plans or health insurance, including those provided by the government. As I read each one, please tell me whether or not you personally are covered by it. How about (INSERT ITEM)?

- a. Health insurance through your or someone else's employer or union
- b. Medicare, the government health program for people 65 and older and certain people with long-term disabilities
- c. Medicaid or a program from your state government that provides health insurance to certain lower-income adults and children and long-term care for some people
- d. Health insurance you get from some other source or buy directly yourself

(Respondents who said they don't have, don't know, or refused to say if they have health insurance)

32aa. Does that mean you have no health insurance today?

**Combo Table Q32/Q32aa
Total Respondents**

Yes, have health insurance	93
Yes, covered by health insurance through employer or union	55
Yes, covered by Medicare	24
Yes, covered by Medicaid or state government program	18
Yes, covered by some other source or direct purchase	33
Yes, have health insurance (unspecified)	5
No, NOT covered	7
Don't know/Refused	*

VIII. DEMOGRAPHICS

33. In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

Republican	21
Democrat	29
Independent	39
Don't know/Refused	11

(Respondents who are Independent)

34. As of today, do you lean more to the (Democratic Party) or the (Republican Party)?

Combo Table Q33/Q34**Total Respondents**

Republican (incl leaners)	33
Democrat (incl leaners)	43
Independent	13
Don't know/Refused	11

35. How important is religion or spirituality in your life—the most important thing, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

Most important	22
Very important	36
Somewhat important	21
Not too important	10
Not at all important	9
Don't know/Refused	2

D1a. Are you currently married, living with a partner, divorced, separated, widowed or have you never been married?

Married	53
Living with a partner	7
Divorced	8
Separated	3
Widowed	7
Never been married	22
Refused	*

D1. What is the last grade or class that you completed in school?

High school or less	41
Less than high school	11
High school graduate or equivalent	29
Some college but no degree	28
College +	30
College graduate	19
Postgraduate	11
Don't know/Refused	1

D2. Are you, yourself, of Latino or Hispanic origin or descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Latin American background?

(Total Non-Hispanic)

D3. What is your race? Are you white, black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander?

**Race/Ethnicity Summary Table
Total Respondents**

White non-Hispanic	64
Black non-Hispanic	11
Asian	4
American Indian or Alaska Native	2
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1
Hispanic	14
Other race	2
Don't know	*
Refused	2

(Total landline Respondents; n=1,147)

L1. Now thinking about your telephone use...Does anyone in your household, including yourself, have a working cell phone?

(Total cell phone Respondents; n=1,276)

C1. Now thinking about your telephone use, is there at least one telephone INSIDE your home that is currently working and is not a cell phone?

L1/C1. Combo Table

Total Respondents

Landline only	7
Both LL and Cell	54
Cell phone only	39

D23a. Is your total annual household income from all sources, and before taxes:

D23b. Is your total annual household income from all sources and before taxes less than \$50,000, \$50,000 but less than \$100,000, or over \$100,000?

D23c. Is that 100 but less than 150 thousand, 150 but less than 200 thousand, 200 but less than 250 thousand, or 250 thousand and over?

Less than \$50,000	47
Less than \$15,000	13
\$15,000 but less than \$25,000	10
\$25,000 but less than \$30,000	7
\$30,000 but less than \$40,000	8
\$40,000 but less than \$50,000	7
Less than \$50,000 (unspecified)	2
\$50,000 but less than \$100,000	24
\$50,000 but less than \$100,000 (unspecified)	13
\$50,000 but less than \$75,000	10
\$75,000 but less than \$100,000	1
\$100,000 and over	16
\$100,000 and over (unspecified)	8
\$100,000 but less than \$150,000	4
\$150,000 but less than \$200,000	2
\$200,000 but less than \$250,000	2
\$250,000 and over	*
Don't know/Refused	4
Refused	8

Male	49
Female	51