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Few report taking steps to protect themselves against Zika

PHILADELPHIA – Just 1 in 5 people say that they have taken steps in the past three months to protect themselves from getting Zika virus, a survey from the [Annenberg Public Policy Center](#) (APPC) of the University of Pennsylvania has found.

In the survey of U.S. adults, 19 percent of respondents said they have done something to protect themselves from Zika. People living in the southern United States, within the range of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that is the primary carrier of Zika, were significantly more likely (24 percent) to say that they have done something to protect themselves than those in other regions. And people who are concerned that the virus will spread to where they live were more likely (27 percent) to say that they have taken steps to protect against Zika.

More than half the people surveyed (57 percent) were very concerned or somewhat concerned that Zika will spread to where they live.

The phone survey of 1,018 U.S. adults was conducted May 19-23 by the research firm [SSRS](#). It has a margin of error of +/-3.6 percentage points. It is one in a weekly series of Annenberg Science Knowledge (ASK) surveys conducted since February by the Annenberg Public Policy Center on public knowledge about the Zika virus, changes in public behavior because of Zika, and support for public policies on Zika.

The people who said that they've done something to protect themselves from Zika in the past three months were asked what they have done. Multiple answers were allowed. In response to that open-ended question, the most-often mentioned steps were:

- Worn insect repellent (33 percent);
- Purchased insect repellent (28 percent);
- Avoided activities or areas that would bring you in contact with mosquitoes (22 percent);
- Removed standing water outside the home (18 percent);
- Treated areas where mosquitoes rest in their homes with insect spray (10 percent);
- Wore long-sleeved shirts or other protective clothing outdoors (9 percent).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [Zika may be prevented](#) by avoiding mosquito bites. The CDC recommends wearing long-sleeved shirts outdoors, using insect repellent, treating indoor areas where mosquitoes rest with insect spray or fogger, using mosquito netting, and using door and window screens to prevent mosquito bites.

To control mosquitoes at home, the CDC recommends emptying and turning over or covering any items that hold water outdoors, where mosquitoes can breed, like tires, buckets, birdbaths and planters. (Read more [here](#).)

Since Zika can also be sexually transmitted from an infected man, the [CDC recommends](#) condom use or the avoidance of sex with men who may have been exposed to Zika. The CDC also recommends that pregnant women [avoid travel](#) to areas with Zika. Zika has been linked with [microcephaly](#) and other severe fetal brain defects.

The Zika outbreak was reported last year in Brazil and has spread through Latin America. As of May 25, there were a total of 591 travel-associated cases of Zika in the continental United States, 11 involving sexual transmission, [according to](#) the CDC. As of May 26, there were 168 [pregnant](#) women in the continental United States with laboratory evidence of a possible Zika infection.

For more on the questions and data, see the [Appendix](#).

The policy center's ASK surveys [can be found here](#) and its recent news releases on Zika include:

[A Majority of People Say They Would Get a Zika Vaccine If It Were Available](#) (May 12, 2016)

[How to Avoid Zika? Only 1 in 3 Says Protect Against Mosquito Bites](#) (May 6, 2016)

[Who Does the Public Think Is Most at Risk From Zika?](#) (April 8, 2016)

The [Annenberg Public Policy Center](#) was established in 1994 to educate the public and policy makers about the media's role in advancing public understanding of political and health issues. APPC's [FactCheck.org](#) is a nonpartisan consumer advocate for voters, and its [SciCheck](#) feature investigates false or misleading scientific claims made to influence public policy. Its latest post on Zika is [What Zika Means for Americans](#).