

Government corruption tops 5th annual Chapman University survey of American fears

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CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY SURVEY OF AMERICAN FEARS 2018

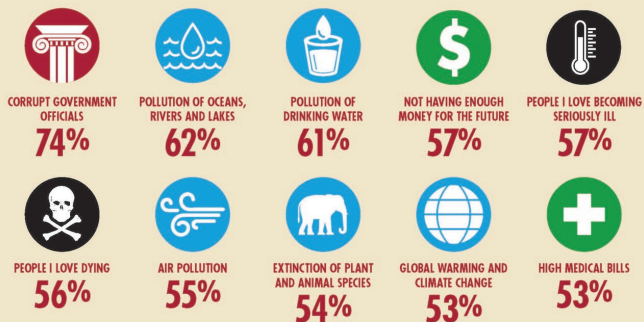
Chapman University's Survey of American Fears, now in its fifth year, provides an in-depth examination into what Americans fear most. Based on a nationally representative sample of 1,190 adults from across the United States.

MORE AMERICANS ARE AFRAID THAN EVER BEFORE

TOP FEARS OF 2018

For the first time on our survey (2018) a majority of Americans are afraid of each of the top 10 items.

● Government ● Environment ● Economic ● Illness and Death



Five of the top 10 fears are related to the environment.

WHY AMERICANS DON'T EVACUATE

One in five Americans report they or their families have had to flee their homes due to disaster. Evacuations save lives, but many choose not to leave. Why?



PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

Belief in the paranormal is widespread.



Visit chapman.edu/fearsurvey for more survey information.



CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
Orange, California

The top fears of 2018. Credit: Chapman University

More Americans are afraid than ever, according to the 5th annual Chapman University Survey of American Fears. The 2018 survey revealed that government corruption remains Americans' primary concern, and the state of the environment, which for the first time represents fully half of Americans' top 10 fears.

This year, each of the top 10 fears are held by more than half of the population; in 2017 only five of that year's top 10 fears were expressed by at least half of Americans, indicating that overall [fear](#) is on the rise and is also more focused on the environment than in previous years.

Americans' Top 10 Fears in 2018 (percentages include those who answered afraid or very afraid):

- 1. Corrupt government officials (73.6 percent)2. Pollution of oceans, rivers and lakes (61.6 percent)3. Pollution of drinking water (60.7 percent)4. Not having enough money for the future (57 percent)5. People they love becoming seriously ill (56.5 percent)6. People they love dying (56.4 percent)7. Air pollution (55.1 percent)8. Extinction of plant and animal species (54.1 percent)9. Global warming and climate change (53.2 percent)10. High medical bills (52.9 percent)

The annual Chapman University Survey of American Fears provides an in-depth examination into the concerns of average Americans, tracking changes and trends over the years. The survey asks about 94 topics ranging from government, health and environmental matters, to [disaster](#)

[preparedness](#), the paranormal and personal anxieties.

Two striking changes have emerged since 2016. First, a 13 percent increase of Americans who fear corrupt government officials, which tops the 2018 list with nearly three-quarters (73.6 percent) of Americans reporting being either "afraid" or "very afraid" of corruption. Notably, there were no significant differences in fears by political affiliation. Second, Americans are increasingly worried about the environment. Not a single environmental concern made the top 10 list in 2016 but in 2018 five of the top 10 fears are environmental in nature.

"The 2018 fear survey results illustrate a continued shift in the primary concerns of American citizens," said Christopher Bader, Ph.D., professor of sociology at Chapman University. "It is worth noting that the fears regarding corruption and the environment have increased significantly following the election of President Trump in 2016 and all top 10 fears continue to reflect topics often discussed in the media."

This year's fear survey also shows that most Americans do not currently share President Trump's immigration concerns. When asked if immigrants were more likely to commit crime than U.S. citizens, only 18.6 percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Conversely, when asked if President Trump ever made them feel afraid, 58.7 percent responded yes.

Americans Show Overconfidence Concerning Disaster Evacuations

Closely related to environmental fears, the annual survey also gauges disaster preparedness and peoples' willingness to evacuate. Despite nearly a quarter (21 percent) of Americans reporting that they or their family members have had to suddenly leave their homes due to disaster,

a higher number report reasons that they would not or could not evacuate. These include:

- The desire to protect their home from looting (43 percent)
- Unwillingness to leave pets behind (34 percent)
- Survived past storms without evacuating (34 percent)
- Cost of food, gas and lodging (32 percent)
- Having a disability or someone in the home with a disability (14 percent)
- Lack of transportation (14 percent)

"Evacuating your home is a heart wrenching choice, but it saves lives. Unfortunately, many Americans choose not to evacuate, even when authorities make it mandatory," said Ann Gordon, Ph.D., an expert in natural and man-made disasters and disaster preparedness. "We are seeing a tragic overconfidence among people who have successfully weathered storms in the past, with 34 percent of Americans reporting confidence in their ability to survive without evacuating. The results can be fatal."

Paranormal America in 2018

The Chapman University survey of American Fears also includes items on paranormal beliefs ranging from ghosts to aliens, psychic powers and haunted houses. Like political fears, paranormal fears are on the rise.

"Using the seven paranormal items included on the [survey](#), we find that only about a fourth of Americans do not hold any of the seven beliefs at all," said Bader. "This means that more than three quarters of Americans believe in at least one paranormal phenomenon compared to 64 percent in previous years."

Currently, the most common paranormal belief in the United States is

that places can be haunted by spirits (57.7 percent) followed closely by the belief that ancient, advanced civilizations, such as Atlantis once existed (56.9 percent). More than two out of five Americans (41.4 percent) believe that aliens visited Earth in our ancient past and more than a third believe aliens are visiting today.

Provided by Chapman University

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