



MARKET RESEARCH

*The Harris Poll*<sup>®</sup> PEOPLE

Fall 2004

Conducted For:

National Fire Protection

Association

(Public Affairs Division)





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# Introduction



# Introduction

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- The National Fire Protection Association commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct the *Fire Prevention Week Survey*.
- A telephone survey was conducted among 1,014 adults, aged 18 and older, living in private households in the continental United States.
- More specifically, the survey explored the following:
  - Experiences with and knowledge of home smoke alarms;
  - Experiences of those who have had fires in their homes;
  - Use of and awareness of potential fire hazards and safety measures; and
  - Risks of and preparedness for naturally occurring disasters.



# Key Findings



## Key Findings

- Virtually all Americans (96%) currently have a smoke alarm installed in their homes.
- Of those, only four of ten (40%) have had their alarms go off in the past 12 months.
  - Of those whose alarms have gone off, those with children in the house are more likely to have had this happen (46%) than those without children (36%).
  - Seven in ten (69%) report that their smoke alarms went off because of smoke from cooking, an oven, stove, or toaster. Only one percent reported their alarm went off due to a real/unwanted fire.
  - When their smoke alarms went off, fewer than one in ten (8%) thought it was a fire and that they needed to get out. Not surprisingly, households with children were more likely to think this (11%) than those without children (5%).
- While the majority of Americans (66%) have an escape plan in case of a fire, most (34%) have not practiced it. However, three-quarters (75%) believe they have 10 minutes or less until a fire turns deadly.
  - Not surprisingly, younger adults are less likely than older adults to have an escape plan (18 – 24: 53%; 25 – 34: 55%; 35 – 44: 75%; 45 – 54: 68%; 55 – 64: 65%; 65+: 74%).



## **Key Findings**

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- The vast majority of Americans (87%) have never had a fire in their home.
  - Of those who have, the most common reasons for the fire were cooking (26%), heating equipment (16%), and electrical/wiring/lamps (13%).
  
- The majority of Americans (77%) use candles in the home.
  - The most common reason for using candles is for their scent (51%), followed by the power going out (24%), and that they look nice (16%).
  - Women are more likely than men to use candles (82% vs. 72%), and they are also slightly more likely to use them for decorative purposes.
  - The living room is the room in which candles are most commonly used (62%), but other rooms see candle use as well, such as the kitchen (42%), bedroom (38%), bathroom (33%), and dining room (30%).



## **Key Findings**

- Slightly fewer than half (47%) would install a home fire sprinkler system if they were building a new home.
  - Of those who would not install a sprinkler system, the most common reasons are the expense (36%), water damage would be worse than fire damage (20%), and that it may go off accidentally (18%).
  
- Tornadoes (31%) and fires (27%) are the disasters people think they are most at risk for, as well as the disasters they think they are most prepared for.
  - While fire is a major concern in all regions, not surprisingly, natural disasters take precedence in the North Central region (tornadoes: 66%), the South (tornadoes: 36%, hurricanes: 31%), and the West (earthquakes: 39%). Fire is the primary concern in the Northeast (44%).
  - Households with children (30%) think they are more at risk for fire than households without children (24%).
  - People feel more prepared for a fire (31%) than other disasters, such as tornadoes (17%), hurricanes (12%), and floods (9%).



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# Detailed Findings



## ***Virtually all Americans currently have a smoke alarm installed in their homes.***

Currently Have Smoke Alarm

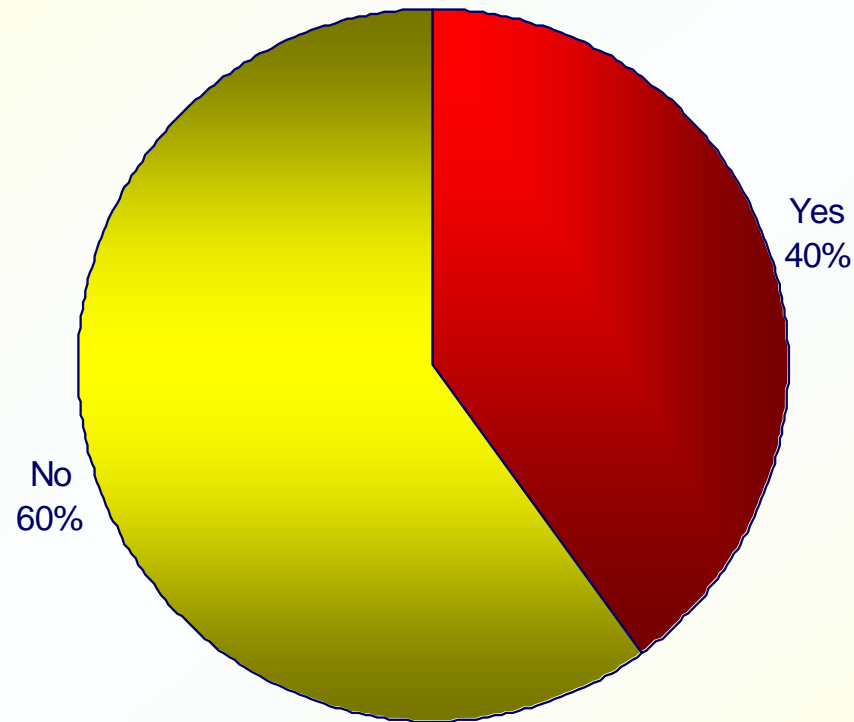


Q1: Do you currently have a smoke alarm, also known as a smoke detector, installed in your home?  
Base: All respondents (n=1014)



**Four out of ten have had their smoke alarms go off in the past twelve months.**

Smoke Alarm Has Gone Off in Past 12 Months



Q2: Has your smoke alarm gone off for any reason in the past 12 months?  
Base: Have smoke alarm in home (n=967)



**While household size is not a significant factor, those with children in the house are more likely than those without to say their smoke alarms have gone off in the past 12 months.**

Smoke Alarm Has Gone Off in Past 12 Months

		Household Size			Children in Household	
		1	2	3+	None	Any
Base:	967	211	354	399	643	321
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	40	36	38	43	36	46
No	60	63	62	57	64	54

Q2: Has your smoke alarm gone off for any reason in the past 12 months?

Base: Have smoke alarm in home (n=967)



**The majority report that their alarm went off because of smoke from cooking, an oven, stove or toaster. Only one percent had their alarm go off from a fire.**

Reasons Smoke Alarm Went Off

	Total
Base:	382
	%
Smoke from Cooking/ Oven/Stove/Toaster	69
Battery Failure/Low Battery	13
Steam (like from a shower)	5
Testing	4
Cigarette/Cigar/Pipe	1
Smoke from Real/Unwanted Fire	1
Candles/Smoke from Candles	1
Fireplace	*
Other	4
Don't Know/Refused	2

Q3: The last time your smoke alarm went off, what set it off?

Base: Smoke alarm has gone off (n=382)



**Fewer than one in ten thought that their smoke alarm going off meant there was a fire or that they had to get out. Those with children are more likely than those without to think this.**

First Thought Upon Alarm Going Off

	Gender			Children in Household	
	Total	Male	Female	None	Any
Base:	382	189	193	234	147
	%	%	%	%	%
Burned Food	24	24	25	25	24
How to Turn Smoke Alarm Off	11	12	11	11	12
Not Concerned/Knew What Caused It	11	10	12	9	13
Checked it Out/Went to Examine	8	11	6	8	10
Fire/Get Out	8	9	7	5	11
Low Battery	7	10	4	8	6
Annoyance at Assumed Nuisance Alarm	7	6	7	9	4
Smoke Detector Works	3	3	4	4	1
Should have Used Exhaust Fan	3	2	4	3	3
Didn't Recognize Sound as Smoke Alarm/Wondered What It Was	2	2	2	2	2
Other	12	11	14	12	13
Don't Know/Refused	3	1	5	4	2

Q3: What was the first thing you thought when the smoke alarm went off?  
 Base: Smoke alarm has gone off (n=382)



**Most think a smoke alarm should be replaced at least every five years. Younger adults are more likely than those who are older to think alarms should be replaced often.**

Frequency of Replacing Smoke Alarm

	Total	Male	Female	18 – 24	25 – 34	35 – 44	45 – 54	55 – 64	65+
Base:	1014	507	507	89	117	175	219	198	208
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1 – 5 Years	65	71	60	82	77	62	59	62	53
6 – 10 Years	15	13	17	13	13	18	18	14	13
11 – 15 Years	1	1	2	-	3	*	*	1	2
16 or More Years	3	2	3	-	1	4	3	5	2
Never/Electrical/Works	3	4	3	1	2	2	6	6	5
Don't Know	12	9	15	5	4	15	12	11	23
Refused	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	*	2
<b>MEAN (Years)</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.6</b>

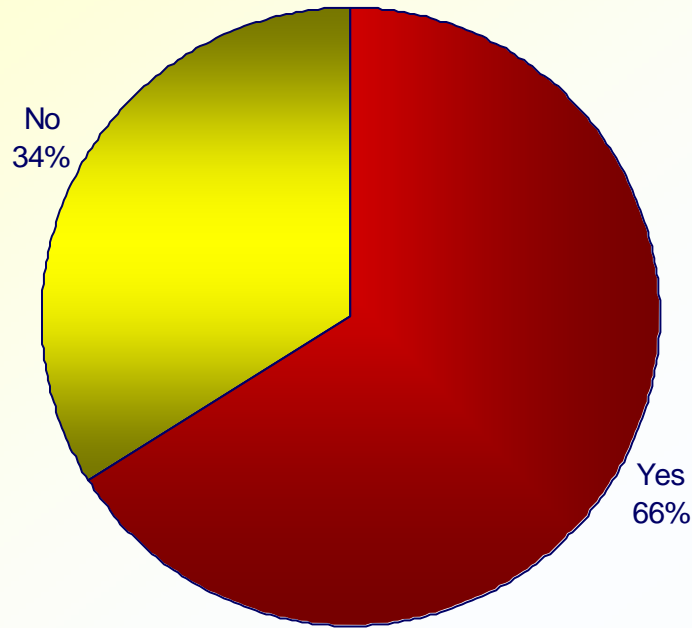
Q5: After how many years do you think a smoke alarm should be replaced? Please think of the device itself, not the batteries.

Base: All respondents (n=1014)

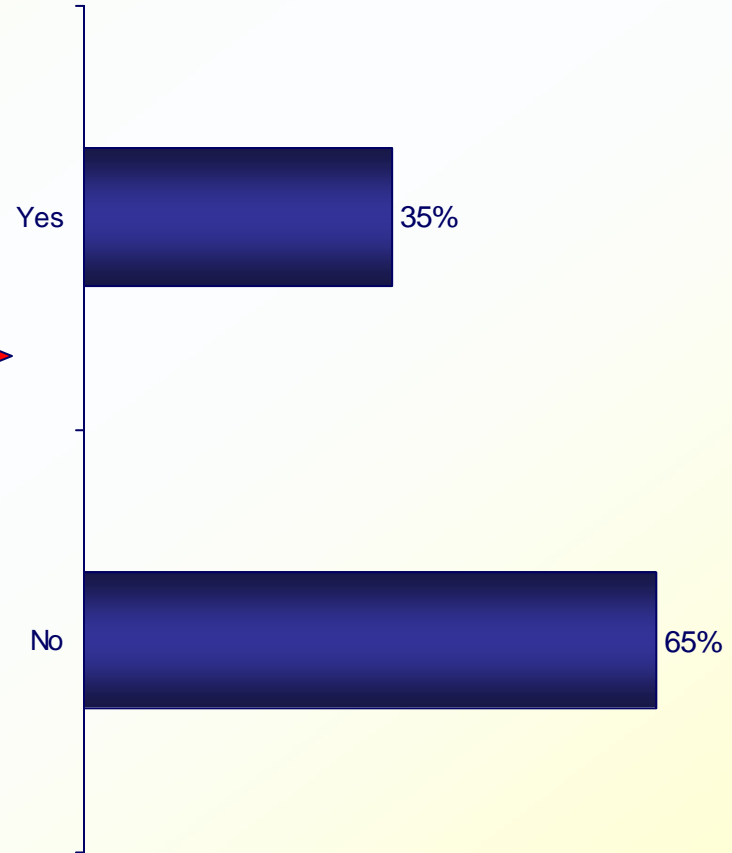


# Two-thirds have an escape plan in case of a fire, but of those only one-third have practiced their plans.

Have an Escape Plan



Have Practiced Escape Plan



Q6: Do you have a plan for what you would do if there was a fire in your home? I am not talking about simply thinking of what you might do, but I am looking for whether or not you have an escape plan to follow in the event of a fire. Do you have such an escape plan?

Base: All respondents (n=1014)

Q7: Have you ever practiced your escape plan?

Base: Have an escape plan (n=673)



## People under the age of 34 are less likely than those who are older to have escape plans.

Have Escape Plan – By Age

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Base:	1014	89	117	175	219	198	208
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	66	53	55	75	68	65	74
No	34	46	45	25	32	35	25
Don't know/Refused	1	1	1	-	*	-	1

Q6: Do you have a plan for what you would do if there was a fire in your home? I am not talking about simply thinking about what you might do, but I am looking for whether or not you have an escape plan to follow in the event of a fire. Do you have such an escape plan?

Base: All respondents (n=1014)



**Almost nine in ten think they have 30 minutes or less before a fire in their home turns life-threatening. Three-quarters think they have less than ten minutes.**

Amount of Time Before Fire Turns Deadly

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Base:	1014	89	117	175	219	198	208
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
30 Minutes or Less (Net)	88	91	93	89	91	93	74
1 – 10 Minutes (Net)	75	72	79	75	80	84	65
1 – 5 Minutes	61	56	63	61	65	71	53
6 – 10 Minutes	15	17	15	14	16	13	12
11 – 15 Minutes	6	6	7	8	5	7	6
16 – 20 Minutes	4	8	4	4	3	-	2
21 – 25 Minutes	*	-	-	-	*	-	-
26 – 30 Minutes	3	5	3	2	2	2	1
More than 30 Minutes	1	1	1	3	1	1	1
Don't know	10	8	7	8	7	6	23
Refused	1	-	-	-	*	1	2
<b>MEAN (Minutes)</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>6.9</b>

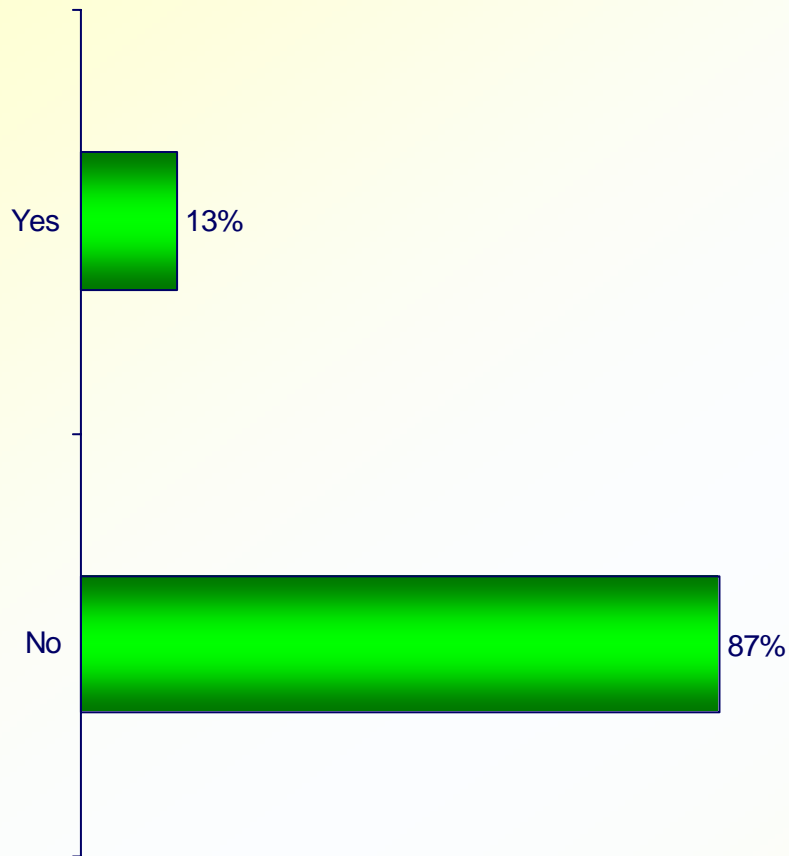
Q8: If a fire started in your home, how much time do you think you would have before the conditions became life-threatening or deadly?

Base: All respondents (n=1014)



**The vast majority have never had a fire in their homes; of those who have, the most common causes were household appliances or cooking.**

Ever Had Fire in Home



Q9: Have you ever had a fire in your home?  
 Base: All respondents (n=1014)  
 Q10: What caused the fire in your home?  
 Base: Have ever had fire in home (n = 143)

Cause of Fire in the Home

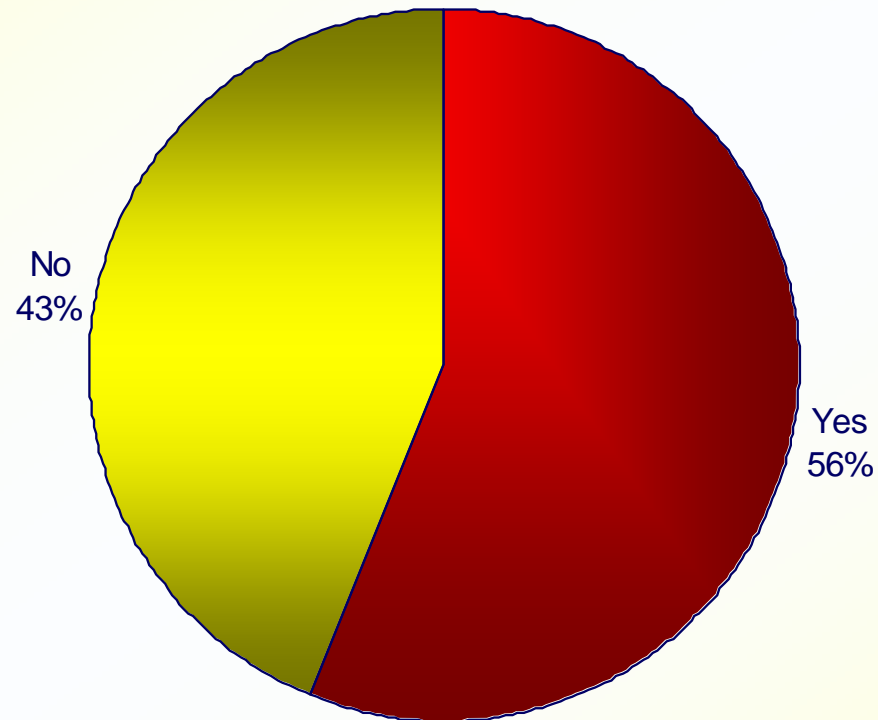
	Total
Base:	143
	%
Cooking	26
Heating Equipment/Water Heater/Space Heater/Fireplace Chimney	16
Electrical/Wiring/Lamps	13
Cooking Equipment/Appliances	12
Smoking Materials	6
Other Appliances/TVs/Stereos	4
Child Playing	4
Candles	2
Lightning	2
Arson	2
Holiday Decorations/Lights	-
Other	7
Don't recall	1
Don't know	3

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**In cases of a household fire, slightly more than half report that the fire department responded.**

Fire Department Response

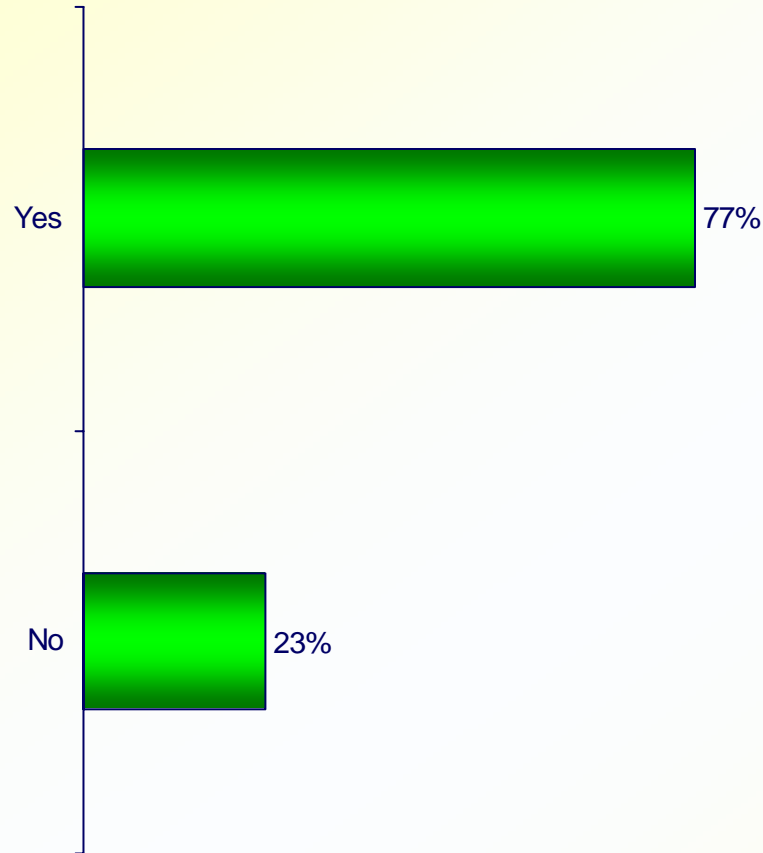


Q11: Did the fire department respond?  
Base: Have ever had fire in home (n=143)



# Three-quarters use candles in the home; and most use them for their scent or for decorative reasons.

Use Candles in Home



Purpose of Candles

	Total
Base:	764
	%
Scent/Smells Good	51
Power Goes Out	24
Looks Nice	16
Ambiance	14
Mood	10
Light the Room	10
Relaxing	9
Birthdays	7
Romance	5
Religious Use	3
Other	6
Don't know	1

Q12: Do you ever use candles in your home?

Base: All respondents (n=1014)

Q13: For what purposes do you use candles?

Base: Use candles in home (n = 764)



**Women are more likely to use candles than men; as are those in households with two or more people.**

Use Candles in Home – By Gender and Household Size

	Gender			Household Size		
	Total	Male	Female	1	2	3+
Base:	1014	507	507	225	369	416
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	77	72	82	69	80	78
No	23	28	18	30	20	22
Don't Know/Refused	*	*	*	1	-	-

Q12: Do you ever use candles in your home?  
Base: All respondents (n=1014)



**The most common use of candles is their scent. Women are more likely to say this; as are those in larger households.**

Purposes for Which Candles Are Used

	Gender			Household Size		
	Total	Male	Female	1	2	3+
Base:	764	507	507	149	287	325
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Scent/Smells Good	51	44	57	46	47	57
Power Goes Out	24	26	22	26	27	22
Looks Nice	16	15	16	17	18	13
Ambiance	14	13	15	21	16	11
Mood	10	9	10	8	10	10
Light the Room	10	9	10	18	10	6
Relaxing	9	7	11	10	6	10
Birthdays	7	7	7	5	6	8
Romance	5	6	4	7	5	4
Religious Use	3	4	2	1	3	4
Other	6	5	7	6	8	4
Don't know	1	2	*	2	*	1

Q13: For what purposes do you use candles?  
 Base: Use candles in home (n=764)



**Candles are used most often in living rooms, though substantial minorities use them in other rooms as well, such as kitchens, bedrooms, and bathrooms.**

Rooms In Which Candles Are Used

	Gender			Household Size		
	Total	Male	Female	1	2	3+
Base:	764	357	407	149	287	325
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Living Room	62	60	64	70	56	63
Kitchen	42	41	43	38	40	45
Bedroom	38	40	36	28	37	43
Bathroom	33	30	35	31	34	32
Dining Room	30	26	34	24	36	28
Family Room/Den	16	15	17	9	16	19
Porch/Patio	4	4	4	2	3	5
Basement/Garage	2	2	1	1	2	2
Other	2	2	1	2	1	2
Don't Know/Refused	4	4	3	5	5	2

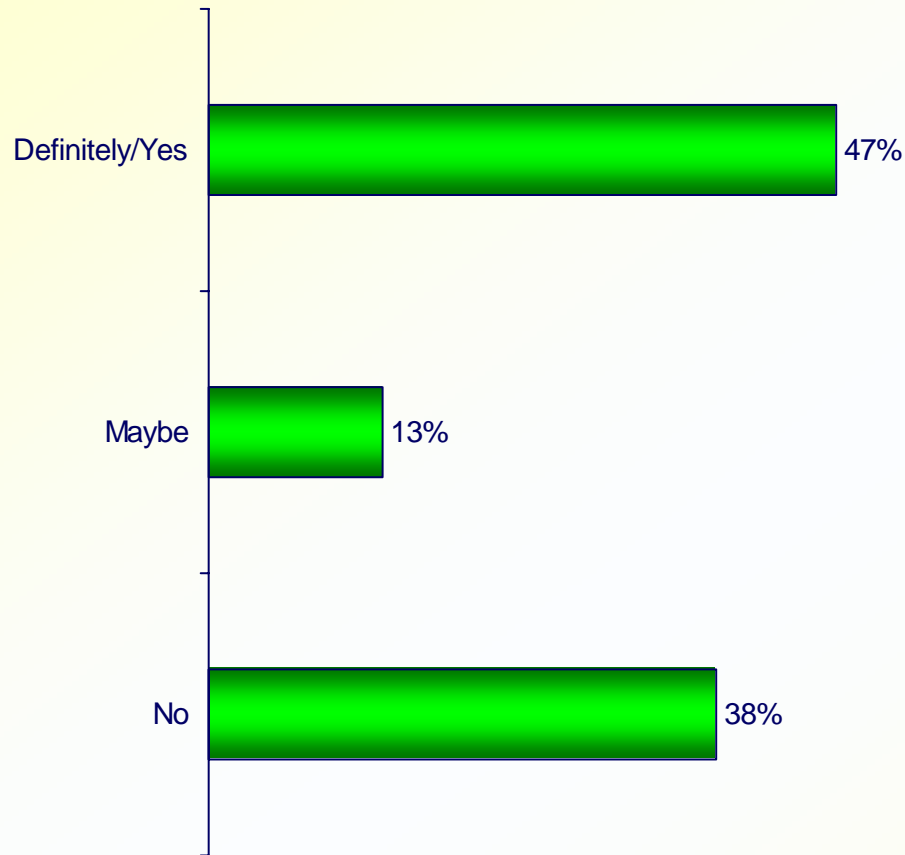
Q14: On occasions other than birthdays, in which room or rooms do you use candles?

Base: Use candles in home (n=764)



**Nearly half would install a sprinkler system if they were building a new home. Of those who would not, one-third say it is too expensive.**

Installing a Home Fire Sprinkler System



Reasons for Not Installing Sprinkler System

	Total
Base:	559
	%
Too Expensive	36
Water damage worse than fire damage	20
May go off accidentally	18
Smoke/Fire Detectors/Alarms offer adequate protection	7
Unlikely to have fire in home	6
Unattractive	5
Possible Leakage	4
Will Flood Entire house	4
Other	14
Don't know/Refused	9

Q15: Switching topics a bit, I would like to discuss automatic home fire sprinklers. These are similar to fire sprinklers you have probably seen in commercial buildings. If they detect intense heat, they spray water on the area below and around them. If you were building a new home, would you consider installing a home fire sprinkler system?

Base: All respondents (n=1014)

Q16: Why would you not consider installing a fire sprinkler system?

Base: Would not or maybe would not consider installing a home fire sprinkler system (n = 559)



# Tornados and fires are the disasters for which people think they are most at risk.

## Disasters Most at Risk For

	Total	Region			
		Northeast	North Central	South	West
Base:	1014	196	230	360	228
	%	%	%	%	%
Tornado	31	9	66	36	6
Fire	27	44	19	17	35
Hurricane	14	15	*	31	1
Earthquake	9	1	1	*	39
Flood	9	12	6	10	8
Terrorist Attack	5	11	3	2	7
Other	1	2	1	1	*
None/Not at Risk	4	6	3	4	2
Don't Know/Refused	1	*	1	*	1

Q17: Now thinking about a variety of disasters, which of the following do you feel you personally are most **at risk** for?

Base: All respondents (n=1014)



## Those with children feel they are more at risk for a fire than those without children.

### Disasters Most at Risk For

	Total	Gender		Children In Household	
		Male	Female	None	Any
Base:	1014	507	507	676	334
	%	%	%	%	%
Tornado	31	35	28	30	33
Fire	27	26	27	24	30
Hurricane	14	14	14	16	11
Earthquake	9	9	9	11	7
Flood	9	7	10	9	9
Terrorist Attack	5	5	5	5	5
Other	1	1	1	1	1
None/Not at Risk	4	3	4	4	3
Don't Know/Refused	1	*	1	1	*

Q17: Now thinking about a variety of disasters, which of the following do you feel you personally are most **at risk** for?

Base: All respondents (n=1014)



# People feel they are prepared for a fire more than other disasters.

## Disasters Most Prepared For

	Total	Region			
		Northeast	North Central	South	West
Base:	1014	196	230	360	228
	%	%	%	%	%
Fire	31	39	31	27	30
Tornado	17	3	36	19	5
Hurricane	12	16	4	21	1
Flood	9	13	7	7	8
Earthquake	7	1	2	2	25
Terrorist Attack	6	7	3	3	11
Other	*	*	-	1	-
Prepared for Anything	5	5	5	7	4
None	12	14	10	11	14
Don't Know/Refused	2	2	1	2	1

Q18: And, which of the following do you feel you personally are most prepared for?

Base: All respondents (n=1014)



# Men generally report feeling more prepared for disasters than women.

## Disasters Most Prepared For

	Total	Gender		Children In Household	
		Male	Female	None	Any
Base:	1014	507	507	676	334
	%	%	%	%	%
Fire	31	32	29	32	30
Tornado	17	18	16	17	17
Hurricane	12	12	12	12	11
Earthquake	9	9	9	7	11
Flood	7	7	7	7	6
Terrorist Attack	6	8	4	4	7
Other	*	-	1	-	1
Prepared for Anything	5	6	5	5	5
None/Not at Risk	12	8	16	13	11
Don't Know/Refused	2	1	2	2	1

Q18: And, which of the following do you feel you personally are most prepared for?

Base: All respondents (n=1014)



## **Methodology**

- Telephone interviews were conducted among a national probability sample of 1,014 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in private households in the U.S. Interviewing was completed during the period of September 9 – 12, 2004.
- Interviews were conducted using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system, which permits on-line data entry and editing of interviews. The system controls skip patterns based on individual responses during the course of the interview, and allows for consistency checks to be built in for key items. This method reduces clerical error by eliminating the need for keypunching, by allowing interviewers to enter the respondents' answers directly into a computer during the interview itself.
- Advanced probability sampling techniques were used to select the households for interviewing. An unrestricted random sampling procedure to control the amount of serial bias found in systematic sampling was used to generate the random-digit-dial sample. The sample is fully replicated and stratified by region. Only one interview is conducted per household, and all sample numbers selected are subject to up to four attempts to complete an interview.
- Completed interviews are weighted by four variables: age, sex, geographic region, and race, to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total population aged 18 and older.