

# The Earl Babbie RESEARCH CENTER

The Earl Babbie Research Center at Chapman University is dedicated to empowering students and faculty to conduct studies that address critical social, behavioral, economic, and environmental problems—work that is more important than ever. The Center’s mission is to provide research support and instruction to students, faculty, and the broader community, and to produce research that addresses societal problems, both at home and abroad.

## Research at the Babbie Center

In keeping with the Babbie Center’s mission to address critical social issues through cutting edge social science research, we have engaged in an unprecedented, on-going study of fear in America. Now in its eighth year, the Chapman Survey of American Fears (CSAF) asks a representative national sample of Americans about more than 90 fears and related behaviors. In addition, the Babbie Center’s work has focused upon a variety of topics, including the impact of climate change on the public, especially with regard to extreme weather such as wildfires that threaten lives and property.

## 2021–2022 HIGHLIGHTS

### The Chapman Survey of American Fears in the News

The CSAF survey has been cited in over 1,000 print, broadcast, and online media. This past year, our work has been discussed by in national outlets such as the *New York Times*, and local outlets such as the *OC Register* and *Mercury News*, and diverse outlets such as *Yahoo News*, *Psychology Today*, and *WebMD*. It has been utilized or cited in over 60 scholarly works and peer reviewed articles, produced by academicians around the country.

### Student Research

Student researchers are a central part of the CSAF project. They are involved in every aspect of the survey, from researching new content areas, to writing questions and analyzing results. In addition, more than 100 undergraduate research projects have used the CSAF, and these are archived in Chapman University’s Digital Commons. Undergraduate researcher, Christian Grevin ('22) reflected on his time as a research fellow and member of Team FEAR, saying it has been "... the greatest opportunity I have had in my time at Chapman. In this position I have been able to help professors gather research for their projects, create

content for the Chapman Survey of American Fears, and pursue research of my own on the connection between social media consumption and an individual’s fear of mass shootings. I have had the opportunity to work with faculty to research topics that have important consequences on people’s lives - like how to better educate people on natural disaster preparedness and which fears are currently affecting US residents.

*"This research has not only given me more confidence in myself and my capabilities as a scholar but has also shown me how one can positively impact communities through research."*

### Visit with the Babbies

Earl and Suze Babbie regularly visit Chapman, and this year they visited virtually. We were thrilled to see them. Dr. Babbie offered reflections on his career and the future of the social sciences. Students and faculty had the opportunity for a great discussion afterwards.

## Fear Across America

This year, the top 10 fears in America center on five main topics: corrupt government officials, harm to a loved one, war, environmental concerns, and economic concerns. Fear of corrupt government officials remains the top fear in America, at 62 percent; however, this is a decline from last year when it was 79.6 percent. For the first time, we asked about Russia using nuclear weapons and it landed within the top three fears, at 59.6 percent. The last time a similar fear landed in the top 10 was in 2017, with fear of North Korea using nuclear weapons placing at number nine. Relatedly, fear of America being involved in a world war and of biological warfare also made the top 10. Some 53.7 percent of Americans are afraid of not having enough money for the future, as well as a total economic collapse. Americans do not fear for their own health and well-being so much as that of loved ones, with 60 percent fearing a loved one becoming seriously ill and 58 percent fearing for a loved one’s death. Concern for the environment, including pollution of oceans, rivers, and lakes and pollution of drinking water rounds out the top 10.

Top 10 Fears of 2022	% Afraid or Very Afraid
1 - Corrupt Government Officials	62.1 %
2 - People I love becoming seriously ill	60.2 %
3 - Russia using nuclear weapons	59.6 %
4 - People I love dying	58.1 %
5 - The U.S. becoming involved in another world war	56.0 %
6 - Pollution of drinking water	54.5 %
7 - Not having enough money for the future	53.7 %
8 - Economic/financial collapse	53.7 %
9 - Pollution of oceans, rivers and lakes	52.5 %
10 - Biological warfare	51.5 %

## Learning at the Babbie Center

To support our mission of providing methodology instruction to the Chapman community, the Babbie Center continued its popular workshop series, 30-Minute Methods. These workshops covered topics ranging from SPSS basics to linear regression and how to perfect an abstract. Participants can follow-up with one-on-one consultations specific to their research projects.

## Wildfire Research Adopted by the National Weather Service

The Babbie Center has undertaken a multi-year partnership with the National Weather Service to improve public safety messaging for wildfires and other dangerous weather. Together with the Henley Lab and the Ideation Lab, we have developed and rigorously tested message templates for Twitter. We presented our work at a series of talks organized by the National Weather Service, including presentations to NWS offices serving the Western Region and to the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Science Coordination Group. The NWS is enthusiastic about our work and the designs have begun to be implemented across the region which includes Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and California. In the next phase of the research, we are studying public ability to understand the difference between watches, warnings, and particularly dangerous situations. We are also expanding the work beyond wildfires to winter storms and other life-threatening weather. Finally, we will be researching how to best use maps and other graphics for effective communication.

