

EXTERNAL

**Catholic Campaign for
Human Development**

Poverty Pulse

Wave IV

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Presented By:

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EXTERNAL

Objectives and Methodology

This is a report of findings from Wave IV of the Poverty Pulse survey, a study designed to evaluate attitudes toward poverty in America. This is the fourth in a series of studies conducted annually beginning in December of 2000. The results of the Poverty Pulse will be used by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) to promote understanding of poverty in America and greater awareness of the problem in our society.

The study used a telephone interviewing methodology. A total of 1,008 interviews among the general adult population were conducted by ICR (International Communications Research) as a part of its EXCEL Omnibus Service. All interviewing was conducted between November 19 and 23, 2003. The sample was selected at random and the results were weighted to ensure that they are representative of the entire general adult population. The previous years' studies used an identical interviewing methodology. Interviewing for 2000 and 2001 was conducted in early December; in 2002 it was conducted in late November.

While many of the questions were asked in all four waves of this research to allow for tracking of trends, there are some new questions in this study. Obviously, in these situations there is no comparison from one year to the next. These situations are clearly indicated in the report. The questionnaire was designed in conjunction with CCHD by Market Research Bureau LLC. Market Research Bureau also conducted the analysis.

Where there are meaningful differences, the results are shown broken out by those who are "low income" and those who are not. The following definition of low income was used:

<u>Low Income</u>			
<i>Household size of . . .</i>	1+	<i>and income less than . . .</i>	\$15,000
	2+		\$20,000
	3+		\$25,000
	4+		\$30,000
	5+		\$40,000
	6+		\$50,000

For comparison, the poverty guidelines as established by the Federal government are as follows:

Poverty Guidelines

<i>Household size of . . .</i>	1	<i>and income less than . . .</i>	\$8,980
	2		12,120
	3		15,260
	4		18,400
	5		21,540
	6		24,680

For some questions, more than one response was accepted from each respondent. In these cases the table percentage totals exceed 100%. If the table total is 99% to 101%, this is likely due to rounding the individual percentages in the table.

The four waves of the Poverty Pulse have been compared and tested for statistically significant differences at the 95% level of confidence. Differences from one year to the next are indicated in the tables with an “s”. Other significant differences are highlighted in the text of the report. The sample tolerances for the total samples for each year are +/- 3 percentage points. This study can be considered reasonably representative of the adults in the United States.

Findings

- ? ***The concern over poverty has remained high over the last several years.*** The percent of respondents who indicated that poverty is a problem in the United States has remained between 87% and 90% since 2000. The slight increase from 2000 to 2001 was statistically significant, but all other numbers are statistically identical. In 2003, 89% of respondents indicated that they are concerned with poverty as a problem in the U.S., with 52% percent indicating that they are **very** concerned.

**Thinking just in terms of the problem here in the United States,
how concerned would you say that you are about poverty?
Would you say that you are very concerned, somewhat concerned,
not very concerned, or not at all concerned with poverty?**

	2000	2001	2002	2003
	%	%	%	%
Very	55	54	50	52
Somewhat	32	36	39	37
Total Concerned	87	90	89	89
Not Very	8	8	7	8
Not at All	5	2	4	3
Total Not Concerned	13	10	11	11
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Base – Total respondents	1015	1014	1015	1008

There were no differences in 2003 as compared to previous years for the level of concern for several issues asked in the survey. This most recent survey added several issues – the economy, terrorism and the U.S. involvement in war. All of these were rated slightly lower than health care and education. The ratings for these new issues are comparable to those for poverty.

% Total Concerned

	2000	2001	2002	2003
	%	%	%	%
Education	93	92	92	91
Health care	91	91	90	92
Crime	91	90	91	89
Poverty	87	90	89	89
Prejudice*	-	83	80	83
Immorality	80	81	80	79
The economy**	-	-	-	87
Terrorism**	-	-	-	85
US involvement in war**	-	-	-	85
Base – Total respondents	1015	1014	1015	1008

* Not asked in 2000 survey

** Not asked prior to 2003 survey

? ***A little more than half of all adults are concerned that they will be poor at some point in their lives and people seem to be more concerned about this than in previous years.*** The percent of respondents who indicated that they are **very** concerned that they might be poor at some point in their lives increased significantly from 24% to 30%. The total who are concerned has shown a steady increase from 2000 (the level for 2003 – 56% -- is statistically significantly higher than the corresponding figure from 2000).

How concerned are you that you might be poor at some point in your life? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned that you will ever be poor?

	2000	2001	2002	2003
	%	%	%	%
Very	23	24	24	30
Somewhat	26	27	29	26
Total Concerned	49	51	53	56
Not Very	25	25	24	25
Not at All	26	24	22	18
Total Not Concerned	51	49	46	43
Don't know	*	*	1	1
Base – Total in each category	1015	1014	1015	1008

* Less than 0.5%

Not surprisingly, those in the low-income group were much more likely to be concerned about being in poverty than those not in the low income group (74% versus 50%). There is also a significant increase from 2002 among the low-income group in the percent who are very concerned about being in poverty (32% versus 53%).

How concerned are you that you might be poor at some point in your life? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned that you will ever be poor?

	Low Income		NOT Low Income	
	2002	2003	2002	2003
	%	%	%	
Very	32	-s- 53	21	22
Somewhat	35	21	27	28
Total Concerned	67	74	48	50
Not Very	17	16	27	29
Not at All	16	11	25	21
Total Not Concerned	33	27	52	50
Don't know	*	-	*	1
Base – Total in each category	213	220	802	788

* Less than 0.5%

? ***Various problems with education continue to be seen as the primary causes of poverty, but the percent citing this cause has dropped since 2000.*** Prior to 2003, various education comments were given by approximately 30% of respondents in each survey. In this year's survey, that percentage has dropped to 25%. This drop has been offset by an increase in those citing a lack of jobs or employment opportunities as the cause for poverty (increase from 8% in 2000 to 25% this year). The response for "personal laziness" has dropped significantly from 26% in 2002 to 20% in 2003.

**What do you feel are the causes of poverty in the United States,
that is, why are people in the U.S. poor?**

	2000		2001		2002		2003
	%		%		%		%
Lack of education (total unduplicated)	30		32		29	s	25
Lack understanding of importance of educ.	9		10	s	7		8
Poor education system	4		7		6		7
Lack of access to education	6		7		5		6
Lack of initiative in education	6		6		5		5
Lack of skills	*		2		1		*
Lack of funds for higher education	*		1		1		1
Other education	2	s	7		9	s	2
Personal laziness/lack of initiative/motivation	32	s	25		26	s	20
Lack of employment opportunities	8	s	21		21	s	25
Lack of work/employ that pays living wage	-	s	17		15	s	10
Family cycle of poverty	5		6		6	s	1
Gov't/welfare/too easy to get assist	5		6	s	9		8
Personal inadequacy	8		6		4	s	*
Unjust laws or social policies	8	s	4		2	s	6
Jobs going outside the country	-		-		-	s	4
Too much spent helping other (countries)	-		-		-		3
Not doing enough to help the poor	-		-		-		2
Racial/ethnic discrimination	4		3		3		3
Illness/elderly/health problems	4		3		4		3
Family issues	-	s	3		1		2
Drug/alcohol abuse	4		3		5	s	1
No skills/training/guidance	1		3		1	s	6
Bad luck/poor choices	2		3		1		1
Wastefulness/poor spending	1		2		1		1
Cost of living is too high	8	s	2		2		2
Economics	1		2		3		4
Unfair distribution of wealth	1		1		2		3
Greed	-		-		2		2
Big businesses	-		-		-		1
Miscellaneous	7		7		2		5
Don't know/no answer	9		6		7		7
Base – Total respondents in each group	1015		1014		1015		1015

* Less than 0.5%

What do you feel is the single most significant cause of poverty?

	2002		2003
	%		%
Lack of education (total unduplicated)	19		16
Lack understanding of importance of educ.	5		4
Poor education system	3		5
Lack of access to education	3		3
Lack of initiative in education	2		2
Lack of skills	1		*
Lack of funds for higher education	*		*
Other education	5	s	1
Personal laziness/lack of initiative/motivation	16		13
Lack of employment opportunities	14		16
Lack of work/employ that pays living wage	10	s	6
Family cycle of poverty	3		*
Gov't/welfare/too easy to get assist	6		5
Personal inadequacy	3		*
Unjust laws or social policies	2		4
Jobs going outside the country	-		3
Too much spent helping other (countries)	-		2
Not doing enough to help the poor	-		1
Racial/ethnic discrimination	1		1
Illness/elderly/health problems	1		1
Family issues	1		*
Drug/alcohol abuse	2		*
No skills/training/guidance	*	s	4
Bad luck/poor choices	1		1
Wastefulness/poor spending	1		1
Cost of living is too high	1		1
Economics	3		2
Unfair distribution of wealth	2		2
Greed	2		1
Big businesses	-		1
Miscellaneous	2	s	7
Don't know/no answer	12		10
Base – Total respondents in each group	1015		1008
* Less than 0.5%			

? **“The government” remains the entity most likely to be viewed as responsible for addressing poverty.** About half of the population (48%) believes that the government has the responsibility to address poverty, followed by “everyone” at 40% and “the poor themselves” at 20%. There was an increase from last year in those who felt that the government should be responsible, but this number actually decreased last year from 2001. There has been a steady decline over the past four years in those who feel “everyone” is responsible. And while the level of those who felt the poor are responsible for themselves dropped in 2001 (possibly due to the emotional response to 9-11), that level continues to show a directional increase.

Whose responsibility is it to respond to the needs of poor people in the U.S. and to address other issues related to poverty?

	2000		2001		2002		2003
	%		%		%		%
The government	38	s	49	s	43	s	48
Everyone/general public	52	s	48	s	41		40
The poor themselves	16	s	13	s	18		20
Churches	8		6		5		4
Other charitable organizations	4		3		3		2
Corporations/businesses	3		2		2		3
Families/friends	1		1		1		1
The wealthy	1		1		1		1
The President	1		1		2		2
Miscellaneous	1		1		1		1
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Base – Total respondents in each group	1015		1014		1015		1008

? **Education is seen as the way to break the cycle of poverty.** When asked, “What is the single best way to *permanently* break the cycle of poverty in the United States?” education, for both children and adults, was seen as the single best way to do this, but employment opportunities ranked second with 11% response. And an additional 5% indicated that more job training is needed. The importance of a living wage has dropped slightly from 2001 (the first year this question was asked).

What is the single best way to *permanently* break the cycle of poverty in the United States?

	2001		2002		2003
	%		%		%
Better education for children	20		20		18
More opportunities for education for adults	15	s	11		11
More employment opportunities	7		9		11
Pay living wages to low-income workers	6		4		2
A better economy	4		4		4
More government aid	4	s	7	s	3
Go to work/get people to work	2		3		1
Get rid of welfare	2		2		1
More private aid/charitable contributions	1		3		1
Change laws	1		*		1
More job training	1		1	s	5
Concentrate effort in US not overseas	1		2		3
There is no end to poverty cycle	1		2		1
Rich should help/share with poor	1		1		*
Motivate people	1		2		1
Caring/understanding/helping*	-		3		2
Developing leadership skills among low income people*	-		1		*
Participation in community-based organizations*	-		1		1
Prayer/turn to religion*	-		1		2
Increasing access to affordable housing*	-		1		*
Cut/lower taxes/less government spending on other issues**	-		-		2
Miscellaneous	12	s	4	s	11
Base – Total respondents	1014		1015		1008

* These categories were not included separately in 2001 and likely were coded under Miscellaneous

** Not included prior to 2003

? ***There was an increase in those who reported getting involved with a community-based organization helping the poor.*** Thirteen percent of respondents indicated that they were involved in such an organization, but this increase comes after a decline from 2000 over the last two years. Since 2000 the percent of those doing something to help the poor has decreased slightly from 87% to 82%.

**What, if anything, have you done in the past year
to help alleviate poverty or to help someone who is poor?**

	2000 %		2001 %		2002 %		2003 %
TOTAL DID SOMETHING	87		86		84		82
Gave money to an organization helping the poor	44		41	s	32		34
Donated food/clothing/goods	12	s	32		35		32
Gave money directly to a poor person	15		15		14		11
Volunteered	12		14		13		15
Got involved with community-based organizations that work to address poverty or injustice	16	s	10		8	s	13
Mentored an individual	4		4		2		3
Supplied shelter	2		2		2		1
Provided jobs	1		2		3		2
Prayer	1		2		2		2
Offered advice/wisdom/educate	-		-		2		2
Paid taxes	1		1		1		1
Miscellaneous	1		3		3		4
Nothing	13		14		16		18
Base – Total respondents in each group	1015		1014		1015		1008

An additional question was asked this year to determine **why** individuals do not provide time, money or other resources to help the poor. The primary reason is a financial one – most (59%) of those who indicated that they did nothing, said they did not have enough money.

**Which of the following reasons best describes
why you have not done anything in the past year
to help alleviate poverty or to help someone who is poor?
Was it because you _____?**

AMONG THOSE WHO DID NOTHING TO HELP THE POOR

	2003
	%
Didn't have enough money	59
Just didn't think about it	13
Didn't want to	6
Thought other causes or charities more important	5
Helping myself right now*	5
Or some other reason	8
Don't know	3
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Base – Total who did not help the poor	145
* This response arose on an unaided basis. All other responses were read to respondents.	

- ? **People feel poverty is an important issue to address.** A direct question was asked of respondents in this year’s survey – “How important do you think it is to decrease or eliminate poverty in the United States?” Virtually all respondents (96%) felt it was important, but 76% said it was **very** important.

**How important do you think it is
to decrease or eliminate poverty in the United States? Is it:**

	2003
	%
Very important	76
Somewhat important	20
Total important	96
Not very important	2
Not at all important	1
Total not important	3
Don't know	1
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Base – Total respondents	1008

? ***There is a huge underestimate among the general public with regard to how many people are living in poverty in the United States, but the estimate has increased since last year.*** As with last year’s survey, about half of the respondents were unwilling to answer this question. The mean and median figures have doubled as compared to last year. The mean number is 10.66 million, while the median is one million. Fifteen percent (15%) of those who ventured a guess indicated that the number living in poverty was between 21 and 50 million (the actual number is nearly 35 million).

[NOTE: The difference between the mean and the median simply indicates that a few people provided very high numbers that skewed the mean higher. The median is probably a better summary number – it is the mid-point of all the responses. In 2003, half of the respondents provided a number below two million and half cited a number higher than two million. The **Cumulative** columns present a sum of the percents for all income levels up to that line. For example, the 11% for the “51-100,000” line in 2003 includes the 2%, 5%, and 4% for “10,000 or fewer,” “11,000-50,000,” and “51-100,000.”]

About how many people would you say are currently living in poverty in the United States?

	Total Respondents			Among Those Providing a Response		
	2002 %	2003 %	Cumulative %	2002 %	2003 %	Cumulative %
10,000 or fewer	3	2	2	6	4	4
11,000-50,000	4	5	7	8	8	12
51,000-100,000	4	4	11	8	8	20
101,000-250,000	3	3	14	6	5	25
251,000-500,000	4	3	17	8	5	30
501,000-1,000,000	8	7	24	16	13	43
1,001,000-2,500,000	3	5	29	6	9	52
2,501,000-5,000,000	4	6	35	8	11	63
5,001,000-10,000,000	5	4	39	10	7	70
11,000,000-20,000,000	5	4	43	10	7	78
21,000,000-50,000,000	4	8	51	8	15	93
Over 50,000,000	2	4	55	4	7	100
Don't know	51	46				
Mean	10,660,000	22,170,000				
Median	1,000,000	2,000,000				
Base – Total respondents	1015	1008		497	541	

Respondents were also asked how many homeless people there were in the United States. This number is estimated to be about half that of those living in poverty. It is interesting to note that more people were willing to provide a response to this question on homelessness than to the question on poverty in general (61% versus 54%).

Thinking just about homelessness, about how many people would you say are currently homeless in the United States?

	2003		Among those providing a response	
	%	Cumulative %	2003 %	Cumulative %
10,000 or fewer	7	7	11	4
11,000-50,000	6	13	10	21
51,000-100,000	4	17	7	28
101,000-250,000	3	20	5	33
251,000-500,000	5	25	8	41
501,000-1,000,000	11	36	18	59
1,001,000-2,500,000	6	42	10	69
2,501,000-5,000,000	7	49	11	80
5,001,000-10,000,000	4	53	7	87
11,000,000-20,000,000	3	56	5	92
21,000,000-50,000,000	2	58	3	95
Over 50,000,000	3	61	5	100
Don't know	39			
Mean	13,580,000			
Median	1,000,000			
Base – Total respondents	1008		615	

? **Almost three-quarters (70%) of the population feel that there are more people living in poverty today than just a year ago.** Nineteen percent (19%) felt that there are about the same number and 7% felt that there are fewer people living in poverty today.

Do you feel there are more or fewer people living in poverty today than there were a year ago?

	2003
	%
More people living in poverty	70
Fewer people living in poverty	7
About the same number living in poverty	19
Don't know	4
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Base – Total respondents	1008

? **Perceptions with regard to the income level needed to cover basic needs are much higher than poverty levels and have increased from last year.** Respondents were asked, “How much annual income would you say a family of four living in the United States needs to cover their basic needs?” The mean level cited is over \$41,000, the median is \$40,000. As a point of comparison, the Federal poverty income threshold for a family of four is \$18,400. [NOTE: The **Cumulative** column presents a sum of the percents for all income levels up to that line. For example, the 16% for the “\$51-\$60,000” line includes the 6%, 4% and 7% for “Over \$75,000,” “\$61-\$75,000,” and “\$51-\$60,000.”]

How much annual income would you say a family of four living in the United States needs to cover their basic needs?

	2002	2003	Cumulative
	%	%	%
Over \$75,000	4	6	6
\$61-\$75,000	3	4	9
\$51-\$60,000	5	7	16
\$46-\$50,000	9	13	29
\$41-\$45,000	3	3	32
\$36-\$40,000	14	12	44
\$31-\$35,000	9	7	51
\$26-\$30,000	14	16	67
\$21-\$25,000	11	9	76
\$16-\$20,000	6	6	82
\$15,000 or less	4	5	87
Don't know	17	14	
Mean	\$ 39,400	\$41,360	
Median	\$ 35,000	\$40,000	
Base – Total respondents	1015	1008	

? **“Terrorism” is less a concern than it was last year, but the “government/politics” weighs more heavily on people.** When asked “What issues or concerns do you have with regard to society in the United States?” “poverty” was cited by 5% in 2003. “Government/politics” is at its highest level since the Poverty Pulse began.

**What do you feel is the single biggest problem facing U.S. society today?
(Top-of-Mind)**

**What other issues or concerns do you have with regard to society in the United States?
What other problems are you concerned about?
(Combined with top-of-mind for Total Unaided)**

SELECTED RESPONSES

	-----2000-----		-----2001-----		-----2002-----		-----2003-----	
	Top of Mind %	Total Unaided %	Top of Mind %	Total Unaided %	Top of Mind %	Total Unaided %	Top of Mind %	Total Unaided %
Terrorism	-	-	15s	23 s	14	22	7	12 s
War	-	-	7s	13 s	9	17 s	9	18
Immorality	9	12	6	10	7	11	8	13
Government/politics	7	14	5	10 s	7	13 s	11	21s
Economy	6	13	11s	24 s	10	23	9	21
Education	5	16	4	11 s	4	12	4	11
Racism/discrimination	3	7	2	7	2	5	2	7
Poverty	3	7	2	7	2	3 s	1	5
Homelessness	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	2

1015

1014

1015

1008

Base – Total respondents in each group

“s” indicates a statistically significant different as compared to the previous year

for the corresponding column (e.g. “Top of Mind” columns were compared only with each other).

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