

**Catholic Campaign for
Human Development**

Poverty Pulse

Wave V

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Presented By:

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Objectives and Methodology

This is a report of findings from Wave V of the Poverty Pulse survey, a study designed to evaluate attitudes toward poverty in America. This is the fifth 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 1,004 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, 2004. 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 and 2003 it was conducted in late November.

While many of the questions were asked in all five 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>	\$ 9,310
	2		\$12,490
	3		\$15,670
	4		\$18,850
	5		\$22,030
	6		\$25,210

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 five 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 2004, 90% of respondents indicated that they are concerned with poverty as a problem in the U.S., with 56% percent indicating that they are **very** concerned (a slight increase over the previous year).

**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	2004
	%	%	%	%	%
Very	55	54	50	52	56
Somewhat	32	36	39	37	34
Total Concerned	87	90	89	89	90
Not Very	8	8	7	8	7
Not at All	5	2	4	3	3
Total Not Concerned	13	10	11	11	10
Base – Total respondents	1015	1014	1015	1008	1004

In addition to “poverty,” the survey asked the same question (“Thinking just in terms of the problem here in the United States, how concerned would you say that you are about _____?”) for two other issues – “health care” and “moral values.” There were no differences in 2004, as compared to previous years, for the level of concern for “health care.” And “moral values,” an issue getting a great deal of attention in the presidential election, was seen as a concern by 87% (in previous years, the survey asked about “immorality” and the results for this issue are presented below as a point of comparison).

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

**% Total Concerned
(Includes Very and Somewhat Concerned)**

	2000		2001	2002	2003	2004
	%		%	%	%	%
Poverty	87	s	90	89	89	90
Health care	91		91	90	92	91
Moral values *	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A	87
Immorality **	80		81	80	79	N/A
Base – Total respondents	1015		1014	1015	1008	1004

* Not asked prior to 2004

** Not asked in 2004

A little more than half of all adults are concerned that they will be poor at some point in their lives. The percent of respondents who indicated that they are **very** concerned that they might be poor at some point in their lives remained the same from last year to this year after showing an increase last year from previous years.

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	2004
	%	%	%	%	%
Very	23	24	24	30	30
Somewhat	26	27	29	26	26
Total Concerned	49	51	53	56	56
Not Very	25	25	24	25	24
Not at All	26	24	22	18	20
Total Not Concerned	51	49	46	43	44
Don't know	*	*	1	1	1
Base – Total in each category	1015	1014	1015	1008	1004

* 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%). The percentages have not changed significantly from last year's survey.

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	
	2003	2004	2003	2004
	%	%	%	%
Very	53	47	22	23
Somewhat	21	24	28	27
Total Concerned	74	71	50	50
Not Very	16	16	29	27
Not at All	11	11	21	23
Total Not Concerned	27	27	50	50
Don't know	-	2	1	-
Base – Total in each category	220	201	788	803

Various problems with education continue to be seen as the primary causes of poverty. Education was cited by 27% of the sample. Jobs also continue to be a concern with 25% indicating that this is a cause of poverty. The percent of those who feel that the poor are responsible for their own situation (i.e. those citing “personal laziness, lack of motivation or initiative”) remains the same from last year after having dropped from earlier years.

Note that respondents were first asked to give all the causes of poverty. If they gave more than one, they were asked to give the single biggest cause. While the levels of response are different for these two versions of the question, the rank order of the causes is not – education, jobs and personal laziness top the list in both cases.

**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	2004
	%	%	%	%	%
Lack of education (total unduplicated)	30	32	29 s	25	27
Lack understanding of importance of educ.	9	10 s	7	8	7
Lack of initiative in education	6	6	5	5	7
Poor education system	4	7	6	7	6
Lack of access to education	6	7	5	6	5
Lack of skills	*	2	1	*	2
Lack of funds for higher education	*	1	1	1	1
Other education	2 s	7	9 s	2	3
Lack of employment opportunities	8 s	21	21 s	25	25
Personal laziness/lack of initiative/motivation	32 s	25	26 s	20	21
Gov't/welfare/too easy to get assist	5	6 s	9	8 s	12
Lack of work/employ that pays living wage	- s	17	15 s	10	10
No skills/training/guidance	1	3	1 s	6	7
Unjust laws or social policies	8 s	4	2 s	6	4
Jobs going outside the country	-	-	- s	4	4
Illness/elderly/health problems	4	3	4	3	3
Family issues	- s	3	1	2	3
Wastefulness/poor spending	1	2	1	1	3
Cost of living is too high	8 s	2	2	2	3
Racial/ethnic discrimination	4	3	3	3	2
Drug/alcohol abuse	4	3	5 s	1	2
Bad luck/poor choices	2	3	1	1	2
Family cycle of poverty	5	6	6 s	1	2
Greed	-	-	2	2	2
Personal inadequacy	8	6	4 s	*	1
Too much spent helping other (countries)	-	-	-	3	1
Economics	1	2	3	4	1
Unfair distribution of wealth	1	1	2	3	1
Big businesses	-	-	-	1	1
Not doing enough to help the poor	-	-	-	2	-
Miscellaneous	7	7	2	5	7
Don't know/no answer	9	6	7	7	5

Base – Total respondents in each group 1015 1014 1015 1008 1004

* Less than 0.5%

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

	2002		2003	2004
	%		%	%
Lack of education (total unduplicated)	19		16	17
Lack understanding of importance of educ.	5		4	4
Poor education system	3		5	4
Lack of access to education	3		3	4
Lack of initiative in education	2		2	4
Lack of skills	1		*	*
Lack of funds for higher education	*		*	*
Other education	5	s	1	2
Lack of employment opportunities	14		16	18
Personal laziness/lack of initiative/motivation	16		13	13
Lack of work/employ that pays living wage	10	s	6	6
Gov't/welfare/too easy to get assist	6		5	6
No skills/training/guidance	*	s	4	4
Jobs going outside the country	-		3	3
Unjust laws or social policies	2		4	2
Cost of living is too high	1		1	2
Too much spent helping other (countries)	-		2	1
Racial/ethnic discrimination	1		1	1
Illness/elderly/health problems	1		1	1
Family issues	1		*	1
Wastefulness/poor spending	1		1	1
Economics	3		2	1
Big businesses	-		1	1
Family cycle of poverty	3		*	1
Greed	2		1	1
Drug/alcohol abuse	2		*	*
Bad luck/poor choices	1		1	*
Unfair distribution of wealth	2		2	*
Personal inadequacy	3		*	*
Not doing enough to help the poor	-		1	-
Miscellaneous	2	s	7	10
Don't know/no answer	12		10	10
Base – Total respondents in each group	1015		1008	1004
* Less than 0.5%				

“The government” remains the entity most likely to be viewed as responsible for addressing poverty, with more people believing this than in previous years. A little more than half of the population (54%) believes that the government has the responsibility to address poverty, an increase of 6 percentage points from 2003. This increase comes from a similar decrease in those who feel that the general public or everyone has the responsibility to help poor people.

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		2004
	%		%		%		%		%
The government	38	s	49	s	43	s	48	s	54
Everyone/general public	52	s	48	s	41		40	s	34
The poor themselves	16	s	13	s	18		20		20
Churches	8		6		5		4		7
Other charitable organizations	4		3		3		2		3
Corporations/businesses	3		2		2		3		2
Families/friends	1		1		1		1		2
The wealthy	1		1		1		1		2
The President	1		1		2		2		2
Miscellaneous	1		1		1		1		3
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Base – Total respondents in each group	1015		1014		1015		1008		1004

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. The importance of a living wage which dropped slightly last year from previous years is back up at 5%.

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

	2001		2002		2003		2004
	%		%		%		%
Better education for children	20		20		18		17
More opportunities for education for adults	15	s	11		11		11
More employment opportunities	7		9		11		11
Pay living wages to low-income workers	6		4		2	s	5
A better economy	4		4		4		5
Go to work/get people to work	2		3		1	s	4
Developing leadership skills among low income people**	-		1		*		3
Government issues (new president/gov't not involved)**	-		-		-	s	3
More government aid	4	s	7	s	3		3
Get rid of welfare	2		2		1		2
There is no end to poverty cycle	1		2		1		2
Caring/understanding/helping**	-		3		2		2
More private aid/charitable contributions	1		3		1		1
Change laws	1		*		1		1
More job training	1		1	s	5		1
Concentrate effort in US not overseas	1		2		3		1
Rich should help/share with poor	1		1		*		1
Motivate people	1		2		1		1
Cut/lower taxes/less government spending on other issues**	-		-		2		1
People need to help themselves/be responsible for themselves	-		-		-		1
Participation in community-based organizations**	-		1		1		*
Prayer/turn to religion**	-		1		2		*
Increasing access to affordable housing**	-		1		*		-
Miscellaneous	12	s	4	s	11		7
Base – Total respondents	1014		1015		1008		1004

* Less than 0.5%

**These categories were not included separately in years indicating no response and likely were coded under Miscellaneous

Employment opportunities were seen as the best way to end homelessness. In the 2004 Poverty Pulse, respondents were asked what the single best way was to end homelessness in the United States. Education ranked fourth for this question, cited by 5% of respondents. More job opportunities, with the highest percentage, was mentioned by 25%, followed by more affordable housing (16%) and more government housing (7%). Housing is a greater concern among those who are low income – there was also a statistically significant difference between low-income and non-low-income respondents in the level who cited affordable (21% versus 14%) or government housing (14% versus 5%) as a solution to homelessness.

Just thinking now of homelessness, what would you say is the single best way to end homelessness in the United States?

	2004
	%
More employment opportunities	25
Build more affordable housing	16
More government housing	7
More/better education	6
More mental health facilities	3
Build more shelters	3
Everybody to work together/help one another	3
Drug/alcohol counseling/rehab	3
Government aid	2
A better economy	2
Pay living wages	2
Mental health counseling	1
Job training	1
More community/social centers/programs	1
Other	10
Can't do one thing to help homelessness	1
Don't know	15
Refused	*
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Base – Total respondents	1004
* Less than 0.5%	

There has been no change in the number of people who have done something to help the poor. Eighty four percent (84%) of respondents indicated that they had done something to help alleviate poverty or to help someone who is poor in the past year. The most popular ways to help was to give money or donations of food, clothing or other goods to an organization helping the poor (35%).

**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 %	2004 %
TOTAL DID SOMETHING	87	86	84	82	84
Gave money to an organization helping the poor	44	41	32	34	35
Donated food/clothing/goods	12	32	35	32	31
Gave money directly to a poor person	15	15	14	11	12
Volunteered	12	14	13	15	15
Got involved with community-based organizations that work to address poverty or injustice	16	10	8	13	14
Mentored an individual	4	4	2	3	5
Supplied shelter	2	2	2	1	1
Provided jobs	1	2	3	2	2
Prayer	1	2	2	2	1
Offered advice/wisdom/educate	-	-	2	2	5
Paid taxes	1	1	1	1	1
Miscellaneous	1	3	3	4	3
Nothing	13	14	16	18	15
Base – Total respondents in each group	1015	1014	1015	1008	1004

When those who did not do anything to help the poor were asked why, the primary response was that they did not have enough money with 60% giving this response (virtually the same as last year's 59%).

**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	2004
	%	%
Didn't have enough money	59	60
Just didn't think about it	13	8
Didn't want to	6	10
Thought other causes or charities more important	5	3
Helping myself right now *	5	7
Or some other reason	8	7
Don't know	3	3
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Base - Total who did not help the poor	145	137
* 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 2003 and 2004 – “How important do you think it is to decrease or eliminate poverty in the United States?” The response this year was the same as last year’s – virtually all respondents (97%) felt it was important, but 77% said it was *very* important.

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

	2003	2004
	%	%
Very important	76	77
Somewhat important	20	20
Total important	96	97
Not very important	2	1
Not at all important	1	1
Total not important	3	2
Don't know	1	1
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Base – Total respondents	1008	1004

The general public is very much in favor of health coverage for all children, including those living in poverty. This year's Pulse included specific questions on health care. When asked if health care should be guaranteed to all children, 96% of respondents agreed that it should be.

In this country we guarantee all children, including those living in poverty, a quality education. Do you think the same should be true for health care and that all children, including those living in poverty, should have health care?

	Total
	%
Yes	96
No	3
Don't know	1
No answer	*
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Base – Total respondents	1004
* Less than 0.5%	

Most people also believe that the Federal government should be responsible for ensuring that low-income people have health coverage. Nine in ten (91%) believe that it is important for the Federal government to make sure that all low-income persons have health coverage. Almost three-quarters of the population (73%) believe this is *very* important.

How important do you think it is for the Federal government to make sure that all low-income persons have health coverage?

	Total
	%
Very important	73
Somewhat important	18
Total Important	91
Not very important	5
Not at all important	4
Total Not Important	8
Don't know	*
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Base – Total respondents	1004
* Less than 0.5%	

There is a better understanding among the general public of the number of people living in poverty. The estimated number of people living in poverty has risen steadily over the last three years and the mean estimate this year is very close to the actual number (although still a bit lower). The mean estimate is approximately 31 million (the actual number is 35 million). However, this high mean is likely due to a few respondents giving a very high number. The median (i.e. the midpoint of the responses) was 2 million, exactly the same as in last year's survey. And half (49%) of the respondents to this year's Pulse guessed a number of 20 million or less.

The percent of respondents who answered this question increased as well perhaps indicating a bit more confidence in the response. The results are presented below for the total sample and recalculated to include just those who responded to the question.

[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 2004, 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 response levels up to that line. For example, the 10% for the “51-100,000” line includes the 4%, 3%, and 3% 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			Cumulative
	2002	2003	2004	
	%	%	%	%
10,000 or fewer	3	2	4	4
11,000-50,000	4	5	3	7
51,000-100,000	4	4	3	10
101,000-250,000	3	3	2	12
251,000-500,000	4	3	3	15
501,000-1,000,000	8	7	11	26
1,001,000-2,500,000	3	5	7	33
2,501,000-5,000,000	4	6	7	40
5,001,000-10,000,000	5	4	5	45
11,000,000-20,000,000	5	4	4	49
21,000,000-50,000,000	4	8	7	56
Over 50,000,000	2	4	6	62
Don't know	51	46	38	
Mean	10,660,000	22,170,000	31,050,000	
Median	1,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	
Base – Total respondents	1015	1008	1004	

	Among Those Providing a Response			
	2002	2003	2004	Cumulative
	%	%	%	%
10,000 or fewer	6	4	6	6
11,000-50,000	8	8	5	11
51,000-100,000	8	8	5	16
101,000-250,000	6	5	3	19
251,000-500,000	8	5	5	24
501,000-1,000,000	16	13	18	42
1,001,000-2,500,000	6	9	11	53
2,501,000-5,000,000	8	11	11	65
5,001,000-10,000,000	10	7	8	73
11,000,000-20,000,000	10	7	6	79
21,000,000-50,000,000	8	15	11	90
Over 50,000,000	4	7	10	100
Base – Total respondents who gave a response	497	541	622	

Although the majority of the general public believes that there are more people living in poverty this year than last, there is a drop in the percent of people who feel this way. Last year almost three-quarters (70%) of the population felt that there were more people living in poverty as compared to the prior year. In this year's survey that percentage has dropped to 64%. There is a corresponding increase in those saying 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		2004
	%		%
More people living in poverty	70	s	64
Fewer people living in poverty	7	s	15
About the same number living in poverty	19		15
Don't know	4		5
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Base – Total respondents	1008		1004

The majority of the general public also feels that there will be more people living in poverty four years from now. Although six in ten (62%) indicated that there would be more poor people in four years, a fourth believe that the number of people living in poverty will decline.

Do you feel that there will be more or fewer people living in poverty four years from now than there are today?

	2004
	%
More people living in poverty	62
Fewer people living in poverty	25
About the same number living in poverty	7
Don't know	6
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Base – Total respondents	1004

An increase in crime is the most likely outcome of greater poverty, according to the general public. When asked “If there are more people living in poverty, what will it mean for the country as a whole?” 20% responded that crime would increase. Only 4% felt that it would not have any impact on the country (17% did not know what impact there would be).

**If there are more people living in poverty,
what will it mean for the country as a whole?
That is, what impact will it have on the country as a whole?**

	2004
	%
Will have some impact	79
More crime	20
Economic impact/poor economy/create depression	14
Higher taxes	8
More homelessness	5
Make the country weaker/less powerful/less trustworthy	5
A reduced quality of life for more people/lower standard of living	5
Devastating/negative impact (general)	5
Health care issues (more disease/sicknesses/strain on system, etc.)	4
More governmental programs/assistance will be needed	4
Lower our status as a country/no longer the leader	4
Discord/unrest/a divided country	4
There will be no middle class, just poor and rich	3
More alcohol/drug use	2
Low morale/self esteem	2
Result of poor leadership/need gov't changes	2
More social service programs needed (soup kitchens, shelters, etc.)	1
Government programs will be cut/drain on resources	1
Fewer educational opportunities	1
Family issues (hunger, homelessness, no child care, etc.)	1
People will become more caring towards each other/come together	1
Other	9
Don't know	17
None/no impact	4
<hr/>	
Base – Total respondents	1004

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 \$44,000, the median is \$40,000. There was a significant increase in those saying that a family of four needs more than \$75,000 (from 6% to 13%). As a point of comparison, the Federal poverty income threshold for a family of four is \$18,850. [NOTE: The **Cumulative** column presents a sum of the percents for all income levels up to that line. For example, the 23% for the “\$51-\$60,000” line includes the 13%, 5% and 5% 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	2004	Cumulative
	%	%	%	%
Over \$75,000	4	6	13	13
\$61-\$75,000	3	4	5	18
\$51-\$60,000	5	7	5	23
\$46-\$50,000	9	13	17	40
\$41-\$45,000	3	3	4	44
\$36-\$40,000	14	12	14	58
\$31-\$35,000	9	7	8	66
\$26-\$30,000	14	16	13	79
\$21-\$25,000	11	9	5	84
\$16-\$20,000	6	6	5	89
\$15,000 or less	4	5	3	92
Don't know	17	14	9	
Mean	\$ 39,400	\$41,360	\$44,460	
Median	\$ 35,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	
Base – Total respondents	1015	1008	1004	

The concerns Americans have remained the same from last year. “When asked “What issues or concerns do you have with regard to society in the United States?” “poverty” was cited by 6% in 2004. The economy and the war top the list of concerns.

**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-----		-----2004-----	
	Top of Mind	Total Unaided	Top of Mind	Total Unaided	Top of Mind	Total Unaided	Top of Mind	Total Unaided	Top of Mind	Total Unaided
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Economy	6	13	11s	24 s	10	23	9	21	10	23
War	-	-	7s	13 s	9	17 s	9	18	11	20
Government/politics	7	14	5	10 s	7	13 s	11	21s	9	17
Immorality	9	12	6	10	7	11	8	13	10	16
Healthcare	4	10	2	6s	2	7	3	10	3	12
Terrorism	-	-	15s	23 s	14	22	7	12 s	8	12
Education	5	16	4	11 s	4	12	4	11	3	11
Violence	4	11	3	6s	3	7	4	9	4	10
Crime	6	13	2s	6s	4	8	5	12	3	10
Racism/discrimination	3	7	2	7	2	5	2	7	2	6
Poverty	3	7	2	7	2	3 s	1	5	2	6
Homelessness	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	*	1
	1015		1014		1015		1008		1004	

Base – Total respondents in each group

* Less than 0.5%

“s” indicates a statistically significant difference as compared to the previous year for the corresponding column (e.g. “Top of Mind” columns were compared only with each other).