

Catholic Campaign for Human Development

Poverty Pulse

Wave VII

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Presented By:

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Objectives and Methodology

This is a report of findings from Wave VII of the Poverty Pulse survey, a study designed to evaluate attitudes toward poverty in America. This is the seventh in a series of studies conducted annually beginning in December of 2000. The results of each Poverty Pulse are 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.

This year's Pulse once again used an online methodology for data collection. A total of 1,027 surveys were completed among the general adult population through Harris Interactive Service Bureau (HISB), a separate operating unit of Harris Interactive. The surveys were completed between December 7 and 11, 2006. The sample was selected at random by HISB using their database of potential respondents. The results of the study were collected and weighted demographically by HISB. The questionnaire was designed in conjunction with CCHD by Market Research Bureau LLC. Market Research Bureau also conducted the analysis of the data and prepared this report.

Many (but not all) of the questions in this year's survey were also asked in previous waves of the Poverty Pulse. In some cases, results from previous years are presented in this report for reference purposes. It should be noted that prior to 2005, the Poverty Pulse was conducted using a telephone methodology. Because of this difference in data collection, comparisons between studies from 2000-2004 and subsequent waves (2005 and 2006) should be made with caution. While general comparisons can be made, numerical differences may reflect the difference in data collection technique rather than true differences in people's opinions. In addition to the data collection differences, some questions were asked differently. For example, in some cases questions were asked this year in an aided fashion – that is, respondents were shown a list from which to choose their response – while in previous years, the question was unaided (no options provided to respondents). Also, in some cases only one response was accepted from respondents where in previous years respondents were allowed to give multiple responses. Any general comparison made in this report is accompanied with a caveat reflecting these differences.

The results presented on the following pages have been tabulated and analyzed by various demographics by Market Research Bureau. If a table total is 99% to 101%, this is likely due to rounding the individual percentages in the table. For some questions, more than one response was accepted from each respondent. In these cases the table percentage totals exceed 100%.

Statistical significance testing was conducted to determine differences by demographics and other criteria. Significance testing across years was conducted just between 2005 and 2006 where the methodology was the same, but these two years are not compared to earlier years. All testing for statistical significance was conducted at the 95% level of confidence. Any statistical differences are indicated in the tables with an “s” or are discussed in the text. The sample tolerance for the total sample is +/- 3 percentage points. This study can be considered reasonably representative of all adults in the United States.

One of the demographic categories analyzed was a combination of income and household size to determine people living with low incomes. The following definition of low income was used in this year’s study:

Low Income Definition

<i>Household size of . . .</i>	1+	<i>and income less than . . .</i>	\$15,000
	2 or 3+		\$25,000
	4+		\$35,000
	5+		\$50,000

For comparison, the poverty thresholds as established by the federal government are as follows:

Poverty Guidelines

<i>Household size of . . .</i>	1	<i>and income less than . . .</i>	\$ 9,973
	2		\$ 12,755
	3		\$ 15,577
	4		\$ 19,971
	5		\$ 23,613
	6		\$ 26,683

Findings

- *The concern over poverty continues to be high.* About half of all respondents in 2006 (48%) indicated that they were “very concerned” about poverty (on an aided basis) and an additional 36% indicated that they were “somewhat concerned” (for a total of 84% who are concerned). Only 3% were “not at all concerned” about poverty in this most recent survey. This shows a small, but statistically significant decline in those who are concerned with poverty from last year (88% in 2005, 84% in 2006), the decline coming mostly from those who 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	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very	55	54	50	52	56	53	48
Somewhat	<u>32</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>36</u>
Total Concerned	87	90	89	89	90	88	84
Not Very	8	8	7	8	7	10	13
Not at All	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
Total Not Concerned	13	10	11	11	10	12	16
Base - Total respondents	1015	1014	1015	1008	1004	1131	1027

Among four specific issues addressed in this survey – poverty, health care, access to education and affordable housing – poverty ranks second behind health care in terms of the level of concern that Americans have.

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 _____?

2006

	Poverty	Health Care	Access to Education	Affordable Housing
	%	%	%	%
Very	48	61	41	40
Somewhat	<u>36</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>42</u>
Total Concerned	84	91	78	82
Not Very	13	7	19	16
Not at All	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
Total Not Concerned	16	8	22	19

Base - Total respondents (1027)

- *On an unaided basis, poverty ranks fifth as the “biggest social problem facing the U.S. today.”* Five percent (5%) cited poverty as the biggest concern (top of mind) and a total of 15% cited it in response to either of two questions asked regarding social problems (the biggest problem + all other problems = total unaided). Health care, illegal immigration, education and the war in Iraq all were of greater concern to respondents. Racial discrimination was equal to poverty as a concern to respondents.

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

**What other social issues or problems in the U.S. are you concerned about?
(Combined with top-of-mind for Total Unaided)**

Note - Only those items with at least 5% Total Unaided are shown.

	<u>Top of Mind</u> %	<u>Total Unaided</u> %
Health care	12	26
War/U.S. involvement in war	7	22
Illegal immigration	10	18
Education	5	18
Poverty	5	15
Racism/ethnic discrimination/prejudice	5	15
Unemployment/under employment/low wages	3	10
Government/Politics	3	8
Crime	2	8
Drug/alcohol abuse	2	8
Homelessness	1	8
Economy	2	7
Immorality	3	6
Social Security	1	5
Environmental issues	*	5
Base - Total respondents		1027

* Less than 0.5%

Previous years' responses for some of these are shown on the following page for reference. (Please note that the question wording prior to 2005 differed slightly. In 2005 and 2006, the question was "What do you feel is the single biggest social problem facing the U.S. today?" In earlier studies the question was asked, "What do you feel is the single biggest problem facing U.S. society today?")

