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THE ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL
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***Americans Say HIV/AIDS Remains A Threat;
Education Efforts Seen as Important for Fighting Its Spread***

The Associated Press Poll is conducted by Ipsos-Public Affairs. Between July 19-21, 2004, the AP/Ipsos poll interviewed a representative sample of 1,002 adults. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 for all adults.

Washington, DC, July 30, 2004 — Half (52%) of Americans believe more people in the U.S. are being infected with HIV now than ten years ago. But results of this recent poll, conducted by Ipsos-Public Affairs for the Associated Press, indicates that public education efforts may have some impact on the most at-risk communities, as young adults and ethnic minorities are among those most likely to describe the situation as urgent.

Majority See No Decline in HIV Infection Rate

Half (52%) of Americans believe more people in the U.S. are being infected with HIV now than ten years ago. A quarter (25%) say infection rates are about the same as a decade ago. Just one in five (20%) say fewer are being affected.

Consistent with findings throughout this survey, members of ethnic minority groups (61%), people in low (59%) or moderate (56%) income households, and young adults (64% of under-30s) are especially likely to say more people are becoming infected. People with up to a high school education (61%) and residents of rural areas (62%) and to a lesser extent, the South (57%) also say more people are contracting HIV now. By contrast, residents of the Northeastern U.S. are relatively more inclined to think fewer people are being infected these days (29%).

Q. When it comes to the problem of HIV and AIDS IN THE UNITED STATES today, compared to ten years ago do you think more people, fewer people, or about the same number of people are becoming infected with HIV?

More people	52
Fewer people.....	20
About the same number	25
Not sure.....	3

Nearly all Americans (94%) say that AIDS is a serious national health problem; six in ten (61%) say it is “very serious.” Concern about AIDS is especially high among women (72% very serious), minorities (76%), and people with up to a high school education and low household income (73% each). Among registered voters, far more Democrats (71%) than Republicans (49%) say HIV/AIDS is a very serious national problem.

Q. Now thinking specifically about AIDS and HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, how serious do you feel AIDS is as a national health problem? Would you say it is ...

Very serious.....	61
Somewhat serious	33
Not very serious.....	4
Not serious at all	2
Not sure	-
Total Serious	94
Total Not Serious	6

Half Worry Their Child – Not Themselves -- Could Become Infected

Even “bearing in mind all the different ways people can become infected with HIV,” half (52%) of Americans say they are not at all concerned with contracting the virus. Another quarter are not too concerned. About one in five (22%) are somewhat or very concerned about becoming infected with HIV, with this worry most acute among ethnic minorities (45%), people in low income households (30%), residents of urban areas (28%) and the Northeast (27%), as well as unmarried men (33%) and women (26%).

Q. Bearing in mind the different ways people can be infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS – how concerned are you personally about becoming infected with HIV?

Very concerned.....	10
Somewhat concerned	12
Not too concerned	26
Not at all concerned.....	52
Not sure	-
Total Concerned	22
Total Not Concerned	78

There is much greater concern that young people are more at risk. Half (51%) are somewhat or very concerned that a son or daughter could become infected with HIV. This concern is substantially greater among minority (66%) than white (48%) respondents. Six in ten (60%) of those who are married with children are concerned.

Q. How concerned are you about a son or daughter becoming infected with HIV?

Very concerned.....	27
Somewhat concerned	24
Not too concerned	18
Not at all concerned.....	21
(NOT READ) No child.....	10
Not sure	-
Total Concerned	51
Total Not Concerned	39

Four in ten (39%) say they personally know someone with HIV or AIDS. People who are in their middle age (51% of those between 40 and 65), have a college education (49%; 53% women graduates) and higher household income (51% of those over \$75,000) are most likely to say they know someone with HIV or AIDS. People living in urban areas (46%) and the Deep South (43%) or Pacific (45%) regions are also more likely to report knowing someone with the disease.

Q. Do you personally know anyone who now has AIDS, has died from AIDS, or has tested positive for HIV?

Yes	39
No.....	61
Not sure.....	-

Many See Limited Progress Fighting HIV/AIDS

Despite the progress in developing drugs to extend the quality and length of the life of people with AIDS, Americans are divided on how much progress has been made in fighting HIV and AIDS in the U.S. over the past ten years. A plurality (42%) say the situation is worse than it was a decade ago (31% better, 24% the same).

Women (46%), non-whites (53%), people with less than a high school education (50%), and both under-30s (50%) and seniors (46%) tend to think the situation is worse than it was. Regionally, Southerners (48%) think the situation is worse, while Northeasterners are more inclined to think it is better (43%). Rural (49%) and urban (45%) residents are more inclined than suburbanites (38%) to say the AIDS situation is worse.

The college-educated (39%; 43% male graduates) and those with a high household income (39%) are more inclined to say the HIV/AIDS situation in the U.S. is better today than ten years ago.

Q. And thinking about HIV and AIDS as a national health problem, compared to TEN YEARS AGO, do you think the situation in the United States is better today, worse today, or about the same today as it was ten years ago?

Better today	31
Worse today	42
About the same today	24
Not sure.....	3

Of those who believe the HIV/AIDS situation in the U.S. is better now, opinion is divided on whether prevention problems or medical research into new treatments is the more important factor behind this improvement. There may be some truth in the view of the one in ten who volunteer that both strategies have had a positive impact.

College grads lean toward saying medical research and new treatments have had the greatest impact. Married men tend to say research (53%) is the most important reason, whereas unmarried men say prevention programs (57%) have been pivotal.

(ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAY THAT THE SITUATION WITH HIV AND AIDS IS BETTER TODAY THAN IT WAS TEN YEARS AGO.)

Q And which of these reasons do you think is the MOST important reason that the problem of HIV and AIDS is better today?

Prevention programs have reduced the number of new cases of HIV and AIDS	43
Medical research has led to treatments that prolong the lives of people with HIV and AIDS	45
(NOT READ) Both equally	11
(NOT READ) Neither	-
Not sure	1

Cancer Seen as More Important Research Priority Than HIV/AIDS

But when it comes to how the federal government should spend its research dollars, more than twice as many Americans say the money should go to fight cancer (37%) than AIDS (14%). However, AIDS ranks as a priority alongside Alzheimer's disease, heart disease and obesity.

Funding cancer research is given particular importance by people under 30 (47%), those with above-average income (44% of those with household income over \$75,000) and residents of the South (43%) and the Great Plains and Mountain (44%) regions. Senior citizens (29% of those 65 and over) and women over 45 (25%) more often say Alzheimer's disease should be the top priority, while young adults (22% of 18-29 year olds), minorities (27%), unmarried men (22%) and residents of urban areas (22%) as well as the Northeastern (23%) and Pacific (19%) regions more often favor funding AIDS research.

Q. I'm going to read you a list of health problems facing the United States today. Please tell me which of these health problems you think should be the federal government's highest priority for spending on medical research.

Cancer	37
Alzheimer's disease	15
Heart disease	14
AIDS	14
Obesity	10
Smoking	4
Strokes	3
(NOT READ) Something else	1
Not sure	2

More Support Safe Sex than Abstinence Programs

By just over a five-to-four margin, Americans say public education programs aimed at reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS should encourage young people to practice safe sex (55%) rather than abstain from sex altogether (40%). People in their thirties (63%) and forties (60%) prefer efforts to focus on safe sex messages, although men under 45 (64%) are more likely than those over 45 (44%) to promote this approach. Overall, seniors favor an emphasis on abstinence (53%). In addition to people in higher income groups, unmarried people say the focus should be on safe sex; married men and women are more closely divided. Catholics (63%) say the focus should be on safe sex, while Protestants' views are split (46% safe sex, 50% abstinence).

Favored approaches also vary by region. People in the Western U.S. (63%) – and the Pacific region (71%) in particular – say reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS among young people is best pursued through safe sex messages. By contrast, people in the Great Plains and Mountain region (53%) as well as the Oil Patch (58%) would focus public education on abstinence. City-dwellers prefer safe sex education (61%), while suburban and rural residents are more closely divided.

Another key difference in these values is reflected in party preference: Republicans favor abstinence (60%) while Democrats prefer a focus on safe sex (70%).

Q. Do you think public education efforts to reduce the spread of HIV and AIDS among young people should focus more on ...

Encouraging them to practice safe sex.....	55
Encouraging them to abstain from sex	40
(NOT READ) Both equally	4
(NOT READ) Neither	1
Not sure	-

Two-Thirds Say U.S. Should Fund Fighting AIDS Abroad – But Not At Cost of U.S. Programs

Two in three (65%) favor a proposal for the U.S. government to spend \$15 billion to help fight HIV and AIDS in developing countries. Among registered voters, Democrats (75%) favor funding international HIV/AIDS prevention, as does a smaller majority of Republicans (63%), while Independents are evenly divided (47% favor, 48% oppose). However, if a choice has to be made, 63% say this spending on international AIDS should not come at the expense of fighting the spread of HIV and AIDS in the United States.

Q. The U.S. government has proposed a program to spend 15 billion dollars over five years to help fight HIV and AIDS in developing countries in Africa and elsewhere. Do you favor or oppose this program?

Favor	65
Oppose	33
Not sure	2

Q. As you may know, HIV and AIDS is a global epidemic, and many of the poorest countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are particularly hard-hit. Some people say that the United States has a responsibility to spend money to help fight the epidemic in countries that can't afford to fight it on their own. Other people say that the money should be focused on preventing and treating the epidemic here in the United States. Which of these statements comes closest to your view?

The United States has a responsibility to spend money to help fight the HIV and AIDS epidemic in developing countries, even if that means less money is spent on the epidemic at home.....	30
The United States should focus on the HIV and AIDS epidemic at home first rather than spending money to help fight the epidemic in developing countries	63
(NOT READ) Both equally	5
(NOT READ) Neither	2
Not sure	-

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