

**Center for American Progress/
Center for Responsible Lending/
National Military Family Association/
AARP
Frequency Questionnaire**

April 13-20, 2006
1000 Adults, general population, 18 and over

Q.3 Generally speaking, do you think that things in this country are going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

	Total
Right direction	24
Wrong track.....	70
(Don't know/refused)	6
Right - Wrong	-46
(ref:DIRECT)	

Q.4 How would you describe the issue of household debt on things like credit cards, car loans, home mortgages and payday loans in this country--a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, not too serious a problem, or not a problem at all?

	Total
A very serious problem.....	47
A somewhat serious problem	35
A not too serious problem	10
Not a problem at all.....	5
(Don't know/refused)	3
(ref:PROB1)	

Q.5 For the following list, please tell me how worried you are that this might happen to you personally.

	Very Worr	Smwt Worr	Not Too Worr	Not At All	Al ready Hapnd	DK/ Ref	Total Worr	Total Not Worr	Worr - Not
[500 Respondents]									
5 (SPLIT A) Being the victim of a violent crime, like rape or assault ...	11	24	30	33	1	1	35	64	-28
[500 Respondents]									
6 (SPLIT B) Getting cancer	18	32	22	24	4	1	50	46	3

	Very Worr	Smwt Worr	Not Too Worr	Not At All	AI ready Hapnd	DK/ Ref	Total Worr	Total Not Worr	Worr - Not
[500 Respondents]									
7 (SPLIT A) Losing your house in a natural disaster, like an earthquake, fire, tornado, or hurricane.....	11	27	27	35	-	0	38	61	-23
[500 Respondents]									
8 (SPLIT B) Being hurt or killed in a major terrorist attack, similar to September 11th	11	22	26	40	-	0	33	66	-33
[500 Respondents]									
9 (SPLIT A) Being the victim of identity theft	21	48	17	14	0	0	69	31	38
10 Not having enough money to pay all your bills	19	29	19	32	0	0	48	51	-2
[500 Respondents]									
11 (SPLIT B) Not being able to have a secure retirement	30	26	16	25	1	1	56	42	15
12 Having to file for bankruptcy.....	8	8	22	61	1	0	16	83	-67
13 Falling deep into debt because of medical expenses.....	15	29	25	30	0	1	44	55	-11
[500 Respondents]									
14 (SPLIT A) Falling deep into debt from paying high interest rates on your mortgage.....	10	13	19	55	0	2	24	74	-51

	Very Worr	Smwt Worr	Not Too Worr	Not At All	AI ready Hapnd	DK/ Ref	Total Worr	Total Not Worr	Worr - Not
15 Falling deep into debt from credit card payments.....	9	14	19	56	1	1	23	75	-52

[500 Respondents]

16 (SPLIT B) Falling behind on your mortgage payments and losing your home.....	10	13	22	51	1	3	23	73	-50
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17 Having to take on a lot of debt to pay for college..... (ref:CONCBATT)	12	15	14	56	2	2	27	70	-43
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Q.18 Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people, organizations, and things, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred, the higher the number the more favorable your feelings are toward that person or organization. If you have no opinion or have never heard of that person, thing or organization, please say so.

		% Mean	% Warm	% Cool	% ID
[500 Respondents]					
18 (SPLIT A) Better Business Bureau	61	49	15	90	
[500 Respondents]					
19 (SPLIT B) Bill collection agencies.....	28	10	58	90	
[500 Respondents]					
20 (SPLIT A) Debt consolidation companies	39	15	37	77	
[500 Respondents]					
21 (SPLIT B) Credit unions and community banks	63	55	14	94	
22 Credit card companies	35	15	56	97	
23 Car finance companies	42	19	40	92	
[500 Respondents]					
24 (SPLIT A) The United States military.....	77	76	12	97	
25 Democrats in Congress.....	44	31	42	94	
26 Republicans in Congress	40	28	46	94	
[500 Respondents]					
27 (SPLIT B) Big corporations.....	41	23	42	94	
28 Pay-day lenders.....	23	7	57	74	

	Mean	% Warm	% Cool	% ID
[500 Respondents]				
29 (SPLIT A) Mortgage lenders.....	48	27	28	89
[500 Respondents]				
30 (SPLIT B) Mortgage brokers	44	22	31	88
[500 Respondents]				
31 (SPLIT A) Large banks.....	48	33	32	93
[500 Respondents]				
32 (SPLIT B) Used car dealers	39	17	47	94
(ref:THERM)				

Q.33 Over the past five years, do you believe the number of Americans having trouble with household debt on things like credit cards, car loans, pay-day loans and home mortgage loans has gone up, gone down or stayed about the same?

	Total
Gone up.....	86
Gone down.....	2
Stayed about the same	9
(Don't know/refused)	3
(ref:PAST)	

Q.34 Now, I'd like to read you a list of reasons why some people say the problem of household debt is growing. Recognizing that NOT every single one can be the most important reason, please tell me how important you think (reason) is--the single most important reason, a very important reason, a somewhat important reason, a not too important reason or a not at all important reason?

	Most Impt Rsn	Very Impt Rsn	Smwt Impt Rsn	Not Impt Rsn	Not At All Impt	Dk/ Ref	Total Impt	Total Not Impt	Impt - Not
34 The economy is primarily responsible because prices have risen much faster than wages so people have to borrow more to make ends meet.	15	44	26	9	5	1	85	13	72
35 State and federal governments are primarily responsible for failing to protect consumers from abusive practices.	6	34	37	13	8	1	78	21	57
36 Individuals are primarily responsible because they made poor choices and spent irresponsibly.....	20	44	30	4	1	1	94	5	89

	Most Impt Rsn	Very Impt Rsn	Smwt Impt Rsn	Not Impt Rsn	Not At All Impt	Dk/ Ref	Total Impt	Total Not Impt	Impt -
37 Lenders and lending institutions are primarily responsible because they engaged in unethical lending practices.	6	30	41	14	6	3	77	20	57
(ref:RESP5)									

Q.38 And what do you think is the most responsible for this problem: the economy, government, individual borrowers, or lenders and lending institutions?

	Total
Individual borrowers	35
The economy	24
Government	23
Lenders and lending institutions	10
(All)	5
(Don't know/refused)	4
(ref:RESP)	

Q.39 Do you believe the problem of rising household debt in this country is primarily a problem for lower income families or do you believe the problem of debt is also a problem for middle class families, say, those earning around \$50,000 a year?

	Total
Problem for lower income families	19
Problem also for middle class families	79
(Not a real problem for either)	0
(Don't know/refused)	1
(ref:CLASSPRB)	

Q.40 Now I'd like to ask you a few question for statistical purposes only. Remember that we are not selling you anything and will keep your responses absolutely confidential. First, do you own your own home?

	Total
Yes	68
No	31
(Don't know/refused)	1
(ref:OWNHOME)	

Q.41 About how much debt do you currently carry? This would include things like credit cards, car loans, student loans, doctor and hospital bills, finance companies, home equity loans and educational loans. Would you say it is none, less than \$1,000, between \$1,000 and \$5,000, between \$5,000 and \$10,000, between \$10,000 and \$20,000, between \$20,000 and \$40,000 or over \$40,000?

	Total
None	24
Less than \$1,000.....	8
\$1,000-\$5,000.....	18
\$5,000-\$10,000.....	10
\$10,000-\$20,000.....	13
\$20,000-\$40,000.....	10
Over \$40,000	10
(Refused)	5
(Don't know).....	1
(ref:DEBT)	

[763 Respondents]

Q.42 (DO NOT ASK "NONE" IN DEBT) Generally speaking, has your level of debt gone up, gone down or stayed about the same over the last five years?

	Total
Gone up.....	35
Gone down.....	28
Stayed about the same	36
(Don't know/refused)	1
(ref:DEBT2)	

[269 Respondents]

Q.43 (IF GONE UP ON DEBT2) Can you tell me why you think your debt has increased?

	Total
LOANS RELATED	36
Car loan/New Car	11
College loans/payments.....	11
Loans/Mortgage General	5
House loan/New House/New Move.....	5
Medical costs/Health costs.....	5
RATE INCREASES	25
Cost of Living increase/Prices increase.....	14
Interest rates increase	8
Cannot afford bills/Behind on payments.....	2
Insurance rates	1
Price of food/groceries	1
ECONOMY/JOB RELATED	23
Low wages/Stagnant salaries	10
Unemployed	9
Economy.....	5
Fixed income	1
Retired.....	1
LIFESTYLE/SPENDING DECISIONS	15
Poor spending habits/Poor budgeting	6
Childcare/Raising children/Growing family	5
Children in college/Children going to college	3
Remodel House	2
ENERGY	5
Gas prices	3
Energy, General.....	1
Utilities.....	1
CREDITORS	4
Credit cards	4
OTHER	8
Other	8
(Don't Know/Refused).....	0
(ref:DEBT3)	

[763 Respondents]

Q.44 (DO NOT ASK IF "NONE" ON DEBT) What are the primary sources of your debt, are they:

	Total
Credit cards.....	26
Car loans	26
Home mortgage loans.....	19
Medical bills	15
College or school loans.....	13
Home equity loans	8
Payday loans	1
(Don't know/refused)	4
Other.....	-

(ref:DEBT4)

Q.45 I am going to read you a series of statements about several issues. After each one I read, please tell me if you agree, disagree or if you neither agree, nor disagree.

	Some Cmplt Agr	what Agr	Nei ther	Some what Dis	Cmplt Dis	Dk/ Ref	Total Agr	Total Dis	Agr - Dis
[500 Respondents] 45 (SPLIT C) Sometimes because I am short of money, I fall behind on my monthly payments and pay bills late.....	15	14	4	9	57	1	29	66	-36
46 I have checked my credit rating on line or ordered a credit report in the past year.	37	7	4	9	40	3	44	49	-5
47 Most financial products such as mortgage loans and credit cards are too complicated and lengthy for me to fully understand.....	19	19	4	21	36	2	38	56	-18
48 I almost always pay off my entire credit card bill every month.....	40	11	8	13	23	5	51	36	15

[500 Respondents]

49 (SPLIT D) Frequently because I am short of money, I fall behind on my monthly payments and pay bills late.....	10	13	5	10	60	2	23	70	-46
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(ref:NORM1)

Q.50 Do you know if interest earned in a savings account is taxed like other income or is it NOT subject to federal income tax?

	Total
Yes, taxed like other income	59
No, not taxed like other income	13
(Depends)	1
(Don't know/refused)	27
(ref:FINLIT2)	

Q.51 In the last ten years, which of the following do you believe generated the most financial growth?

	Total
A U.S. savings bond.....	7
A savings account.....	10
A checking account.....	4
Stocks and mutual funds.....	69
(Don't know/refused)	10
(ref:FINLIT4)	

Q.52 Please tell me if you favor or oppose the following suggestions for addressing the household debt problem.

	Strng Fav	Smwt Fav	Smwt Opp	Strng Opp	DK/ Ref	Total Fav	Total Opp	Favor - Opp
52 Putting a cap or limit on the rate of interest credit card companies can charge, even if it means some people will not have access to credit cards.....	65	18	7	7	3	83	15	68
53 Banning credit card companies from raising your interest rates if you make all your payments on time, even if you miss payments on other debts you owe.....	61	16	9	10	3	77	20	57
54 Creating stronger requirements that companies explain their charges in simple, uncomplicated language.....	76	16	3	4	1	92	7	84
55 Providing an easy to understand government rating system on financial products that tells people how fair a product is to consumers.....	62	24	6	5	2	86	12	74
56 Passing rules that would prevent lending institutions from engaging in abusive practices that would put consumers in unaffordable debt.....	69	16	5	8	2	85	13	72
57 Providing more education and counseling to consumers.....	69	23	3	3	2	92	6	86
58 Cracking down on abusive practices by lending companies.....	74	13	4	7	2	87	11	76
59 Lowering the cost of living with things like affordable health care, housing assistance and low-cost student loans.....	70	18	5	5	2	88	10	78
60 Providing more incentives for people to save money.....	77	16	3	2	2	93	5	88
61 Increasing competition by giving incentives to reputable lending institutions to compete with pay-day lenders in low-income neighborhoods..... (ref:SOLU4)	41	26	11	13	9	67	24	42

Q.62 I am going to read you several statements people have made about the debt issue. After each statement I read, I'd like you to rate how much you agree with this statement on a scale of 0 to 10. A ten would mean you strongly agree. A zero would mean strongly disagree. A five would be a neutral response.

	Mean	% 10	% 8-10	% 6-10	% 5	% 0-4	DK/ Ref
[500 Respondents]							
62 (SPLIT A) The problem of household debt is crushing the American dream in this country. Debt has undermined individuals' ability to improve themselves, to get ahead in life and to provide a financially secure environment for their family.	7.1	31	48	69	17	14	0

[500 Respondents]							
63 (SPLIT B) Household debt can adversely affect our military readiness. Loan sharks and predatory lenders target military personnel by setting up their establishments close to military bases. This poses a national security risk because if a servicemember has financial problems, they can lose their security clearance and cannot be deployed overseas. In addition, excessive debt will affect a servicemembers' ability to perform their military duties and to care for their families.	6.1	23	34	49	27	19	5

[500 Respondents]							
64 (SPLIT A) The problem of household debt is another example of corporate abuse in this country. Big mortgage lenders have raised rates and fees on borrowers and often convince families to take on mortgages with higher rates and fees than a borrower is qualified for.	6.8	30	43	62	21	16	1

[500 Respondents]							
65 (SPLIT B) The problem of household debt is a problem for our most vulnerable citizens. Senior citizens, students and inner-city residents are targeted by predatory lenders and intimidated into taking on loans they cannot afford and do not really need.	7.3	33	55	69	17	13	1

	Mean	% 10	% 8-10	% 6-10	% 5	% 0-4	DK/ Ref
[500 Respondents]							
66 (SPLIT A) The problem of debt is going to be a real problem for our children and our children's children. Household debt has nearly doubled in the last ten years to over \$2.2 trillion dollars and many of these debts will be passed down to the next generation and hurt parents' ability to pay for college. We owe our children a better legacy than that.....	8.3	54	73	84	7	8	1
[500 Respondents]							
67 (SPLIT B) The problem of household debt is a problem of government corruption. For too long, big lending institutions and credit card companies have preyed upon average people and government has done nothing about it, in part because these institutions donate millions of dollars in campaign contributions to politicians.	6.6	29	45	59	17	23	1
68 The problem of household debt is really a problem of personal responsibility. Too many people spend too much on credit cards, trying to keep up with their neighbors. We have become a consumer society and too many people would rather have the money now, rather than saving for the future. This is not an issue for government regulators, but a moral lesson for churches and parents.	7.4	37	57	72	16	12	0
69 The problem of household debt is not a real issue. Some people in this country are bad credit risks and to make up for that risk, lending institutions have to charge higher interest rates. Otherwise, some people would not get any credit at all.....	5.0	11	21	35	27	36	1
70 The problem of household debt is really a larger problem of the middle class squeeze. Families on the edge can be easily driven into unmanageable debt due to medical emergencies, loss of employment, or rising costs for things like gas and electricity. Squeezed by these costs, stagnant wages, and overall difficulty to make ends meet, hard working families are forced into debt..... (ref:FRAMES)	8.0	43	67	81	10	8	0

Q.71 After hearing all this, how would you describe the problem household debt on things like credit cards, car loans, home mortgages and payday loans in this country--a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, not too serious a problem, or not a problem at all?

	Total
A very serious problem.....	56
A somewhat serious problem	39
A not too serious problem	4
Not a problem at all.....	1
(Don't know/refused)	1
(ref:PROB3)	

Q.72 Now I am going to read some statements about the problem of household debt on things like credit cards, car loans and home equity loans. After each one I read, please tell me if you believe this represents a very serious problem, a serious problem, not much of a problem or no problem at all.

	Very Ser Prob	Ser Prob	Not Too Ser	Not Prob At all	DK/ Ref	Total Ser	Total Not Ser
[500 Respondents]							
72 (SPLIT C) The average American household carries total credit card balances of more than \$8000.....	40	44	11	3	2	84	14
[500 Respondents]							
73 (SPLIT D) The average American household has more than 12 credit cards.....	56	31	8	3	2	87	11
[500 Respondents]							
74 (SPLIT C) In 2005, American families saved less than 1 percent of their total income, the lowest household savings rate in more than three decades.	52	38	7	2	1	90	9
[500 Respondents]							
75 (SPLIT D) Since 2001, the national debt has increased more than \$1 billion per day, about \$15,000 per second.....	62	30	5	1	1	93	6
[500 Respondents]							
76 (SPLIT C) The number of young people filing for bankruptcy increased by 50 percent over the past ten years.....	56	36	5	2	2	92	7
[500 Respondents]							
77 (SPLIT D) In a recent national survey, 14 percent of student loan borrowers reported that their high student loans motivated them to delay marriage and 21 percent reported that they delayed having children because of their student debt.	24	38	26	8	4	62	35

	Very Ser Prob	Ser Prob	Not Too Ser	Not Prob At all	DK/ Ref	Total Ser	Total Not Ser
[500 Respondents]							
78 (SPLIT C) One in seven graduate students owes more than \$15,000, debt that potentially affects their career and life choices.....	38	40	16	4	2	78	20

[500 Respondents]							
79 (SPLIT D) The Department of Defense lists predatory lending to military families as one of the 10 most important issues affecting our military's readiness to fight.	31	38	18	5	9	69	23

80 Under a practice known as universal default, credit card companies can raise your interest rate without telling you, even if you have never missed a payment or been late on a payment with that particular card, based on your spending behavior in other areas, such as paying a different bill late.	54	35	7	2	2	89	9
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(ref:FACTS)

Q.81 After everything we talked about, who do you think is primarily responsible for this growing problem: the economy, government, individual borrowers, or lenders and lending institutions?

	Total
Individual borrowers	34
Government	26
The economy	17
Lenders.....	11
(All)	10
(Don't know/refused)	3

(ref:RESP3)

Q.82 These last questions are for statistical purposes only: Please tell me the year in which you were born.

	Total
18 - 24.....	13
25 - 29.....	8
30 - 34.....	8
35 - 39.....	10
40 - 44.....	8
45 - 49.....	12
50 - 54.....	8
55 - 59.....	7
60 - 64.....	8
Over 64.....	16
(No answer)	3

(ref:AGE)

Q.83 What is the last year of schooling that you have completed?

	Total
1 - 11th grade.....	8
High School graduate.....	38
Non-college post H.S.	2
Some college	25
College graduate.....	17
Post-graduate school	9
(Don't know/refused)	1
(ref:EDUC)	

Q.84 About how many credit cards do you have, including store credit cards?

	Total
0.....	22
1.....	15
2.....	18
3.....	14
4.....	9
5.....	8
6.....	5
7.....	1
8.....	1
9.....	-
10 or more.....	4
(Don't know/refused)	3
(ref:CARDS3)	

Q.85 Are you married, single, separated, divorced, or widowed?

	Total
Married.....	57
Single.....	24
Separated/Divorced	12
Widowed	6
(Don't know/refused)	1
Sep/Div/Wid	18
(ref:MARITAL)	

Q.86 Do you have any children under 18 living at home?

	Total
Yes	31
No	68
(Don't know/refused)	1
(ref:KIDS)	

Q.87 In terms of your job status, are you employed, unemployed but looking for work, retired, a student, or a homemaker?

	Total
Employed.....	56
Unemployed.....	8
Retired	21
Student	3
Homemaker	9
(Other)	3
(Don't know/Refused).....	1
(ref:EMPLOY)	

[556 Respondents]

Q.88 (IF EMPLOYED) Are you employed full time or part time?

	Total
Full time	85
Part time	15
(Don't know/Refused).....	-
(ref:EMPLOY2)	

Q.89 What is your religion?

	Total
Protestant	40
Catholic.....	25
Jewish.....	1
Muslim	0
(Other/none/refused).....	34
(ref:RELIG1)	

Q.90 How often do you attend church -- every week, once or twice a month, several times a year, or hardly ever?

	Total
Every week	40
Once or twice a month	13
Several times a year	12
Hardly ever.....	26
(Never).....	7
(Don't know/Refused).....	3
Regular	40
Irregular	60
(ref:RELIG2)	

Q.91 Are you serving or have you served in the active United States military or have you not been in the military?

	Total
Yes: currently serve in military.....	2
Yes, past service in military.....	15
Household member current service.....	4
Household member past service.....	20
No.....	58
(Serve in the US Reserves).....	0
(Served in the US Reserves).....	-
(Don't know/refused).....	1
(ref:MIL1)	

Q.92 Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican or what?

	Total
Strong Democrat.....	23
Weak Democrat.....	15
Independent-lean Democrat.....	10
Independent.....	11
Independent-lean Republican.....	8
Weak Republican.....	12
Strong Republican.....	17
(Don't know/Refused).....	3
(ref:PTYID1)	

Q.95 Thinking in political terms, would you say that you are Liberal, Moderate, or Conservative?

	Total
Liberal.....	22
Moderate.....	33
Conservative.....	40
(Don't know/Refused).....	5
(ref:IDEO1)	

Q.96 And, is there a language other than English spoken regularly in your home?

	Total
Yes.....	15
No.....	84
(Don't know/refused).....	1
(ref:LANG)	

Q.97 What is your race?

	Total
White.....	69
Black.....	11
Hispanic.....	13
Asian/Pacific Islander.....	1
Native American.....	1
(Other).....	4
(Don't know/Refused).....	2
(ref:RACE)	

Q.2 Respondent Gender

	Total
Male.....	48
Female.....	52
(ref:GENDER)	