



# 50 Years After LBJ's War on Poverty

A Study of American Attitudes About Work,  
Economic Opportunity, and the Social Safety Net

Research sponsored by the Half in Ten Education Fund and the Center for American Progress

Survey design, analysis, and report by John Halpin, Center for American Progress  
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# Introduction and summary

Fifty years ago, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared an “unconditional War on Poverty” in his State of the Union address on January 8, 1964. The War on Poverty created a number of important federal and state initiatives that remain in place today—from Head Start to nutrition assistance to Medicare and Medicaid. These initiatives, coupled with the civil rights advances of the era and the overall strong economy in the 1960s, led to a reduction in the number of people living in poverty from around 19 percent to a historic low of 11.1 percent by the early 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

President Johnson described his War on Poverty as a continuation of the basic American bargain that all people should be given a decent shot at achieving their life goals and securing stable lives built on genuine freedom and economic opportunity:

*This budget, and this year's legislative program, are designed to help each and every American citizen fulfill his basic hopes—his hopes for a fair chance to make good; his hopes for fair play from the law; his hopes for a full-time job on full-time pay; his hopes for a decent home for his family in a decent community; his hopes for a good school for his children with good teachers; and his hopes for security when faced with sickness or unemployment or old age.<sup>2</sup>*

Since the start of the War on Poverty, however, much has changed in our society and our economy; some developments are positive and some negative. Women, people of color, the elderly, and people with disabilities are more strongly protected by law and more integrated into parts of our society and economy than they were in the 1960s. At the same time, many people continue to suffer from ongoing discrimination at work and in terms of wages. What's more, economic opportunities, such as decent-paying jobs, a secure retirement, affordable health care, and education, have diminished for many Americans in the bottom end of the income distribution as income and wealth have taken off for those at the very top. The financial crisis of 2007–2008 and the subsequent Great Recession further highlighted the breakdown of the U.S. economy and the ongoing struggle many people face finding employment, decent wages, and secure and supportive communities for raising and educating their children.

With this context, we set out to determine what Americans know and believe about poverty and assess their retrospective opinions about the War on Poverty itself and their support or opposition to new proposals for fighting poverty in the future. This report includes results from focus groups and a major survey of more than 2,000 American adults, including significant oversamples of Millennials, African Americans, and Latinos, to assess attitudes among these important constituencies.

The most important findings from the research include:

- **One-quarter to one-third of Americans—and even higher percentages of Millennials and people of color—continue to experience direct economic hardship.** Sixty-one percent of Americans say their family’s income is falling behind the cost of living, compared to just 8 percent who feel they are getting ahead and 29 percent who feel they are staying even. Twenty-five percent to 34 percent of Americans report serious problems falling behind in rent, mortgage, or utilities payments or being unable to buy enough food, afford necessary medical care, or keep up with minimum credit card payments. While these numbers have somewhat retreated over the past five years, they are still shockingly high, and the disparities across demographic groups underscore how uneven the current recovery has been.
- **A majority of Americans have a direct personal connection to poverty.** Fifty-four percent of Americans say that someone in their immediate or extended families is poor, a figure that has actually increased 2 percentage points since we conducted our first poll in 2008.<sup>3</sup> Nearly two in three African Americans (65 percent) report a direct connection to poverty, while 59 percent of Hispanics say the same.
- **Americans vastly overestimate the annual income necessary to be officially considered poor.** Perhaps expressing a more realistic understanding of the economy than official government measures currently capture, Americans on average estimate that it takes just more than \$30,000 in annual income for a family of four to be considered officially in poverty—about \$7,000 more than the government’s poverty line of \$23,550 for a household of four.<sup>4</sup> Most respondents in the focus groups were shocked to hear that the official poverty line was as low as it is; many suggested that it represents a disconnect with the reality of rising prices over the past few years. Americans on average also report that it would take more than \$55,000 in annual income to be considered out of poverty and safely in the middle class.

- **Americans now believe that nearly 40 percent of their fellow citizens are living in poverty.** When we conducted our 2008 poll, 13.2 percent of Americans were living below the federal poverty line, but our survey found that Americans guessed the number to be 29 percent. Today, with unemployment closer to pre-financial crisis levels and a recovery ostensibly underway for several years, government statistics tell us that 15 percent of Americans live below the poverty level. The public, however, believes that number is now 39 percent—a stunning 10-percentage-point increase that flies in the face of economic indicators such as the unemployment rate, consumer confidence, the financial markets, and gross domestic product, or GDP.
- **Americans strongly believe that poverty is primarily the result of a failed economy rather than the result of personal decisions and lack of effort.** In a forced choice test of ideas, nearly two in three Americans (64 percent) agree more with a structural argument about the causes of poverty. A majority agree that “Most people who live in poverty are poor because their jobs don’t pay enough, they lack good health care and education, and things cost too much for them to save and get ahead,” underscoring the current economy’s failings in the areas of wages, health care, education, and cost of living. In contrast, only 25 percent of Americans agree more with a personal cause: “Most people who live in poverty are poor because they make bad decisions or act irresponsibly in their own lives.” Even white conservatives and libertarians prefer the structural vision of a failed economy to personal reasons for poverty by a wide margin of 63 percent to 29 percent, respectively.
- **Retrospective evaluations of the War on Poverty are mixed, but Americans across ideological and partisan lines believe the government has a responsibility to use its resources to fight poverty.** Americans do not generally have a favorable impression of the term “the War on Poverty” without additional context about the programs and goals associated with the larger project. But after introducing information to describe the War on Poverty and its impact, an overwhelming percentage of Americans—86 percent—agrees that the government has a responsibility to use some of its resources to combat poverty. Moreover, a majority (61 percent) feels that the War on Poverty has made a difference—albeit not a major difference—in achieving its goals; 41 percent say the War on Poverty has made a minor difference; and 20 percent say it has made a major difference. Retrospective evaluations of the War on Poverty, however, are heavily divided by ideology, partisanship, and race. Nearly 7 in 10 (69 percent) white liberals and progressives believe the War on Poverty has worked, and more than 6 in 10 (64 percent) white conservatives and libertarians believe the opposite.

- **Despite mixed feelings about the original War on Poverty, there is strong support for a more realistic goal of reducing poverty by half over the next 10 years.** Asked whether they would support or oppose “the president and Congress setting a national goal to cut poverty in the United States in half within 10 years,” 7 in 10 Americans said they would support such a goal—40 percent of the public would *strongly* support the goal—and only 22 percent would oppose it. This figure is quite similar to the 74 percent support reported in the first study in 2008. Support for a national goal of cutting poverty in half is very strong among African Americans (87 percent support and 58 percent strongly support) and reaches roughly 80 percent among both Millennials (79 percent) and Latinos (79 percent). Sixty-five percent of whites support this goal, as do a majority of Democrats (89 percent), independents (66 percent), and Republicans (54 percent).
- **The public is clear about its priorities for reducing poverty: jobs, wages, and education.** Asked which two areas they believe are most important for new investments, 40 percent of Americans choose creating jobs and increasing wages; 30 percent choose job training and workplace preparation; 25 percent choose elementary and secondary education; 23 percent choose college access and affordability; and 21 percent choose early childhood education.
- **Americans also express very strong support for a number of policies to help reduce poverty rates with particular intensity around jobs, wages, and education but also on more traditional safety net items.** Of the 11 policy ideas tested, five proposals received 80 percent or higher total support and 50 percent or higher strong support from Americans. These five policy proposals are: help low-wage workers afford quality child care (86 percent total support and 52 percent strong support); expand nutrition assistance to provide families with healthy food and enough to eat (85 percent total support and 50 percent strong support); make universal pre-kindergarten available for all children (84 percent total support and 59 percent strong support); expand publicly funded scholarships to help more families afford college (84 percent total support and 54 percent strong support); and increase the minimum wage and make sure it rises with inflation (80 percent total support and 58 percent strong support). A second tier of anti-poverty proposals includes ideas for expanded tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, or EITC, Child Tax Credit, and access to affordable health coverage, as well as proposals for a new national jobs program and more refinancing of mortgages. Roughly three-quarters of those polled support these proposals, and more than 40 percent strongly support them.

Policymakers should feel confident that the American public will support efforts to expand economic opportunity, increase access to good jobs and wages, and maintain a robust social safety net. Harsh negative attitudes about the poor that seemingly defined political discussions throughout the 1980s and 1990s have given way to public recognition that many Americans—poor and middle class alike—are facing many pressures trying to stay afloat and get ahead in the difficult economic environment. Supporters of anti-poverty efforts should not be complacent in their efforts, however, and should recognize that although Americans back government action to reduce poverty, questions remain about the structure and scope of these efforts and how effective they have been over time.

# Personal experiences of economic hardship and definitions of poverty

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## Many Americans are feeling the breakdown of the U.S. economy

Nearly five years after we measured public attitudes near the peak of the 2008 financial crisis, Americans remain broadly pessimistic about the direction of the country in general and their own economic situation in particular. Two in three Americans (67 percent) say the country is on the wrong track, compared to just 26 percent who feel that things are heading in the right direction. Negative assessments of the country's direction are surprisingly consistent across the economic spectrum, although there are predictable differences based on partisanship and ideology. African Americans are the only demographic group with a majority (57 percent) expressing optimism about the country's current direction, while white men are the most pessimistic group, with 79 percent saying America is on the wrong track.

Focus groups conducted for this project demonstrated that Americans feel a powerful sense not just of economic vulnerability but also of losing ground and falling further behind as rising costs continue to outstrip stagnant incomes. This survey reinforces the focus group findings, with 61 percent of Americans saying their family's income is falling behind the cost of living, compared to 29 percent who feel they are staying even and just 8 percent who feel they are getting ahead. While statistics show that the groups most severely affected by the current economic struggles have been younger Americans and minorities, it is whites (66 percent)—and more specifically older whites (71 percent) and noncollege whites (71 percent)—who feel they have lost the most ground. Millennials are one of the few groups in which a majority does not feel they have lost ground, with 12 percent feeling that they are getting ahead, 39 percent staying even, and 47 percent falling behind.

In 2008, we explored the extent to which Americans were facing issues of fundamental economic survival: falling behind in rent, mortgage, or utilities payments; unable to buy enough food; not able to afford necessary medical care; and unable to keep up with minimum credit card payments. Not surprisingly, these numbers were elevated at the height of the economic crisis, with approximately one in three

Americans or more facing every one of these challenges either personally or with an immediate family member. While these numbers have mostly retreated over the past five years of “recovery,” they are still shockingly high, and the disparities across demographic groups underscore how uneven the current recovery has been.

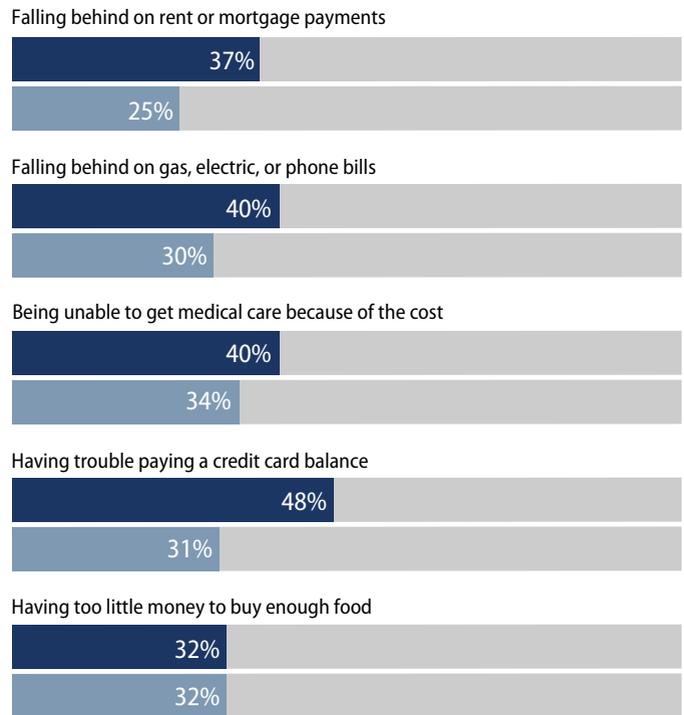
While white Americans are most likely to say that their incomes are falling behind the cost of living, they are the least likely to report facing these fundamental economic challenges. Latinos report the highest level of personal connection to these economic challenges. But this survey makes clear that the larger story is the significant gap between white Americans ages 35 and older and the rest of the country when it comes to the immediacy of poverty in their lives.

**FIGURE 1**

**Many Americans are still on the brink**

Next, I'm going to read you a list of economic challenges facing many Americans today. Please tell me whether you or a member of your immediate family had a serious problem with this issue over the past year.

- November 2008
- November 2013



Source: Questions originally developed in 2001 NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Survey about poverty; 2008 and 2013 figures from Half in Ten/CAP poverty polls.

**TABLE 1**  
**Americans facing fundamental economic challenges**

Personally or member of immediate family

	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	Whites
Falling behind on rent or mortgage payments	38	37	41	20
Falling behind on gas, electric, or phone bills	44	48	47	25
Being unable to get medical care because of the cost	45	37	46	31
Having trouble paying a credit card balance	40	40	40	29
Having too little money to buy enough food	45	47	48	27

Source: See Appendix

## Estimating the official poverty rate and percentage of people in poverty

Our focus group research underscored that the concept of poverty is subjective and means many different things to different audiences. For statistical purposes, the official definition of poverty is \$23,550 for a family of four.<sup>5</sup> But very few Americans are aware of it, and even fewer agree with it. In the focus groups, the concept of falling behind was a central aspect of poverty—being regularly unable to “make ends meet” on a monthly basis to the point where it was difficult for many of the participants to imagine that person or family ever regaining economic balance or where essential needs such as those outlined above are sacrificed. In an open-ended exercise in the survey, when asked what comes to mind when they think of the poor, nearly half of respondents volunteered a response centered on need and not having enough to afford basic necessities.

When asked what should constitute the poverty line for a family of four, our survey finds an average response of more than \$30,000 annually, dramatically higher than the official figure. In our focus groups, most respondents were shocked to hear that the official poverty line was as low as it is; many suggested that it represents a disconnect with the reality of rising prices over the past few years in our society. Notably, only people living at or below the official line disputed that it is too high, preferring to define their own status as clinging to the middle class rather than being poor.

Reflecting the reality of rising prices and income stagnation in our country, Americans' definition of the poverty line for a family of four has increased approximately \$1,000 since our 2008 poll. But the threshold estimated by Americans for the middle class has dropped dramatically in the same period—from more than \$62,000 in 2008 to less than \$55,000 today. This is not a signal that it is easier to achieve the relative comfort of the middle class in the current economy. Rather, it is a reflection of the concern we heard in the focus groups that the gap between the middle class and the wealthy is growing larger, while the middle class continues to either slide down the economic ladder or disappear completely. The focus group participants defined the middle class at a very low threshold—free from want of basic needs but working harder than ever to achieve those basic needs and able to enjoy fewer luxuries of any sort.

Federal poverty statistics paint a stark picture of the challenges that millions of Americans face, the increasing number of Americans falling into poverty, and the rapidly expanding gap between those at the top and bottom of our economy. But this survey suggests the reality may be much worse than official statistics suggest. A majority of Americans (54 percent) say they have a direct connection to poverty today, either personally or through a family member—a figure that has actually increased 2 percentage points since the financial crisis five years ago. Nearly two in three African Americans (65 percent) report a direct connection to poverty, while 59 percent of Hispanics say the same, although it should be noted that Hispanics set the poverty threshold significantly lower at \$28,940 than whites and African Americans place it.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Defining poverty**

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about the issue of poverty in America. The poverty line is the income level below which an individual or family is classified as poor by the government. In terms of annual household income, what do you think the poverty line is for a family of four in America today? [Mean]

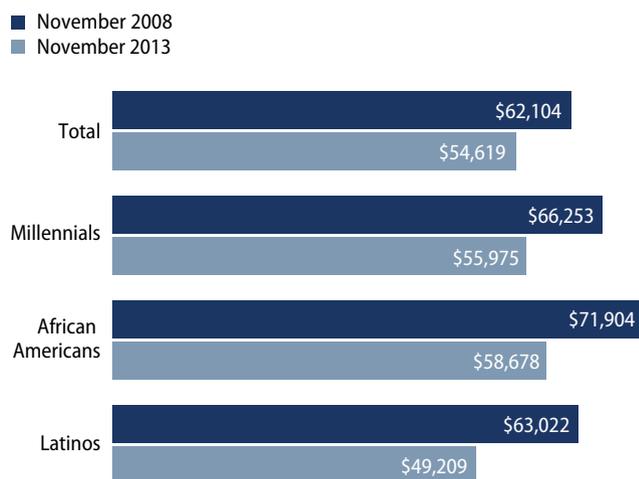
Official poverty line for a family of four, 2013: \$23,550



Source: 2008 and 2013 figures from Half in Ten/CAP poverty polls.

**FIGURE 3**  
**The middle class is declining**

How much annual income do you think a family of four would need to earn to be safely out of poverty and in the middle class?



Source: See Appendix

Given the disconnect between Americans' personal experiences of poverty and economic realities on one hand and the government's official definitions of poverty on the other hand, it should not be surprising that the public sees poverty to be a much more widespread problem than the government does. This is not new, but the growing difference between the official statistics and the public's perceptions is shocking.

When we conducted our 2008 poll, 13.2 percent of Americans were living below the federal poverty line, but our survey found that Americans guessed the number to be 29 percent. This gap was noteworthy, but since the poll was conducted near the peak of economic concerns and the possibility of a financial collapse still very real, it was not shocking. Today, with unemployment closer to pre-financial-crisis levels and a recovery ostensibly underway for several years, government statistics tell us that 15 percent of Americans live below the poverty level. The public, however, believes that number is now 39 percent—a stunning 10-percentage-point increase that flies in the face of economic indicators such as the unemployment rate, consumer confidence, the financial markets, and GDP.

The same pattern persists across a range of subgroups within our society. In each subgroup, there is a massive gap between the number of Americans living below the official poverty threshold and the overall estimate offered by Americans about the percentage of people experiencing poverty—sometimes two, three, or even five times more than the official statistics. (see Table 2 below) While Hispanics and African Americans, who report a much higher level of personal connection to poverty, generally estimate higher proportions of the public and specific subgroups living in poverty than whites do, the gap is not nearly as large as in other measures in this survey and underscores the universality of this dynamic.

**TABLE 2**  
**Living in poverty: Government statistics versus public perception**

Next, for each of the following groups, I would like you to tell me what percentage of that group you think lives below the poverty line in America today.

	Official statistic	Total estimate	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos
U.S. population	15%	39%	39%	45%	44%
Children in the United States	21.8%	42%	40%	49%	44%
African Americans	27.6%	45%	43%	53%	45%
Hispanics	25.3%	43%	42%	46%	46%
Whites	9.8%	35%	32%	35%	32%
Disabled	28.6%	49%	44%	49%	46%
Elderly	9%	49%	43%	50%	47%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2011," available at [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income\\_wealth/cb12-172.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income_wealth/cb12-172.html) (last accessed December 2013).

Throughout this research into economic attitudes and perceptions of the current economy, expectations seem to play a prominent role. Those who are least directly impacted by poverty and fundamental economic challenges—particularly older white Americans and white conservatives—are the most likely to say that their income is falling behind and to see the country heading in the wrong direction. They estimate the federal poverty line and middle-class thresholds significantly lower than others in the country but report higher levels of personal income. Meanwhile, Millennials—a majority of whom have spent most or all of their professional lives in a post-collapse economy—are much more likely than older voters to be directly affected by poverty and a range of economic challenges but much less pessimistic about the current direction of the economy or their own economic position. They also share much more progressive views about poverty and the poor than older Americans.

# Attitudes about poverty and the poor

Fifty years after President Johnson’s declaration of the War on Poverty, it is clear that there are no easy answers about the root causes of poverty nor the best means of eradicating it. Progressives and conservatives have come to very different conclusions on these questions, with progressives putting forth structural economic arguments for poverty and conservatives stressing personal causes. Based on the results in this study, however, Americans today seem to align much more closely with a structural view of poverty and the poor.

When facing the question of where to go from here in addressing poverty, there is broad agreement that our economy is fundamentally lacking in the educational and professional opportunities needed for most Americans living in poverty to work their way up the economic ladder. Right-wing “blame-the-poor” messages have little audience outside their ideological base and reflect a basic misunderstanding about our nation’s current economy. This is undoubtedly related to the fact that so many Americans feel a personal connection to poverty and harbor deep economic concerns about their own ability to keep up with rising prices.

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## Progressive perspectives on poverty

We presented respondents with a series of five progressive and four conservative viewpoints on poverty and found very different reactions. Two of the progressive viewpoints were split sampled so that respondents heard an equal division of progressive and conservative statements. Four of the five progressive messages tested were met with broad agreement.

The message with the highest level of agreement from both sides in this survey was a direct refutation of conservative “blame-the-poor” attacks that seek to obscure the structural inequities of the economy behind stereotypes and generalizations. A total of 79 percent agree that “Most people living in poverty are decent people who are working hard to make ends meet in a difficult economy.”

TABLE 3

**Do you agree or disagree: Most people living in poverty are decent people who are working hard to make ends meet in a difficult economy?**

	Total	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	White liberals/ progressives	White moderates	White conservatives/ libertarians
Total agree	79	82	92	82	92	76	66
Strongly agree	49	45	54	52	68	47	38

Source: See Appendix

What is perhaps most striking about this message is the level of agreement among white conservatives and libertarians, with nearly two in three agreeing with this characterization of the poor that explicitly identifies the majority of the poor as hardworking people captured in an economy that does not serve their needs. It raises the question, however, of why many white conservatives simultaneously embrace attacks on the motives of these individuals and reject policy proposals to support their efforts to work their way out of poverty, given these conservatives’ overall beliefs about the difficult economy.

The message that achieved the most consistent support (77 percent) across the electorate was the most direct diagnosis of the fundamental failings of the current economy: “The primary reason so many people are living in poverty today is that our economy is failing to produce enough jobs that pay decent wages.” Although it is generally a progressive argument about poverty, this concept elicits almost identical levels of support across the ideological spectrum, including 79 percent of white liberals and progressives, 80 percent of white moderates, and 76 percent of white conservatives and libertarians. It is important to note the high levels of strong agreement with this statement—50 percent among Americans overall.

TABLE 4

**Do you agree or disagree: The primary reason so many people are living in poverty today is that our economy is failing to produce enough jobs that pay decent wages?**

	Total	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	White liberals/ progressives	White moderates	White conservatives/ libertarians
Total agree	77	78	80	79	79	80	76
Strongly agree	50	42	49	51	54	50	50

Source: See Appendix

Many contemporary conservative arguments against the War on Poverty and its constituent programs focus on notions of abuse of these programs and able-bodied beneficiaries not deserving support. Given the results above on the statement identifying inadequate jobs and wages as the primary cause of poverty, it is not surprising that two-thirds of Americans, and even two-thirds of white conservatives, reject these criticisms as unfair. Sixty-seven percent of responders agreed that “Many people living in poverty are unfairly criticized by others as lazy or undeserving.”

**TABLE 5**  
**Do you agree or disagree: Many people living in poverty are unfairly criticized by others as lazy or undeserving?**

	Total	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	White liberals/ progressives	White moderates	White conservatives/ libertarians
Total agree	67	74	72	71	71	66	66
Strongly agree	35	37	43	43	41	30	24

Source: See Appendix

The remaining two progressive statements that we tested did not achieve the overwhelming agreement of the previous messages outlined above, but for very different reasons. The first still had broad majority support, and once again, the consistency across ideological lines was most striking: A total of 57 percent agreed that “Children born into poverty in America today are likely to remain poor for the rest of their lives.”

**TABLE 6**  
**Do you agree or disagree: Children born into poverty in America today are likely to remain poor for the rest of their lives?**

	Total	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	White liberals/ progressives	White moderates	White conservatives/ libertarians
Total agree	57	58	47	54	62	60	63
Strongly agree	24	19	14	21	28	28	26

Source: See Appendix

We found mixed emotions on the idea of diminished social mobility for poor children in the focus groups because it flies in the face of what Americans want to believe about our country. On the one hand, most of them endorsed this exact sentiment when bemoaning the generational nature of poverty; on the other hand, they objected to its seeming abandonment of the American Dream for children born into poverty. The groups suggest that many of those who disagree with this

statement do so not on factual grounds but as a rejection of the spirit of such a distressing idea. As we will see later, belief in enabling children to rise out of poverty if provided quality education and equal opportunity is central to Americans' views of how we move forward to address poverty in our country.

The only progressive statement that fails to achieve majority agreement in this survey is the one focused on the role of race: “Racial discrimination plays a large role in determining who lives in poverty and who does not,” with a total of 47 percent agreement. Not surprisingly, this statement produces the largest demographic gaps, with whites almost 20 percentage points less likely than Hispanics and 40 percentage points less likely than African Americans to agree with it. It is also the only progressive viewpoint that produces dramatic ideological gaps among white voters, as shown below.

TABLE 7

**Do you agree or disagree: Racial discrimination plays a large role in determining who lives in poverty and who does not?**

	Total	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	White liberals/progressives	White moderates	White conservatives/libertarians
Total agree	47	58	78	58	59	44	26
Strongly agree	20	25	37	25	23	15	12

Source: See Appendix

Notably, Millennials broadly diverge from Americans overall on this idea that racial discrimination plays a large role in poverty—58 percent agree and 42 percent disagree. For those committed to civil rights, it is important to learn that a generation that knows the civil rights movement primarily through history books, has seen the first African American president elected, and is defined in large part by its diversity and embrace of other cultures, understands that racial discrimination and its consequences are not a thing of the past.

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### Conservative perspectives on poverty

Among the four conservative messages tested in this survey, only one achieves the level of broad support enjoyed by most progressive viewpoints. This perspective offers a pessimistic view on the intransigence of poverty in our society. A total of 79 percent agree that “Regardless of what policies we create, there will always be a sizeable group of poor people living in America.” Our focus groups reveal that many people believe this statement to be sad but true.

TABLE 8

### Do you agree or disagree: Regardless of what policies we create, there will always be a sizeable group of poor people living in America?

	Total	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	White liberals/ progressives	White moderates	White conservatives/ libertarians
Total agree	79	77	84	73	62	82	87
Strongly agree	43	35	48	35	35	46	47

Source: See Appendix

With some of the highest levels of support, and intense support, coming from African Americans and others who strongly support the War on Poverty and its constituent programs, the broad agreement with this statement should not be misconstrued as support for the prescribed cuts that conservatives offer as logical extensions of this supposition. Nor should it be construed as resignation that persistently high poverty rates, despite 50 years of constructing a stronger safety net and tens of millions kept out of poverty, cannot be reduced with more effective anti-poverty policies. But as seen in the data presented later, it does suggest that anti-poverty advocates should promote more realistic goals for poverty reduction that do not explicitly promise to end poverty, given its persistence over time.

The next conservative message reveals an inconsistency in many Americans' views on the poor in our country. On the one hand, large majorities agree with the progressive perspectives that “most people living in poverty are decent people who are working hard to make ends meet in a difficult economy” and “many people living in poverty are unfairly criticized by others as lazy or undeserving.” At the same time, a smaller majority—including high numbers of Hispanics and Millennials—endorses the conservative message that focuses on abuse of public benefits and assumes a culture of dependency among the poor in our culture. A total of 56 percent agree that “Too many poor people would rather live off of government programs and benefits than work to lift themselves out of poverty.”

TABLE 9

### Do you agree or disagree: Too many poor people would rather live off of government programs and benefits than work to lift themselves out of poverty?

	Total	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	White liberals/ progressives	White moderates	White conservatives/ libertarians
Total agree	56	60	45	56	33	52	75
Strongly agree	31	28	18	25	15	31	49

Source: See Appendix

Once again, the focus groups were critical in showing how pervasive this narrative has become and how damaging it can be. Almost every respondent in our noncollege groups had a story of a friend or family member who they perceived to be living in relative ease, collecting government benefits, and not doing much to pursue work or support themselves. Belief in this narrative fosters tremendous resentment, especially among those working so hard to make ends meet and to stay out of poverty. The ideological division among whites is quite telling on this front: While only one-third of white liberals and progressives agree that too many poor people would rather live on government benefits, *three-quarters* of white conservatives and libertarians believe this to be true.

Another conservative sentiment that emerged from some audiences in our focus group research was that poverty has changed through the generations and that today’s poor are not really struggling the same way as those who suffered through past hard times such as the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. Fifty-three percent of Americans overall agree that “Poor people today are actually doing well compared to those in earlier generations”—lower agreement than on other measures but majority agreement nonetheless.

Part of this belief ties in to the previous narrative, as one noncollege woman in our focus groups described people buying groceries with food stamps while talking on a nicer iPhone than the one she has. But some of it also has to do with the success of the War on Poverty over the past 50 years and the effectiveness of the safety net that has been put in place, another sentiment of many in the focus groups.

**TABLE 10**  
**Do you agree or disagree: Poor people today are actually doing pretty well compared to those in earlier generations?**

	Total	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	White liberals/ progressives	White moderates	White conservatives/ libertarians
Total agree	53	52	50	49	30	55	65
Strongly agree	21	16	16	15	8	19	32

Source: See Appendix

The nearly even split among most demographic groups, as well as the low intensity on both sides of the debate, reveals the ambivalence that most Americans feel on this message. A strong majority of white conservatives and libertarians embraces this message (65 percent agree), while a strong majority of white liberals and progressives rejects it (only 30 percent agree).

The final—and weakest—conservative message goes to the heart of many Americans’ beliefs about the American Dream and the promise that hard work will produce success in our society, regardless of one’s station in life. Forty-eight percent agree that “Poor people have the same opportunities to succeed as other people in America today.”

**TABLE 11**  
**Do you agree or disagree: Poor people have the same opportunities to succeed as other people in America today?**

	Total	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	White liberals/ progressives	White moderates	White conservatives/ libertarians
Total agree	48	48	48	47	30	48	56
Strongly agree	21	17	14	20	12	20	29

Source: See Appendix

Although Americans would like to agree with this message based on what we heard in focus groups, most feel it is simply not true in our country today. This is one of just two messages where strong disagreement outstrips strong agreement, particularly among younger Americans and those earning less than \$50,000 per year. But the group with the largest intensity gap on this measure is white college graduates—18 percent strongly agree and 33 percent strongly disagree.

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### Root causes of poverty: Economic conditions versus personal responsibility

The responses to progressive and conservative perspectives on poverty in this survey reveal the conflicting attitudes that many Americans have about poverty in the United States and those who live in poverty. But all of these statements on both sides ultimately revolve around the question of root causes: At its most fundamental level, is poverty in our country a result of economic conditions that restrict opportunity for the poor, or do the poor fail and/or refuse to avail themselves of the opportunities that are available to all?

We forced voters to choose between these two points of view by using a split-sample exercise to test two different formulations of this core debate. In both tests, the structural argument trumps the individual one by a significant margin.

In this first test, nearly two in three Americans (64 percent) side with the structural argument that “Most people who live in poverty are poor because their jobs don’t pay enough, they lack good health care and education, and things cost too much for them to save and get ahead,” underscoring the current economy’s failings in the areas of wages, health care, education, and cost of living. This statement closely mirrors the personal experiences relayed by participants from a range of different backgrounds in our focus groups and captures the sense of “falling behind” that is so common in this economy.

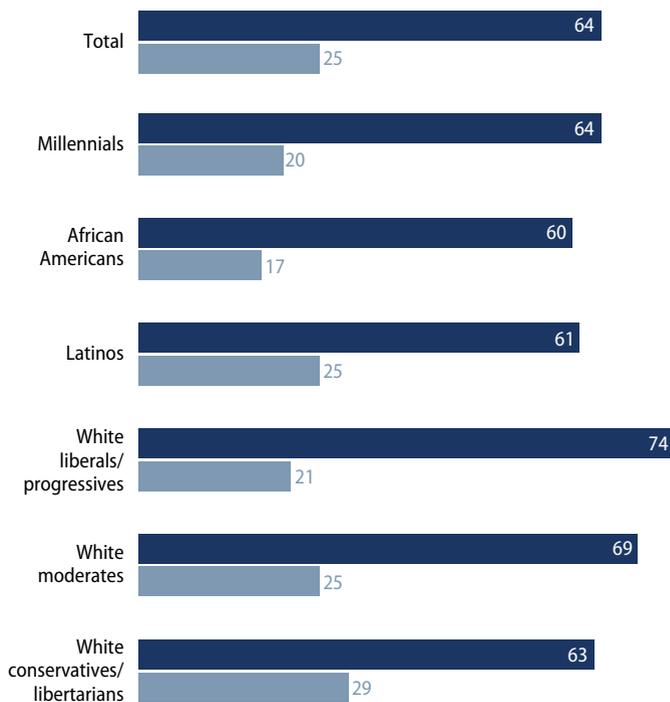
With 25 percent support, the individual argument, “Most people who live in poverty are poor because they make bad decisions or act irresponsibly in their own lives,” does have some limited appeal when unchallenged but does not stand up to an alternative economic framing. The nearly 40-percentage-point gap between the two statements in terms of which statement comes closer to Americans’ views is impressive, but the gap in intensity is even more telling—47 percent strongly prefer the structural statement and 16 percent strongly prefer the individual statement. Even white conservatives prefer the structural argument by a wide margin (63 percent to 29 percent); only strongly committed Republicans are torn between the two (46 percent to 44 percent).

In the alternative test, the structural argument has less specificity about the failings of the current economy (“Most people who live in poverty are poor because economic conditions outside of their control cause them to be poor”), while the individual message is less accusatory and judgmental (“Most people who live in poverty are poor because they are not doing enough to help themselves out of poverty”). As a result, the gap between them is smaller (54 percent to 35 percent), but the larger trend remains the same.

**FIGURE 4**  
**Economic conditions vs. personal responsibility**

Now, I'm going to read you a pair of statements about poverty in America. After I read both statements, please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right

- Most people who live in poverty are poor because their jobs don't pay enough, they lack good health care and education, and things cost too much for them to save and move ahead.
- Most people who live in poverty are poor because they make bad decisions or act irresponsibly in their own lives.



Source: See Appendix

While there are not significant demographic differences in this test, the ideological gap is much larger. White liberals and progressives prefer the structural statement by a wide margin (73 percent to 17 percent), while white moderates are not far behind (62 percent to 29 percent). But white conservatives and libertarians agree more with the individual perspective in this formulation (41 percent to 50 percent).

Stepping back from the analysis of individual results, there is a basic lesson in these findings. Although they are limited, individualistic and conservative perspectives on poverty—and their critiques of the War on Poverty—have some public support and tap into many Americans’ fears about abuse and corruption in our government and our society. The pervasiveness of the abuse narrative when it comes to public benefits and the social safety net in our focus groups underscores this. But this narrative does not stand up to a forceful progressive critique of the current economy and its failings, particularly in the areas of wages and education and the high cost of important needs for expanding opportunity, such as education and health care.

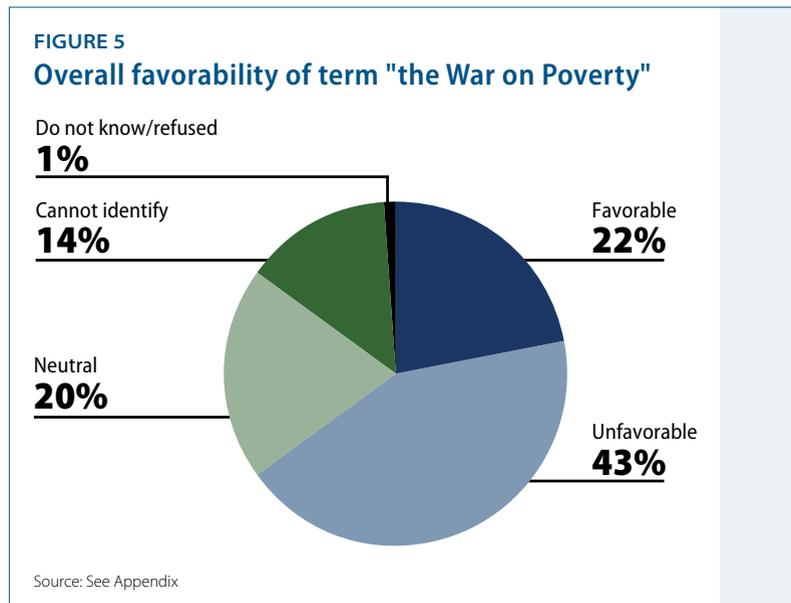
# Beliefs about the War on Poverty and a national poverty reduction goal

## Evaluations of the War on Poverty

Given the basic lack of understanding expressed in our focus groups of the historical origins and purpose of the original War on Poverty that started in the 1960s, it is not surprising that overall reactions to it are mixed in the survey. Americans do not generally have a favorable impression of the term “the War on Poverty” without additional context about the programs and goals associated with the larger project. But after introducing information to describe the War on Poverty and its impact, an overwhelming percentage of Americans say the government has a responsibility to use some of its resources to combat poverty, and a strong majority feel that the War on Poverty has made a difference—albeit not a major difference—in achieving its goals and combating poverty. Retrospective evaluations of the War on Poverty, however, are heavily divided by ideology, partisanship, and race.

Asked to rate a series of items on a 0-to-100 scale measuring overall favorability—with 0 being very cold and very unfavorable and 100 being very warm and very favorable—43 percent of Americans overall rate the War on Poverty unfavorably, 22 percent rate it favorably, 20 percent rate it neutrally, and another 14 percent cannot identify it at all. White Americans report the most pessimistic ratings of the War on Poverty, with only 20 percent viewing the term favorably and 44 percent viewing it unfavorably. In contrast, African Americans are the most positive in their assessment of the term, with a plurality reporting favorable sentiments—35 percent favorable and 32 percent unfavorable.

It should be noted that whites are strongly divided by ideology in their evaluations of the term “the War on Poverty.” White liberals and



progressives are three times more likely than white conservatives and libertarians to rate the War on Poverty favorably (33 percent versus 11 percent, respectively), with a majority of white conservatives and libertarians viewing it unfavorably (53 percent).

Later in the survey, we presented factual information about the War on Poverty and two competing arguments about its utility and effectiveness in order to better understand how Americans view these efforts. Survey respondents were first presented with the following information:

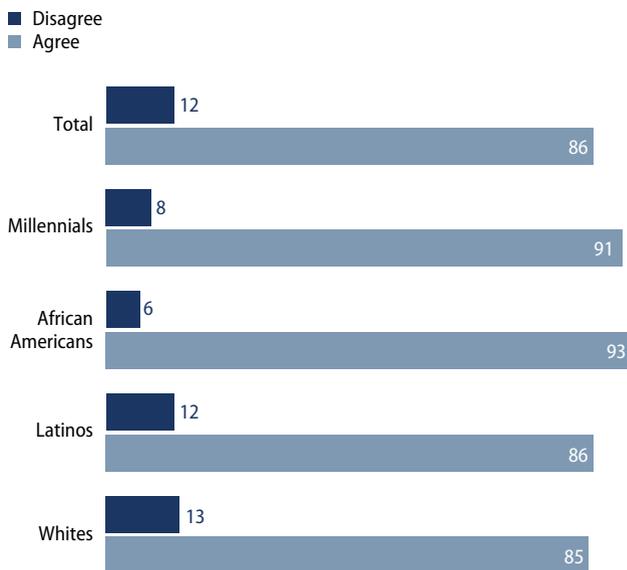
*As you may know, in his first State of the Union address in 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declared “an unconditional War on Poverty” in the United States. The War on Poverty created programs to expand educational opportunities for poor children, provide health insurance for the elderly and poor, and expand job training and employment opportunities for low-income workers. In addition to the civil rights reforms of that era, Johnson eventually signed legislation expanding Social Security and creating Head Start, Medicare, and Medicaid as part of this effort.*

*By 1973, the national poverty rate in America had fallen by 42 percent to a historic low of 11.1 percent of all Americans.*

In the first of two follow-up questions, an overwhelming majority of Americans—86 percent—agrees that looking back on this effort, the government has a responsibility to use some of its resources to fight poverty. This belief crosses racial and ethnic lines, with 85 percent of whites and 87 percent of African Americans and Hispanics agreeing that the government has a responsibility to fight poverty. Ideological and partisan differences are

**FIGURE 6**  
**Government responsibility to fight poverty**

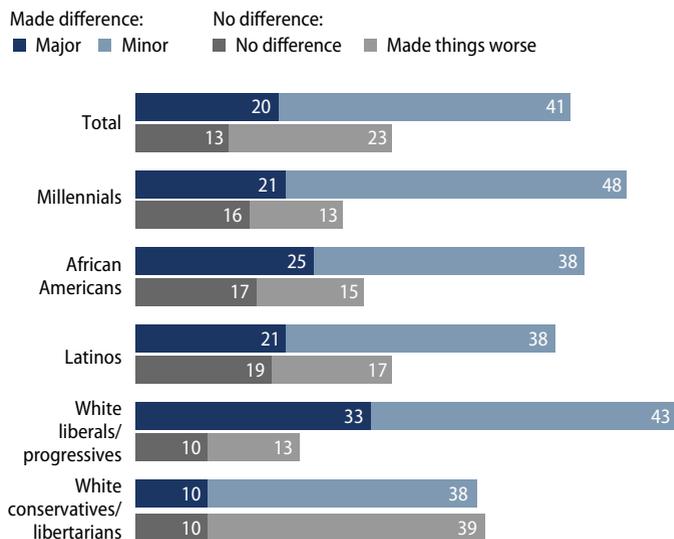
Looking back, do you agree or disagree with the belief that government has a responsibility to use some of its resources to fight poverty?



Source: See Appendix

**FIGURE 7**  
**Impact of the War on Poverty**

Looking back, would you say the War on Poverty has made a major difference in reducing poverty, made a minor difference in reducing poverty, has made no difference, or has actually made poverty worse in the United States?



Source: See Appendix

less pronounced on this basic question of the government's role in fighting poverty, although more than one-fifth of conservatives and libertarians (22 percent) and Republicans (21 percent) disagree that the government should use some of its resources to address poverty.

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## Competing arguments about the impact of the War on Poverty

The second follow-up question asked respondents whether, looking back, they think the War on Poverty has made a major difference in reducing poverty, a minor difference, no difference, or has actually made poverty worse. Sixty-one percent of Americans overall believe that the War on Poverty has made a difference, with 20 percent saying it has made a major difference and 41 percent saying it has made a minor difference. Only 36 percent of Americans think that the War on Poverty has made no difference (13 percent) or actually made things worse (23 percent).

Somewhat surprisingly—given their historical distance from the events of the 1960s—Millennials are most positive about the War on Poverty, with 69 percent saying it has made a difference. Following closely, 64 percent of African Americans say the War on Poverty has made a difference. As with other questions, ideological and partisan differences are pronounced in retrospective judgments about the effectiveness of the War on Poverty: 73 percent of liberals and progressives and 69 percent of Democrats think that it has made a difference in reducing poverty, compared to 50 percent of conservatives and libertarians and 52 percent of Republicans.

After measuring basic opinions about the War on Poverty, we directly assessed people's reactions to a conservative framing of the War on Poverty and a progressive one by asking them which of the following two statements they agreed with more:

*Some people say that America fought a War on Poverty and poverty won. They say federal actions to reduce poverty have been too costly, are prone to fraud and abuse, and encourage greater dependency on government and irresponsible behavior by recipients. They say that government intervention causes more problems than it solves and asks too much of others in terms of taxes and regulations.*

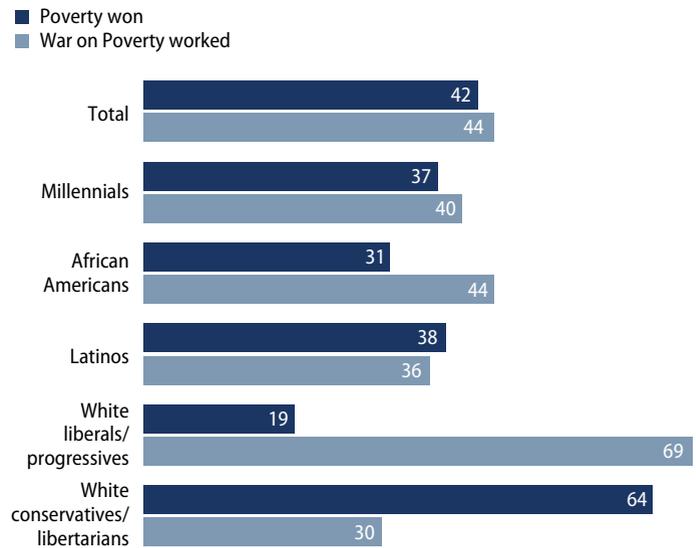
*Other people say that the War on Poverty worked, reducing poverty for many Americans and putting in place an essential safety net to help keep more from falling into poverty. They say that we need to maintain and expand efforts to help the poor get adequate education, housing, health care, and job training. They say that what has really failed is our overall economy, which today produces too few jobs that provide enough hours or pay decent enough wages for families to live on.*

Americans overall are sharply divided on these competing interpretations of the War on Poverty and what this means for today. A slight plurality of Americans agrees with the progressive framing of the War on Poverty (44 percent) over the conservative framing (42 percent). Pluralities of African Americans (44 percent) and Millennials (40 percent) favor the progressive framing that the War on Poverty has put in place an important safety net and that it is the economy that has failed to produce good-paying jobs. In contrast, pluralities of whites (46 percent) and Latinos (38 percent) favor the conservative description that the War on Poverty has failed and produces too much dependency on the government. Given these divisions in opinion, it is clear that Americans have not made a final verdict on the War on Poverty and that both progressive and conservative ideas resonate across different groups of Americans.

More ideologically oriented and partisan-affiliated Americans hold firmer judgments about the War on Poverty than others. Sixty percent of self-identified liberals and progressives, for example, believe that the War on Poverty has worked and that the real issue is the economy, while 58 percent of self-identified conservatives and libertarians believe that it has failed and encourages dependency. Divergent ideological opinions about the War on Poverty are even more pronounced among whites: Nearly 7 in 10 (69 percent) white liberals and progressives believe the War on Poverty has worked, while more than 6 in 10 (64 percent) white conservatives and libertarians believe the opposite.

**FIGURE 8**  
**Arguments for and against the War on Poverty**

After I read both statements, please tell me which statement comes closer to your opinion, even if neither is exactly right.



Source: See Appendix

## Strong support for a national goal of cutting poverty in half

Despite mixed views on the original War on Poverty and ongoing divisions about what it means for the country moving forward, we find strong support for a more realistic yet still ambitious goal: reducing poverty by half over the next 10 years. Asked whether they would support or oppose “the president and Congress setting a national goal to cut poverty in the United States in half within 10 years,” 7 in 10 Americans say they would support such a goal and only 22 percent would oppose it, including 40 percent of the public who would strongly support this national goal. This figure is quite similar to the 74 percent support reported in the first study conducted in late 2008.

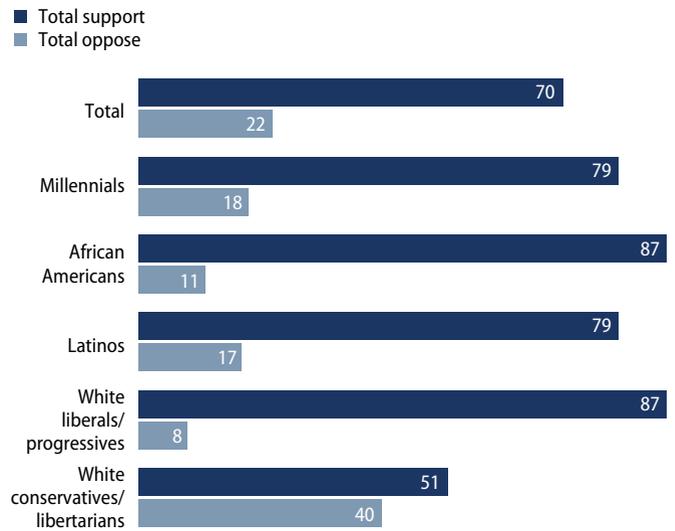
Support for a national goal of cutting poverty in half is very strong among African Americans (87 percent support and 58 percent strongly support) and reaches roughly 80 percent among both Millennials (79 percent) and Latinos (79 percent). Sixty-five percent of whites support this goal, as do a majority of Democrats (89 percent), independents (66 percent), and Republicans (54 percent).

Recognizing that a goal of this nature would require additional resources and government action, we asked two follow-up questions to assess whether people who supported the goal in the abstract would still support it if “it required businesses to pay their workers higher wages or contribute more for benefits like health care” and if “it required higher taxes for the wealthy and new government spending.” Total support drops to 59 percent after presenting the requirement on businesses and to 55 percent after the requirement about taxes and more spending.

Combining all three questions into a single, more precise measure of support, we find that 50 percent of Americans strongly support a national goal of cutting poverty in half, even if it requires more from businesses, higher taxes, and more government spending. Another 20 percent would conditionally support it but

**FIGURE 9**  
**Support for national poverty-reduction goal**

Would you support or oppose the president and Congress setting a national goal to cut poverty in the United States in half within 10 years?



Source: See Appendix

have trepidations about the requirements, and 22 percent would strongly oppose such a goal no matter what. Sixty percent of Millennials strongly support the goal using the combined measures, as do 68 percent of African Americans and 61 percent of Latinos. Less than half of whites (44 percent) strongly support the national goal using the combined measure, and only about one-quarter of white conservatives and libertarians (26 percent) strongly support using both methods. In contrast, 77 percent of white liberals and progressives and a plurality of white moderates (48 percent) strongly support a national goal of cutting poverty in half.

### Priorities in addressing poverty

Americans are very clear about which areas they believe state governments and the federal government should invest in to help reduce poverty: jobs, wages, and education. Asked which two areas they believe are most important for new investments, 40 percent of Americans choose creating jobs and increasing wages; 30 percent choose job training and workplace preparation; 25 percent choose elementary and secondary education; 23 percent choose college access and affordability; and 21 percent choose early childhood education.

**TABLE 12**  
**Priorities for fighting poverty**

Please tell me which two you feel should be the highest priorities for new investments to reduce poverty in the United States.

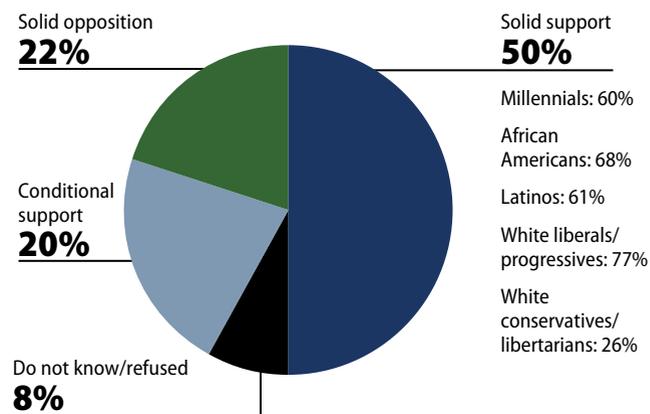
	Total	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos
Creating jobs and increasing wages	40	45	52	50
Job training and workplace preparation	30	23	28	24
Elementary and secondary education	25	19	16	16
College access and affordability	23	29	23	27
Early childhood education	21	20	21	14
Affordable housing	18	24	26	24
Access to affordable health care coverage	18	19	16	20
Nutrition assistance and food for the needy	13	16	17	16

Source: See Appendix

**FIGURE 10**

### Combined support for poverty-reduction goal

Would you still support a national goal to cut poverty in the United States in half within 10 years if it required businesses to pay their workers higher wages or contribute more for benefits such as health care/if it required higher taxes for the wealthy and new government spending?



Source: See Appendix

Fifty-two percent of African Americans and 50 percent of Latinos choose jobs and wages as their most important priorities, as do 45 percent of Millennials. Areas such as affordable housing, affordable health care coverage, and nutrition assistance fall further down the list of priorities for Americans overall but are more important priorities for Millennials and minority groups.

# Support for specific policies to address poverty

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## Jobs, wages, and education policies are most strongly supported

Following the results about overall priorities for fighting poverty, we find very strong support for a number of policies that have been proposed to help reduce poverty rates, with particular intensity around jobs, wages, and education but also on more traditional safety net items. Of the 11 policy ideas tested, five proposals received 80 percent or higher total support and 50 percent or higher strong support from Americans overall. These five in the top tier of policy proposals are:

- Help low-wage workers afford quality child care (86 percent total support and 52 percent strong support)
- Expand nutrition assistance to provide families with healthy food and enough to eat (85 percent total support and 50 percent strong support)
- Make universal pre-kindergarten available for all children (84 percent total support and 59 percent strong support)
- Expand publicly funded scholarships to help more families afford college (84 percent total support and 54 percent strong support)
- Increase the minimum wage and make sure it rises with inflation (80 percent total support and 58 percent strong support)

A second tier of anti-poverty proposals has roughly three-quarters total support and more than 40 percent strong support and includes ideas for expanded tax credits such as the EITC, Child Tax Credit, and affordable health coverage, as well as proposals for a national jobs program and more refinancing of mortgages:

- Expand tax credits targeted to families with low-wage jobs (77 percent total support and 43 percent strong support)
- Help struggling homeowners refinance mortgages on affordable terms (75 percent total support and 45 percent strong support)
- Expand tax credits for low-income families with children (75 percent total support and 42 percent strong support)
- Provide quality, affordable health care coverage for every American (74 percent total support and 51 percent strong support)
- Create subsidized jobs for low-income and long-term unemployed workers (74 percent total support and 41 percent strong support)

Although the intensity of support varies by partisan identification, every proposal listed above for reducing poverty receives more than 80 percent total support from Democrats, more than 70 percent total support from independents, and more than 60 percent total support from Republicans—with the exception of health care, which receives 53 percent of Republican support. A proposal to extend the time limit for unemployment insurance benefits during economic downturns received the lowest level of overall support in relation to others, yet 68 percent of Americans still support the idea, including majorities of all partisan identifiers (81 percent of Democrats, 63 percent of independents, and 55 percent of Republicans).

TABLE 13

**Support for specific policies to reduce poverty**

For each one, please tell me whether you would support or oppose that particular policy solution.

	Total support	Millennials	African Americans	Latinos	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Help low-wage workers afford quality child care.	86	89	96	87	94	85	77
Expand nutrition assistance to provide families with healthy food and enough to eat.	85	84	98	86	95	85	74
Make universal pre-kindergarten available for all children.	84	87	91	85	94	77	76
Expand publicly funded scholarships to help more families afford college.	84	88	95	87	95	75	76
Increase the minimum wage and make sure it rises with inflation.	80	85	95	83	93	72	67
Expand tax credits targeted to families with low-wage jobs.	77	81	90	85	85	79	68
Help struggling homeowners refinance mortgages on affordable terms.	75	82	93	83	88	72	61
Expand tax credits for low-income families with children.	75	80	88	80	84	73	65
Provide quality, affordable health care coverage for every American.	74	81	94	81	92	71	53
Create subsidized jobs for low-income and long-term unemployed workers.	74	84	89	83	87	73	60
Extend the time limit for unemployment insurance benefits during economic downturns.	68	70	89	75	81	63	55

Source: See Appendix

Reasons to support new efforts to reduce poverty

Many reasons are traditionally put forth to support government efforts to help reduce poverty, ranging from how poverty affects kids and social mobility to moral obligations and utilitarian concerns about reducing social problems. Examining the findings throughout this study, it is not surprising that given the state of the U.S. economy today, arguments about work, wages, and opportunities for children emerge as more persuasive rationales for the public to support anti-poverty efforts.

We tested 10 separate arguments to determine which ideas are more convincing to Americans as reasons to take action. In terms of overall support and intensity of support, four of the highest-rated arguments involve the high costs of living for basic needs and the problems of a low-wage economy:

- “The costs of education, housing, health care, and food are just way too high for many people, even those who are working” (82 percent total convincing and 51 percent very convincing)
- “There are too few jobs for people today, and too many of the jobs that do exist don’t pay enough or give enough hours for families to live on” (75 percent total convincing and 44 percent very convincing)
- “Anyone who works full time should be able to support a family and not end up in poverty” (73 percent total convincing and 43 percent very convincing)
- “Instead of forcing their workers to go on food stamps and Medicaid to make up for their low pay, corporations like McDonald’s and Wal-Mart should just pay their employees a decent wage and good benefits” (72 percent total convincing and 42 percent very convincing)

Strong majorities of people across the partisan divide find these arguments about work convincing, with Democrats and independents expressing more intensity of agreement than Republicans. Outside of these reinforcing ideas about work and its relation to poverty, Americans of many stripes are convinced that we should address poverty to increase life chances for children and to meet our moral commitments to those in need:

- “Our children are our future, and we should do everything possible to ensure that all kids get the education and opportunities necessary to succeed and contribute to the nation” (89 percent total convincing and 64 percent very convincing)
- “We have a moral obligation to assist the most vulnerable, including the poor, the sick, the elderly, and the disabled” (82 percent total convincing and 48 percent very convincing)

Interestingly, an argument connecting the American Dream to diminished social mobility was not particularly convincing to most Americans (62 percent total convincing and 28 percent very convincing) in relation to those above. Neither was an argument explaining how money spent to reduce poverty would lower social problems in the future (70 percent convincing and 34 percent very convincing). A direct argument that “the wealthy in America take in too much of our national income, and the middle class and the poor get too little” was the most polarizing idea presented. Seventy-nine percent of Democrats and 63 percent of independents find this argument about income inequality convincing, but only 49 percent of Republicans agree.

# Conclusion

Fifty years after President Johnson launched the War on Poverty, Americans are both encouraged by some of the progress we have made in meeting our goals and discouraged by the resilience of poverty over time. We must do much more as a nation to combat poverty. Most urgently, we need to create stronger overall employment and income growth and better prepare our children for the jobs and economy of the future.

Policymakers should feel confident that the American public will support efforts to expand economic opportunity, increase access to good jobs and wages, and maintain a robust social safety net to help the most vulnerable and those facing economic hardship. Harsh negative attitudes about the poor that seemingly defined political discussions throughout the 1980s and 1990s have given way to public recognition that many Americans—poor and middle class alike—are facing many pressures trying to stay afloat and get ahead in the difficult economic environment. Supporters of anti-poverty efforts should not be complacent in their efforts, however, and should recognize that although Americans back government action to reduce poverty, questions remain about the structure and scope of these efforts and how effective they have been over time.

By focusing policymaking on realistic goals and the intertwining challenges of creating good jobs, increasing wages, and expanding educational opportunities for all people, it is possible to build consensus for significant new efforts to reduce poverty and more fully realize our own values and aspirations as a nation.

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## About the authors

**John Halpin** is a Senior Fellow at American Progress focusing on political theory, communications, and public opinion analysis. He is the co-director and creator of the Progressive Studies Program at CAP, an interdisciplinary project researching the intellectual history, foundational principles, and public understanding of progressivism. Halpin is the co-author with John Podesta of *The Power of Progress: How America's Progressives Can (Once Again) Save Our Economy, Our Climate, and Our Country*, a 2008 book about the history and future of the progressive movement.

**Karl Agne** is a founding partner of GBA Strategies, providing strategy, message, and research services to a variety of corporate, political, and nonprofit clients. Agne specializes in the use of focus groups and in-depth interviews, as well as media testing and perception analyzer exercises, to gain greater insight into consumers' decision-making processes. Agne has conducted research on a broad array of issues—including rebranding Fortune 500 companies, examining the decline of Democrats in Middle America, and defining the unique values and political worldviews of Millennials—and he played a leading role in hundreds of political campaigns.

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## Acknowledgements

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## Endnotes

1 Dylan Matthews, "Poverty in the 50 years since 'The Other American,' in five charts," Wonkblog, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2012/07/11/poverty-in-the-50-years-since-the-other-america-in-five-charts/>.

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3 Karl Agne, "National Survey on Poverty—Key Findings" (Washington: GBA Strategies, 2008), available at [http://www.virtualcap.org/blog/assets/content/Campaigns\\_to\\_Reduce\\_Poverty/Half\\_in\\_Ten\\_Survey\\_December\\_2008.pdf](http://www.virtualcap.org/blog/assets/content/Campaigns_to_Reduce_Poverty/Half_in_Ten_Survey_December_2008.pdf).

4 U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, "2013 Poverty Guidelines," available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm#thresholds> (last accessed December 2013).

5 Ibid.

# Appendix

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## Methodological note

GBA Strategies conducted a representative national survey of 1,000 adults via landline and cell phones. In addition to the base sample of 1,000 adults, oversamples were conducted among three critical constituencies—African Americans (347 total respondents), Hispanics (370 total respondents), and Millennials ages 18–34 (1,035 total respondents)—using landlines, cell phones, and online surveys. The survey was conducted November 12–26, 2013, among a total of 2,052 respondents.

Responses based on the full sample have a margin of error of +/- 2.2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. Millennial results have a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent, while Hispanic results have a margin of error of +/- 5.1 percent, and results reported for African Americans have a margin of error of +/- 5.25 percent.

GBA Strategies also conducted four preliminary focus groups as part of this research program. In Charlotte, North Carolina, we conducted research among African Americans ages 26–45 (mixed gender, minimum of some college education) and white Millennials with college degrees (mixed gender, independents, and weak partisans) on October 28, 2013. In Des Moines, Iowa, we conducted research among white noncollege voters ages 22–34 (mixed gender, independents, and weak partisans) and noncollege Millennials with household incomes at twice the federal poverty level or below (mixed gender and race, independents, and weak partisans) on October 29, 2013.

GBA Strategies previously conducted survey research on behalf of the Half in Ten Campaign five years ago. That national telephone survey of 1,397 adults ages 18 and older was conducted November 11–17, 2008, and has a margin of error of +/- 2.8 percent.

## Full survey results

### Q.5 Are you currently registered to vote in (state)?

(ref:VOTEREG)	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Yes	88	81	78	89
No	12	19	22	11

### Q.6 I know it's a long way off, but thinking about the election for Congress and other offices next year, what are the chances of your voting in the election: Are you almost certain to vote; will you probably vote; are the chances 50-50; or don't you think you will vote?

(ref:VOTE14)	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African americans
Almost certain	66	48	54	58
Probably	17	24	19	16
50-50	8	15	13	14
Will not vote	8	13	12	11
(Don't know/refused)	1	1	1	1

### Q.7 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?

(ref:DIRECT)	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Right direction	26	32	34	57
Wrong track	67	63	61	36
(Don't know/refused)	7	5	5	7
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-40</b>	<b>-31</b>	<b>-27</b>	<b>20</b>

### Q.8 Do you think your family's income is going up faster than the cost of living, staying about even with the cost of living, or falling behind the cost of living?

(ref:VOTE14)	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African americans
Income going up faster	8	12	10	12
Income staying even	29	39	33	34
Income falling behind	61	47	56	51
(Don't know/refused)	2	2	1	2

Next, I'm going to read you a list of economic challenges facing many Americans today. Please tell me whether you or a member of your immediate family had a serious problem with this issue over the past year.

(ref:PRBS2)	Yes; respondent	Yes; family	No	Don't know/ refused	Total yes
<b>9 Falling behind in rent or mortgage payments</b>	12	13	74	1	<b>25</b>
Millennials	18	20	61	0	<b>38</b>
Hispanics	22	19	58	0	<b>41</b>
African Americans	20	17	63	0	<b>37</b>
<b>10 Falling behind in gas, electric, or phone bills</b>	18	12	69	0	<b>30</b>
Millennials	25	19	56	0	<b>44</b>
Hispanics	32	16	53	-	<b>47</b>
African Americans	29	19	52	1	<b>48</b>
<b>11 Being unable to get medical care because of the cost</b>	18	16	66	1	<b>34</b>
Millennials	25	20	54	0	<b>45</b>
Hispanics	28	18	53	1	<b>46</b>
African Americans	23	14	62	1	<b>37</b>
<b>12 Having trouble paying a credit card balance</b>	18	13	68	1	<b>31</b>
Millennials	20	20	60	0	<b>40</b>
Hispanics	27	13	60	0	<b>40</b>
African Americans	20	20	59	1	<b>40</b>
<b>13 Having too little money to buy enough food</b>	19	13	68	1	<b>32</b>
Millennials	27	18	55	0	<b>45</b>
Hispanics	32	16	52	-	<b>48</b>
African Americans	27	19	51	2	<b>47</b>

Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some different people and things, with 100 meaning a very warm, favorable feeling; 0 meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling; and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more favorable your feelings are toward that person or thing. If you have no opinion or never heard of that person, please say so.

(ref:WHOPOOR)	Mean	Favorable	Unfavorable	Indifferent
<b>14 Barack Obama</b>	42	36	48	97
Millennials	47	42	42	98
Hispanics	51	42	34	95
African Americans	75	72	12	97
<b>15 Congress</b>	25	8	70	95
Millennials	29	12	63	94
Hispanics	27	10	66	93
African Americans	33	15	55	94
<b>16 The war on poverty</b>	40	22	43	86
Millennials	43	26	39	85
Hispanics	40	25	44	83
African Americans	50	35	32	89
<b>17 Social Security</b>	57	45	29	94
Millennials	53	41	32	94
Hispanics	57	44	29	93
African Americans	62	50	22	93
<b>18 The Earned Income Tax Credit, or EITC</b>	49	28	26	74
Millennials	50	29	26	73
Hispanics	49	27	30	75
African Americans	58	42	23	81
[1027 Respondents (500 Weighted)]				
<b>19 (SPLIT A) The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP</b>	52	28	24	68
Millennials	54	33	23	70
Hispanics	43	25	41	79
African Americans	62	39	18	74

[1025 Respondents (500 Weighted)]

<b>20 (SPLIT B) Food stamps</b>	45	31	40	90
Millennials	52	43	35	94
Hispanics	51	39	39	89
African Americans	58	44	27	94
<b>21 Head Start</b>	56	35	22	72
Millennials	57	33	19	66
Hispanics	53	32	26	75
African Americans	64	46	17	78
<b>22 Pell Grants</b>	56	32	19	65
Millennials	58	38	20	73
Hispanics	55	33	23	71
African Americans	63	45	18	77
<b>23 Unemployment insurance</b>	50	30	30	85
Millennials	47	30	32	84
Hispanics	47	29	38	88
African Americans	56	37	24	83

Q.24 Now, I would like to ask you some questions about the issue of poverty in America. The poverty line is the income level below which an individual or family is classified as poor by the government. In terms of annual household income, what do you think the poverty line is for a family of four in America today?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African americans
Less than \$10,000	8	13	15	15
\$10,000–\$14,999	4	5	6	5
\$15,000–\$19,999	7	7	6	10
\$20,000–\$24,999	14	15	13	9
\$25,000–\$29,999	13	10	10	13
\$30,000–\$34,999	15	15	14	13
\$35,000–\$39,999	6	5	5	7
\$40,000 or more	19	20	22	17
(Don't know/refused)	14	9	10	12
<b>Mean</b>	<b>\$30,009</b>	<b>\$30,704</b>	<b>\$28,940</b>	<b>\$31,700</b>

Next, for each of the following groups, I would like you to tell me what percentage of that group you think lives below the poverty line in America today.

(ref:WHOPOOR)	Mean	7% or less	8% – 15%	16% – 20%	21% – 25%	26% – 30%	31% – 40	41% – 50%	51% or more	No opinion/ don't know
<b>25 The entire U.S. population</b>	39%	4	10	9	6	13	13	17	21	7
Millennials	39%	8	10	9	5	13	15	13	23	4
Hispanics	44%	7	8	6	7	8	11	14	32	6
African Americans	45%	4	9	4	3	9	11	19	30	9
<b>26 Children in the United States</b>	42%	4	9	8	6	11	12	16	26	8
Millennials	40%	9	11	9	5	12	9	14	25	6
Hispanics	44%	6	11	6	7	8	9	16	31	7
African Americans	49%	5	7	6	4	9	8	16	40	4
<b>27 African Americans</b>	45%	3	6	5	5	10	14	19	29	9
Millennials	43%	5	9	7	5	11	13	18	27	5
Hispanics	45%	7	9	6	4	6	10	17	35	6
African Americans	53%	2	5	6	2	7	12	19	42	5
<b>28 Latinos or Hispanic Americans</b>	43%	3	7	7	7	10	13	16	26	11
Millennials	42%	7	9	8	6	9	12	14	28	6
Hispanics	46%	6	8	8	6	5	10	15	37	5
African Americans	46%	4	8	5	4	8	10	22	29	10
<b>29 White or Caucasian Americans</b>	35%	5	15	11	7	10	11	15	16	9
Millennials	32%	10	18	14	6	9	10	12	14	5
Hispanics	32%	11	18	11	6	8	9	14	15	7
African Americans	35%	8	15	8	6	10	13	16	16	8
<b>30 Disabled Americans</b>	49%	4	8	7	4	7	11	15	37	8
Millennials	44%	7	12	9	3	7	9	16	32	5
Hispanics	46%	8	13	6	3	6	8	18	35	4
African Americans	49%	6	7	7	3	6	8	17	38	8
<b>31 The elderly</b>	49%	4	8	7	3	8	11	16	37	6
Millennials	43%	7	12	9	4	8	9	16	30	5
Hispanics	47%	8	12	6	3	7	9	14	39	3
African Americans	50%	4	12	4	2	4	8	18	42	5

Q.32 How much annual income do you think a family of four would need to earn to be safely out of poverty and in the middle class?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Less than \$30,000	12	18	24	14
\$30,000–\$39,999	9	10	9	10
\$40,000–\$44,999	12	9	8	10
\$45,000–\$49,999	6	5	8	5
\$50,000–\$54,999	20	19	13	17
\$55,000–\$59,999	3	3	3	2
\$60,000–\$64,999	10	9	8	9
\$65,000–\$74,999	6	7	6	7
\$75,000–\$99,999	9	8	9	10
\$100,000 or more	6	9	7	9
<b>Mean</b>	<b>\$54,619</b>	<b>\$55,975</b>	<b>\$49,209</b>	<b>\$58,678</b>

Q.33 What do you think of when I say “the poor?” What words, images, or phrases come to mind?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
<b>Definition of poverty: Need</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>54</b>
Not enough money/unable to afford basics	40	44	51	43
People who need help (in general)	5	7	5	8
Can't afford to take care of themselves/kids/family	4	3	3	3
Can't afford luxuries	3	4	1	3
<b>Face of poverty</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>47</b>
Homeless	18	20	18	17
Unemployed	7	5	7	7
Lonely/sad/unfortunate	7	7	7	9
Children	5	3	3	4
Poorly dressed/dirty	4	7	4	3
The middle class/regular Americans/normal people/people like me/my family	4	4	2	3
Immigrants	3	3	4	8
The elderly/people on fixed income	3	1	2	4
Disabled people	2	1	2	1
Sick people (mental or emotional problems)	2	2	2	3
Single-parent households/single mothers	1	2	1	1
Veterans	1	0	2	-
Minorities	1	1	1	2
People living in the inner city	1	1	0	1
People in foreign countries	1	1	1	1
<b>Causes of poverty: Economic conditions</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
Bad jobs/minimum-wage jobs	6	7	6	5
Uneducated/can't afford good education/bad schools	5	4	4	4
People who work hard	5	8	6	4
Crime	1	0	0	-
Other positive description	0	1	1	0
<b>Definition of poverty: Take</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
Take government assistance	5	5	4	3
Take charity/shelter/food bank/soup kitchen	1	2	1	1

<b>Causes of poverty: Choices</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Lazy/no ambition/don't work hard	3	1	0	1
Other personal choice	1	1	0	0
<b>Other</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>
Unrepresented by the government	1	1	1	1
Other	9	10	8	8
<b>Don't know/refused/none</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
Don't know/refused	8	5	5	7
None/nothing	2	2	4	2

Q.34 Thinking about your own family—both your immediate family living here and your other close relatives like aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on—as far as you know, is anyone in your family poor?

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Millennials</b>	<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>African Americans</b>
Yes	54	53	59	65
No	45	46	41	34
(Don't know/refused)	1	1	-	1

Now, we're going to review statements some people have made about the poor and about poverty in America. As I read each statement, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the statement.

(ref:WHOPOOR)	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/refused	Total agree	Total disagree	Difference
<b>35 Racial discrimination plays a large role in determining who lives in poverty and who does not.</b>	20	26	23	30	1	47	52	-6
Millennials	25	33	23	19	1	58	42	16
Hispanics	25	33	21	20	0	58	41	17
African Americans	37	40	14	8	1	78	21	56
[1027 Respondents (500 Weighted)]								
<b>36 (SPLIT A) Many people living in poverty are unfairly criticized by others as lazy or undeserving.</b>	35	32	16	14	2	67	30	37
Millennials	37	37	15	10	1	74	25	48
Hispanics	43	28	14	13	2	71	27	43
African Americans	43	29	15	12	1	72	27	45
[1025 Respondents (500 Weighted)]								
<b>37 (SPLIT B) Most people living in poverty are decent people who are working hard to make ends meet in a difficult economy.</b>	49	30	15	5	2	79	19	60
Millennials	45	37	14	3	0	82	17	65
Hispanics	52	30	11	7	0	82	18	64
African Americans	54	39	7	1	0	92	8	85
<b>38 Children born into poverty in America today are likely to remain poor for the rest of their lives.</b>	24	33	25	17	2	57	41	16
Millennials	19	39	27	14	1	58	41	18
Hispanics	21	33	26	19	0	54	45	9
African Americans	14	33	28	24	1	47	52	-5
<b>39 The primary reason so many people are living in poverty today is that our economy is failing to produce enough jobs that pay decent wages.</b>	50	28	12	9	1	77	21	56
Millennials	42	37	15	6	1	78	21	58
Hispanics	51	29	12	7	2	79	19	61
African Americans	49	31	12	7	1	80	19	61

<b>40 Regardless of what policies we create, there will always be a sizeable group of poor people living in America.</b>	43	36	13	7	2	79	20	59
Millennials	35	42	17	6	1	77	23	54
Hispanics	35	37	16	9	3	73	24	48
African Americans	48	37	10	4	1	84	15	70
<b>41 Poor people today are actually doing pretty well compared to those in earlier generations.</b>	21	32	23	20	4	53	43	10
Millennials	16	36	31	15	2	52	46	6
Hispanics	15	34	23	23	5	49	46	3
African Americans	16	34	29	20	2	50	49	1
<b>42 Poor people have the same opportunities to succeed as other people in America today.</b>	21	27	23	27	1	48	50	-2
Millennials	17	31	27	24	0	48	52	-4
Hispanics	20	27	29	23	1	47	52	-5
African Americans	14	34	24	27	1	48	51	-3
<b>43 Too many poor people would rather live off of government programs and benefits than work to lift themselves out of poverty.</b>	31	25	19	23	2	56	42	14
Millennials	28	32	20	19	1	60	39	21
Hispanics	25	31	19	23	1	56	42	14
African Americans	18	27	26	27	2	45	53	-8

Now, I'm going to read you a pair of statements about poverty in America. After I read both statements, please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

(ref:WHOPOOR)	1st strong	1st not strong	2nd not strong	2nd strong	Neither	Don't know/refused	Total 1st	Total 2nd	Difference
<b>44 (SPLIT A) 1. Most people who live in poverty are poor because their jobs don't pay enough, they lack good health care and education, and things cost too much for them to save and move ahead.</b>									
<b>OR</b>									
<b>2. Most people who live in poverty are poor because they make bad decisions or act irresponsibly in their own lives.</b>	47	17	9	16	8	2	64	25	40
Millennials	47	17	8	12	12	4	64	20	44
Hispanics	49	12	9	16	10	3	61	25	36
African Americans	50	10	7	10	20	1	60	17	43

[1025 Respondents (500 Weighted)]

<b>45 (SPLIT B) 1. Most people who live in poverty are poor because economic conditions outside of their control cause them to be poor.</b>									
<b>OR</b>									
<b>2. Most people who live in poverty are poor because they are not doing enough to help themselves out of poverty.</b>	36	18	11	23	8	2	54	35	19
Millennials	32	20	13	15	15	4	52	28	24
Hispanics	37	18	11	18	12	4	55	29	26
African Americans	35	16	10	17	17	4	51	27	25

(ref:AGRDIS)

Q.46 As you may know, in his first State of the Union address in 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declared “an unconditional War on Poverty” in the United States. The War on Poverty created programs to expand educational opportunities for poor children, provide health insurance for the elderly and poor, and expand job training and employment opportunities for low-income workers. In addition to the civil rights reforms of that era, Johnson eventually signed legislation expanding Social Security and creating Head Start, Medicare, and Medicaid as part of this effort. By 1973, the national poverty rate in America had fallen by 42 percent to a historic low of 11.1 percent of all Americans.

Looking back, do you agree or disagree with the belief that government has a responsibility to use some of its resources to fight poverty?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Strongly agree	53	48	51	60
Somewhat agree	33	43	35	33
Somewhat disagree	6	6	8	4
Strongly disagree	7	2	4	2
(Don't know/refused)	2	1	3	0
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>87</b>

Q.47 Looking back, would you say the War on Poverty has made a major difference in reducing poverty, made a minor difference in reducing poverty, has made no difference, or has actually made poverty worse in the U.S.?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Major difference	20	21	21	25
Minor difference	41	48	38	38
No difference	13	16	19	17
Made things worse	23	13	17	15
(Don't know/refused)	4	2	5	4
<b>Total made a difference</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>64</b>

(ref:IMPACT2)

Q.48 Now, let me read you two statements about the War on Poverty. After I read both statements, please tell me which statement comes closer to your own opinion, even if neither is exactly right.

*1. Some people say that America fought a War on Poverty and poverty won. They say federal actions to reduce poverty have been too costly, are prone to fraud and abuse, and encourage greater dependency on government and irresponsible behavior by recipients. They say that government intervention causes more problems than it solves and asks too much of others in terms of taxes and regulations.*

*2. Other people say that the War on Poverty worked, reducing poverty for many Americans and putting in place an essential safety net to help keep more from falling into poverty. They say that we need to maintain and expand efforts to help the poor get adequate education, housing, health care, and job training. They say that what has really failed is our overall economy, which today produces too few jobs that provide enough hours or pay decent enough wages for families to live on.*

Which statement do you agree with more?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
First much more	20	16	21	11
First somewhat more	22	21	17	20
(Both equally)	8	16	17	19
Second somewhat more	24	25	17	22
Second much more	19	15	18	22
<b>(Neither)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
(Don't know/refused)	2	1	1	2
<b>Total first</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Total second</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-13</b>

(ref:IMPACT3)

Q.49 Would you support or oppose the president and Congress setting a national goal to cut poverty in the United States in half within 10 years?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Strongly support	40	41	46	58
Somewhat support	30	38	33	29
Somewhat oppose	8	10	7	6
Strongly oppose	14	8	10	5
(Don't know/refused)	8	3	4	2
<b>Total support</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>75</b>

(ref:INITIALA)

Q.50 Would you still support a national goal to cut poverty in the United States in half within 10 years if it required businesses to pay their workers higher wages or contribute more for benefits like health care?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Strongly support	38	42	41	57
Somewhat support	21	27	29	24
Somewhat oppose	13	15	10	9
Strongly oppose	19	10	14	7
(Don't know/refused)	10	4	5	3
<b>Total support</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>66</b>

(ref:INTRVNA)

Q.51 Would you still support a national goal to cut poverty in the United States in half within 10 years if it required higher taxes for the wealthy and new government spending?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Strongly support	36	38	39	50
Somewhat support	19	28	28	21
Somewhat oppose	14	17	13	13
Strongly oppose	22	14	16	13
(Don't know/refused)	9	3	5	3
<b>Total support</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>45</b>

(ref:PAYMOREA)

Now, I'm going to read you some statements in support of government efforts to reduce poverty. For each statement, please tell me whether it is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, a little convincing, or not at all convincing reason to support efforts by federal and state governments to reduce poverty.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	A little convincing	Not at all convincing	Don't know/refused	Total convincing	Total not convincing
[1041 Respondents (500 Weighted)]							
<b>52 (SPLIT C) There are too few jobs for people today, and too many of the jobs that do exist don't pay enough or give enough hours for families to live on.</b>	44	31	12	12	1	75	24
Millennials	43	34	15	8	0	77	23
Hispanics	49	28	15	7	1	77	22
African Americans	58	21	11	9	1	79	20
[1011 Respondents (500 Weighted)]							
<b>53 (SPLIT D) The wealthy in America take in too much of our national income, and the middle class and the poor get too little.</b>	42	23	9	23	2	65	33
Millennials	43	29	14	14	0	72	28
Hispanics	51	23	12	13	1	74	25
African Americans	46	28	11	14	1	74	25
[1041 Respondents (500 Weighted)]							
<b>54 (SPLIT C) The American Dream of opportunity for all is undermined when kids born to poor families remain poor and kids born to rich families stay rich.</b>	28	35	14	22	1	62	36
Millennials	31	33	19	16	1	64	35
Hispanics	34	38	15	12	2	71	27
African Americans	40	30	17	11	2	70	29
[1011 Respondents (500 Weighted)]							
<b>55 (SPLIT D) Our children are our future, and we should do everything possible to ensure that all kids get the education and opportunities necessary to succeed and contribute to the nation.</b>	64	25	5	5	1	89	10
Millennials	63	29	5	3	0	91	8
Hispanics	65	21	9	4	0	86	13
African Americans	66	28	4	2	-	94	6

<b>56 We have a moral obligation to assist the most vulnerable, including the poor, the sick, the elderly, and the disabled.</b>	48	34	9	7	1	82	16
Millennials	40	40	13	6	1	80	19
Hispanics	49	32	11	5	2	82	16
African Americans	53	35	8	4	1	87	11

<b>57 A dollar spent today on education or preventive health care for the poor will save dollars down the road in terms of lower crime, fewer social problems, increased productivity, and more stable families.</b>	34	36	14	15	2	70	28
Millennials	33	38	18	9	1	72	28
Hispanics	37	32	19	10	2	69	29
African Americans	39	43	10	7	0	82	17

[1041 Respondents (500 Weighted)]

<b>58 (SPLIT C) Instead of forcing their workers to go on food stamps and Medicaid to make up for their low pay, corporations like McDonald's and Wal-Mart should just pay their employees a decent wage and good benefits.</b>	42	29	10	15	3	72	25
Millennials	47	31	13	9	1	78	21
Hispanics	45	31	12	11	2	76	23
African Americans	62	22	11	5	1	84	15

[1011 Respondents (500 Weighted)]

<b>59 (SPLIT D) If corporations and businesses paid their workers decent wages and good benefits, we wouldn't need the government to step in as much to reduce poverty.</b>	35	37	9	18	1	72	27
Millennials	37	37	13	12	0	74	25
Hispanics	42	29	12	17	-	71	29
African Americans	45	38	10	6	1	82	16

<b>60 Anyone who works full time should be able to support a family and not end up in poverty.</b>	43	30	10	15	1	73	25
Millennials	42	31	14	12	1	73	26
Hispanics	39	29	12	17	3	69	29
African Americans	47	27	12	13	1	74	25

<b>61 The costs of education, housing, health care, and food are just way too high for many people, even those who are working.</b>	51	31	9	8	1	82	17
Millennials	52	31	12	6	0	82	17
Hispanics	53	27	12	8	1	80	19
African Americans	57	30	7	6	-	87	13
(ref:THEMES)							

Q.62 Next, I'll read a number of different areas in which state governments and the federal government might invest to reduce poverty. Please tell me which two you feel should be the highest priorities for new investments to reduce poverty in the United States.

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Creating jobs and increasing wages	40	45	50	52
Job training and workplace preparation	30	23	24	28
Elementary and secondary education	25	19	16	16
College access and affordability	23	29	27	23
Early childhood education	21	20	14	21
Affordable housing	18	24	24	26
Access to affordable health care coverage	18	19	20	16
Nutrition assistance and food for the needy	13	16	16	17
(Other)	1	1	2	-
(None of the above)	1	0	0	-
(Don't know/refused)	3	1	3	1
(ref:INVEST)				

Now, I'm going to read you some specific policy solutions that have been proposed to help reduce poverty in this country. For each one, please tell me whether you would support or oppose that particular policy solution.

(ref:WHOPOOR)	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know/refused	Total support	Total oppose	Difference
[1041 Respondents (500 Weighted)]								
<b>63 (SPLIT C) Expand tax credits targeted to families with low-wage jobs.</b>	43	34	11	10	2	77	21	56
Millennials	40	41	14	4	1	81	18	63
Hispanics	47	38	12	1	1	85	14	72
African Americans	57	33	5	5	-	90	10	81
[1011 Respondents (500 Weighted)]								
<b>64 (SPLIT D) Expand tax credits for low-income families with children.</b>	42	32	11	11	4	75	22	53
Millennials	42	38	13	6	2	80	18	62
Hispanics	53	27	10	5	5	80	15	65
African Americans	49	39	7	2	3	88	9	79
<b>65 Expand publicly funded scholarships to help more families afford college.</b>	54	30	8	7	1	84	15	69
Millennials	57	31	9	3	0	88	11	77
Hispanics	60	27	7	6	0	87	13	74
African Americans	72	23	4	1	-	95	5	90
<b>66 Provide quality, affordable health care coverage for every American.</b>	51	23	8	16	2	74	25	49
Millennials	53	27	11	8	1	81	19	62
Hispanics	58	23	8	10	1	81	18	63
African Americans	70	24	4	1	1	94	5	89
<b>67 Increase the minimum wage and make sure it rises with inflation.</b>	58	22	8	11	1	80	20	60
Millennials	61	24	9	6	0	85	15	70
Hispanics	62	22	9	7	1	83	16	68
African Americans	81	14	3	2	0	95	5	90

[1041 Respondents (500 Weighted)]

<b>68 (SPLIT C) Expand nutrition assistance to provide more families with healthy food and enough to eat.</b>	50	35	9	5	1	85	14	71
Millennials	52	32	11	4	1	84	15	70
Hispanics	55	32	8	4	1	86	12	74
African Americans	76	22	2	0	-	98	2	96

[1041 Respondents (500 Weighted)]

<b>70 (SPLIT C) Extend the time limit for unemployment insurance benefits during economic downturns.</b>	35	33	15	15	2	68	30	38
Millennials	31	39	19	10	1	70	29	40
Hispanics	39	35	14	9	2	75	23	52
African Americans	57	32	6	3	1	89	10	79

[1011 Respondents (500 Weighted)]

<b>69 (SPLIT D) Help struggling homeowners refinance mortgages on affordable terms.</b>	45	30	10	13	3	75	22	53
Millennials	46	36	11	6	2	82	16	66
Hispanics	48	35	7	9	0	83	17	67
African Americans	59	34	4	2	1	93	6	87

<b>72 Help low-wage workers afford quality child care.</b>	52	34	7	5	1	86	13	74
Millennials	55	35	8	2	1	89	10	79
Hispanics	56	32	7	4	2	87	11	76
African Americans	71	25	3	1	1	96	3	93

[1011 Respondents (500 Weighted)]

<b>71 (SPLIT D) Create subsidized jobs for low-income and long-term unemployed workers</b>	41	33	10	13	3	74	24	50
Millennials	42	42	10	4	1	84	15	69
Hispanics	47	36	8	9	-	83	17	66
African Americans	49	40	6	2	3	89	8	81

<b>73 Make universal pre-kindergarten available for all children</b>	59	25	8	7	1	84	15	69
Millennials	55	32	9	3	1	87	12	75
Hispanics	59	26	8	6	1	85	14	72
African Americans	68	24	6	1	1	91	7	84

(ref:POLICY)

Finally, I would like to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes.

Q.74 What is the last year of schooling that you have completed?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
1st–11th grade	9	8	15	11
High school graduate	33	32	33	35
Noncollege post high school.	1	1	2	1
Some college	27	32	27	33
College graduate	20	20	17	14
Postgraduate school	9	7	6	6
(Don't know/refused)	1	0	-	1
(ref:EDUC)	13	16	16	17

Q.75 In what year were you born? (Based on respondents' answers, we calculated the following information on ages)

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
18–24	13	42	18	16
25–29	9	29	12	10
30–34	9	29	12	9
35–39	8	-	11	8
40–44	9	-	13	11
45–49	9	-	7	7
50–54	7	-	6	7
55–59	11	-	8	11
60–64	6	-	3	5
Over 64	19	-	9	15
(No answer)	1	-	1	1

(ref:AGE)

Q.76 Are you married, single, separated, divorced, or widowed?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Married	54	32	45	30
Single	28	61	36	47
Separated	3	2	6	5
Divorced	9	2	10	10
Widowed	6	0	3	7
(Don't know/refused)	1	1	-	-

(ref:MARITAL2)

Q.77 Do you have any children 18 years of age or younger living at home?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Yes	27	34	38	27
No	72	65	62	73
(Don't know/refused)	1	0	-	-

(ref:KIDS)

Q.78 Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, or what?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Strong Democrat	21	16	27	54
Weak Democrat	13	16	19	14
Independent-lean Democrat	11	14	12	11
Independent	16	22	19	15
Independent-lean Republican	12	11	4	4
Weak Republican	10	10	8	0
Strong Republican	15	8	8	2
(Don't know/refused)	2	2	2	0

(ref:PTYID1)

Q.81 Which of the following do you feel best describes your political perspective?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Conservative	31	22	21	21
Liberal	17	20	22	20
Libertarian	5	7	7	3
Moderate	30	33	30	38
Progressive	8	10	10	12
(Other)	2	3	5	2
(Don't know/refused)	7	5	6	4

(ref:SELFIDEO)

Q.82 In terms of your job status, are you:

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Employed full time	40	40	39	32
Employed part time	12	16	13	15
Unemployed, but looking for work	9	15	12	18
Student	5	17	8	6
Homemaker	7	9	10	5
Retired	22	1	12	20
(Other)	3	1	6	3
(Don't know/refused)	2	1	1	0

(ref:EMPLOY)

Q.83 Are you a member of a labor union? If yes, are you a current member or a retired member? If not a current or retired union member, is anyone in your household a current or retired member of a union?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Yes; respondent belongs	9	8	9	10
Yes; household member belongs	6	7	8	8
No member belongs	77	82	80	75
Retired member	6	2	2	6
(Don't know/refused)	2	1	1	1
(ref:UNION2)	22	1	12	20

Q.84 What is your religion?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Roman Catholic	18	16	35	4
Baptist	13	10	7	34
Nondenominational Christian	9	11	6	12
Lutheran	5	2	1	1
Methodist	5	3	1	7
Pentecostal	3	3	5	7
Presbyterian	2	1	2	2
Mormon	2	2	2	0
Congregational/United Church of Christ	1	1	1	2
Evangelical	1	2	1	2
Charismatic	1	0	1	1
Buddhist	1	1	1	0
Christian Scientist	1	2	1	2
Hindu	1	1	-	-
Islam	1	1	0	1
Jewish	1	1	2	0
Seventh Day Adventist	0	0	0	1
Eastern Orthodox	0	1	0	0
Anglican/Episcopal	0	0	0	1
Unitarian Universalist	0	0	-	1
(Other)	9	7	7	5
No religious affiliation	19	30	21	15
(Don't know/refused)	7	5	5	2

(ref:RELIG1)

Q.85 (If Lutheran, Presbyterian, Congregational, Evangelical, Charismatic, Baptist, Methodist, Seventh Day, Pentecostal, or nondenominational) Do you consider yourself to be a born-again Christian?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Yes	63	65	73	80
No	34	34	27	18
(Don't know/refused)	3	1	-	2
(ref:RELIG2)	5	2	1	1

Q.86 How often do you attend religious services: more than once a week, every week, once or twice a month, several times a year, or hardly ever?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
More than once a week	13	10	12	16
Every week	22	19	20	31
Once or twice a month	13	10	12	17
Several times a year	14	15	16	9
Hardly ever	35	44	35	27
(Don't know/refused)	4	1	6	1

(ref:RELIG3)

Q.87 In the 2012 election for president, did you vote for Democrat Barack Obama or Republican Mitt Romney?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Democrat Barack Obama	28	26	35	63
Republican Mitt Romney	26	16	17	1
(Other candidate)	1	1	1	1
(Did not vote)	40	56	44	31
(Don't know/refused)	4	0	2	4
<b>Difference</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>63</b>

(ref:VOTE12)

Q.88 Of all the personal telephone calls that you receive, do you get all or almost all your calls on a cell phone, some on a cell phone and some on a regular home phone, or all or almost all your calls on a regular home phone?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
All or almost all on a cell phone	38	75	53	45
Some on a cell phone and some on a regular home phone	25	14	21	25
All or almost all on a regular home phone	34	10	22	28
(Other)	0	0	0	-
(Don't know/refused)	3	1	3	2

(ref:CELL)

Q.89 What racial or ethnic group best describes you?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
White	65	57	-	-
African American or black	12	13	-	100
Hispanic or Latino	15	21	100	-
Native American	1	0	-	-
Asian	6	6	-	-
(Other)	1	2	-	-
(Don't know/refused)	1	0	-	-

(ref:RACE)

Q.91 Last year—that is in 2012—what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category.

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Less than \$20,000	14	21	21	27
\$20,000 to under \$30,000	14	15	14	20
\$30,000 to under \$50,000	18	22	25	21
\$50,000 to under \$75,000	16	17	15	12
\$75,000 to under \$100,000	11	11	9	6
\$100,000 or more	12	9	7	7
(Refused)	10	2	5	5
(Don't know)	4	3	4	2

(ref:INCOME2)

### Q.3 Respondent's gender

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Male	48	49	50	45
Female	52	51	50	55

(ref:GENDER)

[467 Respondents (185 Weighted)]

Q.2 (CELL ONLY) Hello, my name is (caller name). I'm calling for (calling house name). I know I am calling you on your cell phone, but we are conducting a brief survey of a random sample of Americans 18 years of age or older. I am not selling anything, and I will not ask you for a donation. Are you 18 or older and in a place where it is safe to talk?

	Total	Millennials	Hispanics	African Americans
Yes, 18 or older and safe to talk	100	100	100	100
No, not 18 years of age	-	-	-	-
No, not a safe place	-	-	-	-
(Don't know/refused)	-	-	-	-

(ref:CELLINTRO)



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