

2000

National Opinion Poll

POLITICS

By David A. Bositis

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The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies' 2000 National Opinion Poll, conducted between September 15 and October 9, 2000, is a national survey of 1,608 adults. It covered a broad range of topics, including politics and the 2000 election, education, social security, health care, criminal justice, asset accumulation, race relations, attitudes toward American corporations, and globalization and foreign policy.

The survey has two components: a national general-population sample of 850 adults and a national sample of 850 adult African Americans. There are 92 African American respondents in the general-population sample who are also part of the national sample of African Americans. Thus, in total, there are 1,608 adults (18 years of age or older) included in this study. This first release of the findings from the survey covers politics and the 2000 election. In the following months, the Joint Center will release findings on the other areas identified above. The survey methodology is described in an accompanying appendix.

POLITICS AND THE 2000 ELECTION

The 2000 presidential election promises to be one of the closest in recent history. In these circumstances, the views of different segments of the voting-age population could very easily sway the outcome. In the 1996 and 1998 elections, African American voters had an important impact in several key states, so their views of the 2000 presidential candidates and the programs that each is proposing are of particular news interest this year. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies has tracked African American public opinion since 1984, noting how their views of candidates, issues, and party politics compare with those of the general population. This document reports on the findings of the Joint Center's 2000 poll. Among the key findings this year are the following:

- Education, health care, Social Security, and taxes—all issues that have been publicly debated by the candidates— are ranked by our respondents as the most important public issues.
- African Americans have been viewing Vice President Al Gore increasingly favorably, 86 percent rating him favorably this year, up from 69 percent in 1999.
- Texas Governor George W. Bush is viewed less favorably by African Americans this year than in 1999, dropping from 43 percent favorable in 1999 to 29 percent this year.

- African Americans continue to be supportive of school vouchers, one of Bush's education proposals, with respondents in households with children being most supportive.
- Bush's plan for Social Security reform through partial privatization received support from 45 percent of African Americans, but Gore's Retirement Savings Plus had much greater support among this segment of the population (76 percent).

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies' 2000 National Opinion Poll reveals an interesting mix of continuity and change from last year's survey. The black and (largely white) general populations of the United States continue to be similar in their views on a number of subjects—but significantly divergent on others.

The Joint Center's 2000 survey was fielded shortly after Labor Day and the start of the political season, when Americans began paying more serious attention to the forthcoming election. In rating the country's most important national problems, both black respondents and those in the general population identified education and healthcare issues at the top of their lists. The survey results also provide strong evidence that African Americans will continue to support the Democratic party in November 2000. Also—and quite surprisingly—the respondents in the survey, both black and white, voiced reservations about the administration of capital punishment in the United States.

Responses to several survey questions reveal some racial and ideological divides that characterize the 2000 political environment. African Americans, liberals, and moderates view the current presidential administration and its policies favorably; conservatives do not. Christian conservatives, in particular, think that the country is on the wrong track; African Americans, liberals, and moderates think the country is headed in the right direction.

The Joint Center's 2000 National Opinion Poll shows continued strong African American support for President Clinton—both personally and with regard to his job performance. Vice President Al Gore also continues to be viewed favorably by African Americans; since last year his favorability ratings have risen to a level almost as high as President Clinton's. Gore's Republican rival, Texas Governor George W. Bush, is not viewed as favorably by blacks as is Gore, and his favorability ratings among blacks have declined substantially since the Joint Center's 1999 survey: in 1999 Governor Bush's favorable ratings were greater than his unfavorable ratings among African Americans; in the 2000 survey his unfavorable ratings are almost double his favorable ratings.

For the third year in a row, proportionally more African Americans than whites reported that they were financially better off than a year before. The 1998 survey represented the first time in a Joint Center National Opinion Poll that a higher proportion of African Americans than whites said they were financially better off than in the previous year.

Finally, in a hypothetical match-up between Bush and Gore, the vice president tops the Texas governor 74 to 9 percent. Ralph Nader was the choice of two percent of the respondents, and no African American respondents said they would vote for Pat Buchanan. Also, black voters indicated a strong preference for a Democratic Congress; 84 percent said they would vote for the Democratic candidate in their congressional district, and only 7 percent opted for the Republican candidate.

MOST IMPORTANT NATIONAL PROBLEM (TABLE 1)

In the 2000 survey, blacks and whites identified the most important national problems with greater similarity than they did in last year's survey. This greater similarity is likely influenced by the agenda-setting aspects of a presidential election campaign. Among African Americans, the highest rated problems were education (26 percent) and prescription drugs and healthcare issues (18 percent). (In last year's survey, healthcare issues were not identified as a priority.) These problems were followed by crime (16 percent), which declined substantially among blacks since last year, and economic problems (14 percent). Social Security and Medicare were identified by a significant number of African Americans for the first time in recent years, with eight percent saying they represented the most important national problem (again, this is likely an instance of the agenda-setting of the presidential campaign). Finally, four percent of blacks identified moral decline and three percent identified gun control as the most important national problem.

The most often mentioned problem among whites (24 percent) was education, followed by prescription drugs and healthcare, which were identified by 18 percent of whites as being the most important national problem. Twelve percent of whites said moral decline is the most important national problem; 7 percent said taxes, 7 percent said crime, and 6 percent said Social Security and Medicare are the most important national problems.

PRESIDENTIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL JOB RATINGS (TABLES 2 AND 3)

President Clinton's job approval ratings were considerably better than Congress's among both blacks and whites. Among blacks, 83 percent gave Clinton excellent or good marks, while 16 percent rated his job performance as fair or poor; in 1999 Clinton's job approval rating among blacks was 77 percent. A bare majority of whites, 50 percent, rated Clinton's job performance as excellent or good, while 47 percent rated him fair or poor; Clinton's ratings from whites in the Joint Center's 1999 survey were 43 percent excellent/good vs. 56 percent fair/poor.

Among blacks, the elderly rated Clinton's job performance very highly (92 percent excellent or good) as did blacks living in the Northeast (96 percent); every black subgroup rated Clinton's job performance favorably. Among the general population, Clinton fared best with liberals (73 percent excellent or good), moderates (61 percent), and Northeasterners (61 percent). He fared poorest with conservatives, both secular (66 percent fair or poor) and Christian (62 percent fair or poor).

Congress's job ratings were poorer than Clinton's with all groups but, like Clinton's, improved from last year's levels. Blacks and whites gave Congress similar job approval ratings. Among blacks, 35 percent gave Congress an excellent or good job approval rating, and 61 percent rated Congress's work as fair or poor; in last year's survey the parallel ratings were 27 vs. 67 percent. Among whites, 34 percent rated Congress's work as excellent or good, while 60 percent gave Congress fair or poor marks; in 1999, whites rated Congress 24 vs. 71 percent.

Among the subgroups of the black population, the most significant subgroup differences were between men (30 percent excellent/good vs. 65 percent fair/poor) and women (39 vs. 58 percent), who gave Congress somewhat less negative marks; young adults (40 vs. 55 percent) and low-income respondents (41 vs. 51 percent) were also somewhat less negative in their evaluation. In the general population, men differed from women in ways similar to their differences among black respondents, and respondents from the West rated Congress quite poorly (73 percent fair or poor).

FINANCIAL STATUS (TABLE 4)

In 1998, for the first time in a Joint Center survey, blacks responded more favorably than whites when asked whether they were financially better or worse off (or doing the same) than in the previous year. In the 2000 Joint Center National Opinion Poll, African Americans for the third year in a row responded more favorably than whites to this question. Further, in the 2000 survey, the differences between blacks and whites were greater than in 1999. Among blacks, 45 percent indicated that they were financially better off, while 10 percent indicated that they were worse off (the balance of the respondents said they were doing the same). In contrast, 27 percent of whites said they were better off, and 17 percent indicated that they were worse off. In last year's survey the better vs. worse responses were 39 to 11 percent for blacks and 33 to 13 percent for whites.

Among every subgroup of the African American population in the 2000 survey, more respondents said they were financially better off than the year before. Especially positive responses to this question were given by younger black adults (18-25 years: 61 vs. 9 percent better vs. worse; 26-35 years: 59 vs. 3 percent), those living in the Northeast (52 vs. 8 percent), those with a college degree (52 vs. 5 percent), and upper-income blacks (\$60-\$90,000 a year: 53 vs. 6 percent; \$90,000+: 68 vs. 3 percent).

In the general population, low-income persons and seniors were the only subgroups whose "worse off" responses outnumbered their "better off" responses (21 vs. 25 percent for low-income persons and 11 vs. 19 percent for seniors); Christian conservatives were equally split between those saying they were better off and those saying they were worse off (at 22 percent).

DIRECTION THE COUNTRY IS GOING (TABLE 5)

Consistent with the generally favorable economic situation, when asked if the country is going in the right direction, whites and blacks both responded positively. Equal numbers of African Americans and whites (56 percent) believe that the country is generally going in the right direction. In the 1999 Joint Center survey, a majority of blacks (55 percent) and whites (51 percent) thought things in the country had "pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track".* Equal numbers of blacks and whites (34 percent) gave the "wrong track" assessment in the 2000 survey.

Among blacks, men (60 percent), seniors (63 percent), those living in the Northeast (69 percent), and middle-income (\$35-\$60,000) respondents (61 percent) were the most likely to respond that the country was going in the right direction. Young adults (18-35 years) were the least optimistic, with roughly equal numbers split between right direction and wrong track (45 vs. 43 percent). Christian conservatives (46 vs. 43 percent), those without a high school diploma (49 vs. 42 percent), and low-income respondents (47 vs. 41 percent) were also among the less optimistic subgroups.

In the general population, Christian conservatives (41 percent right direction vs. 51 percent wrong track) were most likely to believe that the country is on the wrong track. Young adults (67 percent right direction), seniors (63 percent), those living in the Northeast (63 percent) and West (63 percent), liberals (66 percent), and college graduates (63 percent) were most likely to believe the country was on the right track.

* It should be noted that the Joint Center's 1999 survey was fielded shortly after the Columbine High School shootings.

FEELINGS TOWARD PUBLIC FIGURES (TABLE 6)

The respondents in the survey were asked to rate their feelings toward eight public figures, three of whom were black and seven of whom were white. The Joint Center has included these ratings since 1992, with certain prominent national leaders included in each survey (Bill Clinton, Jesse Jackson, Colin Powell), and with others rotated in (Al Sharpton and Joseph Lieberman) or out (Bill Bradley and Bob Dole) over time. Included in these questions is an explicit name recognition feature; prior to examining how the public feels about these figures, their level of public recognition is noted. In the black population, Bill Clinton, Al Gore, George W. Bush, and Jesse Jackson are universally known; Colin Powell is unknown to 4 percent of the respondents; Pat Buchanan is unknown to 7 percent, Al Sharpton to 9 percent, Ralph Nader to 11 percent, Joseph Lieberman to 13 percent, and Dick Cheney to 15 percent (these percentages reflect the response “never heard of him”). In the general population, Clinton, Gore, Bush, and Jackson are universally known to the public; Buchanan is unknown to 3 percent of the general population respondents; Powell is unknown to 5 percent, Nader to 6 percent, Cheney to 7 percent, Lieberman to 9 percent, and Sharpton to 23 percent.

BILL CLINTON

Bill Clinton continues to be rated very favorably by African Americans, with 91 percent favorable to 5 percent unfavorable ratings. These ratings are indistinguishable from his consistently outstanding ratings in previous surveys. All subgroups of the black population rate Clinton very favorably. Among respondents in the general population, Clinton’s ratings were unchanged from the 1999 survey, with 51 percent rating him favorably and 43 percent rating him unfavorably.

AL GORE

In the 2000 survey, Vice President Al Gore was rated much more favorably by African Americans than in last year’s survey, with 86 percent rating him favorably and only 7 percent rating him unfavorably; in the 1999 survey, 69 percent rated him favorably, while 17 percent rated him unfavorably. This indicates that Gore has connected with African Americans during the presidential campaign; his ratings in 2000 were nearly as favorable as President Clinton’s. In the general population, Gore’s favorable to unfavorable ratings were 62 to 30 percent.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Texas Governor George W. Bush’s ratings among African Americans plunged between the 1999 and 2000 surveys. In the 1999 survey he received somewhat favorable ratings from African Americans, with 43 percent favorable and 34 percent unfavorable. In the 2000 Joint Center survey, Bush’s favorable ratings among blacks fell to 29 percent, and, most significantly, his unfavorable ratings substantially increased to 55 percent. Over the course of the 2000 presidential campaign, as Bush became better known to African Americans, their views of him became more negative. The only black subgroup that viewed Bush favorably were Republicans (87 percent favorable); however, Republicans represented only 4 percent of the sample.

JOSEPH LIEBERMAN AND DICK CHENEY

The two parties’ vice-presidential nominees remain unknown (apart from name identification) to significant portions of both the black and the general population. About two-in-five African Ameri-

cans and three-in-ten in the general population indicated that they did not know enough about the vice-presidential nominees to express their feelings about them. Among African Americans who know something of him, Joseph Lieberman is viewed quite positively, with 43 percent rating him favorably and 10 percent rating him unfavorably. Dick Cheney's unfavorable ratings are higher than his favorable ratings by a small margin, with 23 percent of blacks rating him favorably and 28 percent rating him unfavorably. Among those in the general population, Lieberman's and Cheney's ratings are similar (42 and 43 percent favorable), with Lieberman having a slight edge due to his lower unfavorable ratings (14 vs. 21 percent).

RALPH NADER AND PAT BUCHANAN

The two most prominent third party nominees—Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan—are somewhat better known than Lieberman and Cheney. Ralph Nader remains unknown (apart from name identification) to one-third of blacks and 22 percent of those in the general populations; Pat Buchanan is unknown to a quarter of African Americans and 13 percent of those in the general population. While Ralph Nader is viewed relatively positively among those in both the black and the general populations, Pat Buchanan is viewed very negatively in both. Among blacks, Ralph Nader's favorable ratings exceed his unfavorable ratings 40 to 19 percent, while Buchanan's unfavorable ratings are twice as large as his favorable ratings—43 to 22 percent. In the general population, Nader's favorable ratings exceed his unfavorable ratings 43 to 25 percent, while Buchanan's unfavorable ratings are more than twice as large as his favorable ratings—56 to 24 percent.

JESSE JACKSON

As in the Joint Center's 1999 national survey, in 2000 Jesse Jackson was rated very favorably by African Americans and more favorably than not among those in the general population. Among blacks, Jackson's favorable ratings outnumbered his unfavorable ratings by nine to one (83 to 9 percent). Among those in the general population, Jackson's favorable ratings were 47 percent, and his unfavorable ratings were 38 percent.

COLIN POWELL

Retired General Colin Powell continues to be rated very favorably by every subgroup of the black and general populations of the United States. On balance, Powell was the most favorably viewed figure in the survey; this was also the case in the Joint Center's 1999 National Opinion Poll. Powell's ratings were quite similar among those in both the black (70 percent favorable) and the general populations (76 percent favorable); 12 percent of blacks and 8 percent of those in the general population rated Powell unfavorably.

AL SHARPTON

Since the Reverend Al Sharpton has received considerable media attention in the past year, his name was included in this year's survey in order to assess how the public views him. About one-quarter of African Americans and 44 percent of the general population do not know enough about Sharpton to give their views of him. Among blacks, Sharpton is viewed somewhat more favorably than not, with 37 percent rating him favorably and 29 percent rating him unfavorably. Among those in the general population, Sharpton's unfavorables exceed his favorables by four to one (41 to 10 percent). In the Northeast (where Sharpton lives) only 11 percent of blacks and 22 percent of those in the general

population are unaware of him. Among African Americans living in the Northeast, his favorable ratings are substantially higher than nationally, with 52 percent favorable vs. 29 percent unfavorable; among those in the general population living in the Northeast, Sharpton's ratings are 16 percent favorable and 55 percent unfavorable.

BLACK PARTISANSHIP (TABLE 7)

There was modest change in black partisan identification (toward the Democrats) since the Joint Center's 1999 National Opinion Poll. In 2000, 74 percent of African Americans were self-identified Democrats (up from 68 percent in 1999); 20 percent were self-identified Independents (down from 23 percent in 1999); and 4 percent were self-identified Republicans (down from 5 percent in 1999). Among African Americans, over the past few years there has been a small shift away from identifying with the Democratic party; however, there has been a concomitant decline in the (already quite small) percentage of black self-identified Republicans.

The change in self-identified partisanship among African Americans has moved toward independence and away from both major national parties. Among all subgroups of the black population, the most independent is the 18-to-25-year-old age cohort, among whom 36 percent identify themselves as independent (up from 30 percent in the 1999 survey). African Americans of retirement age continue to remain Democratic stalwarts, with 82 percent identifying Democrats and only 1 percent as Republicans. In the 2000 survey, the most noteworthy shifts in black partisan identification have occurred among black baby boomers and those of pre-retirement age (51-64 years). In the 1999 survey, 66 percent of black baby boomers and 69 percent of those of pre-retirement age identified themselves as Democrats. In the 2000 survey, 79 percent of black baby boomers and 77 percent of those of pre-retirement age identified with the Democrats.

PARTIES AND ISSUES (TABLE 8)

The respondents were asked which of the two major political parties has the better approach to dealing with a variety of different issues. Among African Americans (while there is some differentiation of the parties on issues) the Democratic party is clearly seen as the party with a better approach to dealing with the issues that were presented. African Americans favor the Democrats over the Republicans on Social Security (76 to 8 percent), race relations (79 to 6 percent), national security (58 to 21 percent), keeping unemployment low (78 to 8 percent), health care (76 to 8 percent), cutting taxes (64 to 15 percent), and paying down the national debt (68 to 12 percent). Among blacks, the Democrats are most favored over the GOP on race relations and least favored on national security issues.

Respondents in the general population favor the Democrats over the Republicans on Social Security (40 to 30 percent), race relations (45 to 20 percent), keeping unemployment low (51 to 26 percent), health care (46 to 27 percent), and paying down the national debt (44 to 30 percent). The Republicans are favored over the Democrats on national security (49 to 25 percent) and cutting taxes (42 to 31 percent).

2000 PRESIDENTIAL VOTE (TABLE 9)

When asked their presidential preference, 74 percent of African Americans chose Gore and 9 percent chose Bush; 2 percent of blacks surveyed indicated they support Ralph Nader and no blacks said they

would vote for Pat Buchanan. All subgroups of the black population strongly backed Gore over Bush. The most politically prominent (due to high voter turn-out rates) black subgroup—senior citizens—were Gore’s strongest supporters (85 percent for Gore and 6 percent for Bush).

Among the general population, Gore and Bush were tied at 39 percent, with Bush’s strongest support coming from whites (42 to 34 percent), men (45 to 35 percent), “Generation X” (i.e., 26-35 years) (47 to 32 percent), seniors (46 to 30 percent), respondents from the South (50 to 35 percent), conservatives (58 to 20 percent), and high-income respondents (\$60-\$90,000: 44 to 34 percent; \$90,000+: 48 to 28 percent). Gore was supported by women (42 to 33 percent), those of pre-retirement age (48 to 28 percent), Northeasterners (48 to 24 percent), liberals (61 to 20 percent), moderates (45 to 32 percent), and lower-income respondents (\$15-\$35,000: 49 to 30 percent).

2000 CONGRESSIONAL VOTE (TABLE 10)

When asked about their voting intentions in their home congressional districts, 84 percent of African Americans said they were voting for the Democratic candidate, and 7 percent said they were voting for the Republican candidate. All subgroups of the black population strongly backed the Democrats over the Republicans in House contests, with senior citizens most Democratic (92 percent).

Among the general population, the Democrats were favored over the Republicans by 44 to 36 percent. The GOP was supported mostly by whites (40 to 39 percent), men (45 to 40 percent), Generation X (i.e., 26-35 years) (42 to 36 percent), seniors (43 to 40 percent), secular conservatives (47 to 28 percent), Christian conservatives (60 to 30 percent), and high-income respondents (\$60-\$90,000: 38 to 37 percent; \$90,000+: 45 to 38 percent). The Democrats were supported by women (49 to 28 percent), young adults (50 to 26 percent), baby boomers (48 to 34 percent), those of pre-retirement age (47 to 34 percent), Northeasterners (44 to 25 percent), Westerners (49 to 27 percent), liberals (61 to 18 percent), moderates (50 to 27 percent), and those making less than \$60,000 (47-54 percent Democratic vs. 28-35 percent Republican).

CAMPAIGN ISSUES (TABLE 11)

The respondents were asked their views on four issues that have been raised during the 2000 presidential campaign: education, retirement policy, healthcare, and the death penalty.

SCHOOL VOUCHERS (TABLE 11A)

A majority (57 percent) of African Americans and a plurality (49 percent) of those in the general population said they supported school vouchers; 37 percent of blacks and 44 percent of those in the general population oppose school vouchers. Among blacks, those under 35 (75 percent), black Republicans (69 percent), and those from households with children (74 percent) are most supportive of vouchers; blacks over 50 (44 percent) and respondents with no children in the household (49 percent) were the least supportive of vouchers. In the general population, respondents between 26 and 35 (60 percent), respondents from households with children (58 percent), and Christian conservatives (57 percent) strongly supported vouchers.

BUSH’S SOCIAL SECURITY PROPOSAL (TABLE 11B)

Bush’s Social Security proposal (involving partial privatization of Social Security) received plurality support among African Americans (45 percent for and 42 percent against) and strong majority support among the general population (64 percent for and 28 percent against). Among blacks, those under 50 (55 percent) and black Republicans (65 percent) were most in favor of Bush’s proposal; black seniors were the subgroup most opposed (22 percent favor and 63 percent opposed). In the general population, those under 35 (77 percent), Republicans (79 percent), secular conservatives (81 percent), and those in the highest income group (75 percent) were most supportive of Bush’s proposal; those over age 50 (53 percent), Democrats (50 percent), and those in the lowest income group (48 percent) were least supportive of Bush’s proposal.

GORE’S RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLUS (TABLE 11C)

Among African Americans, there was much greater support for Gore’s “Retirement Savings Plus” proposal than for Bush’s plan; in the general population, Bush’s plan was favored over Gore’s, but by only a small margin. Among blacks, 76 percent supported Gore’s plan, while 16 percent were opposed. In the general population, 59 percent supported Gore’s plan, and 32 percent were opposed. In the general population, those younger than 35 (67 percent), Northeasterners (75 percent), Democrats (76 percent), and liberals (74 percent) were most supportive of Gore’s proposal; senior citizens (35 percent), Republicans (42 percent), and Christian conservatives (43 percent) were least supportive. There were no significant black subgroup differences on support for Gore’s proposal.

HMO REFORM (TABLE 11D)

Large majorities among the black (64 percent) and general (64 percent) populations thought receiving quality care from health maintenance organizations (HMOs) was a major problem. Among blacks, college graduates (72 percent) and those with the highest income (78 percent) were most likely to identify quality care from HMOs as a major problem; blacks between 18 and 25 (42 percent) were least likely to identify HMOs as a problem. In the general population, women (71 percent) were more likely than men (53 percent) to identify care at HMOs as a major problem, and Democrats (71 percent) were more likely than Republicans (54 percent) to identify care at HMOs as a problem. Those of pre-retirement age (73 percent) also strongly believed that care at HMOs was a major problem.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE DEATH PENALTY (TABLE 11E)

The respondents in the survey were presented with two statements on the administration of the death penalty and asked which was closest to their views. One statement asserted that there are enough procedural safeguards in the system now (Governor Bush’s position), and the other asserted that executions should be suspended until the system can be shown to be fair (Illinois Governor Ryan’s position). A large majority (75 percent) of African Americans believe that executions should be suspended until the system can be shown to be fair; there were no subgroup differences due to the near unanimity of opinion among blacks. A bare majority (50 percent) of the general population also believed that executions should be suspended until the system can be shown to be fair; 38 percent of the general population believed there are sufficient safeguards at the present time to ensure fairness. In the general population, those between 18-25 years (63 percent), those over 50 years (57-60 percent), Northeasterners (58 percent), Westerners (64 percent), Democrats (58 percent), those

without a high school diploma (62 percent), and those in the lowest income group (63 percent) were the most supportive of suspending executions until the system can be shown to be fair. Southerners (41 percent) and Republicans (43 percent) were the least supportive.

Appendix METHODOLOGY

The survey was designed and the questionnaire developed at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. The overall study design consisted of two groups: a national general population sample of 850 and a national sample of African Americans of 850. There are 92 African American respondents in the general population sample who are also part of the national sample of African Americans. Thus, in total, 1,608 adults, 18 years of age or older, are included in this study.

The survey results are based upon (random digit dialing) telephone interviews with 1,678 adults that were conducted between September 15, 2000 and October 9, 2000. The field work was done by Research America of Philadelphia, PA. Randomized procedures were used to select respondents within each household reached by telephone, and after the initial call, there were at least three “call-backs” if no interview was completed.

The results of this survey for both the general population sample and the black population sample should be interpreted with a statistical margin of error of ± 3.5 percentage points. That is, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the statements made based upon the procedures employed have a random error (sampling error, random measurement error, etc.) component of ± 3.5 percentage points. Actually, this survey, like all surveys, does not have a margin of error. The individual items in the survey have margins of error; the margin of error for a question is based upon its sample variance, the level of confidence desired (e.g., 95 percent), and upon sample size.¹ The ± 3.5 percentage points are a conservative estimate of margin of error (i.e., many items—especially those where large majorities of either sample hold similar positions—have a margin of error much smaller than ± 3.5 percentage points).

In addition to the random error component in surveys, there are potentially non-random errors that may be present. While this survey is based upon random digit dialing techniques that effectively deal with potential problems in telephone surveys (such as unlisted numbers, new numbers, etc.), non-response in telephone surveys produces a variety of known (and probably some unknown) biases. Further, a telephone survey defines its population as those individuals who can be reached by telephone. Such a definition, of course, eliminates certain populations; for example, most homeless people, and others living in poverty who are unreachable by phone, are not part of the sample population. Thus, the statements made based upon this survey are most likely not applicable to homeless people, black or white.

During the field work phase of the survey, an effort was made to maximize the use of same-race interviewers, and a majority of the interviews were conducted with same-race interviewers (i.e., black interviewers for black respondents and white interviewers for white respondents).

1. A random sample is a random subset of a population. One makes observations on suitable units of a random sample in order to make statements about the population and to estimate the error associated with such statements. A common misconception regarding surveys and associated statistical theory is that “population” (or population size) is a factor in margin of error. This is not true. Population does not appear in the statistical formulation for margin of error.

Table 1
“What do you think is the single most important problem facing the country today?”

	Population					
	–Black–		–White–		–General–	
	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Education	25	26	23	24	24	24
Prescription drugs/healthcare	1	18	3	18	2	19
Crime, violence, drugs	26	16	13	7	14	9
Employment/economy (jobs, poverty, homelessness, hunger)	14	14	4	4	6	6
Social Security/Medicare	-	8	-	6	-	7
Morals/moral crisis (family values, corruption, scandals)	4	4	18	12	14	13
Gun control	5	3	5	1	5	1
Race relations/racism	9	2	1	-	2	1
Taxes	-	2	-	7	-	7
World affairs (foreign policy, terrorism, world economy, lack of leadership)	1	1	2	3	2	3
Other/none/don't know	23	6	31	18	31	10
(N =)	925	850	644	679	850	850

Table 2
**“How would you rate the job of President Clinton is doing?
 Is it excellent, good, only fair, or poor?”**

	Black Population				General Population			
	Excellent/ Good		Fair/ Poor	D/K	Excellent/ Good		Fair/ Poor	D/K
	%	%	%	(N)	%	%	%	(N)
Total	83	16	1	850	53	45	2	850
White	-	-	-	-	50	47	2	679
Men	82	16	2	367	50	47	3	396
Women	84	16	1	438	57	42	1	454
<u>AGE</u>								
18-25	82	15	3	76	57	43	-	72
26-35	75	24	-	148	48	52	1	151
36-50	82	16	2	234	57	42	1	277
51-64	85	14	1	173	59	39	2	172
65+	92	6	1	150	43	51	6	125
<u>REGION</u>								
Northeast	96	5	-	152	61	31	4	161
Midwest	78	20	2	149	51	48	-	251
South	80	18	1	444	50	47	3	272
West	87	13	-	105	50	48	2	166
<u>IDEOLOGY</u>								
<u>(SELF-IDENTIFIED)</u>								
Liberal	88	12	1	317	73	26	1	244
Moderate	87	13	1	215	61	37	1	234
Secular conservative	81	17	1	88	34	66	1	107
Christian conservative	76	23	2	188	34	62	4	207
<u>EDUCATION</u>								
Less than high school	81	18	-	77	50	49	2	65
High School graduate	84	16	-	268	58	41	2	229
Some college/tech	81	17	2	224	53	46	1	244
College Degree+	85	13	1	245	53	44	3	302
<u>ANNUAL INCOME</u>								
Less than \$15,000	83	16	2	64	59	36	5	56
\$15-\$35,000	83	16	2	179	58	38	3	152
\$35-\$60,000	88	11	1	188	54	45	1	186
\$60-90,000	81	18	1	139	56	43	1	183
More than \$90,000	84	16	-	37	48	49	3	92

Table 3

“How would you rate the job that Congress is doing? Is it excellent, good, only fair, or poor?”

	Black Population				General Population			
	Excellent/ Good %	Fair/ Poor %	D/K %	(N)	Excellent/ Good %	Fair/ Poor %	D/K %	(N)
Total	35	61	4	850	33	61	6	850
White	-	-	-	-	34	60	6	679
Men	30	65	6	367	30	65	5	396
Women	39	58	3	483	35	57	8	454
<u>AGE</u>								
18-25	40	55	5	76	41	56	3	72
26-35	28	69	3	148	45	51	5	151
36-50	37	61	3	234	32	62	6	277
51-64	34	61	4	173	25	69	7	172
65+	32	60	8	150	28	66	6	125
<u>REGION</u>								
Northeast	34	59	7	152	36	61	4	161
Midwest	29	69	1	149	39	53	7	251
South	38	58	4	444	34	62	5	272
West	32	62	7	105	19	73	9	166
<u>IDEOLOGY</u>								
<u>(SELF-IDENTIFIED)</u>								
Liberal	35	62	3	77	37	58	5	244
Moderate	38	56	6	268	31	60	9	234
Secular conservative	34	56	10	224	40	58	2	107
Christian conservative	32	66	2	245	29	66	5	207
<u>EDUCATION</u>								
Less than high school	38	52	10	77	39	57	14	65
High school graduate	36	60	4	268	34	57	8	229
Some college/tech	34	62	4	224	33	61	6	244
College degree+	33	66	2	245	32	65	3	302
<u>ANNUAL INCOME</u>								
Less than \$15,000	41	51	8	64	30	52	18	56
\$15-\$35,000	33	61	5	179	33	58	9	152
\$35-\$60,000	34	62	3	188	36	59	5	186
\$60-90,000	31	66	2	139	34	63	5	183
More than \$90,000	25	73	3	37	30	67	3	92

Table 4

“Would you say that you are financially better off, worse off, or about the same now as you were a year ago?”

	Black Population					General Population				
	Better	Same	Worse	D/K	(N)	Better	Same	Worse	D/K	(N)
	%	%	%	%	(N)	%	%	%	%	(N)
Total	45	44	10	1	850	29	54	16	1	850
White	-	-	-	-	-	27	56	17	1	679
Men	50	40	10	-	367	27	56	16	1	396
Women	41	47	11	2	483	30	53	16	1	454
<u>AGE</u>										
18-25	61	30	9	-	76	33	56	8	3	72
26-35	59	38	3	-	148	33	53	14	-	151
36-50	40	45	14	1	234	30	52	18	-	277
51-64	39	48	11	2	173	30	55	13	1	172
65+	33	53	12	2	150	11	67	19	2	125
<u>REGION</u>										
Northeast	52	39	8	1	152	30	58	12	-	161
Midwest	44	48	8	-	149	28	55	17	-	251
South	44	43	12	1	444	29	51	17	3	272
West	38	51	10	1	105	27	54	19	-	166
<u>IDEOLOGY</u>										
<u>(SELF-IDENTIFIED)</u>										
Liberal	53	39	7	1	317	35	51	14	1	244
Moderate	45	44	10	1	215	34	50	15	-	234
Secular conservative	36	53	10	1	88	20	64	14	2	107
Christian conservative	36	49	13	-	188	22	55	22	1	207
<u>EDUCATION</u>										
Less than high school	32	53	13	2	77	25	60	15	-	65
High school graduate	39	46	14	1	268	27	55	17	1	229
Some college/tech	48	42	10	-	224	25	56	18	-	244
College degree+	52	42	5	1	245	33	51	15	1	302
<u>ANNUAL INCOME</u>										
Less than \$15,000	31	47	20	2	64	21	52	25	2	56
\$15-\$35,000	38	49	13	1	179	22	58	18	2	152
\$35-\$60,000	51	39	9	-	188	33	52	15	1	186
\$60-\$90,000	53	40	6	2	139	35	51	14	-	183
More than \$90,000	68	30	3	-	37	32	55	13	-	92

Table 5

“Do you feel things in the country are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?”

	Black Population				General Population			
	Right Direction	Wrong Track	D/K	(N)	Right Direction	Wrong Track	D/K	(N)
	%	%	%	(N)	%	%	%	(N)
Total	56	34	10	850	56	34	10	850
White	-	-	-	-	57	34	9	679
Men	60	27	12	367	58	33	9	396
Women	53	39	8	483	54	36	10	454
<u>AGE</u>								
18-25	45	43	12	76	67	25	8	72
26-35	50	43	7	148	53	36	11	151
36-50	59	32	9	234	54	34	13	277
51-64	55	34	11	173	53	41	6	172
65+	63	26	11	150	63	27	10	125
<u>REGION</u>								
Northeast	69	23	8	152	63	26	11	161
Midwest	44	42	14	149	54	38	8	251
South	55	35	10	444	49	39	11	272
West	59	34	7	105	63	30	8	166
<u>IDEOLOGY</u>								
<u>(SELF-IDENTIFIED)</u>								
Liberal	58	30	11	317	66	25	10	244
Moderate	60	30	10	215	62	28	10	234
Secular conservative	60	33	7	88	50	36	14	107
Christian conservative	46	43	11	188	41	51	8	207
<u>EDUCATION</u>								
Less than high school	49	42	9	77	45	46	9	65
High school graduate	56	32	10	268	52	36	12	229
Some college/tech	56	32	12	224	53	37	10	244
College degree+	59	31	10	245	63	29	8	302
<u>ANNUAL INCOME</u>								
Less than \$15,000	47	41	13	64	52	38	11	56
\$15-\$35,000	53	38	9	179	52	38	11	152
\$35-\$60,000	61	29	10	188	58	32	10	186
\$60-90,000	58	33	9	139	59	34	7	183
More than \$90,000	59	32	8	37	58	33	9	92

Table 6

“I’m going to read a list of names of people in public life. I’d like you to rate your feelings toward each one as either very favorable, favorable, unfavorable, or very unfavorable. If you haven’t heard about someone or don’t know enough about them to rate them, just say so?”

	Black Population				(N)	General Population				(N)
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	D/K		Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	D/K	
	%	%	%	%		%	%	%	%	
Bill Clinton	91	2	5	2	850	51	5	43	1	850
Al Gore	86	2	7	5		62	6	30	2	
George W. Bush	29	6	55	10		54	7	34	5	
Joe Lieberman	43	8	10	39		42	12	14	32	
Dick Cheney	23	8	28	41		43	9	21	27	
Ralph Nader	40	8	19	33		43	10	25	22	
Pat Buchanan	22	10	43	25		24	7	56	13	
Jesse Jackson	83	5	9	3		47	10	38	5	
Colin Powell	70	6	12	12		76	4	8	12	
Al Sharpton	37	10	29	24		10	5	41	44	

Table 7

“In politics, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, or an independent?”

	Black Population Only									
	Democratic		Independent		Republican		D/K		(N)	
	%		%		%		%		1999	2000
	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000
Total	68	74	23	20	5	4	5	2	925	850
AGE										
Ages 18-25	58	51	30	36	7	9	5	4	123	76
Ages 26-35	67	70	26	24	4	5	3	1	149	148
Ages 36-50	66	79	26	18	4	4	4	0	248	234
Ages 51-64	69	77	20	18	5	3	5	2	234	173
Ages 65+	80	82	13	13	4	1	4	4	140	150

Table 8

“Tell me which political party you think has the better approach to dealing with some different issues. Which party is better on the issue of....?”

	Black Population			(N)	General Population			(N)
	Democrats	Republicans	D/K		Democrats	Republicans	D/K	
	%	%	%		%	%	%	
Social Security	76	8	16	850	40	30	30	850
Race relations	79	6	16		45	20	35	
National security	58	21	21		25	49	27	
Keeping unemployment low	78	8	14		51	26	24	
Health care	76	8	16		46	27	28	
Cutting taxes	64	15	21		31	42	27	
Paying down the national debt	68	12	20		44	30	26	

Table 9

“Suppose the 2000 Presidential election were being held today. Among the four major nominees, Al Gore, George W. Bush, Ralph Nader, and Pat Buchanan, who would you like see win?”

	Black Population						General Population					
	Gore	Bush	Nader	Buchanan	D/K	(N)	Gore	Bush	Nader	Buchanan	D/K	(N)
	%	%	%	%	%	(N)	%	%	%	%	%	(N)
Total	74	9	2	-	14	850	39	39	4	2	16	850
White	-	-	-	-	-	-	34	42	4	3	16	679
Men	74	10	3	-	13	367	35	45	4	5	19	396
Women	74	8	2	-	16	483	42	33	5	-	15	454
AGE												
18-25	72	8	3	-	16	76	40	39	6	-	15	72
26-35	70	9	4	-	12	148	32	47	4	1	16	151
36-50	74	14	2	-	12	234	40	39	4	4	13	277
51-64	77	13	5	-	13	173	48	28	4	4	15	172
65+	85	6	-	-	13	150	30	46	6	-	18	125
REGION												
Northeast	79	11	3	-	7	152	48	24	6	2	20	161
Midwest	72	8	3	-	17	149	38	38	4	2	18	251
South	73	9	1	-	17	444	35	50	2	2	10	272
West	73	10	5	-	11	105	37	35	6	3	19	166
IDEOLOGY												
(SELF-IDENTIFIED)												
Liberal	77	9	3	-	12	317	61	20	5	-	13	244
Moderate	75	8	2	-	14	215	45	32	3	1	19	234
Secular conservative	72	10	7	-	11	88	21	58	7	2	13	107
Christian conservative	69	11	1	-	19	188	19	57	3	5	16	207
EDUCATION												
Less than high school	75	10	1	-	13	77	40	37	3	3	17	65
High school graduate	72	10	3	-	14	268	43	35	2	2	18	229
Some college/tech	74	8	1	-	16	224	37	40	5	2	15	244
College degree+	77	7	3	-	13	245	37	41	6	2	15	302
ANNUAL INCOME												
Less than \$15,000	78	5	-	-	17	64	55	29	4	-	13	56
\$15-\$35,000	70	11	1	-	18	179	49	30	3	1	16	152
\$35-\$60,000	75	11	4	-	11	188	42	36	3	2	17	186
\$60-90,000	77	9	1	-	13	139	34	44	5	3	14	183
More than \$90,000	81	5	-	-	14	37	28	48	7	1	16	92

Table 10

“Thinking about the U.S. House election this November, in the congressional district where you live, if that election were held today, for whom would you vote: the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?”

	Black Population				General Population			
	Democrat	Republican	D/K	(N)	Democrat	Republican	D/K	(N)
	%	%	%	(N)	%	%	%	(N)
Total	84	7	10	850	44	36	20	850
White	-	-	-	-	39	40	21	679
Men	83	9	8	367	40	45	15	396
Women	84	5	11	483	49	28	24	454
<u>AGE</u>								
18-25	79	14	7	76	50	26	24	72
26-35	81	10	9	148	36	42	21	151
36-50	87	6	7	234	48	34	18	277
51-64	81	6	13	173	47	34	19	172
65+	92	3	5	150	40	43	17	125
<u>REGION</u>								
Northeast	84	4	13	152	44	25	30	161
Midwest	79	9	12	149	42	40	18	251
South	84	7	9	444	44	43	13	272
West	88	7	6	105	49	27	23	166
<u>IDEOLOGY</u>								
<u>(SELF-IDENTIFIED)</u>								
Liberal	89	5	6	317	61	18	21	244
Moderate	85	5	10	215	50	27	23	234
Secular conservative	77	7	16	88	28	47	25	107
Christian conservative	76	13	11	188	30	60	10	207
<u>EDUCATION</u>								
Less than high school	77	10	13	77	51	29	20	65
High school Graduate	83	8	9	268	49	31	21	229
Some college/tech	83	8	9	224	41	37	21	244
College degree+	86	5	9	245	42	40	18	302
<u>ANNUAL INCOME</u>								
Less than \$15,000	80	6	14	64	54	30	16	56
\$15-\$35,000	81	8	11	179	53	28	19	152
\$35-\$60,000	83	8	9	188	47	35	18	186
\$60-90,000	86	8	6	139	37	38	25	183
More than \$90,000	92	-	8	37	38	45	17	92

Table 11
Campaign Issues

11a. “Would you support a voucher system where parents would get money from the government to send their children to the public, private, or parochial school of their choice?”

Black Population				General Population			
Yes	No	D/K		Yes	No	D/K	
%	%	%	(N)	%	%	%	(N)
57	37	6	850	49	44	7	850

11b. “Texas Governor Bush and others in both parties have proposed a reform of social security that would reduce the payroll tax by two percentage points and allow workers to put that money into a personal retirement account. Would you support or oppose such a proposal?”

Black Population				General Population			
Support	Oppose	D/K		Support	Oppose	D/K	
%	%	%	(N)	%	%	%	(N)
45	42	13	850	64	28	7	850

11c. “Vice President Gore has proposed a program called Retirement Savings Plus which would give people tax breaks to match their own retirement savings apart from Social Security. For low income people, the government would match these savings with up to \$3 for every dollar the family deposited into the account. Would you support or oppose such a proposal?”

Black Population				General Population			
Support	Oppose	D/K		Support	Oppose	D/K	
%	%	%	(N)	%	%	%	(N)
76	16	8	850	59	32	9	850

11d. “Congress is currently debating regulating Health Maintenance Organizations or HMOs in order to ensure that patients’ rights to quality care are protected. How big a problem do you think quality care at HMOs represents ñ is it a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem at all?”

Black Population					General Population				
Major	Minor	Not At All	D/K	(N)	Major	Minor	Not At All	D/K	(N)
%	%	%	%		%	%	%	%	
64	21	6	9	850	63	26	6	6	850

11e. “In the past year, serious questions have been raised about the fairness of the administration of the death penalty, with several persons released from death row when they were shown to be innocent. Which of the following statements is closest to your views: there are enough procedural safeguards in the system now, or executions should be suspended until the system can be shown to be fair.”

Black Population				General Population			
System OK	Suspend	D/K	(N)	System OK	Suspend	D/K	(N)
%	%	%		%	%	%	
15	75	11	850	38	50	12	850