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The Maxwell Poll

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Inequality and the American Public:

Results of the Third Annual Maxwell Poll
Conducted September - October, 2006

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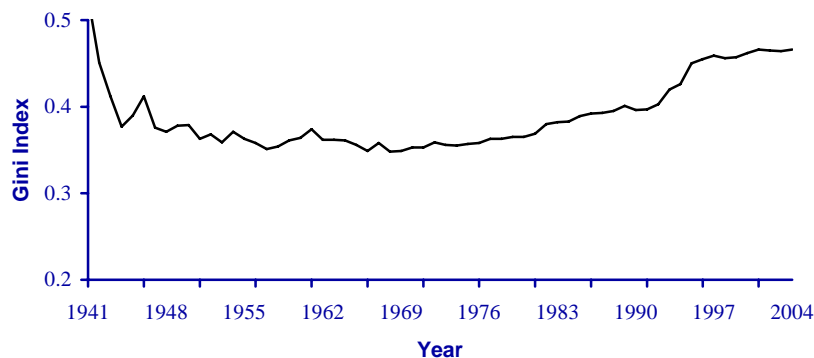
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I. Inequality Trends in American Society

The Steady Rise in Inequality

Inequality in the distribution of income continues to increase in American society. While inequality declined from the mid-1940s until the early 1970s, since then there has been a steady rise in inequality. Figure 1 presents one measure of inequality, the Gini index, for individual incomes for 1941 – 2004.¹ Higher values indicate greater inequality, and the inequality is now greater than it has been since the late 1940s.

**Inequality in the Distribution of Income,
(the Gini Index), 1941 to 2004**



Source: US Census Bureau Reports

Changes by Income Groups

How this greater inequality is coming about is particularly important. If people at all levels were enjoying income increases with those at the top experiencing larger increases, greater inequality might be somewhat more palatable to the public because everyone is better off. As Table 2 indicates, however, inequality in household incomes is increasing primarily

because over the last 25 or so years those with higher incomes are experiencing large increases in real incomes and those in the lower income brackets are experiencing very little growth in real incomes. The less affluent are not only being left behind relatively speaking but they are also experiencing very limited increases in income over a lengthy period of time. This is occurring even as more and more families have two adults earning incomes. In the 1960s about 20 percent of women were in the labor force. It is now almost 70 percent.² This increase in inequality is also occurring at a time when there is evidence of a decline in social mobility,³ and the costs of gaining access to and completing college are steadily increasing.⁴

**Pre-Tax Average Household Income by Income Groups (2003 dollars),
1979 – 2003.**

| Income quintile | 1979 | 2003 | % Change 1979 – 2003 | Dollar Change 1979 – 2003 |
|-----------------|---------|---------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Lowest fifth | 11,400 | 11,500 | .9 | \$100 |
| Second fifth | 25,400 | 28,500 | 12.2 | \$3,100 |
| Middle fifth | 38,100 | 44,700 | 17.3 | \$6,600 |
| Fourth fifth | 54,400 | 67,100 | 23.3 | \$12,700 |
| Top fifth | 108,000 | 156,500 | 44.9 | \$48,500 |
| Top 10 % | 138,400 | 214,400 | 54.9 | \$76,000 |
| Top 5 % | 189,600 | 305,100 | 60.9 | \$115,500 |
| Top 1 % | 449,200 | 830,400 | 84.7 | \$380,800 |

Source: Congressional Budget Office, *Effective Federal Tax Rates, 1979 to 2003*, Table 4C, December 2005.

This inequality and its steady growth in recent decades have the potential to have a significant impact on American society. Sustained increases in inequality may create doubts about the American Dream - the belief that “those who play by the rules and work hard have a chance to succeed.”⁵ Further, if income variations are associated with differences in use of government programs and with the inclination to participate, then greater inequality may

reflect a divided society – one segment doing well economically, having little use of and contact with government and participating consistently, and another less well off, using government but not registering its needs and views via political activity. All this may affect the political dialogue in American politics about how we should respond to greater inequality.

In an effort to explore the many aspects of inequality, the Maxwell School began an annual nationwide survey of Americans in October 2004. Respondents were asked about their economic situation and about their views on inequality and opportunity in American society. They were also asked their views about government programs and whether they or a family member has ever used various government programs.

This report is an attempt to assess the questions raised above. The report first focuses on perceptions of inequality - how much exists and whether it is increasing or decreasing. Second, it examines optimism about the future and views about what affects economic success in America. Third, it reviews how usage of government programs affects opinions about the efficacy of programs and the need for government to do more to address inequality. Fourth, it examines the representation of differing views about inequality in American politics. A crucial aspect of American democracy is how these views become represented through voting. The report addresses the questions: Do those concerned about inequality participate more or less, and how do differences in views about inequality play out in partisan politics?

This report provides an assessment of how the phenomenon of inequality is affecting American society. The specifics of how the surveys were conducted are explained in the appendix. The data sets and the frequencies of responses for each year are available at the web site: <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/Poll/CitizenshipPoll.htm>. The survey will be conducted annually.

II. Public Views about Inequality

Perceptions of Inequality Trends

While the evidence indicates inequality is increasing, do Americans recognize this trend? Over the last several years the percentage seeing inequality as increasing has grown from 46 % to 57 %. The percentage that sees it as decreasing is now 17 %. The sense that it will continue to increase has risen, from 37 % in 2004 to 55 % in 2006. Most respondents, 71 %, agree that we are becoming a society of the haves and have-nots and 23 % disagree. The percentage in 2006, 70.7 %, agreeing that we are becoming a society of the haves and have-nots has decreased from 2005 (75.2%) and is close to the 2004 percentage (68.8 %). The views that inequality is increasing and will continue to increase are widespread.

Over the last 5-10 years, do you think income inequality has increased, stayed the same, or decreased?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Increased | 45.6 | 41.8 | 56.7 |
| Stayed the same | 24.5 | 28.6 | 23.0 |
| Decreased | 23.8 | 24.5 | 16.3 |
| No opinion | 5.9 | 3.0 | 4.0 |

Over the next 5 years, do you think income differences will decline, stay about the same, or grow larger?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Increase | 37.4 | 49.2 | 54.7 |
| Stay the same | 34.7 | 30.9 | 26.3 |
| Decrease | 14.1 | 16.9 | 11.4 |
| No opinion | 13.8 | 3.0 | 7.7 |

Do you think we are becoming a society of the haves and the have-nots?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Yes | 68.8 | 75.2 | 70.7 |
| No | 26.4 | 20.5 | 23.4 |
| No opinion | 4.8 | 4.3 | 5.9 |

The 57 % who see inequality as having increased are more likely to think it is going to increase in the future (64 % will increase – 20 % will stay the same – 9 % will decrease), while the 23 % that think no change has occurred are more optimistic (47 % will increase – 42 % will stay the same – 10 % will decrease). Likewise, those who see a haves and have-nots society are more likely to expect inequality to increase in the future (62 % will increase – 20 % stay the same) than those who do not (39 % will increase – 45 % stay the same).

Concerns about Inequality

When asked about the extent of opportunity and upward and downward mobility in American society, opinions are divided and can be seen in different ways. The Maxwell Poll shows that 26 % think everyone in American society has an opportunity to succeed but 32 % think only some have this opportunity. There is more optimism than pessimism about mobility with 31 % thinking there is a lot of upward mobility and only 10 % thinking there is not much mobility. In addition, only 17 % see a lot of downward mobility and 28 % do not see much downward mobility. Most see the opportunity for upward mobility and few see a lot of downward mobility.

Views of inequality trends are related to perceptions of opportunity. Among those that agree that we are becoming a divided society, 18 % see everyone as having an opportunity and 43 % think only a few have opportunity. Among those who disagree, 47 % see opportunity available to everyone and 6 % think only a few have opportunity. Among those who think inequality will increase, 19 % see opportunity for everyone and 41 % think only some have an opportunity. In contrast, among those who think inequality will not change, 37 % think everyone has opportunity and 26 % think only some have opportunity. While there are differences of opinion about opportunity in American society, those optimistic and pessimistic are not strongly polarized. If all those who see us as becoming a

society of the haves and have-nots also saw little equality of opportunity *and* all those who do not see a growing divide saw widespread opportunity, conflicts over opportunity would likely become more intense.

Do you think everyone in American society has an opportunity to succeed, most do, or do only some have this opportunity?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Everyone | 28.8 | 30.3 | 25.8 |
| Most | 47.9 | 36.7 | 40.0 |
| Only some | 22.3 | 29.6 | 32.3 |
| No opinion | 1.0 | .4 | 1.9 |

How much upward mobility - children doing better than the family they come from – do you think there is in America: a lot, some, or not much?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| A lot | 34.8 | 34.1 | 30.7 |
| Some mobility | 53.0 | 48.9 | 55.9 |
| Not much | 10.4 | 14.8 | 9.7 |
| No opinion | 1.7 | 2.2 | 3.7 |

How about downward mobility in America - children doing worse than the family they come from – is there a lot, some, or not much?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| A lot | 16.9 | 16.9 | 17.2 |
| Some mobility | 54.1 | 50.2 | 48.2 |
| Not much | 24.9 | 28.3 | 27.5 |
| No opinion | 4.2 | 4.6 | 7.1 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

When asked about the seriousness of inequality, 52 % of Americans now see the extent of inequality as a serious problem, an increase from 41 % in 2004. Only 15 % see it as not much of a problem. The view that inequality is a serious problem is considerably greater (64 %) among those who see our society as becoming one of haves and have-nots. Among the 23 % who do not see us as becoming a divided society, 20 % see it as a serious problem,

37 % see it as somewhat of a problem, and 43 % see it as not much of a problem. Among those who think all have an opportunity to succeed, 37 % see inequality as a serious problem and 25 % see it as not much of a problem. In contrast, among those who think only some have an opportunity to succeed, 73 % see inequality as a serious problem and 2 % as not much of a problem.

Do you see the current extent of income inequality in our society as a serious problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Serious problem | 40.8 | 46.8 | 51.6 |
| Somewhat of a problem | 41.8 | 38.5 | 30.5 |
| Not much of a problem | 15.0 | 12.6 | 15.4 |
| No opinion | 2.4 | 2.0 | 2.6 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

What Creates Success

Essential to the American Dream is the notion that individuals are not bound by family background, and that individuals can make it on their own on the basis of hard work. If that is the case, then there should be significant possibilities for upward mobility. To assess views about these issues, we asked people several questions about the role of family background and hard work in the ability to achieve. When asked what affects “what you achieve in life, largely your family background, or your abilities and hard work,” only 13 % chose family background. Most respondents see abilities and hard work as more important than family background, but the percentage supporting the former has decreased in the last three years from 61 to 45 %. When asked if hard work and perseverance can overcome the different opportunities people begin with, 83 % agree and 15 % disagree.

Do you think what you achieve in life depends largely on your family background, or on your abilities and hard work?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Family background | 7.4 | 11.6 | 13.2 |
| Both | 29.6 | 27.6 | 39.3 |
| Abilities and hard work | 60.8 | 59.8 | 45.4 |
| No opinion | 2.2 | 1.1 | 2.1 |

Would you agree or disagree with the following: While people may begin with different opportunities, hard work and perseverance can usually overcome those disadvantages.

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Agree | 82.4 | 84.2 | 82.6 |
| Disagree | 13.1 | 12.5 | 14.6 |
| No opinion | 4.5 | 3.3 | 2.8 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

It is important to note the joint distribution of responses for these two questions. Among the 83 % who think hard work overcomes disadvantages, 52 % believe that abilities and hard work are more important and only 10 % think family background is more important. Among those who disagree that hard work can overcome disadvantages, 33 % think family background matters most and only 11 % think abilities and hard work matter most. Overall, 43 % of all respondents think hard work can overcome disadvantages *and* that hard work is most important. In contrast only 5 % of respondents disagree that hard work overcomes disadvantages *and* think family background matters most. The belief in the role of individualism in creating success is very strong.

Despite the strong pluralities of groups supporting individualism, there are differences of opinion about opportunity. As shown below, among those who think that family background matters, only 10 % think everyone has the opportunity to succeed, and

62 % think only some have. Among those who think hard work and abilities dominate, 32 % think everyone has an opportunity to succeed and 44 % say only some have this opportunity. The belief in individualism is strong, but limits are recognized, and that recognition is greater among those who attribute less impact to individual effort.

Opinions About Sources of Success by View about Existence of Opportunity

Percentages sum across to 100 for each category

| Achievement due to Family or Hard Work | Who has opportunity to succeed? | | |
|--|---------------------------------|------|-----------|
| | Everyone | Most | Only Some |
| Family | 10.0 | 28.1 | 61.9 |
| Both | 24.0 | 40.9 | 34.5 |
| Hard work - abilities | 32.2 | 44.3 | 22.3 |
| Hard work and Abilities Overcome Difficulties | | | |
| Agree | 27.4 | 44.3 | 26.6 |
| Disagree | 19.2 | 16.2 | 62.8 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

Work Effort and Fairness of Results

A fundamental tenet of the American Dream is that hard work will produce fair results. Americans are rarely asked about their own work effort and the fairness of the outcomes that occur. In an effort to incorporate the role of work effort, The Maxwell Poll asked people to rate their work effort and their sense that the outcomes have been fair. Half of the respondents say they have worked very hard. A majority of Americans say how life has worked out is fair with only 10 % saying life has not been very fair. Those who say they have worked very hard are as satisfied with fairness as those who say they have not worked hard. Perhaps most interesting, those who are younger – less than 45 – are less likely to see outcomes as being fair. Of the older respondents, those above the age of 45, 70 % say life has been fair. A smaller percentage, 53 % of those under the age of 45 say that life has been fair. How these views change, if at all, could have significant implications for whether or not inequality becomes more or less of a political issue over time.

If you were to rate your own work efforts in life, with 1 being not very hard and 5 being very hard, where would you place yourself?

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| 1 (not very hard) | 1.0 |
| 2 | 2.0 |
| 3 | 15.1 |
| 4 | 30.7 |
| 5 (very hard) | 50.0 |
| No response | .5 |

When you think about how you have fared economically in your life, given the effort you have put in and the talents you have, do you think the way things have worked out for you has been fair, only somewhat fair, or not very fair?

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Fair | 59.7 |
| Somewhat | 28.3 |
| Not very fair | 9.7 |
| No response | 2.3 |

Optimism about the Future

Not only do respondents believe that hard work and abilities are primary in determining success, Americans' views of their own situation and of the future are fairly positive. 52 % say they are better off than their parents and only 17 % say they are worse off. When asked how they have fared over the last several years, 41 % say they are better off and 24 % say they are worse off. When asked how they are faring relative to others, 32 % say they are doing better than others and only 10 % say they are doing worse. Finally, when asked about how they think they will do in the next several years, 50 % think their situation will get better and only 13 % think they will do worse. While inequality may be steadily but gradually increasing in American society, most respondents have a relatively positive sense of their own situation and their prospects for the future.

The Maxwell Poll asked for opinions on economic situation compared to parents. In general, most respondents believe they are better off than their parents, 52 %. People do have very different experiences in life and this does affect assessments of American society. Among the 41 % who say that their situation has improved over the last several years, 66 % say they are better off than their parents. Among those who say their situation has gotten worse over the last several years, 43 % say they are better off than their parents, and 29 % say they are worse off than their parents. Among those who are better off than their parents, 31 % see opportunity for everyone, while only 17 % of those worse off than their parents see opportunity for everyone. Among those who are better off than their parents, 36 % see inequality as a serious problem. In contrast, among those worse off than their parents, 76 % see inequality as a serious problem.

Compared to your parents, are you better off economically, about the same, or worse off?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Better | 57.3 | 50.1 | 51.6 |
| Same | 24.1 | 27.5 | 28.7 |
| Worse | 16.5 | 20.6 | 17.3 |
| No response | 2.1 | 1.8 | 2.4 |

Over the last several years has your economic situation improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Improved | 48.7 | 47.9 | 40.8 |
| Stayed same | 30.2 | 26.0 | 35.2 |
| Gotten worse | 20.3 | 25.8 | 23.8 |
| No response | .8 | .3 | .3 |

Over the last 5 years, when you compare your economic situation to how others in our society are doing, do you think you are doing better than average, about the same, or worse than average?

| | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Better | 38.7 | 32.4 |
| Same | 52.6 | 55.9 |
| Worse | 7.8 | 10.1 |
| No response | .9 | 1.5 |

Over the next several years, do you think your economic situation is likely to improve, stay the same, or get worse?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Improve | 61.6 | 57.9 | 49.7 |
| Stay the same | 23.3 | 28.9 | 34.8 |
| Get worse | 9.9 | 12.3 | 13.4 |
| No response | 5.3 | .9 | 2.1 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

These results are important for public debates about inequality. There are divisions but also some commonalities. Those better off relative to their parents and whose recent experience has been positive are less concerned about inequality. But their positive

experience has not resulted in their being unconcerned about inequality. Substantial percentages of those better off recognize the problem. Likewise, those who have had a negative economic experience have not become thoroughly negative about the existence of opportunity. For both groups strong reactions are relatively tempered. Again, the sense that inequality is a problem is widespread.

In summary, there is concern about inequality. There is a sense that it has increased and is likely to in the future, and a substantial percentage sees it as a serious problem or somewhat of a problem. Most respondents do not think that everyone has the opportunity to succeed, but there is a widespread belief that individual abilities and hard work are the primary sources of success. Most think there is mobility, they have experienced such mobility, and they think it will occur in the future.

Class and Views about Inequality

With inequality increasing, if views about this differ significantly by income, it could provide the basis for significant class-based political divisions. As the following table indicates, this is not the case. There are differences by income in the conclusion that only some have opportunity and that we are becoming a society of the haves and have-nots, but the differences are not large.

Income and Views about Inequality

| | Who has opportunity in American society? | | |
|--------------------|---|------|-----------|
| | All | Most | Just some |
| Less than \$50,000 | 18.2 | 38.1 | 39.5 |
| \$50 – 99,999 | 31.1 | 47.0 | 21.9 |
| \$100,000 + | 25.9 | 43.2 | 30.9 |

How serious of a problem is the current extent of income inequality in our society?

| | Serious | Somewhat | Not much |
|--------------------|---------|----------|----------|
| Less than \$50,000 | 53.7 | 19.9 | 21.0 |
| \$50 – 99,999 | 50.8 | 31.9 | 17.4 |
| \$100,000 + | 47.7 | 26.4 | 21.1 |

Are we becoming a society of haves and have-nots

| | Agree | Disagree |
|--------------------|-------|----------|
| Less than \$50,000 | 73.7 | 16.8 |
| \$50 – 99,999 | 65.1 | 31.4 |
| \$100,000 + | 69.8 | 26.4 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

III. Assessment and Use of Government Programs

Assessments of Government Programs

While individuals may recognize inequality and are concerned about it, do they see government as an effective way to address the problem of inequality, or do they think what matters most is individual motivation? Inequality is unlikely to become a political issue if people do not see government as relevant to addressing the issue. When the general question is asked whether government should do more to reduce inequality, 62 % say do more (an increase over the last two years) and only 15 % want government to do less. Despite this

generally positive reaction, when asked whether government programs help a lot or whether individual motivation is most important, 39 % think individual motivation is most important and only 31 % (a decrease over the last two years) think programs help a lot.

Should government do more to try to reduce inequality, about what it is doing now, or less that is done now?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| More | 53.8 | 55.5 | 61.5 |
| About what done now | 22.4 | 18.8 | 18.7 |
| Less | 17.5 | 21.2 | 14.5 |
| No opinion | 6.3 | 4.5 | 5.4 |

There are lots of government programs (Head Start for young children, loans to go to college, job training) to try to create more equality of opportunity. Generally speaking, do you think these programs help a lot or do you think the most important matter is individual motivation?

| | <u>2004</u> | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Programs help a lot | 40.6 | 37.4 | 30.8 |
| Both are important | 17.5 | 17.4 | 25.8 |
| Individual motivation most important | 38.7 | 45.4 | 38.8 |
| No opinion | 3.2 | 0 | 4.6 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

While it may appear that there is somewhat of a consensus that government should do more, reactions to this issue divide sharply based on whether people think inequality is a problem. Most, 76 %, of those who think only some have the opportunity to succeed want government to do more, compared to 53 % wanting more government action among those who think everyone has the opportunity to succeed. While 74 % of those who see inequality as a serious problem want more government action, among those who think inequality is not much of a problem, only 34 % want less government action.

Concern with Inequality and Support for Government

Should Government do More?

Who has opportunity in our society?

| | More | About same | Less |
|-----------|------|------------|------|
| Everyone | 53.0 | 26.4 | 14.6 |
| Most | 57.3 | 17.7 | 20.4 |
| Just some | 76.3 | 13.9 | 7.8 |

How serious of a problem is inequality?

| | More | About same | Less |
|----------|------|------------|------|
| Serious | 74.4 | 13.4 | 9.3 |
| Somewhat | 55.2 | 27.1 | 9.6 |
| Not much | 33.7 | 21.0 | 41.2 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

Use of Government Programs

While views about inequality are related to their views on government action, how do actual experiences with government programs affect assessments of programs? Surprisingly, few polls ask citizens about their use of programs, and those that do inquire only about present usage, not whether individuals have ever utilized the program. To explore how much people have used government programs, the Poll includes this question:

“Speaking of government programs, I’d like to ask you about your experience with several programs. Could you tell me for each of the following if you or anyone in your immediate household / family (such as your brothers and sisters, your children, or your parents), have *ever* received some benefit / payment from the program?”⁶

Respondents were then asked about usage of eighteen different government programs. The table below shows the percentage of respondents using each program (either they or they plus a family member) at some time during their or a family member's life. The usage rates of programs by respondents range from 37.4 % to 5.4%, depending on the program. Twenty-five percent or more of respondents have used the programs of mortgage interest deduction, Earned Income Tax Credit, Social Security, student loans, unemployment compensation, and grants to attend college. Citizens' experiences with government programs are even higher if one includes the percentage reporting that someone in the family used the program (not shown).

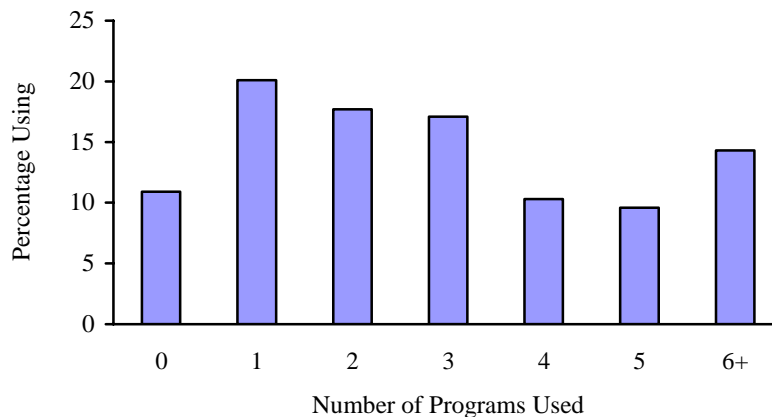
Usage of Government Programs: Percentage saying program used by:

| <i>Program</i> | Self only | Both me and a family member | Total Self (me alone + me and a family member) |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|--|
| Mortgage Interest Deduction | 20.9 | 16.5 | 37.4 |
| Student loan | 18.2 | 12.9 | 31.1 |
| Unemployment compensation | 19.2 | 7.9 | 27.1 |
| Grant to attend college | 16.0 | 9.7 | 25.7 |
| Earned Income Tax Credit | 15.8 | 8.7 | 24.5 |
| Social Security | 14.0 | 7.7 | 21.7 |
| Medicare | 11.0 | 6.7 | 17.7 |
| Workmen's Compensation | 8.8 | 2.3 | 11.1 |
| Medicaid | 5.2 | 5.3 | 10.7 |
| WIC | 7.4 | 3.2 | 10.6 |
| GI Bill | 8.9 | 1.0 | 9.9 |
| Veterans' benefits | 7.7 | 1.8 | 9.5 |
| Welfare/public assistance | 6.1 | 3.3 | 9.4 |
| Food Stamps | 5.7 | 3.2 | 8.9 |
| Disability | 7.4 | .5 | 7.9 |
| Head Start | 5.5 | 1.9 | 7.4 |
| Government Pension | 5.0 | 2.3 | 7.3 |
| Government Subsidized Housing | 3.7 | 2.5 | 6.2 |
| Small business loan | 3.0 | 2.4 | 5.4 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

A substantial percentage of the population has used multiple programs. As shown in Figure 1 only 10.9 % of respondents have never used one of the eighteen programs examined. Over a third (37.8 %) used one or two programs, 27.4 % used three or four programs, and 25.9 % used five or more programs. While some may think that use of government programs is confined to a few, usage of government programs constitutes a common experience among Americans.

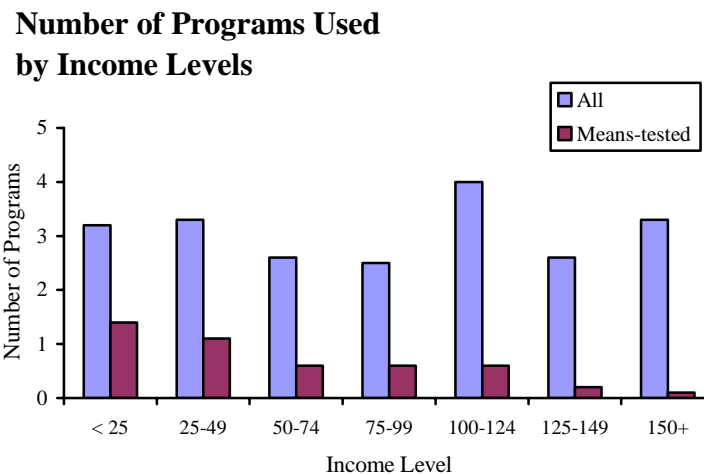
Figure 1: Frequency of Program Usage



Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

While many Americans have used government programs, usage differs by income, which has implications for the issue of inequality. The following chart indicates how the average number of programs used (for all eighteen programs) varies by income. Those who make less money are more likely to have some experience with government programs. When it comes to inequality issues and programs to address them, there are also significant differences by income. The chart also shows the average number of means-based programs used by income levels. Means-based programs are defined as the programs: Medicaid,

welfare, Earned Income Tax Credit, public housing, Head Start, and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children). Usage of these programs is considerably higher among those making less than \$50,000 a year.⁷



Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

These differences in contact with government programs have significance because those who use programs are more likely to regard them as “generally effective” in responding to “specific social problems or needs.” Respondents were asked if they see several specific government programs as generally effective. The following table shows that responses varied by program use, with 79 % of Head Start beneficiaries considering the Head Start program generally effective compared to only 31 % of welfare or public assistance beneficiaries seeing the welfare/public assistance program as generally effective. For most programs, beneficiaries were more convinced of the effectiveness of programs than non-recipients, with gaps in opinion between the two groups as large as 22.7 % for welfare and 21.8 % for Food Stamps.

Percentage Viewing Government Programs as “Generally Effective” Among Recipients and Non-recipients

| Program | Recipients | Non-Recipients | Difference |
|-----------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| Public Housing | 57.7 | 35.0 | 22.7 |
| Food Stamps | 62.0 | 41.2 | 21.8 |
| Head Start | 79.3 | 66.5 | 12.8 |
| Welfare / Public Assistance | 31.0 | 23.5 | 7.5 |
| College grants & loans | 76.9 | 69.3 | 7.6 |
| Medicaid | 51.0 | 53.1 | -2.1 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

IV. The Representation of Opinions about Inequality

Participation, Opinions and Usage of Programs

Americans are concerned about inequality trends and think government should do more, but they also have considerable faith in the role of individualism and some doubts about the effectiveness of programs. As the public debate about inequality evolves, a crucial matter is the representation of these different views in the political arena. There are two aspects of representation that are crucial. One is whether those who vote regularly and those who vote less frequently have differing views and have differences in their experience with government. If participants and non-participants have different views, then the effective electorate – those who politicians worry about – will be different from the overall public. The second is whether the political parties play the role of representing differing opinions such that a political debate about contrasting perspectives occurs and the arguments of opposing sides are presented.

Voting and Opinions about Inequality

| | Who has Opportunity | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|------|-----------|
| Voting | All | Most | Only some |
| Always | 28.4 | 41.2 | 28.9 |
| Less frequently | 24.1 | 39.3 | 33.8 |

| | How serious of a problem is inequality | | |
|-----------------|---|----------|----------|
| | Serious | Somewhat | Not much |
| Always | 54.6 | 26.5 | 15.5 |
| Less frequently | 44.1 | 36.9 | 18.6 |

| | Should government do more about inequality | | |
|-----------------|---|---------------|---------|
| | Do more | What done now | Do less |
| Always | 59.1 | 20.6 | 13.6 |
| Less frequently | 60.2 | 18.3 | 16.8 |

| | Are government programs generally effective | | |
|-----------------|--|------|------------|
| | Helpful | Both | Individual |
| Always | 25.6 | 30.5 | 40.0 |
| Less frequently | 36.6 | 20.4 | 39.5 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

First, then, is whether those with different frequencies of voting have the same views. Respondents were asked if they vote always, usually, only sometimes, or not much at all. All responses other than “always” were grouped together as “less frequently.” The results suggest no systematic pattern of some views being under or over-represented. When asked about the existence of opportunity and whether government should do more, those who always vote do not differ from those who vote less frequently. Those who vote more are more inclined to see inequality as a serious problem, but they are less inclined to see

government programs as effective. Regular voters want government to do more but do not have a lot of faith in government programs.

A second way in which representation might be affected is if those who are recipients of government programs vote less. As indicated above, those who have used programs have a more positive view of them than non-recipients. Are there differences in voting rates for recipients and non-recipients? As shown in the following table, this is the case for several of the programs. Non-beneficiaries are generally more likely to report that they vote “always” than are beneficiaries. The difference is particularly large for welfare, Medicaid, and Food Stamps.

Percentage Voting “Always,” by Government Program Used

| Program | Recipients | Non-Recipients | Difference |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| Welfare/Public Assistance | 41.3 | 60.7 | -19.4 |
| Medicaid | 44.0 | 60.3 | -16.3 |
| Food Stamps | 45.2 | 59.2 | -14.0 |
| Earned Income tax credit | 51.6 | 60.0 | -8.4 |
| Head Start | 52.7 | 59.0 | -6.3 |
| College grants & loans | 57.8 | 58.1 | -.3 |
| Public Housing | 62.1 | 57.9 | 4.2 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

The under-representation of program beneficiaries may have left many of these programs vulnerable to budget cuts over recent decades. Though substantial proportions of citizens have used many of the programs, the value of benefits has generally declined because policymakers have failed to make increases to keep up with inflation. Two programs with the greatest gap in voting participation between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are those in which the real value of benefits has deteriorated dramatically over time: food stamps

benefits per family per month fell from \$144 in 1981 to \$91 in 2000, in 2002 dollars; welfare benefits plummeted steadily from over \$800 per family per month in 1970 to \$400 in 2000.⁸

Generally speaking, turnout rates tend to be higher among recipients of programs for which benefits are not means-tested, resources are generous, and in which aspects of program design or the political dynamics surrounding the program stimulate involvement. Policies elevate participation if they grant resources to beneficiaries that enhance their capacity to participate and their incentive for doing so. Policies may also foster cognitive effects among beneficiaries, increasing their sense that the political system is responsive to them. Finally, they may affect the extent to which political groups and leaders perceive individuals to be worth mobilizing.⁹

Beneficiaries of social programs vary considerably in their likelihood of voting. On the high end, 72.1 % of Social Security beneficiaries, 77.5 % of disability beneficiaries, and 58.2 % of Medicare beneficiaries vote “always.” Social Security benefits reduce poverty rates sharply among the elderly, from 37 % to about 10 %, and low-income elderly rely particularly on Medicare because they tend to have greater health problems and less access to private health insurance than more affluent individuals.¹⁰ The reported voting levels for recipients of these programs suggest that their concerns receive more attention from political leaders.¹¹ GI Bill beneficiaries also have high turnout rates, with 65.9 % reporting that they vote “always.” By contrast, only 45.3 % of Food Stamp beneficiaries and 41.3 % of welfare beneficiaries say they vote “always” and their concerns have received less attention from politicians in recent years.¹² In short, beneficiaries of different programs are not equally active in the political process. Programs serving less involved citizens have been particularly vulnerable to budget cuts over recent decades.

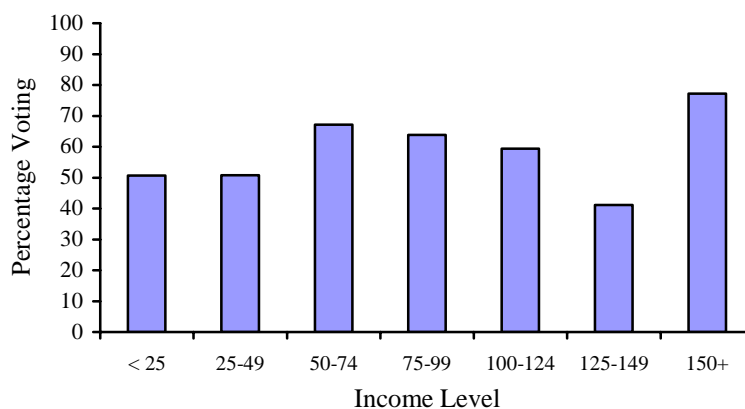
Voting Frequency By Program Usage

| Program Used by Self or Self & Family | Vote “Always” |
|--|----------------------|
| Disability | 77.5 |
| Government Pension | 72.5 |
| Social Security | 72.1 |
| Veterans’ benefits | 68.6 |
| Workmen’s Compensation | 67.3 |
| GI Bill | 65.9 |
| Government Subsidized Housing | 62.1 |
| Mortgage Interest Deduction | 58.9 |
| Medicare | 58.2 |
| Grant to attend college | 57.8 |
| Student loan | 57.2 |
| WIC | 56.7 |
| Unemployment compensation | 54.8 |
| Head Start | 52.7 |
| Earned Income Tax Credit | 51.6 |
| Food Stamps | 45.2 |
| Small business loan | 45.1 |
| Medicaid | 44.0 |
| Welfare/public assistance | 41.3 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

These patterns appear to be particularly harmful to citizens who have been hurt by growing economic inequality. On the one hand, the least well-off citizens tend to benefit from the greatest number of programs, as shown earlier. Such individuals have often used an array of means-tested programs, including public assistance, food stamps, WIC, housing assistance, and Medicaid. On the other hand, as seen in the following figure, the less affluent, on average, have lower levels of voting than those with higher incomes.¹³ The programs on which they rely remain intact. However, the benefits in many of them have deteriorated in real terms over time.¹⁴

Percentage Voting by Income Levels



Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

Partisan Representation of Opposing Views

Finally, there is the matter of whether differences of opinion about inequality and government programs are a source of division between the parties such that the parties might create an ongoing debate about this issue. Representation of issues of inequality might occur if Democrats and Republicans receive support from voters with very different views about these matters. If the parties have electoral bases with different views, then the elected members of each party are more likely to be advocates of those differing views and create a debate about the issues.

Differences in party bases can be seen by examining whether people with differing views on inequality issues are more supportive of Democrats or Republicans. In particular, in October 2006, are views on inequality related to job approval of President George Bush and identification with the major parties? These views have a powerful effect on job approval. The following table indicates that people with varying views about aspects of inequality differed in their job approval – disapproval of the president. Among the 26 % who

think everyone has the opportunity to succeed, President Bush's job approval was 41.8 % approve – 43.1 % disapprove, a relatively positive reaction at a time when the overall results were 27 % approve – 62 % disapprove. Among the 40 % who think only some have the opportunity to succeed, his ratings were 11.4 % approve – 83.0 % disapprove.

Inequality Issues and Presidential Job Approval

(percentages sum across, representing choice by indicated opinion)

| | Approve | Disapprove | No Opinion |
|---|---------|------------|---------------|
| Who has the opportunity to succeed in America? | | | |
| Everyone | 41.8 | 43.1 | 15.1 |
| Most | 31.8 | 58.3 | 10.0 |
| Only some | 11.4 | 83.0 | 5.7 |
| Are we becoming a society of haves and have-nots? | | | |
| Yes | 19.6 | 72.3 | 8.1 |
| No | 48.4 | 37.1 | 14.5 |
| How serious is inequality as a problem? | | | |
| Serious | 11.0 | 84.0 | 5.0 |
| Somewhat serious | 39.3 | 43.2 | 17.5 |
| Not much of a problem | 57.2 | 30.5 | 12.4 |
| Should government do more to reduce inequality | | | |
| Do more | 16.9 | 73.4 | 9.8 |
| About the same | 44.0 | 48.6 | 7.4 |
| Do less | 51.3 | 39.2 | 9.5 |
| Government programs effective or individual motivation most important? | | | |
| Help a lot | 18.4 | 79.9 | 8.7 |
| Both are important | 18.5 | 68.0 | 13.6 |
| Individual motivation most important | 41.4 | 50.3 | 8.3 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

Among the 52 % who think inequality is a serious problem, President Bush's job approval was 11.0 % approve – 84.0 % disapprove. Among the 30 % who think inequality is only somewhat of a problem, ratings were 39.3 % approve – 43.2 % disapprove., and among the 15 % who think inequality is not much of a problem, ratings are 57.2 % approve – 30.5 % disapprove. While much of the recent public discussion has been about foreign policy and Iraq, it is clear that domestic issues are related to presidential job approval.

Inequality Issues and Party Identification

(percentages sum across)

| | Republican | Independent | Democrat |
|---|------------|-------------|----------|
| Who has the opportunity to succeed in America? | | | |
| Everyone | 40.5 | 12.2 | 27.9 |
| Most | 24.3 | 22.5 | 36.8 |
| Only some | 11.6 | 16.4 | 51.6 |
| Are we becoming a society of haves and have-nots? | | | |
| Yes | 17.7 | 19.6 | 47.8 |
| No | 44.8 | 15.4 | 17.4 |
| How serious is inequality as a problem? | | | |
| Serious | 12.0 | 17.5 | 53.5 |
| Somewhat serious | 31.4 | 18.5 | 27.2 |
| Not much of a problem | 47.0 | 22.2 | 18.0 |
| Should government do more to reduce inequality | | | |
| Do more | 11.7 | 17.2 | 47.2 |
| About the same | 39.7 | 19.7 | 29.9 |
| Do less | 53.3 | 15.3 | 23.3 |
| Government programs effective or individual motivation most important? | | | |
| Help a lot | 17.5 | 21.6 | 44.2 |
| Both are important | 24.2 | 9.7 | 44.8 |
| Individual motivation most important | 30.6 | 21.7 | 33.5 |

Source: 2006 Maxwell Poll, Campbell Public Affairs Institute

These differences in inequality views are also related to party affiliation. They are not just a reflection of reactions to George Bush. Those who are optimistic about opportunity, do not see a haves-have-nots society, who do not see inequality as a serious problem, and think government should do less and emphasize individual motivation are much more likely to identify with the Republican Party. Those with opposing opinions are much more likely to identify with the Democratic Party. The parties are attracting voters with very different views, which provides them with the electoral base to be strong advocates for diverging positions.¹⁵ The result is a focused debate within the political process about inequality.

V. Summary

The increase in inequality of recent years is recognized by many Americans, and most think it is likely to continue to increase. While this trend is recognized, the belief that individuals have opportunity and can overcome any early disadvantages and succeed in American society is also fairly widespread. Not everyone shares that optimism, but it is sufficiently widespread that it surely somewhat restrains the extent of conflict that might exist about the issue.

Despite faith in individualism, many Americans use a wide range of government programs and most find them to be very effective. That positive assessment is not always fully conveyed through the representation process, however. Those who use means-based programs are positive about them, but they vote at lower levels.

While individuals may not always vote and represent their reactions, political parties play the role of mobilizing voters with differing views about inequality. Each has

constituencies with differing views about the extent of inequality and how government might respond, if at all, to it.

Endnotes

¹ The logic of this index is to set perfect equality as a baseline and then measure divergence from that. If every one percent of the population had one percent of income we have perfect equality. If we were to plot this geometrically, every percentage increase in the percentage of the population would be matched by an equivalent percentage of income. In contrast, if there is inequality and 50 percent of the population has only 25 percent of income, a discrepancy from that baseline develops. The greater this discrepancy, the greater the inequality, and the higher the Gini index. Sources: The Gini index is taken from Robert D. Plotnick, Eugene Smolensky, Eirik Evenhouse, and Siobhan Reilly, "The Twentieth Century Record of Inequality and Poverty in the United States." Institute for Research on Poverty, Discussion Paper no. 1166-98, 1998. <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/>. The index measures how evenly incomes are distributed and runs from 0 to 1. A score of zero indicates there is no difference between the percentage of the population and the percentage of income received by that population. High scores indicate that a small percentage of the population has a large percentage of income. He and his associates use the Gini index for family incomes from the Bureau of the Census for 1947 - 1996. To estimate scores for 1913-1964 they first fit an equation to estimate the Gini index for 1947-1996 using several independent variables. They then use the parameters derived from the 1947-1996 equation results and data on the same independent variables from 1913-1946, and estimate a Gini index for 1913-1946. The Gini index from 1997-2001 is taken from U.S. Census Bureau Historical Income Tables <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/histinc/ie1.html>.

² For recent figures, see: <http://www.bls.gov/opub/working/data/chart3.txt>.

³ For a summary of studies that track the same individuals over time, see: Katherin Bradbury and Jane Katz, "Are Lifetime Incomes Growing More Unequal?" Regional Review Q4 2002 Sep02, available at: <http://www.bos.frb.org/economic/nerr/rr2002/q4/issues.pdf>. For a graphical presentation of these data, see the New York Times' series on "How Class Matters." http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/national/20050515_CLASS_GRAPHIC/index_03.html.

⁴ The real costs of attending college are rising, while federal aid covers a smaller percentage of college costs, and borrowing to attend college is increasing steadily. For reports on these matters, see the following: "Trends in College Pricing, 2004," The College Board, 2005. The full report is available at: http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/041264TrendsPricing2004_FINAL.pdf. "Trends in Student Aid, 2004." The College Board, 2005. The full report is available at: http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/TrendsInStudentAid2004.pdf. For changes in levels of student loans see Sandy Baum and Marie O'Malley, College on Credit: How Borrowers Perceive their Education Debt; Results of the 2002 National Student Loan Survey, February 6, 2003, at: http://www.nelliemae.com/library/nasls_2002.pdf

⁵ Jennifer Hochschild, *The American Dream: Race, Class and the Soul of American Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 19.

⁶ Respondents were then asked whether the usage was by: just that individual, the individual and a member of their family, or just a member of their family. For this analysis, the focus is just on whether the individual respondent used a government program. To assess this the first two sets of responses are added.

⁷ Suzanne Mettler and Jeffrey M. Stonecash, "Generation of Voters: Patterns of Policy Receipt and Political Voice," manuscript, Maxwell School, Syracuse University, July, 2006.

⁸ "A Sense of the State: Tracking the Role of the American Administrative State in Citizens' Lives Over Time," with Andrew Milstein. Presented at Annual Meeting, Midwest Political Science Association, April 3-6, 2003, Chicago, IL.

⁹ Suzanne Mettler and Joe Soss, "The Consequences of Public Policy for Democratic Citizenship: Bridging Policy Studies and Mass Politics," Perspectives on Politics, Vol. 2, #1 (March 2004): 55-73.

¹⁰ Andrea Campbell found that both Social Security and Medicare promote higher levels of political participation particularly among low-income recipients because for them the resources offered by the programs are most consequential. Andrea Louise Campbell, How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Political Activism and the American Welfare State (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Strengths of the Safety Net: How the EITC, Social Security, and Other Programs Affect Poverty," (1998), available at: <http://www.cbpp.org/snd98-rep.htm> (Accessed February 6, 2006); Campbell, How Policies Make Citizens.

¹¹ Campbell, How Policies Make Citizen; Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1993), pp. 108-9, 115, 117.

¹² See Joe Soss, "Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action." American Political Science Review, 92, 2 (June 1999): 363-80.

¹³ Equally problematic, American government has failed to respond to new risks, such as job instability and changes in family structure, which are particularly disruptive for family income today. See Mettler and Milstein, "A Sense of the State."

¹⁴ Jacob S. Hacker, "Privatizing Risk Without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States." American Political Science Review. 98, 2 (2004): 243-60.

¹⁵ Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and, Jeffrey M. Stonecash, Mark D. Brewer, and Mack D. Mariani, Diverging Parties: Social Change, Realignment, and Party Polarization (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003).

Maxwell Poll Appendix Material

About the Survey: The Calling Process, the Sample and Weighting

The survey was conducted in 2006 over the time period of mid-September through the first week of October. A sample of telephone numbers was obtained from Survey Sampling, Inc. The sample of telephone was representative of households within the continental United States. That excludes Hawaii and Alaska. To reduce any bias involving those working in the evenings during the week, calls were made during the time period of the survey on the weekends during daytime hours. Otherwise calls were made during the week within the hours of 5:30 – 9:00 within each time zone. All numbers were called at least three times.

Obtaining respondents for such a lengthy survey is difficult, so the approach used is to ask anyone at home over 18 to take the survey and then weight the results to correct for any imbalances in the resulting sample. For this survey it is possible to balance it geographically, but weighting needed to be done for sex, race, and age. Women are more likely to answer the phone at home, so men are underrepresented. Younger people and non-whites are also under-represented. The sample of those contacted in 2006, just as in prior years, had some differences by age, sex, and race from the population over 18 within the continental United States. To adjust the sample, the results are weighted so the presence of age, sex, and race groups within the overall results is equivalent to that of the continental U.S. population. The weighting variable in the data set is the "allwt" variable. If that weighting variable is used, the sample is representative of the 18 and over population in the continental U.S.

In 2006 605 respondents completed the survey.

For any further explanation of the conduct of this survey, contact Jeff Stonecash, Department of Political Science, The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, 13244. You may call him at 315-443-3629 or send him an email at jstone@syr.edu.

Questions Asked for Various Years and the Frequencies by Year

Below are the exact questions asked, the alternatives presented, and the frequencies by year. If a year does not have frequencies listed, the question was not asked that year.

We're interested in how much people follow public affairs – issues of government and politics – on a regular basis, even when there isn't an election coming up. Generally speaking, do you follow public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|
| Most of the time | 58.4 | 50.3 | 46.8 |
| Some of the time | 23.6 | 29.5 | 30.4 |
| Only now and then | 11.4 | 12.1 | 14.0 |
| Hardly at all | 6.7 | 7.9 | 8.7 |
| No response | 0.0 | 0.2 | |

How often do you...

Read a newspaper?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|
| Daily | 41.1 | 38.0 | 46.0 |
| Several times a week | 28.3 | 27.5 | 24.2 |
| Several times a month | 7.8 | 7.4 | 9.3 |
| Only very occasionally | 17.3 | 22.1 | 12.9 |
| Never/no response | 5.5 | 5.1 | 7.6 |

Watch local - national TV news?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|
| Daily | 54.9 | 69.9 | 65.0 |
| Several times a week | 19.3 | 16.8 | 19.8 |
| Several times a month | 5.3 | 2.7 | 4.7 |
| Only very occasionally | 12.3 | 5.7 | 4.9 |
| Never | 8.0 | 4.9 | 5.5 |
| No response | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.2 |

Use the internet for news?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|
| Daily | 31.4 | 32.1 | 30.0 |
| Several times a week | 11.3 | 15.6 | 14.8 |
| Several times a month | 5.7 | 4.9 | 6.7 |
| Only very occasionally | 20.7 | 15.2 | 17.9 |
| Never | 29.9 | 31.9 | 30.0 |
| No response | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.5 |

During the last year, did you do any of the following?**Contact a public official via phone, letter or email about an issue?**

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----|------|------|------|
| Yes | 34.6 | 34.9 | 39.8 |
| No | 65.2 | 65.1 | 60.2 |

Attend a political rally, meeting or dinner?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----|------|------|------|
| Yes | 23.4 | 20.3 | 17.7 |
| No | 76.4 | 79.7 | 82.3 |

Contribute money to a political campaign or candidate, including paying to attend a dinner or reception?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----|------|------|------|
| Yes | 25.1 | 27.6 | 23.5 |
| No | 74.9 | 72.4 | 76.5 |

Work for a political campaign in some way (making calls, distributing literature, preparing mailings, gathering signatures)?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----|------|------|------|
| Yes | 11.8 | 13.7 | 12.3 |
| No | 88.0 | 86.3 | 87.7 |

Join and contribute money to an internet political group such as MoveOn.org, or Meetup.com?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----|------|------|------|
| Yes | | 6.3 | 5.0 |
| No | | 93.8 | 94.8 |

Which of the following applies to you: you are currently registered to vote, you could register but have not, or, you are not eligible to register for some reason?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes, registered | 86.9 | 87.4 | 86.3 |
| Not sure if currently registered | 0.7 | 0.8 | 2.3 |
| Not registered | 6.7 | 5.4 | 8.1 |
| Not registered because not eligible | 5.6 | 5.6 | 2.0 |
| No response | 0.0 | 0.4 | 1.3 |

Do you vote always, usually, sometimes, or not at all? (*Only registered voters*)

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Always | 65.0 | 67.8 | 58.3 |
| Usually | 22.4 | 17.7 | 26.7 |
| Sometimes | 7.8 | 7.2 | 9.3 |
| Not at all | 3.5 | 2.6 | 3.1 |
| No response | 1.4 | 4.7 | 2.6 |

There's a lot of discussion about the Internet's effect on politics. How do you think the internet has affected the ability of average citizens to influence political decisions?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|
| Greatly increased it | | | 17.8 |
| Somewhat increased it | | | 48.3 |
| Not changed it | | | 17.2 |
| Decreased it | | | 1.2 |
| No response | | | 15.5 |

How has the Internet affected your *own* level of political activity?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|
| Greatly increased it | | | 11.2 |
| Somewhat increased it | | | 22.9 |
| Not changed it | | | 56.9 |
| Decreased it | | | 0.2 |
| No response | | | 8.8 |

Next I'd like to ask you if you belong to any of the following groups or organizations:

| Organization | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---|------|------|------|
| 12. Labor union | 11.4 | 11.6 | |
| 13. Professional associations or societies, or trade or business associations that are related to your job or work | 26.3 | 28.8 | |
| 14. Church, temple, or other related religious organization (e.g. church choir, church council, prayer group, etc.) | 62.2 | 61.6 | |
| 15. Fraternal association (e.g., Elks, Moose, Masons, or Eastern Star) | 8.3 | 8.8 | |
| 16. Service groups (e.g. Lions, Rotary, Exchange) | 11.0 | 15.0 | |
| 17. Political club or party committee | 7.5 | 7.3 | |
| 18. Veteran's group | 5.3 | 8.8 | |
| 19. College or professional fraternity | 11.9 | 15.4 | |
| 20. Neighborhood / homeowners group | 22.8 | 26.8 | |
| 21. School support group (PTO / PTA) | 17.5 | 21.8 | |
| 22. Youth serving group | 18.3 | 20.6 | |
| 23. Sports, hobby, or book clubs | 27.2 | 31.2 | |
| 24. Any other groups that you just pay a membership fee to, such as the Sierra Club, NRA, AARP, ACLU, Common Cause, the Children's Fund, etc. | 36.8 | 30.9 | |

Do you currently serve on an organization's board, on a commission, a task force, a foundation, fund, or trust, or a group responsible for planning a one-time event?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Yes | 15.6 | 12.7 | |
| No | 84.4 | 87.3 | |
| No response | 0.0 | 0.0 | |

Aside from funerals and weddings, how often do you attend religious services: several times a week, once a week, several times a month, several times a year, only very occasionally, or never?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|
| Several times a week | 18.2 | 12.4 | 13.3 |
| Once a week | 26.2 | 29.4 | 25.1 |
| Several times a month | 9.9 | 16.6 | 15.5 |
| Several times a year | 11.7 | 9.3 | 18.0 |
| Only very occasionally | 19.0 | 19.1 | 15.4 |
| Never | 14.6 | 11.4 | 12.2 |
| No response | 0.6 | 1.8 | 0.6 |

Do you agree or disagree with this statement: You can generally trust public officials to try to do the right thing.

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Agree | 37.7 | 37.1 | 35.3 |
| Disagree | 53.0 | 58.9 | 57.3 |
| No response | 9.3 | 4.0 | 7.5 |

Do you agree or disagree with this statement: People like me don't have much say about what government does.

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|
| Agree | | | 51.8 |
| Disagree | | | 40.6 |
| No opinion/response | | | 7.6 |

Next, I'd like to read you three statements about volunteering and contributing to community organizations and ask which describes you.

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---|------|------|------|
| It is an important obligation and everyone should. | 49.5 | 31.3 | |
| It is important, but obligations of work and family are more important, and I can't always find the time. | 44.6 | 58.1 | |
| It is just not that important in my life. | 3.7 | 9.5 | |
| No opinion / response | 2.3 | 1.2 | |

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about differences among people in our society.

Do you think everyone in American society has an opportunity to succeed, most do, or do only some have this opportunity?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|------------|------|------|------|
| Everyone | 28.9 | 30.3 | 25.8 |
| Most | 45.5 | 40.1 | 40.0 |
| Only some | 24.9 | 29.4 | 32.3 |
| No opinion | 0.8 | 0.2 | 1.9 |

Do you think differences in how much money people make in our society are too small, about right, or too large?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Too small | 13.3 | 18.7 | 18.4 |
| About right | 24.3 | 26.1 | 21.1 |
| Too large | 54.0 | 46.8 | 53.3 |
| No opinion | 8.4 | 8.4 | 7.2 |

Do you think we are becoming a society of the haves and the have-nots?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|------------|------|------|------|
| Yes | 67.6 | 75.6 | 70.7 |
| No | 27.8 | 20.1 | 23.4 |
| No opinion | 4.6 | 4.3 | 5.9 |

Over the last 5-10 years, do you think income inequality has increased, stayed the same, or decreased?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|
| Increased | 44.2 | 41.8 | 56.7 |
| Stayed the same | 25.9 | 28.9 | 23.0 |
| Decreased | 23.9 | 24.5 | 16.3 |
| No opinion | 6.0 | 4.8 | 4.0 |

Over the next 5 years, do you think income differences will decline, stay about the same, or grow larger?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|
| Increased | 37.4 | 49.5 | 54.7 |
| Stayed the same | 34.7 | 31.2 | 26.3 |
| Decreased | 14.1 | 16.7 | 11.4 |
| No opinion | 13.8 | 2.7 | 7.7 |

Do you see the current extent of income inequality in our society as a serious problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|
| Serious problem | 38.3 | 47.5 | 51.6 |
| Somewhat of a problem | 43.1 | 38.2 | 30.5 |
| Not much of a problem | 17.1 | 12.5 | 15.4 |
| No opinion | 1.6 | 1.8 | 2.6 |

Do you think what you achieve in life depends largely on your family background, or on your abilities and hard work?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Family background | 7.5 | 11.5 | 13.2 |
| Both | 27.3 | 27.9 | 39.3 |
| Abilities and hard work | 63.2 | 59.5 | 45.4 |
| No opinion | 2.0 | 1.1 | 2.1 |

Would you agree or disagree with the following: While people may begin with different opportunities, hard work and perseverance can usually overcome those disadvantages.

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|------------|------|------|------|
| Agree | 82.5 | 84.4 | 82.6 |
| Disagree | 13.5 | 12.2 | 14.6 |
| No opinion | 3.9 | 3.4 | 2.8 |

Some say class divisions will always be with us and there isn't much that can be done about that. Would you agree or disagree with that?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|------------|------|------|------|
| Agree | 52.9 | 59.4 | 64.1 |
| Disagree | 42.3 | 37.7 | 31.2 |
| No opinion | 4.9 | 2.9 | 4.6 |

Do you generally support affirmative action – trying to make sure minorities and women are given special consideration for jobs – or are you generally not supportive of affirmative action?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|----------------|------|------|------|
| Supportive | 53.8 | 56.3 | 59.4 |
| Not supportive | 37.6 | 37.4 | 31.8 |
| No opinion | 8.6 | 6.3 | 8.9 |

How much upward mobility – children doing better than the family they come from – do you think there is in America: a lot, some, or not much?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|
| A lot | 33.4 | 34.5 | 30.7 |
| Some mobility | 56.4 | 48.4 | 55.9 |
| Not much | 9.1 | 15.0 | 9.7 |
| No opinion | 1.0 | 2.2 | 3.7 |

How about downward mobility in America – children doing worse than the family they come from – is there a lot, some, or not much?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|
| A lot | 19.0 | 17.1 | 17.2 |
| Some mobility | 55.0 | 49.8 | 48.2 |
| Not much | 22.9 | 28.5 | 27.5 |
| No opinion | 3.1 | 4.6 | 7.1 |

Should government do more to try to reduce inequality, about what it is doing now, or less that is done now?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|
| More | 53.8 | 55.5 | 61.5 |
| About what it is doing now | 22.4 | 18.8 | 18.7 |
| Less | 17.5 | 21.2 | 14.5 |
| No opinion | 6.3 | 4.5 | 5.4 |

There are lots of government programs (Head Start for young children, loans to go to college, job training) to try to create more equality of opportunity. Generally speaking, do you think these programs help a lot or do you think the most important matter is individual motivation?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|
| Programs help a lot | 40.6 | 37.4 | 29.4 |
| Both are important | 17.5 | 17.4 | 26.4 |
| Individual motivation | 38.7 | 45.4 | 39.6 |
| No opinion | 3.2 | 0.0 | 4.6 |

I'd like to ask you about some specific programs that are intended to respond to specific social problems or needs. For each could you indicate if you think the program is generally effective, only somewhat effective, or not very effective?

Head Start – a program to help children before beginning kindergarten

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|
| Generally effective | 66.4 | 69.7 | 65.4 |
| Only somewhat | 18.2 | 17.1 | 19.0 |
| Not very effective | 6.4 | 7.2 | 4.6 |
| No opinion | 8.9 | 6.0 | 11.1 |

Medicaid and other health care programs for lower income families

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|
| Generally effective | 56.8 | 57.9 | 52.6 |
| Only somewhat | 30.2 | 27.3 | 30.5 |
| Not very effective | 9.5 | 13.2 | 11.3 |
| No opinion | 3.6 | 1.8 | 5.6 |

Food stamps for lower income families

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|
| Generally effective | 44.1 | 51.2 | 43.6 |
| Only somewhat | 35.3 | 31.5 | 35.3 |
| Not very effective | 15.3 | 15.5 | 14.4 |
| No opinion | 5.3 | 1.8 | 6.8 |

Grants and loans to go to college

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|
| Generally effective | 74.9 | 73.8 | 70.5 |
| Only somewhat | 18.7 | 17.7 | 19.3 |
| Not very effective | 5.3 | 7.1 | 5.7 |
| No opinion | 1.2 | 1.4 | 4.5 |

Welfare or public assistance

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|
| Generally effective | 28.2 | 30.8 | 28.6 |
| Only somewhat | 40.3 | 41.7 | 41.4 |
| Not very effective | 24.2 | 26.4 | 22.0 |
| No opinion | 7.4 | 1.1 | 8.0 |

Public housing and housing subsidies

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|
| Generally effective | 36.2 | 44.0 | 37.4 |
| Only somewhat | 39.2 | 34.0 | 38.2 |
| Not very effective | 16.6 | 19.4 | 17.1 |
| No opinion | 8.0 | 2.7 | 7.4 |

Providing more school aid to lower income school districts

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|
| Generally effective | 56.9 | 56.8 | 56.4 |
| Only somewhat | 21.9 | 24.4 | 20.0 |
| Not very effective | 16.0 | 15.2 | 17.5 |
| No opinion | 5.1 | 3.7 | 6.1 |

Speaking of government programs, I'd like to ask about your experience with several programs. Could you tell me for each of the following if you or anyone in your immediate household / family (such as your brothers or sisters, your children, or your parents), have ever received some benefit / payment from the program? (for each, ask if you, family member, or both?)

Social Security

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 11.0 | 14.8 | 14.0 |
| Yes, my family member | 44.0 | 35.3 | 40.0 |
| Yes, both me and family | 10.5 | 15.1 | 7.7 |
| No | 33.6 | 34.7 | 36.0 |

| | | | |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|
| No response | 0.9 | 0.0 | 2.3 |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|

Medicare

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 10.5 | 11.3 | 11.0 |
| Yes, my family member | 39.2 | 40.5 | 34.9 |
| Yes, both me and family | 8.8 | 10.2 | 6.7 |
| No | 39.9 | 37.7 | 45.0 |
| No response | 1.6 | 0.3 | 2.5 |

Medicaid

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 6.3 | 4.8 | 5.2 |
| Yes, my family member | 24.0 | 28.9 | 22.4 |
| Yes, both me and family | 3.7 | 4.9 | 5.3 |
| No | 63.6 | 60.9 | 63.0 |
| No response | 2.4 | 0.5 | 4.0 |

Welfare or public assistance

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 3.0 | 3.9 | 6.1 |
| Yes, my family member | 16.6 | 15.5 | 12.0 |
| Yes, both me and family | 2.3 | 5.1 | 3.3 |
| No | 76.0 | 75.4 | 74.9 |
| No response | 2.2 | 0.1 | 3.7 |

Earned income tax credit

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 17.1 | 19.3 | 15.8 |
| Yes, my family member | 17.2 | 17.1 | 13.5 |
| Yes, both me and family | 17.3 | 18.8 | 8.7 |
| No | 40.2 | 38.5 | 55.4 |
| No response | 8.3 | 6.3 | 6.6 |

Grant to attend college

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 16.5 | 20.4 | 16.0 |
| Yes, my family member | 20.5 | 20.4 | 20.3 |
| Yes, both me and family | 9.8 | 9.6 | 9.7 |
| No | 52.1 | 49.3 | 51.3 |
| No response | 1.1 | 0.3 | 3.6 |

A student loan for college

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 16.0 | 25.3 | 18.2 |
| Yes, my family member | 30.7 | 26.8 | 24.6 |
| Yes, both me and family | 12.4 | 14.9 | 12.9 |
| No | 39.7 | 32.9 | 42.0 |
| No response | 1.2 | 0.2 | 2.2 |

Veteran's benefits

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 8.3 | 10.0 | 7.7 |
| Yes, my family member | 24.9 | 24.6 | 23.3 |
| Yes, both me and family | 1.6 | 2.5 | 1.8 |
| No | 63.2 | 62.0 | 64.3 |
| No response | 2.0 | 0.9 | 2.9 |

Unemployment compensation

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 19.2 | 24.4 | 19.2 |
| Yes, my family member | 16.2 | 19.6 | 18.3 |
| Yes, both me and family | 8.8 | 7.5 | 7.9 |
| No | 54.8 | 48.3 | 52.5 |
| No response | 1.0 | 0.3 | 2.1 |

Government pension

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 3.9 | 4.5 | 5.0 |
| Yes, my family member | 12.1 | 11.9 | 13.1 |
| Yes, both me and family | 1.3 | 1.4 | 2.3 |
| No | 81.3 | 80.6 | 76.2 |
| No response | 1.3 | 1.6 | 3.4 |

Workman's compensation

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 7.7 | 10.0 | 8.8 |
| Yes, my family member | 10.7 | 13.4 | 12.6 |
| Yes, both me and family | 2.0 | 2.8 | 2.3 |
| No | 77.9 | 73.5 | 74.2 |
| No response | 1.7 | 0.4 | 2.2 |

Food stamps

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 4.8 | 7.2 | 5.7 |
| Yes, my family member | 14.3 | 13.8 | 13.1 |
| Yes, both me and family | 4.3 | 4.9 | 3.2 |
| No | 76.0 | 73.0 | 75.6 |
| No response | 0.7 | 1.1 | 2.4 |

Government subsidized housing

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 1.3 | 5.2 | 3.7 |
| Yes, my family member | 8.0 | 7.1 | 5.1 |
| Yes, both me and family | 0.9 | 1.3 | 2.5 |
| No | 89.2 | 86.3 | 86.6 |
| No response | 0.7 | 0.1 | 2.2 |

Government loan for small business activities

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 0.9 | 0.8 | 3.0 |
| Yes, my family member | 6.8 | 4.3 | 3.8 |
| Yes, both me and family | 0.4 | 1.0 | 2.4 |
| No | 90.4 | 93.6 | 87.6 |
| No response | 1.5 | 0.3 | 3.2 |

GI bill

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 6.7 | 7.4 | 8.9 |
| Yes, my family member | 14.7 | 10.8 | 15.4 |
| Yes, both me and family | 1.8 | 2.6 | 1.0 |
| No | 75.1 | 78.5 | 71.8 |
| No response | 1.7 | 0.7 | 2.8 |

Deduction of mortgage interest from income taxes

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 19.4 | 18.8 | 20.9 |
| Yes, my family member | 11.2 | 11.4 | 11.5 |
| Yes, both me and family | 18.9 | 17.6 | 16.5 |
| No | 44.7 | 49.7 | 46.7 |
| No response | 5.8 | 2.4 | 4.4 |

Head Start

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 3.0 | 4.3 | 5.5 |
| Yes, my family member | 13.6 | 12.2 | 11.3 |
| Yes, both me and family | 2.1 | 2.0 | 1.9 |
| No | 80.0 | 80.5 | 77.9 |
| No response | 1.1 | 1.0 | 3.5 |

The WIC (Women and Infants) program

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 4.2 | 5.0 | 7.4 |
| Yes, my family member | 15.4 | 12.9 | 13.1 |
| Yes, both me and family | 2.7 | 4.1 | 3.2 |
| No | 71.4 | 77.2 | 71.4 |
| No response | 6.3 | 0.9 | 4.9 |

Disability benefits from the government

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes me | 6.1 | 7.0 | 7.4 |
| Yes, my family member | 15.7 | 13.2 | 14.6 |
| Yes, both me and family | 2.2 | 2.5 | 0.5 |
| No | 75.3 | 76.5 | 75.1 |
| No response | 0.8 | 0.7 | 2.5 |

Now, some questions about you.

Would you agree or disagree with this: The people working for the federal government are competent.

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|
| Agree | | | 56.0 |
| Disagree | | | 24.5 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | | | 17.2 |
| No response | | | 2.3 |

What about this: In my *own* interactions with the people working for the federal government I have been treated with respect.

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|
| Agree | | | 64.7 |
| Disagree | | | 12.2 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | | | 8.7 |
| Never had interaction | | | 12.1 |
| No response | | | 2.4 |

Do you generally regard yourself as a Democrat, an Independent, a Republican, or something else?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Democrat | 32.5 | 39.1 | 39.2 |
| Independent | 20.7 | 19.3 | 18.5 |
| Rep | 33.3 | 27.5 | 24.0 |
| Other | 10.6 | 10.6 | 11.0 |
| No response | 3.0 | 3.5 | 7.4 |

Politically, do you generally regard yourself as liberal, moderate, or conservative, or do none of those apply?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|--------------|------|------|------|
| Liberal | 19.7 | 18.3 | 27.6 |
| Moderate | 31.9 | 30.8 | 32.0 |
| Conservative | 30.5 | 30.9 | 26.4 |
| None | 18.0 | 20.1 | 14.1 |

Do you approve or disapprove of the job George Bush is doing as President?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|------------|------|------|------|
| Approve | | 34.7 | 27.4 |
| Disapprove | | 56.6 | 62.1 |
| No opinion | | 8.6 | 10.5 |

In the elections this fall for the House of Representatives, are you likely to vote for the Democrat, the Republican, another party, or are you likely not to vote?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|
| Democrat | | | 40.8 |
| Republican | | | 21.4 |
| Other | | | 7.3 |
| Not likely to vote | | | 12.8 |
| No response | | | 17.7 |

Are you currently working full-time, part-time, unemployed, mainly retired, a homemaker, or mainly in school?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Working full-time | 51.2 | 47.3 | |
| Homemaker | 5.6 | 6.4 | |
| Working part-time | 10.9 | 11.0 | |
| In school (include working part-time) | 8.0 | 7.8 | |
| Unemployed | 4.7 | 4.7 | |
| Other | 2.1 | 3.7 | |
| Retired (include working part-time) | 17.5 | 18.2 | |
| No response | 0.0 | 0.0 | |

Do you or your family currently have some sort of health insurance?

| | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----------------------|------|------|
| No | 10.9 | |
| Yes, employer | 57.3 | |
| Yes, purchased | 11.8 | |
| Yes, both | 10.4 | |
| Medicaid | 3.1 | |
| Medicare | 4.4 | |
| Not sure/ no response | 2.1 | |

Are you currently single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Single | 25.7 | 29.3 | 30.5 |
| Married | 59.8 | 51.9 | 53.0 |
| Separated | 1.9 | 3.6 | 2.5 |
| Divorced | 7.6 | 8.9 | 7.5 |
| Widowed | 4.5 | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| No response | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.3 |

Do you have any children?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Yes | 65.6 | 70.6 | |
| No | 34.1 | 29.1 | |
| No response | 0.2 | 0.3 | |

Do you regard yourself as Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, or as something else? (If Hispanic, ask if that is Hispanic white or Hispanic non-white.)

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|
| Black | 12.0 | 16.9 | 19.2 |
| White | 71.1 | 67.9 | 69.6 |
| Asian | 2.7 | 4.1 | 2.0 |
| Hispanic, white | 7.8 | 5.0 | 3.4 |
| Hispanic, non-white | 4.4 | 4.2 | 3.6 |
| Other | 1.2 | 1.4 | 0.9 |
| Refused | 0.9 | 0.6 | 1.4 |

What is your sex?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|--------|------|------|------|
| Male | | | 48.3 |
| Female | | | 51.7 |

Are you a U.S. citizen?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Yes | | | 98.0 |
| No | | | 1.8 |
| No response | | | 0.3 |

Did you or one of your parents come to this country as an immigrant—born in another country?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|--------------|------|------|------|
| Respondent | | | 3.3 |
| One parent | | | 4.9 |
| Both parents | | | 4.8 |
| Neither | | | 86.6 |
| No response | | | 0.4 |

Over the last several years has your economic situation improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Improved | 48.8 | 48.4 | 40.8 |
| Same | 30.2 | 25.5 | 35.1 |
| Worse | 20.3 | 25.8 | 23.8 |
| No response | 0.8 | 0.3 | 0.3 |

Over the next several years, do you think your economic situation is likely to improve, stay the same, or get worse?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Improved | 61.6 | 58.4 | 49.7 |
| Same | 23.3 | 28.4 | 34.8 |
| Worse | 9.9 | 12.4 | 13.4 |
| No response | 5.3 | 0.9 | 2.1 |

Compared to your parents, are you better off economically, about the same, or worse off?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Better | | 50.0 | 51.6 |
| Same | | 27.2 | 28.7 |
| Worse | | 21.1 | 17.3 |
| No response | | 1.8 | 2.4 |

Would you say your parents were relatively well-off economically, just average, or were below average?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|
| Well-off | | | 16.5 |
| Just average | | | 59.1 |
| Below average | | | 22.5 |
| Not sure | | | 0.1 |
| No response | | | 0.1 |

Over the last 5 years, when you compare your economic situation to how others in our society are doing, do you think you are doing better than average, about the same, or worse than average?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Better | | 38.8 | 32.4 |
| Same | | 52.3 | 55.9 |
| Worse | | 7.9 | 10.1 |
| No response | | 1.0 | 1.5 |

When you think about how you have fared economically in your life, given the effort you have put in and the talents you have, do you think the way things have worked out for you has been fair, only somewhat fair, or not very fair?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|
| Fair | | | 60.1 |
| Somewhat | | | 28.0 |
| Not very fair | | | 9.6 |
| No response | | | 2.3 |

If you were to rate your own work efforts in life, with 1 being not very hard and 5 being very hard, where would you place yourself?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|
| Not very hard | | | 0.1 |
| | | | 2.0 |
| | | | 15.1 |
| | | | 30.7 |
| Very hard | | | 50.0 |
| No response | | | 1.3 |

Is religion very important, somewhat important, or not very important in your life?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|
| Very important | | | 49.2 |
| Somewhat important | | | 33.7 |
| Not very important | | | 15.7 |
| No response | | | 1.4 |

Could you tell me the highest education level you achieved?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|
| High school or less | 24.6 | 22.7 | 25.9 |
| Some college | 28.2 | 32.0 | 22.0 |
| College degree | 27.1 | 27.2 | 29.8 |
| Graduate work/ degree | 20.1 | 18.0 | 21.9 |
| Don't know / refused | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.4 |

Into which of the following categories does your annual family income fall?

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|----------------------|------|------|------|
| Under - 25,000 | 15.7 | 15.0 | 16.5 |
| \$25 - 49,000 | 21.0 | 33.4 | 21.9 |
| \$50 - 74,000 | 23.3 | 20.9 | 20.1 |
| \$75 - 99,000 | 12.2 | 13.4 | 12.7 |
| \$100 - 125,000 | 8.9 | 7.3 | 5.7 |
| \$125 - 150,000 | 2.9 | 5.4 | 4.8 |
| \$150,000 or more | 4.4 | 4.7 | 5.2 |
| Don't know / refused | 11.7 | 0.0 | 13.2 |