

## **Public Opinion on the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the United States**

Overall, HIV/AIDS is a concern to many in the United States, both as a personal concern and as a problem facing the nation. In 2006, 17% of the public name HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation, a share that declined dramatically between 1995 and 2002, but has remained relatively stable since then. Fifteen percent of the public in 2006 say they are personally very concerned about becoming infected with HIV, and another 14% say they are somewhat concerned. Views on the nation's progress in the area of HIV/AIDS are somewhat mixed. In 2006, four in ten people say the United States is making progress on the problem of HIV/AIDS, while about three in ten say we are losing ground, and just over one in five say the problem is about the same.

African Americans and Latinos have been particularly hard hit by the HIV epidemic in the U.S., and this impact appears to be reflected in their views and perceptions about the disease. African Americans and Latinos express more concern about the epidemic than their white counterparts, both on a personal and a national level, and they are also more likely than whites to say that the problem of HIV/AIDS has gotten worse in their local communities in recent years. In addition, African Americans are much more likely than whites or Latinos to say the country is losing ground when it comes to the problem of HIV/AIDS.

The public is generally supportive of federal spending on HIV/AIDS, and public opinion data indicate that support for such spending has increased in recent years. Whether the question is asked about HIV/AIDS spending in general, or about HIV/AIDS spending in relation to spending on other diseases, larger shares say that such spending is too low than say it is too high or about right. Between 2004 and 2006, the share saying the federal government spends too little money on HIV/AIDS in general increased from 52% to 63%, and the share saying spending on HIV/AIDS is too low compared with other diseases increased from 42% to 48%.

In 2006, most Americans are optimistic that spending more money on HIV prevention and testing in the U.S. will make a difference, with about six in ten say that spending more on both HIV/AIDS prevention and testing will lead to meaningful progress, compared with about three in ten saying such spending won't make much difference.

For more information about public opinion on HIV/AIDS, see:

Public Opinion on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic  
<http://www.kff.org/spotlight/hivglobal/index.cfm>

The Public's Experiences with and Attitudes about HIV Testing  
<http://www.kff.org/spotlight/hivtest/index.cfm>

Attitudes About Stigma and Discrimination Related to HIV/AIDS  
<http://www.kff.org/spotlight/hivstigma/index.cfm>

The Public's Knowledge and Perceptions About HIV/AIDS  
<http://www.kff.org/spotlight/hiv/index.cfm>

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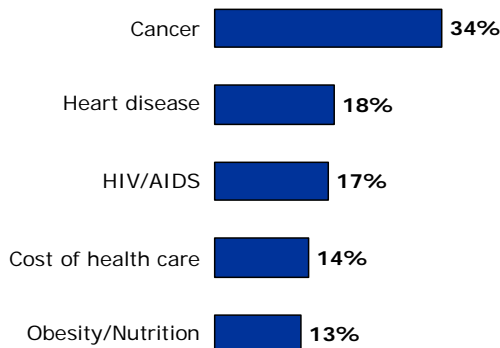
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## 1. HIV/AIDS as the Most Urgent Health Problem Facing the Nation

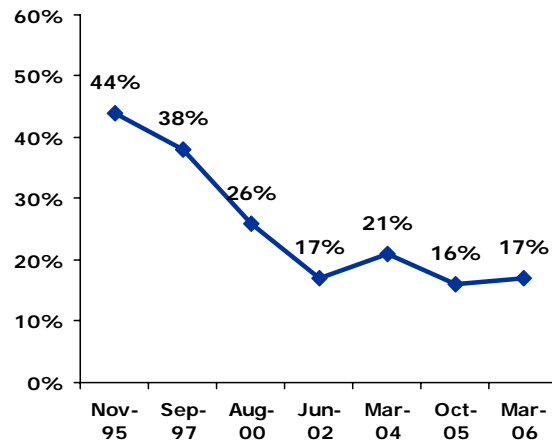
In 2006, in an open-ended question, 17% of the public names HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation, ranking third behind cancer (34%), and just behind heart disease (18%). The share of the public naming HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation declined dramatically between 1995 and 2002, and has remained relatively stable since then.

### HIV/AIDS as the Most Urgent Health Problem Facing the Nation

What do you think is the most urgent health problem facing this nation today? (Mar-06)  
(Open-ended – top 5 responses shown)\*



Percent naming HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation...



\*Note: Adds to more than 100% because of multiple responses

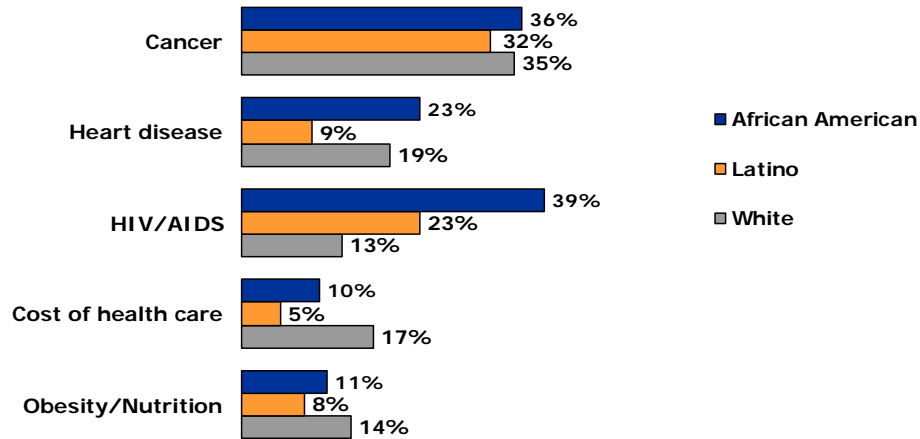
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Surveys

## 2. HIV/AIDS as the Most Urgent Health Problem Facing the Nation by Race

Among African Americans, HIV/AIDS ranks first as the nation's most urgent health problem, and the share naming HIV/AIDS in this open-ended question is greater among African Americans than among whites or Latinos. Nearly four in ten African Americans (39%) say that HIV/AIDS is the most urgent health problem facing the nation, compared with just under a quarter of Latinos (23%), and about one in eight whites (13%).

### HIV/AIDS as the Most Urgent Health Problem Facing the Nation By Race

What do you think is the most urgent health problem facing THIS NATION today?  
(Open-ended – top 5 responses shown)\*



\* Note: Adds up to more than 100% because of multiple responses.

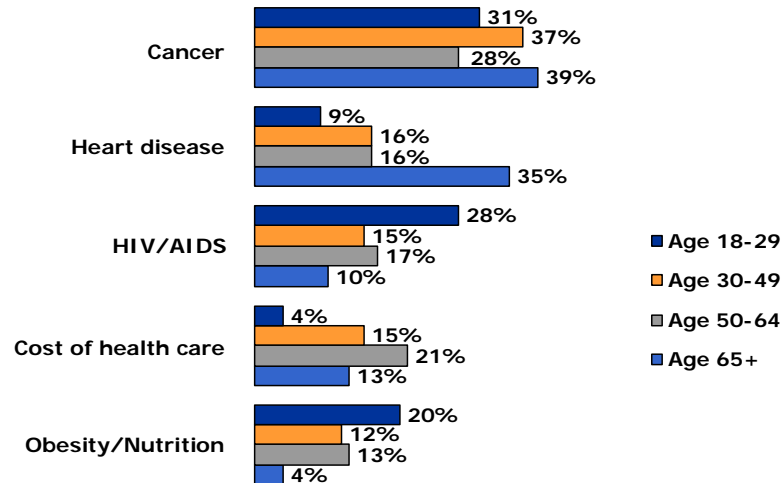
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

### 3. HIV/AIDS as the Most Urgent Health Problem Facing the Nation by Age

Young people ages 18-29 (28%) are more likely than their older counterparts ages 30-49 (15%), ages 50-64 (17%) and ages 65 and over (10%) to name HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation. However, even for young people, HIV/AIDS ranks behind cancer as the nation's most urgent health problem.

#### HIV/AIDS As Most Urgent Health Problem Facing The Nation By Age

What do you think is the most urgent health problem facing THIS NATION today?  
(Open-ended – top 5 responses shown)\*



\* Note: Adds up to more than 100% because of multiple responses.

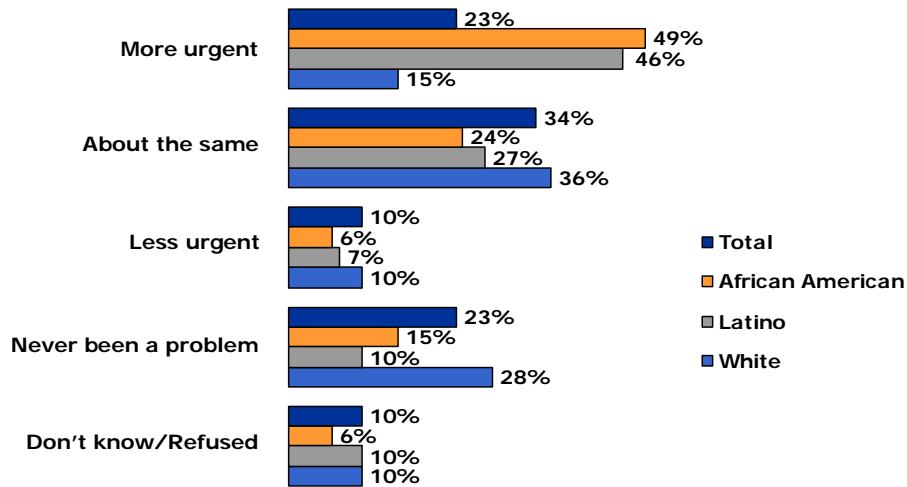
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

#### 4. How HIV/AIDS Is Affecting Your Local Community

Just under a quarter (23%) of Americans say HIV/AIDS is a more urgent problem for their local community than it was a few years ago, while one in ten say it is less urgent, and a third (34%) say it is about the same. Nearly a quarter (23%) say HIV/AIDS has never been a problem for their community. African Americans (49%) and Latinos (46%) are much more likely than whites (15%) to say that HIV/AIDS is a more urgent problem for their community than it was a few years ago.

##### How HIV/AIDS Is Effecting Your Local Community

Thinking about the way the problem of AIDS is affecting your local community today, do you think AIDS is a MORE urgent problem for your community than it was a few years ago, a less urgent problem, is it about the same, or has AIDS never been a problem in your community?



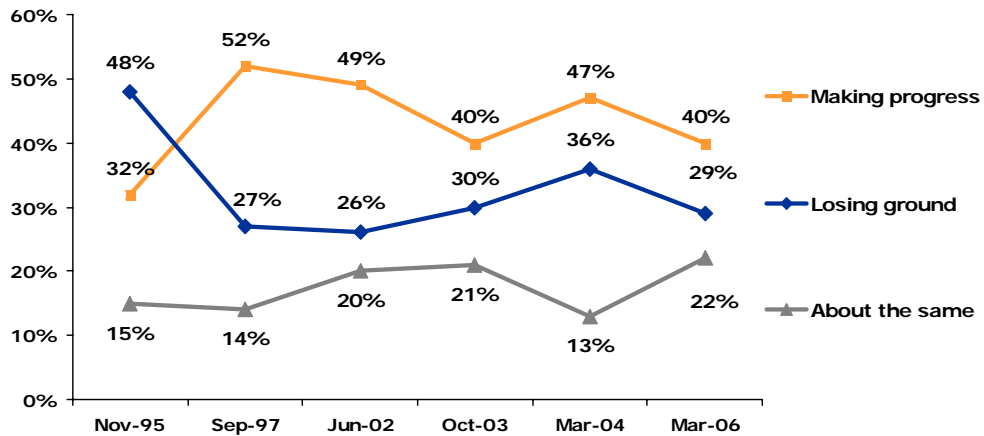
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 5. Perceived Progress on the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the U.S. – Trends

Since 1997, the public has been more likely to say that the United States is making progress than losing ground on the problem of HIV/AIDS. In 2006, four in ten people say the United States is making progress on the problem of HIV/AIDS, while about three in ten (29%) say we are losing ground, and just over one in five (22%) say the problem is about the same.

### Perceived Progress on the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the U.S.

Thinking about the way the problem of HIV/AIDS affects the United States today, do you think the problem is about the same as it has been, that the U.S. today is making progress in this area, or that the U.S. today is losing ground?



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Surveys

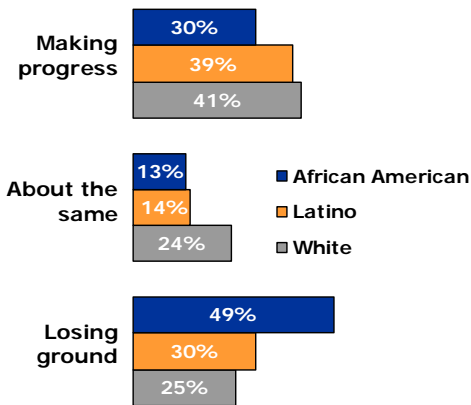
## 6. Perceived Progress on the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the U.S. by Race

In 2006, African Americans are more likely to say the United States is losing ground (49%) when it comes to the problem of HIV/AIDS than making progress (31%), as they are more likely than either Latinos or whites to say the country is losing ground. Between 1997 and 2003, the share of African Americans who said that the U.S. was losing ground on HIV/AIDS remained fairly steady at around four in ten, increasing to a majority in 2004 and remaining close to half in 2006.

### Perceived Progress on HIV/AIDS Epidemic By Race

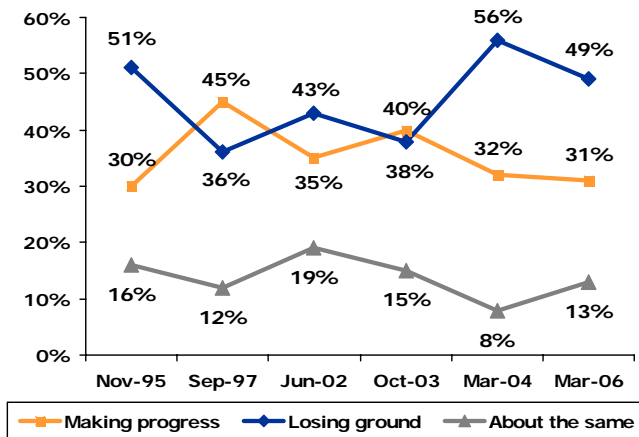
Thinking about the way the problem of HIV/AIDS affects the United States today, do you think the problem is about the same as it has been, that the U.S. today is making progress in this area, or that the U.S. today is losing ground?

March 2006:



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys

Among African Americans:



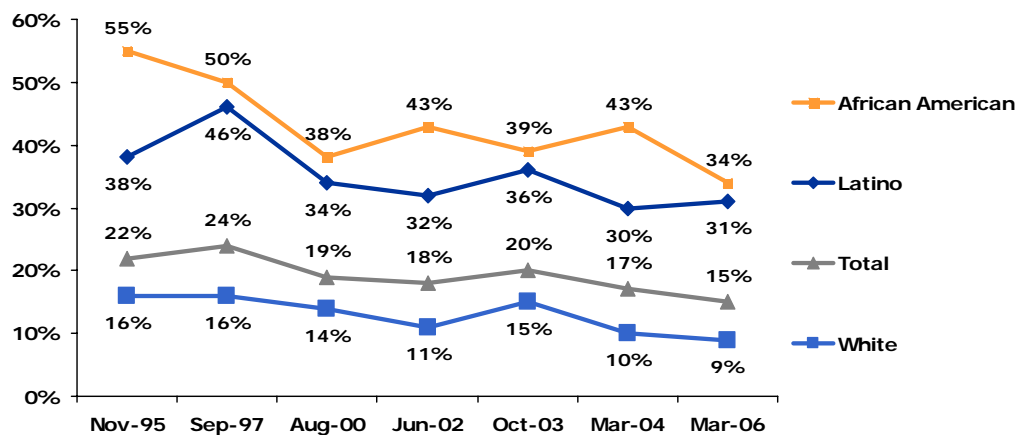
## 7. Personal Concern About Becoming Infected With HIV – Trends

In 2006, 15% of Americans say they are personally “very concerned” about becoming infected with HIV, and another 14% say they are “somewhat concerned.” African Americans (34%) and Latinos (31%) are much more likely than whites (9%) to say they are “very concerned”.

The percent of people overall saying they are personally “very concerned” about becoming infected has remained fairly steady since 2000. However, since the mid 1990’s, concern for all groups has fallen, particularly among African Americans and Latinos.

### Personal Concern About Becoming Infected With HIV - Trends

Percent who say they are personally “very concerned” about becoming infected with HIV



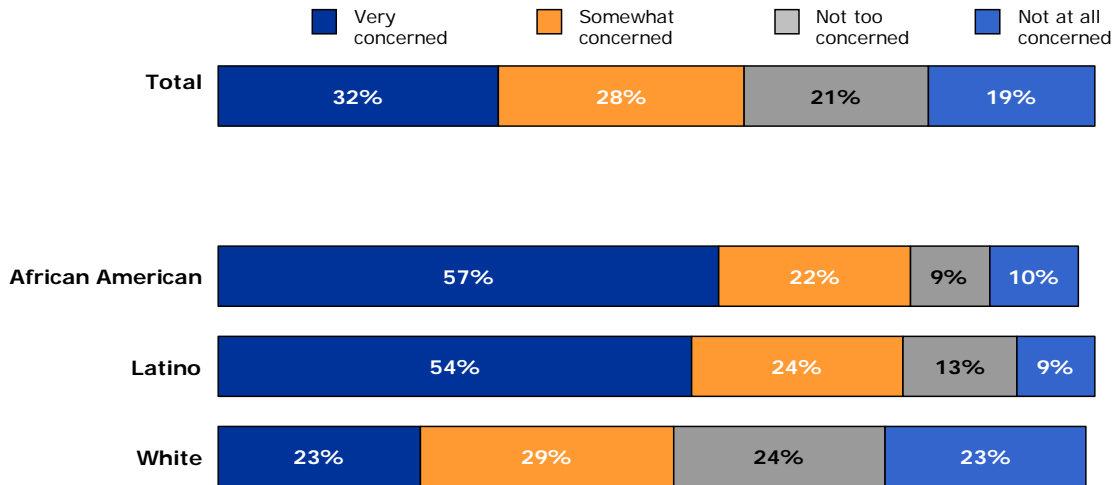
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys

## 8. Parents' Concern About Their Children Becoming Infected With HIV

About one-third (32%) of parents of children age 21 or younger say they are "very concerned" about their child becoming infected with HIV, and another three in ten (28%) say they are "somewhat concerned." African American and Latino parents are more likely than white parents to say they are "very concerned" about their child becoming infected with HIV; more than half of African American (57%) and Latino (54%) parents say they are "very concerned," compared with less than a quarter (23%) of white parents.

### Parents' Concern About Children Becoming Infected With HIV

Asked of parents of children ages 21 or younger: How concerned are you about a son or daughter becoming infected with HIV?



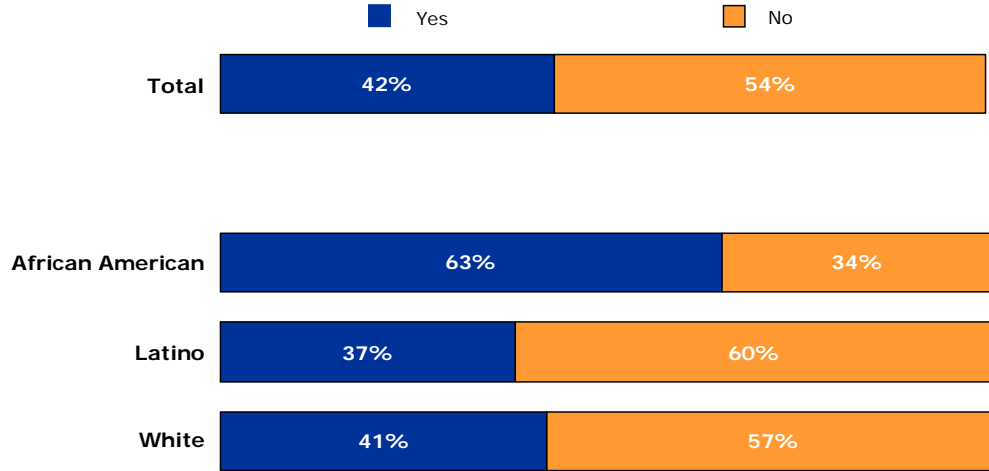
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 9. Percent Who Report Knowing Someone with HIV/AIDS

More than four in ten Americans (42%) say they know someone who has HIV or AIDS, or someone who has died from AIDS. About two-thirds of African Americans (63%) say they personally know someone, compared with about four in ten whites (41%) and Latinos (37%).

### Percent Who Report Knowing Someone With HIV/AIDS

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



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

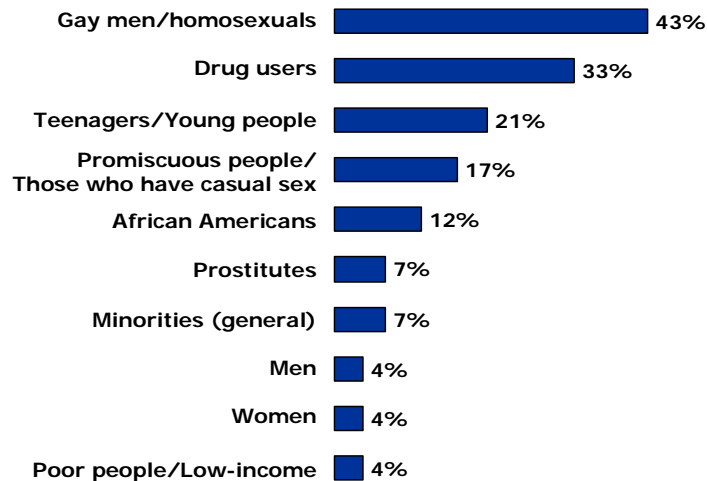
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 10. Perceptions of Groups Impacted by the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

In 2006, in an open-ended question about which groups of people are most likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS, the group named most often by the public was gay men (43%), followed by drug users (33%), teens and young people (21%), and promiscuous people or those who have casual sex (17%). Despite the fact that approximately half of new AIDS diagnoses in the U.S. are among African Americans, just 12% named African Americans in this open-ended question.

### Perceptions of Groups Impacted by the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

When you think about HIV/AIDS, which group of people do you think of first as those who are most likely to be infected? (Open-ended)\*



\* Note: Adds up to more than 100% because of multiple responses.

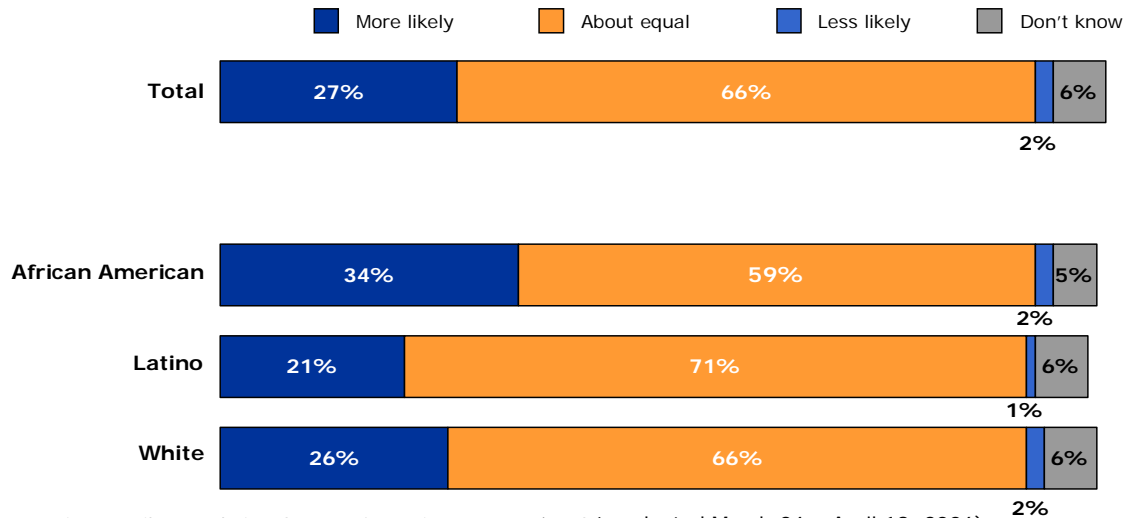
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 11. Perceptions of Relative Likelihood of African Americans and Whites to Be Infected with HIV/AIDS

Most Americans are not aware of the disproportionate impact of the HIV epidemic on African Americans; just over a quarter say that African Americans are more likely than whites to be infected with HIV. African Americans themselves (34%) are somewhat more likely than whites (26%) and Latinos (21%) to say that this is true, but still the majority are unaware of the disparities.

### Perceptions of Relative Likelihood of African Americans and Whites to Be Infected

As a group, do you think that African Americans in the U.S. are more likely or less likely than whites to be infected with HIV, or do you think African Americans and whites are about equally likely to be infected with HIV?



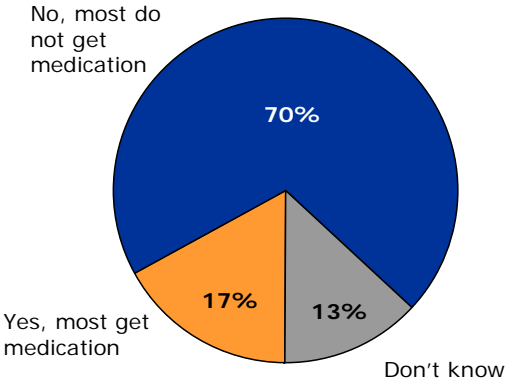
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

**12. Perceptions of Access to HIV Prevention and Treatment in the U.S.**

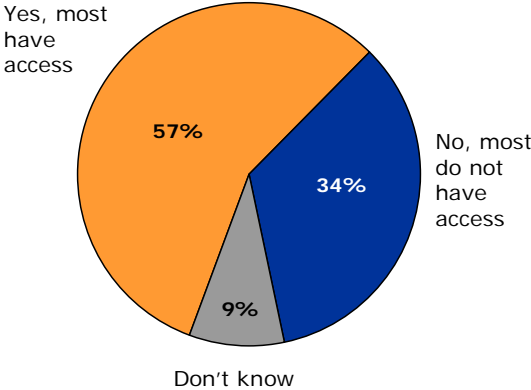
Treatment access is an issue even in the U.S., with the CDC reporting that about half of those who need antiretrovirals are not getting them. Americans perceive these access challenges, with seven in ten (70%) thinking that most people with HIV in the U.S. do not get access to needed medication. However, a majority (57%) believe that most people at high risk for HIV in the U.S. do have access to needed prevention services.

**Perceptions of Access to HIV Prevention and Treatment in the U.S.**

Do you think that most people in the U.S. who need medication for HIV actually get that medication, or do you think that most of them do NOT get the medication they need?



Do you think that most people at high risk for HIV in the U.S. have access to needed prevention services, such as HIV education, testing, and counseling, or not?



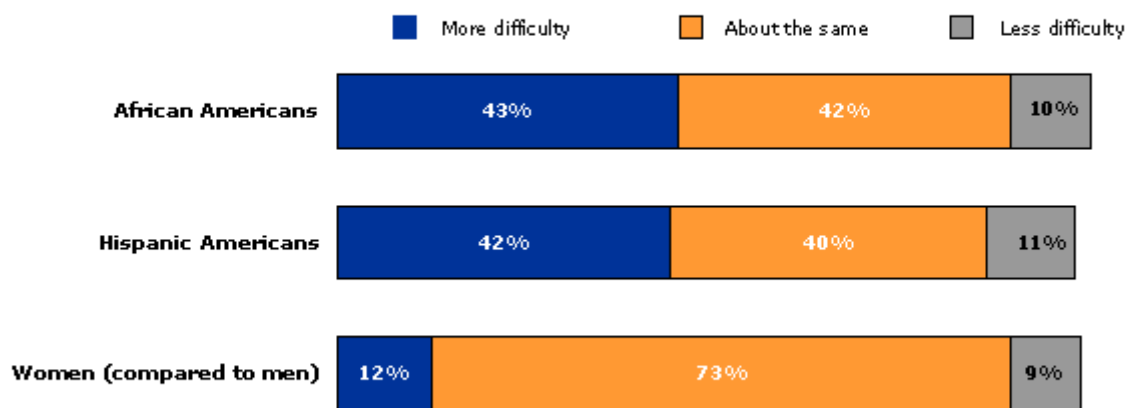
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

### 13. Perceptions About HIV Care And Treatment for Minorities and Women

Most Americans are not aware that African Americans and Hispanics have more difficulty accessing HIV/AIDS care, with four in ten adults saying that African Americans (43%) and Hispanics (42%) with HIV have more difficulty in getting the care and treatment they need compared with people of other backgrounds. The public is even less aware of the difficulties faced by women with HIV in accessing care and treatment. Just over one in ten (12%) say that women with HIV have more difficulty than men accessing care and treatment, while nine percent think that women have less difficulty, and 73% think that men and women's ability to access care and treatment for HIV is about the same.

#### Perceptions About HIV Care And Treatment for Minorities and Women

Compared to people of other races and ethnic backgrounds, do you think that (INSERT) with HIV/AIDS face more difficulty or less difficulty in getting the care and treatment they need – or that their ability to access care is about the same?



"Don't know" responses not shown

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 15 – May 11, 2004)

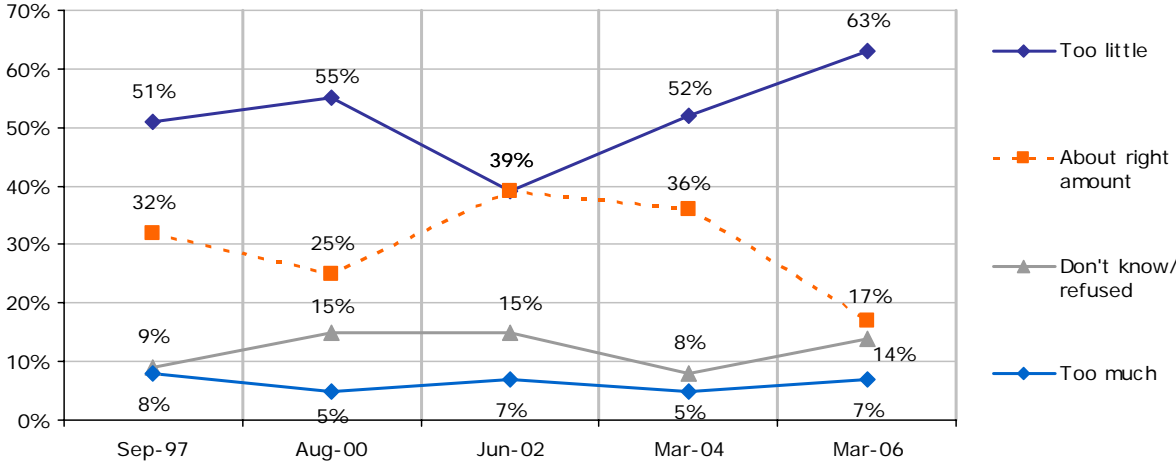
### 14. Amount of Federal Government Spending on HIV/AIDS

The public is generally supportive of federal spending on HIV/AIDS, with greater shares saying the federal government spends too little money on HIV/AIDS than saying it spends too much or that spending is about right.

In 2006, more than six in ten (63%) say that the federal government spends too little on HIV/AIDS, a share that has increased in recent years.

#### Amount of Federal Government Spending on HIV/AIDS

In general, do you think the federal government spends too much money on HIV/AIDS, too little money, or about the right amount?



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Surveys

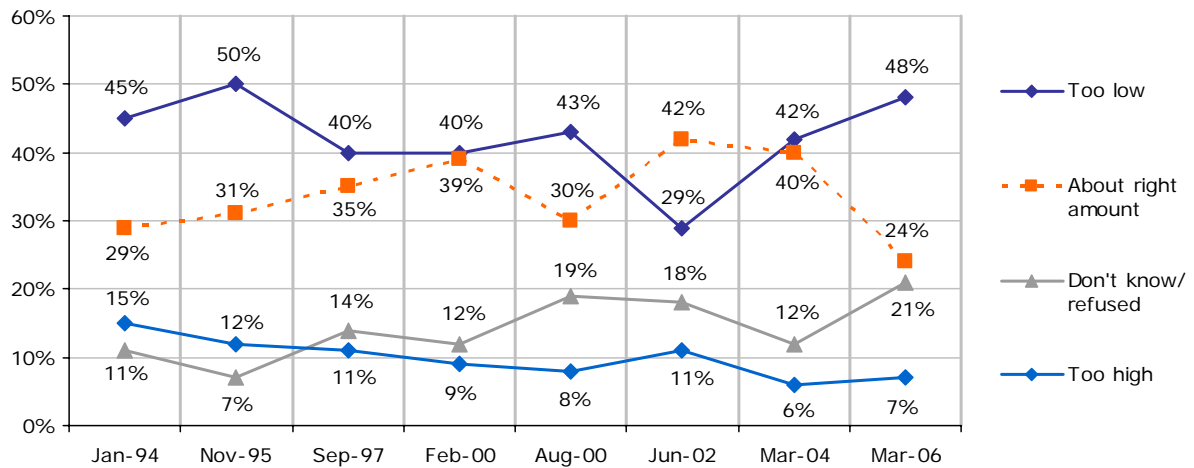
## 15. Amount of Federal Government Spending on HIV/AIDS Compared with Other Health Problems

When the question is asked about federal spending on HIV/AIDS compared with other health problems such as heart disease and cancer, the public is again supportive, with nearly half (48%) in 2006 saying spending on HIV/AIDS is too low. About a quarter (24%) say spending is about right (24%); and only a small share (7%) say such spending is too high when compared to other health problems.

While in 2006, twice as many people say that AIDS spending is too low as say it is about right, historically the public has been more divided on this question, with the shares giving these responses being much closer in previous years.

### Amount of Federal Government Spending on HIV/AIDS Compared with Other Health Problems

Compared with the amount of money the federal government spends on other health problems, such as heart disease and cancer, do you think federal spending on HIV/AIDS is too high, too low, or about right?



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Surveys; January 1994 data from NBC News/Wall Street Journal

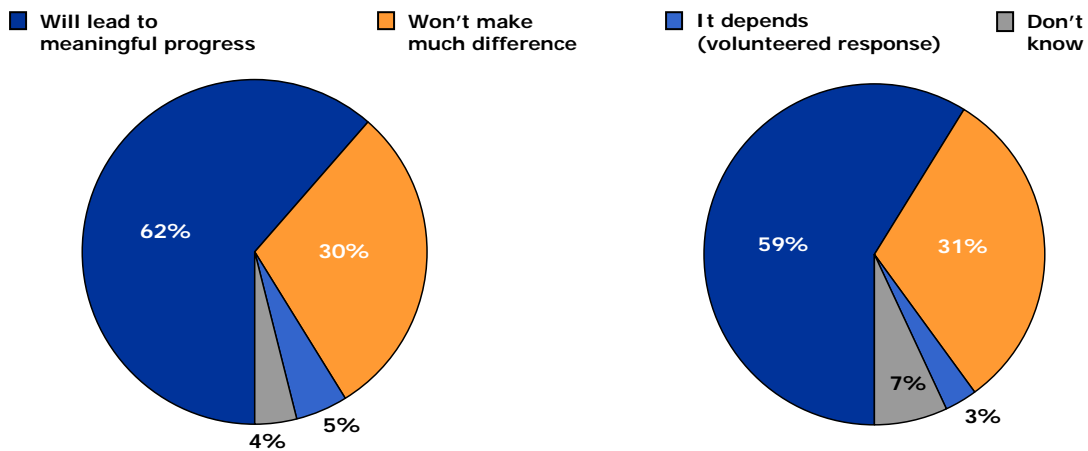
## 16. Will Spending on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Testing in The United States Lead to Progress?

Most Americans are optimistic that spending more money on HIV prevention and testing will lead to meaningful progress in slowing the epidemic. In 2006, about six in ten say that spending more money on both HIV/AIDS prevention (62%) and testing (59%) in the U.S. will lead to meaningful progress, while about three in ten say such spending won't make much difference.

### Will Spending on HIV/AIDS Prevention/Treatment in the U.S. Lead to Progress?

In general, do you think that spending more money on HIV/AIDS PREVENTION in the United States will lead to meaningful progress in slowing the epidemic, or that spending more money won't make much difference?

In general, do you think that spending more money on HIV/AIDS TESTING in the U.S. so that more people would know their HIV status will lead to meaningful progress in slowing the epidemic, or that spending more money won't make much difference?



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

### 17. Priorities for HIV Prevention in the U.S.

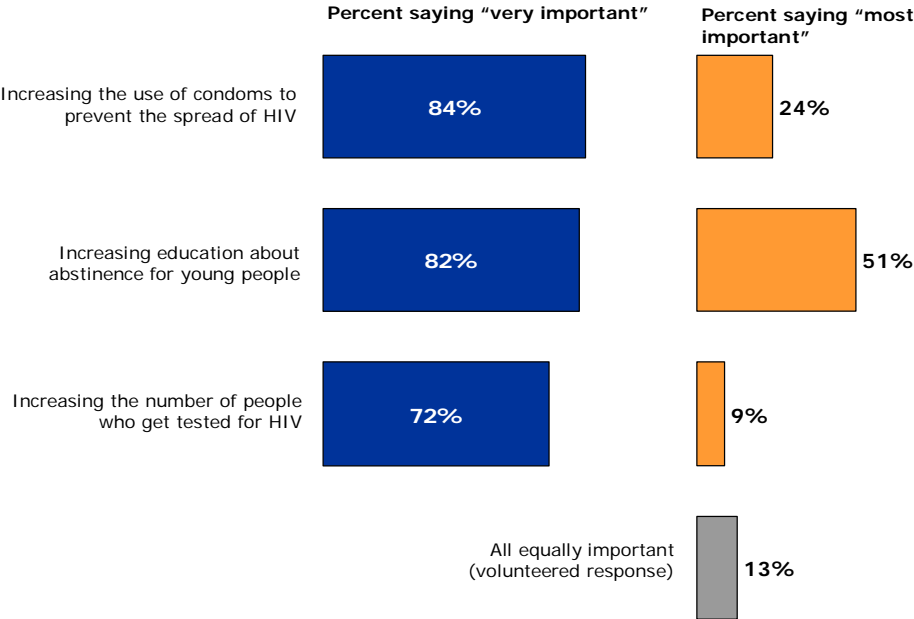
Large majorities say that increasing use of condoms (84%), increasing education about abstinence (82%), and increasing the number of people who get tested for HIV (72%) are “very important” priorities for HIV prevention in the United States. When forced to choose, half (51%) say increasing education about abstinence for young people should be the most important priority, while smaller shares choose increasing the use of condoms (24%) and increasing the number of people who get tested for HIV (9%). One in eight (13%) volunteered that these priorities should all be equally important.

#### Priorities for HIV Prevention in the U.S.

Percent who say each of these is a “very important” priority for HIV/AIDS prevention in the United States...

When forced to choose...

Percent who say each should be the “MOST important” priority\*



\*Also includes those who said “very important” to only one.

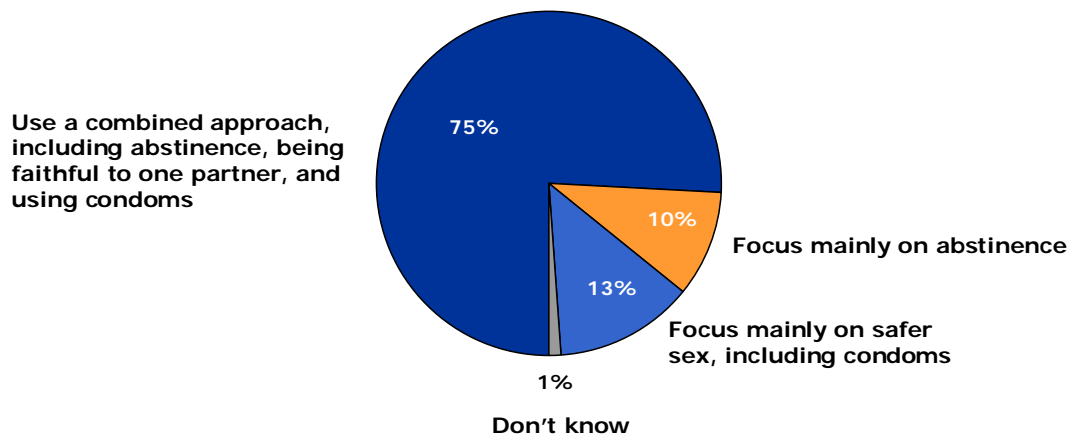
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 18. Views on HIV Prevention Programs for Youth

The vast majority of the public prefers a comprehensive approach when it comes to HIV prevention programs for youth. Three-quarters (75%) say such programs should use a combined approach, including abstinence, being faithful to one partner, and using condoms. Smaller shares say HIV prevention programs for youth should focus mainly on safer sex, including condoms (13%) or should focus mainly on abstinence (10%).

### Views on HIV Prevention Programs for Youth

Thinking about HIV prevention programs for youth, which of the following comes closest to your view of what the focus of these programs should be? Should they...



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)