

PERCEIVED HEALTH CHALLENGES IN THE UNITED STATES

National Survey Results

Presented by

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On behalf of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Commission to Build a Healthier America, Public Opinion Strategies and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research conducted a national survey in November 2007⁺ and one in February 2008⁺⁺.

Presented here are the research findings.

RESEARCH KEY FINDINGS

- The majority of Americans believe health differences due to social factors in this country are an important problem that needs to be addressed.
 - 78% of Americans agree that "it is important to make sure health differences between groups of people in this country no longer exist because of factors such as income and education."
 - 52% rate "helping people with different levels of income or education have the same opportunities to be healthy" as very important to them personally (a rating of 10 on a one to 10 scale). This attribute received the same mean rating score of 8.4 as "ending the war in Iraq."
 - Vulnerable adults* and certain racial/ethnic minorities view these issues as more acute.
- In addition to personal behavior, Americans view social factors, such as income, education, and environment, as having a significant impact on a person's health.
 - 82% of Americans believe living in a safe neighborhood can have a positive influence on a person's health.
 - 67% of Americans believe a higher educational level can have a positive influence on a person's health.
 - 68% of Americans believe a lower income can have a negative influence on a person's health.
- The majority of Americans believe government should do more to address health differences in this country due to social factors such as income, education, and environment.
 - 60% of Americans believe current government policies are not working to reduce health differences.
 - The most vulnerable believe more strongly that government should do more to reduce barriers.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS AND SUPPORTING DATA

The majority of Americans see themselves as being in very good health, but the most vulnerable people view themselves as less healthy.

	<u>National</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Latinos</u>	<u>Vulnerable Adults*</u>	<u>Opinion Elites**</u>
Total Excellent/ Very Good	55%	56%	41%	39%	42%	71%
Total Fair/Poor	16%	14%	24%	28%	23%	7%

The most vulnerable people in America are also somewhat more likely to view themselves as having less control over their health than other population groups.

Control Over Own Health

- Nearly eight in ten Americans (79%) believe they have complete control over being healthy while 19% believe it is beyond their control. There are sharp divides by socioeconomic status.
- The most vulnerable people in America are more likely to view themselves as having less control over their health than others. Looking at the percent who say being healthy is beyond their control:

- 24% of African Americans
- 23% of Latinos

- 26% of Vulnerable Adults*
- Only 8% of Opinion Elites**

Americans believe socio-economic factors are impacting health in this country. They see a strong correlation between socio-economic differences and the health of individuals.

○ Respondents were read the following and asked how believable they found each:

	<u>Very Believable</u>	<u>Total Believable</u>
People who live in poverty, or under economic stress, are at greater risk of having poor health	61%	91%
People who have less education are at greater risk of having poor health	34%	72%

○ Respondents were also read some additional statements and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement.

	<u>% Strongly Agree</u>	<u>% Total Agree</u>
It is important to improve the quality of education and increase education levels because it will not only improve a person's quality of life but will have a significant impact on improving their health.	71%	92%
It is important to improve housing and neighborhood conditions because it will not only improve a person's quality of life but will have a significant impact on improving their health.	56%	87%

The majority of Americans want government to do more to address health differences in this country beyond health care costs and access, but believe that it is important to weave into the resolution an element of personal responsibility.

○ *Government Has A Responsibility To Resolve Health Differences*

- The majority of Americans believe government, private industry, and the individual have a responsibility to reduce health differences in this country due to social factors. (1-10 scale, 1 = no responsibility, 10 = greatest responsibility, %8-10 rating shown)
 - 55% federal government
- The most vulnerable people in America rate government's responsibility to reduce health differences in this country higher than others:

Federal Government – %8-10 / Greater Responsibility

- 72% among African Americans
- 70% among Vulnerable Adults*
- 66% among Latinos
- 50% among Opinion Elites**

	<u>% Strongly Agree</u>	<u>% Total Agree</u>
People have an individual responsibility to take care of themselves. But some things beyond our control can negatively affect our health. It is important to make sure health differences between groups of people in this country no longer exist because of factors such as income and education.	60%	85%

More than six out of ten Americans agree health differences are affecting all of us.

	<u>% Total Agree</u>
The health of America depends on the health of all Americans. Yet many Americans with less education and lower incomes are sicker and dying younger than they should, resulting in a human and economic toll for the nation.	63%

 *Vulnerable Adults are respondents between the ages of 18-64, with less than a college education who make an annual household income of less than \$50,000.

**Opinion Elites are respondents between the ages of 25-64, who have some college education or higher, who have a household income of \$50,000 or higher, are very likely voters, and follow the news and current events closely.

* Poll conducted November 7-15, 2007 among 1,011 adults, 250 African Americans, 250 Latino Americans, 250 Opinion Elites, and 250 Vulnerable Adults. Margin of error on sample of 1,011 = ±3.08% and on each 250 = ±6.2%.

** Poll conducted February 6-10, 2008 among 800 registered voters Margin of error = ±3.5%.