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U.S. Adults Have Mixed Views about Providing Foreign Aid to Poorer Countries for Public Health Initiatives and HIV/AIDS Treatment and Prevention

The American public overall does not appear to be a strong proponent for increased foreign aid to poorer countries for public health initiatives and to help with the prevention of disease including HIV/AIDS. While one-in-five (21%) U.S. adults believes the U.S. government spends about the right amount, twice that number (43%) thinks the government spends too much to help prevent disease and improve public health and one-quarter (23%) believes it does not spend enough. Furthermore, when asked specifically about providing foreign aid to poorer countries to help prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, just over a third (36%) of adults believe that the U.S. government does not spend enough.

However, Democrats and Independents are much more likely than Republicans to feel that the government does not spend enough to help poorer countries with these health initiatives.

- Approximately three in 10 Democrats (31%) and Independents (29%) believe the U.S. government does not spend enough money to help prevent disease and improve public health in poorer countries, while only 11 percent of Republicans feel this way.
- Forty-six percent of Democrats and 41 percent of Independents, compared to 21 percent of Republicans, believe the U.S. government does not spend enough money to help prevent and treat HIV/AIDS in poorer countries.

These are some of the results of a Harris Interactive online survey of 2,547 U.S. adults conducted between June 23 and 27, 2005 for The Wall Street Journal Online's Health Industry Edition.

Restricted vs. Unrestricted Foreign Aid for HIV/AIDS Prevention

A plurality of adults (47%) believe the U.S. government should allow other countries to decide how aid dollars for the prevention of HIV/AIDS are best spent based on their own experience and understanding of what works best in their countries. Approximately one-third (32%) believes the U.S. government should have the right to set limits on how its aid dollars are spent by other governments, while another one-in-five (21%) believes the U.S. government should not be in the business of funding any HIV/AIDS prevention programs outside the United States.

Democrats and Independents appear to have a different point of view than Republicans as to how foreign aid dollars for HIV/AIDS are awarded. While majorities of Democrats (52%) and Independents (59%) tend to support unrestricted foreign aid, a plurality of Republicans (45%) tend to believe the U.S. government should have the right to set restrictions on how its monetary assistance is spent by other countries.

Health-Care Poll

TABLE 1

Perceptions of Foreign Aid for Public Health

“Based on what you know or have heard, do you believe the U.S. government spends too much, not enough or about the right amount on foreign aid to poorer countries to help prevent disease and improve public health?”

Base: All Adults

	All Adults	Party I.D.		
		Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%
Spends too much	43	49	41	40
Does not spend enough	23	11	31	29
Spends about the right amount	21	28	16	19
Not sure	14	12	12	11

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 2

Perceptions of Foreign Aid for HIV/AIDS Prevention

“Based on what you know or have heard, do you believe the U.S. government spends too much, not enough or about the right amount on foreign aid to poorer countries to help prevent and treat HIV/AIDS?”

Base: All Adults

	All Adults	Party I.D.		
		Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%
Spends too much	24	30	20	25
Does not spend enough	36	21	46	41
Spends about the right amount	25	35	18	22
Not sure	16	14	16	12

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Health-Care Poll

TABLE 3
Funding HIV/AIDS Prevention

"The statements below represent different points of view regarding foreign aid funding to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Which do you tend to agree with most?"

Base: All Adults

	All Adults	Party I.D.		
		Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%	%
The U.S. government should allow other countries to decide how aid dollars for the prevention of HIV/AIDS are best spent based on their own experience and understanding of what works best in their countries, including funding condom distribution programs or prevention programs among high-risk populations such as drug users and commercial sex workers	47	32	52	59
The U.S. government should have the right to set limits on how its aid dollars are spent by other governments. For example, it should be allowed to state that money for HIV/AIDS prevention should only go to countries that use the money for abstinence education rather than condom distribution programs or prevention programs among high-risk populations such as drug users and commercial sex workers	32	45	28	24
The U.S. government should not be in the business of funding any HIV/AIDS prevention programs outside the U.S.	21	23	20	17

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Downloadable PDFs of Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Polls are posted at http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_wsj.asp.

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Methodology

Harris Interactive conducted the online survey within the United States between June 23 and 27, 2005 among a nationwide cross section of 2,547 adults, aged 18 and over. Figures for age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income and region were weighted where necessary to align with population proportions. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

Though this online sample is not a probability sample, in theory, with probability samples of this size, Harris Interactive estimates with 95 percent certainty that the overall results have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Sampling error for the sub-samples of Republicans (769), Democrats (837) and Independents (652) is higher and varies. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. This includes refusals to be interviewed (nonresponse), question wording and question order, and weighting. It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

About the Survey

The Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll is an exclusive poll that is published in the award-winning Health Industry Edition of The Wall Street Journal Online at www.wsj.com/health.

About The Wall Street Journal Online

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